

Foreword

Shortly after midnight on January 1, 2004, I completed this book. It would be almost a year before it was self-published. The Christian publishing houses were honest in their rejections, most of which concerned economic viability. Publishers knew that an apolitical cultural critique of African Americans from a Christian perspective would not be well received. As with the case of O.J. Simpson's, *If I Did it*, there would be backlash and extra scrutiny. If the thesis was politically driven, the book could have acceptable and profitable. That was not the case and after several years of vigorous and strategic promotion on a shoestring budget, the book remains an overlooked and obscure text. I am very thankful that God employs a variety of messengers and mediums to communicate his message.

That message for Black America is that it must wake up and address the current moral crisis in the black community. We are living in a time where our collective house is on fire. Those who should be screaming, "the roof is on fire" are determined to keep the party going while ignoring the fire. Since the completion of this book in 2004, we have witnessed the destruction of the "Chocolate City," the impotence of a post 911 government that is supposedly better prepared for crisis, and been exposed to the underreported plight of the poor, all within in one catastrophic event: Hurricane Katrina.

The Government, which black people simultaneously depend on and loathe, was charged with racism in its response to this unprecedented act of God. For all the calls for unity and outcries against racism, no voice seemed more absurd than Minister Farrakhan's, which charged that U.S. Navy Seals destroyed levies protecting New Orleans' poor black neighborhoods. If only the Navy's commandos were that effective in Baghdad, our troops would have been home years ago. His outrageous claims are sadly characteristic of black leadership in recent years.

What Farrakhan and countless others missed in the collective response to Hurricane Katrina was the fact that, while charges of racism were lobbed in blanket fashion, the poor and displaced victims voiced heartfelt appreciation for America's opening of their homes and wallets to them. This response was a testimony to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit to change the hearts of a nation that would have left the black poor to live like refugees only a few decades ago. No Christian leader that I am aware of called for a collective thanks to God and the country for the generous response. Were racially motivated incidents taking place during the storm and its aftermath? Yes. The Gretna Parish law officers used force to bar blacks from entering their community to flee the devastation, and there surely were scores of individuals and groups exhibiting racist behavior during the crisis, yes, but what else is new? We live in a fallen world, in a nation quick to rush into a battle, but slow to face historical truths.

Yet, in the face of a pitifully disjointed national response spurred on by a media that is typically indifferent to lower class woes, America responded in a graceful fashion, crossing racial barriers and economic lines to serve distressed black citizens. To that miracle, our leaders responded in standard form, highlighting the victim role. What is even more shameful is the fact that the Million Man March Anniversary event, called Millions More March, was co-opted into a of self-congratulation fest. Apart from giving a shout out to numerous organizations, the impact of the event was trivial. The original march declared a need to focus on the betterment of black men, a need that was ironically underscored by the Toledo Ohio riot on the same day.

In Toledo, Ohio Neo-Nazis planned a small demonstration to exercise their constitutional rights. A mob of black men petitioned the mayor and police to deny the Neo-Nazis the right to march. Without the Neo-Nazis even showing up, the mob erupted in violence. Black elders were somehow able to show restraint in a racially oppressive civil rights environment, and yet

the progeny of the Civil Rights generation could not contain their anger towards an essentially non-existent threat. What high irony that the participants of Millions More March would demand that Farrakhan not focus on the condition of black men. I will not deny the Lord praise for using the 1995 march to change some men, but it is obvious by any number of empirical studies that the Million Man March had no collective impact.

By 2005, millions more black men had fathered children without marrying the childrens' mothers. Millions more avoided joining the workforce during an unprecedented economic expansion because of their love of a cool pose and thug veneration. Millions more crimes were committed in the black community and, above all, millions more did not hear Jesus' Good news, or see it lived out. We can take pride in the fact that we are making millions more dollars as a people, but we will need that extra money to pay the healthcare cost of millions of poor black people who cannot afford treatment for STDs and drug addiction. Such issues of morality and responsibility were ignored at the Millions More March, just as mainstream media ignored Millions More March. The so called "drive-by media" simply drove by, and yet they did not really miss anything.

A merciful God continued trying to get black folks' attention, and in a providential nod to contextualization, he picked a messenger who was not a preacher. Bill Cosby delivered his famous Constitution Hall address commemorating the Brown vs. The Board of Education of Topeka decision. I need not go into detail regarding his speech and its controversial fallout, for Juan Williams has already done a masterful job of this in his book, *Enough*. However, I will comment on the theological implications.

God chose a beloved and caring individual in Bill Cosby to call attention to the moral crisis existing in the black underclass. After his address, Mr. Cosby personally funded a cross-country tour in an effort to exhort the poor to re-evaluate their values. Yet, the

backlash against Mr. Cosby's efforts, witnessed especially by the silence of black leadership, is strikingly similar to Ancient Israel's response to God's prophets who came to warn them. It begs the question: if Black Americans will not listen to Bill Cosby, to whom will they listen? If Cosby is to be faulted, it can only be for not applying the same criticism to the middle and upper class.

Who has not heard the old saying, "God works in mysterious ways?" This sentiment is born out when one considers the Creator's understanding that irreligious blacks under the age of 40 need a prophet too. Surprisingly, this prophet came in the form of vulgar, hilarious comedian, Dave Chappelle. Chappelle's popular comedy show offered sharper, more accurate cultural criticism than many pastors and news commentators. Chappelle's success on the Comedy Channel is attributed to his comedic skill and a broad cross-cultural audience willing to laugh at racial parody. Some people asserted that the success of Chappelle's show signaled that Generations X and Y were ready to move beyond race and laugh at America's historical hang up.

Naturally, Chappelle's vulgarity and base humor obligated clergy and other leaders to write off his observations and sharp critiques. Inexplicably, the reality of his art and the cultural implications of the show suddenly caused a disconcerting epiphany as Chappelle observed a white producer "laughing at us." Chappelle shocked the entertainment community by fleeing to South Africa while leaving behind a 50 million dollar paycheck. Even as Oprah Winfrey gently prodded Chappelle on her show, he could not seem to express what revulsion led him to walk away from phenomenal success. Using even a comedian such as Dave Chappelle, God revealed the condition of black morality, couching it in humor instead of fiery pulpit rhetoric. Black Americans laughed at Chappelle's comedy, yet failed to wonder if there was any social truth in his portrayal of black society.

Two recent court cases reflect the cognitive dissonance and hypocrisy of contemporary black ethics.

In 2006, a black stripper hired to entertain Duke University lacrosse players accused the all white team members of rape. The district attorney bent over backwards to show the black community that he was "down" as he approached election season. Black leaders calling for justice assisted a media driven by ratings to proverbially lynch the defendants. However, by Spring 2007, the three defendants were exonerated by evidence that inarguably shows that the rape never occurred. Along the way, black commentators portrayed the stripper as a woman working a legitimate job in support of her family. As the case collapsed, black voices fell silent. Apologies for injustice apparently are not warranted for wrongfully accused whites. Whites were angry at our disinterest in justice and rightfully so.

In the second court case, shock DJ Don Imus taunted the predominately black Rutgers women's basketball team by calling them "nappy headed hos." The resulting outrage led to his firing. Some whites questioned why there appeared to be a double standard permitting black rappers and comedians to use such degrading language to refer to blacks. For a moment, it appeared as if a national conversation would begin in Black America, but the opportunity slipped away, proving the truth in Martin Luther King's observation that we are a 10 day nation. We are interested in a topic for ten days and then it is on to something else.

We know that Imus and any other individual white or black are wrong for maligning the character blacks by using racial slurs, yet this frame of racial reference is standard operating procedure for black comedians and rappers. Have we grown so desensitized to the usage of denigrating language that it seems arbitrary to reflect upon it? How many more incidents and outrages must occur before we become as courageous as the Korean community is as they explore a collective problem in their culture? In the wake of the Virginia Tech Massacre, the Korean community has taken collective responsibility for the actions of Sueng-Hui Cho. They are looking inward and considering how they raise their children. Again, how many shameful events

will it take before we realize there is a problem with the moral state of Black America?

Before I published this book, I solicited endorsements and comments by sharing the manuscript with many well-known black clergy. John Perkins, of Christian Community Development fame, told me that he agreed with 90% of the book. John advised me that the book's argument was so heavy that the book needed more affirmation. I considered his wise counsel, but I decided keep the book as it is. These days the dialogue within and without the black community is loaded with affirmation. Serious problems such as the STD epidemic disproportionately affecting Black Communities are characterized by health officials so that one might conclude that the diseases are contracted at random. Liberal academics report that the problems facing blacks stem from racism, while conservative commentators say that a lack of personal responsibility and accountability is the reason for the ongoing troubles. Furthermore, the small number of clergy who are prepared to state the problems in the black community reflects a decline in collective and personal morality.

Things have not improved since the printing of this book, but as you will read, they can dramatically change for the better, for the glory of God and the glory of our nation.

INTRODUCTION

In the November 2003 issue of *Ebony*, there was an article addressing marriage and Black Americans entitled, "The Shocking State of Black Marriage." The article stated that, in 1963, about 70% of Black families were headed by married couples, but that by 2002 the number was down to 48%.¹ For those who claim to be Christians (80%+ of Black Americans do), this has catastrophic theological implications.

We must remember that God's first ordination was that of marriage, the center of the family (Genesis

2:4). The statistical representation of the decline in marriage has translated into a general moral decline within Black culture. This decline can be readily witnessed in both secular empirical studies and five minutes of channel surfing. Something is amiss—with us...within us. The country is experiencing a collective moral decline, but what about the black community in particular? Even a cursory glance at recent national headlines shows evidence of troubling signs. Incidents and behavior uncharacteristic of Black Americans abound. Immediately, many would argue that anecdotal evidence is not an accurate gauge of trends. Others would question whether Blacks can trust the media to present anything more than thinly veiled stereotypes. While this was certainly the case thirty years ago, this argument is arduous to maintain as newsrooms and media organizations across the nation pursue diversity to exhibit professionalism, and most importantly, to attract as many ethnic markets as possible. Black Americans must begin to ask of themselves, both as individuals, and as a group, what's going on?

February 11, 2003 - The Fox network's immensely popular television series American Idol eliminated 24-year-old semi-finalist Frenchie Davis after discovering that she had recently been employed in the pornography industry. For those who are familiar with the broadcasting content of Fox television, the action was unusual. ²

March 22, 2003 - An African-American paratrooper attacked fellow soldiers with a hand grenade during the opening days of Operation Iraqi Freedom.³ Black Muslims hailed Sgt. Hasan Akbar's attack as the revolutionary actions of a new Nat Turner. ⁴

May 15, 2003 - Eighteen illegal immigrants died locked in a trailer as trucker Tyrone Williams attempted to smuggle them into the United States. Williams faces a litany of charges relating to the deaths. ⁵

June 8, 2003 - One year after his suicide while in police custody, St. Louis police are still trying to piece together the crimes of Maury Travis, whom many experts believe to be the second most prolific Black serial killer in American history.⁶

June 22, 2003 - Authorities in Louisiana are now questioning their race-based assumptions regarding the profiling of serial killers after the capture of Derrick Todd Lee (accused of six murders in Louisiana). Lee was arrested at a Holiday Inn in Atlanta where he was hosting a Bible study. ⁷

June 27, 2003 - Chante Jawan Mallard, a 27-year-old nurse's aide, was convicted of murder for hitting a homeless man while returning from a night club and leaving him embedded in her windshield to die as she turned in for the night.⁸

September 10, 2003 - Jayson Blair, former reporter for the New York Times who was fired for plagiarism and fabrication, unrepentantly hailed the signing of a six-figure book deal about his infamous career.⁹

October 1, 2003 - A two-year-old toddler was left home alone in Jacksonville, Florida for three weeks while the mother was arrested and put in jail. The mother neglected to let the father, her family, or authorities know that her child was home alone. The little girl survived on ketchup and dried pasta. ¹⁰

October 5, 2003 - A woman murdered her mother and the pastor at Turner Monumental AME Church, and then committed suicide just before Sunday morning service.¹¹

October 7, 2003 - Two sisters left their six young children at home alone to go to a local Yazoo City, Mississippi nightclub. Five of the six are burned alive as the home caught fire and was destroyed. ¹²

October 8, 2003 - In St. Louis Missouri, a 19 year-old mother dashed her infant baby against a curb following a dispute with the child's father.¹³

October 20, 2003 - Opening statements commenced in the trial of John Allen Muhammad, the senior member of the Washington, D.C. sniper duo that terrorized the Washington area, randomly killing ten persons while ultimately failing to extort \$10 million dollars from the government in 2002.¹⁴

October 29, 2003 - New Jersey's Division of Family Services reverberated from a case in which foster parents Raymond and Vanessa Jackson starved four adopted boys. Their six other children were reportedly well fed.¹⁵

In my hometown of St. Louis Missouri, the community is catching its breath after a summer that mimicked the video game Grand Theft Auto. In the game, the player is a car thief who, in addition to stealing cars, must battle rival gangsters and dodge the police. In St. Louis, life not only imitated the game, but transcended it as a quartet of youth embarked on a "crime for thrills" spree that matched the insanity of the original youth perpetrated thrill killings of the late 1950s.¹⁶ Even our nation's capitol, Washington, D.C., is still reeling from a summer of Black violence and gang war.¹⁷

Some readers may be put off by this recitation of the spectacular, but I would be remiss to report that the empirical data in this book reflects a widespread epidemic of lawlessness and rampant immorality. Marvin Gaye said it best, "makes me want to holler," and we should be collectively hollering in mourning and repentance to our God for this abysmal condition.

The Black American population in the U.S. stands at 37 million, and data shows that 80% of that group claims religious affiliation that is overwhelmingly Christian.¹⁸ Yet, as we declare our piety and devotion to Jesus Christ, statistics show that we are the robbery kings and queens of America. We are, hands down, the undisputed leaders in internal and external murder. Although we are not the epitome of immorality, we are light years away from our moral state of 1963.

In those days we had no one but the Lord to look to for deliverance from oppression. A God of justice heard our pleas and exalted us rapidly—more rapidly than any other oppressed people group, to a more equal footing within this society. Our clergy pointed out the hypocrisy of American Christianity during centuries of suffering, and exhorted the black masses to pursue biblical holiness, individually and collectively. The faith in a God who delivered the Israelites from the hands of powerful oppressors was called upon for our people. As usual, God delivered.

We have been free on paper since the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Our collective buying power is 300 billion dollars,¹⁹ and we have been in the inner circles of American power for the last three presidential administrations. While the gap still exists between what Blacks and Whites earn, they have diminished dramatically—things have certainly changed. Unfortunately, as John McWhorter pointed out in *Losing the Race*, the “cult of victimology” has transfixed our collective psyche.²⁰ From within this cult, the ideological fallacy is maintained that we are better than they. This prideful notion is at the heart of our moral delinquency. We have subconsciously reasoned that, as historical victims of adjudicated lawlessness, we have been licensed to sin.

Despite a rich history of Christian pastoral leadership, this theologically flawed worldview has intoxicated the Black American’s worldview and has been unchallenged from the pulpit. The peculiar institution of slavery, the Holocaust, Cambodia’s Killing Fields, the Intifada, and countless other historical tragedies are all part of the continuing cycle of sin unleashed upon the earth by the “fall.” The belief that Black victimology makes us more righteous should beg us to question how we measure up compared to the Kurds, the Armenians, the Tibetans, or the Kosovar Muslims. For Christians, the only avenue to individual and collective righteousness is through the blood of Jesus and his church, a gift from God, the Father, for his deserving work.

So, when there is no perceivable difference between the cultural actions of those who claim His name and those who do not, there exists a moral emergency. This book is targeted, in part, to the Black Christian Clergy, as a wake-up call to the fact that the moral state of America is a stench overpowering Christ's message in a people who have a uniquely powerful testimony to present to America and to the world. Pride did not save us, but pride is now what prevents a unified call from the pulpit denouncing the landslide of postmodern culture and its secular humanist worldview. Instead of challenging the mindset of Black Americans who solipsistically accumulate and revel in material resources historically denied to them, clergy often join in the rally, and in some quarters lead the cry for more!

In the midst of this ruckus, the One responsible for our freedom is overlooked. Our service to Him has been replaced by America's world-renowned materialistic idolatry. As we live out this freedom, His message is diluted and insulted by the lives and actions of those whose service to Him means coming to get their "shout on" on Sunday morning, then stopping at the liquor store, casino, mall, or babies' daddy's house for sex on the way home. Like the unsaved, we revel in the cult of celebrity, and revel to the extent that we even hold our pastors and worship leaders as idols. We have our own awards show for gospel music, the Stellar Awards, which is a replication of mainstream productions. We have become contextualized to irrelevancy, our religion being just another quirky characteristic ascribed to our people group. How can we declare the power and supremacy of Christ and Christian living when, at the most basic anthropological level—the family—we are in disarray? Paul's scriptural instructions for husbands and wives have been rejected in favor of fictionalized relationships portrayed on *The Young and the Restless* and in Zhane's novels. Since the Sexual Revolution, postmodern culture has declared chastity and biblical sexual mores unrealistic. We have accepted these assumptions and joined in the cultural orgy.

We have strayed, impugning Christ's name—and our descent toward de-civilization, and our rapid demise at our own hands, have affirmed the censure. In writing this book as a seminary student, I was inclined to model after other authors who pick a key passage and creatively interpret their way to a grand point. In an effort to "keep it real," this book will not take that course, but will, instead, analyze America, our subculture, and present the reader with the obvious. As we consider Jesus' words, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching," and "He who does not love me will not obey my teaching" (John 14:23a, 24a), no intensive hypothesizing is necessary to make this point: We do not love Christ if we do not obey Him. Many of those claiming Christ are clearly not in union with Him, and that is a dangerous condition in which to be. God has promised to oppose those who oppose His Son, in whom all things have been given.

Anyone who has served in the military is familiar with the oath sworn upon completing the enlistment process. The enlistee swears to defend the country from all enemies foreign and domestic. Similarly, God's words are clear that He will defend His Son's name and strike out in righteous vengeance against all enemies within and without His Kingdom. Furthermore, the blackest darkness is reserved for the unsaved domestic enemies (2 Peter: 17). Do we expect God to sit back as we make light of the work of Christ and His magnanimous grace, rivaling the unsaved in debauchery? Since the traditional doctrine of Hell has been dumped in modern times for an all-good, feel-good version of the gospel, we have lost sight of what Christ has saved us from.

Jesus is waiting for our return to Him. He will lead us to worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The truth is that we have drifted astray. The way back to righteousness is on our faces in repentance. Our community can be restored spiritually and naturally through an unhindered work of the Holy Spirit. We must remove the stumbling blocks that inhibit our calling others to the faith and our growth within the Kingdom. May the reader be moved to heed the call to show the world yet another great work by Christ Jesus, as

intractable problems get solved and many who doubted the power come to find the power irresistible. We can only look upward for our salvation now, tomorrow and forevermore.

Chapter 1

How Did We Get Here?

If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. -John 8:31-32

Most people, in fact, will not take trouble in finding out the truth, but are much more inclined to accept the first story they hear. -Thucydides 400 B.C.

In order to gain a greater understanding about the present, we must return to America's pre-Columbus past, in order to identify God's purpose for this continent. Prior to Columbus, North America's inhabitants were ignorant of the Gospel, which had not yet reached these shores. Yet, God's providential grace would ensure that the message reached them, and therein lay the first test of American Christianity. America started out as a European business venture. Columbus, a "Christian," did not sell this expedition to Queen Isabella as a long-term mission trip. Moreover, from his own diary, he set the tone for the relationship between Europeans and Native Americans.¹ Thus, the first test of American Christianity failed. While Columbus is not alone in this precedent, tragically, the Gospel's message would be used as a tool of oppression and submission to the authority of men for hundreds of years thereafter.

Popular American mythology largely focuses on the Puritan escape from religious persecution as opposed to a collage of business ventures by the French, Spanish and English. Despite centuries of scriptural study and a litany of learned church fathers, the European mind was unchallenged as to the concept of universal human equality under God. This Satanic stratagem of racial

pride and superiority has long served the devil's campaign to taint the witness of Christ worldwide. This fact is hard to swallow, but historically correct. Tragically, even as the colonies would introduce African slave labor, opposition arose to the idea of converting the Blacks. The Puritan forefathers were more vigorous in their pursuit of earthly riches than those promised by Christ (Matt. 6:19). Justo Gonzalez, a Christian historian, noted that "in 1667 a law was passed declaring that baptism did not change a slave's condition"—another indication of the degree to which established religion was willing to bend to the interest of the powerful.² So we see that, from colonial days, the Gospel was tragically mutated to serve the idol of the market place; moreover, despite man's stumbling blocks, God would see that the Gospel would be disseminated through both Great Awakenings. Yet, as slavery was transmitted through generations by breeding, brutality, and family dissection, a philosophical construct was adopted to soothe troubled spirits. The wonderful truth preached by Jonathan Edwards, George Whitfield and others calling on one to have a personal relationship with God through Christ on an individual level emancipated a collective blame for corporate injustice. This same belief is widespread among White Christians and was well documented in the award-winning book *Divided By Faith*.³ This individualized separation between real life and the spiritual state blended into the American identity as we gained our independence.

Separation of church and state is one of the most loudly heralded attributes of our nation. Curiously, American Christianity has always laid claim to this land being Christendom. That claim, which was again boisterously levied in the summer of 2003 as an Alabama supreme court judge refused to remove a Ten Commandments monument from a public courthouse, as well as when a *USA Today* survey showed an unwillingness to allow an Islamic monument (or Buddhist, or Hindu) equal footing, highlights the bipolarity in our thinking. 4 On the one hand, we declare the separation to be the best way to govern, and on the other, we declare that

our founding fathers (many of whom were Enlightenment influenced Deists) formed a Christian nation. American Christianity has always pointed to the Godly, not Christly, acknowledgment that adorns our courts, money, and the Constitution as evidence of national Christian identity. We must not overlook the numerous historical instances when violent means were used to deal with heretics (Mormons), Jews, and even Catholics as they attempted to exercise their constitutional right of freedom of religion. American Christianity has developed amnesia about such episodes, and most Americans are guilty of bad faith with respect to their own personal histories. This brings us to the ultimate question for practitioners of American Christianity: Who comes first, Christ or America?

Regarding America, again we must ask, how did we get here? Why did the United States come into existence? This question has been answered from a standard historical perspective, a mythological patriotic perspective, a critical historical perspective, and even an Afrocentric perspective. But has there been an answer from a critical, historical, Christian perspective? I will attempt to develop such an answer here, because Americans who claim to be Christian must completely put down the blinders of individualism and aim to understand the big picture: the expansion of what Luther termed the "invisible church." No one will dispute that, in terms of human history, America has been, and is, the most profitable experiment in civilization. Conversely, in the context of Christian history, our country has been the site of five catastrophic failures. Before we go further, I must insert this disclaimer: Obviously, God's providential grace has been at work in American history, and only He knows the scores of souls harvested into the kingdom by the Gospel message. The five failures are in no way attributable to our Father, but to the deeds and misdeeds of men who have declared themselves Christians.

The first failure of American Christianity was the Columbus precedent. North and South America were teeming with undiscovered peoples struggling in a

variety of ways to learn the Great Spirit's will. God created these indigenous people to be spiritually sensitive and desired that they be brought into his truthful knowledge. Columbus then entered the scene on a mercantile expedition and, from his own log, we can see his party's thinly veiled enthusiasm to convert the natives erode into a lascivious thirst for plunder. 5 Follow-up expeditions by the Jesuits were little more than exercises in psychological warfare and pre-colonial reconnaissance. The monetary focus of the Europeans superceded all other concerns, and thereby set forth a consistent and bloody communion between the Native Americans and Neo-Americans. There have been a minute number of souls who developed a concern to properly contextualize the Gospel to the land's original stewards, who were ultimately exploited, marginalized, and violently defeated. The failure to present the Gospel in love to the Native Americans, as opposed to a means to an end, was the first mistake of American Christianity.

American Christianity initially stood silent as a new mutation of an ancient sin came to birth. Slavery has been around as long as man, but interestingly enough, Muslims were the first to turn Europeans on to the practice of tapping Africa for their burgeoning slave trade. Surprisingly, many of the persistent stereotypes and attitudes about Blacks were adopted by Europeans, who closely observed veteran Muslim slave traders. In a remarkable irony, historical Muslim involvement in the African slave trade is unacknowledged to such an extent that Islam is considered a worthy alternative for African-Americans, due to the religion's perceived clean hands regarding slavery. 6

The American slave trade—north, central and south—did something unusual in human history by creating new people groups, such as Black Americans, in our case. The process was simple. Like any competent farmer, the best candidates were picked and transferred from Africa to America. Transported in abominable conditions, the voyage induced a survival of the

fittest atmosphere, where those who survived were sold at auction.

At the plantation, with profits beckoning, cattle breeding science was applied to human chattel. Female slaves were forced to breed with the strongest and most virile males. From day one, a sweeping social re-engineering went into effect as the African, injected into a new social paradigm, was forced to sever all connections to past family, tribe and traditions. The English language was enforced as the sole means of communication. As all aspects of life were unstable, the slaves' introduction to Christianity was commonly used as a necessary means of control, but that which was intended to further the goals of men became used for God's glory, and through those oppressed souls, God would judge the nation.

The Lord made certain that the good news of the Gospel spread through the land, with two Great Awakenings. As many declared America a Christian nation, the actions that bore out through the implementation of Manifest Destiny proved otherwise. Yet, from early on, pastors would play a pivotal role in the success of this experimental state. Clergy would declare our existence and actions the will of God, while thumbing their noses at the Old World, heralding the resolute separation between church and state. In the meantime, the Old Testament, Darwinism, groupthink, and other psychological mechanisms were employed to justify the barbarity of our peculiar institution. So effective was this legacy of denial that the remnants of history still persist through collective amnesia and silence enduring to this day! Next we must consider the blood-soaked watershed in American History: The War between the States.

The Civil War was not fought over singular lofty states' rights aspirations. Instead, the war was waged against a consortium of pre-fascist states intent on retaining repression and human exploitation as a valid lifestyle. The Civil War was not only the tragic outcome of the maintenance of an immoral cultural regime, but marked the end of the American feudal era

as well. The industrial age would expand exponentially due to the war and, in the aftermath, freedom was dispensed to the slaves as America became poised to enter a new era.

