

***Free at Last?*** by Carl F. Ellis Jr., InterVarsity Press, Downer's Grove, IL:1996  
(47 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

## **1. Parallels in History**

A survey of African-American history reveals that like the children of Israel, we have had four-hundred-year collective trauma from which we have yet to fully recover. And like the children of Israel we have sojourned in a philosophical wilderness as our thinking has developed. The big question we face is, Has God been guiding us toward a promised land?

Martin Luther King Jr., in his *Memphis speech* the night before he died, prophetically answered that question:

We've got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn't matter with me now. Because I've been to the mountain top. I won't mind.

Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over, and I've seen the *promised land*. I may not get there with you, but I want you to know tonight that we as a people will get to the promised land.

So I'm happy tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord. (Page 14)

## **2. White History**

It used to be said that Western historians had sold us a bill of goods, that what was portrayed as "objective" history was in reality *White* history. *Black* history was almost completely glossed over as if we did not exist. The same could have been said about the other people-oriented disciplines, such as sociology, psychology and anthropology. This White basis was unseen by White society until the militant brothers of the sixties pointed it out. (Page 19)

## **3. Black Leaders—Black is Beautiful**

But the Black leaders of the sixties showed us the folly in this. They pointed out that the White American system of values proclaimed that Black was not beautiful, that the system perpetuated the daily degradation of African-Americans. The system was not neutral when it came to us. (Page 19)

#### **4. Pure and Holy Christianity**

*Frederick Douglass*, the abolitionist, had also rejected “Christianity,” but with one important difference:

Between the Christianity of this land, and the Christianity of Christ, *I recognize the widest possible difference*—so wide, that to receive the one as good, pure, and holy, is necessary to reject the other as bad, corrupt, and wicked. To be the friend of the one, is of necessity to be the enemy of the other. I love the pure, peaceable, and impartial Christianity of Christ. I therefore hate the corrupt, slaveholding, women-whipping, cradle-plundering, partial and hypocritical Christianity of this island. Indeed, I can see no reason, but the most deceitful one, for calling the religion of this land Christianity. I look upon it as the climax of all misnomers, the boldest of all frauds, and the grossest of all libels (Page 20)

#### **5. Significance Makes History**

History is never an account of all the events of the past. It is instead an account of the events that have been sifted and evaluated to determine their significance. History might be called a collection of significant events. But what makes an event significant? To some extent an event is significant if it changed the course of history.

How can we understand what is and what is not significant in our past? It will certainly help if we have a God-centered view of the world. If we leave God out, we will have a distorted view. (Page 24)

#### **6. Standard and Values**

How can African-American consciousness be defined? What should we as people recognize as our standard, our values? Only by seeing ourselves as God sees us will we be able to avoid false, self-destructive values. Our values must come from the Word of the one true God. (Page 26)

#### **7. Reconstruct African-American**

Though the leaders of the sixties left God out, by God’s grace they were able to make some valuable contributions to us. However, because of the onslaught of do-your-thing-ism, we lost the cultural framework to tie those contributions together.

In order to pick up the pieces and reconstruct African-American culture, we will have to “reflect back” on what God has revealed about himself and about us. This must be the task of a new generation of leadership. Such a noble task will require the wisdom and

understanding available only from God. “The fear [reverence] of the Lord—that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding” (Job 28:28) (Page 27)

## **8. Ungodliness and Oppression**

When people lack the basic commitment to God, unrighteousness follows. Scripture describes at least two types of unrighteousness: *ungodliness* and *oppression*. Ungodliness happens when people rebel against God and his revelation. Disregarding their responsibility toward God and others, they themselves suffer the consequences of their wrongdoing. Oppression occurs when people impose their godliness on others, causing them to suffer the consequences. For example, if a person has a racist attitude, he or she is guilty of ungodliness. If, however, that person imposes his racism on others, forcing them to live in substandard conditions, then he is guilty of oppression. (Page 28)

## **9. God’s Grace Alone**

God cares about justice and has compassionate love for suffering people (Isaiah 58:3-12; Amos 5:10-15, 21-24). God’s compassion is rooted in his grace. It is because of God’s grace that oppression will ultimately cave in to the resistance of the oppressed.

