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**Afrocentricity &
Black Consciousness:
Challenges for
Christianity**

Part 1

By

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Over the last five hundred years, Christianity in Africa and in most countries with people of African ancestry, has been charged with outright racism (when non-Blacks headed the hierarchy within denominations) and with inverse racism (when Blacks headed the hierarchy within denominations). To these charges the Church has had to plead 'guilty' or 'guilty with explanation', not, regrettably, by its own volition but in response to external pressure, not readily but reluctantly.

The awful reality is that racism and inverse racism are still within sectors of the Christian Church and in societies where Christianity is the dominant religion, like the Caribbean region. To what extent this is true, is open to guesswork since, to the best of my knowledge, there has not been any definitive research done on the current levels of racism and especially inverse racism in any country within the Caribbean.¹

There is no question that there are residual negative effects of the chattel slavery experience in sections of the world today. Black people have had to

¹ In a recent radio discussion on racism/inverse racism in which I was involved, I raised the issue of any study recently done on the subject and Professor Patrick Bryan, historian at the University of the West Indies (Mona), said he knew of none.

struggle with a culturally entrenched notion of white supremacy that has adversely affected their psyche. There has been, and there still is a need for a thorough programme of self-affirmation as Blacks learn to be at ease with themselves. The enterprise of Afrocentricity—an enterprise involving a refocusing of the Black person's psyche on things African—is designed in part to remind Blacks of their roots in Africa and the proud historical and historic achievements of their ancestors.

Black consciousness is an enterprise that can be seen as intimately related to Afrocentrism if not identical with it. The differentiating nuance, if any, is that Black consciousness deals specifically with the need for pride in one's Black skin while sharing with Afrocentricity the concern to refocus the Black psyche on things African.

Where there is evidence that Black people are not at ease concerning who they are, there is going to be a need to assist such persons in improving their sense of ethnic identity and ethnic worth. This assistance, if accepted, will result in pride in the particularity of one's ethnic identity.

It must be realized though that there are Black persons who are very proud of their ethnic identity but do not deem it necessary to wear anything special or speak in any particular way to show that they are proud of their ethnic identity. Nor do they see the need to be, in principle, against any other ethnic stock.

If there is genuine pride in ethnic particularity, plain and simple, there can be no place for denouncing those who are not so vocal or even ambivalent about ethnic issues. Nor should we indulge or defend the practice of calling such persons by derogatory terms as 'roast breadfruit' or 'coconut'². Is my ethnicity or my skin colouration the essence of me?

² The breadfruit is a popular source of carbohydrate in Jamaica and some of the Eastern Caribbean countries. It is often roasted until the green outer skin is black but the edible portion on the inside is basically white or off-white in colour. The 'roast breadfruit' epithet is used in Jamaica, while the 'coconut' epithet, which has

Here now is an awkward issue which must be faced. Why should there be any greater virtue in preferring one's skin colour or craniofacial features over say one's height, weight, brainpower or character? If I can, defensibly, have a certain brain, height, weight or character and yet prefer another kind of any or all of these, what is so wrong with having a certain skin colour and preferring another kind, especially given the wide spectrum of skin colourations qualifying as Black?

If what I am raising here has any probative value it means that we need to be more careful in our tendency to conclude that Black people who 'bleach'³ their skins—health concerns aside—are necessarily suffering from inverse racism. They might just be desirous of a lighter or 'high brown' but still Black skin, for aesthetic or economic or other defensible reason.

What I am calling for in this essay is care in how we execute this necessary double-edged programme of Afrocentricity and Black consciousness.

The Ethnicity of the Ancient Egyptians

Afrocentricity and Black consciousness are necessary as correctives to white myth-making ventures and as means of enlightenment for Blacks though, at times, there needs to be greater linguistic care in some of the assertions made during the corrective project. We illustrate now this need

reference to the dried dehusked fruit—brown on the outside but white on the inside—is used in the Eastern Caribbean. In the USA the disparaging epithet is the Oreo cookie.

³ 'Bleaching' is the predominantly female practice of using formal or home-made cosmetics to effect a lighter skin colouration. There is a belief and a truth that some men prefer women who are lighter in skin colouration; such women are called 'browning' (=brown skin) in the cultural jargon.

for a corrective project and as well the need for care during such a project as we explore the ethnic stock of the ancient Egyptians.