Many people today would be astounded by the tenor and variety of civil rights that were pursued vigorously during Reconstruction. Twentieth Century civil rights veterans would be bewildered by the efforts of Whites working to integrate Blacks as equal participants in American society, while being met with violent resistance. An unrepentant South used terrorist tactics to derail the reconstruction process. Their final success was ideological, admitting no wrong but appealing to a base view of racial unity while keeping blacks socially subordinated. Despite ranks of seminary-trained preachers, few were able or brave enough to declare the truth about race. God settled the race question in the New Testament. God views our one world composed of many nations in two delineations: the saved and unsaved. Today we have the luxury of genetic scientists declaring the illusionary idea of racial construct bogus, affirming God's position on the subject years ago. However, the longtime rejection of God's truth about racial equality was the foundation for mistake number two: American Christianity's support of slavery.

In the years following Reconstruction's failure, the South executed a propaganda coup de grâce that persists into this era. They re-characterized their bloody rebellion as nothing more than a bid for the continuance of a noble lifestyle, admittedly class and race conscious, but nothing more. The heritage of dissent was framed as noble and honorable, as with any gentlemen's disagreement. Tragically, the Black victims of that age would bear the brunt of what psychiatrists call "transference." The South's anger and shame for defeat was dumped upon the powerless. As citizens in the North faced mass immigration by Europeans, they followed the South's lead in accepting a social discourse that erected racial barriers. European immigrants would find that the fastest and easiest

track to American solidarity was found in the mutual hatred of the Negro.

With nowhere to hide, Blacks bore out the nadir of race relations in the bosom of Jesus, as their fleshly bodies were extracted for lynching. Despite the depths of sin exhibited by a Christian nation, God's mercy shown brightly on Los Angeles' Azuza Street. Sadly, even there, where racial unity existed during the heart of the revival, the wicked reality of two Americas was reinstated when the years following the 1906 revival developed into some of the darkest in American history. We suffered economic collapse during the Great Depression and two world wars. American Christianity's failure to address racial oppression and oppose the codification of discrimination in the years following the Civil War was mistake number three.

The Civil Rights victory of the 1960's still astonishes the world. Humanistic pride rarely credits the fact that the movement for equality and social justice was led by a Christian organization headed by a Christian clergyman, Martin Luther King, Jr. The non-violent response to violent opposition played worldwide over a fledgling international medium: television. As the Western world, headed by America, faced off against atheistic communist Russia, television exposed America's hypocrisy to the world. Issuing no apologies, American Christianity formally sided with the conservative political camp, adopting the view that anyone criticizing America was squarely aligned with our enemies. Martin Luther King, Jr. was declared a "commie," and his followers were dubbed like-minded agitators. Instead of being grateful that a Black Intifada hadn't erupted on U.S. shores, the grievances of the oppressed were ignored, and American Christianity hardened racial division within Christ's church.

Unexpectedly, a further tragedy ensued as youthful Baby-Boomers rejected the faith of their fathers who were modeling a conditional Christianity, and initiating an era of collective and societal disorder. Heretical religions gained a foothold as

young Boomers searched elsewhere for the truth they didn't see in American Christianity. Secular humanism gained prestige as it declared the crimes of the past wrong, championed racial equality, and called for historical accuracy in liberal political quarters. Ostracized and rejected for ages by mainstream Christianity, the Black Church married a liberal bride unaware of the long-term effects of such a union.

Despite the dramatic changes to America in a postmodern age, American Christianity is still divided by faith. Each faith camp remains embedded in secular political ideologies. The Right remains wrong for its mythological view of history, its unrepentance and Pharisean morality, while the Left remains wrong for its rejection of moral absolutes. Neither Black nor White Christians should be beholden to either camp. The response to the Civil Rights Movement was failure number four for American Christianity.

September 11, 2001, was the fifth failure of American Christianity. In the wake of an attack by religious zealots, American Christianity pronounced where its faith nested to a world magnetically focused upon it. That faith is not dependant on the Savior's protective gaze, even though all things have been given to Him. American Christianity's trust lies within the power of its bombs. It has led the charge to close ranks and has rejected reaching outward. American Christianity took a leading role in throwing a national pity party. It was silent as voices called for the use of torture as a legitimate means to gain information to stave off further attacks. 7 American Christianity declared us victims while denying any depravity in our foreign policies. It declared and confirmed the hierarchy of humanity, ours being worth more than theirs. American Christianity believes that the Gospel is best shared from a position of numerological and technological strength. Fortunately for America, our God is patient and longsuffering. How many times will He allow American Christianity to fail? We know that He desires American Christianity to become pure Christianity. He desires our allegiance first and foremost to His Son. He desires us to worship in

spirit, truth and unity. That day has not yet dawned in America, and perhaps it may not until He comes. Until that time we must strive to be obedient to Christ and His word as American Christians.

The Black Church's union with liberalism has wreaked havoc within our churches and within our community. This is a call to dissolve that union. Joining the conservative quarter is not the answer. The answer lies in a return to the basic Gospel truth. All the power we need to restore and transform our communities rests in the hands of Jesus.

The Nineteenth Century's clash with theological liberalism was a harbinger of an ongoing religious debate in American Christianity. In recent years mercantile driven multiculturalism and liberalism have continued to cry for truthful history, challenging the idealized American history championed in conservative circles. Liberalism declared fundamental Christianity mythological as well. It is believed that religious fundamentalism cannot coexist with an accurate portrayal of American history. It can, yet the unrepentant nature of American Christianity has drawn this liberal assumption.

Currently, liberalism demands that the Black Church retain and support the role of perpetual victimization. This is morally killing us and stunting our cultural growth. Pastoral voices of dissent are left nowhere but the Right, and this should not be. Postmodernism and multiculturalism have eroded the historically fundamentalist Gospel message by demanding philosophical concessions in order to remain allegiant. The power of Jesus Christ has given way to the power of the vote. Religious leaders in the conservative camp may have more liberty to preach the Gospel, but must play the role of political spoilers and hacks to remain in the Right's good graces. Black conservatives have not challenged American Christianity's Dr. Strangelove doctrine: how I stopped worrying (about world peace) and learned to love the bomb (as long as we have the most). The Black Church must unify and separate from both camps in order to reclaim our collective

allegiance to Jesus. God has saved and delivered us, bringing us honor in the eyes of men. He gave us spiritual and natural freedom. What have we done with it?

Many scholars, sociologists, and citizens at large have declared the social problems intractable. Liberals explain that these problems are complex and rooted in a history of oppression, while conservatives declare that they are lapses of personal responsibility. Both are right. Black Americans can no longer avoid this issue by hiding behind a discourse of blame. God is the only one able to assign unequivocal blame, but He goes further by providing absolution and solutions. How dare Black Christians obsess over who is to blame? Does God? Let's get real for a moment. For all the talk about accepting responsibility coming out of conservative circles, neither a conservative nor a liberal United States Government has issued, or will be issuing any apologies for slavery in this republic of lawsuits. We must transcend the quest for comeuppance through surrender to Jesus. Our brothers and sisters trapped in cycles of depravity are no longer crying out for help but are sold on postmodern cynicism and relativism. Where is Christ's free offer of salvation? It lies in discarded hymnbooks and dust coated Bibles, sits beneath prosperity ministry videos covered with voting guides. The remainder of this book will explore this question by examining our present moral condition.

Chapter 2

Non-clerical Prophets

Because your sins are so many and your hostility so great, the prophet is considered a fool, the inspired man a maniac. -Hosea 9:7 b,c

We have grasped the mystery of the atom and rejected the Sermon on the Mount. -Omar Bradley

With the assurance that God's people know His will and opinions, He has routinely used prophets. Even though we are blessed to have His revelations and will contained in a handy book, God still dispatches truths to be revealed through men and women. This phenomenon is especially ironic for one raised within the dispensationalist tradition with its contortional attempts to render prophesy au courant. I find striking messages emanating from secular society, which disdain even the notion of prophecy (Nostradamus excluded). I am surprised to find the messages of "non-clerical prophets" aligning with scripture, testifying against the condition of the nation more soundly than anything coming from the Christian prophecy cottage industry.

Right Now, I look at it and think, if I just draw a straight line from where we are now, one of three things has to happen. Either we have to have a major tax increase, taking back everything that happened under Bush, and more, or we have to have drastic cuts in the core middle-class entitlement programs. We have to have big cuts in Medicare and Social Security. If you ask me which one, the answer is, God knows. But it's certainly going to be some kind of crash - Paul Krugman, Economist and New York Times Columnist¹

The Black religious experience defies monolithic interpretations. Black Americans can be found in all sorts of American religious organizations. Even though most Blacks remain part of a Christian worshiping community, far more are seeking alternatives to the church. Islam is the fastest-growing religion in the United States, and its numbers are rapidly expanding among African Americans as well. With even Louis Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam, increasingly leaning towards a more orthodox practice, Islam promises to hold a significant place in the Black religious imagination. Hinduism and Buddhism also continue to make inroads into Black communities in the twenty-first century, as globalization narrows the gap between East and West. And as Blacks seek to reclaim their African heritage, African-based religions like Candomble' and Santeria will still have a place on the

black religious landscape. - Juan Williams, National Public Radio commentator²

Every group that wants to can anoint itself as God's chosen people. - Vernon Jarrett, retired columnist Chicago Tribune and Sun-Times³

The remarkable fact is that today so many Americans value marriage, get married and want their children to marry. Many often cohabit, but when a child arrives most get married. The ones who don't make their children suffer. But to many people the future means more cohabitation-more "relationships" -and fewer marriages. Their goal is Sweden, where marriage is slowly going out of style. -James Q. Wilson, political scientist at the University of Chicago⁴

It is now absolutely normal in many circles for young Black men and women (and, for that matter, little Black boys and girls) to refer to one another as "niggaz" and "bitches" and "ho's." Doing well in school is frequently disdained as a White thing. Doing time in prison is widely accepted as a Black thing, and no cause for shame.

Few people are surprised to hear that a gathering at this party or that club degenerated into the kind of violence we used to associate with the O.K. Corral. Homicide, drugs and AIDS are carving the heart out of one generation after another, and suicide among Blacks is on the rise.

My question is a simple one: When are we going to stop this? -Bob Herbert, New York Times Columnist⁵

Just because you beat a man doesn't mean you're going to change his mind! - Keisha Thomas, who shouted these words while protecting Klansmen from a violent assault by anti-Klan demonstrators⁶

In the past 10 years, we've seen the near total disintegration of Black political and social leadership. That means the single largest influence on

Black America's self-image is popular culture, music, TV and films. - Aaron McGruder, political cartoonist⁷

They coddle them. They lie for them. They co-sign for them. Parents cover for their kids, even when their kids are dead wrong. And that's where the problems come in. They always say they want to give their kids more than they had. But sometimes more is not always better. Teachers quit because they can't teach these bad kids. Police officers can't patrol the streets anymore. We've dropped the ball. - Bernie Mac, comedian and actor on the state of African-American parenting ⁸

We learned manners in home and in church. We stopped going to church and we stopped having homes, so we are no longer being civilized, no longer socialized - Eldridge Cleaver, radical and lifetime activist⁹

It no longer seems to me that we are preoccupied with education and intelligence. It's not cool, even sicker, we equate smart and intelligent with being White. Intelligence is White and uncool. Just because you're African-American don't mean anything you do is all right because you're African-American. - Spike Lee, film maker¹⁰

You know, I would really hate to be a young person right now. If we don't stem the tide now, the jobless percentage I'm talking about now will seem mild. And there is no serious planning going on for this. There will come a day when ignoring the poor is not an option.

-William Julius Wilson, sociologist¹¹

The Black family has crumbled more in the last 30 years than it did in the entire 14 decades since slavery. - Julia Hare, sociologist¹²

Chapter 3

Morality by Numbers

For the wages of sin is death. -Romans 7:23

Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we
met Thee,

Lest our heart drunk with the wine of the world, we
forget Thee.

-Black National Anthem, lines 28 & 29

It is standard operating procedure for anyone outside the Black community who lodges a charge or attempts to make a critique of any aspect of Black culture to be attacked. To illustrate this point, consider David Chang, a Taiwanese immigrant who after observing rap videos created Ghettopoly, a Monopoly spoof¹. The object of the game, like Monopoly, is to dominate the board with crack houses as opposed to hotels and regular houses. Any form of entertainment that celebrates immorality is deplorable, however, Chang was attacked for perpetrating stereotypes and attempting to profit from them. Target identified, attacked, and issue dodged, as usual. SOP.

When other Blacks speak out about the ongoing troubles plaguing African-Americans by using statistics, they fall into one of two categories: popular conservatives pandering to White audiences (because the political affiliation causes most blacks to turn a deaf ear), or Black leadership calling for increased funding to solve the problem. We cannot overlook pastoral use of such statistics to make a point in a sermon. I shall do the same here with a variety of indicators. I challenge the reader to research each statistic and verify the facts for themselves. It is important to re-emphasize that we are the second largest ethnic group in the population at 12.7%. Latinos are now the largest minority group at 13.4% of the U.S. population.²

Denominational statistics compiled by the New York Public Library indicate that 81% of African-Americans claim membership in Christian churches.³

According to Target Market News, Black buying power in 2002 was \$631 billion dollars.⁴ To put that figure into perspective consider the GDP of these African countries: Nigeria, Africa's fifth most populace nation, \$113.5 billion; South Africa, \$432 billion; and Egypt \$268 billion. We spend more on consumer electronics (\$3.2 billion) than Uganda's entire \$3.1 billion dollar gross domestic product!⁵

Census figures for the year 2000 show that slightly less than a quarter of Black Americans live in poverty. In 1960 the number was a staggering 55%.⁶ Fifty-six percent of abandoned babies were Blacks as opposed to 21% white and 14% Hispanic infants.⁷

About 53% of Black children are raised in single parent households with 48% living with their mother and a paltry 5% living with their father. Thirty-six percent of the children are raised in homes with a parent cohabiting with a non-parent. To put these numbers into perspective, 25% of Hispanic and 16% of White children live in single parent families.⁸

Black children make up 38% of those in foster care, followed by 37% White and 17% Hispanic. A staggering 45% of American children waiting to be adopted are Black. Of the children abused and neglected, 50% are White; 25% are Black, and 15% Hispanic.⁹

The median household incomes by race were: Asian and Pacific Islanders, \$55,521; Whites, \$45,856; Hispanic, \$33,447; and Blacks, \$30,439.¹⁰

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reported that of those who died from AIDS, Blacks accounted for 46%, Whites, 34%, and Hispanics, 18%. Reports from the year 2000 indicate that Blacks led the nation in HIV

infection at 52%, followed by Whites at 37%, and Hispanics at 8%.¹¹

The CDC warned that the infection rate for the rest of the array of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) was reaching an epidemic level. The gonorrhea rate for Blacks alone is beyond belief: 78%, or 848.8 cases per 100,000 people. To put this into perspective, Native Americans have the second highest rate at 10%. The publication *Tracking the Hidden Epidemics 2000* stated that the STD rate for Blacks is thirty times that of Whites. "The disparity is due in part to the fact that African Americans are more likely to seek care in public facilities that report STDs more completely than private providers." Yet the report acknowledged that the reporting bias did not even begin to explain the dramatic difference. Sadly, Black Americans lead the nation in Herpes, HPV, Syphilis, Trichomoniasis, BV and Hepatitis B. ¹²

In 1999, President Clinton ordered a study on the impact of expansion of casino gambling across the nation. The National Gambling Impact Study Commission found that "pathological problems, and at-risk gambling was proportionately higher among African Americans than other ethnic groups."¹³

The Office of Special Education OSEP, reports that "Black students with disabilities exceeded their representation among the resident population. The most striking disparities were in the mental retardation and development delay categories."¹⁴

Black youth accounted for 15% of the national juvenile population in 1996. Yet 40% were in residential placement due to serious offenses and another 43% were in custody in public facilities.¹⁵

The Federal Bureau of Prisons declared 40.4% of the inmates are black.¹⁶

Suicide among Black youth aged 10-19 increased 114% between 1980-1995. The Center of Disease Control hypothesized the increases were attributable to the

breakdown of family as well as the growth of the Black middle class. In the case of the middle class youth, suicide represents an adoption of a mainstream coping mechanism.¹⁷

Out of the Black female population under 21, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services estimated that 77.3% are overweight and/or obese, as are 60.7% of Black men.¹⁸

Research done by Yale University discovered Blacks tipped cab drivers the least and were the most likely to stiff the driver. Blacks gave bigger tips to white drivers and were more likely to stiff Black cabbies. The report cited the findings as a possible reason why cabbies refuse to pick up Black passengers.¹⁹

Of the nearly 14 million arrests in the year 2000, 27.9% were Blacks. Blacks accounted for 48.7% of the murder arrests, 33.8% of the rape arrests, 64% of the aggravated assault arrests and 53.2% of those detained for robbery. We also made up 30.3% of those arrested for crimes against children and family, 34.1% of arrests for embezzlement, and 34.1% of all arrests for fraud. I have included the Department of Justice Uniform Crime Reports Arrest data in the appendix for review.²⁰

The Drug and Alcohol Services Information System issued the OASIS report in March 2003. The report is a compilation of statistics regarding those admitted to facilities for substance abuse treatment. Blacks comprised 30% of the adult admissions for marijuana as compared to 54% Whites. Yet Whites represent 70% of the American population while Blacks represent 12.7%.²¹

Blacks have the highest incidence of lung cancer, largely attributable to smoking, and the highest mortality rate due to cancer, surpassing all ethnic groups in the United States.²²

It would be easy to dismiss this compilation of statistics as overly focused on collective depravity.

Some would demand equal time to present the dignity embodied by Black America. Certainly, as creatures made in God's image and honed by adversity, we are resilient, humorous, creative, intensely spiritual and so on. Our problem is that we dwell so intently on our dignity that the we are tricked into believing that we are without depravity. Unfortunately, our distracted clergy have not kept up with the work of exposing the Black image to scriptures that reveal its faults.

Others may offer these two explanations for the numbers: residual destabilizing effects of slavery, and the ongoing efforts by racists, operating clandestinely or openly, to eliminate and exploit Black people. These explanations are standard fare, and are common in discussions between Black intelligentsia or the patrons at the corner barbershop. Both explanations are problematic.

The residual racism/slavery effect does not account for the strength of the traditional Black family rising from Emancipation to its societal peak in the 1940s, a peak that kept pace with the White population through the 1960s. Scholars have attributed the post 1960's family destabilization to the welfare system, thereby implicating the Government even further as an enemy of Black Americans. If we follow this argument, we must remember that Blacks were not forced to take welfare. Apparently, a collective greed made us overlook the fact that the welfare system required a father's abandonment in order to collect a state penance. The urge to sell out the family should have been widely resisted in that quarter as well as the collective exodus by upwardly mobile Blacks from class androgynous enclaves due to opportunities stemming from our newly won equality. The demise of the inner cities can be traced to the Black middle class' integration into the mainstream exclusionary class clustering model that mirrors White America.

In both cases collective greed trumps common sense and historical precedent. Yes, we were impoverished but we survived together as families and as community. While I am not advocating segregation and

do believe that Black integration expanded the melting pot phenomena to all colored peoples, rendering a lopsided myth ecumenically viable, we cannot ignore the historical record.

Turning our attention to the conspiratorial view in which Black America is continually under attack by White America, be it cabal or collective; let us explore the logic of this view. As we know, the primary means of transmission for HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, is unprotected sex and intravenous drug use. Despite an avalanche of information and a conviction that AIDS is a genocidal plot, we find ourselves apparently incapable of modifying behavior to facilitate survival. Ironically, this is a validation of the racist tenet that Blacks are incapable of sexual restraint, not even to save our own lives.

The San Jose Mercury News article "Dark Alliances" asserted that the CIA used funds generated from crack cocaine sales on American streets to facilitate support for anti-Marxist Contra rebels in Nicaragua.²³ Congress, in 1984, prohibited federal funding to the Contras. Gary Webb, the article's author, charges that, in addition to selling arms to Iran, the drug sales were yet another avenue taken by the CIA to bankroll the Nicaraguan insurgency. The article set off a firestorm within the Black community with many, including Congresswoman Maxine Waters, declaring it a smoking gun.²⁴ Mainstream America, especially those on the Right, dismissed the story. Yet to dismiss this story outright is foolish, as any historical survey of international intelligence services would reveal a full range of nefarious activities perpetrated against society's most vulnerable.

In Russia, the impetus for the Second Chechen War was fixed upon a terrorist attack on an apartment building housing poor Russian citizens. In recent years the bombing and the subsequent war against the Chechens has come under intense scrutiny by the Russian free press, who began connecting the bombing to the KGB's reincarnation, the FSB.²⁵ It must be noted that the

Russian independent press has been subject to an ongoing intensive clampdown. Altruistically, powerful men have always used the poor, or minorities in plots for political gain. To repudiate Gary Webb's "Dark Alliances" outright is historically shortsighted.

What are we to think about "Freeway" Rick, the chief distributor of the CIA connected dope, and the armies of dealers, consumers, and assorted benefactors connected to the crack epidemic? Have Rick and the drug dealers been condemned as traitors, scoundrels, and collaborators in another genocidal design? No, conversely and perversely the drug culture has been heralded, mythologized, and trumpeted in artful venues. Rap music, movies, magazines, and even commercials have transformed a societal pariah into a cultural norm. "Thugs" as celebrities, trendsetters, and even romantic interests, have been deemed acceptable, and even desirable, in publications such as Ebony.²⁶

What does this say about a people? Jewish collaborators during the Holocaust were collectively despised and are repudiated today. French collaboration with Nazis is quietly ignored and remains unspoken about out of a national sense of shame. Incredibly, we celebrate homegrown oppression and denounce outsourced injustice. Apparently, the White man is not the only one who speaks with a forked tongue. This dualistic absurdity is not without precedent in America, for even today the rebellious tide that nearly sunk America is celebrated as upright heritage. Perhaps we should shelve our criticism of the Confederate banner as long as the flag of legitimacy is waved by us over Snoop Doggie Dog and Jay-Z's entertainment.

This brings us back to the numbers; they exist as the documentation of immorality gone mainstream within Black America. Instead of declaring a moral emergency, we declare a conspiracy. Yet even in that declaration the most unversed outside observer cannot miss our co-conspiratorial actions. It is the nature of man to have his cake and eat it too. However, the biblical record is clear. Immorality leads to death, eternal separation from God, and everlasting punishment.

African-Americans may find the Apostle Paul's words insensitive, but even if he knew what political correctness was, he would still declare all humanity slaves. Paul said, being slaves, we can live in only two conditions: slaves to sin resulting in death, or slaves to righteousness that leads to life. In our hard won natural freedom we have collectively chosen to be slaves: slaves to immorality. One bondage compounds another. Our slavery to materialism has demolished community and family. This collective thought process observed by two generations of youth has flowered faulty reasoning that legitimizes all methods (unethical or illegal) of accumulating wealth. The accepted practice of gaining wealth by illegal or extra legal means has resulted in an expansion of criminal behavior and elevated incarceration rates. Our slavery to illegitimate sex has our minds gripped by pornographic themes in movies, print, language and music. This sexual slavery has corrupted our bodies with AIDS and venereal disease, and has the Black family hanging on the verge of collapse.

Are we alone in this condition? No, but we lead the nation in a rush to bondage. Our politicians, athletes, businessmen, and entertainers announce our success to the world when below their feet our cities are in ruin. I am unaware of an American equivalent to expressing intense mourning by wearing sackcloth and donning ashes. We are unfamiliar and averse to rending our clothes in like expression, but an honest contemplation of our moral condition would have us exploding in grievous cries for divine mercy. Repenting on our faces and knees is the only path to communal restoration.

Chapter 4

Media and Cultural Propaganda

For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. -I Corinthians 3:19

It's on the path you do not fear that the wild beast catches you. -African Proverb

The Twentieth Century's closing decades witnessed a new era of information synergism unlike anything the world had ever seen. This age of "media unlimited," as author Todd Gitlin termed it, is largely a commercial merge of television, print material, radio, and the internet mediums.¹ While politicians and others herald these outlets as a plethora of empowerment for the individual, in reality, the individual is nearly overwhelmed by an informational tidal wave. This fourth state largely serves corporate interest but can be used to serve the state. Moreover, If Goebbels and the Nazi's could craft such an effective propaganda machine with newspapers, spectacles and film; I shudder to consider the possibilities of the information age in diabolical hands. But what is propaganda? Are we not exposed to it with every Jack-in-the-Box commercial, pop-up ad, junk e-mail, telephone call from MCI, and magazine ad?

Of our age, Thomas de Zengotita writes, "Our minds are the product of total immersion in a daily experience saturated with fabrications to a degree unprecedented in human history."² He goes on to declare that never had people to cope with so much "stuff" and choices in kind and number.

Commenting likewise from the Seventeenth Century, Pascal's thoughts were:

Only one thing needs to go wrong to make us unhappy ... That is why men cannot be too much occupied and distracted, and that is why, when they have been given so many things to do, if they have some time off they are advised to spend it on diversion and sport, and always to keep themselves occupied.³

It is now the way of the world to partake heartily of the postmodern global marketplace by remaining constantly entertained while spending every

dime available. Are we not subject to propaganda? For the Nazis, Goebbels saw to it that every speech, presentation, film, article and story was crafted and calculated to manipulate the audience. He routinely created new words and mastered the sound byte, and with these tools the Nazis led their zealous population in a human rights' crime spree.⁴ What does this have to do with Black America? Turn on a radio, watch a film preview, visit Blockbuster Video, and you will see that Madison Avenue and Hollywood find Black Culture an effective tool to peddle wares and swell box office sales. Hollywood, the record industry, and others, have declared the Hip Hop/Hood culture to be the definitive and most profitable portrayal of Black life. While this is nothing new (read my paper in Appendix 1), it is toxic propaganda foisted upon numb American minds. The choice of the Hip Hop/Hood image of Black life for worldwide distribution is part of the odious racial stereotyping lineage started centuries ago. The difference now is that our people accept it, love the attention, and are committed to life imitating art.