Thus it is God’s grace alone that provides the *basis* for resisting opposition. It is his grace that provides the *power* to resist oppression. It is God’s grace that provides the *will* to resist oppression. If we leave God out, we leave out the very possibility of freedom. (Page 30)

## **10. African-American Quest**

A central theme in the flow of African-American history has been the quest for freedom and dignity. There is only one basis for human dignity: the scriptural teaching that man and woman were created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27). God’s personal dignity is the original personal dignity. Our dignity is derived from the dignity of God. In other words, if God is somebody, which he is, then I am somebody because I in some ways resemble God. (Page 30-31)

## **11. Blacks Were Part of the Evangelism of the Early Church**

As Jesus was carrying his cross through the streets of Jerusalem, he stumbled under its weight. Simon, a Black man from Cyrene, Africa, was enlisted to carry the cross the rest of the way (Luke 23:26). On the day of Pentecost, people from every nation (including African nations) heard the gospel and were converted (Acts 2:5-12). An Ethiopian government official was converted on his way home (Acts 8:26-39). The church of Antioch has several African members, among them two prophets or teachers: Simeon,

called the Black man, and Lucius the Cyrenian (Acts 13:1). What were those two Africans doing in Antioch? We find in Acts 11:19-21 that they had gone there when they learned that non-Jews were not hearing the good news from the Jewish missionaries; the young African church may have been sending missionaries like Simeon and Lucius to plant churches. It was out of the Antioch church that Paul and Barnabas were sent to evangelize Turkey, Greece, and Italy. So the European church party has the African church to thank for its missionary faithfulness. (Page 39)

## **12. Slave Resistance**

Columbus Salley and Ronald Behm write about the experience of slavery: The series of traumatic shocks involved had such an effect upon the Africans that their personality development was altered to suit the image and likeness of a system that assumed their inferiority.

First, there was the shock of being captured. “The second shock—the long march to the sea—drew out the nightmare for many weeks. . . . Hardship, thirst, brutalities, and near starvation penetrated the experience of each exhausted man and woman who reaches the coast.” It was also shocking to be sold to foreign traders and then branded and herded into a strange ship. Then came the protracted and stupefying Middle Passage from Africa to the Americas. This dread transportation involved severe overcrowding, frequent raps, fatal disease and cruel beatings, all of which served to establish a master’s absolute domination. The final shock came with a seasoning period in the West Indies during which slaves were taught obedience and cringing submission to their masters. . .

As an African came to America he was easily “fitted” for his work because he was divorced from his native culture and language. His number was inexhaustible, and his physical characteristics made identification unmistakable. As rationale and justification for the system, he was reputed (falsely) to come from an uncivilized world, thus making slavery the means to the graces of white, Western . . . civilization.

The whole basis of this dehumanization practice was an illegitimate view of humanity—a view to which skin color determined only a person’s status but indeed the presence or lack of the image of God. It became a time-honored belief among many adherents of White Christianity-ism that the uprooted African had no soul. Black people were therefore classified as nonhumans—in later history as three-fifths human. So raping a female slave was not a crime, nor was it considered fornication or adultery. (Page 42-43)

## **13. Christianity and Humanism for Blacks**

From various sources, many slaves began to pickup bits and pieces of biblical truth. By God’s grace they were able to put these gospel fragments together and derive some

interesting ideas. These early Black theologians began to set their fellow slaves on fire as they shared their insights. They began to get the notion that they were created in the image of God. This confirmed their sense of human worth and reaffirmed their awareness of being a slave was a contradiction to their dignity as human beings.

Black *spirituals* like “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot” and “Free at Last” became examples of historic Black theology. The writings and sayings of Frederick Douglas expressed the practical outworking of Black theology. Douglass, *Sojourner Truth*, *Harriet Tubman* and many other Black exponents of freedom were committed to Christ. *The Underground Railroad* itself became an application of this “good news.” (Page 44)

#### **14. White Jesus Vs. The Mark of Cain or Ham**

The scriptures themselves warn us that “the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:3). Slavery had opened the door for the emergence of unchristian Christianity-ism. But 2 Timothy goes on to say, “Instead, to suit their own desires, . . . they will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths” (vv. 3-4). Such myths became the basic ingredients of slavemaster Christianity-ism. Let’s look at some of these myths.

