

## Religious Beliefs Reflect On Racial Prejudice

"Three in 10 Americans acknowledge feelings of racial prejudice, and yet 9 in 10 say they believe in God. How does racial prejudice reflect on one's religious beliefs?"

1. Assuming that no Americans (indeed, no human beings) are completely free of racial prejudice, this "On Faith" question can be read to mean that only one in 10 Americans deny the existence of God, but 7 in 10 Americans deny their feelings of racial prejudice. From this reading, one might hasten to the conclusion that belief in God correlates with honesty and an uninflated self-image.

But this reading is vulnerable to its unproved assumptions (1) that none of us is entirely free of racial feelings, and (2) that the three in 10 who acknowledge their feelings of racial prejudice are believers in God, who calls all human beings to humility, self-examination, confession, repentance, and love of all humanity (in the radical instance of Jesus, love even of one's enemies).

2. As a pelican throws a fish in the air as many times as is necessary for it to come down head first for gulping, the above paragraph reconfigures the question to the advantage of my point of view. Every panelist will, similarly, come up with a plausible point-of-view response. Where does this get us?

3. It gets us seated around the same table, a world-conversational table we all should thank the "On Faith" founders and staff for. Physically, it's impossible for any two in a roundtable to have the same point of view and for any one to fail to see and hear all the others. Another impossibility: to listen long without having one's ignorance overcome and one's prejudices irritated. And a possibility: to experience the expulsive power of truth against prejudice, love against hate, faith against fear, hope against cynicism and despair.

4. All of us panelists (as it were) hear comments behind our backs, and some of us turn around and engage some commenters in conversation. At the University of Chicago, I remember that widening conversational effect of radio's first table-conversation designed to stimulate a wider audience, namely, the University of Chicago Round Table (1931-55). Religion was well represented among the topics. / We Americans have freedom of speech, and need to exercise this freedom in ways that enrich-protect-advance the values we cherish. God's design is for the evolution not only of life but also of consciousness and conscience, the increase of appreciable awareness. (The Baptists who founded the University of Chicago chose a motto which may be translated from the Latin thus: "As knowledge increases, life opens up and out." They meant the knowledge of God, of the world, of the other, and of the self.)

5. A culture's sacred (that is, its religion) reflects (though it may also critique) the culture's virtues and vices. To criticize a religion for defects in its earlier stages is an instance of the genetic fallacy: everything, including religion, is entitled to be evaluated in its present stage. And to condemn a religion for its faults and failures is an instance of the perfectionist fallacy: nothing human is perfect. But every religion deserves and needs inspection in the light of what it has yearned for through all its stages. We who teach (or have taught) the world's religions want our students to avoid the fallacies, inspect for the yearnings, discover and deepen their own religious commitments, make their own witness, and work for improved and enriched relationships in this one world of many religions-and-cultures. / In this educational process, we teachers are free to make our own witness without "imposing" it on our students. My witness is to the biblical yearning: "My soul longs...for...the Lord; my heart [inner being] and flesh [outer being] sing for joy to the living God" (OLD Testament: Psalm 84); "Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (NEW Testament, Jesus in "the Lord's Prayer": Matthew 6 and Luke 11).

6. To reject religion for being change-resistant is one-sided, unfair, and untrue to history. Yes, religion promotes stability through memory of the lore and celebration of its wisdom. But religion is also a change-agent. CHANGE: In 1819, the high priest of Hawaii persuaded Kamehameha I (the unifier of the Islands) that their Polynesian religion was false, and the king ordered the destruction of the temples. The next year Christian missionaries arrived from Boston, and before long almost all Hawaiians had converted to Christianity. CHANGE: In American history, most of the societal changes have been biblically inspired and have been led by deeply committed Christians. CHANGE: The early Christians were radicals for non-discrimination: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). Think of it: no racism, no slavery, no sexism. The ideal, of course. But in the 21st century, we're still at work in church and world toward this ideal which in the 1st century the church aspired to live.

