

God's Answer to Ethnic Hatred and Violence

Rod Reynolds

In a six month period just over a hundred years ago, from April to early October, in 1919, race riots bloodied the streets of at least twenty-five American cities and towns.

These were but some of the many riots involving ethnic hatreds between and among various groups that have occurred within the United States during its history. This in addition to various wars, including the French and Indian War (during the Colonial period), the Civil War, and other wars involving American Indians.

Conflict between ethnic groups, whether designated races, nationalities, or some other term, is a problem that has gone on among human beings the world over from the earliest times of human existence.

What is the origin of such hatreds, how are they propagated, and what can we as Christians do to make sure we are not drawn into such evils?

It's recorded in Genesis of two brothers: "Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, 'I have acquired a man from the Lord.' Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell" (Genesis 4:1-5).

As a result of his anger and jealousy Cain murdered his brother Abel. Adam and Eve subsequently had another son, named Seth. And following that, other sons and daughters (Genesis 5:3-4).

The population of the earth grew exponentially, but with it came trouble. The various families of human beings who had become the earth's inhabitants were at one another's throats, so to speak. The earth was filled with violence. And God regretted that he had created human beings in the first place. "Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart" (Genesis 6:5-6).

Violence resulting from the corruption due to human nature influenced by Satan pervaded the entire world. "The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth" (Genesis 6:11-12).

So God destroyed that world with a flood, and only eight people were saved alive by God's intervention to begin a new world. But human nature didn't change. And the history of human kind since that time is largely a history of struggle for dominance among various nations, or ethnicities. Conflict, violence, war, oppression have been hallmarks of mankind's existence.

What Is Race and Racism?

When it comes to the matter of race, we might ask, what is race?

The idea of race is a rather ill defined one, with various ideas about what constitutes a "race." In a general sense, race has often been defined by skin color. The "white race," the "black race," the "brown race," the "red race," the "yellow race," for example.

One definition from the *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, Fifth edition is:

"A group of people identified as distinct from other groups because of supposed physical or genetic traits shared by the group."

A second definition from the same source is:

"A genealogical line; a lineage."

By those definitions a "race" could be, and often is, defined much more narrowly than is implied by skin color alone. One could speak of the "Irish race," for example, or the "Japanese race." And in fact such terms are not at all uncommon.

If race refers to a group of people sharing a common ancestry, or ethnic identity, then what is "racism"?

Racism:

1) "unfair treatment of people, or violence against them, because they belong to a different race from your own."

2) "the belief that different races of people have different characters and abilities, and that your own race is the best."

(*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*).

Who is capable of unfair treatment of people, or violence against them, because of difference in race? Pointing to a history of racially motivated mistreatment of black people and others, it's become fashionable among some radical elements to assert that only white people can be "racists."

It is certainly true that white people can be racists. "White people," by the way, includes a vast array of widely diverse ethnicities. But just a little thought based on facts can inform us that there is no racial or ethnic group that is incapable of racism.

Take the Japanese, for example, whom most would not classify as among the "white race," whatever that is.

In writing about the Japanese war with China in the 1930's, in which the Japanese were the aggressors, Anthony Beevor, in his book *The Second World War* describes the "rape of Nanking" as it is called, which began December 13, 1937 and continued well into February and by some accounts to the end of March. An estimated 200,000 to 300,000 were killed, although the exact number is unknown, in an orgy of pillage, humiliation, torture, rape and murder of the civilian population and surrendered Chinese soldiers, in the most heinous ways one could imagine, or perhaps not imagine.

In explaining the psychology behind the extreme brutality of the Japanese towards the Chinese, Beevor writes: The Japanese soldier, "...had ...been indoctrinated since elementary school to believe that the Chinese were totally inferior to the 'divine race' of Japanese and were 'below pigs'" (Little, Brown and Company, 2012, p. 60).

What about American Indians, could they be capable of ethnic hatred? The fact is, long before European settlers in large numbers began migrating to North America, many American Indian tribes did not get along well together, and were constantly fighting one another. Among many American Indian tribes, fighting, attacking, making war on other tribes was deeply embedded in their culture.

