

Charles B. Copher*

Blacks/Negroes: Participants in the Development of Civilization in the Ancient World and Their Presence in the Bible

I. Introduction

As I review my life—which now spans some eighty years—I can readily detect the manner in which my mind has changed with respect to Biblical studies. During this developmental process there were many changes, some incidental and minor, but others of a more serious nature. Among the latter was the initial change from a fundamentalistic, literalistic biblical perspective to a radical critical historical/literary position, and then to one more moderate. However, the momentous change occurred when I discarded a narrow white, Euro-American perspective in exchange for a Black Perspective which was and continues to be more universal. Secondly, and more particularly, were the changes that occurred with reference to the question: were Blacks participants in the development of civilization in the ancient world and do they appear in the Bible?

II. Searching for a Black Presence: The Questioning Years

A. "Hewers of Wood and Carriers of Water"?

The beginnings of the process by which my mind

*Charles B. Copher is Professor Emeritus, Biblical Studies and Languages (Old Testament), Interdenominational Theological Center, Atlanta, Georgia.

changed occurred at the early age of ten years at which time I read two books by Philip Van Ness Meyers, *Ancient History*¹ and *General History*.² In both, after dividing humanity into three races—the Black, the yellow or Turanian, and the white—the author writes concerning the Black race: "Africa south of the Sahara is the home of the peoples of the Black race, but we find them on all the other continents and on many of the islands of the seas, whither they have migrated or been carried as slaves by the stronger races; for since time immemorial they have been 'hewers of wood and drawers of water' for their more favored brethren."³

It should be noted that Meyers, writing later, in his *General History*, changes his words so that they no longer refer to any voluntary migrations of Blacks to other parts of the world. Now, they can only be "carried as slaves by the stronger races." Continuing, he divides the white race into three groups or families: the Hamitic, the Semitic, and the Aryan or Indo-European. While asserting that the ancient Egyptians were the chief people of the Hamitic branch, he includes Libyans and Cushites.⁴

These flagrant assertions concerning the servile, inferior character of Blacks made an indelible impression upon me. This impression was rendered more severe because, on the one hand, at the young age of ten, I had already read Joshua's making the Gibeonites "hewers of wood and carriers of water" (Joshua 9:27).

¹Philip Van Ness Myers, *Ancient History*, rev. ed. (Boston: Ginn & Company, 1904).

²Philip Van Ness Myers, *A General History for Colleges and High Schools* (Boston: Ginn & Company, 1898).

³Myers, *Ancient History*, 15; *A General History*, 2.

⁴*Ibid.*, 19; *Ibid.*, 7.

On the other hand, at least ten percent of the Black Community consisted of former slaves, some of whom, my grandparents, for example, could and did show marks upon their bodies made by the whips of slave-masters.

B. "Cursed" by Noah or God?

As I advanced in age, discussions concerning both the period of slavery and the present experiences related to the differences in status between whites and Blacks frequently led to my question, "Why?" In answer, reference would be made to some never-specified passage in the Bible, one concerning the idea that Negroes had been cursed by someone, either Noah or God. While I found such answers extremely difficult to accept, I believed deeply that if they were in the Bible, they had to be true. Fortunately, however, the idea of a curse neither seemed to rest heavily upon my mind nor to become lodged in my subconscious. I do not recall it ever becoming an issue again until I had become a professor at a theological seminary. By that time I was sufficiently mature theologically and could curse Noah or any God who had cursed the group of people to whom I belonged.

When I was in high school two of the textbooks used in history classes had been written by the great historian-egyptologist, James Henry Breasted. The first of these was *Ancient Times: A History of the Early World*,⁵

⁵James Henry Breasted, *Ancient Times: A History of the Early World; An Introduction to the Study of Ancient History and the Career of Early Man*, 2d ed., rev. and largely rewritten (Boston: Ginn & Company, 1935).

and the second, *Conquest of Civilization*.⁶ In both volumes, repeatedly, the author lays great emphasis on the phrase "The Great White Race" that inhabited the "Great Northwest Quadrant." And, writing in *Ancient Times*, he states:

The peoples of the Great Northwest Quadrant as far back as we know anything about pre-historic man, have all been members of a race of white men, who have well been called the Great White Race. The men of this race created the civilization which we have inherited. If we look outside of the Great Northwest Quadrant, we find in the neighboring territory only two other clearly distinguished races—Mongoloids on the east and the negroes on the south. These people occupy an important place in the modern world, but they played no part in the rise of civilization.⁷

In both volumes are the following identical statements pertaining to Negroes:

On the south of the Northwest Quadrant lay the teeming black world of Africa. . . . It was separated from the Great White Race by the broad stretch of the Sahara desert. The valley of the Nile was the only road leading across the Sahara from south to north. Sometimes the blacks of inner Africa did wander along this road into Egypt, but they came only in small groups. Thus cut off by the desert barrier and living by themselves, they remained uninfluenced by civilization from the north. The Negro peoples of Africa were therefore without any influence on the development of early

⁶James Henry Breasted, *The Conquest of Civilization . . . Including New Text, the Author's Own Revisions and Notes*, ed. Edith Williams Ware (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1938).

⁷Breasted, *Ancient Times*, 131.

civilization.⁸

These views of Meyers and Breasted were representative of the historical studies that I pursued throughout my years in high school, college, seminary, and even graduate school. In fact, if there were any reference to Blacks/Negroes at all, it was only an occasional one to them as slaves. And, as in the case of the curse, I accepted this content with bitterness of spirit but I knew of no challenging authority.

How well do I remember discovering another viewpoint. This came quite by accident when at sixteen years of age I obtained *The Black Man, the Father of Civilization, Proven by Biblical History*.⁹ Although a classmate considered this a highly important document, I dismissed it as without value. It was contrary to all that I had been taught. Thus, by age sixteen I was quite well indoctrinated, comforted only occasionally by a misquotation of Psalm 68:31 that had long been current in Black/Negro Communities: "Well, you know what the Bible says, 'Ethiopia [referring to Black peoples everywhere] shall stretch forth her wings to God, and become one of the greatest nations in the world.'"