No matter how low (in a socioeconomic sense) an American white may be, his ancestors built the civilizations of Europe; and no matter how high (again in a socioeconomic sense) a Negro may be, his ancestors were (and his kinsmen still are) savages in an African jungle.

The obnoxious contentions of Henry E. Garrett, written while he was on staff at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, USA.⁴ The racial pride and arrogance are as evident as the admixture of truth and myth.

Consider now a lengthy quotation from that esteemed Senegalese scholar, Cheikh Anta Diop.

[The ancients, Herodotus, Diodorus, Pliny, Tacitus, et al] have unanimously informed us about one fact which had come to their attention and about which they could not be mistaken: the race of the Egyptians. They all tell us that the Egyptians were Negroes, like the Ethiopians and the other Africans, and that Egypt civilized the world...

[Negroes] were the first to invent mathematics, astronomy, the calendar, science, the arts, religion, agriculture, social organization, medicine, writing, technology, architecture...In saying all this one simply asserts that which is, in all modesty, strictly true and which no one, at this time, can refute, by arguments worthy of the name.⁵

⁴ "Racial Differences and Witch Hunting", *Science* 135, 1962, 982, 984.

⁵ In Robert O. Collins (Ed.), *Problems in African History*, 1968, 11, and quoted by Raymond Mauny, 16. Similar arguments appear in Diop's *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality?*, 1974, edited by Mercer Cook, 1-5. This 1974 work, edited by Cook with Diop's consent and a preface, consists of selections

The racial pride and arrogance are as evident as the admixture of truth and myth.

Henry Garrett wrote in 1962 and Cheikh Anta Diop in 1955 but to this day there are Eurocentric folk who share Garrett's views and Afrocentric folk who subscribe to Diop's views.

I have two basic problems with quotations of the kind that I used from Garret and Diop: the problem of linguistic carelessness and the problem of flawed arguments. We could call it one basic problem; failing to prove what you have proudly and arrogantly asserted.

Every person, like every group of persons, needs to take pride in self or one's kind but not at the expense of truth or of respect for others. It is my considered opinion that if the world is to experience genuine harmony of peoples and groups then pride in '**who we are**' must be married to respect for, '**who others are**'. Indeed, if we reckon with the fact of miscegenation or interbreeding over millennia and therefore the relative rarity of any 'pure race' today, racial pride would be tempered with humility and ethnocentric arrogance would be seen as an exhibition of vanity.

The accident of what we have done or achieved, personally or ancestrally, can ground our pride but should be seen as secondary to the fact that all of us in the human family are alike human persons created by, and in the image of, God. The recognition of our common God-connection, if taken seriously, can foster genuine respect for all peoples.

I am not significant simply and solely because my ancestors were great builders of Dynastic Egypt or of ancient Mediterranean societies. I am human — in the image of God — therefore I am significant.

The denigration of people of African or any other ancestry by tying individual worth to collective accomplishments is just as

from Nations Nègres et Culture and Antériorité des Civilisations Negres: Mythe ou Vérité Historique?

indefensible as the assumption that 'civilization' has anything whatsoever to do with the biological differences of its creators. On the other hand, it is no more justifiable, however understandable it might be, for the positions to be reversed and for people of Black African origins to lay claims to status by virtue of a putative relationship with the creators of the ancient cultural achievements in the Valley of the Nile.⁶

Both Garret and Diop need to be probed and questioned somewhat, because, as Frank M. Snowden, Jr. correctly says, "The time has come for scholars and educators to insist upon truth, scholarly rigor, and accuracy in the reconstruction of the history of blacks in the ancient Mediterranean world."⁷

Garrett and White Myths

There is, among some white folk, the view that, once you think of ancient Africa (or modern Africa for people like Garrett) you think of a monolithic primitive society and of 'savages'. Ignorance is commingled with ethnocentric or racist arrogance and each feeds on and fuels the other and together they provide a fertile setting for ethnocentric or racist myths or exaggerations.

One can concede that there were and are Africans who could be legitimately described as savages but what would Garret say if he knew that before the modern malady of colour prejudice Blacks were not stereotyped in Egyptian, Greco-Roman or Christian records as 'primitives' or 'savages'?⁸

⁶ C. Loring Brace et al in Mary Lefkowitz et al (Eds.), *Black Athena Revisited*, 1996, 130.

