

# [A Creationist Response to Race and Racism](#)

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- [social issues](#)

The tragic and senseless death of George Floyd on May 25, 2020 has seemingly changed American society forever. The explosion of race-related discussions, dialogues, debates, and demands along with protests, counter-protests, statue-topplings, and riots are all evidence of this fact. “Race” and “racism” have become two of the most charged words in the English language today, not only in this nation but across the globe as reverberations of the event in Minneapolis have literally been felt worldwide. These events in the larger culture naturally impact the church as well and demand an appropriate Christian and biblical response. Obviously the “Christian” response has not been a unified one as different denominations and churches have responded in different ways, and not all denominations have the Word of God as their final authority for faith and practice. In this newsletter, however, TASC strives to look at all issues from a specifically biblical and creationist perspective. It is my goal in this article to do just that with the issues of “race” and “racism,” particularly in light of the cultural context of 21st century America.

To begin with, it is important to make a clear distinction between the two words “race” and “racism.” As a matter of fact, the main thesis of the article is this very distinction. Though related in root, the two terms are very different in application. I will argue in this article that the word “race” is actually a cultural construct with no merit biblically or scientifically. In other words, there is no such thing as “races” biblically or scientifically, at least in the way the term is typically used today that includes the baggage of Darwinian evolution. It could be argued that there are “races” if the term is only used to distinguish one people-group from another with no implications of differing evolutionary history, but even then there are many people on earth that would not fit neatly into any one “racial” category. In contrast, the word “racism” represents a legitimate cultural crisis that should concern and grieve every Bible-believing Christian. For many years, biblical creationists have been emphasizing the first of these two points in their writings. Whole books have been written on the subject making clear the point that biblical creationists have never accepted the idea of separate “races,” and therefore racism should be unequivocally condemned. [1](#) Many valid points were also made in these writings about how racism was embraced and promoted by most all early Darwinists. These points were valid in both scientific and logical argumentation. These writings, to their credit, also pointed out the second of the points above, that racism has always been a societal evil. However, perhaps not enough attention was given to the fact that even Christians have been guilty of racism through the years and that racist thinking is still alive and well today in various circles. The fact that racism was promoted by Darwinists does not negate the Christian’s responsibility to have compassion on the victims of racism.

In not emphasizing this equal but opposite truth to a greater degree, it is possible that biblical creationists might have unwittingly come across as dismissive or not caring enough about the legitimate pain and struggles still experienced by people of color today. In his short book *The Grace and Truth Paradox*, [2](#) theologian Randy Alcorn lays out a Christ-like balance for responding to any

issue, whether in our personal lives or in society as a whole. A Christian's response should balance grace for others and their feelings with truth from God's Word. We should neither be too harsh with truth, not caring for the perspectives of others, or water down truth for the sake of harmony and acceptance with others. It is such a balanced perspective on the subjects of race and racism that I will strive to lay out in this article. We need both biblical and scientific clarity about race coupled with a biblical compassion and empathy for those who have suffered from the abomination of racism.

## The Illegitimate Theory of "Race": A Cultural Construct

The word "race" is not a biblical term, because biblically there is only one "race," the human race. Acts 17:26 as well as the Genesis account of creation makes this point very clearly. Nonetheless, there are many different groups of people who share common physical features that separate them, in appearance, from other groups of people. How do we explain the origin of these various people-groups which modern society terms as "races"? Some past Christians tried to answer this question by alluding to the tower of Babel, where God confused the speech of mankind and formed the various languages. This position, that virtually no creationists accept today, postulated that God also created the various races at this point. This, however, is an unnecessary assumption with no biblical evidence. Even worse, some have claimed that the Bible teaches that the curse on Ham mentioned in Genesis 9:25 was the cause of dark skin. It is important to point out, however, that the curse was not on Ham but on Canaan, his youngest son, and the Canaanites likely were brown-skinned (Genesis 10:15-19). Commentator Kenneth Mathews writes:

There are no grounds in our passage for an ethnic reading of the "curse" as some have done, supposing that some people are inferior to others. Here Genesis looks only to the social and religious life of Israel's ancient rival, Canaan, whose immorality defiled their land and threatened Israel's religious fidelity (cf. Lev 18:28; Josh 23). [3](#)