In 1833, for example, most of the men of fighting age in a Kiowa band camped in what is now Southwestern Oklahoma had left on a raiding expedition against Utes, a tribe to the northwest, intending "to return with scalps, horses and other plunder." Mostly women, children, and old men were all who were left in the camp

when a band of Osage, long time enemies of the Kiowas, attacked and wantonly slaughtered many of the women and children, and some of the men (*The Great Chiefs*, Time-Life Books, 1975, pp. 15-17).

Meanwhile, "For 200 years, the Apaches had preyed on the villages, the haciendas, the herds and pack trains of Mexico.... In no man's memory had there been a time when Mexicans and Apaches had not hated each other. To the Mexicans, the Apaches were a scourge and a curse. To the ... Apaches, the Mexicans ... were worthy of nothing but contempt" (*ibid.*, p. 63).

Peter Wood, of the National Association of Scholars, addresses in an article the question, "Where Did We Get the Idea That Only White People Can Be Racist?" He writes: "The twin themes 'only whites can be racist' and 'all whites are racist' appeared at the University of Delaware in 2007. The 'sustainability' dorm-based indoctrination program at UD offered this aperçu:

"A RACIST: A racist is one who is both privileged and socialized on the basis of race by a white supremacist (racist) system. 'The term applies to all white people (i.e., people of European descent) living in the United States, regardless of class, gender, religion, culture or sexuality. By this definition, people of color cannot be racists, because as peoples within the U.S. system, they do not have the power to back up their prejudices, hostilities, or acts of discrimination...'" (www.nas.org, May 15, 2015).

It should be noted that black people, about 12 percent of the population of the United States, occupy positions of "power" on every level of the nation's society. There are black mayors of many large cities.

"Of the 100 largest cities in the country, 39 have had elected black mayors. In 2018, 57.1% of black mayors served in cities (over 40,000) that did not have a black majority population.

"By 2018, that number has dropped to 40.6%. Perhaps the introduction and prevalence of the Black mayor has helped America become more comfortable with Black politicians in positions of major leadership. In 2018 there were about 32 Black Mayors of cities with populations of more than 40,000 according to our estimates...."

"Two of America's newest cities are majority Black (89% or more) and located in Suburban Atlanta. They are made up of formerly unincorporated Black communities many of which are middle-class [w]ho decided to take local control of their own fate from the county governments who governed them. The city of Stonecrest for example is 93% Black and has a median income above \$60,000 annually" ("Black Mayors," blackdemographics.com, retrieved July 30, 2020).

There are numerous black police chiefs. The **majority** of police officers in many major cities are of “minority” (non-white) ethnic groups (blacks, hispanics, others). There are black Congressmen and women and Senators, and a half-black man was recently President of the United States for two terms. There are and have been for decades Justices of the Supreme Court who are black, and other judges and officials in virtually every level of government. There are many successful black entrepreneurs, corporate executives, actors and actresses, singers, musicians, media personalities, professors, doctors, etc. If anything, some professional sports, football and basketball, for example, are over-represented by blacks. Maybe it's because they tend to excel at those particular sports. Moreover, the laws of the United States prohibit racial discrimination in hiring, housing, and other aspects of behavior governed by law. The idea of a “white supremacist” system in the United States today is a canard, a hoax, a myth, perpetrated for sinister reasons.

The idea that blacks or “people of color” cannot be racist, and that all whites are inherently racist, has been repeated by many others, especially leftists in academia, government, and the media.

As an aside, I've never met or seen a “white” person. So far as I know, my ancestors migrated to what is now the United States from the British Isles. My skin is certainly not white, but more of a light pinkish color, except where tanned, and there it's more of a brownish color, on occasion during my lifetime quite dark. My eyes are brown and until it began turning gray, my hair has been most of my life dark brown or black. At times I've been mistaken for an “Indian.” In any case, I did not know that “white” is not a color. So, I conclude that every human being is a “person of color.” But speaking of “white” people has become a convention that we'll have to put up with for the purpose of this article.

From April to July of 1994 in the African country of Rwanda a genocidal campaign of murder was carried out by extremist elements of Rwanda's majority ethnic Hutu population who sought to exterminate the minority ethnic Tutsi population of the country. “It is estimated that some 200,000 Hutu, **spurred on by propaganda from various media outlets**, participated in the genocide. More than 800,000 civilians — primarily Tutsi, but also moderate Hutu — were killed during the campaign” (“Rwanda Genocide of 1994,” www.Britannica.com, retrieved June 12, 2020).

