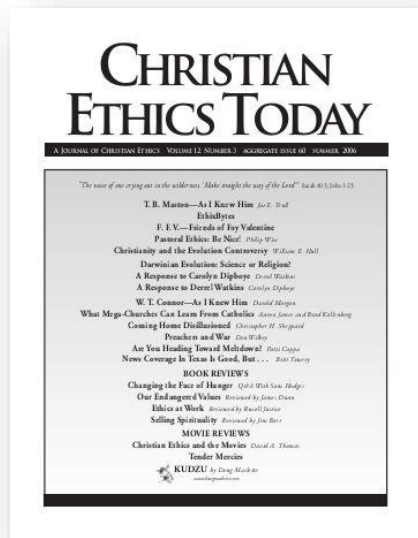


Theological Musings from Dave's Laptop

November 22, 2016 ¹

As you know if you read this column, one of the journals I read is *Christian Ethics Today*. The current issue has an editorial by Patrick Anderson entitled, "**Confessions of a White Supremacist.**"²

I was struck by this piece partly because of the frightening timeliness of its subject, and partly because a painful percentage of what follows is my story, too. . . .



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"I was born and raised in the milieu of white supremacy. I cannot remember ever hearing the term explicitly, but the superiority of white people was implicitly understood and assumed. In a segregated world, devoid of dark skinned people, where non-white persons were never encountered socially, my whiteness was more than just evident. It was pervasive, 'normal,' and majoritarian. My mother and grandmother occasionally utilized the services of a black housekeeper, the church my father pastored employed a black custodian, but other than those persons my world was white. The schools I attended were all white; our church was all white; our neighborhood was all white. The city parks where I played ball were all white. The public swimming pool was all white.

"My grandchildren roll their eyes when they hear me talk about that strange, colorless world in which I lived. Yet even they now live in a resurging environment, even in the community of faith, that expresses explicit and complicit paeans of white superiority. They hear white folks say 'we want our country back,' 'why don't they teach values in school,' 'build a wall,' 'too many people who don't look like us are doing stuff,' 'law and order,' and the like.

"Furman University, where I attended on a track scholarship, was all white until the first African American student was admitted my senior year. In college, my encounters with non-white people expanded because our track team competed on a national stage, so I raced many black runners in track meets in New York, Philadelphia, Louisville, Miami, and Detroit . . . never in South Carolina, or Georgia, or Tennessee.

"I remember times when I was the only white contestant in the indoor 600, or when our mile relay team was the only white entrant in the university



<sup>1</sup> The 53<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the assassination of JFK.

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<http://pastarticles.christianethicstoday.com/CETArt/index.cfm?fuseaction=Articles.main&ArtID=1745>

division of the Penn Relays. Just before the command to ‘runners, take your marks’ we shook hands and expressed insincere ‘good luck’ utterances before a race. I remember sharing mutual congratulations and ‘good race’ affirmations after races, even embraces and exchanges of sweat. Track is an uncomplicated sport in many ways. Whoever gets to the finish line first, wins. I remember thinking how much the same we were, how skin color mattered not at all when speed was the separation between us. Whoever gets there first, wins.

“After college, the milieu of my life changed. I worked in the juvenile justice system alongside African American and Latino caseworkers. I attended for a while a Spanish language church. I developed close friendships with non-white persons. Today I like to consider myself as ‘colorblind,’ non-biased, and consider African Americans and Latinos as some of my best friends. My racial awareness expanded in the years of the Civil Rights Movement.

“But the separations between myself and even my closest non-white friends cannot be merely brushed aside. President Obama recently referred to the ‘implicit racial bias’ which exists in the police subculture. He could have made a much broader claim, for we white folks all share a deep and defining sense of superiority. Some of us bury it better than others, but I see little in our American life that gives evidence of a ‘post-racial era’ or a ‘colorblind’ society.

“The life experiences we have had in the white world are unlike the life experiences in the non-white world. This is true today as much as it was in my childhood.

“I have never been denied a job because of my skin color. Banks or mortgage companies or real estate agencies have never red-lined my housing options or otherwise determined where I could live or purchase property. Access to doctors and health care has never been a problem for me. I have never been followed around by a store security guard. No one from my family was ever enslaved, lynched, beaten. My family name was not taken and a new one assigned.

“I can walk, drive, stand, talk, laugh, be angry, and otherwise function without ever wondering if I will be killed by a cop. I have always lived that way. My family members have lived that way. My children and grandchildren live that way. The people with whom I routinely socialize live that way. How can I claim not to be ‘superior?’

“The police do not see me as suspicious, or say one to the other at a traffic stop ‘He’s a bad looking dude.’ My existence is never considered threatening or subversive. No policeman has ever said ‘Step out of the car. Put your hands on the roof and spread your legs.’

“My African American friends have never lived the way I have lived. They never will. You, I, and most other people know this, deep down.”

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This whole thing makes me sick. This whole thing makes me sad. This is not how we live at CBF, and that’s a beautiful, beautiful thing. This is no time to turn inward. We must continue the battle to push back the Darkness, wherever we find it.

Dave

P.S. The OMI clergy would very much like to sponsor conversations that might advance the cause of mutual understanding among persons of various ethnic backgrounds in our building and neighborhood. If you have ideas about resources, movies, books, or other things that might be of use in such a project, I'd be very glad to know about them.



PUSHING BACK THE DARKNESS