⁷ In Mary Lefkowitz et al, 1996, 127-128.

⁸ See the insightful book *Before Colour Prejudice: The Ancient View of Blacks* by Frank M. Snowden Jr., 1983, passim, but especially 63-108.

One is tempted, mischievously, to seek a comment from Garret and his kind on the fact that Strabo,⁹ Greek historian and geographer from Pontus on the Black Sea, regarded *Whites* not *Blacks* as the most 'savage'. For Strabo, the ancient inhabitants of Ireland were even more savage than the Britons because the ancient Irish deemed it honourable to eat their fathers when they died and have sexual intercourse with their mothers and sisters!

Assuming that Strabo's observations are historically reliable, are the modern Irish to be labelled and libelled because of an unfortunate episode in history?

We would not place before Garrett the more debateable historical claims of some Afrocentrists, but neither can we fail to lay out a minute portion of the incontestable legacy of ancient Negroes.

From the ancient Egyptian records, especially Egyptian art, we know that the peoples living south of Egypt, in Lower and Upper Nubia (roughly modern Sudan), had features that would qualify in modern terms for the description 'Negro'; they had, on the whole, dark or black skins, broad noses, thick lips and tightly coiled hair.¹⁰ They were called Ethiopians (from the Greek *aithiops* 'sunburnt face'), Nubians and Kushites.¹¹

From as far back as the 1st Dynasty in Egypt (c. 3100 – 2890 BC), there were attempts to subjugate Nubia.¹² The Kushites resisted these incursions into Nubia but periodically had thousands of their people taken

⁹ Circa BC 63 to 21 AD or later.

¹⁰ See J. Vercoutter et al, *The Image of the Black in Western Art, I: From the Pharaohs to the Fall of the Roman Empire*, 1976, or the illustrations in Snowden, 1983, cited in the note above.

¹¹ Edwin Yamauchi (ed.), *Africa and Africans in Antiquity*, 2001, 3.

¹² Snowden, op. cit., 21 and Ian Shaw, *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, 2000, 77.

as prisoners and eventually were forced to surrender control of Lower Nubia.¹³

It is to be noted though that the so-called 'Execration Texts' dating from the reign of Sesostris III (c. 1878 – 1843 BC), and shortly after, mention the names of approximately 30 Nubian peoples and Asiatic enemies seen as dangerous.¹⁴

By the late Intermediate Period (c. 1786 – 1567 BC) the peoples of Kerma, near the 3rd Cataract, extended their influence northward and their rulers gained control of Lower Nubia over the Pharaohs.¹⁵

King Kamoze of the 17th Dynasty (c.1650 – 1567 BC) admits to a shared rule of Egypt with Kushites and the Hyksos. On a stela erected at Karnack, Kamoze indicates that he intercepted a letter from the Hyksos ruler Apophis to the ruler of Kush. He quotes the letter which shows the emerging might of Kush.

...Apophis, sending greetings to my son, the ruler of Cush.¹⁶
 Why do you arise as a ruler without letting me know? Do you see what Egypt has done to me: the ruler who is in it, Kamoze the Strong...Come north. *Do not falter*. See he is here in my hand, and there is no one who is waiting for you in this (part of) Egypt. See, I will not give him leave until you have arrived. Then we shall divide the towns of this Egypt, and *our [two lands]* will be happy in joy.¹⁷

¹³ Snowden, op. cit., 21-22.

¹⁴ Snowden, op. cit., 22.

¹⁵ Snowden, op. cit., 22.

¹⁶ This is an alternative spelling for Kush.

¹⁷ James B. Pritchard (ed.), *The Ancient Near East*, Volume II, 1975, 91-92.

The skirmishes between Egypt and the Kushites continued for another 700 years or so until the rise to prominence of the Napatan Kingdom of Kush which conquered Egypt and ruled it as the 25th Dynasty from c. 750 to 663 BC when the Assyrians drove them out of Egypt. Nonetheless, the Napatan Kingdom of Kush thrived until AD 350. The capital of the Kingdom was moved from Napata to Meroë, further south, thus giving rise to the Meroitic Kingdom of Kush.¹⁸ The Meroitic Kingdom of Kush was destroyed by the Kingdom of Axum (Abyssinia).¹⁹

The history and archaeology of the peoples of the Nile Valley, south of Egypt, indicate a lengthy period of cultural and artistic achievement and even if Egyptian influence on this achievement be granted the issue is not that Whites are influencing Blacks but that people of colour are influencing other people of colour.