Though a few Christian interpreters of the past, always "white," might have suggested this unbiblical position, it has never been widely accepted or the majority opinion of the church. It has actually been a favorite tool of cultists of the past and secularists of the present to say that the Bible teaches this. Note, for instance, from 1958 writings of the Mormon church: "We know the circumstances under which the posterity of Cain (and later of Ham) were cursed with what we call Negroid racial characteristics." [4](#) Jehovah's Witness publications have made similar claims. [5](#) So it is historically inaccurate to say that it was primarily Christians who promoted the idea of separate "races" or were responsible for racism and slavery. It is actually historically the case that in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, slavery had been a world-wide abomination for centuries among nearly all people groups, and it was evangelical Christians, with their biblical worldview, who were most responsible for the abolitionist movement. One notable example was William Wilberforce, who labored tirelessly in the British Parliament to abolish the slave trade. He first introduced a bill to that effect in 1789, but Parliament did not move to pass a bill and abolish the slave trade until 1807. In 1833 Wilberforce died shortly after "The Emancipation Act," which freed all slaves in the British empire, passed the House of Commons. The movie *Amazing Grace* depicts his life-long struggle for this cause, and it would be a great tool for families to use as a way to educate children on the horrors of the slave trade and the Christian response to it.

Where did the idea of "races" originate then? Though the idea certainly predates Darwinism, the idea of separate "races," especially in the scientific community, was given a huge boost by Darwin's theory of evolution in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The late Stephen J. Gould, perhaps America's most famous evolutionary scientist at the time of his death wrote, "Biological arguments for racism may have been

common before 1850, but they increased by orders of magnitude following the acceptance of evolutionary theory.” [6](#)

Darwin himself clearly promoted racist ideas. Few remember that the subtitle to his famous *The Origin of Species by Natural Selection was The Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life*. He predicted in a later book *The Descent of Man* that:

...the civilised races of man will almost certainly exterminate, and replace, the savage races throughout the world.... The break between man and his nearest allies will then be wider, for it will intervene between man in a more civilised state, as we may hope, even than the Caucasian, and some ape as low as a baboon, instead of as now between the negro or Australian and the gorilla. [7](#)

In light of statements such as this, an interesting question could be posed: Why is no one clamoring to remove Charles Darwin from the history books or topple his statues? Not only are his teachings on race morally repugnant, his spurious scientific musings that underlie his racism are required learning for our public school children. [8](#) Furthermore, lest we think it was only the founder of “Darwinism” that was guilty of such thinking, it is important to note that nearly all of the early Darwinists shared this racist thinking! This fact has been documented in an important book by John Haller entitled *Outcasts from Evolution*. [9](#)

By way of example, a high school biology text-book from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century reads:

At the present time there exist upon the earth five races or varieties of man, each very different from the others in instincts, social customs, and, to an extent, in structure. There are Ethiopian or negro type, originating in Africa; the Malay or brown race, from the islands of the Pacific; the American Indian; the Mongolian or yellow race, including the natives of China, Japan, and the Eskimos; and finally, the highest type of all, the Caucasians, represented by the civilized white inhabitants of Europe and America. [10](#)

Quotes such as these should be repugnant to any Bible-believing Christian that understands that all men were created in the image and likeness of God. The result of these racist attitudes of early Darwinists were countless barbaric acts such as the eugenics movement that forced sterilization of over 60,000 United States citizens [11](#) and motivated Margaret Sanger, the founder of Planned Parenthood, who “explicitly promoted abortion among those she considered ‘human weeds,’ which included black people.” [12](#)

In contrast to the false explanations for the origin of “races,” a more likely explanation comes from the study of genetics. Creationists obviously believe that all men descended from Noah and his wife. Furthermore, virtually all modern evolutionists will agree that all the races descended from the same ancestors, though many used to speculate that the different races evolved separately. Therefore, we must assume that there is a genetic answer to this question, and indeed the scientific evidence verifies our assumption. We can logically assume that Noah and his wife possessed a far more complete gene pool than we have today and were capable of producing offspring of varying skin colors, facial features, hair color, etc. It is interesting to note that there is really only one skin color - *melanin*. This is a brownish pigment which produces skin color. All humans have it (with the exception of albinos who are unable to produce it due to an inherited mutation), but some have more than others. “So the different ‘colours’ are controlled by genes regulating the amount of melanin produced.” [13](#) It can be shown genetically that if we were to start with two mid-brown parents who

both had genes for both dark and light skin, a whole range of color (from black to white) could result within only a single generation. In the modern world this scenario can be reproduced when mixed-race people marry one another. Their children can display a wide variety of skin shades. One example is from Nottingham, United Kingdom where in April of 2005 a set of beautiful twin girls (one “black” and one “white”) were born (see picture). In this case both of their parents, Remi Horder and Kylee Hodgson, had “white” British mothers and “black” Jamaican fathers. [14](#)