It should be noted that although an estimated 200,000 Hutu participated in the killing, many others, by far the majority, did not directly participate.

Hutu and Tutsi are black skinned, somewhat distinct ethnic groups in Rwanda that share a common language. There is a history of tension between the two groups. The genocide was organized by Hutu extremists who sought to eliminate moderate Hutu and Tutsi politicians in order to create a political vacuum and take control of the country. “**Radio broadcasts further fueled the genocide by**

encouraging Hutu civilians to kill their Tutsi neighbours, who were referred to as 'cockroaches' who needed to be exterminated" (*ibid.*).

Peter Wood in the article referenced earlier comments further on the assertion that black people cannot be racist promoted by so-called "progressives": "The idea that 'black people can't be racist' is just a meme, not a coherent argument. It is easy to see why it appeals. The programs these folks want to defend and, if possible, advance, **are inherently racist**. That is, they divide people into primary groups by race; treat race as 'essential'; and distribute public goods according to racial group identification and affiliation. **This is purely and simply racism.**"

It is **egregious racism** to accuse all people of a particular race of an inherent character flaw, that only applies to them, because of their race. **Such racist ideology is disgusting, dangerous, and should be repudiated by every sane, fair-minded person!**

Racism and ethnic hatred is not confined to any one race. Such hatred, bigotry and prejudice is an evil that is a **human problem** that may, potentially, affect anyone.

What is the Origin of Ethnic Conflict?

So what is the origin of ethnic conflict? "**Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have.** You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures" (James 4:1-3).

Part of the problem is lust, covetousness, envy, the desire to take with little or no concern for others. This leads to unfair competition, taking unjust advantage of others who are weaker. **Some become aggressors, actively planning to seize what is not theirs. They harbor evil intentions to neutralize or destroy anyone who gets in their way.**

Nations, or ethnic groups, depending on the circumstances, become distrustful, suspicious, of their neighbors. They may arm for war. **They plot and accuse.** They may harbor anger, bitterness and hatred for perceived wrongs. It doesn't take much after suspicion and mistrust have developed to set off a conflagration.

How is racism and ethnic hatred propagated?

How is racism and ethnic hatred propagated? World War II was started by a maniac who preached race hatred. He, Adolph Hitler, sought to exterminate the Jews, he coveted areas to the east inhabited by Slavic peoples and intended to

seize them. He had a score to settle with France. He wanted to aggrandize his own nation at the expense of others, and he was ruthless in his ambitions.

So through propaganda, through slander, through stirring up passions of envy and hatred, through threats, intimidation and force, he persuaded the German people to follow his mad plans to humiliate and destroy the Jews, to make war on their neighbors. Some heroically resisted, but the vast majority became willing to follow wherever Hitler led them.

The psychology and tactics were little different from those used to persuade the Hutu who followed the propagandists comparing the Tutsi to cockroaches, and urged their destruction, or those of the Japanese militants who viewed the Chinese as inferior, and of less worth than pigs.

If you read about race riots, it's remarkable how often they were begun or spurred on by rumor, false accusations, or sensational and irresponsible news reporting. One city that experienced a riot in 1919 was Washington, D.C. As recounted in *Race Riot*, by William M. Tuttle, Jr., "In June and July, four women were allegedly assaulted in Washington, and three in the portion of Maryland contiguous to the District of Columbia. **The press featured emotional accounts of these attacks,** imputing them all, without substantive evidence, to blacks. One alleged victim claimed that she had been sexually assaulted by 'two young negroes ...wearing white shirts, no coats, tan or yellow hats.' Two weeks later she admitted that she had not been attacked by black youths, or indeed attacked at all. But the denial received minuscule coverage compared to the initial accusation. Such **inflammatory journalism** aroused the ire of whites, especially of military personnel stationed in or near the Capital, and racial tension mounted. On Saturday, July 19, the *Washington Post* ran headlines telling of another sexual assault: 'NEGROES ATTACK GIRL ...WHITE MEN VAINLY PURSUE' [read the headline]. The next night Washington exploded. Racial tempers flared after a minor dispute on Pennsylvania Avenue in the midst of the capital city. Roaming bands of soldiers, sailors, and Marines began to **molest any black person in sight....**" Violence ensued for three days as white mobs ran amuck. Blacks retaliated.