##### **A Mark, a Curse and a Spook**

First, a myth was created about the “mark of Cain.” According to Genesis 4:1-15, Cain, a farmer, rebelled against God and killed his brother Abel, a shepherd. In response God punished Cain by putting the ground under a curse. Nothing would grow for him. Cain was condemned to be a homeless wanderer for the rest of his life.

Cain appealed to God on the grounds that (1) the punishment too hard for him to bear and (2) he was afraid he’d be killed by anyone who found him. As an act of grace, God put a mark on Cain as a warning to everyone not to kill him. God told Cain that if anyone killed him, God would take seven lives in revenge.

The slavemasters’ myth declared that the mark on Cain was dark skin. But the Bible neither says nor implies that this mark had anything to do with skin color. The scripture just says that the mark was a warning not to kill Cain. (If the mark was dark skin, as some have dogmatically believed, then woe to those who have hurt or killed dark-skinned people, for they will be avenged by God sevenfold!) Of course, we will never know what the mark of Cain really was. Besides, all of Cain’s descendants were killed in the flood.

A second myth revolved around a *curse on Ham* and his descendants. The myth is rooted in the twisted interpretation of Genesis 9:18-28. According to this passage, Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.) Noah planted a vineyard, made some wine, got drunk, took off his clothes and lay naked in his

tent. Ham discovered his father in his drunken, naked state; he told his brothers to care for their father, and they did.

This was no sin on Ham's part. However, according to the myth, Ham laughed at Noah and mocked him. But Scripture neither records nor implies such irreverence on Ham's part.

When Noah sobered up and learned "what his youngest son had done to him," he cursed Cain and his descendants. Advocates of the Ham myth deliberately ignore the fact that Hebrew language had no word for grandson. Noah's "youngest son" was really his youngest male descendant. This was Canaan, Ham's youngest son and Noah's youngest grandson. It was Canaan and not Ham who irreverently took advantage of Noah's drunken condition and did something horrible to Noah. It was Canaan who left Noah naked in his tent.

Thus the curse fell on Canaan and the Canaanites, who followed his perverted example (Genesis 19:1-9). All the Canaanite kingdoms were eventually destroyed, fulfilling the curse on Canaan (2 Samuel 8:1; I Chronicles 18:1-14; Psalm 135:1-12).

One thing is clear. Ham and his other descendants had nothing to do with this curse. Ham was also the father of Cush, Egypt and Put (Or Libya; Genesis 10:6-14), who are the fathers of the people of Africa. The curse has absolutely nothing to do with Africans or African-Americans.

A third myth pictures a totally otherworldly Jesus. If the slave system was to be preserved, the slavemasters could not afford the slaves to have a biblical Jesus who was fully human and fully divine. Such a Jesus might have something to do with salvation in this life. The slaves might get some dangerous ideas from Jesus' statements like "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me . . . to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and . . . to release the oppressed" (Luke 4:18).

The humanity of Christ in particular presented a problem. If Jesus was really a man of southwest Asian or northeast Africa descent, he might have looks more like the slaves than like the slavemasters. Thus an exclusively White Jesus was substituted, a man who was totally otherworldly. This Jesus offered a salvation restricted to the hereafter. Jesus' humanity was diminished almost to nothing, and his divinity was rendered abstract. The fake Jesus was nothing more than a spineless spook and bore little resemblance to the biblical Christ. According to scripture, Jesus came by way of incarnation (John 1:14); the slavemasters' mythological Jesus, however, was an invention of the spirit of antichrist, according to 1 John 4:13. (Page 45-47)

## **15. Slavery Denies Blacks Personal Dignity**

Through the pain of exploitation, we realize that slavery as practiced could never allow Black people the personal dignity the Bible declares open to all. We saw the parallel between our oppressed condition and that of the ancient Hebrews. Though faith in Christ promised us freedom on the other side of death, we were awakened in *faith* also to pursue freedom on this side of the Jordan. We learned that life cannot be lived on an otherworldly basis, with hope only for the hereafter. In short, we learned that the God of the Bible was truly God, while the god offered us in Christianity-isn was no god at all. (Page 53)