C. "White" as Desirable?

Just as my first experiences relative to ancient history occurred when I was ten years old, so did my first experiences in interracial activities begin when I was sixteen. With "white" as my criterion of all things

⁸Ibid., 133; Breasted, *Conquest of Civilization*, 44.

⁹James Morris Webb, *The Black Man, the Father of Civilization, Proven by Biblical History* (Seattle: Acme Press, Printers, 1910; reprint, San Francisco: Julius Richardson Associates, 1984).

good, I became an ardent integrationist, eager to be assimilated into the mainstream of white American life. For all practical purposes, such integration meant learning to think and act—if not look—white. Opportunity for participation in interracial affairs increased when I went to college in the deep South. In the curriculum there was a course entitled “Race Relations,” with racial interaction provided through membership in the Y.M.C.A. and the Student Volunteer Movement.

The “white” criterion of all that was good and desirable, and the concomitant evaluation of everything Black as being undesirable, was evidenced in my reading during this period. It was strengthened by the phenomenon in college and seminary of having either all white administrators and professors or some Black counterparts having advanced degrees from white institutions, all of whom depended upon scholarly sources written, naturally, from the white perspective. There were few, if any, seminary or graduate courses regarding the “Black Experience.”

The goal of my graduate education was to become qualified according to the best white academic standards, (although “best white” is rather a contradiction in terms). I felt highly honored when I was selected a Teaching Assistant of my major professor in the doctoral program. Later, after I had become a professor and Dean of the theological seminary from which I graduated, I maintained high academic and professional standards, as evidenced in mainline liberal, seminaries. Of course I observed American Association of Theological Schools (A.A.T.S.) standards. I was also honored when, along with other seminary professors of my predominantly white denomination, I was chosen to write curricular materials for church school

learners of all ages. In the meantime, I had been appointed Bible study leader in Schools of Christian Mission and Spiritual Life Retreats across the country, often serving as a facilitator for interracial relations.

III. Emerging Awareness of a Black Biblical and Worldwide Presence

A. Black Awareness Movement

My activities were not questioned until a white member of the seminary's Board of Trustees criticized my writing church school materials. A more serious criticism, however, was made by a Black person, who, without being specific, stated that our curriculum was irrelevant for a predominantly Negro student body. This latter assessment was the prelude to forceful experiences during the 1968-1969 school year, namely, "Black Power," "Black Awareness Movement," and a general student revolt.

The Black Awareness Movement and the student revolt changed all areas of the seminary's life—governance, administration, and curriculum. The curriculum, for example, had to include the Black Experience, and I was pressured personally to provide courses in my own discipline—Bible. Additionally, I had to guide the faculty in their development of a Black Studies program for the school's disciplines.

B. Position Papers for A.A.T.S.

Also, during this time of intense involvement at our own school, I was named to an A.A.T.S. committee whose assignment was to prepare for a future conference designed to include the Black Religious Experi-

ence in seminary curricula. Without my being asked I was assigned to write two position papers: "The Black Religious Experience and Biblical Studies" and "Some Areas for Research in a Black Theological Curriculum." One of these papers was to be read at the pending conference. Thus, I had several frustrating interrelated tasks simultaneously.

Needless to say, I was completely unprepared to cope with any of these tasks—the demands hit me like a bolt of lightning! At first, I had difficulty comprehending the term "Black" as it was being used with such phrases as "Black Experience," "Black Awareness," "Black Studies." Frantically, I consulted younger persons, some of whom had been engaged in Black Awareness activities from the inception of the Movement. It appeared that, like Rip Van Winkle, I had been asleep while a revolution was raging. Gradually, with much pain, I began to obtain rudimentary answers. As my understanding increased, I experienced "a new birth" intellectually and spiritually. Arriving at the point of joyfully embracing my own Blackness, I was no longer ashamed of it, which resulted in my increased ability to view things from a Black Perspective.

IV. Blacks/Negro Presence in Biblical World

A. Papers and New Courses

In considering courses in Biblical studies I instituted two seminars, one concerning the Black Presence in the Bible; the other, with Black Men and the Bible. This latter course focused upon the manner in which white and Black people interpreted the Bible, especially regarding Blacks/Negroes. During the sec-

ond semester of 1968-1969 with six students, I experimented with the first of these courses.

At the same time, I began to compose the two papers assigned to me which were related to the A.A.T.S. conference scheduled February 20-22, 1970 at Howard University, Washington, D. C. In meetings of the committee I increased my knowledge of the nature and significance of Black Awareness—from younger persons who, unlike me, were in the vanguard of the Movement.

The first assignment I titled "Perspectives and Questions: The Black Religious Experience and Biblical Studies." Among other items in the paper, I submitted five axioms, the fourth of which stated: "The Bible must be studied and interpreted according to its objective content, in keeping with sound methods, and in such a manner that study and interpretation contribute to the liberation of oppressed peoples (with special reference to Black people) from positions of indignity, dehumanization in an oppressive and destructive society; i.e., the Bible must be studied and interpreted from the Black [P]erspective as well as from the white."¹⁰

I stated, further, that the Black Religious Experience could be incorporated into the seminary curriculum by adding new content to already existing courses and by the development of newly designed material. Suggestions for each procedure were offered. In the second paper, "Some Areas for Research," I suggested from among several topics dealing with the Bible the two I had previously considered in connection with

¹⁰Charles B. Copher, "Perspectives and Questions: The Black Religious Experience and Biblical Studies," *Theological Education* 6 (Spring 1970): 183.

my own immediate seminary curriculum.¹¹

As an instructor in Biblical Studies, I was faced with the necessity to implement at my own institution that which I had suggested to the conference. In the ensuing process I noted that the two seminar topics were interrelated and could be executed concurrently. Hardly had my work begun when I encountered difficulty with the subject—the presence of Blacks in the Bible.