"During the riot, further irresponsible journalism, by both the white and black press, heightened the anger of the mobs." A black newspaper ran an incendiary headline alleging an assault on a black female. Only if the article was read was it learned that the alleged "assault" was only a verbal assault.

The *Washington Post* ran an article detailing a plan for white service men to assemble at a particular place and time to engage in further violence. “Thus **the Post had not only inflamed the passions of the rioters**, it had even furnished them with a battle plan.” Finally, federal troops were called in to restore order. Six had died in the rioting, and around 100 injured (*Race Riot*, Atheneum, 1970, pp. 29-30).

Rumor, accusations, often false, and inflammatory rhetoric are common when racial and ethnic grievances and suspicions flare up into violence. “My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. **Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell**” (James 3:1-6).

The Greek word used in verse six (*trochos*), translated “course,” could also be translated “cycle.” The word translated “nature” (*genesis*), means “birth.” One is **born** into a race and in some cases a class. And the cycle continues for generations – in perpetuity.

For generations many Arabs have hated Jews. And so it is with hatred involving other races or ethnic groups. Why do these hatreds exist?

James tells us that, in addition to other factors already mentioned, at the bottom of the ever present class and race hatred is a flapping tongue. It's the fire that keeps the fuel – human nature – burning! Such hatreds are taught – by word – perhaps by parents, teachers, organized groups with an agenda, or other elements in a society.

Christ said, “... out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks” (Matthew 12:34). So also what people hear they soon may begin to believe, especially if what they hear is evil. So it's a tremendous responsibility for anyone who teaches or seeks to influence others to be certain that what he believes and speaks is right and good.

But alas, such is often not the case. James said, **“the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity”!**

Adolph Hitler wrote in his autobiography, a blueprint for disaster, *Mein Kampf*, “All great movements are eruptions of human passion stirred by the firebrand of the word.” He should know.

It was by means of his fiery oratory and the inflammatory propaganda ground out by his minions that he stoked the coals of race hatred to an intense white-heat. As a result, millions of Jews, Poles, and other races deemed “inferior” went up – literally – in smoke! The world was cast into a conflagration of monumental proportions.

It was his fanatical teachings based on the doctrine of the super race (*Herrenvolk*) that resulted in the bloodbath of World War II. **Communists have used similar propaganda techniques to stir up race and class hatreds. Militant “firebrands” in the United States and elsewhere stoke the fires of envy, bitterness, hatred, bigotry, and violence today, as in past eras. The result: Bloody streets, dead people, cities going up in smoke!**

God Almighty warns through the apostle James: “My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment” (James 3:1). Whatever his cloak or excuse may be – religion, past injustices – whatever – the doctrines and behavior of anyone preaching class or race hatred is condemned.

“Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?” (James 4:11-12).

“Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door” (James 5:9).

God's answer to hatreds among human beings

God requires that we make sure our speech reflects purity of heart. That would go along way toward preventing or solving problems between races or ethnic groups. “The words of the pure are pleasant” (Proverbs 15:26). “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt” (Colossians 4:6).

Hatred and anger stir up strife. "Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all sins" (Proverbs 10:12). "An angry man stirs up strife, And a furious man abounds in transgression" (Proverbs 29:22).

Our hearts must be reformed so that we love other people, regardless of class, race or ethnicity. "Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer. For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, **who shows no partiality** nor takes a bribe. He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing. Therefore love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Deuteronomy 10:16-19).

We must learn to love our neighbors, and treat all people fairly without partiality. "If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors" (James 2:8-9).

Past grievances and wrongs are no excuse to nurse hatred and resentment. We must learn to forgive, especially if the guilty party expresses remorse and repents. "Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you" (Ephesians 4:31-32).

Because some people of a particular racial or ethnic group are evil, doesn't mean they all are. If a white person harms a black person, or vice versa, there's no excuse for assigning guilt to the entire group.

And today's generation is not responsible for the sins of past generations. "**The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son.** The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself. But if a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him; because of the righteousness which he has done, he shall live" (Ezekiel 18:20-22).

God loves all people, and does good, and we should do the same. "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the

good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be [or become] perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:44-48).

If everyone were doing these things, there wouldn't be any hatred, wars, or conflict between races and nations. Someday, in the Kingdom of God, there will be such peace and harmony. But for now, it's up to each one of us to purge from our hearts any enmity or spite towards people because of race, nationality or ethnicity, if we have such.

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