Now we must discuss the use of the term Hip Hop/Hood culture, and to do so we must recall the blacksploitation films from the 70's. After years of neglect Hollywood graciously decided to portray Black life on film, and unfortunately (and deliberately, some argue), the subjects were pimps, prostitutes, drug pushers, and criminals. When a bonafide hero was allowed, he was not married and was usually the prototypical buck: an angry, oversexed, volatile Black man. These films were condemned and loved at the same time by the Black community. This archetype in film made a comeback as Hip Hop music was detoured to profitable depravity (gangster rap). Gangster rap was the aesthetic side of the American city drug culture's expansion during the crack cocaine era. Many street stars stepped out of the drug trade and into the world of art, their authenticity appreciated and even venerated today.

Liberal championship of relativism and deliberate conservative indifference and disdain of the Black poor created the conditions by which the Black underclass

(post Civil Rights generation) embraced the new found attention generated by gangster rap. Living in the ghetto was now venerated as keeping it real. Ignorance and resistance to cultural evolution was (and is) resisted by a new pride, and a misplaced sense of interest (albeit long distance) was found in ghetto life. The new ghetto/hood lifestyle spread through the Black middle class youth, to Whites and across the globe, the link being the music.

Let us look at some of the characteristics of the Hip Hop/Hood culture. We must recognize that this subculture arose out of anger and rebellion, the anger of feeling left behind as Blacks integrated into mainstream society. As the American economy shed manufacturing jobs since the 70s, inner cities, and especially Black communities, were stripped of employment opportunities and a tax base. Interestingly enough, Whites were not the only ones fleeing to the suburbs. Those left behind did not feel or see what they had overcome. The camaraderie and brotherhood of segregation days disappeared as the upwardly mobile blacks were now able to earn the American dream. Yet, scores lived on in a third world nightmare. The anger and frustration felt by the underclass continues to manifest in violence, substance abuse, and, finally, a rejection of civilized living. Many may wince at the use of the term, "civilized living," but it is wholly appropriate. The values of the Hip Hop/Hood culture are anti-family, hedonistic, anti-intellectual, anti-authoritarian, and most definitely anti-religious. As a thirty-six year old, I remember when rap music first came on the scene. As the genre blossomed there existed a vast variety of voices in the art. By the early 90s the major labels hedged their bets on gangster rap being the chief moneymaker, and it was. To the delight of the major record labels, White youth seeking to express their rebellion toward being reared in broken homes and bland suburban settings wholeheartedly embraced the new genre.

We must be clear about the nature of gangster rap music. Simply put, gangster rap music is the glorification of the wholly evil and destructive drug

culture. Yet the Hood collectively claimed ownership because of societal disenfranchisement. The thug and "thug life" now celebrated represented an opportunity to sully the suit of Black respectability proudly heralded with each new public and private sector appointment. So as the new tale of Black life flowered in music, so did it in Hollywood with its genre of Hood movies. In art and in life, middle class Blacks would have to prove they were down and that they could keep it real. Even the author was not immune from signing on to this self-destructive foolishness. This quest for authenticity has us mired in a cultural quagmire that is costing us the moral ground we gained from years of struggle.

Consider this: If a ten-year old in 1994 started listening to Biggie Small, Tupac, Tha Dogg Pound and others, day in and day out on a walkman; watched the videos on BET and MTV; and heard repeated recitation of sociological reasons and statistics declaring his future failure, why would he try? Has he not been made accustomed to Black on Black violence whether he lives in a suburb or in the ghetto? This young man, now twenty, has seen thousands of commercials whose impact has created the need for constant sensory consumption. Simultaneously, his ears have been saturated with messages of drug use, violence, misogyny, rebellion, excess materialism, and general antisocial behavior interspersed amid ruthlessly catchy and infectious beats. Where in the realm of common sense would anyone expect upright, wise, and ethical decisions to be made by this person? We have long heard "you are what you eat". Well, you are also what you think. Imagine the thoughts of this young man or young woman as we consider their role models and the amount of real time spent harvesting their warped ideologies.

Hip Hop Industry thoroughbreds such as Jay-Z, Ludacris, Lil' Kim, Missy Elliot and DMX are unwavering in their commitment to material excess; undeterred by calls to examine the social impact of their lyrics, they hold to the myth that only mature audiences are familiar with their material. Lil'Kim is hailed as a rap diva for aggressively marketing her sexuality (how

original) and introducing the idea that there is no shame in getting paid for sex. Her siren calls to young women to shipwreck their lives on a sea of sexual immorality does not produce community ire. No, she is deemed a legitimate talent worthy of a VH-1 *Behind the Music* documentary, and is a celebrity shill on Old Navy clothing commercials. Sociologists have started to weigh rap music's effect on the young, but still the religious community stands quiet as Lil' Kim and Missy Elliot implore Black women⁵ already falling prey to an arsenal of STDs to get their freak on, collect remuneration for it, and embrace the fiction that such action bears no relation to harlotry. Whereas the Nazi propaganda machine co-opted a society to engage in unparalleled serial murder, gangster rap and R&B musicians champion suicidal philosophies and behaviors while earning communal kudos for their talent. How many minds have been lost, as these glorifications of sin remain unchallenged by the faith community? Why do we not declare the firewall of the Gospel as the only effective anecdote to this monstrous virus infecting the minds of our people?

Music artists' active and passive compliance with regimes bent on world market or cultural domination can lead to disastrous consequences. Just a decade ago in Rwanda, Hutu rebels with unsophisticated methods utilized radio to incite and direct a colossal genocidal massacre of the ethnic Tutsi population. Now, one must wonder whether a youth born in 1994 who spent his formative years drinking in rap music's self-hating, egotistical, anti-social propaganda will develop a system of moral values. His mind is drenched by an overemphasis of negative societal influences such as police brutality, a race-centered worldview, unbridled anger, the legitimization of criminal activity, incarceration presented as routine, cavalier attitudes towards sexuality, general hedonism and a fervent disdain for any knowledge other than that pertaining to the street. This popular music is no longer attacked, but is lionized as our own creation. Our publications uncritically present gangster rap superstars as legitimate celebrities that deserve the same billing as Oprah, Bill Cosby, Denzel Washington,

and similar figures. Jet and Ebony are co-conspirators in this sending of mixed messages. Apart from Reverend Calvin Butts, the silence from the pulpits has been deafening. In the meantime, the streets flow with our blood during an internecine orgy of violence backed by a soundtrack and ideology provided by the record industry.

The second form of popular music, Rhythm and Blues, is as just pitiful in its lyrical baseness. A quick survey of the top R&B hits at any given time reveals ballads celebrating sex, marriageless love, the glorification of unfaithfulness (creeping on the down-low), and he said/she said relational disputes ad nauseam. Graphic language punctuates most lyrics, and the Black church's collective response to popular music has been to mimic it, both within and without the church house. This discussion should be thundering across the church world. We cannot forget that the Apostle Paul vigorously addressed the cultural encroachments within the Corinthian church. The phenomenon that occurred in their time has not abated. It has increased.

Consider the dilemma: modern psychiatry deems shame and guilt to be unhealthy emotions. In addition to this construct, Missy Elliot and Little Kim tell the ladies to have no shame as they barter sex for resources. The call to be unashamed, if not proud, of sin occurs as a repeated theme in rap, on television, and in the actions of most movie characters. Conversely, the message from the pulpits has been tempered not to challenge or remind the masses we should be ashamed for our lawless rebellion and debasement of sin. The church, however, must also challenge the logic of street knowledge. Just what is this venerated street knowledge? The strong survive. It's dog eat dog out there. Trust no one. Cash is king. The Hood life is authentic living. The gangster lifestyle is now a legitimate career choice. R&B artists have cosigned on this absurdity by hailing gangster love as desirable.

Latina pop-superstar, Jennifer Lopez, was interviewed when she dated Sean "Puff Daddy" Combs (now "P-Diddy"), and stated that she loved dating bad boys because they make you feel safe.⁷ Apparently she did not buy into her own rhetoric because she dumped Puff Daddy after a shooting occurred at a nightclub where they were hanging out. Even Ebony printed an article coaching women on how to date a badboy.⁸ In the name of common sense, how can a girl want a gangster lover and not expect to share a gangster's end? This is an example of the faulty thinking, foolish advice and unbelievable absurdity that is passed on through the popular media. How long will the church stand idly by and let postmodern America believe that the only sages worth listening to are the daytime talk show hosts? We sit atop an inexhaustible supply of wisdom that can be backed up with the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit for those who would believe, and we say nothing. We must remember that the Media has told kids that Biggie Small, Aliyah, Tupac and Left Eye are giants, artistic heroes. In reality, they are no more than talented propagandists glorifying a legacy of shame, murder, and loveless sex; the legitimization of out-of-wedlock childbearing; and general rebellion against corporate morality. Their heroism lies in their success as capitalists and in their mantle of celebrity. They are hailed as champions of an industry, which exploits and covertly serves the devil through seductive packaging of anti-Christian messages. No one tells today's starry-eyed youth that the odds of breaching the stratosphere of such fame are about the same as winning the Powerball. Many others are equally or more talented. They are simply not picked.

As if the rain of antisocial influence from the music industry is not enough, we cannot forget the impact of television. Recently, St. Louis celebrated the premier of channel UPN 46, a channel pridefully hailed as being Black owned and operated.⁹ Big names such as Mo'nique, Jerry Springer, and a coterie of local celebrities, such as the mayor, attended the affair. Yet a review of the UPN programming for the following week should have drawn a protest. UPN, while abundant with Black faces, is one of the most prolific

networks concerning casual sexual references and foul language, outpacing even the notorious FOX network.

The Parents Television Council, a media watchdog group, reported that UPN programming had an 188% increase in on-air foul language between 1998 and 2002.¹⁰ *Girlfriends*, one of UPN's flagship programs, is a prime example of the postmodernist indoctrinations that Americans are exposed to, and especially African-Americans since we watch more television than all other racial groups in America.¹¹

Girlfriends is a Black cast version of HBO's cable hit *Sex in the City*. *Sex in the City* is nothing more than a soft-porn soap opera with major stars. The program's main characters are four upwardly mobile women who swashbuckle their way through men in search of good sex and a meaningful relationship that never fully materializes. *Sex in the City*'s heroines are never perceived as sluts, prostitutes, or loose women. Instead, they are applauded for their supposed portrayal of fashionable, empowered women who are in control. Television restrains graphic depictions of sex, but *Girlfriends* manages to capture the spirit and tenor of *Sex in the City*. The sinful lives played out in both shows are portrayed as glamorous and without consequence. This is the essence of the Devil's ideological psychological warfare campaign crystallized in postmodern culture. Man has been sold on the idea that these previously collectively condemned behaviors are now normal and without existential consequence. Satan has succeeded in repackaging the Garden of Eden message and selling it wholesale. Man is free to do as he wishes; ethics and law need only be defined by man. Violators of the rule of law are deemed only as victims of faulty thinking, never immoral. Even the word immoral has been extracted from the public lexicon by the popular media and replaced by the milder variations of the term "ethics." "Moral," the root word of immorality, brings into question the nature of morals, and asserts that there may exist a true set of morals which stands in stark opposition to the relativistic world view. Most of UPN's programming not only tows the

larger cultural line, but it stretches it as far as possible.

UPN also airs the notorious Jerry Springer, The Ellen Degeneres Show, Married with Children, Angel (a Buffy the Vampire Slayer spin-off) and Cheaters. Cheaters stands apart from the rest of UPN's fare for two reasons. First, Cheaters is UPN's only reality show, and it is probably the only true reality show out of the whole genre. Secondly, Cheaters is one of the few shows on television in which viewers can see the pain inflicted by the offenders' depravity. Cheaters works like this: If a person is in a relationship in which they suspect infidelity, the show will put a team of private investigators on the case to verify the suspicions. The show builds suspense by showing the actions of the offender caught on video before they reveal it to the victim. Each segment builds to a confrontation, and it is in these clashes that the true emotions that are absent from the whole of "reality TV" are revealed. Cheaters allows the viewer to witness the rawness of mankind's depravity and to see the shallow poverty of what passes today as modern love. Cheaters, UPN's only redeeming program, illustrates the bankruptcy and failure of non-marital and premarital sexual norms ushered in by the Sexual Revolution. Despite this reality gem, the bulk of UPN's programming is pointless entertainment offering repetitive blueprints of civility's erosion through the use of base and vulgar subject matter. UPN has targeted Blacks as an audience, and preachers should be the first to let our community know that we are being harmed, and not honored, by their favor.

The Nielsen rating company has consistently reported that Blacks watch more television than all other ethnic groups in the United States. 12 This is obvious as one watches an afternoon of BET and then takes a stroll through our neighborhoods. Television and movie plot lines can be overheard playing out in clubs and churches. Our lives are imitating art in dress, action, and value formation. This media propaganda has registered with great effect on the African-American mind. We have been re-enslaved yet

again for commercial exploitation. Where are our prophets? Most are worried about their own profits. The freedom available to Black Americans to reject these influences and live above the mainstream commercial legitimization of stereotypes should be shouted from the steeple tops. Until our prophets and preachers drop their search for fifteen minutes of fame, the media will continue to chart our destruction and document it on the nightly news.

Chapter 5

The State of the Individual

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. -Matthew 9:36

The pace of life right now has been accelerated past our ability to live it. -Bruce Bendinger

Matthew 9:36 reports Jesus describing the crowds who gathered around him as harassed and helpless. Jesus' compassion grew as he gazed upon the shepardless sheep. The people of that age were living within a world less simple than we admit. It is difficult for contemporary man to consider the people of the New Testament era as living within a layered societal complexity. Yet they did so under the oppression of extra-Levitical religious constructs, beneath the rule of Roman colonists and in the ongoing legacy of humanity's fall. Then, as now, the individual suffered under a perpetual siege.

We live in the age of the global free market, and its cult stands victorious over monarchism, feudalism, fascism, and communism. It has managed this feat with or without racism, sexism and religious approval. The cult of the free market has managed to draft psychiatry, sociology, and all manners of technology

into its service. It is the individual who remains the final holdout. The free will of man has yet to be conquered. Yet the onslaught grows daily. Our culture has transformed itself in submission to the cult. Few are able to grasp what has happened. Even fewer have the time.

Once the producers of goods realized that workers were needed more as consumers, the ad-men set about dismantling the image of the self-sufficient American. At the same time, the authority of parents was wrested away and given to the experts. Insecurity was transfused into all aspects of life: family, dating, marriage, health and sport. An illusionary satisfaction is only permitted through inconspicuous consumption. Christopher Lasch wrote in *The Culture of Narcissism* that posterity and the future are deliberately neglected to nurse individuals to an unceasing affixation on the here and now.¹ Within that context, momentary satisfaction reigns supreme.

While Lasch has described the American individual as a narcissistic archetype, Dick Keyes argues for two central figures of individuality: the New Victorian and the New Romantic.² The New Victorian implements willpower and control in all aspects of life, and the New Romantic plays the perpetual rebel, supposedly achieving true freedom. Both are self-centered idolaters or narcissists, as Lasch would argue. Keyes' New Victorian and New Romantic are readily identified in our culture. This odd couple is a pop culture staple, appearing in every buddy cop movie, in the "fish out of water" films, in Congress, and starting for the Los Angeles Lakers. At the heart of these individuals and others like them a grand charade is played with the sole purpose of convincing the world that they are in control. Many individuals unsure of their identities admire the New Victorian and New Romantic, and spend their lives mimicking these archetypes, even through gender reorientation.

The foundation of our identity lies in our relationship with the creator. The severed path to our

maker was restored by the Christ's heroic sacrifice. Even the most valorous actions by men to save fellow human beings do not translate into the saving of the soul. Yet it is the folly of man to frame heroism in fleshly terms. The truly honest reject the popular cultural sense of denial, the denial of the need for salvation. The psychiatric community considers itself generous by acknowledging religious belief as being beneficial for mental health. At the same time, however, their colleagues in the labs routinely publicize new evidence of our insignificance and dare to tread in areas exclusively the Creator's.

As technology has charged forward in areas such as genetic cloning, the religious community has failed to keep pace. The individual is buffeted in the breach, armed with only sound bytes of explanations. He is declared significant and free but cannot ignore the feeling of insignificance in his bondage to a nihilistic worldview. One routinely hears men or women declaring themselves to be "basically good." This construct must be maintained to stave off vestiges of guilt as they wrestle through lives lived as offender and offended. Other devices are pursued to drown out any pain and distract oneself from the fact that they have no idea who stares back at them in the mirror. Humanity's ancient enemy makes full use of our culture to distract or eliminate the individual before they are in a position to surrender to God.

Our Savior waits patiently to restore the individual, giving them purpose and identity. As so many are seduced into a life that values style over substance, views living and dying as being indifferent to the resolute purposefulness of each individual's creation, how can we, as believers, be comfortable with this arrangement? As Dietrich Bonhoeffer asked, "Are we of any use?"³ Do we not groan with Christ and feel his longing to spread the news of the Father's mercy? If we don't feel that, our union with Christ may be a mirage. If we are in union with Him then would we not tarry in our service to the Lord of the Harvest?

God created the individual for his own glory by investing of Himself. He remains the true soul mate of man. Unbelievably, popular culture markets the idea that such a union is possible with another human being. Many are sold on the idea they can find a localized god in flesh that will lead to lifelong contentment. This belief will lead to the diametric polar opposite: guaranteed future discontentment and interpersonal dissatisfaction. Never mind that it is good for the romance business. No amount of money can buy the love waiting in Christ for the heartbroken individual. It is the preacher's job to let the people know that it is real and free. The cost of subscription to online matchmaking service: fifty dollars a month. The cost of providing His son as an eternal soul mate to an individual: priceless. Like the Visa card motto, we must take freedom to the individual everywhere He wants us to be.

Chapter 6

Education

Fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. -
Proverbs 1:7a

Stupidity is a more dangerous enemy of the good than evil. -Dietrich Bonhoeffer

In 1997 in the Cleveland suburb of Shaker Heights, affluent Black parents demanded to know why their children were averaging a 1.9% GPA as opposed to the 3.45% GPA of their fellow White students. By all accounts, the Shaker Heights School District was using every method available to close the test score and grade gap. When the efforts appeared to fail, the parents and the school invited an expert to study their dilemma.

The distinguished scholar, John Ogbu, was brought in from the University of California at Berkeley. As an anthropologist he studied how ethnic minorities coped

academically in the United States and around the world. He and a team of researchers studied Shaker Heights' schools, staff, students, and students' parents for nine months. Then, in a public forum, he presented his findings. Promptly, he was attacked. He was called an Uncle Tom and was derided as being culturally insensitive to Black Americans because of his African heritage. Black and White liberal scholars previously respectful of his work levied charges of elitism, incompetence, conservatism, and even racism. Ogbu was deeply hurt and remains shaken by the whole affair until his passing in 2003.¹

What was it about Professor Ogbu's conclusions that made him a persona non grata to the Shaker Heights' Blacks? He contended that the Black student's failures were due to attitudes and subculture values that equate academic achievement as being synonymous with acting White. He discovered that most Black students valued leisure activities over success in school. Black students admitted and acknowledged they needed to make a modest effort with schoolwork but choose not to do so. When Ogbu inquired about their futures, many responded with certainty that they would lead successful careers as athletes and entertainers. It was clear to Professor Ogbu that the Black students were infected with an anti-intellectual worldview. Instead of accepting the findings and using them as an impetus for collective change, the parents vilified the messenger.

How can the parents who witness (and assist) their children's immersion in a popular culture, which only applauds the entertaining and athletic Blacks, actually be shocked that their youth do not value education? These same youth have constructed a hostile and exclusionary environment for children who attempt to academically achieve. The whole idea seems to be the epitome of a Klan inspired plot to destroy Black Americans, but it is not. This cancerous mentality that leads scores of Black youth down the path to poverty and jail sprung out of the Black Power Movement.

Proponents of the Black Power Movement rejected the whole of White culture for reasons pertaining to the idea that White academia ignored and sustained the ideological support of racial supremacy. This mantra was reintroduced during rap music's expansion in the early 1990s. Apparently, to reject academic achievement is to don authentic Blackness and is an exhibition of Afrocentrism. The rappers and proponents of Afrocentrism would be hard pressed to find African or Caribbean natives opposed to academic study and achievement. Furthermore, the saddest aspect of this notion is that it stands diametrically opposed to the historical values that have brought Black Americans this far. Slaves learned to read in secret at great risk, as did the Whites who risked life and limb to teach them. Our faith and educational gains had been advocated universally throughout the Black community until our inclusion in the welfare state. Now many our youth appreciate school chiefly for its social aspect. It is a place to get dates, fashion new looks, develop gossiping skills, and prove manhood and womanhood through pointless conflicts. The new view finds that school is a place for everything but education.

The media propaganda (discussed in Chapter 5) aims an inexhaustive stream of messages at youth to verify the anti-intellectual mindset. Since few schools teach critical thinking (colleges included), students are ill equipped to deconstruct the messages or resist them. Markets dictate the youthful cliché' of questioning authority - which is done with vehemence - but never move youth to question their motives and methodology. A fine example of lies in some of the marketing campaigns of Abercrombie & Fitch. Their clothes are very popular among the 16-25 set. Abercrombie & Fitch had been rightfully criticized by a Christian activist for the sexual content found in their catalogues, but more recently they have come under fire for racist employment practices in keeping with their all- (insert White) American look.² Many youth are aware of the sexual controversy, and purchase their clothes as an act of anti-parental rebellion. These youth are unaware that Abercrombie & Fitch has no

compunctions in exposing them to imagery depicting risky behaviors (group sex, bisexuality) and the promotion of a narrow definition of beauty found only in Whites. Abercrombie & Fitch are insulting and exploiting their customers who, unaware, buy the merchandise like hotcakes.

Public education is not what it used to be, and never was what it should have been. In any case, our public education system is the primary means of empowerment for the masses. African-Americans have developed an avowed distrust of the public educational system. It was in light of this pronounced reality that Professor Ogbu observed a cognitive disconnection among the Black parents in Shaker Heights. On the one hand, they expressed distrust of the school system, yet on the other hand they expected the system to do the total job of educating their children while they solely focused on building wealth.³

In the years prior to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, parents were assisted in child rearing by the extended family, the neighborhood, and the church. Pastors, deacons, church mothers, elders and ushers taught, modeled, and expected civilized behavior. The Church's authority has been challenged and eroded by popular culture. This wayward retreat is especially lamentable considering our peoples' long historical relationship with the church. The Civil Rights victory has turned out to be a key victory for the Devil as the Black masses replace faith in God with faith in dollars. The newfound faith has reaped monetary and social gain, but has bequeathed a legacy of rebellion and confusion manifested in the self-destructive ideologies of the youth.

As many of our children attend school with the intent of being stumbling blocks, can we be shocked or offended when Asians, Hispanics, and Whites distance themselves from us? Is this racism? Is it prejudice? No, it is pragmatism. Public education has been watered down with the intention that no one will be offended by any textbook or lesson plan. This excessive striving

for political correctness has ultimately offended students with its blandness.⁴ Adding insult to injury, school districts are forced to squander funds on a standardized test orgy as selfish, empty-nest baby-boomers demand lower local taxes, and battle the drive of religious interest groups to redirect public funds to parochial coffers. Is it a wonder that students receive an education at all. Yet, within this context, we would allow our children to be agent provocateurs and inhibitors to that already burdened process. The Bible provides an answer to the question as to why our children nationally test lower: Fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline (Proverbs 1:7). In order to escape fool's valley we must return to the grass roots of knowledge.

Chapter 7

Law and Order

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. -Romans 13:1

Whether the knife falls on the melon, or the melon on the knife, the melon suffers.

-African Proverb

Every so often the collective Black leadership issues a warning about incarceration rates as evidence of racism. The Black clergy sound off in unison and support. The rates are declared evidence of the racist court system when, ironically, the clergy should be pointing to the high numbers as evidence of a moral epidemic. Such an admission, however, would mean bearing responsibility. Has anyone ever analyzed the absurdity of this proclamation? Is a federal judge who is about to sentence a mid-level drug dealer supposed to be more lenient because of the imprisoned Black multitude? The same Black leaders deriding the State for locking up so many brothers begged the government

for help during the crack epidemic. To attack the State for locking up offenders while simultaneously demanding justice and safety in the community from a government derided as being morally bankrupt is an exercise in illogical dualism. Simply put, this is pure nonsense. This line of reasoning is most problematic when proclaimed by Black ministers.

Paul, in Romans 13, is clear when he commands believers and nonbelievers to submit to civil authorities instituted by God to govern, administer his justice by proxy and restrain anarchy. Do the U.S. civil authorities have a distressing history of prejudice when dealing with Black America? Yes. Does this give us a free pass to disobey the law? Never! Our prolongation of the eternal victim status comes at the expense of our own safety and civilization. The statistics bear out that we are our own worst enemies. An article in Soldier of Fortune magazine related the fact that White cops working in Black communities lay back on their jobs in the face of routine communal charges of brutality.¹ Of course, police brutality is criminal and must be clamped down upon, but do we expect hardened street hustlers who have no regard for the community who cries out on their behalf to be deterred with coddling? Romans 13:2 regards these individuals as rebels who have brought man's judgment upon themselves. There is an incredible disproportion of Blacks arrested, convicted, and incarcerated, as I have noted in Chapter 3. This is due to the criminal action of free will. Does racism's residue mean some Blacks are receiving comparatively longer sentences? Undoubtedly, yes. Are some innocent? Yes, as are some Whites, Latinos, and Native Americans. It is the retention of the "we-do-no-wrong" fiction that has ill served the community by challenging the assumption that law and order are negotiable in civilized society. Ages before the sociologist, God recognized that circumstance and desperation drives some to criminal behavior (Numbers 35:11, Joshua 20:2, Proverbs 6:30-31), but this situation does not pardon the sin. Our clergy should trumpet this fact loudly. Who has not heard that "two wrongs don't make a right?"