B. The Table of Nations

The Table of Nations, in Genesis 10, was chosen as a point of departure. Only two sources consulted initially treated the matter. The first of these, *Genesis*, by John Skinner, in the *International Critical Commentary*, stated that “true negroes” are excluded from the Table.¹² Likewise, the second reference, *History of the Old Testament*, by Paul Heinisch, after noting that the Table traces all the peoples of the earth back to the three sons of Noah, declared, “No reference is made to the Indians, Negroes, Mongoloids, Malaysians, Chinese, Japanese. . . . The author names only the peoples within his own sphere of knowledge.”¹³

I then turned to Martin Noth's volume, *The Old Testament World*,¹⁴ but was disappointed with his ex-

¹¹Copher, "Some Areas for Research in a Black Theological Curriculum," *Theological Education, Supplement 6* (Spring 1970): S-44-S-52.

¹²John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*, vol. 1, *The International Critical Commentary* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), 192.

¹³Paul Heinisch, *History of the Old Testament* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1952), 32.

¹⁴Martin Noth, *The Old Testament World* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 236.

clusion of Negroes except as neighbors of Egypt. Further, I was insulted by his criticism of the Egyptian for having incorrectly classified the Nubians as Negroes. His words struck me as European racial arrogance, i.e., Noth's assertion that he, living thirty-five hundred years later, knew better than an Egyptian the correct identity of a Nubian. One other resource was available to me at the time, Dr. Albright's article "The Old Testament World" in the *Interpreter's Bible*. After declaring that "all races of man known from the Old Testament belong to Homo sapiens . . .,"¹⁵ Dr. Albright continues by saying, "all known ancient races in the region that concern us here belonged to the so called 'white' or 'Caucasian' race, with the exception of the Cushites ('Ethiopian') who were strongly Negroid in type, as we know from many Egyptian paintings."¹⁶ This opinion was hardly less disappointing than the others. Yet, as I reflected upon what these scholars had said, I came to realize that their views were exactly what I had been taught to believe. They were essentially the views of Philip Van Ness Meyers and James Henry Breasted, and corresponded with what later I shall refer to as a New Hamite view. Inasmuch as I had begun to consider matters from a Black Perspective, I could not be satisfied with these views, for not only were Blacks/Negroes excluded from the biblical world; they were at the same time excluded from the Bible. Upon reflection, this was in disagreement with all that I had otherwise discovered about the use of the Bible by white and Black people with reference to Blacks/Negroes.

¹⁵William Foxwell Albright, "The Old Testament World," in *Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 1, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Press, 1952), 238.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

So, there were at least some other views, and I set out to ascertain their characteristics. To my surprise I uncovered at least six categories of views, all of which have devoted adherents among contemporary Americans. Accordingly, and utilizing my own terminology, these categories are:

Pre-Adamite
 Adamite
 Cainite
 Noahite, or Old Hamite
 New Hamite
 Various Black Views

C. Pre-Adamite

According to one view within this category, Blacks/Negroes do appear in the Bible as creatures, who, in their creation by God, antedate the creation of Adam and Eve. This category appears to have several roots, and has gone through a process which views contemporary Black people as the offspring of the Pre-Adamites. Apparently one ancient root lies in the idea that a demon resident in the Serpent that tempted Eve was black. Another root, datable to the Age of Discovery, developed from the knowledge gained by Europeans that there were peoples unlike themselves and who, therefore, must belong to a creation different from their own. They were, of course, convinced of their relation to the creation of Adam. This latter root supported a trunk that developed into a fully grown tree with the publication in 1655 of Isaac de la Peyrère's *Pre-Adamites*.¹⁷ In turn, this book became the ancestor of

¹⁷Isaac de la Peyrère, *Men Before Adam or, A Discourse upon the Twelfth, Thirteenth and Fourteenth Verses of the Fifth Chapter*

a work by the American, Alexander Winchell¹⁸ with somewhat the same title. Some of the substance of this category deals with the "beast of the field" (Genesis 2:19-20) which was grasped by the Ku Klux Klan, and appears in the writings of Charles Carroll, a clergyperson. Two of these are *The Negro a Beast*¹⁹ and *Tempter of Eve*.²⁰ Carroll's views were very popular in the South, and are presented today in books such as *In the Image of God*, published in New England.²¹

D. Adamite

The Adamite view is that which traditionally regards Adam as the first human created in the image of God and from whom all others are descended. It takes for granted that Blacks/Negroes are members of the "race" of Adam, so to speak, and consequently appear in the Bible along with all others. Thus, as the apostle Paul puts the matter in Acts 17:26, "[God] hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth . . ."

of the Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Romans, by which are Prov'd that the First Men were Created before Adam (London: [n. p.], 1656). Title translated by Thomas F. Gossett, *Race: The History of an Idea in America* (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), 461, n. 25.

¹⁸Alexander Winchell, *Preadamites or, A Demonstration of the Existence of Men before Adam; Together with a Study of their Condition, Antiquity, Racial Affinities, and Progressive Dispersion over the Earth*, 4th ed. (Chicago: Griggs and Company, 1886).

¹⁹Charles Carroll, *The Negro a Beast or, In the Image of God: The Reasoner of the Age, the Revelator of the Century! The Bible as it is! The Negro Not the Son of Ham* (St. Louis: American Book and Bible House, 1900).

²⁰Charles Carroll, *The Tempter of Eve* (St. Louis: American Book and Bible House, 1903).

²¹Charles Carroll, *In the Image of God* (Merimac, MA: Destiny Publishers, 1967).