BY WILLIS E. ELLIOTT | AUGUST 2, 2008; 8:48 AM ETSAVE & SHARE:       



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RESPONSE TO MR. MARK:

Your comment makes sense not only societally but also biblically: "in Christ" (by which Paul means in church, in the Christian community), in-world distinctions of race, ethnicity, social position, gender are irrelevant (Galatians 3:28). That is the vertical FACT (in the relation of each to Christ, to God) & the horizontal IDEAL (in relation to each other). A horizontal fact is the "natural" flowing together of the like-minded. At a party, women & men from each other. In a school cafeteria, blacks & whites from each other. If this occurs in the comparatively superficial activities of partying & eating, how much more should we expect it in the deepest social activity, namely, worship? The separation is, as I said, "natural."

Some think we should fight against nature, forcing (human) integration against (natural) segregation.

Forced busing of school-children was a disaster in Boston & elsewhere, & the % of integrated schools has declined. My wife & I worship in an integrated church, & a half-century ago I was president of an integrated church body (The Midwest Council of Community Churches). That year, 1958, my wife & I were in a Community Churches delegation to the Middle East, the delegation having an equal number of blacks & whites.

The chief impediment to integrated worship is not racial (in the skin-color sense) but ethnic (in the cultural sense): the emotional content of black African worship (of whatever religion, & wherever) is much higher than the emotional content of Caucasian worship.

In America, slaves were invited to Caucasian worship (separation being respected: blacks in balconies), but preferred to form their own churches. After 1968 (the death of Martin Luther King Jr.), many white churches were eager to have blacks come to worship, but often got this response: "We're not interested in your worship, it's so different from ours; we didn't want to come to your church; we just didn't want to feel uninvited." (As a pastor during the 1950s, I was eager that our Sunday-morning congregation not be all-white.)

You ask, "What does it say of Christianity" when

church worship is segregated? This question should be in a dialog with two other questions: (1) What does it say of society, America? & (2) What does it say of human nature?

Thanks for your column. On this issue, you & I are on the same page.

**POSTED BY: WILLIS E. ELLIOTT, PANELIST | AUGUST 5, 2008 10:29 AM**

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Dear Rev Elliot -

Suppose, like me, you consider our nation's over-dependence on religion to be one of its most egregious vices? Who then does the critique of said vice? Surely, not religion.

A story on CNN's website today states that only 5% of America's churches are integrated, and that half of those 5% that are integrated are on their way to becoming exclusively black or exclusively white.

What does it say of Christianity when Sunday services are the LAST place in America where segregation seems to be not only tolerated, but "the way things are and forever shall be?" In a country where the workplace, the public square, politics, sports and entertainment are fully integrated, does it not make you wonder why Christianity IN PRACTICE cannot seem to get with the integration program?

What kind of "stability" is Christianity supporting through such segregation?

In what way is Christianity acting as a "change agent" in integrating itself?

Perhaps Christian churches should be forced to integrate? If not, why not?

Thanks in advance for your comments.

**POSTED BY: MR MARK | AUGUST 4, 2008 4:58 PM**

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RESPONSE TO ASH:

Your notions of Christianity in Hawaii are secular-revisionist gibberish. Face a few facts:

(1) The 1820 missionaries were distressed that the king had ordered the complete destruction of everything visible of the old Polynesian religion, & what we know of it we know because the CHRISTIAN missionaries were concerned that it not be lost to

history: they did interviews, & sketched the remains of the temples, especially the statues; (2) The missionaries reduced the Hawaiian language to writing, produced both a grammar & a dictionary, & translated the entire Bible from

Hebrew/Aramaic/Greek into Hawaiian; (3) By example & teaching, the missionaries greatly reduced social violence, & were convincing partly because they refused any form of coercion in promoting their Christian faith. (4) The missionaries did no colonizing, though an unintended effect of their work was to further open Hawaii to the West -"further," because traders got to Hawaii more than a generation before the missionaries. (5) I learned sufig from a missionary in Hawaii.

**POSTED BY: WILLIS E. ELLIOTT, PANELIST | AUGUST 3, 2008 6:20 PM**  
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On Faith - please remove this obnoxious self-serving spammer's inappropriate posts. He's infected most of the threads here with his deviant racist nonsense.

This poster is trolling continuously and will spam his nonsense at every opportunity when left unscreened. This has been going on for well over a year.

You are losing potential posters/participators with this narcissist allowed to post his offensive garbage at will.

Thank you.