## **16. Emancipation Proclamation Diminished**

The “freedom” wrought by the Emancipation Proclamation turned out to fall short of true freedom. It was diminished as the Reconstruction lost momentum. It was demolished with the final *death blow to the Reconstruction* in 1877, at the inauguration President Rutherford B. Hayes. Hayes, for political reasons, withdrew the federal troops that had been enforcing the provisions of the *Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendment* to the constitution in the South. The former slaves were thereby abandoned to the devices of those who wanted to reestablish White supremacy. As a result, a neoslavery emerged—a system of oppression rooted in political disenfranchisement, racial segregation and exploitative economic relationship that subjected Blacks to Whites. This became known as *Jim Crow backlash*, and the laws that undergirded it were known as the “black codes.” (Page 54)

## **17. African-American Abandoned**

Many White Christians has been faithful to the culture mandate of Jesus Christ during Reconstruction. They brought education and other forms of help to the former slaves. When the pressure of Jim Crowism arose in the late 1870s, however, they were forced to abandon the African-American community, leaving us to face the horrors of the Southern racist backlash alone. (Page 55)

## **18. Not Free to Themselves**

But how can people be free if they are not free to themselves? How can people find dignity if they are ashamed of their cultural and ethnic heritage? Pretending to be White is bondage to a lie and demeaning to a person’s character. After all, what would this Negro who was “passing” do if his White associates found out that he was not White? (Page 64)

## **19. Mrs. Parks Refused to Move for Male Passenger on the Bus**

On December 1, 1955, an attractive Negro seamstress, Mrs. Rosa Parks boarded the Cleveland Avenue bus in downtown Montgomery [Alabama]. She was returning home after her regular day's work in leading department store. Tired from long hours on tired feet, Mrs. Parks sat down in the first seat behind the section reserved for whites. Not long after she took her seat, the bus operator ordered her, along with three other Negro passengers, to move back in order to accommodate boarding white passengers.

By this time every seat in the bus was taken. This meant that if Mrs. Parks followed the driver's command she would have to stand while white male passengers, who had just boarded the bus, would sit. The other three Negro passengers immediately complied with the driver's request. But Mrs. Parks quietly refused. The result was her arrest. . . .

She was anchored to that seat by the accumulated indignities of days gone by and the boundless aspirations of generations yet unborn. She was a victim of both of the forces of history and the forces of destiny. She had been tracked down by the *Zeitgeist*—the spirit of the time. (Page 68)

## **20. We Must Protest**

If we fail to do this our protest will end up a meaningless drama on the stage of history, and its memory will be shrouded with the ugly garments of shame. In spite of the mistreatment we have confronted we must not become bitter and end up by hating our white brothers. As Booker T. Washington said, "Let no man pull you so low as to make you hate him." (Page 71)

## **21. The Right Message and Actions**

Many have tried to explain the Civil Rights Movement merely as a people movement, but it doesn't work! As Brother Martin himself explained, this movement, which suddenly catapulted him into worldwide recognition, cannot be explained without God. In 1958 he wrote:

Every rational explanation breaks down at some point. There is something about a protest that is supernatural; it cannot be explained without a divine dimension. . . . God still works through history his wonders to perform. It seems as though God had decided to use Montgomery as the proving ground for the struggle and triumph of freedom and justice in America. And what better place for it than the leading symbol of the Old South? It is one of the splendid ironies of our day that Montgomery, the Cradle of the Confederacy, is being transformed into Montgomery, the cradle of freedom and justice. .

In the first days of the protest none of these expressions was mentioned; the phrase most often heard was “Christian love.” It was the Sermon on the Mount, rather than a doctrine of passive resistance, that initially inspired the Negroes of Montgomery to dignified social action. It was Jesus of Nazareth that stirred the Negroes to protest with the creative weapon of love.” (Page 72-73)

## **22. Fear in Birmingham & The Silent Good**

It was in the Birmingham of Theopholis Eugene “Bull” Connor, the public safety commissioner, that the power of soul force was most visibly demonstrated. In Connor’s Birmingham, the silent password was fear. It was a fear not only on the part of the black oppressed, but also in the hearts of the white oppressors. Guilt was part of their fear. There was also the dread of change, that all too prevalent fear which hounded those whose attitude had been hardened by the long winter of reaction.

Many were apprehensive of social ostracism. Certainly Birmingham had its white moderates who disapproved of Bull Connor’s tactics. Certainly Birmingham had its decent white citizens who privately deplored the maltreatment of Negroes. But they remained publicly silent. It was a silence born of fear—fear of social, political and economic reprisals. The ultimate tragedy of Birmingham was not the brutality of bad people, but the silence of the good people. (Page 74)

## **23. The Red Sea**

As the Birmingham drama unfolded, tensions increased. Adult demonstrators by the hundreds were rounded up by the police. As these protestors were jailed, teenagers and children quickly stepped in to replace them. The Birmingham jails overflowed. In repeated skirmishes with the police, the marchers were brutalized with clubs and fire hoses.