E. Cainite

According to several versions of this view, Blacks/Negroes appear in the Bible in different relationships to Cain. They might appear as a son of Adam and Eve, or as a son of Eve and someone other than Adam, such as the aforementioned demon which was in the Serpent, the Serpent himself, or the "beast of the field." Accordingly, Cain was either born black or turned black by hail blowing in his face, by the smoke from his unacceptable sacrifice, by the curse resulting from his murder of Abel, or from the mark placed upon him,²² and so on. However he obtained his black color, he became either the channel through whom Blacks/Negroes enter the world, or their outright ancestor. Thus, wherever in the Bible one reads material concerning Cain and his descendants, one is reading about Black folk. With disregard for Cain's offspring having been the founders of civilization, as depicted in Genesis 4:20ff, they are said to have been the vile creatures who were responsible for the Flood. Whenever it is recalled that *all* of Cain's descendants were destroyed in the Flood, a correction must necessarily be made. Then, it is argued that Ham had married a daughter of Cain, who, by the way, would have been doubly black, since her black father had married a Pre-Adamite woman, a "negress" because the Pre-Adamites were Negroes.²³ So it happens that Cain's blood was present on the Ark, having been transmitted through Ham and his progeny. It is of great interest to me that, since at

²²These are explanations given by various individuals and groups, beginning with ancient rabbis and continues today in bodies such as the Mormons.

²³Various religious bodies, especially those that hold Pre-Adamite views, emphasize this belief.

least the twelfth century C.E., Cain has been depicted in European art as a Negro;²⁴ and that at one time the Cainite view was widely held in America, becoming a basic doctrine in at least one of America's religious bodies.²⁵

F. Noahite-Old Hamite

This category is related to the Adamite as its continuation, so to speak, inasmuch as Noah was a direct descendant of Adam through Seth. Noah, in turn, became the ancestor of all peoples through his three sons, one of whom, Ham, became the eponymous, if not the historical, progenitor of Blacks/Negroes. Specifically, then, this category should be designated Old Hamite since, as already noted, there later arose New Hamite views. This Old Hamite view was based upon the Table of Nations in Genesis 10, and interpreted either in conjunction with, or separate from, the curse upon Canaan recounted in Genesis 9. Apart from the curse, these Hamites, i.e., Cush (Ethiopia), Mizraim (Egypt), Phut, and Canaan, all Black as their father

²⁴See Ruth Mellinkoff, *The Mark of Cain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).

²⁵The Mormons. On this point see the following among the voluminous literature: Naomi Felecia Woodbury, "A Legacy of Intolerance: Nineteenth Century Pro-Slavery Propaganda and the Mormon Church Today" (M.A. thesis, University of California: Los Angeles, 1966); John L. Lund, *The Church and the Negro: A Discussion of Mormons, Negroes* [n. p.], 1967; William J. Whalen, *The Latter-Day Saints in the Modern Day World: An Account of Contemporary Mormonism*, rev. ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1967); Newell G. Bringhurst, *Saints, Slaves, and Blacks: The Changing Place of Black People within Mormonism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981); Robert Gottlieb and Peter Wiley, *America's Saints: The Rise of Mormon Power* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1984).

before them had been, born or changed in color, were the founders of the ancient civilizations in the Nile Valley and in the Asiatic regions of Mesopotamia and surrounding areas.²⁶ Thus Blacks/Negroes appear in the Bible as Hamites, who are descendants of a black Ham, who either was born black or who as a white man sired cursed black descendants.

One or more versions within this category became traditional in European thought and held the field until approximately two hundred years ago when there arose and developed the New Hamite category. Yet, the versions of this category that emphasize a curse upon Ham or Canaan or both are, as I learned, very much with us today in popular and conservative circles and in some academic communities as well.²⁷

The Cainite category has interested me greatly, but the Old Hamite, especially the versions that dealt with a curse upon Ham, interested me all the more. Further research was necessary. How happy I am to notice that in my Bible there is nothing said about a curse upon Ham by either God or Noah. How sad I became when I read that one version of the Septuagint and an Arabic translation of the Tanakh had a curse upon Ham rather than upon Canaan, not thinking at the time that all translations are only interpretations.²⁸

²⁶This view, as indicated, is held by traditional, conservative and fundamentalistic "Bible believing groups," many of whom, however, emphasize only the negative idea of the "curse of Ham," based on Genesis 9. Note, for example, Merrill F. Unger, *Archaeology and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1954), 73-77.

²⁷The academic communities are represented, of course, by conservative scholars in various theological seminaries.

²⁸References of the "curse of Ham" in the Septuagint and Arabic Bible are found, for example, in the writing of Adam Clarke, *The*

My sadness continued when I noticed that some Christian Bibles contain the Genesis 9 superscription, "Malediction Upon Ham," or contain commentary in agreement with interpretations of the ancient rabbis.²⁹

The rabbinic interpretations referred to in Christian Bibles served as a clue to direct me to the Babylonian Talmud and various Midrashim. In the *Talmud, Sanhedrin* 108b, I read:

Our rabbis taught three copulated in the ark, and they were all punished—the dog, the raven, and Ham. The dog was doomed to be tied, the raven expectorates his seed into his mate's mouth, and Ham was smitten in his skin, with an editorial footnote explaining that "smitten in his skin" means that from Ham descended Cush (the negro) who is black skinned.³⁰

Similarly, I read in *Midrash Rabbah*, Genesis:

R. Huna said in R. Joseph's name: (Noah declared), 'you have prevented me from be-getting a fourth

Holy Bible . . . with a Commentary and Critical Notes . . ., vol. 1 (Nashville: Abingdon, [n. d.]), 38, from which rabid Negrophobes such as Josiah Priest borrowed. See also Arthur C. Custance, "Noah's Three Sons" in *The Doorway Papers*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), 25.