Diop and Black Myths

Any venture to remind Negroes of their proud heritage is commendable. If that venture succeeds it is intellectually therapeutic not only for Negroes but for myth-believing Whites who are exposed to the material.

We need to examine the extent to which Diop has succeeded in proving some of the stronger claims that he makes. The analysis given here is very selective, not exhaustive, and our aim is to show some of the pitfalls of argumentation that bedevil the otherwise commendable efforts of some Afrocentrists.

¹⁸ Snowden, op. cit., 23-26 and Siegfried J. Schwantes, *A Short History of the Ancient Near East*, 1965, 102-104.

¹⁹ Schwantes, op. cit., 103.

Diop's fundamental thesis is that the ancient Egyptians were Negroes and he bases his thesis primarily, though not exclusively, on the writings of Herodotus (c. 484 - c. 420 BC). We treat with the principal references to Herodotus and one to Diodorus. Scholars have examined Diop's use of ancient writers and some are convinced that he has not been careful enough with the sources he uses.²⁰

According to Diop²¹, Herodotus (II.22)²² describes the Egyptians as black. However, as Raymond Mauny points out, the reference cited by Diop does not speak of Egypt but of Libya and Ethiopia, from where the Nile comes.²³

The context finds Herodotus attempting to explain the three theories re the flooding of the Nile advanced by certain Greeks. It is while explaining and rebutting the third view that Herodotus says,

...according to this, the water of the Nile comes from melting snow - but as it flows from Libya through Ethiopia into Egypt, that is, from a very hot into a cooler climate, how could it possibly originate in snow? Obviously this view is as worthless as the other two. Anyone who can use his wits about such matters will find plenty of arguments to prove how unlikely it is that snow is the cause of the flooding of the river: the strongest is provided by the winds, which blow hot from those regions...thirdly, **the natives are black because of the hot climate.**²⁴ [my emphasis]

²⁰ See Raymond Mauny in Collins, op. cit., 16-23; Mary Lefkowitz, *Not Out of Africa*, 1996, 1-52.

²¹ In Collins, op. cit., 11-12, similarly, Diop, 1974, op. cit., 1.

²² Diop's reference H.2 in Collins, op. cit., 11, is a typographical error.

²³ See Raymond Mauny in Collins, op. cit., 18.

²⁴ Translation by Aubrey de Selincourt, 1954, 109, 110.

The Greek text of the section calling the inhabitants 'black' uses the word *melanes*²⁵ which approximates what some would call 'coal-black or jet-black'. So the Libyans and Ethiopians, according to Herodotus, were very, very black. We shall return to Herodotus' description of the colour of the Egyptians in due course.

Herodotus (II.58)²⁶, according to Diop²⁷, utilizes a black dove which was symbolic of an Egyptian woman. To be more precise, Herodotus is reporting what, allegedly, he heard concerning the origin of oracles in Dodona in Greece and also in Libya. He heard one version from the Egyptians (re two women stolen from Thebes) and a quite different one from the priestesses at Dodona. Concerning the version from Dodona, Herodotus declares (II. 55 and 57),

two black doves, they say, flew away from Thebes in Egypt, and one of them alighted at Dodona, the other in Libya...As to the bird being black, [the priestesses] merely signify by this that the woman was Egyptian.²⁸

If one accepts the symbolism of the version from the Greek priestesses then the most one could defensibly say is that the Greek priestesses saw Egyptians as black.²⁹ The Greek word for black here is not *melanes* but *melainas/melainan*. *Melainas* means black or dark but not as black as *melanes*.

²⁵ I am following the Greek text of Joseph W. Blakesley, 1854.

²⁶ The reference is actually II. 55, 57.

²⁷ In Collins, op. cit., 11-12, similarly in Diop, 1974, op. cit., 1.

²⁸ de Selincourt, op. cit., 124, 125.