**POSTED BY: ANONYMOUS | AUGUST 3, 2008 5:02 PM**  
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inheritors...:

Att: V e r d e, V A M O S;

Please Know 3 things:

1)

One can take a Person out of Jungle or Desert or Mountain or Islam or Cave, but cannot always take that Jungle, Desert... 'BiO-FiNiTE' MENTALiTY out of that Person.

2)

Statistically & Correlationly, that There are Many More Blacks than Whites in U.S.A. Prisons. And as a matter of Factly it is because of that "Can't take or shake that Jungle out of the person real story" that is an underlieing problem. Note: It is blacks who Rape on a Majority White Folks. Why? It is the Blacks who Sell Drugs & Overbooze in their Neighorhood/Cummunitys, not whites why?

3)

From info & beliewf: Ironically Black Folk in Sweet Sweet America also should be AWARE & know that "AMERICAN Indians", also had their Slave-Trade here or internally , way-before 'Pale-Face' came & offered to smoke Peace-Pipe & Americano indians engaged in POW WOWs to War aginst Pale-Face etc..!

Please AZTECS & INCAS history on How They Treated Their Captors of War or refusal.

Example-1:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aztec>

EXCERPT:

Slaves or tlacotin also constituted an important class. Aztecs could become slaves because of debts, as a criminal punishment or as war captives. A slave could have possessions and even own other slaves. However, upon becoming a slave, all of the slave's animals and excess money would go to his purchaser.

Slaves could buy their liberty, and slaves could be set free if they had children with or were married to their masters. Typically, upon the death of the master, slaves who had performed outstanding services were freed. The rest of the slaves were passed on as part of an inheritance.

Traveling merchants called pochtecah were a small, but important class as they not only facilitated commerce, but also communicated vital information across the empire and beyond its borders. They were often employed as spies.

Example-2:

<http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/news/655380/posts>

EXCERPT:By 1860, the Cherokees had 4,600 slaves; the Choctaws, 2,344; the Creeks, 1,532; the Chickasaws, 975; and the Seminoles, 500. Some Indian slave owners were as harsh and cruel as any white slave master. Indians were

often hired to catch runaway slaves; in fact, slave-catching was a lucrative way of life for some Indians, especially the Chickasaws.

Black slavery in America usually evokes images of the antebellum South, but few realize that members of the Five Civilized Tribes--the Cherokees, Choctaws, Chickasaws, Creeks, and Seminoles--in Indian Territory, today's Oklahoma, also had slaves. Like their counterparts in the South, Indian slaveholders feared slave revolts. Those fears came true in 1842 when slaves in the Cherokee Nation made a daring dash for freedom.

August 2, 2008 5:54 PM | Report Offensive Comments

Posted on August 2, 2008 17:54

Bogus:

As someone already pointed out, the fact that Mr Cohen, a Jew, is apologizing for slavery that happened before the Jews even started stepping foot in the US speaks volumes about his agenda. Also the blacks of America have actually angered themselves over nothing over an issue they know nothing about. In fact the lazy often use the term "slavery" in order to be unproductive members of society.

August 2, 2008 6:00 PM

**POSTED BY: JACOB: INHERITORS OF NEBULA BUILT SPACE-SHIP EARTH(S), NEVER BIBLE(S) | AUGUST 3, 2008 12:33 AM**

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I sincerely hope that you're not making the claim that the colonization and enforced Christianization of Hawaii was a bright spot in American history (I honestly can't tell, because as usual your writing is almost complete gibberish). All anyone needs to know about that is that the missionaries banned surfing. SURFING!!!! That's as close to pure evil as I can imagine.

**POSTED BY: ASH | AUGUST 3, 2008 12:09 AM**

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That clears the mess right up, "...7 in 10 Americans deny their feelings of racial prejudice." So Willis Elliott says Americans are just a pack of liars. Knew it all along. And the lie they put the most "faith" in is believing what they believe -a clear violation of the 11th commandment.

11. Thou shalt not believe thy own lies.

Small wonder America is going to hell. Everything begins in California and it's been on fire for over a month now. California is still there so it must be burning with "the fire that burns but does not consume." Look out everyone for here comes hell starting in California and soon to be all over the country. Couldn't even get'em with an earthquake.

Will president Obama know what to do to save us?

**POSTED BY: BGONE | AUGUST 2, 2008 9:20 PM**

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