²⁹For instance, some editions of the Vulgate, and other Roman Catholic Bibles such as *The Holy Bible: Douay-Confraternity* (New York: P. J. Kennedy & Sons, 1950). Additionally, however, Christian commentators such as Adam Clarke in relatively recent times have relied heavily on the ancient rabbis. See Clarke, *The Holy Bible*, vol. 1, *Genesis*, Chapter 4, 61 *passim*. See Abraham I. Katsh, *The Biblical Heritage of American Democracy* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1977) for the acquaintance of American Gentiles with rabbinical writings.

³⁰This is the reading in Jacob Shacter, trans. *Sanhedrin*, Hebrew-English Edition of the Babylonian Talmud, chs. 1-4, ed. Rabbi I. Epstein (London: Soncino Press, 1969).

son, therefore your seed will be ugly and dark-skinned.' R. Hiyya said: 'Ham and the dog copulated in the Ark, therefore Ham came forth blackskinned while the dog publically exposes its copulation.'³¹

Moreover, I read in a popular publication a version that combines *Sanhedrin* 108b with various Midrashim such as *Tanhuma Noah*, as follows:

Others say that Ham himself unmanned Noah who, awakening from his drunken sleep and understanding what had been done to him cried: 'Now I cannot beget the fourth son . . . Therefore it must be Canaan, your first born, whom they enslave . . . Canaan's children shall be black. Moreover, because you twisted your head around to see my nakedness your grandchildren's hair shall be twisted into kinks, and their eyes red; again, because your lips jested at my misfortune, theirs shall swell; and because you neglected my nakedness, they shall go naked, and their male members shall be shamefully elongated.' Men of this race are called Negroes. . .³²

So this is where it all began, I reflected. "How tragic," I said to myself, "that the equivalent of myth and fairy tales could be regarded as actual history, and the Bible used as the basis of a curse which doomed a people for all times to a hell on earth worse than any hell in an afterlife could ever be. Worse still, intelligent people still believe such tripe today."

³¹Rabbi H. Freedman and Maurice Simon, eds. *Midrash Rabbah*, Genesis in two vols, chapter XXXVI: 7-8 (London: Soncino Press, 1939), 293.

³²Robert Graves and Raphael Patai, *Hebrew Myths: The Book of Genesis* (New York: Greenwich House, 1983), 121.

G. New Hamite³³

As noted previously, over against the Old Hamite category, there arose during the nineteenth century a New Hamite theory, one which continues into the present. Like the old, it is based upon the Table of Nations in that it views the Hamites listed there as Caucasians, instead of Blacks. Even though some peoples, such as the Cushites, are black in color, they are still regarded as white, Caucasoid or European Blacks, as it were, but by no means Negroes. This position is emphasized in all the literature related to the subject, whether archaeological, anthropological, ethnological, historical, sociological, or theological. This is the view already noted as that held by such scholars as Skinner, Heinisch, Noth, and Albright. And I dare say that it is the view adhered to by the majority of non-conservative, non-traditional mainline scholars today. Like the old Hamite category this one has two sides with reference to Blacks/Negroes. Since the Hamites are all white, the curse upon Ham/Canaan is

³³It is to be noted that there are several views (or versions) that go under the heading of my category, "New Hamite," and one must be careful to distinguish among them. For discussions and evaluations of the subject one may note, for example, the following: Edith R. Sanders, "The Hamite in Anthropology and History: A Preliminary Study" (M.A. thesis, Columbia University, [1965]); Philip D. Curtin, *African History*, publication number 52 (Washington, D.C.: Service Center for Teachers of History, 1964), 34-38; Christopher Wrigley, "Speculations on the Economic Prehistory of Africa," in *Peoples and Cultures of Africa*, ed. Elliott P. Skinner (Garden City, NY: Doubleday/Natural History Press, 1973), 81-99; Bruce G. Trigger, "Nubian, Negro, Black, Nilotic?" in *Africa in Antiquity: The Arts of Ancient Nubia and the Sudan* (Brooklyn: Division of Publications and Marketing Services, The Brooklyn Museum, 1978), 26-35; Peter Garlake, *The Kingdoms of Africa* (New York: Peter Bedrick Books, 1990), 19, 141.

removed from Black peoples. Thus, some modern white friends of Blacks, relying upon Albright, were able to oppose segregation of Negroes in the United States. This occurred when the Supreme Court outlawed segregation in education, which rejuvenated all of the "curse of Ham" literature that had been employed to uphold Black enslavement.³⁴ However, this view, of course, removes Blacks/Negroes not only from the biblical world, but from the Bible itself.

H. Various Black Views³⁵

Traditionally, African Americans have been firm believers in some view or views within the Old Hamite category despite embarrassment relative to the curse upon Ham and/or Canaan. To my utter surprise, in the course of this research, I learned that African Americans, over the past two centuries, had written histories of ancient Black peoples on the basis of Genesis 10. Some of these histories, corresponding with similar histories written by white persons, were produced by well-educated scholars, and, had I known of their existence, would have been better able to utilize my research hours upon related topics.³⁶ One such his-

³⁴See, for example, Everett Tilson, *Segregation and the Bible* (New York: Abingdon Press, [1958]), 26; T. B. Matson, *Segregation and Desegregation* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1959), 100.

³⁵Interestingly, some Blacks, even uneducated ones, have subscribed to a Pre-Adamite view on the basis of Genesis, as for example, Elder W. E. Bowen, *The Hambo Book on the Black Race* ([n. p.], 1925). In recent times several Black groups have arisen, claiming to be descendants of one or more biblical personalities and/or groups: Jewish, Hebrew-Israelites, Nubiāns, Church of the Living God, etc.