It was inevitable that this would climax in a violent and deadly confrontation with Bull Connor and his men. People throughout the city began to pray earnestly for God’s special intervention to prevent the anticipated bloodshed.

The dreaded climax came, but God manifested his grace. For even those under the direct authority of Bull Connor were moved by the Spirit to obey God rather than man. Connor became so frustrated that he was driven into a frenzy of fury as the whole world looked on.

*It was a Sunday afternoon, when several hundred Birmingham Negroes had determined to hold a prayer meeting near the city jail. They gathered at the New Pilgrim Baptist Church and began an orderly march. Bill Connor ordered out the police dogs and fire hoses. When the marchers approached the border between white*

*and Negro areas, Connor ordered them to turn back. The Reverend Charles Billups, who was leading the march, politely refused.*

We asked everybody to get down on their knees. And they got down on their knees in their Easter Sunday do to meet'n [clothes]. Somebody just started praying in those old traditional chants of the Black community [the theological dynamic]. People were moaning, crying and praying. . . . Bull Connor was totally difficult and said he was going to throw us all in jail.

All of a sudden some old lady got up and said "God is with this movement, we goin' on to the jail." She got up and everybody started [getting up].

*Enraged, Bull Connor whirled on his men and shouted:*

"Dammit. Turn on the hoses."

What happened in the next thirty seconds was one of the most fantastic events of the Birmingham story.

*Bull Connor's men, their deadly hoses poised for action, stood facing the marchers. If they had turned [the hoses] on, the pressure from that close distance would have broken people's ribs. Bull Connor was [yelling], "Stop 'em, Stop 'em!!!"*

*The marchers, many of them [still] on their knees, stared back, unafraid and unmoving. Slowly the Negroes stood up and began to advance.*

Those firemen, . . . who really didn't know any better, had been so moved by the experience, that . . . they never turned the hoses on.

*Connor's men, as though hypnotized, fell back, their hoses sagging uselessly in their hands while several hundred Negroes marched past them.*

The dogs had been straining at the leash, jumping at us, all of a sudden just stopped, and we walked right on through. And somebody hollered out, "Great God Almighty done parted the Red Sea one more time!!"

This broke the back of segregation in Birmingham. It brought the White leaders to the conference table, and in the end, even the opposition could not withstand the power of soul force. (Page 75-77)

## **24. A Time of Training**

Brother Martin did not go to an evangelical seminary. Had he applied to one, he might well have been rejected on racial grounds. But since our Lord is sovereign over history, Dr. King received the preparation needed to become the leader, theologian and prophet of the civil Rights Movement. (Page 79)

## **25. Liberalism too Sentimental for Dr. King**

Although Dr. King did accept everything liberalism encompassed, he was impressed with its intellectual vigor, something he had never found in fundamentalism. But he questioned the liberal doctrine that humanity is basically good. The more he “observed the tragedies of history and man’s shameful inclination to take the low road,” the more he came to see the depths of sin. Liberalism for Dr. King was “all too sentimental concerning human nature and it leaned toward false idealism.” Liberalism had optimistically overlook “the glaring reality of collective evil” and: the fact that reason was darkened by sin.” (Page 79)

## **26. Gandhi’s Weapon of Christian Love**

After studying several social and ethical theories, Brother Martin almost despaired of the power of love to solve social problems. “The turn-the-other-cheek and the Love-your-enemies’ philosophies are valid,” he felt, “only when individuals are in conflict with other individuals; when racial groups and nations are in conflict, a more realistic approach is necessary.”

