

CHRIST AND RACE IN THE MIDST OF THIS YEAR'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

by

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In these United States, we have made significant strides in combating our old bugaboo, racism. That isn't to say we have nowhere to go on this issue. Our successes have been monumental when viewed by our society at large, but perhaps not so much when experienced by contemporary blacks. Most of the former, today's citizens, might be, in general, too young to have suffered or known those who in the past were subjected to the immoral use of legal, political and civic power because of their race. The latter have been the beneficiaries of their ancestors' fight against the 'system,' but haven't felt the reality and depth of their pain.

How deep does racism still lie in our country? It is impossible to say definitively, but the Obama – McCain presidential race (no pun intended) raises more questions than answers about the depth of racism here. Sen. Obama is not the typical black caricature a racist-orientated person imagines most blacks to be. He is refined, sophisticated, intelligent, scholarly (perhaps a little too much so), and he is also white. Query: why do we call him a black when he is half white? Perhaps because that's all we see on the surface. He is a wonderful father who is still at home! This is sometimes a rarity in black families. Even his own father deserted the family and went back to Kenya. In the United States, the same domestically-inclined irresponsible black male just leaves town or goes to the bar.

I am speaking about those who are this type and within the group which does not live up to its responsibilities, not everyone in the black community. However, there are millions of this group, particularly in the relatively young set. Sen. Obama himself has brought up this lack of responsibility many times in his speeches. It hardly makes him popular with the Jesse Jackson set. He is not loud and uncouth, doesn't pepper his talk with rapid-fire mfs, doesn't talk about cutting off/or out someone's testicles (as did Mr. Jackson when the microphone was on during an Obama speech), doesn't grope his crotch publicly, doesn't have a criminal record but has tried drugs, and doesn't sing dirty songs.

Considering all of this, Bubba can legitimately ask "How *could* he be black?" Who is Bubba? He (or she) could be the slightly-below average Hillary or average Sarah supporter...

At this date, Obama leads McCain by double digits in almost all categories and a new CBS poll out today (10/14/08) puts Obama 14 points ahead in the national poll. But it ain't over 'til the fat lady sings! Will the "Bradley Effect" do him in?

The Bradley Effect

This effect is associated with Tom Bradley, former Mayor of Los Angeles, who, in 1982, ran for Governor of California against Armenian-American Republican George Duekmejian. He was a

highly respected member of the black community. The exit polls showed him leading, but he lost.. People who said they were voting for Bradley must not have done so. Minds were changed in the voting booth; or the real truth just came out. In another case, former Virginia governor Douglas Wilder won by only 1/10 of 1%, but the exit polls showed him with a double-digit lead!

Some political pundits on current talk shows have expressed the view that if the Bradley Effect is in play the black candidate has to be more than four percentage points ahead in the polls to squeak by with a win. Others say it is six points. Either way, the black candidate is really behind and going to lose. Other commentators believe the Bradley Effect, being many years ago, is not relevant today. The Obama campaign seems to doubt that it is a factor. We will see...

How Does Christ View Race?

We are to love everyone irrespective of who or what they are. Christ introduced a new commandment for the New Testament, which will guide us. The new commandment about loving our neighbours is complementary to the First Commandment. When we love our neighbour, we love God and if we love God we will love our neighbour unconditionally. Who are our neighbours? Everyone, including our enemies.

A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another. (St. John 13:34-35)

Blessed Theophylact spiritually states the Fathers' interpretation of this Scripture:

One might ask, 'Lord, why is the commandment to love called *new* when it is found in the Old Testament?' The Old Testament commandment – *Thou shalt love thy neighbour* [Lev. 19:18] – means, 'Pay back to your friend the love you *owe* (emphasis supplied) him, because he loved you first.' Jesus teaches, '*As I have loved you, that ye also love one another.* I freely loved when you had not yet accomplished anything good. When your human nature was still idle and hostile, I took it upon Myself and made it holy. Therefore, you should also love one another freely. When your brother offends you, do not remember the offence.' This is the **new commandment of the New Testament: freely love your neighbour when you owe him nothing** (emphasis supplied). Assuring His disciples that after His departure they would not be put to shame, but would win everlasting glory, the Lord promises, '*By this shall all men know you.*' They will esteem you more for your love than for your miracles.

[*The Explanation of the Gospel of John*, Chapter 13, p. 222.]

Christ went to the Cross and hung there for us. He could have come down from the Cross at any moment. But He didn't! He welcomes us to follow Him by picking up His Cross and accepting it as ours. We are meant to be "little Christs," being Christ-like; or, that is our goal: deification in His energies. An old Protestant slogan perhaps says it pretty well "WWJD"? (What would Jesus Do?) That's what we're expected to do or not do. Christ is our spiritual standard; nothing less will do.

Being Christ-like means we voluntarily love our neighbour, and a neighbour includes an enemy. Loving our friends should not be difficult although one wonders sometimes as they probably wonder about us. But loving our enemies? A lot more difficult, but Jesus doesn't want our spiritual lives to be easy. He challenges us with snares and pitfalls along life's journey in preparation for His world which is not of this one.

Is Barack Obama Our Neighbour? Certainly.

Would Jesus Christ consider Barack Obama's race as a factor or a determining one in such an election as we are having now? No!

Would Christ cry out at campaign locations "Muslim," "off with his head," "terrorist," or "kill him!"? No!

Would Jesus forward undocumented or flawed documentation about his positions on different matters, past associations, gossip of any kind? No!

Would He publish ads making innuendoes about race, with the black candidate featured somewhat menacingly within a dark foreboding background to indicate danger if elected? No!

So, let's not do it! Consider the candidates upon their spiritual merits. When we vote, do so with our hearts as softened by Christ's love and not impaired by express or implied bigotry. And, if John McCain wins, so be it, or otherwise.

+ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.