³⁶"Ancient Black History" by African Americans appears in addresses, books, booklets, etc. at least from 1793 onwards—based

tory, entitled *The Cushite or the Descendants of Ham as Found in the Sacred Scriptures and in the Writings of Ancient Historians and Poets from Noah to the Christian Era*, by Rufus L. Perry, D.D., Ph.D., in 1893-1897, ostensibly was written to refute a book, published in 1869 by John D. Baldwin, entitled *Pre-Historic Nations . . .*.³⁸ Baldwin contended that the Cushites were Caucasian. Another volume, *The Negro in Holy Writ*, published in 1902 by Benjamin Tucker Tanner, then a bishop in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and a good student of Greek and Hebrew, took issue with the New Hamite removal of Black peoples from the Bible.³⁹ Over against the Old Hamite view, especially in recent times, there has arisen among African Americans a variety of views, some of which regard all biblical personalities to have been Black until Esau or even Gehazi, the servant of Elisha. Others regard all good biblical characters such as Abel to have been Black and all evil ones such as Cain, Delilah, and Jezebel to

upon the Bible yet also upon classical sources in some instances. Among authors who have produced works which vary widely in value are the following: Prince Hall, David Walker, Hosea Easton, J. W. C. Pennington, A. G. Beeman, R. B. Lewis, H. H. Garnett, M. R. Delany, William G. Allen, E. W. Blyden, Alexander Crummell, W. W. Brown, G. W. Williams, J. M. Barber, E. A. Johnson, R. L. Perry, B. T. Tanner, J. J. Pikin, J. M. Webb, W. H. Ferris, R. A. Morrissey, M. Work, J. W. Norris, E. E. and J. E. Carlisle, A. P. B. Holly, M. Ellison, W. E. B. Dubois, R. Windsor, R. A. Bennett, J. Dyer, A. G. Dunston, Jr., C. B. Copher, R. H. Woolsey, F. S. Rhoades, W. L. Dillard, John Johnson, C. H. Felder, W. A. McCray, J. Smith, W. D. McKissic, S. C. Drake.

³⁸John D. Baldwin, *Pre-historic Nations; or Inquiries Concerning Some of the Great Peoples and Civilizations of Antiquity and Their Probable Relation to Still Older Civilization of the Ethiopians or Cushites of Arabia* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1869).

³⁹Benjamin Tucker Tanner, *The Negro in Holy Writ* (Philadelphia: [n. p.], 1902).

have been white. Others consider themselves to be descendants of the "true Hebrew-Israelites" apart from any or all Black Jewish groups. Still others claim to represent the original Jews who they say were Black in color.⁴⁰

I. Assessment of Two Hamitic Categories

Faced with these several views, I had to decide which, if any of them, might be considered valid. Without hesitation I threw out the Pre-Adamite and Cainite categories, since they appeared to be incredible, even utterly ridiculous. I did the same with the numerous views in the Black category, excepting certain aspects of the Old Hamite, and for the same reasons that I had discarded the Pre-Adamite and Cainite categories. The Adamite, I noted, as previously stated, was a traditional biblical view considered by perhaps a majority of Bible believers as theologically, if not historically sound, and left it at that. This left the two Hamite categories to be considered. Which of these two expressed the truth about a Black/Negro presence in the Biblical World

⁴⁰Some writers who do not necessarily belong to one of the several and various sects nevertheless hold some of the same views, such as those in regard to the color of Esau or Gehazi. See, for example, Rudolph R. Windsor, *From Babylon to Timbuktu: A History of the Ancient Black Races Including the Black Hebrews* (New York: Exposition Press, [1969]), 25; John L. Johnson, *The Black Biblical Heritage: Four Thousand Years of Black Biblical History*, new and rev. ed. (Nashville: Winston-Derek Publishers, 1993), 223, 225; William LaRue Dillard, *Biblical Ancestry Voyage Revealing Facts of Significant Black Characters* (Morristown, NJ: Aaron Press, 1989), 28, which is the same as Johnson's page 225 and pages 37-38. Additionally, see *The Original African Heritage Study Bible, King James Version with Special Annotations Relative to the African/Edenic Perspective* (Nashville: James C. Winston Publishing Company, 1993), 91. Footnote: "Color Significance and Leprosy."

and Bible?

1. The Problem of Definition: Black/Negro and Race

Before I could proceed with my evaluation, however, I discovered that there were serious difficulties related to the definition of Black/Negro. The same was true with reference to the term "race." Literature concerning Black/Negro contained so many conflicting and contradictory usages that I was at a loss to determine which definition, if any, I might employ. Moreover, the term "Negro" was qualified by numerous adjectives, as many as three or even four by a given author on a single page, such adjectives as: full genuine, pure, real, technical, true, etc.⁴¹ Moreover, "Negroes" were further subdivided into types such as Negrilos and Negritoos. What, I wondered, is a Negro? Writers, especially members of the New Hamite school, so to speak, make clear that, when they are dealing with Negroes who have never developed any degree of civilization, they are those who have the adjectives as part of their identity. From my Black Perspective I thought that one might just as well speak about a hypothetical pure, genuine, etc., Caucasian who is to be credited with civilization's origin and development. Upon reflection, I noted that this was exactly what Breasted and others had done. However, I did not let my mind linger, but proceeded to deal with definitions of Black/Negro.

The definitions I discovered include, among others, the following: "one who literally is black in varying

⁴¹Note, for example, W. E. B. Dubois, *The World and Africa*, new and enlarged ed. (New York: International Publishers, 1965), 91.

degrees of blackness, even though color may or may not have anything to do with race so that one may literally be black but classified as white, Caucasian"; "anyone who anthropologically is Black/Negro, that is, possessing black skin, kinky hair, flat nose, etc."; "anyone with any discernible trace especially of African-Negro appearance"; "anyone with any known Negro ancestry"; "anyone with one drop of African-Negro blood"; etc.⁴² All of these definitions, it is to be noted, are those developed by white, not Black/Negro, people; all of them occur in American thought and practice. However, I noted that among New Hamite anthropologists one drop of white Hamite blood is as strong as one drop of Negro blood. Whereas one drop of Negro blood makes one a Negro, one drop of white Hamite blood deprives one of being a pure, true, etc., Negro.⁴³

Now, although I was aware that the ancients did not have our categories of racial distinctions, I had to make sense of our definitions in dealing with peoples of the Biblical World. Only one way was open to me: recognize and use all of them, even the anthropological. So, by Black/Negro I mean all the definitions taken together.