²⁹ Mauny, Robert O. Collins, 1968, 18, adverts to what he calls the "well known" tradition among Greeks and Hebrews of regarding as 'black' anyone who was darker than they were. He mentions as well a similar tradition in France that has given rise to such family names as Morel, Moreau, Lenoir, Nègre. He raises the issue of tanning as well suggesting that Negroid features are not necessarily being suggested in these traditions or ways of describing people.

According to Diop³⁰, Herodotus (II.104) shared the view of the Egyptians that the Colchidans³¹ were descendants of the Egyptian pharaoh Sesostris because the Colchidans "...are black and have crinkly hair..."

Has Diop been faithful to Herodotus? Yes and no, as the fuller text reveals.

The Egyptians did, however, say that they thought the original Colchians were men from Sesostris' army. My own idea on the subject was based first on the fact that they have black skin and woolly hair (not that that amounts to much as other nations have the same)...³²

It is significant that Herodotus does not argue a similarity between the Egyptians and the Colchidans on the basis of skin-colour and hair but on cultural realities; they both practice circumcision, do work in linen in a peculiar way and have similar speech patterns.³³ Herodotus uses the term *melagchroes*, translated as black skin here. It could also mean dark skin or brown skin.

It is puzzling that Diop³⁴ calls attention to Herodotus III.101 which deals with the peoples of India and the differentiation between the Padaeans and other Indians even though they all have black skins like the

³⁰ In Robert O. Collins, 1968, 12, similarly in Diop, 1974, op. cit., 1.

³¹ The inhabitants of Colchis or Colchida on the Black Sea were variously called Colchians, Colchidans or Colchidians.

³² de Selincourt, op. cit., 140.

³³ See II. 105.

³⁴ In Robert O. Collins, 1968, 12, similarly in Diop, 1974, op. cit., 1.

Ethiopians. Egypt is not mentioned at all but Herodotus makes some strange allegations concerning the Indians and as well the Ethiopians.³⁵

Diodorus of Sicily, according to Diop,³⁶ mentions that the Ethiopians were of the view that they were the ancestors of the Egyptians. Even if Diodorus is accurately reporting the beliefs of the Ethiopians, one still has to reckon with the historical accuracy of what the Ethiopians believed. But it is instructive to examine the quotation Diop uses from Diodorus and the conclusion he draws from his reading of Diodorus.

The Ethiopians say that the Egyptians are one of their colonies which was brought into Egypt by Osiris. They even allege that this country was originally under water, but that the Nile, dragging much mud as it flowed from Ethiopia, had finally filled it in and made it a part of the continent...They add that from them, as from their authors and ancestors, the Egyptians get most of their laws. It is from them that the Egyptians have learned to honour kings as gods and bury them with such pomp; sculpture and writing were invented by the Ethiopians. The Ethiopians cite evidence that they are more ancient than the Egyptians, but it is useless to report that here.³⁷

Immediately after this quotation Diop proceeds to say, "If the Egyptians and Ethiopians were not of the same race, Diodorus would have emphasized the impossibility of considering the former as a colony (i.e., a fraction) of the latter and the impossibility of viewing them as forebears of the Egyptians."³⁸ The logical connection between 'colony' and 'same race' is not clear.

³⁵ "All the Indian tribes I have mentioned copulate in the open like cattle; their skins are all of the same colour, much like the Ethiopians'. Their semen is not white like other peoples', but black [*melaina*] like their own skins - the same peculiarity is to be found in the Ethiopians."

³⁶ In Robert O. Collins, 1968, 12, similarly in Diop, 1974, op. cit. 1-2.

³⁷ Diop, 1974, 1-2.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

The line of argument that Diop seems to be taking in general, from the sources he uses, is quite simple, simplistic even and unworthy of his intellect. For Diop, apparently, there is a colour syllogism; all blacks are Negroes, the Egyptians were blacks, therefore the Egyptians were Negroes.³⁹

The syllogism may be valid, logically, but not true, because the major premise 'all blacks are Negroes' was not true in antiquity and is certainly not true today. As C. Loring Brace et al have observed, "...skin colour in such places as southern India, Melanesia, and the northern part of Australia is every bit as dark as it is in 'Black Africa'..."⁴⁰

Unfortunately, this is not an uncommon type of reasoning among some of those who take pride in being called Afrocentrists. One therefore finds faulty reasoning and overdrawn conclusions simply because writers or speakers do not bear in mind that terms such as 'black', 'African' and 'Egyptian', say nothing clearly or conclusively about racial stock unless one stipulates, as opposed to demonstrating logically, that the terms are synonyms for Negro.