It all came together for him in the next stage of his journey. He explains:  
I was introduced to the life and teachings of Mahatma Gandhi. As I read his works I became deeply fascinated by his campaigns of nonviolent resistance. The whole Gandhi concept of *satyagraha* [*satya* is truth that equals love, and *graha* is force; *satyagraha* thus means true force, or love force] was profoundly significant to me. As I delved deeper into the philosophy of Gandhi, my skepticism concerning the power of love gradually diminished, and I came to see for the first time that the Christian doctrine of love, operating through the Gandhi method of nonviolence, is one of the most potent weapons available to an oppressed people in their struggle for freedom. (Page 80-81)

## **27. White Standards Vs. Spiritual Standards**

Sadly, many White *evangelical fundamentalist* and *Reformed* churches were caught sleeping with no oil in their lamps at the outbreak of this move of God in the land. They had evidently been rendered dysfunctional by a defective view of theology and culture. They failed to distinguish between White standards and scriptural standards. Their theology had led them to a preoccupation with private salvation.

The importance of personal salvation should never be diminished. But the Whole counsel of God revealed in the Scriptures goes far beyond the scope of the private realm. According to God’s Word, even salvation itself finds significance in terms of a much larger picture—namely, the praise of God’s glory (Ephesians 1–2). But many leading evangelicals never came to grips with the big picture of God’s purposes. They never saw the broad cultural implications of the Great Commission. This is why their Christianity never had application beyond the private aspects of life. Many believe that America’s racial injustice would fade away automatically as more individuals had conversion experiences. This naïve view completely ignored the patterns of racism that had been woven into the American system.

The fundamentalist reaction was much harsher. Fundamentalists and right-wing politicians branded Dr. King and the Civil Rights Movement “communistic.” Though there was no evidence for such allegations, the label effectively scared off some potential supporters. The Civil Rights Movement and the words of King were beginning to strike the very roots of White Christianity-ism that supported the political, economic and social system in which they had a vested interest. (Page 81-82)

## **28. History is Neither Autonomous nor Chance**

Those in the Reformed church community, who pride themselves on having a wholistic theology, were better equipped to understand the phenomenon of Brother Martin. Dr. King was trying to bring the reality of the biblical world-and-life-view to bear on the real problems in society, such as racism and segregation. He firmly believed that history was neither autonomous nor a chance occurrence of events, but that God was sovereign over all things. He believed in the power of the Spirit of God to quicken people to respond positively to the Word. Dr. King was firmly rooted in the life of the church and saw the kingdom of God as having a broad sphere of influence in its theology and ethics.

Yet the Reformed Christians who shared Brother Martin’s outlook did not recognize him. They were caught in the “paralysis of analysis. (Page 82)

## **29. Misunderstanding Dr. King**

Thus the mainline, Bible-believing community generally misunderstood the significance of Dr. King—the fundamentalists and evangelicals primarily because of their defective theology position and the Reformed Christians primarily because of their defective cultural position. (Page 83)

## **30. Dysfunctionality of the Conservative Church**

This dysfunctionality of the conservative church was due in part to the nature of Western theology itself. It had developed under the challenge of unbelieving philosophy

and science, and thus it was much more concerned with *epistemological* issues (what we should know about God) than with *ethical* issues (how we should obey God). The White church has gradually been isolated from the African-American community for almost a hundred years, and Brother Martin was the product of the African-American churches—a church with a distinctly different growth and flavor. Hence, just as the kingdom of God had caught the scribes and Pharisees unawares, the Civil Rights Movement caught the predominantly White, Bible-believing community unawares. Ironically, the liberals, who had apparently departed from God’s written Word, were able to recognize this move of God better than those who were supposed to be committed to God’s Word. (Page 83)

### **31. Scripture Orthodoxy**

We must also remember that in Scripture orthodoxy is most often measured on ethical grounds. Most in the Bible-believing community were more consistent with Scripture individually and conceptually than they were socially and ethically. But Dr. King was perhaps more consistent with Scripture socially and ethically than he was individually and conceptually. From an individual and conceptual perspective Brother Martin appeared to be less than orthodox; from a social and ethical perspective, however, many Bible-believing Christians appear less than orthodox. The ideal of all of us should be total consistency in all aspects of faith. (Page 86)

### **32. Restrain Sin & Destroy Evil**

Cornelius Van Til said, we are called both to restrain sin and to destroy its consequences in the world as much as may be possible.

It is our duty not only to seek to destroy evil in ourselves and in our fellow Christians, but it is our further duty to seek to destroy evil in all our fellow men. It may be, humanly speaking, hopeless in some instances that we should succeed in bringing them to Christ. This does not absolve us, however, from seeking to restrain their sins to some extent for this life. We must be active first of all in the field of special grace, but we also have a task to perform with respect to the destruction of evil in the field of common grace.