Having considered the matter of definitions, I moved forward with my evaluation of the two categories of Hamite views. In the course of my investigations I observed eight categories of evidence that would

⁴²One meets one or more of these definitions in various kinds of writings, from directions to government census workers to informal statements.

⁴³Some writers even indicate the proportion of Hamitic blood such as half-Hamite etc. See, for example St. Clair Drake, *Black Folk Here and There: An Essay in History and Anthropology*, vol. 1 (Los Angeles: Center for Afro-American Studies, University of California, 1987), xx.

aid, I thought, in reaching a conclusion. These categories were:

- 1) Archaeological data
- 2) Historical works
- 3) Opinions of critical historical/literary Biblical scholars
- 4) Proper names and adjectives
- 5) Opinions of modern travelers and anthropologists
- 6) Statements of ancient Greek and Roman writers
- 7) Early Christians commentators
- 8) Hebrew, Israelite, Judahite, Jewish accounts, traditions, and legends as these appear in the Biblical Table of Nations, the Babylonian Talmud and Midrashim.

I then divided the Biblical world into two regions, and applied pertinent categories to each region. These regions were a) Egypt and African Cush, and b) Mediterranean Lands.

a) Egypt and African Cush

I noted first that recent archaeological discoveries establish the existence of a Negro civilization in the Sahara as far back as 8,000 B.C.E. Some scholars believe that, with increasing desiccation of the Sahara, some of the inhabitants moved eastwards into the Nile Valley.⁴⁴ Next I learned that even many new Hamite scholars concede that the pre-dynastic Egyptians were Negroid in whole or in part, but then they progressively

⁴⁴See among others, Basil Davidson, *The Lost Cities of Africa* (Boston: Little, Brown Company, 1959), 7-8; Drake, *Black Folk*, 129.

remove the Negro from the population between the beginning of the dynastic period and the Eighteenth Dynasty. Afterwards, they admit a limited presence.⁴⁵ In my investigation of Egypt and African Cush under the overall heading of Archaeological Data, I proceeded according to the following sub-headings: *Ancient Egyptian Historical Records: Statuary and Paintings* and *Skeletal Remains*.

Using Breasted's *Ancient Records of Egypt*,⁴⁶ I noted that, beginning with the Third Dynasty, Breasted's work was a documentary of references to Negroes. Statuary and paintings representing Negroes, some of whom were in highest positions, I discovered, and were traceable back to as early as 3,000 B.C., and continued throughout Pharonic periods. With reference to skeletal remains, one authority allowed $\frac{1}{3}$ Negroid mixed population during one pre-dynastic span.⁴⁷ Another authority reported that of Egyptians belonging to the period between the Early Pre-dynastic and Fifth Dynasty 24% of the males and 19.5% of the females were to be classified as Negroes.⁴⁸ Further, that for the periods of the Sixth to the Eighteenth Dynasty about

⁴⁵One may consult various histories of Egypt for such a view.

⁴⁶James Henry Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt: Historical Documents from the Earliest Times to the Persian Conquest . . .*, 5 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1906).

⁴⁷Eugen Strouhal, "Evidence of the Early Penetration of Negroes into Prehistoric Egypt," *Journal of African History* 12 (1971): 1-9.

⁴⁸For this information I am partially dependent upon W. E. B. Dubois, *World and Africa*, 107. See also Cheikh Anta Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality*, ed. and trans. Mercer Cook (New York: Lawrence Hill and Company, 1974), 130; "Origin of the Ancient Egyptians," in *Ancient Civilizations of Africa*, ed. G. Mokhtar (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 26-57; Drake, *Black Folk Here and There*, 152-153.

20% of the males and 15% of the females studied are grouped with Negroes. According to still another authority, the percentage of Negroes in the population of Egypt rose to 40% in the Eleventh, Twelfth and Thirteenth Dynasties of the Middle Kingdom; and towards the end of the New Kingdom Negroids and mixed bloods together composed 40% of the total population.⁴⁹

A survey of histories of Egypt proved to be most interesting.⁵⁰ I got the impression that one major goal of Egyptology was to prove that the ancient Egyptians were not Negroes. Two hundred years ago these inhabitants of the Nile Valley had been believed to be Black. Towards the end of the nineteenth-century Budge and Rawlinson would emphatically declare that they were not, and Breasted would declare the older historians wrong in their identification. And despite Rawlinson's contention that the Egyptians were Caucasians he describes them in part as follows: "The Egyptians were not negroes, but they bore a resemblance to the negro which is indisputable. Their type differs from the Caucasian in exactly those respects which when exaggerated produce the negro."⁵¹ Such a description leaves the poor Egyptian suspended in mid-air, halfway between Caucasians and Negro—belonging to neither. After stating that it is impossible for the historian to obtain decisive results from the activities of physical anthropologists, Breasted says, "The conclusion

⁴⁹As reported by Tarharka, *Black Manhood: the Building of Civilization by the Black Man of the Nile*, rev. ed. (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1979), 53; also Diop, *African Origin*, 130.

⁵⁰These histories date from the earliest days of "Egyptology," beginning around 1820.