Photo by Gary Roberts, from Creation Ministries International (2007) Two-tone twins. *Creation* 29(2):28–29, <https://creation.com/two-tone-twins>. Accessed 2020 Jul 14

Furthermore, it can be shown that the so-called racial characteristics that are supposed to distinguish one “race” from another, like skin color and eye shape, account for only 0.012% of human biological variation. In contrast, if one takes any two people in the world, the basic genetic differences between them would typically be about 0.2%, even if they came from the same people-group. [15](#) In other words, there is more genetic difference between any two people of the same “race” than between any two “races.” Clearly the Bible is right when it says that all human beings are of “one blood” (Acts 17:26).

Therefore, we can assume that all the various races originated from the offspring of Noah’s sons and daughters-in-law as they spread out from Babel into small groups that only interbred with one another. Each group would start with different mixes of genes and would also encounter different environments. Over time, gene combinations suitable for the specific environments (i.e., lighter skin in cold climates and darker skin in warm climates) would tend to dominate numerically. Eventually, this would cause each group to develop into a specific people-group that modern terminology would call a “race.” Each of these groups, however, would retain the image and likeness of God, though marred by sin, that reflected the original creation. Thus, all human lives are precious to God because all humans reflect the image and likeness of their Maker!

## **The Legitimate Tragedy of Racism: A Cultural Crisis**

Though not contradicting anything written above, there is another side of this same coin that we must consider, or we (that is to say “white” American evangelical Christians) will likely leave people of color unimpressed and unconvinced of our opposition to racism. Scientific and logical reasons of why there shouldn’t be racism will not remove the hurt from those who have suffered from real racism, however unbiblical it may have been. In other words, we now need to add “grace” to the formula lest it be out of balance with only “truth.” The grace element, in essence, will seek to empathize with victims of

racism and attempt to put ourselves in their shoes if we are of the majority “race” in our society. This is very simply an application of the second “great commandment,” which commands us to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39). Philippians 2:3-4 also comes into play here when it says:

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

In other words, we should consider the feelings and interests of others above our own. We must humbly realize that the perspective of another might be very different from our own but that does not make their perspective wrong, only different. As a matter of fact, it might even indicate that our own perspective needs to be rethought and/or adjusted. I am currently working through a video series entitled *Discovering Relational Wisdom* [16](#) created by Ken Sande, the founder of Peacemaker Ministries. One acrostic used in the video series is “SOG,” standing for self-awareness, others-awareness, and God-awareness. In other words, in any situation or potential conflict I should be asking myself: “How am I feeling and acting and why?, How are they feeling and acting and why?, and What is God up to in all of this?”

In this matter of racism, “white” Christians need to be “others-aware” and consider the perspective of people of color. Is it possible that we could come across as racist even without intending to? To cite an unfortunate example from my own life, I remember an occasion when standing in line to vote during an early voting period before an election. There was a long line out the doors, and several candidates were coming right up to voters in line to campaign. I really didn’t think this should be allowed and didn’t like it, but I was not being “self-aware, others-aware, or God-aware” at the moment. I was probably already frustrated to have to stand in such a long line. I recall a “black” American candidate coming up to me and, rather than politely just saying “no thank you,” I proceeded to tell him why I thought he should not be doing this. I confess I was not as polite as I should have been. Looking back, I know in my heart that this incident had nothing to do with the color of his skin, but I bet he thought it did! Years later I am ashamed and embarrassed by this incident. I am grateful that he did not know I was a Christian. I should have been even more polite to him than with a “white” candidate who was doing the same thing!