Instead of being repudiated, the players and hustlers have earned role model status. The pimp and his junior league companion, the player, are no more than narcissistic parasites and exploiters of women. How dare we deem their behavior tolerable by mimicking their vernacular? The pimp and player are the prototypical stereotype of oversexed criminality that was ascribed to all Black men by racist doctrines for hundreds of years. Now, in movies, music videos, magazines (including *Ebony*), and other music venues, this behavior is seen as common to the Black cultural experience. As Eric Strosser pointed out in *Reefer Madness*, when immoral or taboo behavior becomes mainstream the waves reverberate throughout society, eroding other pillars of civility.²

When Black leaders attempt to win points with the constituency by proclaiming incarceration rates as evidence of racist America, it does nothing for those imprisoned or their families. Ex-convicts have always faced challenges in finding employment. The litigation-excessive character of our society has made this especially arduous. Employers are fearful of being sued for negligent hiring practices if an incident occurs surrounding the ex-convict or parolee. This problem would be easily addressed by introducing legislation holding employers blameless in such cases. This legislation is not a priority since congressmen or senators would not dare risk doing anything that could be construed as being soft on crime. Instead of waving incarceration rates on a flagpole, Black political leaders should be removing ex-offenders' barriers to work, and Black preachers should be laying scriptural barriers down to deter the offending behavior.

The fallout from September 11 caused yet another crisis for ex-offenders seeking to reenter society through gainful employment. Employers, with a patriotic zeal, sought to improve security and deny potential terrorists employment by implementing intense criminal background checks on employees and potential new employees. Employers have deterred scores of ex-

convicts from gaining employment with these measures. Operationally, most terrorists use cover identities that are free of arrest records in order to carry out their missions without drawing attention. No one is interested in addressing the problem of elevated security measures which, ironically, lead to more garden variety street terrorism by ex-convicts turned recidivists due to a lack employment opportunities. The Black community, with its locked away multitudes one day to be released, is silent on this issue. Christ declares that those who aid the prisoner serve His interest. Black ministers should have two roles in addressing law and order in the community.

They must demand uncompromised morality for all, and must also demand submission to civil authority. Civil Rights era civil disobedience should be put in its proper historical context. Law breaking rooted in immorality must not be tolerated. Only if a person gets arrested for preaching the Gospel should we bail them out. The church should campaign tirelessly to evangelize, train, mentor, and supply ex-offenders with work.

The pastors should be leading the faith community and others in challenging criminal encroachment in our communities. We are to hate what God hates—evil! Collectively, we confronted a massive culturally integrated State-sanctioned apartheid. With prayers, songs, and collective unity, onslaughts of armed troopers, vigilantes, Klansmen, and throngs of hostile citizens were defeated by the power of God's love for justice. Yet we have now surrendered whole communities to criminal elements who revel in their rebellion and have been glamorized by popular culture.

The Bible, in both Testaments, heralds the actions of the good, and calls to those who would serve God and Christ to emulate their divine goodness. Conversely, marketers have deemed that bad is good. The bad boy image now gets the lion's share of attention. Within African-American generations X and Y, the thug look and thug life are prominent popular trends. Their foolishness has led to society treating more Blacks as

potential thugs. This is the true reason for police profiling. The cops aren't offending us. We are offending ourselves as we retain and continue to promote thug life foolishness.

Our folly serves the Devil's destructive purposes as each degree of separation, every league submerged in sin, handicaps the believer, and convinces the unbeliever that a union with Christ is impossible. The prison walls that surround Attica, Leavenworth, Angola, and Folsom prisons extend outward, surrounding even the hearts of those who will never see the inside of such places. It is time to continue the Master's work of setting the captives free, part of which must involve helping ex-offenders find gainful employment.

Chapter 8

The Devaluation of Marriage and Sex

All should honor marriage, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. -Hebrews 13:4

Central to our discussion of the moral state of Black America is the core condition of the nuclear family. The sterile scientific referral to the term "nuclear family" may seem dated, as it has fallen out of use while sin has led Western societies to open up the term "family" to broad interpretations. Yet, when it was coined by the sociological community, they perhaps had no intention of introducing a term that squarely aligned with God's view. When we hear the word nuclear, we think "powerful," as in nuclear bomb, or "elemental," as in nucleus. Both are appropriately applied to what the family unit is. Family is the amalgam that holds and has held all functioning societies together. The union of marriage between man and woman is at the heart of the family, which is exactly what God ordained.

In Genesis 2:24, we witness the first ordination: the marriage of man to woman. The unity of one flesh, the sexual union¹, has been sacredly reserved for the marital relationship without shame. It has been indicative of the Western human experience that shame and guilt be assigned to the sexual union. The only shame or guilt that should occur in sexual relationships is when they take place outside of the marital context. Yet this inverted history came crashing on its head through means of revolution - the Sexual Revolution. Science, historical gender oppression, and misinterpreted Biblical religious sexual dispositions collided in the 1970s. As a generation rebelled against the collective lies and failures of a society called to explain its duplicity, it unwittingly offered further assistance to the serpent in his cosmic campaign against humanity, which, as we know, originated in the garden.

The Sexual Revolution vociferously declared sex to be good for the people. It was a natural human expression that, like our freedom, shouldn't be repressed or denied by any willing participants. With the assistance of a young, multi-tentacled media, sex was wrenched from its familial roots and declared public domain. Homosexual sex is declared natural as well as other deviant practices, such as sadomasochism, bondage, and bisexuality. Technological advances in contraceptives and legalized abortion presented new options to old issues during the revolution. The popular culture exploded in an orgy of celebration for the wide distribution of restricted fruit. The orgy continues today with more and more partners joining in. Despite recent attempts to refocus the sexual dialogue in marriage, Pandora's Box is open. Postmodern men and women have devoured another fruit from the tree. They have decided that sex not only belongs outside of God's mandate that it remain in the confines of the marital unit, but have also decided that the family can exist and be created without marriage.

Quietly, under the guise of assisting couples, fertility science and the free market have enabled

anyone desiring children the means to do so. In vitro fertilization, surrogate mothering, sperm preservation/donation, and genetic cloning often serve as means for further familial destabilization. Ironically, the scientific community has affirmed God's divine design by asserting to the public that the best conditions for child rearing are within the dual sex, two-parent system.² Unfortunately, their declarations ring impotently in our narcissistic culture. The path to organic cultural restoration still exists and only exists through the submission to the divine will. God loves families. He made them! We must undermine the ongoing satanic plot that has the view of the world aligned with the debauched desires of the flesh to experience sex within a context of our choosing. To do this means getting back to the basics and reinstating marriage as the only accepted norm for sex and family. Now let us consider what Paul said in Ephesians 5:37:

"But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: no immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—*has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.*" (NIV, italics mine.)"

Postmodern values have erected new ashtoreth poles that are as tempting to modern Christians as the originals were to the Hebrews of ancient Israel. The ancient Hebrew was continually seduced to participate in fertility rites within the idol worship in the region. The ashtoreth poles that God declared an abomination were a combination of totem poles and a campsite brothel. The onsite illicit acts of sex were fervently believed necessary to appease the Near-Eastern pantheon of gods in order to insure crop growth. In those times, societies were agrarian, and worries about crop failure were similar to our concerns about economic stability. For the Hebrews to participate in such rites was an especial affront to

Yahweh, who revealed himself in truth and visible power on numerous occasions. God instituted true worship practices meant to be a model to the world through Israel. All knew his law, yet still the temptation to commit collective sexual sin caused numerous Israelites to stray. God's righteous wrath followed prophetic warnings and calls to eliminate the ashtoreth poles and the false worship associated with them.

Tragically, even under the New Covenant of grace, we find ourselves in a similar situation. Modern sexual mores declare sex to be free for all, necessary for proper health maintenance, and seek to reject any religious voices calling for restraint by charging that such voices were responsible for the former constraints. All prohibitions must be discarded as individuals are afforded the right to express their sexuality in its fullness. Though monogamy is paid lip service, great sex is expected to be a part of every liaison, affair, period of dating, and relationship, be it female-male, male-male or female-female.

This cult of sexuality saturates our lives as markets, Hollywood, musicians, comedians, and everyday people looking to make an honest or dishonest buck in America blatantly utilize sex. On the new morality, Eric Schlosser writes:

For almost two millennia pagan and Christian views of the body have remained in conflict, their rivalry expressed in various forms. But the old systems of moral authority have been replaced by a new one. The rules that govern sexual behavior are no longer determined by the pronouncements of stoic philosophers, high priest, martyrs, or saints. Democracy has increasingly granted freedom of choice in matters of sexuality, while the free market ministers to consumer taste.³

Schlosser goes on to chronicle pornography's transition from the underground economy to its mainstream debut as major hotel chains now provide porn on demand in rooms across the nation. Mainstream media companies such as

Echostar, DirectTV, AT&T Broadband and AOL Time Warner have muscled into the lucrative business of providing subscribers pay-per-view adult entertainment.⁴ The new ashtoreth poles are resulting in increased wealth for America's corporations.

We can see on newsstands, in movies, and on television how the sinful buds nourished during the Sexual Revolution have grown into robust vines that choke out the idea of monogamy, and portray such a notion as an implausible relic of a bygone era. Popular mores expect boys not to even consider virginity, and instruct girls to wait no longer than the arrival of "the right time." Daytime Television's Soap Opera immorality is eclipsed by the talk shows aired at the same time. A child sick at home from school can hear a Ricki Lake guest defend infidelity on grounds that his partner/boyfriend/spouse was sexually ineffective. He can see Maury Povich surprise couples with paternity tests confirming or denying the human byproduct of illicit unions. The child can turn on BET and deduce what "Pimp Juice" is by the effect Nelly is having on the scantily clad vixens grinding suggestively in his music video.⁵ Soap operas, in an effort to keep up, have taken plot lines over the top with marriage being synonymous with infidelity. The media's entertainment reporting assists the television and film industry by extending plotlines from the screen into reality by broadcasting celebrity sex lives. One glance left or right in the grocery checkout line offers big, colorful, attention grabbing headlines enabling any adult or first-grader to keep up with which entertainer or actress is sleeping with whom. Worse still, in 1998, the government released the Starr Report to the public.⁶ The sexually explicit documentation was spread throughout every media outlet by a political party which claims ownership of family values and Judeo-Christian ethics.

It is from within this dome of omnipresent sexuality that American Christianity has quietly surrendered to the new ashtoreth poles with an apparent belief that grace is not sufficient and that Ephesians 5 can be ignored and cast into the trash can along with

Christ's teachings on divorce. Church attending Christians promote and routinely send their offspring to secular colleges with the naïve belief that they will resist the cult of collegiate debauchery with its standard issue chemical and sexual experimentation. Some of the same Christians are amazed at reports about Canaanite parents sending daughters off to do their year's service at the base of the ashtoreth pole. The belief that their god's demands for the girl's stint as a religious prostitute to ward off famine surpassed the Canaanite parent's personal anguish in contemplating the daughter's fate. Those ancient actions replay themselves every Fall as Christian parents pack their children off to serve at new ashtoreth poles so they can get a high paying job upon graduation, enabling the Believer to cast his boast about the success of his offspring at the office water cooler. In keeping with postmodern culture, Christian parents are advising their sons and daughters to postpone marriage like everyone else—naïvely believing they will maintain virginity until marriage. The implicit message conveyed is that nothing, including morality, is to supercede the drive for material gain and world recognition. Sadly, the American Christian's capacity to forget and ignore Christ's teachings is similar to the ancient Israelites and their tragic amnesiac disobedience.

Black Americans have fought intensely throughout American History against the characterization that we are oversexed and subordinated to a debauched nature. However, since 1964, the yoke of Christian values has been shelved and replaced with postmodern sexual attitudes. The decision to trudge with the yoke is not enough; instead, we must charge like racehorses. The Black family has been unsaddled and dragged through the dirt, hanging on precariously with one foot in the saddle as the horse runs away from the finish line.

From our entertainers to our politicians and preachers, we find postmodern sexual values modeled for all generations. This is especially troubling considering 81% of Blacks claim to be Christians. Our awareness of what is said to pollsters to make us look collectively good far outweighs our knowledge of

scripture. Christ's truth and His messengers charged with sharing that truth waiver on commands to avoid sexual impurity and reserve sex for the marriage bed. We've bent on that truth, leaving many to question the validity of the claim of biblical inerrancy as they see the clergy behave like everyone else. We are declaring the awesome power of the Holy Spirit to be insufficient to sanctify the individual. So many of us have failed to even resist the Devil's lascivious temptations in the resignation that "boys will be boys." This surrender to the new sexual mores bolsters the falsehood championed by the antichrist, declaring the crucifixion and resurrection as impotent mythology. How dare we impugn the inestimable cost paid by our Savior? How dare we contradict his sacred words and disrespect his precious name?

Yet we do, and we are suffering for it. But God is merciful even in his correction. The numbers in Chapter 3 could be far worse. We are also suffering as our prayers go unanswered in the debasement and stagnation of the Black church. Despite our boasting, God has lifted our skirt and has exposed our nakedness to the nation. We are too busy bragging, demanding reparations for slavery, or begging to notice the laughter and scorn emanating even from those truly African. The failure by the church to stand firmly and resist the onslaught of new sexual values weakens its message. Even today, in light of their own record, many pastors tread lightly or hesitate to call for sexual purity for fear of offending congregations by appearing to be hypocrites. Hypocrisy is easily overcome by honest admission and refraining from sinful behavior. The pastor who first condemns his own depravity carries the weight of integrity in his message.

In light of our struggle to attain family and even basic marital rights, the present state of the family should be cause for grief. Marriage and family stability were denied during slavery. Emancipated slaves pursued marriage and family with a determination layered with aspirations of cultural reconstruction, collective healing, and the opportunity to follow Biblical instruction regarding the family.⁷ The quest

to construct the Black family also arose as a protective measure. It is easily and persistently forgotten that the multiplicity in shades of skin tone visible among African-Americans is the forensic historical evidence of the sexual exploitation Blacks suffered at the hands of Whites from slavery to the Civil Rights Era. Placing traditional cultural control on sex and family meant erecting a firewall against that bitter reality.

We see historically that marriage and family are, or rather were, of enormous importance to Black Americans. Under the direction of the Black preacher, Blacks were strongly exhorted to abstain from sexual sin. Not only for the primary reasons of holiness and obedience, but as a matter of pride. Let me clarify this pride. This was not the self-righteous pride exhibited by religious people of any stripe, but pride inspired by a need to repudiate the racist propaganda used to characterize Blacks as subhuman creatures devoid of intellect and restraint. The ongoing oppression continually demanded a justifying ideology to construct permissive conditions for that purpose. For this reason African Americans were subject to dehumanization as long as mainstream America accepted the subhuman differentiation. Humans have always used this methodology to wage war, exploit, or subjugate targeted groups of people. Consequently, from early days the Black woman was described as sexually voracious—conveniently justifying any slave master's rapacious sexual appetite and suppressing any guilt over forced breeding. Hence the birth of the infamous expression: "she wanted it." That was label number one. Label number two was ironically, a necessary spoiler to prevent any such experimentation by White womanhood. The Black male was as equally voracious as the Black female, totally incapable of controlling his desires for sex (preferably outside his race).

In the mid 1800s James Hammond was a South Carolina Congressman, Governor and slave owner. He was well known for his death penalty for abolitionist advocacy and was a champion of the infamous Patroller system essential to maintaining the police state

security in the slave territories. Interestingly enough, Hammond, a professed Christian, vigorously advocated the suppression of Black Christianity, unless led by White ministers. He believed the carnal untamed sexual nature of Blacks alone justified the need for slavery. This position was espoused by a government official, landowner and pillar of society who, according to historian Martin Duberman, had sex with his nieces, daughters, slaves, and two men.⁸ Slavery was a moral corrupter for all involved and the legacy for blaming the victim for it gained steam centuries ago, and is continues to this day.

I use the Hammond illustration to make a point about the insidious and monolithic use of sexual stereotypes about Black Americans. This is why it is especially appalling to see that, after centuries of efforts to counter such depictions in pulpits and daily lives, contemporary Black men and women embrace the stereotypes with enthusiasm. Postmodern sexual mores have been adopted, embraced, and advanced by Blacks to the extent that other groups are following our lead in wrecking the family unit. Though sociologists, cultural critics, and historians have traced the deconstruction of the family to Whites in the late 1950's, today it is most apparent among African Americans.

U.S. News and World Reports recently documented the sexual activity of preteens and early teenagers.⁹ As alarming as that report is, it was not until media icon Oprah did a show and published an article in her magazine that the report seemed to be taken seriously.¹⁰ This shocking revelation produced a brief ripple effect in the form of other outlets doing a few similar stories, but as with many topics circulated by the media, it fell off the national radar screen. Such an outcome is to be expected as postmodernism's relativism stymies the discussion of addressing actual root causes. To do so would tread into the off limits of morality, which lies too close to religion. In the articles, the best parents could do was to get their sons and daughters to admit it was too soon, as they offered advice to wait until the right person comes along. Even the suggestion to wait for marriage is

relegated as too close to religion, or as being hypocritical in light of the mother's sexual history. It seems ridiculous to think that parents would honestly believe that children bombarded by sexual imagery on television, radio, in magazines, and in movies would not be seduced into finding out what all the hoopla is about.

Marketers have long extrapolated sex as a sales tool, but today it is to the extent of iconic saturation. On November 19th of this year, CBS aired the Victoria's Secret Fashion Show for the second time.¹¹ The network had no qualms about presenting a sex-centered infomercial, but squeamishly pulled a biopic about Ronald Reagan for fear of offending conservative viewers.¹² Sadly, no second thought was given to overt sexual exploitation to market racy skivvies on prime time, but thought was given to maintaining mythological status for figures in American history.

Rutgers University is spearheading the National Marriage Project. It is a comprehensive study regarding the social indicators of marital health and well being over the past four decades. In their report, *Unions 2003*, they discussed the poverty of connectedness:

"The weakening of marriage has contributed to a new kind of poverty among the young. It is a poverty of connectedness. Four decades of persistently high levels of marital disruption and nonmarriage have taken a toll on children's primary sources of emotional nurturance and security. Parent-child, and especially father-child ties, have become more turbulent, insecure, and anxiety filled as a result."¹³

Christ defined this universal condition when, in Matthew 9:36, he described the crowds as harassed and helpless. His words also define the present generation. Battered and leaning like Pisa's famous tower, they await the crash as the marital foundations quietly slip away.

Where is marriage going? It is falling into the hands of those to whom it does not belong and it is being taken to places where it was never intended to go. Gays, in search of the ultimate legitimacy, have campaigned for legal and societal recognition since the pitched battles for gay rights in the 1970s. The ultimate legitimacy for their lifestyle would mean dollars. If America is going to view two individuals that divine nature affirms are not candidates for marriage to be eligible for benefits and tax breaks, then the two good buddies sharing a room together at state college should be eligible too. No one, straight or gay, is taking a common sense look at the legal Pandora's Box that gay marriage will open up.

Heterosexuals, following Hollywood's lead, view marriage as the domain for soul mating. The soul mate view detours marriage away from the path of raising and sustaining the family and boomerangs it back to the familiar narcissistic self. The belief in soul mates is not born out of an idea that God has the right spouse for the individual, but that there exists an individual who is, as Depeche Mode sang, a personal Jesus. The American narcissists wrapped up in personal idolatry expect another finite human being to provide all their spiritual and sexual needs. Rutgers concludes that this selfish view of marriage, coupled with aggressive marketing by the bridal industry through movie and television plotlines, account for the recent, modest spike in marriages.¹⁴ Today, the idea of a wedding is hot. Marriage as social responsibility is not.

For Black people, the topic of marriage holds monumental significance, as yet a new poverty of connectedness sweeps through a wider swath of our children. Statistics show that our women are the most likely never to be married, and most likely to raise children within that context. If the Black popular subculture deems study and intellectualism to be White characteristics, will marriage be next? How can we stem the tide that is washing away our social piers and leaving toxic garbage on our beach of humanity? We must return to the Gospel by introducing some and reacquainting others with our Savior. History can be

reconciled with His story. From there we can begin to address this problem through service - service to Jesus Christ through the family. With eyes open to the light, many will be ready to encounter the scriptural and empirical data on marriage.

Once Black men understand the eternal relevance of today's action, they will turn their hearts to Christ mournfully, repenting for their catastrophic neglect of family. Our preachers must broadcast the fearsome reality of 1Timothy 5:8, where believers who neglect their families are denounced as worse than unbelievers. This is not such a big deal if one subscribes to the popular heresy of universalism, where everybody makes it to heaven somehow, even Sadaam Hussein, and Bin Laden. The Bible does not affirm any view of the sort. Churches must clarify and preach eternal destinies. Research done by the Barna Group finds popular secular beliefs on the afterlife have gained widespread acceptance among Christians.¹⁵ How can we appreciate Christ if we don't know what He saved us from and what he promises us? Black men must be informed that indifference to family amounts to eternal judgment, which will be worst for those claiming to be Christ's own.

The problems that plague our community are complex, and are rooted in effects of a depraved history. God's solutions for man's problems are simple. They start with a simple surrender and absolute honesty in repentance. The solutions, His solutions, lie within an inquiry: An inquiry to the Lord. Then we must simply wait and listen. He answers, acts, or asks us to act. It is that simple. He is our simple salvation for the sweet by and by, but also for the present.

The Christian acceptance and practice of premarital sex keeps many ministries from calling congregations to chastity and virginity. Their failure to do so is a failure to truthfully communicate the Gospel. Whomever we first sexually unite with is considered by God to be our wife. Depending on whether we marry that person or continue to plot a sexual

history determines if we are properly married or fornicators. And while society may advertise the need for sexual experience and encourage experimentation, we are condemned under divine law. God created the virginal affinity for the husband only, not the traveler on the sexual superhighway. Despite feminist and assorted postmodernist claims, sexual relations generate profound feelings. These cannot be ignored, and this was the greatest miscalculation of proponents of the Sexual Revolution. One byproduct of the revolution was the resulting war of the sexes. Protocol for the war of the sexes dictates that each side uses sexuality for gain *without emotional attachment*. This is further evidence of man's ignorance in the face of divine design.

Even my grandmother marveled at the simplicity in God's call for monogamy. Grandma watches a fair amount of television, like many seniors, especially talk shows. On most weekdays, Maury, Montel, Ricki Lake or Jenny Jones will have guests bemoaning sexual betrayal or defending betraying behavior. Too often, it is the betrayers' mental (and, at times, active) catalog of sexual experiences that they claim leads them to seek better sexual partners. Well, Grandma says it's like home cooking. "If you only eat what's in the pot at home, it'll always be the best." As individuals move into relationships with a large sexual history behind them, the best possible mate may be discarded due to historical comparison. God knows what is best. Preachers, preach chastity. If you have sinned, admit it, and reclaim the moral high ground provided by the Savior. Compromise will not bring God's blessings. Due to the times, the new ashtoreth poles may be here to stay, but through Christ with the power of the Holy Spirit, we can topple the allegiance to the ashtoreth poles, starting with us, and spreading throughout America.

Chapter 9

The State of Black Clergy

Those who guide this people mislead them, and those who are guided are led astray.

-Isaiah 9:16

He that cannot obey, cannot command. -Ben Franklin

I have discussed our moral state in historical terms with statistical evidence, but now we must discuss the issue of responsibility. The blame falls squarely at the feet of those who have been commissioned to shepherd the flock: the preachers. There is no need to deconstruct the historical record to explain why Black clergy hold a higher position of influence within the Black community. The reason is simple: since slavery they had been the only leaders we had. Obviously, as progress and Black influence was allowed to blossom, a variety of other leaders appeared. We cannot forget that it was God's use of a Christian preacher, Martin Luther King, Jr., to usher in a new era of opportunity that benefited not only Blacks, but all Americans. With 81% of our population claiming Christianity through church membership, the Black preacher still carries tremendous influence. It has been the pastor who has defined acceptable behavior and has pushed, cajoled and exhorted our people to collectively overcome the ill will shown us. What happened? This chapter will attempt to answer that question.

Criticism of the Black clergy is nothing new. Charles Hamilton, author of *The Black Preacher in America*, reported, "complaints have been divided into four categories-those who are materialistic, nonintellectual, authoritarian or politically non-involved.¹ Contemporary preachers have made gains (many superficial) concerning intellectualism. Political activism is hit or miss. Authoritarianism remains a problem and materialism has spread like cancer among the clergy. The newest and most pressing problem is the failure to preach the uncut gospel to address sinful practices gone mainstream.

Abortion is seen as an issue driven by the White Conservative/fundamentalist Christians. The historic circumstances originate during the fourth failure of American Christianity. After discrediting itself in the eyes of young Baby-Boomers for resisting and denouncing the Civil Rights Movement, American Christianity needed a rallying issue to regroup the faithful. The Feminist and Sexual Revolution proponents scored a victory for postmodern values when, in 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court legalized abortion. American Christianity sprung into dual action with fundamentalists staunchly opposing abortion and liberal elements supporting choice. Generally, the Black church remained silent on the subject for years. Some preachers reasoned that it was better for Black women to get an abortion than to add yet another illegitimate child to the growing ranks spawned by the Sexual Revolution. This was a mistake.

Statistics now indicate that Black women have a grossly disproportionate number of abortions to our population.² This tragedy is partly the fault of the Black clergy for not defining abortion like our brothers across the aisle did, and for adopting many of the values of secular humanism. This is how it became possible for full service Planned Parenthood to be supported by Black clergy. Contraception's intended use for the family became secondary in its use as a facilitator for degenerate sexual lifestyles, ironically leaving abortion as the last ditch choice to maintain a woman's freedom and dignity. The latest technology, Plan B, or the morning after pill, has been slated, according to the manufacturer, to be marketed to young women.³ Where are the Black clergy on this issue? Celebrating with Planned Parenthood?

AIDS and STD's are testament to the epidemic of sexual immorality and the adoption of popular cultural norms in opposition to Godly living. Evidently, it has been forgotten that the founder of Planned Parenthood was also a racist and proponent of Eugenics. This did not sway 400 pastors and Black religious leaders from supporting the "Keeping it Real" curriculum, joining

voices in a humanistic response to problems stemming from sexual sins.⁴ It seems to be easier to promote choice and condoms than to preach biblical directives on sexuality. If the pastors were keeping it real, they would not ignore 1 Corinthians 6:9,18, Hebrews 13:4, and Revelations 21:8. The preachers' actions broadcast the message that real solutions are to be found at Planned Parenthood, not in the Gospel, which is deemed impotent in the face of such a social problem.