³⁹ Indeed, Diop says, "Anticipating the agreement of all logical minds, I call *Negro* a human being whose skin is black; especially when he has frizzy hair...", 1974, op. cit., 136. One wonders what a black-skinned person without frizzy hair would be, according to Diop's reasoning! In a footnote (n. 2, 288) to this use of the term Negro, Diop says, "The probability of encountering men with black skin and woolly hair, without any other ethnic feature common to Negroes, is scientifically nil. To call such individuals 'Whites with black skin' because they allegedly have fine features, is as absurd as the appellation 'Negroes with white skin' would be if applied to three-fourths of the Europeans who lack Nordic features." Actually, Diop should have used 'Blacks with white skin' instead of 'Negroes with white skin' because he implies that 'Negro' is not exactly equivalent to 'black[-skinned]' but denotes, presumably, a person with two *necessary and sufficient* features: black skin and frizzy hair.

⁴⁰ In Mary Lefkowitz et al, 1996, 150.

Let me illustrate in passing. G.G.M. James, in *Stolen Legacy*, refers to Eratosthenes as a black man simply because he was a native of Cyrene!⁴¹ Chancellor Williams informs, despite contrary evidence,⁴² “In ancient times ‘African’ and ‘Ethiopian’ meant the same thing: a Black.”⁴³

The celebrated Nigerian polymath, Chinweizu, in his book, *Decolonising the African Mind*, contends,

Herodotus, “father of history” among the Greeks, not only acknowledged the antiquity of Egyptian civilization, and its having served as the civiliser of the Greeks; he also gave his eyewitness testimony that the ancient Egyptians were black skinned and wooly [sic] haired. Aristotle, though in an insulting vein, supports Herodotus on the race of the Egyptians when he remarked that the Egyptians and Ethiopians were cowards because of their “excessively black colour”. All of which, would make the Egyptians blacks/negroes.⁴⁴

By this line of reasoning, race can be determined, apparently, from the necessary and sufficient characteristics of black skin and woolly hair. (Recall Herodotus, II. 104, on the non-uniqueness of these.) Of course Chinweizu simply stipulates an equation between blacks and Negroes and that’s that.

Continuing the trend of the stipulative, Chinweizu gets more caustic later in the book and advises, while arguing the need for a separate Black World organization,

⁴¹ See 50, “...Eratosthenes, the Cyrenean (i.e a black man and native of Cyrene)...”

⁴² See Frank M. Snowden, Jr., “Bernal’s ‘Blacks’, Herodotus, and Other Classical Evidence”, *Arethusa* 22. 83-95.

⁴³ See *The Destruction of Black Civilization: Great Issues of A Race from 4500 B.C. to 2000 A.D.*, 1987, 30-31.

⁴⁴ See 83.

Those who are squeamish about being called black or negro are free to substitute the term African, provided they recognise the equivalence of the terms, and use them correctly. After all, an African is defined as a negro, a member of the black race, a native of Africa. Thus, a white African is a contradiction in terms. In particular, Arabs, being whites native to Asia; and Anglo/Boers, being whites native to Europe, are not Africans, whatever their pretensions, and they cannot legitimately be included in an African or Pan-African organisation.

By the way, from the definition of African, the term black African is tautologous...A black African is simply an African; white settlers in Africa are simply white settlers in Africa.⁴⁵

With all due respects to Chinweizu, this is far too stipulative and prompts obvious and awkward questions for this line of reasoning. For instance, what is a third-generation Afrikaner who has been born and bred in South Africa if not at least an African, though white? What of the 'coloureds' in South Africa who have been born and bred in South Africa, are they not at least Africans, though not Negroes?

British Eurocentric thinkers and American Afrocentric thinkers and others also make a similar type of mistake when they fail to see that there is no clear or conclusive synonymous relationship between being Caucasian and being British or between being a Negro and being Caribbean or American. Regional or national identity must not be confused with race.

Africans are not all blacks or Negroes. Americans are not all Caucasians. Jamaicans are not all Negroes.