Still further we must note that our task with respect to the destruction of evil is not done if we have sought to fight sin itself everywhere we see it. We have the further obligation to destroy the consequences of sin in this world as far as we can. We must do good to all men, especially to those of the household of faith. To help relieve something of the suffering of the creatures of God is our privilege and our task. (Page 86-87)

### **33. Civil Rights Movement Vs. The Gospel**

How did the Civil Rights Movement relate to the Gospel? Segregation points to racism; racism points to human depravity; depravity points to human rebellion against God; rebellion brings God's judgment and wrath; judgment points to our need for salvation; and our need for salvation points to Jesus Christ our only hope for it. Martin Luther King Jr. applied the Word of God to the evils manifested in society without letting us forget that Jesus was the ultimate fulfillment of the Civil Rights Movement. (Page 87)

### **34. Unleashing the Power of God by Nonviolence**

While Dr. King looked to nonviolence as a means of unleashing the power of God, his followers looked to the strategy of nonviolence itself as the answer. Hence they lacked Dr. King's prophetic power. We can be thankful for the method of nonviolence, but nonviolence was not the force. Nonviolence succeeded in changing the structure not because it was nonviolent, but because it had a strength derived from God. American culture, like all cultures, has a way of accommodating itself to new expressions of truth the way the human body accommodates itself to dope. With the first hit comes an initial, blissful "rush"; but with succeeding hits, an increasing numbness sets in, and the body no longer responds. This is the case with nonviolence. Initially it was a powerful means of culture discipleship, but as time passed and the American culture became acclimated to it, numbness crept in. The shock value was lost. We needed new methods of applying God's Word and power. (Page 90)

### **35. Not Black Versus White**

Time has vindicated Dr. King. Ultimately it is not Black versus White. It is justice versus injustice, have versus have-nots. As long as Dr. King talked about only African-Americans he was relatively safe, but when he began to pull poor Whites and poor Blacks together he became a threat to the power and wealth elite. (Page 91)

### **36. Thank God for Martin Luther King**

We can thank God for Martin Luther King Jr. and for his ethics apologetic, which gave God's worldwide church a valuable tool for making disciples of all nations. Yes, we can be thankful for this prophet who has a love ethic like Jesus', a cultural brilliance like Paul's, a poetic speech like Jeremiah's, an agenda for justice like Amos's, a direct-action dream like Ezekiel's and a mode of leadership like Moses'. God had spoken to Brother Martin:

God has spoken to me, and I am not going to run from the responsibility. May mean going through the flood and through the waters, but I'm going if it means that! May mean going through the storm and the wind but I'm going, if it means that!

May mean going to jail, but I am going if it means that! It may even mean physical death, but if it means that, I will die standing up for the freedom of my people! God has spoken to me! (Page 91)

### **37. Negative Encounters**

Malcolm went on to think about all his encounters with White people; and without exception they had been negative. (Page 99)

### **38. Muslims Enslaved Blacks First**

If Malcolm had had the chance to familiarize himself, with the history of the Islamic world, he would have discovered that the “color patterns” he observed were pretty much the result of racism and slavery (see *racism in the Muslim world*). In fact, Muslims enslaved Black Africans long before America existed. And slavery is still widely practiced in the Arab Islamic world today (see *slavery in the Muslim world*). (Page 103)

### **39. Brotherhood Cannot be Forced.**

I am in agreement one hundred percent with those . . . who say that no government laws can *force* brotherhood. The only true world solution today is government guided by true religion—of the spirit. (Page 104)

### **40. Malcolm Was Genuine Seeker of Truth**

Malcolm seemed to have been a genuine seeker of truth, but the distortion of un-Christian Christianity-ism prevented him from seeing the Bible as the real source of the truth about humanity. He functioned as a cultural prophet, enlightening us and condemning Christianity-ism with its view of Africa-Americans. The enlightenment used “borrowed capital” from Christian truth, but in the name of Islam. (Page 105)

### **41. Indifference toward God & Loss of Prophetic Power**

In the historic African-American quest the Southern stream stayed within the pattern of the church, but it has become a formal tradition. The result has been indifference toward God and the loss of the prophetic power we had discovered in the Civil Rights Movement. The Northern stream tried to replace the theological dynamic with an alien religious base (Islam, secularism and the like). The result has been instability, apostasy, splintering, violent disputes between factions, assassinations and the loss of the African-American culture as a unified force. (Page 135)

## **42. The Roots of Christianity**

Although Western Christianity is somewhat expressed through Euro-American culture, Christianity itself did not arise in Europe or America. It grew up in the Middle East, among people known as Hebrews. Its roots can be traced to Abraham. The roots continue back to a time when all people were monotheistic and approached God through animal sacrifice. Ultimately, the roots of Christianity will lead us back to Adam and his response to God's salvation promise.