For too long abortion has been presumed to be a White problem, with Black clergy deferring their authority on the issue to pro-choice advocates. We have surrendered in the face of indisputable evidence that the Sexual Revolution and the welfare system are inferior to God-ordained parameters for sexual relations and family structure. Even social scientists have concluded that the best environment for child rearing is the traditional husband/wife unit. This truth has been challenged as the Episcopal Church's ordination of an openly gay Bishop, Gene Robinson, has emboldened Gay activists to demand same sex marriage as a right that should be recognized as culturally legitimate.⁵

Now, more than ever, the anti-family values that are being heralded as cultural options must be countered with scriptural imperatives buoyed by divine indicatives gleaned from our Savior. The secular humanists declare that such changes are just part of modern living and, therefore, Christianity must change to keep current. As we can see, not only the American Episcopal Church, but also the Black church, by its clergy's actions and alliances, believes the assumption. As the clergy holds to this assumption, the powerful Gospel of Jesus Christ is discounted as ineffectual rhetoric to the believer and unsaved alike, thereby opening a door of doubt to be exploited by the Devil and the anti-Christ propaganda machine.

I was shocked one evening by a preacher's lack of faith in supernatural wisdom and power to solve worldly problems. Reverend Eugene Rivers of the Azusa Christian Community Church in Boston was the guest on National

Public Radio's *The Connection* to discuss the numbing wave of Black on Black violence gripping South Central Los Angeles. Reverend Rivers is an activist minister and president of the Ten Point Coalition, a community-based group credited with reducing violence in inner city Boston. "Blessed be the peacemakers," Christ said on the mount, and we must applaud Reverend Rivers' work in this vein. Yet I was startled by Reverend Rivers' response when the radio host inquired, "What is the first thing you say to a hard case - do you tell them about God?" Reverend Rivers replied, in the most dismissive tone, that no experienced youth worker would ever give them a Sunday school lesson.⁶ Since when is sharing the plan of salvation a Sunday school lesson? The power of the Gospel, which has transformed the world through countless lives, is not enough to transform a local menace to society? This statement is yet another example of how far into humanist thought we have regressed.

I have spoken to numerous convicts who told me that, as they grew up in their neighborhood, a preacher had never once so much as looked in their direction except with disdain. So many "tough guys" seemed genuinely hurt by the experience. Are inner city pastors afraid of these youth? Is taking a risk to share the Gospel left only to Bible characters and figures in church history? Where is the faith to take not just another Government program to the streets, but the redemptive news of the Cross? There is a lack of faith, or rather, a predominance of faith that exists only on the inside of churches. For those inside and outside the church house, the strongest indication of faith is often exhibited by the pastoral use of gimmicks and marketing techniques to attract, retain, and grow the flock.

My wife and I recently decided to spend an evening at the movies. She chose Chicago, a movie adaptation of the Broadway musical. My favorite number was performed by the character Billy Finn, (Richard Gere), a flamboyant, efficacious trial lawyer. The song was called *Razzle-Dazzle*. As I later mused over the number, I was impressed with its resonance; this

secular show tune is a critique of the modern Black church.

*Give 'em the old razzle dazzle
Razzle dazzle 'em
Give 'em an act with lots of flash in it
And the reaction will be passionate
Give 'em the old hocus pocus
Bead and feather 'em
How can they see with sequins in their eyes?
What if your hinges are all rusting?
What if in fact you're just disgusting
Razzle dazzle 'em
And they'll never catch wise!7*

Verse two's concluding notes imply that if the show is grand enough, the onlookers won't even notice the speaker's ineffectiveness. Moreover, if the singing is lively, the choir rocking the house, and the sermon style and substance equally complimentary, no one will question whether the pastor is really called.

Therein lies the question: are you called? Does the fact that the Lord miraculously and graciously turned your individual life around mean that He called you to the pulpit to lead a flock? Is your authority genuine or assumed? Is it Jesus' choice that your son or daughter inherits the Church, or yours? Are you a female pastor because of Christ, or because of the times? Behind the Sunday morning razzle-dazzle, are you hopelessly ineffective and swamped by requests for counseling and care? Do you really care for the people? If the trustee board removed your name from the marquee and replaced it with Jesus' name (the true head of the Church), would you be offended? Would you quit?

These are hard questions. The answers have enormous ramifications. The postmodern world has equipped the unbelievers and nominal believers alike with an extraordinarily effective, hypocritical sensitivity. This sensitivity fosters a cynicism that serves Satan's Kingdom as all Christian Orthodox truth is rejected with the uncovering of one false shepherd after another. While the flock may not catch wise due

to your Razzle-Dazzle, how can you ignore the heavenly eyes that keep watch on both the wicked and the good (Proverbs 15:3). How will you be able to escape the words of the righteous Judge on the day of the Lord: "I never knew you. Away from me you evildoers (Matt.7:23)!"

Frankly, perhaps the problem is that you don't believe any of it. Maybe you are a secular humanist enjoying a religious career. Even so, you still cannot escape the insurmountable evidence of the condition of Black Americans. Either way, your Razzle-Dazzle is part of the problem. Most people hate being labeled, but it is necessary to categorize types of Black clergymen:

- Called, active, and effective
- Called but politically infatuated
- Called but doctrinally distracted (due to worldly influences)
- Called but burned out
- Called but keeping up with the Joneses
- Not called but apparently effective
- Not called but attractive due to orthodoxy
- Not called and heretical

Chances are that many in these categories will be reticent to admit their condition. But if one does not do so, one risks the eternal wrath and judgment of God reserved for those who lead his children astray. Are you willing to chance partaking of the full cup of God's wrath? None of us can bear even a sip! Get off the Devil's mount of pride and renew your mind. Even though leadership has been historically denied to African American men, we have no right or license to sin and cover it up to protect our position. Leaders

are human, and humanity is prone to transgression. When the pastor slips, he must quickly admit the wrong and correct it, setting the example for the congregation. Those who cover up sins by denying them or hiding them make themselves targets for blackmail (spiritual and natural). More importantly, they weaken the church with the "do as I say, not as I do" hypocrisy. Christ's representatives must be sold on his message, par none. They must be champions of holiness and lead by example. If you do not believe the Bible at face value and recognize that you are to serve him instead of being served, then consider leaving the pulpit. Do this for the sake of the community, your soul and Jesus Christ.

In his book, *Preaching to the Black Middle Class*, Pastor Marvin McMickle calls for Black ministers to alert the Black middle class of their responsibility to help the underclass.⁸ Yet McMickle's overemphasis on addressing racism overshadows his praiseworthy call for us to be our brother's keepers. The urgent need to address racism was relevant during segregation and into the late 1970s. The racism African Americans encounter today is typically historically mild, and more often than not represents a garden variety prejudice. When slights towards ones race occur, our community typically blows the situation out of proportion. As the pluralism of America grows, we are experiencing an ideological challenge to our claims of debilitating racism at the hands of other ethnic groups. Asians, Latinos, Hawaiians, and others who have taken it on the chin for decades and are surging forward, and represent a spoiler to our monolithic claim of victimhood.

Pastoral overemphasis on racism ignores the biblical reality of sin's ever-presence. It will not be until the return of Christ that the earth will be purged of all sins, including racism. Racism is an evil that will be with us until that time. Furthermore, preachers are in a superior position to put racism's evil in its proper context in relation to the larger fallen world. McMickle missed an opportunity to identify the greatest problem confronting Black Christians of all economic stations: immorality and unholiness. McMickle's exhortation to the Black middle

class to be the salt of the earth is admirable, but does not go far enough.

The famous American preacher Jonathan Edwards delivered a sermon inspired by Proverbs 14:34 titled "Sin and Wickedness Bring Calamity and Misery on a People." Proverbs 14:34 states, "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people." Edwards made this observation: "When a man is getting worse he understands his own badness less and less."⁹ Jonathan Edwards' 18th Century estimation sums up the moral condition in our day as well. Our ministers must address our sin first, and refrain from the legacy of presenting a lopsided gospel.

During the 1970s hippies and postmodernists, using humanistic reasoning, challenged the doctrine that God could be a dispenser of wrath and judgment as well as love. Since American Christianity had declared the government's Vietnam campaign righteous, and was proved to be in error, counter cultural challenges to traditional orthodoxy gained plausibility as many questioned how God could be love and punish humans with hell. American Christianity flinched at the ideological challenge, and the fire and brimstone message was relegated to a back seat so as not to offend mainstream sensibilities. Messages informing and containing imagery of God's wrath were considered over the top.

Since that time masses of Americans have been shortchanged on the Gospel and the point of Christ's earthly ministry. How can Christ's actions be fully appreciated unless people understand what they were saved from? Moreover, the "God is love" message often leads believers to brush off biblical calls to holiness. The unmerited grace offered through Christ degenerates into a free pass to heaven with no strings attached. The Devil scored a coup as the traditional doctrine of heaven and hell was modified to fit cultural sensitivities.

Robert Peterson is the foremost Evangelical scholar on the traditional doctrine of hell. In *Hell on Trial*, he contends that the failure of Christian

leaders to articulate clear, biblically defined, eternal destinies leaves believers susceptible to the influence of a myriad of afterlife scenarios generated in pluralistic culture.¹⁰ Due to this, Christians supposedly privy to the ultimate truth are as confused as everyone else. This confusion has facilitated a window of encroachment for proponents peddling heretical doctrine.

As agents of God's truth, we must advance Christian doctrine in its completeness to the world. The truth is that Jesus saves us from hell, a hell that humanity deserves for its rebellion and sin. The God of the universe is truth personified. Compromised flesh cannot share the same space with He who does not compromise. The world rejects the idea of a supreme authority. It declares that the truth rests with men, and is ready to challenge all who do not share this view. These are the facts, and persecution is the cost that Christ's servants are called to pay. If anyone wants to compromise they had better stick to politics, for we, as Christians, cannot. The condition of our communities bears witness to the cost. Our clergy owe the people the truth as to exactly what the penalty is for brazen immorality. Once people understand that from which they are saved, love and gratitude for the risen Christ blossoms and grows. When emergency room nurses report that gang members dying in the emergency room show no regrets or confess nothing as they leave this life, Black preachers must ask, "Are we of any use?" ¹¹

Dietrich Bonhoeffer posed this question to the clergy in Nazi Germany who failed to oppose, and instead pronounced, blessings on Hitler's fascist regime.¹² Are we of any use when Christ died for these misguided gang members and they were never informed of the fact? God wants the Crips saved just as much as the Yuppies. Both have value in God's eyes, and both, if unsaved, will suffer the same fate. If Jesus had the most to say about heaven and hell during his ministry, shouldn't his representatives mirror such concerns? Are the servants greater than the master? The traditional doctrine of Hell is just one of a number of dominions left unchallenged by Black clergy.

Unchallenged Dominions

In November 2003, I picked up Reverend Jesse Lee Peterson's *Scam*. Peterson, in his radio interviews and on the internet, touted *Scam* as the definitive book defining all that is wrong with Black America and its Left leaning leadership. As I finished book, however, I was disappointed as yet another prominent Black preacher elected political posturing for personal gain while denouncing similar action in others. Peterson's most striking statement, "Forty years ago Blacks were ashamed of sin," was lost in a milieu of standard issue Left bashing.¹³ His simplistic view that conservative Republicans represent the Hezbollah (Party of God) of our day is as laughable as his characterizing all Democrats as "evil," "racist" and communist. Apparently, Peterson was unaware that the Cold War had ended with us winning.

Scam is yet another scam perpetrated by Black clergy more allegiant to the cult of the dollar than Jesus Christ. Our shepherds are too busy securing retirement accounts, chasing celebrity, engaging in commercial networking, and political grandstanding than ministering to the needs of a neglected and malnourished flock. Peterson's discourse in *Scam* was culturally accurate but was lost in a tirade of political vulgarities. His reductionist view of American history generously under-dramatizes Christian involvement in monstrous historical wrongs in a fashion typical of those championing a political conservative worldview. It is telling that Christians and Christian leaders who are supposed to be committed to truth can neither accurately nor honestly discuss American Christianity while maintaining fundamentalist doctrinal views.

The current dual camp posture is an affront and stumbling block to those who should be primarily focused, if not obsessed, with sharing the Gospel. Which scriptural text laid down the foundation for the doctrine of political affiliation? Who does this serve? American Christianity is already divided by

denomination and race. Political divisions are yet another handicap. Conservatives are very clear in their allegiance to the flag first, Christ second. Liberals are equally committed to humanistic supremacy and indulge an opposite self-righteous strain. Each side deifies its leaders, never truthfully discussing their failures as sinful, fallen men and women. This bombastic posturing has corrupted the Black clergy. Pastors on each side avoid using the full lens of scripture to interpret culture; instead, they lean into their own understanding using biblical passages to accessorize personal ideologies. Shepherds who can wrest themselves away from both camps and dare to stand independently in sole allegiance to Christ are best equipped to transmit an apolitical gospel with its transcendent message. Lost in the conflicting ideological debate is the scriptural truth that Christians are strangers and aliens to this world (1 Peter 2:11). Our failure to sever the mooring to our national identity ill equips adherents of the faith to question whether the American dream's accruing of treasures on earth is Christ's dream for America.

Again, we must consider Bonhoeffer's challenge, "Are we of any use?" Are we of any use when our fixation on attendance roles and political turf wars field strips the purpose and tenor of the sermon? Are we of any use when, behind all the Left and Right positioning, few working solutions have been presented or implemented to address our litany of problems? Are we of any use as our people transition from historical victims to victimizers? Are we of any use as our art, politics, and home life shout "immorality rules," and, in outlandish vanity, obsessively search for a racist speck in our brother's eye? The Black clergy can again be of use by exerting the authority of scripture.

Gambling

There are five "riverboat" casinos in the city where I live, and the St. Louis metropolitan area is swiftly moving forward with plans for a sixth casino. Most of the casinos have sumptuous buffets, which I have been inclined to patronize. One evening, as my

wife and I waited to go into the casino's buffet, we decided to engage in an anthropological exercise for fun (people watching). In our unscientific manner (counting heads), we observed an inordinate number of middle-aged Black women heading for the slots. Of those who passed us, one quarter rushed to the games as if they were guaranteed a payout. Others were dressed as if they had just woken up, with two such characters entering with curlers dangling from their hair! The fact that many are allured by the exaggerated sound of slot machines paying out, the lights, and the over-hyped promises of action plastered across countless billboards is not remarkable in itself. What is remarkable is that the St. Louis Metropolitan Clergy coalition (Black preachers) helped to surmount the opposition to legalized gambling.

Those opposing gambling forwarded two main arguments. The first argument was against gambling for moral reasons, with its degenerate influence increasing a panoply of potential ills. The second argument was based on negative economic impact. Armed with statistics from other communities, those opposed to gambling disclosed that unless 90% of the casino patrons came from outside the area, the economic impact would be negative for the region.

Our Coalition of Christian Leaders said that the casinos would mean more jobs and dollars desperately needed for education. Let me repeat, our clergy were promoting the merits of legalized gambling in terms of jobs. These same men are expected to be taken seriously on spiritual matters even as they wager that the Black community would avoid further submersion in risky behavior by reaping employment benefits from an exploitive industry.

The casino's smattering of jobs held by Blacks proves to be crumbs compared to the tens of millions of dollars more in inheritance, savings, and disposable income which floods the coffers of an industry that legitimized itself from the bloody origins of organized crime. Even Al Capone would be proud that the masses accept an illegal game gone mainstream by the handiwork

of marketers instead of machine gunners. Gambling stands out as an unchallenged dominion unaddressed, or under-addressed, by those charged with the spiritual development of humanity.

Heresies and Witchcraft

Multiculturalism's peeling away of the White influence on American culture by steering the country toward an inclusive respect for ethnicity has been one of the positive effects of postmodernism. Contributions to American history and culture deliberately neglected by Whites are now being made known, and are receiving newfound appreciation as we collectively work to season to taste the ingredients in our national melting pot. The downside comes in the form of the celebration and legitimization of pagan idolatry. Voodoo, Buddhism, Candomble, Islam, Santeria and Rastafarianism are now declared as valid as the Gospel of Jesus Christ. 14 The militantly concocted Kwanzaa receives equal legitimacy with Christmas. Psychics such as Miss Cleo and others pander to and are patronized by the same community claiming to be 81% Christian. Our adoption into God's family through the knowledge of Jesus Christ freed us from the bonds of witchcraft and ancestor worship common to Africa. Now, these discarded shackles are characterized as a freedom denied to us by the slave system. As if the rising popularity and integration of the New Age occultic elements into popular culture weren't bad enough, now African Americans are now told that they should be angry that the "freedom" to practice witchcraft was denied by Whites during slavery! We should be praising God that idolatry was suppressed, not returning to our own vomit.

Social critic Alan Wolfe recently proclaimed, "American culture has triumphed in the transformation of American religion."15 This statement is easily observed in the domain of the Black church. The Black clergy have backed away from scriptural absolutes in order to keep its liberal, political bride happy. That bride, like Ahab's Jezebel, demands that her religion of postmodern relativism must be worshiped in order to enjoy the fruits of Naboth's vineyard. Liberal marital

vows require the Black clergy and community to forever don the straightjacket of victimhood, nourishing its children with a watered down version of Christianity. An ever-growing array of conditions and dominions go unchallenged by the Black preacher who is out of step with his historical role models. When issues such as AIDS are addressed, they are framed in non-scriptural context. These prescriptions and warnings are powerless, leaving the people to remain trapped in cycles of sin.

Pride

There exists a quiet smugness among Blacks in the belief that we do not commit certain crimes or sins. For years, Black leaders of all ilks have used such reasoning as dots that connect a line back to slavery in order to paint Whites as collectively more immoral than Blacks. The case of the D.C. Snipers is an example that contrasts this faulty thinking. In the fall of 2002, when the snipers' reign of terror appeared to be ending, news outlets began to profile the now convicted John Muhammad. I watched a CBS evening news piece in which Blacks were publicly saying, "Please don't let him be one of us." Are only White snipers acceptable? Our arrogance in being overly concerned with a collective image as ten families (Blacks included) grieved their loss is appalling. In my hometown, a similar scenario played out to absurd extremes.

The St. Louis area turned out to be the crime scene for the Midwest's most prolific Black serial killer to date, Maury Travis. On local Black talk radio, the theory was being circulated that Travis was being set-up as a serial killer to make us look bad. Travis' jailhouse suicide added gasoline to the conspiratorial flames. Later, the police and news outlets revealed to the public videos of Travis in the midst of committing the sadistic crimes. Those claiming such conspiracies as a matter of protecting Black pride were made to look like fools.

Further evidence of our prejudices can be uncovered in the most unusual places. During the

September 17, 2003 airing of the deplorable Howard Stern Show, James Brown revealed that, as BET honored him on their 2003 Annual Awards show for lifetime achievement as an entertainer, they refused to allow his wife on stage with him because she is White.¹⁶ Brown stated that they were not up front about it and, instead, led him and his wife to believe that she would perform on stage with him. How soon we forget. It is humanly impossible to calculate all of the racial wrongs perpetrated by Whites when access was denied to us because of our color. If it was wrong for them, it is wrong for us. Why are we so comfortable in staking claims as to which sins we do and don't commit? We denounce racism and prejudice at every turn, but the light skin versus dark skin drama continues to play out despite wide, collective knowledge of its divisive roots in slavery. While the intention of this reverse pride may be a sociologically recognized survival mechanism common to oppressed peoples, it is still pride. This pride is sin, and it has been under-addressed in Black pulpits. The Apostle Paul clearly addressed the issue in Romans, as he informed his Jewish audience that they were not, as they believed, superior to the Gentile, but were equally condemned with all humanity; all deserve God's righteous judgment for sin. The same goes for us, historically victimized or not. Without Christ we stand judged.

This prideful mindset has infected our people with a we-can-do-no-wrong attitude. In *Losing the Race*, John McWhorter argued that this is a logical byproduct of a perpetual victim ideology. On that point I agree, and add that this is a further mutation of the oppressed people's pride syndrome.¹⁷ Whether couched in sociological terminology or not, it represents the basic maintenance of pride, the original sin. Just as Blacks have historically questioned the legitimacy of American Christianity, which supported enslavement and oppression, we must question our own version of Christianity as we covertly harbor a moral superiority complex. Is the sum of our misery greater than other oppressed peoples? Do we definitely know that we've suffered more than the Chechens, the Palestinians, Armenians, South Africans or the Native Americans?

God's record book only reads as sins committed against Him. The Black clergy must collectively emphasize the doctrine of original sin so as to place sins committed against us, and those we commit against others, in proper perspective. Our clergy must challenge their members to identify and, as Jonathan Edwards would say, mortify sin. Only the scalpel of scripture can cut this cancer out of the Black body collective. Proverbs 16:18 states, "Pride comes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall." We have fallen. The word must go out so that we can get up.

Pimps and Players

The 1970s Black exploitation film glorification of the pimp has not died out, but has been resurrected in a new form, the player. We observe gangster rap heavyweights such as Nelly, Snoop Dog, Jay-Z, DMX, 50 Cent and an armada of like-minded proponents declaring the pimp legitimate. But, if you are not cut out to be a pimp, you can aspire to be a player ("playa"). What is a pimp? What purpose does he serve in society? None, other than his own. A pimp is a manipulator of the weak, a sexual exploiter of women and the epitome of predatory narcissism. While the United Nations Council on Human Rights works to denounce the sex trade and sexual exploitation in its New York Headquarters, the brothers passing by it on the street greet each other with, "what's up playa." The Black vernacular has always given birth to new, hip terms that are quickly adopted by Madison Avenue marketers. The reintroduction and variations of the term pimp (i.e. pimping, pimp slap, pimp juice,) used by youth and the celebrity elite bestow legitimacy on behavior that is depravity defined.

Recently, a dear friend of mine attended a workshop in Washington, DC, for teenage girls rescued from prostitution. He said that after you've talked face to face with young women whose lives have been ravaged so that some guy can get paid, you will recoil at the mere utterance of "pimp". The pimp's ideological son, the player or playa, is an exploiter of a lesser degree. His goal is to live off the backs of gainfully

employed women. Cash, lodging and amenities are dispensed to him because of his sexual proficiency. The player, like the pimp, has many women to facilitate his materialistic lifestyle. Both the pimp and the player are social pariahs. Both are routinely saluted in rap and R&B hits. Ironically, the pimp is a perpetuation of the slave master model. And while the player's lifestyle spins off the pimp in a modestly subversive way, both exploit women and manipulate emotion for personal benefit. Each is representative of the denigration of work, which is another popular theme in hip hop music. Hard work, or real work, is left to the victim, or suckers, who are so naïve as to follow societal norms. Young men and women are indoctrinated to envy and emulate the player's lifestyle expressed in videos, music, and news outlets affixed on celebrity, as we discussed in Chapter 4.

Where are our clergy in opposition to this toxic proselytism? Shockingly, some clergy see fit to emulate these pimps and players in style, dress, and demeanor. Instead of modeling Paul's call to dress modestly, our look reeks of prosperity. Generations X and Y have observed the clergy keeping up with the Joneses and have decided to remain outside the church in the interest of "keeping it real". Of course, no one is advocating pastors dress like paupers. But if the pimp is to be denounced from the pulpit, the reverend had better not look like one.

We must be vigilant to analyze and critique any new lifestyle that is introduced into the culture. Men of God should condemn what must be condemned, even the supporting language. Words are powerful. Words start wars, arguments, religions, relationships and, as we know from the Bible, life. The common usage of terms such as pimp and player serve to glorify and validate those characters. How dare we glorify monsters, legitimize wickedness, and crown degeneracy as authentic Black culture. The Black church has failed to keep up with cultural changes.

The Church is instructed to be as wise as the serpent and as gentle as doves (Matthew 10:16). This is

necessary for Christians as we use the light to expose the enemies' schemes to the world, drawing the unsaved to the source of protection and salvation. In Luke 6:39 Jesus used the illustration with a question, "Can a blind man lead the blind?" Can the church lead people blinded by the world if it is blind to the way the world works?

Unfortunately, the Black church is not alone in its need to catch up. American Christianity as a whole trails behind American culture, especially in addressing the possible outcomes of fast and furiously introduced new technologies. The clergy should be on point with Biblical perspectives concerning new cultural inventions in order to stay relevant. If the church is leading the path to enlightenment, pastors will not need to worry about implementing strategies and models for church growth.

Money Theology

Too often preachers remark that, if one loses his or her job, the Lord has a better job waiting. Such a remark is presumptively arrogant. The person may or may not get a better job. Should the person ignore the offers of lesser paying jobs and march into financial arrears while waiting for a better job? No. God promises to provide for our spiritual needs first and our physical needs second. The Israelites were fed daily with manna, and their clothes did not wear out during their 40 years of wandering in the desert. God did not rain filet mignon down from the heavens, nor did fine clothes miraculously appear on their backs because they were God's people. He simply met their needs.

Let us consider the latest heresy: the prosperity message. Daily, TBN and other Christian Broadcast Networks pump, via satellite, an American mutation of Christianity across the globe. Its message is that a major sign of a successful Christian is financial prosperity: don't have enough money, well, pray the prayer of Jabez. If the financial blessings aren't flowing in, then question your level of faith. This

bogus call to materialism has camouflaged itself as trappings of the Gospel.

It is interesting that few preach Paul's exhortation to be content within Jesus, whether rich or poor (Philippians 4:11). To be content in America is to be at a logger's head with the consumer culture's ideology: financial and material dissatisfaction (covetousness). American socio-economic dogma requires the citizenry to work tirelessly until the dream of home ownership, complete with white picket fence and retirement portfolio, is realized. Furthermore, while promises of freedom have drawn multitudes to these shores, so has the prospect of becoming rich. A dream concocted by humans is masqueraded as a reward of salvation. Christ's righteous work that extends freely to man to justify humanity is now utilized as a stage prop in a global marketing presentation. May God have mercy on us for allowing this disrespectful, heretical message to go forth unchallenged. The reason for its existence is more evidence of the clergy's ongoing adulterous relations with money. To be honest, in the American context, New Testament teachings on money clash with the reality of overflowing abundance. Popular culture heralds the rich for their success, and despite some minor cosmetic differences, economic orientations are readily apparent in our "classless" society. From public policy (Left and Right), the media and daily life we can see, as James Gilligan argued in *Violence*, that the poor are made to feel ashamed of their station.¹⁸ Cynically, preachers have recited Jesus' statement of the poor always being among us (Matthew 26:11) as a green light to ignore their plight. How convenient it is to tie evidence of one's faith to economic viability. Consider the consequences as this corrosive message reaches a new convert in a township in South Africa. He is thrown into a quandary because the riches promised by the American televangelist do not materialize for him, his family, or his town. Dare we place stumbling blocks to those bought and paid for with the precious blood of Jesus? Dare we earn the woes our savior lodged at the Pharisees for the mishandling of converts (Matthew

23:13-15)? We must quickly remove such obstacles. This warped corruption of the Gospel must end.