This is also why phrases like “we need a color-blind society,” though well intended and true in and of themselves, should perhaps be avoided. Why? Let me allow a person of color to speak for himself to answer this question. Black American pastor Emmanuel Malone, a board member and adjunct professor at Central Baptist Theological Seminary in Minneapolis—the location of the George Floyd tragedy—in an interview conducted by one of his seminary colleagues, John Pratt, for the “In the Nick of Time” newsletter/blog states:

Perhaps a good beginning is for white Christians to understand some of the perceptions people of color have. When events occur like the George Floyd killing by a Minneapolis police officer, it reinforces the belief that there is no “justice for all” and the injustice is against people of African descent. Also saying you are color blind is perceived to be just as bad, for it denies the reality of the person and it is a false perception that color does not truly play a part in everyday life. [17](#)

Arguments that we have not personally ever committed racist acts or owned slaves will likely fall on deaf ears since it is obvious that other “white” Christians of the past were slave holders and since, according to Malone:



The community of color doesn't necessarily look at life at the individual level. The view is corporate identity, and every white person is part of that corporation. There is no justification in saying what one's family did not do. The better claim is an expression of regret for what your race of people did to my race of people. Just as the people of color are ashamed when a black person does something publicly wrong or are elated when a person of color does something great, either way there is association. [17](#)

Once again, the perspective shared above does not negate the "truth" that there is really only one "race," but understanding the perspective as legitimate in light of the experience of "black" Americans adds the element of *grace* to the equation. How then should we respond as biblical creationists to the cultural crisis of racism? An alliterated answer might be "repentance, regret, and remorse." First, if we personally have been guilty of racist thoughts, words, or actions, then we should repent of them. That being said, passages like Deuteronomy 24:16 and Ezekiel 18:20 clearly teach that children should not be punished for the sins of their fathers. In other words, we can't technically "repent" for the crimes of our ancestors, but we certainly can and should express regret and remorse as per Malone's quote above. Likewise, Christian victims of racist acts should repent of any responses to racism motivated by revenge or bitterness. A Christ-like response is one always willing and ready to forgive (Matthew 18:21-35). The parable of the "good Samaritan" gives us the perfect biblical example of loving one's neighbor as oneself. The Samaritan was of another people-group, but he was the only one who showed biblical love and compassion for the suffering man. May we all strive to do the same for our "neighbors," regardless of their skin color or ethnicity. All ground is level at the cross (Galatians 3:28)!

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- [1.](#) See, for instance, Ham K, Wieland C, Batten D (1999) *One Blood: The Biblical Answer to Racism*, Master Books, Green Forest, AR
  - [2.](#) Alcorn R (2003) *The Grace and Truth Paradox: Responding with Christ-like Balance*, Multnomah Books, Colorado Springs, CO
  - [3.](#) Mathews KA (1996) *Genesis 1-11:26* (The New American Commentary v.1a), Broadman & Holman Publishers, Nashville, TN, 423
  - [4.](#) McConkie B (1958), "Apostle of the Mormon Council of 12," *Mormon Doctrine*, 554 as quoted in Ham K, Wieland C, and Batten D, 100
  - [5.](#) Ham K, Wieland C, and Batten D, 100
  - [6.](#) Gould SJ (1977) Ontogeny and Phylogeny, 127-128
  - [7.](#) Darwin C (1874) *The Descent of Man*, 2nd ed., A. L. Burt Co., New York, NY, 168
  - [8.](#) See Heck P (2020 June 23) Since we're canceling people for racism, can we talk about Charles Darwin? <https://disrn.com/opinion/opinion-if-you-hate-racism-its-long-past-time-to-cancel-darwin?fbclid=IwAR1MfYPGuYNRhft18QLejBFO-ZIhOpOzsWHNju4ytODCI615HvTlvLNteU4> Accessed 2020 July 11
  - [9.](#) Morris HM (1989) *The Long War Against God*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, 61
  - [10.](#) Hunter, GW (1914) *A Civic Biology: Presented in Problems*, American Book Company, NY, 196, as quoted in Sarfati, JD (2015) *The Genesis Account*, Creation Book Publishers, Powder Springs, GA, 625
  - [11.](#) Sarfati, JD (2015) *The Genesis Account*, Creation Book Publishers, Powder Springs, GA, 625
  - [12.](#) Ibid., 626
  - [13.](#) Ibid., 669
  - [14.](#) Ibid., 671
  - [15.](#) Ham K (2006) "Are There Really Races?" in *The New Answers Book*, Master Books, Green Forest, AR, 225
  - [16.](#) See <https://rw360.org/discover-rw/> Accessed 2020 Jul 14
  - [17.](#) a. b. Pratt J (2020 July 2) Am I My Brother's Keeper? A Dialogue about Race and the Church <https://centralseminary.edu/am-i-my-brothers-keeper-a-dialogue-about-race-and-the-church/> Accessed 2020 July 11

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