In Genesis 3:15 God tells a fallen Adam and Eve that a savior will come (the woman's "offspring"). This savior will conquer Satan (crushing the serpent's head), but the salvation will come through the suffering of the savior: "his heel will be bruised." This is a primitive but accurate description of what Christ accomplished on the cross. This Christianity is disqualified at the "White man's religion" in the first sense, for its roots precede the White race by a long shot. (Page 142)

## **43. Creation Vs. Evolution & Racisms**

Contrary to popular myth, evolution is not a proven fact. It is a basic assumption forming a framework by which many biologists interpret and classify the differences in life forms. Creation is also a framework. Not all that passes for creationism is true to the creation framework; the same can be said for evolution.

Unlike evolution, however, the theory of creation derives from God's Word. God was there at the beginning, and humankind was not. An example of the origin of race consistent with creation will lead to human equality, because we are all in God's image. Thus if creationists are racist, they are being inconsistent with their framework.

An evolutionary account of biological variety assumes that differences within groupings reflect the fact that some are "higher" on the evolutionary scale than others. Thus if evolutionists are racist, they are consistent with their framework. (Page 148)

## **44. White Secular Humanism**

When the advocates of Black militancy identified "Christianity" as the White man's religion, they were in fact identifying a cultic mutation of White secular humanism. The heresy originated as a justification of American slavery, which was itself a byproduct of racism. The militants neither saw secularism as the basis of White Christianity-ism nor recognized unrighteousness as its roots. Their analysis of racism, radical as it was, was not radical enough. It never dealt with the real root of racism. (Page 149)

## 45. Humanism Replaces Christianity

But if Christianity is the White man's religion, why has it been thrown out of the life of so many institutions in White society, such as the public school system? What is the real, underlying religion in today's American society? It is not Christianity; it is secular humanism. This notion of human independence from God has enjoyed an increasing position of authority in Western thinking since the Renaissance. The secular framework has left absolutely no room for the God of the Scripture. Yes, unfortunately, Western society is still called Christian. (Page151)

## 46. Universality of the Christian Gospel

Biblical Christianity is, by God's plan, universal in nature; it can take on itself the identity of any culture. We see the universality of the gospel in the book of Acts. The day of Pentecost, when the gospel was preached in every language of the world, it is clear proof that the Christian gospel is not locked into a particular culture or language. We see its universality as it was communicated and absorbed in Jewish and Greek cultures in the first century. The call of the church was to penetrate every nation, every culture, with the message of salvation, that all people might submit to God in their ethnicity. So in Christianity, if I do not worship God in my own culture, I am being inconsistent with my faith.

Notice how unlike an ethnic religion Christianity is. In Islam if I try to worship Allah in my own culture, I am being inconsistent with my faith! According to Muslim teaching, the Qur'an in Arabic only (Suras 12:2; 20:112; 39:28, 41; 42:7). If it is translated into another language, it is no longer Qur'an. It becomes merely a commentary or a paraphrase. (Page 151-152)

## 47. God Ain't

The only way anyone can declare that God "ain't" is to declare that *is* ain't. And if *is* ain't there never was a "God ain't" declaration in the first place. Without God even the atheist could not say "God ain't." He would not exist to say it. Without *is* there would be *nothing*. "The fool says in his heart, "There is no God"" (Psalm 14:1); he is a fool, because the only way he could say "There is no God" is on the basis of God himself. Thus dilemma is an aspect of what the theologian call "the ontological problem." (Ontology is the study of existence and being.) Duke Ellington, though not a theologian in the classical sense, beautifully communicated this in his song "Something About Believing" when he said, "The silliest thing ever read was that somebody said 'God is dead'; the mere mention of the first word automatically eliminates the second and the third." (Page 158)