Dick Gregory once likened Black pastors' ability to raise funds with being able to get blood from a turnip. So often the call to give denigrates to the level of a sales pitch. You've probably heard the time tested statement, "You can't out-give God," meaning that you should give with the expectation of the coming blessing. This and other claims are psychological orchestrations that precede offertory regimen. The tithe box is placed forward for all to see who the real "Christians" are. This perspective is fundamentally flawed.

The Devil's chief charge lodged against Job was that his Godly obedience was solely due to his receipt of physical blessings. The scriptures show us quite the opposite as we learn about the greatness of God, his sovereignty, and the proper attitude to take as we suffer trials. Most importantly, we learn that the material props that dot our walk as servants to God are of no importance to Him, nor are they to be used as a divine favor indicator.

If the message goes out to expect more if something is taken away, or to expect a blessing when we give, then the Christian walk is rendered a faith of bartering. We would be at a cosmic disadvantage, because we can't out give God, who has given all through Jesus Christ. Our posture towards giving should be out of respect to our Sovereign God and provider, out of love for our Lord, and with no expectation other than the fulfillment of God's promise to provide. Christ said "store up for yourselves treasures in heaven", (Matthew 6: 20a). There they are safe because God handles the security and bookkeeping. Only a lack of faith in the words of our savior, or a deliberate choice to feed the sheep a fast food Christian message, can account for the existence, continuation and dissemination of such propaganda.

Greed

We have already touched upon the failure of pastors to preach contentment to their congregations. As contentment is antithetical to our consumer driven economy, ads and commercials have indoctrinated us so effectively that few Christians realize that they are immersed in covetousness. The desire for more things fuels the desire for the means to acquire those things. Show us the money. It is the love of money that has been the root of infamous historic American evils. Today, this love undermines most aspects of American culture. Let us start with Education.

Contemporary conventional wisdom has described college as no more than a means to a prosperous end; therefore, whatever methods used to get to college are fair game. Cheating is rampant and widespread in high school and college. Some parents opt for having their children labeled ADD in order to secure more testing time for SAT/ACT tests. Colleges assist students in ruining their credit by permitting credit card companies to sign on students for access fees. Collegiate athletic programs are so addicted to bountiful revenues that they often fail to educate the Black participants.¹⁹ School districts hungering for revenues have co-opted concerns for children's health in allowing Coke and Pepsi to peddle junk food to youth already bombarded by marketers beckoning them to eat in an unhealthy manner.

The world of education is just the tip of the iceberg. For fear of sounding like a Marxist, I will curtail expounding on this point. It is a blessing to live in a land of prosperity and, conversely, a curse. The average American believer and non-believer can quickly be seduced into a love affair with money. We have discussed money theology and its errors, but, as American clergy, we must be aggressive, vocal, and persistent in warning against greed.

Missions

It is curious that Black Americans have widely and pridefully accepted the sobriquet "African American," despite its inaccuracy. African-Americans,

including Black Muslims, exhibit little interest in Africa and African affairs, especially since the end of Apartheid. Africans, and Africans in America, will confirm that point readily. African American Christians have long neglected to share the Gospel on the African Continent and just about everywhere else. For all the ongoing criticisms of White Christianity, one cannot ignore their faithfulness to the call to evangelize the world. Black clergy, in the interest of retaining power and resources, have stifled Black missionary work to the level of statistical insignificance.²⁰

Marvin McMickle recently documented great Black American Christian figures in his *Encyclopedia of African American Christian Heritage*. From the very beginnings of the Black church in America, mission work was heavy on the minds of pioneering Black ministers. Carey Lott zealously decried, "I long to preach to the poor Africans the way of life and salvation", and he did in 1821.²¹ Other men such as Daniel Coker, George Liele and Peter Williams, Jr. aggressively and fearlessly answered Christ's (Acts 1:8) call. Today, international mission work is vigorously pursued by White Christians. Apart from the February donning of kinte cloths and the surname, African Americans are not interested in sharing the gospel with their African brothers. Worse yet, the idea that monetary resources would divert from the community parish is unthinkable to some pastors. Prominent pastor and author Marvin McMickle omitted this subject in *Preaching to the Black Middle Class*. The Black middle class, growing in wealth and prosperity, are the most able to support international missions, but McMickle declares racism as the Black pastoral priority. The contemporary Black church's record on missions is yet another sign that even the basic Gospel is not being disseminated or heeded.

The Down Low

I have saved what I believe is one of the most threatening trends for final discussion. Recent reports about the Down Low Lifestyle have leaked out of mainstream media outlets.²³ As HIV infection and the

AIDS mortality rate skyrocket among Black women, information about the Down Low lifestyle has emerged. Increasing numbers of Black men are exploring bisexuality and engaging in illicit sex with gay men. These men are then returning home to their wives and lovers, infecting them with HIV. These men cover their tracks by appearing virulently anti-gay.

Some Black activists, now publicly revealing the lifestyle, have blamed the behavior on the Black community's "homophobia." This is the reasoning publicly expressed by those who righteously "expose their risky lifestyle." Apparently, we are to sit back quietly and permit these depraved men to sentence Black women to suffering, bankruptcy, and death, as well as orphaning their children, for fear of being branded homophobic. These participants of the Down Low lifestyle must be condemned and castigated as fiends, enemies of Black people, and humanity in general. Preachers should use this aberrant behavior as an opportunity to reacquaint the saved and unsaved with God's prescribed penalty for wickedness and immorality. As we can see, in the absence of a clear and vocalized doctrine of hell, our community of believers has no fear as they parcel out hell on earth in pursuit of sexual gratification. These spineless, gutless cowards would rather the world collapse around them than have their pride bruised by accurate name-calling and public looks of disapproval. Some behaviors rightly earn communal disdain, and this is one of them. Even victims of some of the vilest murders are not subjected to the long term suffering the practitioners of the Down Low lifestyle casually and callously mete out. Pastors need to lay down the law and the love. Jesus can, will and wants to forgive those living the Down Low lifestyle. If a denunciation of the Down Low lifestyle is taken as a swipe at the gay/bisexual/transgendered community, then so be it. The Gospel will offend, but to righteous ends.

Church as Lifestyle

In current American society, rugged, hoary individualism has become an indicative trend of

lifestyle. In the U.S., you are free to live the lifestyle you choose. Relativism provides supportive ideology. There are many lifestyles to choose from. As I visited a boat and RV show, I found out there is an RV lifestyle. There is the gay lifestyle, the Hip Hop lifestyle for the young, and, in keeping with the times, the Black church offers the church lifestyle.

An individual can come "get his shout on" and practice a no-strings-attached spirituality. The Sunday worship service will rival most performances the previous night in the club district in terms of volume and concocted emotion. The best numbers are reserved for the offertory period - you cannot expect to be entertained like that for free. One must bear with additional calls for special offerings and back tithes. If Whitney Houston can charge fifty dollars for a concert ticket, then the church deserves at least twenty-five for its performance.

The Black church lifestyle is comfortable for its members. The pastor paints Jesus as the great problem solver or bail bondsman on whom the members can rely when in trouble. Little else is demanded except regular tithing. The member is securely connected with popular culture as they are afforded close proximity to a celebrity figure, the pastor. The pastor/celebrity enjoys the best seats at the table, is well dressed, and is well fed. His or her name is plastered everywhere so that the members will not forget it whenever they utter, "My pastor ____." The pastor's celebrity status is affirmed by political visits during election time, and the pastor is so gracious that he doesn't expect the visiting VIP to sit through the sermon. He does, however, expect raucous verbal affirmation of his subject (regardless of its exegetical nature). Once a year, during the pastor's appreciation day, or on his birthday, intense adoration (verbal and fiscal) is expected.

Many may be offended by the characterization of the Black church as an alternative competing lifestyle. But unless it and these who lead it to return to fundamental adherence to scripture, the church will be

nothing more than a lifestyle as powerless and inconsequential as the medieval Catholic Church. We will discuss the future in the next chapter.

Chapter 10

End Game

The major threat to Blacks in America has not been oppression, but rather the loss of hope and absence of meaning. -Cornel West

Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me.

-Psalm 51:12

It is easier to recognize and diagnose problems than it is to solve them. Our world is complex, and everyone from politicians to sociologists offer solutions devoid of attempts to address root causes. Fortunately, for Bible-believing Christians the answers are simple. It is when we insist on viewing the world through human eyes that the view becomes obfuscated and dark. The Bible tells us that sin and the fall of man is the root of our misery, and while there may be no comfort in that knowledge, we can take comfort not only in that God has secured a way out of this mess, but also in that He gives us the grace to live in the here and now. Our God and Messiah are grieved when we, who claim His name, look away as Peter did, focusing on the troubled waters. It was not until Peter cried out, "Lord save me," that Jesus reached out and saved him from drowning (Matthew 14:29), but it shouldn't be overlooked that while he had his eye on Christ he was walking on water. We are drowning in a tumultuous sea of immorality, and instead of looking to the same hand that rescued us from a lengthy history of natural oppression, we look elsewhere. We have convinced ourselves that we can tread water forever, or swim to a shore that is miles away on our own. This is much like the popular fiction of pulling oneself up by his

bootstraps. Invariably, in every such tale there is always someone or some situation unacknowledged as the true reason for the success. God is shortchanged for the supposed indomitability of the human spirit, as was the case with the Civil Rights victory. It was not Martin Luther King, Jr. alone, but thousands working for justice with the true impetus for success coming from God's desire for that justice. He saved us with the sacrifice of his son, and it was an infusion of Christ's love flowing from oppressed hearts that melted the opposition rooted within the psyche of those claiming the same faith.

We need that kind of power to save Black Americans. As we continue to fail our Savior with our ignorance of scripture and subsequent disobedience to it, will our pastors and teachers secure their obsolescence by reinterpreting God's Word to fit the times? There will be one of two paths blazed from this juncture: redemption and restoration, or continued disgrace, followed by eternal damnation. For those who believe that this is fear mongering, please, reread Chapter three.

Disease (HIV/AIDS) and criminal violence continue to lead death's charge through the Black populace. Despite mountains of accurate information and an unprecedented compilation of means of delivery, Blacks are catching and swiftly dying from a preventable illness. Yes, as the Ugandans have demonstrated, abstinence prevents HIV and AIDS infection, as does abstaining from intravenous drug use.¹ What is not mentioned is the threat of an emerging virus incubating within the mounting ranks of the incarcerated: Hepatitis C.

Apart from those on death row and those serving life without parole, 90% of inmates will be released. In addition to prisoners released with HIV/AIDS and TB, thousands more will return to Black communities infected for life with Hepatitis C, a disease that can be transmitted even easier than HIV. The shamefully small amount of medical attention delivered by a few

HMO's, society's scornful indifference to the criminally convicted, and the media's self-censorship account for this newest health threat.² Since we have the greatest proportionate number of prisoners in the penal system, we will suffer the greatest ravages of this coming epidemic. To compound this problem, fiscal belts continue to tighten to support political and national objectives (War on Terror and tax cuts). Social programs will be cut. Special and corporate interest will continue to guide and influence policy with an occasional, non-substantial nod toward Black Americans. Funds for medical resources to treat our limited voting, non-contributing, second rank ethnic block will be scarce. Furthermore, we must expect that un-evangelized, under-employed, and scorned ex-convicts will have no sense of communal inclusion to prohibit behavior conducive to Hepatitis C's widespread transmission.

We must also consider the possibility of what I call a Rwandan Syndrome. Left unchecked, as our traditional family base deteriorates both physically and morally, a Black criminal class will continue to grow. The convicted, unemployed, disenfranchised male population, in the absence of a meaningful message, is disposed to receive an alternative message.³ A rapping pied piper sporting a Five-percenter ideology has the potential to woo many. These masses are then taught to no longer hate Whites, but to instead blame those who left the ghetto behind for integration and prosperity without substantively "giving something back." A call to make the Black middle class pay for the underclass' suffering could lead to internecine culling unlike anything America has ever seen. This would be class warfare taken to a literal level. Apart from the body count, the negative effects on Black Americans would be manifold. A crime wave of such magnitude would overwhelm the court system, meaning a possible imposition of martial law. Martial law would mean a disruption in economic activity, meaning most Americans might unite in a disdain for Black Americans. We would then understand the meaning of the Lord exposing our nakedness to the nations for all to see (Nahum 3:5-7).

Before discounting the possibility of such an event, one must consider what happened in Rwanda. Throughout its colonial period, the Belgians favored the Tutsi ethnic group. Despite being liberated since 1959, the acrimonious tension between the two groups lay beneath the surface as the prejudicial social regime continued. In 1994, when Rwanda's Hutu President, Juvenal Habyarimana, died in a mysterious plane crash, the call went out via radio to all Hutus to extract revenge on all Tutsis. One-hundred days and 800,000 bodies later, the killing ended. Can such a thing happen here? Would those who sociologist William Julius Wilson described as "suffering intense hopeless forms of poverty" stop acting out on one another and launch a retributive campaign of Black on Black genocide? If the majority of killing in Rwanda was done with machetes, how would the proliferation of weapons on our streets affect the ensuing carnage?

To those unfamiliar with God's historical record presented in scripture, these nightmarish predictions would appear to be an exercise in fanciful scare mongering. But those who are familiar with God's Word know that He corrects those whom He loves and eliminates His enemies. The God of the Old Testament is the same as in the New. We must wonder then, how long will He tolerate those claiming to be His Son's representatives, the Son He sacrificed, to discredit that righteous work by their unfaithfulness and compromises with worldly values? Will God fail to correct his children and shepherds? Can we expect false teachers to get off the hook for leading humanity astray? No, not without ignoring the Apostle Peter's shuddersome warning in 2 Peter 2. How long do we expect God to allow our condemnation of American Christianity's hypocrisy as we ignore our own?

Praise God for his exceedingly incomprehensive mercy. Christ is waiting for our collective repentance. God is incessantly worried about our fatherless and widows as he views 70% of the Black children being born into that state. He knows that multitudes of mothers will live their lives as widows. He is concerned. Jesus

wants to stand in the midst of wedding ceremonies, and waits to pour out the wine of the Holy Spirit into the cups of those who would be faithful to Him and God's Word. God wants to restore us because He loves us. Our Savior loves us. Its time we turn to Him.

The remainder of this book is comprised of solutions, the first being to collectively repent. The solutions presented in this chapter are a blueprint, but we cannot forget what happened to Joshua and the Israelites. They believed that they were capable of making the right decision and were tricked by the Gibeonites because they "did not inquire of the Lord" (Joshua 9:14). Our problems are immense and we do not know how to solve them. Therefore, after we repent, we must ask for divine guidance, and clarity for direction.

Solutions

The first step toward restoration with God is, and has always been, repentance. Some might ask: what we are repenting for? We have been victims for centuries. Yes, that is true, but in recent years we have made an idol of that history. This has produced a spirit of bitterness and spite, with thankfulness being a scarce commodity. Our leaders posture our history as a tool to extract concessions and produce a spirit of superiority- yes, superiority. I'm better than you,...look what you did to me. We would have never done that to you. These assumptions are the height of human nature's ignorance. All humanity is depraved. The victims of today could be the human rights' violators of tomorrow. The blight of sin taints all groups. Yet, as sinners forgiven, we must forgive. Is the servant greater than the master?

We must repent to White America for not acknowledging those who fought the good fight for justice; for painting so many with the brush of collective blame; for criticizing them for not reaching out to us; for extracting concessions in a spirit of arrogance every chance we get; and for not setting the example of being the peacemaker. The love that our

Savior extends to us should be shown to the greatest offender, especially to our brothers. White Christians are our brothers. No student of the Bible needs science to verify the myth of race. We must pray this prayer:

Heavenly Father, creator of all humanity, we thank you for removing the barrier between you and us through your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Such grace was unmerited on our behalf. Forgive us for not modeling such grace, forgive us for our intransigence. Forgive us for erecting an idol of victim-hood. Forgive us for not forgiving our enemies and brothers. Please allow the Holy Spirit to empower us to be the peacemakers and finish the work in America started by Martin Luther King, Jr. Let the power of Christ be evident to the world as two groups with a bitter history unite in love and in a joint declaration of the Gospel's power. Of what cannot be completed at this time, we look forward to its finalization under Christ's rule upon His return. This we pray in the name of our glorified Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

This prayer is less than perfect, but we owe such an apology to our God and fellow man.

In our anger and disappointment about the government not making a collective apology for slavery, two meaningful apologies have been overlooked. In the appendix I have included apologies by two major Christian denominations, the Southern Baptist Convention and the Presbyterian Church of America. Neither in 1995 when the Southern Baptist's issued their apology, nor in the year 2000 when the PCA issued theirs, did the press pay much attention. These unacknowledged apologies for slavery, while overdue, must be acknowledged and made known throughout Black churches and communities. The expectation of a similar governmental decree is a naive fantasy, for we live in a land and time of tortmongering. This brings us to the subject of reparations.

As an act of contrition and thankfulness for all God has done for us, Black Christians must put the reparation subject to rest. This will be the public

sign that we forgive America, her debt being pardoned as Christ pardons ours. The idea of reparations at this historical juncture is comical. America is in the midst of its "War on Terror", which by all accounts will last for a considerable amount of time. Our healthcare costs are skyrocketing more each year. Sooner or later some administration will have to address this issue, which will be costly. Social Security solvency looms in the future as an enormous demographic transitions to retirement. We expect our government to solve these fiscal behemoths. Do we also expect it to bankrupt itself on 12.7% of the population's claim for reparations? African-Americans need to "get real".

These are the points reparations proponents fail to address:

a) It is impossible to accurately estimate a figure of the total lost, denied and stolen wages for work during slavery and the Jim Crow era.

b) Even if such a total were calculated, the attempt to pay the enormous amount would shatter the economy. No country in world history has bankrupted itself to pay restitution to an aggrieved minority.

c) The Black underclass would be ripped off again as affluent proponents declare the funds to be used for scholarships. Such scholarships would benefit the middle and upper class, whose children are already in a fair position to take advantage of the many scholarships already available. Few have advocated using the reparations for job creation for the 24% Blacks living in poverty, or for the incarcerated/ex-convicts.

d) Discussion about a violent backlash has been nonexistent. Racist organizations would have a rallying cry, and would enjoy the opportunity to advance from the fringes into the mainstream by challenging reparations payouts. A brief listen to Right-wing talk radio reveals a simmering resentment for Blacks being afforded equal access to welfare. Reparations would surely bring ideological support for the racial holy

war pined for by neo-Nazis, the Klan, and like-minded militia groups.

All things considered, the reparations issue must be dropped. This should be done for Christ and in the interest of common sense. Every minute a pastor spends advocating reparations is time that should be spent advocating the Great Reparator. Dropping the reparations discussion lies on the road to restoration and is tied to our corporate repentance.

We must also ask forgiveness of the Black underclass who, as segregation ended, were left behind as the Civil Rights victory opened new opportunities for the middle and upper classes. The underclass has been exploited by the Black political leadership to extract concessions from a society stricken with what Shelby Steele terms, "White guilt." These concessions have largely benefited the Black middle class. The underclass has suffered scorn and condemnation for their visible sins while the middle and upper classes are able to keep them in the closet. They are no longer hidden. We must repent for this in-house hypocrisy. The step following our confession is to institute an Urban/Suburban fellowship.

Set up along the lines of the Big Brother, Big Sister program, a family, or a member of a prosperous congregation would be assigned, through a local church, to a family or an individual in a distressed area. Fellowship, support, and an informational exchange would bring back the sense of community indicative of the pre-Civil Rights era. Information and exposure to life beyond the "hood" would spurn change in areas written off by society.

Immediately following our collective call for forgiveness, there must be a nationwide interdenominational evangelism drive focusing on college campuses, crime plagued areas, and school-aged children.

One day as I worked with an elder in my church, he recounted a fond childhood memory involving "Bible

Baseball." Since I had never heard of Bible Baseball, my interest was piqued. During the 1950s, Methodists in the Louisville, Kentucky area went to neighborhoods and set up a tent for Sunday School kids. They served refreshments, had a song, devotion, did a quick lesson and wrapped it up with a game of Bible Baseball. A batter could request a single, double, triple, or home run question. The kids were organized into teams, usually boys versus girls. The team with the highest score won a prize. At first the kids failed miserably, but by the second or third Sunday, due to study, the kids excelled at a rapid pace. Their familiarity with the Bible increased. I was awestruck and overjoyed at the method and the results. Therefore, as part of these plans for repentance, restoration, and revival of the Black family and church, I have to include a proposal: the M.S.M.U. (Mobile Sunday School Ministry Unit).

Just like the mobile mammogram units or library bookmobiles, churches could rent an RV, bus, or truck, and set-up in a spacious area on a glorious Saturday or Sunday afternoon in neighborhoods full of children. Naturally the more distressed areas would be first. They could serve refreshments, teach them a song, have a quick sermon, and wrap it up with a contest such as Bible Baseball, or Bible Basketball. This would follow the preliminary selection of a central site for distribution of fliers and preparation for follow-up programs to direct the kids to the MSMU. The program should run in four week blocks, once in the spring, and once in the summer. The fourth week could be the grand contest week of Bible Baseball/Basketball, a contest made more exciting by greater prizes. All participants would get a free age-appropriate Bible. Just as on the foreign mission field, denominational affixation on turf control should yield to the greater cause of winning these young souls to Jesus. The college evangelism groups could follow the Campus Crusade model.

In Chapter 7, I discussed the church's mandate for addressing the needs of our incarcerated population. Ex-offenders working side by side with pastors, deacons and elders who are required by Christ

to step outside their comfort zone to witness should spearhead evangelism in the street. Prison ministries must spawn a fully integrated approach, meaning that, upon release of an incarcerated person, the church must surround the former inmate with love and new influences, as well as assist them in finding gainful employment. The employment dilemma is one of the most serious conundrums facing Black Americans. Prisoners are not only affected by their transgressions against the State. Since September 11th, companies like ChoicePoint are being utilized by increasing ranks of employers, financial institutions, insurers, police, and health providers to identify criminal, fraudulent, or problematic episodes in a person's history. Our society is gravitating towards a zero tolerance policy for any lapse in judgment. Companies such as ChoicePoint are profiting on the electronic retention of personal history. Honor and integrity have to be ingrained in the minds of our people. While God is, as the Koran says, all merciful and oft forgiving, our society saves its forgiveness for celebrity. The common man better not make a mistake. In light of these realities, it should be the church leading the call to solve the underemployment problem with prayer, advocacy, and employment wherever possible.

In conjunction with the national evangelism campaign, our clergy must demonstratively preach against sexual immorality, promote marriage, and preach the traditional doctrine of hell. The Church must retrain the Black community to respect the authorities, and to demand law and order in our homes and communities. Romans 13 is explicit in commanding Christians to obey the law and submit to the governing authorities. Today, however, we remain ungovernable as we challenge police on every incident. Black leaders claim this scrutiny is necessary because the police can not be trusted due to incidents of police brutality. Of course, we must address injustice aggressively. But where is the justice for people who want to live in peace? The authorities are sanctioned by God to use force when necessary to subdue rebels who repudiate the law and seek to live outside it by preying on the defenseless. Police forces today are more professional,

reflective of the community, and attempt to be more culturally sensitive than they were in the past. Will knuckle-dusters, racists, and cowboy cops be on police forces? Undoubtedly. But the police are still the police. We are to recognize them for their honorable duty.

Our pastors should have a national week of rededication. In a solemn service starting with prayer, every congregation should rededicate their sanctuaries with a sacred vow of their exclusive service to Jesus Christ. We must promise the Lord that His house will be a house of prayer, not a house of politics, a house of pancakes, or a house of style. If the clergy don't respect the temple, how can we expect the community to respect it?

A consortium of pastors should start a special ministry dedicated to evangelizing, serving, mentoring and molding Black athletes and celebrities into strong Christian role models. Our clergy must work harder to recognize and understand cultural trends so that we can enable the flocks to use scripture to identify and avoid camouflaged snares. People outside the church will be drawn by discernment and wisdom exhibited by church members. Wisdom is a scarce commodity in American life. We are drowning in technical knowledge, but there exists a great lack of wisdom.

The Black Church has long neglected international missions. An international outreach can coincide with a local one. African Americans must reach out to Africans, Asians, Latinos, Europeans, and to whomever else the Lord directs us to reach out to.

Finally, we must prepare the flock to embrace the multiracial dimension of our faith, as we have prepared ourselves to be unprejudiced. As our society transitions away from the predominately White/Black perspective, we cannot don the "us versus them" worldview while declaring salvation's universal appeal. Simply put, we must learn from American Christianity's mistakes, and not repeat them.

In July 2003, I happened to catch a particularly transcendent episode of *60 Minutes*. Peter Holsten, a Chicago real estate developer, tore down the infamous Cabrini-Green housing project and erected half a million dollar townhouses in its place.⁴ Former Cabrini-Green residents were invited to live for free in the same luxury quarters selling for \$500,000. Those purchasing homes were well aware and pleased that their neighbors would be former housing project residents. Holsten met with the Cabrini-Green residents to announce the opportunity for them to move out of the violent, cramped, and rundown quarters. He was met with anger, disbelief and rejection. A number hurled profanities at Holsten and City of Chicago officials. The program focused on those who stayed the course, followed the rules and guidelines, and then ended up neighbors with Chicago's upper-middle class. I think this episode is a parable about heaven. C.S. Lewis' *The Great Divorce* played out for anyone watching CBS on that July night.

The Black preacher has been condemned since slavery for his excessive emphasis on heaven. This criticism has grown in postmodern times. In response, many black preachers have backed away from the subject of heaven. This situation must be reversed. When Jesus walked the earth, His ministry focused on getting people ready for heaven and connecting them to it through sacrificing Himself. We are mortals. Death is certain. In death we are unified with all humanity, either to rejoice through eternity with Christ, or to suffer disgrace forever.