It must be conceded that some terms of nationality are more suggestive of race than others and some even double as both national and racial terms.

⁴⁵ See 169, 170.

Chinese, Japanese, Korean, readily jump to mind. Even so a Negro born and bred in China, let's say, is a Chinese national, though not a member of the Chinese race.

We need to return to the issue of the race of the Egyptians and/or the physical features that characterized the Egyptians. What really is the state of the evidence from antiquity?

There is much controversy on the issue in the literature of the modern experts who write on it.⁴⁶ One thing seems clear though, there is some unease with the use of the term 'race' to describe human populations especially of the ancient world and even of today.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ See the exchanges in *Arethusa* : Special Issue (Fall 1989), Martin Bernal, "Black Athena and the APA", 17-38, Frank M. Snowden, Jr., "Bernal's 'Blacks', Herodotus, and Other Classical Evidence", 83-95; Vol. 24 (1991) 2, "Response to Edith Hall", 203-214; Vol. 26 (1993), S.O.Y. Keita, "Black Athena: 'Race', Bernal and Snowden", 295-314, Martin Bernal, "Response", 315-318, Frank M. Snowden, Jr., "Response", 319-328, S.O.Y. Keita, "Response to Bernal and Snowden", 329-334.

⁴⁷ See especially Frank B. Livingstone in *Current Anthropology*, Vol.3, No. 3, June, 1962, 279, "On the Non-existence of Human Races", says, "There are no races, there are only clines."; Martin Bernal, in *Arethusa* 26 (1993), 315, 316, "Response", disdains "...the misleading and pernicious concept of discrete, biological 'races'", and informs that "The restricted use of the word ['black' to represent purely West African physical types] was the reason why I regretted having used the title *Black Athena* and why I have not claimed that the Egyptians were 'black' in my books."; S.O.Y. Keita in *Arethusa* 26 (1993), 295, 297, "Black Athena: 'Race', Bernal and Snowden", maintains that "... 'race' explains little in the way of human variation or achievement...Most modern physical anthropologists work from the perspective of population affinity not racial taxonomy."; C. Loring Brace et al in Mary Lefkowitz et al, 1996, 130, "Clines and Clusters Versus 'Race': A Test in Ancient Egypt and the Case of a Death on the Nile", contend that "...the treatment of [the question of who the ancient Egyptians were, who was related to them, and to what degree] demonstrates that a successful resolution can only be accomplished by dispensing with the concept of race altogether."

The modern phenomenon of race-consciousness and pride has prompted modern Afrocentric and Eurocentric thinkers to seek to claim, in a racially exclusive sense, the achievements of the ancient Egyptians.

C. Loring Brace et al highlight this point and indicate that early in the nineteenth century Cuvier declared that the Egyptians were “caucaciques” (1817), and this was repeated with self-satisfied pride by others subsequently (Colfax 1833; Morton 1844; Nott 1844). Matching that has been the arguments for the blackness or Negritude of the Egyptians advanced by Diop (1955), Finch (1985), Asante (1990), et al.⁴⁸

But what did the Egyptians look like, and who were they, in ethno-racial terms? There is no unanimity among the scholars on this point and the verdict depends on how one reads the evidence from Egyptian history and art and from Graeco-Roman literature.

The question is not easier, but less difficult, if one asks concerning a particular historical period or dynasty, given the periodic intrusions by foreigners and the resultant interbreeding.⁴⁹

In summarizing his chapter on “Semites in Egypt”, James K. Hoffmeier says,

This review of epigraphic and archaeological data clearly demonstrates that Egypt was frequented by the peoples of the Levant, especially as a result of climatic problems that resulted in drought (as “Merikare” reports) from the end of the Old Kingdom (ca. 2190 B.C.) through the Second Intermediate Period (ca. 1786-1550 B.C.). Even during the Empire period, there are records of hunger and thirst driving people from Canaan and Sinai to Egypt...⁵⁰

⁴⁸ C. Loring Brace et al in Mary Lefkowitz et al, 1996, 156.

⁴⁹ Note the presence and at times the power control of such groups as Asiatics, Nubians and Semites in Egypt.

⁵⁰ See his *Israel in Egypt*, 1996, 68.