Heaven will not be segregated by race. Let's prepare the people for this. It is time that we honor Christ by providing answers. Our people need answers, answers to questions not asked. This is the nature of the Gospel. Comfort and peace lie in the answers provided in love by Jesus Christ. God holds the answer to everything, and all of the answers that we need to know to spend eternity with Him have been provided in His precious words.

We stand on the verge of a great triumph in American Christianity, as the world will bear witness to the improved moral state of Black America through our collective submission to, and faith in, Jesus Christ.

Postscript

Writing this book was painful. In analyzing Black America's morality and, indeed, American morality, I had to consider my personal contribution to the moral decline. I ashamedly admit that my conduct as a young adult contributed to the moral decline of our community, but I am even more ashamed of the fact that my status as an ex-convict earns me more street credibility than I would have if I had not gone to prison. This is the new reality. Those who rebel in the most uncivilized way are said to be "keeping it real," while those who excel in work, academics, and build civilization through marriage and active child rearing are considered somehow less than authentically black. The positive values of our oppressed ancestors, as they strived to prove to America that Black folks deserve respect, is being rejected and replaced by the stereotypical values they sought to eradicate.

Our collective history is a religious history, but postmodern Black values are tarnishing that history. The postmodern view of Black history acknowledges historical oppression, but attributes the heroic actions of our ancestors to a Black person's unique ability to cope with difficult circumstances. This human centered vision is offensive and fails to give credit where credit is due. The Black church has historically kept African Americans mindful that the strength to endure is evidence of the power that Christ instills in His servants. Yet, in the post-Civil Rights era the church has allowed those outside the Black community to subtly shift the praise to the human influence of Black notables like Martin Luther King Jr., instead of giving God the glory for what someone like King notable in the first place. For example, people attribute King's philosophy of nonviolence to his study of Gandhi, not the Apostle Paul's original biblical doctrine of nonviolence.

A continued emphasis on the human as hero will continue to exacerbate the identity crisis facing the Post-Civil

rights generation. This emphasis will ultimately destroy the identity of Black America, but it can be prevented if the Black church, which has been God's means of grace by which the miraculous history of Africans in America has been transformed from a global tragedy to an unbelievable testimony of Christ's power, returns to its historical Christian emphasis. American slaves were emancipated in 1863, but the completion of their legal emancipation did not arrive until the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The emancipation of the souls of Black Americans has also been a historical process, and the Church must now lead them in this emancipation as much as it did in the beginning, only this time it must help emancipate them from the self-imposed enslavement of their souls.

The 2008 presidential election may bring to power a candidate whose concern for the poor represents a collectively ignored concern by God. The near twelve years of bogus compassion and unabashed deference to the haves at the expense of the have nots is offensive to a God whose scriptures make abundantly clear His concern for the oppressed. During President Clinton's campaign, the Black Community felt comfortable placing the plight of the poor at the feet of government, but when Clinton left office, they blamed a new presidential campaign for their condition. We are to be our brothers' keepers both in time of plenty and in time of want. If we do not relentlessly work to reconcile the ex-offenders, prepare the undereducated for employment, support the single parents, train our youth, and insure that our neighborhoods become as peaceful as possible, how can we expect those outside the community to take the lead in addressing our issues? Furthermore, the same God who has blessed African Americans by making them the wealthiest blacks in the world is not obligated to see that we retain this blessing if we continue to neglect our role in insuring justice among our people by our people.

In *Seeking to be Christian in Race Relations*, (1957) Benjamin Mays writes, "The sad thing about the present day church is that it does not place enough emphasis upon the need for people to change their unchristian

behavior when they join the church." Mays's observation is perhaps more relevant now than when he originally made it. The Black church must change for Christ's sake.

ENDNOTES

Introduction

1. Kinnon, Joy Bennett. "The Shocking State of Black Marriage," *Ebony*, Nov 2003, 192-194.

2. Levin, Gary. "Idol Contestant Booted for Working for Adult Web Site," *USA Today*, 11 Feb 2003.

3. Komarow, Steven, Richard Willing, and Larry Copeland. "Soldier Held in Deadly Grenade Attack on 101st," *USA Today*, 24 Mar 2003, 31 Oct 2003.
<http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2003-03-22-war-kuwait-attack_x.html>.

4. X, Marvin. "The New Nat Turner: Hasan Akbar," *Davey D's Hip Hop Corner*. 23 Mar, 2003, 31 Oct 2003.
<<http://www.daveyd.com/commentarynewnattturner.html>>.

5. "Trucker Charged as 18 Die in Trailer," *Jefferson City News Tribune*, 15 May, 2003, 24 Oct 2003<http://www.newstribune.com/stories/051503/war_0515030904.asp.html>.

6. Bryan, Bill. "Secrets Died with Serial Killer." *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 8 June 2003, late ed.: news A1.

7. Corbell, Beverly. "Expert: Black Serial Killers not so Uncommon." *The Advertiser*, 22 June 2003. 25 Oct 2003. <<http://cgi.newsweaver.net/cgi-bin/linkweaver/print.pl?url=http://www.acadiananow.com/...html>>.

8. "Jury Finds Texas Woman Guilty of Murder in Windshield Death of Homeless Man." *North County Times*. 27 June 2003. 24 Oct 2003.
<<http://www.nctimes.net/news/2003/20030627/60127.html>>.

9. Arce, Rose. "Jayson Blair Sells Tell-all book." *CNN*. 10 Sept 2003. 25 Oct 2003.
<<http://www.cnn.com/2003/SHOWBIZ/books/09/10/jayson.blair.book.html>>.

10. "Tot Survives Three Weeks Alone on Mustard, Ketchup, Dried Pasta." *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. 1 Oct 2003, Nation.

11. "Woman Kills her Mother and Minister at Church." *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. 6 Oct 2003, Nation.: A5

12. Harden, Clay. "Bond Reduced in Deadly Yazoo Fire." *The Clarion Ledger*. 9 Oct 2003.
<<http://www.clarionledger.com/news/0310/09/m03.html>>.

13. Bryan, Bill. "Eyewitnesses Describe Infant's Horrid beating." *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. 8 Oct 2003.

14. Barakat, Matthew. "Accused Sniper Fires Lawyers as Trial Starts." *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. 21 Oct 2003, late ed.:A.

15. Kaufman, Leslie. "Abuse Case Highlights Dangers of Adoption Incentives program." *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. 29 Oct 2003, early ed.: A5.

16. Bryan, Bill. "Police Arrest 2 in String of Violent Crimes." *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. 12 Aug 2003, late ed.: A1.

17. Holly, Derrill. "Crime Spike Shakes Up U.S. Capitol." *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. 24 Aug 2003, NEWS.

18. Statistics compiled by count of denominational membership provided by "Religion." *The New York Public Library African American Desk Reference*. New York: Stonesong Press, 1999.

19. "New 'Buying Power' Report Shows Blacks Still Outspend Other Ethnic Segments." *Target Market News*. 17 Oct 2003.
<<http://www.targetmarketnews.com/buying%20report%202003.html>>.

20. McWhorter, John. *Losing the Race: Self Sabotage in Black America*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001.

Chapter 1 - How Did We Get Here?

1. Fuson, Tobert H. *The Log of Christopher Columbus*. Camden:International Marine, 1987.

2. Gonzalez, Justo. *The Story of Christianity: The Reformation to the Present Day*. Harper Collins: New York, 1985. 219-220.

3. Emerson, Michael O., and Christian Smith. *Divided By Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

4. Copeland, Larry. "Church and State Standoffs Spread of USA." *USA Today*, 30 Sept 2003. 15A.
5. Fuson, Robert H. *The Log of Christopher Columbus*. Camden: International Marine, 1987. 107.
6. Keener, Craig S. and Glenn Usry. *Defending Black Faith: Answers to Tough Questions about African-American Christianity*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997.

Chapter 2 - Non-Clerical Prophets

1. "Fresh Air." National Public Radio, WHYY, Philadelphia. 10 Sept 2003.
2. Williams, Juan, and Quinton Dixie. *This Far By Faith: Stories from the African American Religious Experience*. New York: Harper Collins, 2003. 297
3. Terkel, Studs. *Will the Circle Be Unbroken: Reflections on Death, Rebirth, and Hunger for a Faith*. New York: The New Press, 2001. 250
4. Wilson, James Q. "Why We Don't Marry." *City Journal* Winter 2002.
5. Herbert, Bob. "Civil Rights, the Sequel." *NYTimes.com* 7 Jul 2003.

<<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/07/opinion/07HERB.html?Ex=1058586312&ei=1&en=f8a8fd4363ac966>>
6. DeLeon, Lauren Adams. "Braveheart." *Emerge* Oct. 1996: 18.
7. "Fresh Air" National Public Radio, WHYX Boston 14 Oct 2003.
8. Chappell, Kevin. "Bernie Mac: TV Father Says Stop Coddling Our Children." *Ebony*. June 2003.
9. Gates, Henry Louis, Jr. "After The Revolution." *The New Yorker*. 29 April 1996, 6 May 1996: 59.
10. Associated Press Release. *L.A. Daily News*. 7 Feb 2003, 15 Feb 2003.

<<http://www.dailynews.com/stories/0,1413,200~26898~1164282,00.html>>

11. Remnick, David. "Dr. Wilson's Neighborhood." *The New Yorker*. 29 April 1996, 6 May 1996: 96-107.

12. See endnote in introduction.

Chapter 3 - Morality By Numbers

1. Joiner, Robert. "Playing the Blame Game." Editorial. *St. Louis Post Dispatch*. 20 Oct 2003.

2. United States, U.S. Bureau of the Census *the Black Population in the United States: March 2002*. Washington: GPO, April 2003.

3. "Religion." *The New York Public Library African American Desk Reference*. New York: Stonesong Press 1999. Denomination date was tallied and the sum total subtracted from the total population. The resulting figure represented 81% of the population as opposed to the widely repeated 90% which source was hard to verify. The 81% number is utilized throughout the book. New denomination statistical information was difficult to come by as many of the major Black denominations fail to have working websites at the time of this writing.

4. "New 'Buying Power' report shows blacks still outspend other ethnic segments." *Target Market News*. 11 Aug 2003, 17 Oct 2003.

<http://www.targetmarketnews.com/buying%20Power%20report%2003.html>.

5. United States. Central Intelligence Agency. *World Factbook*. Langley: GPO, Oct 2003.
<<http://www.cia.gov/publications/factbook/geos.html>> 30 Oct 2003.

6. United States. U.S. Bureau of the Census *Poverty in the United States: 1995*. Washington: GPO 1993, 60-194, also John McWhorter. *Losing the Race: Self-Sabotage in Black America*. New York Harper Collins 2000.

7. United States. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children & Families. *Abandoned Babies - Preliminary National Estimates*. Washington: GPO.

8. United States. U.S. Bureau of the Census. *Children's Living Arrangements and Characteristics: March 2002*. Washington. GPO June 2003. 6 June 2003.

<http://www.act.hhs.gov/news/stats/abandon.html> (17 Oct 2003) U.S. Department of Health and Human Services National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information.

United States. National Adoption Information Clearinghouse. *Foster Care National Statistics*. Washington: GPO June 2003.

<<http://www.calib.com/nccanch.html>> (25 Oct 2003).

9. United States, U.S. Bureau of Census. Money Income in the United States. Washington: GPO 2000.

10. United States, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, National Center for HIV, STD, and TB Prevention. *Surveillance Report* - Volume 12, Number 2 Atlanta: 10 Aug 2001.

<<http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/stats/hasr1202/table20.html>> (30 Aug 2003).

11. United States, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control & Prevention. *Tracking the Hidden Epidemics*. "Trends in STDs in the United States 2000". Washington: GPO 2000.

12. United States, National Gambling Impact Study Commission, Final Report. "Problem and Pathological Gambling." Washington: GPO 18 Jun 1999.

<[http://www.casino-gambling-reports.com/GamblingStudy/ProblemGambling/ page10html](http://www.casino-gambling-reports.com/GamblingStudy/ProblemGambling/page10html)> (30 Aug 2003).

13. United States, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. *Twenty-third Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*.

Washington: 14 May 2002.

<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP/Products/OSDP2001A.nlRpt/ExecSumm.html>> (30 Aug 2003)

14. United States. National Center for Juvenile Justice. *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 1999 National Report*. Washington: GPO Sept 1999. pp150, 192-197.
15. United States. Federal Bureau of Prisons. *Federal Bureau of Prisons: Quick Facts*. Aug 2003
<<http://www.bop.gov/fact0598.html>> (2 Sept 2003).
16. United States, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Violence Prevention. Washington: GPO 20 Mar 1998.
17. United States. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institute of Health, National Institute of Diabetes & Digestive Kidney Diseases. Washington: GPO July 2003.
<<http://niddk.nih.gov/health/nutrit/pubs/statobes.html>>
(8 Sept 2003).
18. Morin, Richard. "The Color of Tips." *Washington Post*, 6 June 2003, 7 June 2003.
<<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A26773-2003June.html>>
19. United States. U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation Uniform Crime Reports. *Crime in the United States 2000*. Washington: GPO 2003, pp 236.
20. United States. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Office of Applied Studies. *The DASIS Report*. Arlington: 29 Mar 2003.

<<http://www.DrugAbuseStatistic.samhsa.gov>> (30 Aug 2003)
21. United States. National Institute of Health, National Cancer Institute, *Patterns of Cancer in the United States 1988-1992*. Bethesda: 1996 NIH Pub. No. 96-4104
22. Webb, Gary. "Dark Alliance: The Story Behind the Crack Explosion." *San Jose Mercury News*. 19 Aug 1996.
23. Valentine, Victoria. "The Courage to Publish." *Emerge*. Jan 1997: 36.
24. Nichols, Thomas M. "Putin's First Two Years: Democracy or Authoritarianism?" *Current History*. Oct 2002:310.

25. "Why (some) Women Like Bad Boys." *Ebony*. April 2003. 73-74, 76. It must be noted that Ebony did not site an author for this article.

Chapter 4 - Media and Cultural Propaganda

1. Gitlin, Todd. *Media Unlimited*. New York: Metropolitan Books. 2001.

2. Zengotita, Thomas de. "The Numbing of the American Mind: Culture as Aesthetic." *Harpers*. Apr 2002: 35.

3. Pascal, Blaire. *Pascal's Pensees*. Translation by Martin Turnell. London: Harrill Press. 1962.

4. Rutherford, Ward. *Hitler's Propaganda Machine*. London: Bison Books. 1978.

5. "Study Says Rap is Bad for Black Girls." *St. Louis American*. 6-12 Nov 2003, Vol 75 No. 34: A1, A6.

6. Frame, John M. *Contemporary Worship Music: A Biblical Defense*. Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1997, and Daniel Frankforter. *Stones for Bread: A Critique of Contemporary Worship*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.

7. Gallick, Sarah. *J.Lo: The Secrets Behind Jennifer Lopez's Climb to the Top*. Boca Raton: AMI Books 2003.

8. Why (some) Women Like Bad Boys." *Ebony*. April 2003. 73-74, 76. It must be noted that Ebony did not site an author fro this article.

9. Peterson, Deb. "Channel 46's UPN party draws Mo'nique and a Batch of Bakulas." *St. Louis Post Dispatch*. 3 Apr 2003, section D2.

10. "The Blue Tube: Foul Language on Prime Time Network TV." *Parents Television Council State of the Television Industry Report*. 24 Sept 2003, 26 Sept 2003.

<<http://www.parentstv.org/PTC/publications/reports/statindustrylanguage/main.asp.html>>

11. "African-American Television Usage: Daytime, Primetime, Late Night." *Nielsen Media Research*. 9 Oct 2003.

<<http://www.nielsonmedia.com/ethnicmeasure/africanamerican/AAdaytime.html>>

<<http://www.nielsonmedia.com/ethnicmeasure/africanamerican/AAprimetime.html>>

<<http://www.nielsonmedia.com/ethnicmeasure/africanamerican/AAlatenight.html>>

12. See previous note.

Chapter 5 - The State of the Individual

1. Lasch, Christopher. *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1979.

2. Keyes, Dick. *Beyond Identity: Finding Your Way in the Image and Character of God*. Carlisle Partnership Publishing, 1998.

3. Rassmussen, Larry L. *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Reality and Resistance*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972.

Chapter 6 - Education

1. Reid, Karla Scoon. "Meager Effort Said to Fuel Racial Gap." *Education Week*. 12 Mar 2003, Volume 22:1, 18.

2. "The Look of Abercrombie & Fitch." *60 Minutes*. KMOV, St. Louis. 7 Dec 2003.

3. Goldsmith, Susan. "Rich, Black, Flunking." 23 May 2003. 9 Oct 2003.

<<http://freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/916557/post.html>>

4. Ravitch, Diane. *The Language Police: How Pressure Groups Resist What Students Learn*. New York: Knopf, 2003.

Chapter 7 - Law and Order

1. Reed, Fred, "Police, Race, and the Fourth Estate: Have Cops Gone on Strike?" *Soldier of Fortune Magazine*. Aug, 2001: 48-51.

2. Schlosser, Eric. *Reefer Madness*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003.

Chapter 8 - Marriage and Sex Devalued

1. Rugoff, Milton. *Prudery & Passion*. New York: Putnam, 1971.

2. Manning, Wendy D., and Kathleen A. Lamb. "Adolescent Well-Being in Cohabiting, Married, and Single-Parent Families." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 65 (2003): 876-91.

3. Schlosser, Eric. *Reefer Madness*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003.

4. Same as above

5. Page, Clarence. "Nelly's new Pimp Juice drink sends a mixed message." *St. Louis Post Dispatch*. 16 Sept 2003. Nelly's plans to market an energy drink by the same name stirred a murmuring of controversy but did little harm to Nelly's nice guy rapper image. Strident criticism was absent in Nelly's hometown (and the author's). St. Louis Press.

6. Rosenbaum, Robert A. "Clinton Impeachment." *The Penguin Encyclopedia of American History*. New York: Penguin Books, 2003.

7. Berlin, Ira and Leslie S. Rowland. *Families and Freedom: A Documentary History of African-American Kinship in the Civil War Era*. New York: The New Press, 2002.

8. Loewen, James W. *Lies Across America: What our Historic Sites Get Wrong*. New York: The New Press, 1999.

9. Mulrine, Anna. "Risky Business." *U.S. News & World Report*, 2002: 42-49.

10. Buford, Michelle. "Girls and Sex: You Won't Believe What's Going On." *O*. Nov 2002.

11. IBD

12. Nichols, Bill. "Conservatives Cheer Mini-Series Cancellation." *USA Today*. 5 Nov 2003, 6A.

13. Rutgers University. "The State of Our Unions 2003" *The National Marriage Project*. Piscatany: 2003.

14. See above

15. "Americans Describe Their Views About Life After Death." *Barna Research Online*. 21 Oct 2003.

<<http://www.barna.org/cgi-in/PagePressRelease.asp?PressReleaseID=150&Reference=A.html>>

Chapter 9 - The State Of Black Clergy

1. Hamilton, Charles V. *The Black Preacher in America*. New York: William Marrow & Co., 1972.

2. "Abortion Statistics." *AbortionTV.com*. 6 Oct 2003.

<http://www.abortiontv.com/AbortionStatistics.html>.

3. "How wider use of a pill could quiet abortion fights." Editorial. *USA Today*. 30 Dec 2003, 12A.

4. Stricherz, Mark. "Abortion has cost 13 million African American lives."

5. "Gay marriage, civil rights aren't linked, some blacks say." *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, 30 Nov 2003. three star ed.

6. "Taking It to the Streets." *The Connection WBUR*, National Public Radio, Boston, 2 June 2003.

7. Gere, Richard. "Razzle Dazzle." *Chicago*. Epic Records, 2002.

McMickle, Mavin A. *Preaching to the Black Middle Class: Words of Challenge, Words of Hope*. Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2000.

8. Edwards, Jonathan. "Sin and wickedness bring calamity and misery on a people." *Jonathan Edwards Sermons and Discourses 1723-1729*. Ed. Kenneth P. Minkema. New Haven: Yale UP, 1997. 487.

9. Peterson, Robert A. *Hell On Trial: The Case for Eternal Punishment*. Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing., 1995.

10. Terkel, Studs. *Will the Circle Be Unbroken?* New York: New Press, 2001.

11. Fant, Clyde E. *Bonhoeffer: Worldly Preaching*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1975.

12. Peterson, Jesse Lee. *SCAM*. Nashville: WND, 2003.

13. Williams, Juan. *This Far By Faith*. New York: William Marrow, 2003.
14. McGreery, John T. "Culture vs. Faith." *Chicago Tribune*, 30 Nov 2003, late ed.: sec.14.
15. *The Howard Stern Show*. WXRK, New York, 17 Sept 2003.
16. McWhorter, John. *Losing the Race: Self-Sabotage in Black America*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001.
17. Gilligan, James. *Violence: Our Deadly Epidemic and Its Causes*. New York: Putnam, 1996.
18. Briggs, Jimmie. "No Finish Lines." *Emerge*. Jun 1994: 54-57.
19. Walston, Vaughn. "African American Mobilization." *Mission Frontiers*. Apr 2000. 19 Feb 2003. <<http://missionfrontiers.org/2000/02/walston.html>>.
20. McMickle, Marvin A. *An Encyclopedia of African American Christian Heritage*. Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2002.
21. See above
22. *No More Secrets, No More Lies*. Dir. Slan Hatch. Videocassette. King & King Training, 2002.

Chapter 10 - End Game

1. "Uganda's ABC Program." *All Things Considered*. National Public Radio, Washington, D.C. 1 Jan 2004. Uganda's HIV rate of 30% of the population has been cut to 6%.
2. Hyton, Wil S. "Sick On the Inside." *Harpers*. Aug 2003. 43-54.
3. Williams, Juan. *This Far By Faith*. New York: William Marrow, 2003. 290.
4. "Tearing Down Cabrin: Green." Prod. Michael Bronner. *60 Minutes*. New York. 23 July 2003.

Appendix A

RESOLUTION ON RACIAL RECONCILIATION ON THE 150TH
ANNIVERSARY OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

June 1995

WHEREAS, Since its founding in 1845, the Southern Baptist Convention has been an effective instrument of God in missions, evangelism, and social ministry; and
WHEREAS, The Scriptures teach that Eve is the mother of all living (Genesis 3:20), and that God shows no partiality, but in every nation whoever fears him and works righteousness is accepted by him (Acts 10:34-35), and that God has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on the face of the earth (Acts 17:26); and
WHEREAS, Our relationship to African-Americans has been hindered from the beginning by the role that slavery played in the formation of the Southern Baptist Convention; and
WHEREAS, Many of our Southern Baptist forbears defended the right to own slaves, and either participated in, supported, or acquiesced in the particularly inhumane nature of American slavery; and
WHEREAS, In later years Southern Baptists failed, in many cases, to support, and in some cases opposed, legitimate initiatives to secure the civil rights of African-Americans; and
WHEREAS, Racism has led to discrimination, oppression, injustice, and violence, both in the Civil War and throughout the history of our nation; and
WHEREAS, Racism has divided the body of Christ and Southern Baptists in particular, and separated us from our African-American brothers and sisters; and
WHEREAS, Many of our congregations have intentionally and/or unintentionally excluded African-Americans from worship, membership, and leadership; and

WHEREAS, Racism profoundly distorts our understanding of Christian morality, leading some Southern Baptists to believe that racial prejudice and discrimination are compatible with the Gospel; and

WHEREAS, Jesus performed the ministry of reconciliation to restore sinners to a right relationship with the Heavenly Father, and to establish right relations among all human beings, especially within the family of faith.

Therefore, be it RESOLVED, That we, the messengers to the Sesquicentennial meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, assembled in Atlanta, Georgia, June 20-22, 1995, unwaveringly denounce racism, in all its forms, as deplorable sin; and

Be it further RESOLVED, That we affirm the Bibles teaching that every human life is sacred, and is of equal and immeasurable worth, made in Gods image, regardless of race or ethnicity (Genesis 1:27), and that, with respect to salvation through Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for (we) are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28); and

Be it further RESOLVED, That we lament and repudiate historic acts of evil such as slavery from which we continue to reap a bitter harvest, and we recognize that the racism which yet plagues our culture today is inextricably tied to the past; and

Be it further RESOLVED, That we apologize to all African-Americans for condoning and/or perpetuating individual and systemic racism in our lifetime; and we genuinely repent of racism of which we have been guilty, whether consciously (Psalm 19:13) or unconsciously (Leviticus 4:27); and

Be it further RESOLVED, That we ask forgiveness from our African-American brothers and sisters, acknowledging that our own healing is at stake; and

Be it further RESOLVED, That we hereby commit ourselves to eradicate racism in all its forms from Southern Baptist life and ministry; and

Be it further RESOLVED, That we commit ourselves to be doers of the Word (James 1:22) by pursuing racial reconciliation in all our relationships, especially with our brothers and sisters in Christ (1 John 2:6), to the end that our light would so shine before others,

that they may see (our) good works and glorify (our) Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16); and
Be it finally RESOLVED, That we pledge our commitment to the Great Commission task of making disciples of all people (Matthew 28:19), confessing that in the church God is calling together one people from every tribe and nation (Revelation 5:9), and proclaiming that the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is the only certain and sufficient ground upon which redeemed persons will stand together in restored family union as joint-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17).

Atlanta, Georgia

<http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/amResolution.asp?ID=899>
Copyright © 1999-2002, Southern Baptist Convention. All Rights Reserved.

Appendix B

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

30TH General Assembly, 2002

During the annual meeting of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America that met in Birmingham in mid-June, the following resolution was overwhelmingly embraced with a standing ovation.

Whereas the heinous sins attendant with unbiblical forms of servitude-- including oppression, racism, exploitation, man stealing, and chattel slavery-- stand in opposition to the Gospel," and,

Whereas the effects of these sins have created and continue to create barriers between brothers and sisters of different races and/or economic spheres,' and, Whereas the aftereffects of these sins continue to be felt in the economic, cultural, and social affairs of the communities in which we live and minister.

We, therefore, confess our involvement in these sins. As a people, both our fathers and we have failed to keep the commandments, the statutes, and the laws God has commanded.