Janine Bourriau commences her chapter on the Second Intermediate Period⁵¹, in *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, with these words,

The Second Intermediate Period is defined by the division of Egypt—the fragmentation of the Two Lands. ‘Why do I contemplate my strength while there is one Great Man in Avaris and another in Kush, sitting united with the Asiatic and a Nubian while each man possesses his slice of Egypt.’ This was the complaint of the Theban King Kamose (1555-1550 BC) at the end of the 17th dynasty.⁵²

Beyond the interbreeding factor, from the difference the Egyptians documented between their features and those of their southern neighbours, and how the Greeks and Romans described these peoples as well, it is indisputable that if one deduces ethno-racial stock from the combined features of black skin, woolly hair, broad nose and thick lips, then it was the Nubians, Kushites or the Ethiopians—to the South of Egypt—and not the Egyptians, who could be called ‘black’ in the sense of being Negroes.⁵³

Long before Greek and Roman writers had described in accurate detail the physical characteristics of Ethiopians, and classical artists had called attention to the ethnic differences between Egyptians and Ethiopians, important iconographic documents from Egypt depicted clearly the black skin and woolly or tightly curled hair of Kushites, which differed from these features as portrayed in Egyptians.⁵⁴

It seems fairly easy to prove that the Egyptians, in general, for most of their history were people of colour or Black—meaning non-white/non-

⁵¹ Her dates are c. BC 1650-1550.

⁵² Edited by Ian Shaw, 2000, 185.

⁵³ See Frank Snowden’s “Bernal’s ‘Blacks’ and the Afrocentrists”, also “Clines and Clusters versus ‘Race’: A Test in Ancient Egypt and the Case of a Death on the Nile” by C. Loring Brace et al in Mary Lefkowitz et al, op. cit., 112-128 and 129-164.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 114-115.

Caucasian—but it is difficult to prove that they were Negroes. It should be known too that “the Egyptians were among the most ethnocentric of all peoples, and generally regarded black Africans of Nubia, as well as other non-Egyptians, with contempt.”⁵⁵

Need for Racial Humility

There is need for pride in who we are, whomever and however we might perceive ourselves to be, but there is hardly a place for ethnocentric arrogance or racial intolerance. There is need for racial humility based on common-sense reasons and scientific reasons.

From the standpoint of common-sense, one should realize that if humanity sprang from one common ‘ancestor’—whether primeval slime or primordial pair—then there is no defensible basis for ethnocentric arrogance or racial intolerance between and among ‘descendants’, however distinct and diverse they might have been or might be.

From a scientific standpoint one brute fact should humble Eurocentrists especially and foster respect for Africa and Africans. C. Loring Brace et al say it quite succinctly, “Whether our assessments are based on biochemical or on fossil evidence, it is clear that all ‘modern’ human populations can trace their ultimate roots to Africa.”⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Edwin Yamauchi (ed.), *Africa & Africans in Antiquity*, 2001, 1.

⁵⁶ Op. cit., 133. One caveat here to Brace’s statement might be to factor in flood geology and the *possibility* of fossils being relocated. The oldest fossils found so far though are from Africa but this does not mean that what has been found is *all* that is possible to be found.

**The Gospel Of
Matthew:
The Unfolding of
Missions**

by

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The above title suggests a number of things about the study at hand. It, first of all, indicates that the canonical gospel of Matthew is to be considered. Second, it shows that the topic of missions will be considered from the perspective of Matthew. The great debate about whether we should talk about mission (in the singular) or missions (in the plural) will not be taken up. The writer's position is that "mission" refers to everything the Church does under the authority of Christ, whereas "missions" indicates the intentional and cross-cultural making of disciples in obedience to the Great Commission. It is the latter concept that we wish to firmly establish as present throughout Matthew's gospel and the earthly ministry of Christ, but also as unfolding with an ever-increasing clarity until it is encapsulated in the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20.

Method and the Mandate

It was not unusual in the first half of the 20th Century for a missiologist to sense a need to establish that the Great Commission was not something added on to the gospels by the author at the last moment, that in fact the universality of the Gospel permeates the gospels.¹ The idea being combated was that the

¹ For example Zwemer, writing in 1942, presented chapters both on "The Universality of Jesus" (43-55), and "The Authenticity and Genuineness of the Great Commission" (57-67).