We, therefore, publicly repent of our pride, our complacency, and our complicity. Furthermore, we seek the forgiveness of our brothers and sisters for the reticence of our hearts that have constrained us from acting swiftly in this matter.

OVERTURE 14 from Rocky Mountain Presbytery (to CCB & B & O "Amend BCO 24-1 to Replace "should" With "shall"

Whereas the BCO 24-1, line 5, states that a "...prospective officer should be an active male

member. . ." using subjunctive mood to indicate a likely rather expected case; and

Whereas the normal circumstance for prospective officers must be an active and committed male member in a local PCA congregation; and

Whereas the indicative mood "shall" would better express the norm for prospective candidates;

Therefore the Rocky Mountain Presbytery, meeting April 26, 2001, respectfully overtures the General Assembly to replace the word "should" in line 5 of BCD 24-1 with the word "shall".

The new reading would then be "... keeping in mind each prospective officer shall be an active male member..."

That Overture 15 from Rocky Mountain Presbytery ("Amend BCO 24-1 to Specify "men" Rather Than "persons" be answered in the negative. [See also 30-29, III, p. 101.]

Adopted

Grounds: In this context "persons" refers to men. BCO 7-2 states "... these offices are open to men only." BCO 24-1 provides, "...keeping in mind that prospective officer should be an active male member meets the qualifications set forth in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1." It is worth noting that the term in question has been in this place since the original constitution of the PCUSA in 1788, so there can be no suggestion of unwholesome contemporary influence in its employment.

OVERTURE 15 from Rocky Mountain Presbytery (to CCB & B & O "Amend BCO 24-1 to Specify "men" Rather Than "persons'

Whereas, the Bible makes clear that the office of elder is for men only (see I Tim 2:12, I Tim 3:2 and Titus 1:6 [husband of one wife]) and

Whereas, the PCA has consistently and unashamedly held this view and

Whereas, while there may be some Biblical and exegetical disagreement about the ordination of women to the office of deacon among some in the PCA; yet at present the office of deacon is also available only to men (see I Timothy 3:2 [husband of one wife]) and

Whereas, the BCO 24-1, line one, says "persons" which is gender neutral rather than men;

Therefore Rocky Mountain Presbytery, meeting on April 26, 2001, respectfully overtures the General Assembly to replace the word "persons" in line one of BCQ 24-.1, with word "men".

The new reading would then be "Every church shall elect men to the offices of ruling elder and deacon ..."

That the General Assembly refer Overture 19 from Chesapeake Presbytery ("Erect a Study Committee on Ministry Amidst Ethnic Diversity") to the Committee of Commissioners on Mission to North America for their recommendation to the General Assembly.

[For text and action, see 30-31, Ill; 18, p. 188.]

That the General Assembly pause for prayer before beginning consideration of Overture 20, [see text and action at 30-53, III, 14, p. 262] and that the General Assembly suspend RAO 17- 4.d to allow 30 minutes on the main motion, without a motion for the previous question being in order, after the Committee, through its appointed representatives, has the opportunity to speak in favor of the Committee's recommendation for 10 minutes.

Adopted in accordance with RAQ 1.8

That Overture 20 from Nashville Presbytery ("Racial Reconciliation") be answered by the adoption of the following statement.

Adopted

Whereas, the heinous sins attendant with unbiblical forms of servitude-including oppression, racism, exploitation, man stealing, and chattel slavery-stand in to the Gospel; and,

Whereas, the effects of these sins have created and continue to create barriers between brothers and sisters of different races and/or economic spheres; and

Whereas, the aftereffects of these sins continue to be felt in the economic, cultural, and social affairs of communities in which we live and minister;

We therefore confess our involvement in these sins. As a people, both we and our fathers have failed to keep the commandments, the statutes, and the laws God has commanded. We therefore publicly repent of our pride, our complacency, and our complicity. Furthermore, we seek the forgiveness of our brothers and sisters for the reticence of our hearts that have constrained us from acting swiftly in this matter.

We will strive, in a manner consistent with the Gospel imperatives, for the encouragement of racial reconciliation, the establishment of urban and minority congregations, and the enhancement of existing ministries of mercy in our cities, among the poor, and across all social, racial, and economic boundaries, to the glory of God. Amen.

Note:

The Presbyterian Church in America participated in addressing the question of racial reconciliation as early as 1977, through her delegation to the NAPARC conference on race relations, and the resulting statement adopted.

That statement achieved a "consensus on a number of crucial issues" and it began by confessing serious inadequacies with respect to NAPARC member churches concerning race relations in the church:

We are convinced that we, as Reformed Christians, have failed to speak and act boldly in the area of race relations. Our denominational profiles reveal patterns of ethnic and racial homogeneity. We believe that this situation fails to give adequate expression to the saying purposes of our sovereign God, whose covenant extends to all peoples and races. "

We are convinced that our record in this crucial area is one of racial brokenness and disobedience. In such a situation the credibility of our Reformed witness, piety and doctrinal confession is at stake. We have not lived out the implications of that biblical and confessional heritage which we hold in common with each other, with its emphasis on the sovereignty and freedom of grace, on the absence of human merit in gaining salvation, and on the responsibility to subject all of life to the Lordship of Christ.

The statement continued with a summary of faithful biblical teaching adapted to address the defects confessed above:

Although there are marked distinctions and even divisions among men, including those of race, mankind, according to the teaching of the Bible, has a single origin. Later distinctions and divisions are indeed significant and may not simply be pushed aside; nevertheless, the Bible clearly teaches that the gospel is universal in its offer and its call. All men are created in the image of God and have fallen into sin, and are in need of redemption. All those who are in Christ are united together with Him as their Head in a new humanity, in which the distinctions and divisions that otherwise separate men are transcended in a new unity. True, the distinctions mentioned in the Bible as having been overcome in Christ are not primarily those of race, nor does the Bible think along lines that correspond with the distinctions of race as we understand them today; nevertheless, racial distinctions and divisions as we know and understand them today certainly fall under those things that have been transcended in Christ. How, then, is the new unity

in Christ to be expressed in the communion of the church today as it bears on the question of race?

The description of God's people in I Peter 2:9, 10, as a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, reveals the church's visible oneness as the community of those separated into the Lord. It is a oneness on the order of the racial, cultic, and national unity of Israel (Exodus 19:6), and it has the wonderful works of God. Therefore, the church's identity transcends and makes of secondary importance the racial, national and cultic identities of the world.

We see in Revelation 7:9, 10, the chosen race worshipping the Lamb in heaven. They come from different backgrounds, yet worship with one voice. Is- not the unity of our worship here on earth to be a copy of that which takes place within the heavenly sanctuary? Should not all those washed in the blood of the Lamb joyously worship together?

In the light of such scriptural teaching, the continued in the acknowledgement of sin on the part member churches:

In repentance we acknowledge and confess that we have failed effectively to recognize the full humanity of other races and the similarity of their needs, desires, and hopes to ours; and thus we have failed to love our neighbor as ourselves. . . Within the church, our members have exhibited such attitudes and actions as discourage membership or participation by minority groups...Our churches have not been free from such formal actions as discourage membership or participation by minority groups. They have been guilty of a lack of positive action concerning mission to ethnic groups in their neighborhoods and to ethnic groups at large. They have practiced a kind of cultural exclusivism, thinking of the church as "our church" rather than Christ's involves the sins of pride and idolatry.

Yet the statement was able to acknowledge the work of grace evident in this matter, particularly in the seminaries that serve the PCA:

We commend... Westminster Theological Seminary for its ministerial institute, which intends to assist inner-city pastors in their continued training in ministry and Covenant Theological Seminary for its Urban Ministers' Institute...

The statement concluded with a number of exhortations, among which are included:

We encourage congregations to reach out to the entire community around them. We encourage congregations to rise to meet the challenge of racial diversity in changing neighborhoods.

We encourage members of our congregations to remain in those communities where there are racially changing patterns.

We acknowledge that in order to change our unbiblical profile, we should urge churches in NAPARC to give priority to a vigorous pursuit of evangelism and church planting in racially, economically, and ethnically diverse communities. . . .

In reaffirming the great commission, we recommend . . . that cross-cultural evangelism be encouraged in our churches through preaching, modeling, and disciplining, through the elders and pastors, beginning with the use of our covenant families and homes, and house-to-house neighborhood outreach.

OVERTURE 20 from Nashville Presbytery (to B&O) "Racial Reconciliation"

Whereas, the Scriptures portray a covenantal pattern of both celebration of our rich heritage and repentance for the sins of our fathers; and,

Whereas, our nation has been blessed even as we have repeatedly addressed iniquity, redressed injustice, and

assessed restitution for our inconsistent application of the ideals of truth and freedom; and,

Whereas, the heinous sins attendant with unbiblical forms of servitude-including oppression, racism, exploitation, man stealing, and chattel slavery-remain among the defining features of our national history; and,

Whereas, the issues surrounding that part of our history continue to shape our national life, even creating barriers between brothers and sisters of different races and/or economic spheres from enjoying: unencumbered Christian fellowship with one another and,

Whereas, the aftereffects of that part of our history continue to be felt in the economic, cultural, and social affairs of the communities in which we live and minister.

We therefore confess our covenantal involvement in national sins. As a people, both we and our fathers have failed to keep the commandments, the statutes, and the laws our God has commanded. We; therefore publicly repent of our pride, our complacency, and our complicity. Furthermore, we seek the forgiveness of our brothers and sisters for the reticence of our hearts, which has constrained us from acting swiftly in this matter.

As a people, we pledge to work hard, in a manner consistent with the Gospel imperatives, for the encouragement of racial reconciliation, the establishment of urban and minority congregations, and the enhancement of existing ministries of mercy in our cities, among the poor, and across all social, racial, and economic boundaries, to the glory of God. Amen.

That Personal Resolution 6 be answered by reference to the Assembly's action with regard to Overture 20. [See 30-53, III, 14, p. 261.]

Whereas, the Presbyterian Church in America was formed to preach and teach the truth of God's Word with the

desire that its members would practice and live by the truth and as we are a young denomination meeting together for our 30th Annual General Assembly, we want to thank God for the enabling grace to do this as well as we have done it and confess that when and where we have failed it is our fault and because of our sin; and

Whereas, we acknowledge that corporately as a denomination and individually as members of the Presbyterian Church in America we have sinned, (Romans 3:23)

Whereas, we acknowledge that along with our many other sins, we may have corporately or individually sinned by slighting or offending a brother in Christ, and we as the people of God are called on in Scripture to repent of our sins as God reveals them to us by His Holy Spirit (Rev. 3:19, Acts 16:19-20, Luke 5:32, & II Cor. 7:10); and

Whereas, we recognize that each one of us must repent for our own sins as God holds each of us accountable for them (Ezekiel 18:20, Romans 14:12, Jeremiah 31:29-30, Deuteronomy 24:16), and

Whereas, we also recognize that Scripture establishes precedents for the confession of the past sins of others without assessing personal responsibility for those past sins to the confessing party (Neh. 1:5-7, Neh. 9:1-3, Daniel 9:4-19), and

Whereas, we recognize the dangers of sins of omission as being grave as those of the sins of commission (James 4:17, Psalm 51:16-17, Proverbs 21:3, Luke 12:47), and

Whereas, God's Word warns strongly against mistreating or not loving a Christian brother (I Corinthians 6:8, I Thessalonians 4:6, James 4:11-12), and

Whereas, we recognize that some have in the past, by commission and/or by omission, offended and slighted their brothers and sisters in Christ (I John 1:8-10), and

Whereas, we desire that all members of the Presbyterian Church in America conduct themselves first as the people of God - without favoritism, prejudice or partiality (Leviticus 19:15 & I Timothy 5:21), and

Whereas, we desire that all members of the Presbyterian Church in America not only show love for their brothers but that they actually have love for their brothers in their hearts (I John 4:21, Hebrews 13:1, Psalm 133:1 & John 13:34-35)

Appendix C

Appendix D

FSI Lecture Series

What Movies say about Race in America

by Rodrick Burton

INTRODUCTION

One does not need a theological degree to learn that nowhere in the New Testament are Christians called either to condone or practice inequality among believers. Furthermore, scripture found in James 2: 1-9 clearly prohibits discriminatory actions within in the church. The Apostle Paul repeatedly and explicitly explained that God's new people are united in faith by the sacred blood and atonement of the cross. Sadly, this has not deterred Satan's plans of constructing and maintaining divisive racial and economic inequity inside the Christian community. This is American Christianity's legacy of shame. The empirical data that Dr. Emerson and others have compiled over the years have conclusively demonstrated the obvious: the United States is a highly racialized society despite the often celebrated preeminence of Christianity.

Chapter 1

How Did We Get Here?

Omar Bradley stated in 1948, "we have grasped the mystery of the atom but rejected the sermon on the mount¹." Throughout Dr. Emerson's lecture at Covenant Seminary it was stressed that white Evangelical Christendom uses three methods to keep the head collectively buried in the sand on the race division issue. They involve a minimizing of the problem, assigning blame to individuals (a few bad apples) and shifting the blame to Blacks. Conversely, if one were to hearken to the rhetoric of prominent Christians they would be led to believe that this country stands as a

testament to the faith evidenced by undisputed material blessing. Within this arrogant construct of comfort and unexamined privilege, Christ's unifying message of reconciliation is denied, and new stones form for the nonbeliever to hurl. God's justice enabled the Civil Rights Movement to be successful. White Evangelical silence and overt opposition to Blacks' fight for equality under secular law drove scores to view Christianity as an impotent force to change the secular human condition and question its claims of legitimacy. This occurred at the critical juncture in human history when modernity transformed into postmodernism. As the youth of the sixties rebelled against the establishment, they turned from the God of their fathers, embracing the old Eastern gods, Mohammad's message, and old-fashioned hedonism.

The aforementioned state represents a dual tragedy. On one hand, White American Christians have not participated in the truth and reconciliation necessary to restore and build solid bridges across the racial divide. Yet on the other hand, Black Americans have not relinquished their roots of bitterness to the message of holistic forgiveness taught by Christ. The fumbling of the ball by the Christian majority in the 1960s has served as a siege ramp for Lucifer's campaign to promote Christian irrelevancy in the Western world.

Tragically, the continuation of unchallenged or single-sided challenges to eliminate the canyon dividing believers endures. I intend to explore the effects of racialization that Dr. Emerson discussed within the context of the film. Finally, I will conclude with a review of Spike Lee's "Clockers", and explore its relevance to the topic.

CHAPTER 2

HOORAY FOR HOLLYWOOD?

Movies. What are they? What do they mean to us? How ingrained are they in American

culture? This is what Roger Ebert had to say about movies:

We live in a box of space and time. Movies are windows in its walls. They allow us to enter others' minds-not simply in the sense of identifying with the characters, although that is an important part of it, but by seeing the world as another sees it!²

From Ebert we glean that movies are an art form that allows others to live through the character's eyes. This art form is unique in that the viewer is subject not only to the motion within the picture, but also to sound. Seeing a movie is the only way to feel its full impact.

Movies are not just an art, they are also a business. Rutgers film professor, John Belton, accurately described the American film industry as an "institution."³ This institution has always been honest with its proclamations that Hollywood was in the myth making business. Therefore, to sell tickets, Tinseltown's survival instinct is to put the best, most beautiful and idealized face forward. As a consequence, the subject of race relations has been deliberately ignored and romanticized, causing American history to be routinely rewritten.

Proverbs 12:17 instructs that a truthful witness gives honest testimony, but a false witness tells lies. As bearers of the ultimate truth, why are Christians silent as fiction is being promoted as truth? Hollywood's immoral images have been routinely attacked, but its web of historical lies has never been dismantled. This propaganda started in earnest with "Birth of a Nation."

CHAPTER 3

BLACK FILM: CONTEXT AND PERSPECTIVE

Race history affects all corners of American culture, including the film history. Regarding that

history, it is my contention that from its beginnings an ingrained, racialized worldview has been infused into its powerful medium, and has largely served to reinforce racist stereotypes, minimizing race problems to the present day.

Film critic Nelson George described contemporary Black film as, "flattened into formulas as a genre better understood as a market niche than an artistic aesthetic."⁴ How this came about over the years can be best understood by returning to the early days of film.

During the waking years of American film, a racial bombshell called "Birth of a Nation" was unleashed. D. W. Griffith's artful propaganda piece was released to a country in love with a new, revolutionarily stimulating medium. Griffith rewrote Southern Reconstructionist history by portraying the Confederate rebellion as an honorable cause, forever typecasting Southern society in a manner repeated to this very day in films such as "Gods and Generals." The "peculiar institution of slavery" was justified as Griffith depicted the newly empowered freed slaves engaged in corrupt governance. The most outrageous assertion made by the film is that the Ku Klux Klan's origins were a response to free Blacks' designs on sullyng White-womanhood.⁵ This film was a pop culture hit. It was received with such enthusiasm in the South that it resulted in an immediate spike in the ongoing tragedy of lynching. President Woodrow Wilson zealously expressed his approval for the film at a time when a racial hierarchy was enforced by Jim Crow laws. After enduring the South's backlash, American Blacks suffered a national "blame the victim" epidemic brought on by Griffith's visual heresy. The new medium wielded a power and influence that would later be further exploited by the Nazi regime.

Hollywood kept pace with society and its relegation of subservient roles for Blacks. In 1939 the landmark film "Gone with the Wind" was released. Yet again, a sympathetic look at an unsympathetic South was the subject. For the first time, a Black actress, Hattie McDaniel, won an Oscar for her role as Scarlet

O'Hara's personal slave. As time passed, Hollywood churned out cheap productions specifically marketed to black audiences. President Truman's integration of the armed forces to counter Cold War Communist propaganda spurred Hollywood to sally further into the realm of race relations, albeit with great trepidation.

Over the years a small cadre of Black actors and actresses worked in non-racially threatening roles to satisfy White audiences, White actors, and White directors, with a few notable exceptions (*Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, *No Way Out*). Late Modernism and the revolutionary 1960s seemed to signal an opportunity for more engaging film-making to compliment the changing times. Many blacks found a groundswell of new roles in movies and television. The problem was that television was free, and therefore played it safe by sticking to traditional entertainment. Therefore, Black roles were ancillary in nature. As for the road to Tinseltown, it detoured into the Black Exploitation film period. Roles were made abundant to those willing to play pimps, prostitutes, crooks, and various antisocial characters. Even famous stars such as Sidney Poitier and Bill Cosby had to do their time in Panavision and Technicolor film stereotyped cesspools. The image of the angry, oversexed, criminal-minded Negro served to justify social and religious balkanization.

From the 1970s onward, Hollywood has pressed forward, offering escapism, nihilism, and idealized love. Although the ranks of Black actors and actresses have swelled, there exist a handful of Black directors. It was not until 1991 that one was honored for his work. The film academy bestowed its coveted award upon a young Black director named John Singleton. His urban drama, "The Boys in the Hood," provided a glimpse of the lives of those living in crime plagued South-Central Los Angeles. In the final scene, the character "Dough Boy," played by rapper Ice Cube, utters a statement bemoaning America's indifference to the internecine culling taking place in urban centers nationwide. Unfortunately, he was wrong. Those living the American dream in suburban settings did not care about inner-city violence: they cared for it to remain

where it was. Again, a critically acclaimed motion picture about Black life reinforced the premise that "we" need to stay separated from "them". The White viewer was able to safely watch in his own home yet another movie telling him that Blacks are violent, oversexed, unemployable, and uncivilized. The credibility level was raised due to the fact that a Black man directed it.

As the 20th century progressed, corporations and Hollywood honed their marketing techniques to target products specifically designed to certain. The costly blockbuster films are tailored to appeal to all audiences, tend to stick to formulas, and avoid the race topic or other substantive issues. This holds true even for the popular independent film market. As in the real-world, the fictional world presents a divided nation as a given.

When one considers the recent historic Academy awards won by Halle Berry and Denzel Washington, it is clear that the wheel has turned full circle. This victory must briefly be explored. In 2002, after 74 years and a paltry six awards to black actors and actresses, the American Film Academy issued its first award to a Black woman for best actress (Halle Berry), and honored Denzel Washington with the best actor award in the same night. It was declared a historical night by all, especially industry insiders and Blacks long craving recognition in the field. What happened, however, was a historical rerun. Denzel Washington's award winning role was for playing a servant, a civil servant. He played the role of a vile, wicked, morally-depraved narcotic cop who was training a young new detective (Ethan Hawke). Over the course of the "training day," Washington's character tries thoroughly to corrupt Hawke who is a young, idealistic, upstanding White officer. As the final confrontation plays out in a Black neighborhood so lawless that Washington warns Hawke never to go there alone, the hood rejects Washington's authority and honors Hawke's.

Similarly, Halle Berry plays the role of a servant: a sexual servant. In "Monster's Ball" She has

a love affair with the son of a racist. So, some sixty years after receiving the first Oscars for playing the servant, the new awards again went to Blacks playing the servant.

CHAPTER 4

CLOCKERS: A SERMON ON THE MOUNT

I will now discuss Spike Lee's most profound and poignant work. *Clockers*, released in 1995, is a story about the inner city drug trade. The film was a joint effort by Lee and Martin Scorsese to bring Richard Price's novel of the same name to the screen. Spike Lee received good reviews for his work, but the commentary from the Black community was noticeably muted, for the film's message rang too close to home. Drugs have always plagued the Black community, but never to the degree that was epidemic in the 1960s. While conspiracy theorists claim that the government permitted the problem, the reasons for the initial deluges of heroin more than likely relate to Baby-Boomer Mafioso discarding old guard prohibitions against narcotic sales. Whatever the reason for the heinous epidemic, enterprising, disenfranchised Blacks expanded the trade until the neighborhood drug pusher reached institutional status.

The Crack epidemic and street gang proliferation of the late 1980s spewed forth new waves of urban bloodletting unseen since prohibition. Spike Lee's *Clockers* peered into the life of the dealers and the corrosive ripple effects of the trade within and without the Black community.

The main character, Strike (Mekhi Phifer), is a street dealer who comes under suspicion for a murder to which his brother has confessed. This older brother (Victor Isaiah Washington) is an upstanding, hard-working family man whose job at a neighborhood restaurant brings him face to face with customers who are local criminals. One homicide detective, Rocco Klein (Harvey Keitel), resists the cynicism and racism expressed by his partner and digs deeper into a would-be open and

shut case. Through Lee's storytelling, the viewer peers at the characters beyond the criminal activity to view secondary communal effects. In the housing projects where the story takes place, the viewers are allowed to witness how people struggle to live and raise children in areas most Americans would consider hell. As so many Black children are born and raised by single parents (seven in ten),⁶ young men such as Strike reach out to father figures, and so often in crime-plagued areas, this figure is an influential/older criminal. This dynamic is evidenced by some of the scenes between Strike and his boss, Rodney Little (Delroy Lindo). The mask of compassion is ripped away when Little, suspicious of continued police questioning, threatens Strike with death if he ever implicates his employer. Strike replicates this mentoring dynamic by taking a studious neighborhood kid under his wing and warning him of the street's dangers. Strike's brother, in jail awaiting trial, expects him to raise bail to release him from an environment that so many Black men have grown accustomed to.

The final act reveals the lamentable: those who were working to escape the ghetto become criminal perpetrators, and those surviving as predators within the environment continue to ply their vile trade. It is difficult to continue with this review without choking up on the horrible tragedy of it all. Two communities touting a universal faith infused with power from on high have accepted violent ghetto life to be a given, White Christians' by continued arrogance and benign neglect, and Black Christians' by equally absurd issues involving pride and neglect. The failure of the two to bridge the racial divide tarnishes Christ's message and robs those who would witness the Holy Spirit's power.

CHAPTER 5

THE SUM OF ALL FEARS

As I previously asserted, the 1960s presented an opportunity for reconciliation as well as an attack pad from which a unified Christian America could have challenged Hollywood's worldview. What remains today

are Black films that embody age old stereotypes in new costumes. The Black church leaves these images unchallenged. Are we so appreciative of acting jobs that we ignore Paul's call to hate what is evil (Romans 12:9)? Are we so pleased to see ourselves on the silver screen that we never protest the content? I ask White Christians, if it is a worthy cause to unite against abortion, why is it called Communism when questions arise about ending poverty or redistributing wealth? Has the worship of American individualism trumped the New Testament's call to unite obediently and serve the faith community? How long will the Black Clergy rally to every public affront, real or perceived?

Christ said that we are to love our neighbor as ourselves, calling this the second most important commandment. To bridge the chasm that continues to divide us we must consider, as did the Jews after hearing Jesus' Samaritan parable, whether we know who our neighbors are. Do we love ourselves? Does the world hate us for espousing the faith and failing to live it at home? I have neighbors that I have known for years. I would never sit idly by while one neighbor's basement disgorged smoke, nor would I let another's home be defaced by vandals without challenging them. Black Christians need help putting out the fires in the cities, and White Christians need to lead the charge in challenging Hollywood's divisive lies. I pray for the day when this mote in the eye of American Christianity is removed. I know that the fallen condition of the world will increase until the Messiah's return. However, through him we have access to the power to witness with a unity unknown to these shores. United by faith, we can move the mountain into the chasm that divides us.

WHAT MOVIES SAY ABOUT RACE IN AMERICA

ENDNOTES

1 Knowles, Elizabeth, ed. *The Oxford Dictionary of 20th Century-Quotations*. New York: Oxford UP, 1998.

2 Ebert, Roger. *The Great Movies*. New York: Broadway Books, 2002.

3 Belton, John. *American Cinema/American Culture*. New York: McGraw Hill, 1994.

4 George, Nelson. *Blackface: Reflections on African Americans and the Movies*. New York: Coopersquare Press, 2002.

5 Lang, Robert, ed. *The Birth of a Nation*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1994.

6 United States. *Census 2000*. Washington: 2000.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Belton, John. *American Cinema/American Culture*. New York: Broadway Books, 2002.

Cripps, Thomas. *Making Movies Black*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Ebert, Roger *The Great Movies*. New York: McGraw Hill, 2002.

George, Nelson. *Blackface: Reflections on African Americans and the Movies*. New York: Coopersquare Press, 2002

Knowles, Elizabeth, ed. *The Oxford Dictionary of 20th Century Quotations*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Lang, Robert, ed. *The Birth of a Nation*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994.

United States. *United States Census 2000*. Washington D.C.: 2000.