⁵¹George Rawlinson, *Ancient Egypt*, 3d ed. (London: T. Fisher Unwin; New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1887), 24.

once maintained by some historians, that the Egyptian was of African negro origin is now refuted; and evidently indicated at most he may have been slightly tintured with negro blood . . ."⁵² Apparently Breasted was unaware that even a "slight tincture" would have sufficed to place the Egyptian in the category of Negro, I surmised. Further, I noted that some historians, such as Budge and Mariette-Bey, whose books went through several editions, progressively removed Negroes from their texts in describing Egyptians. Budge, for example, presents Nefertari Ahmose initially as a "negress" of "ebony hue"; then as an Ethiopian, and finally with no reference to her color or nationality. The inference being in the last instance that she was a lily-white Caucasian. In the end I had to conclude, as did W. E. B. Dubois after he had studied Maspero, Reisner, Breasted and others, that, according to American definitions, the ancient Egyptians would have to be classified as Negroes.⁵³

Continuing with findings regarding Egypt/African Cush, I had thought Breasted to be the most anti-Black racist under the sun. However, with my discovery of Dr. Hermann Junker, I found one who went beyond even Breasted. Dr. Junker, in a famous lecture delivered in 1921, in disagreement with Breasted, Edward Meyer, and Randall MacIver, all of whom had begun the history of the Negroes as far back as circa 3,000 B.C.E, declared that Negroes did not first appear in history until circa 1,500 B.C.E, a millennium and a half later, thus eliminating Negroes from those

⁵²James Henry Breasted, *A History of Egypt from the Earliest Times to the Persian Conquest*, 2d ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924), 26.

⁵³Dubois, *World and Africa*, 108.

who could have shared in the greatest periods of Egypt's most ancient history.⁵⁴ Needless to say, I was most pleasantly surprised when I noted that in his book, *Races of Africa*, ethnologist Charles Gabriel Seligman, arch protagonist for one of the most outlandish New Hamite views, took issue with Junker, partly on the basis of his ridiculous definition of Negro, and traced the Negro back to as early as 3,200 B.C.E.⁵⁵

These findings are presented, in part, because both Junker and Seligman were widely accepted, although the Hamite hypothesis has been laughed to scorn;⁵⁶ apparently, Junker's position is still maintained among scholars. I was to learn later, however, that even among former staunch supporters, Junker's views were deemed invalid.⁵⁷ In addition, I came across another scholar who was almost as bad as Junker, namely, Dr. J. A. Wilson, who has been as influential as Drs. Junker and Seligman. In articles published in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*,⁵⁸ and in *The World History of the Jewish People: At the Dawn of Civilization*,⁵⁹ Wilson states that the Negro did not appear

⁵⁴Herman Junker, "The First Appearance of the Negro in History," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 7 (1921): 121-132.

⁵⁵Charles G. Seligman, *Races of Africa* (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1939), 52.

⁵⁶See, e.g., Basil Davidson, "The Ancient World and Africa: Whose Roots?" in *Egypt Revisited*, 2d ed., ed. Ivan Van Sertima (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1989), 45-48. Cf. Trigger, "Nubian, Negro, Black . . ."

⁵⁷Jean Vercoutter, "The Iconography of the Black in Ancient Egypt: From the Beginnings to the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty," in *The Image of the Black in Western Art*, vol. 1, *From the Pharaohs to the Fall of the Roman Empire* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1967), 33-38.

⁵⁸Cf. J. A. Wilson, "Egypt," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 39-66, especially 42.

⁵⁹J. A. Wilson, "Egypt—The Kingdom of the Two Lands," in *At*

on the Sudanese horizon until about 2,000 B.C.E. Of course, his position stands to be corrected for the same reasons as those of Junker.

In applying the categories of archaeological data, historical works, physical anthropology, etc. to African Cush, I discovered almost as much diversity and disagreement among authorities as in the case of Egypt, itself. Some scholars, for example, state that Nubians/Cushites are Black and Negroid one year, but then, the next year, they are understood to be Caucasoid White. Some, I found, insist that especially the rulers of the Twenty-fifth, an Ethiopian Dynasty, were Caucasians,⁶⁰ while others refer to a member of that dynasty as a Negro king.⁶¹ Still another author wrote concerning a second member of the same dynasty under the title, "The Exploits of a Nigger King."⁶² Legends on a bust of Tirhakah, and on the famous "Nubian Archers" discovered at Assyut, and presently in the Cairo Museum, are identified as Negroes, and that I accept as valid.⁶³ Contrary to Dr. Noth's criticism of the Egyptian Dawn of Civilization, vol. 1, The World History of Jewish People Series, ed. E. A. Speiser (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1964), 267-347.

⁶⁰E.g., Roland A. Oliver and J. D. Fage, in their *A Short History of Africa*, ed. Ronald Segal (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1962), state: ". . . Kush, like Egypt, was basically a country of white Caucasians." J. A. Wilson in *At the Dawn of Civilization*, 305, refers to the Middle Kingdom of Egypt (1990-1780 B.C.E.) as a period when the Nubians "at that time" were not Negroes.

⁶¹George Steindorf and Keith C. Steele, *When Egypt Ruled the East* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 271, who write, "The throne of Egypt was occupied by a Negro king from Ethiopia."

⁶²Arthur Weigall, "The Exploits of a Nigger King," in *Personalities of Antiquity* (New York: H. W. Wilson Company, 1932), 185-192.

⁶³*Ibid.*, 192. Here, Weigall refers to Taharqua (Tirhakah) as a full-blooded Negro. Others writers, too numerous to be listed here, also regard Nubians as Negroes.

tians for depicting the Nubians as Negroes, Marriette-Bey, Montet, Steindorf and Steele, and Fairservis, for examples, describe the Black people painted in Huy's tomb as Negroes.⁶⁴

When combining the Critical Historical-Literary category (composed of scholars who, I assume, are to be classified as subscribers to a New Hamite view), and the category of Proper Names and Adjectives, I noted that the term "Cush" (Ethiopia) and related words were translated as Black/Negro.⁶⁵ Similarly, some scholars identify the Cushite wife of Moses as Negro, as do others in instances where Cushites appear elsewhere in the Scriptures. The same translation is made in the case of the name "Phinehas," especially with reference

⁶⁴Auguste Marriette-Bey, *The Monuments of Upper Egypt*, trans. Alphonse Marriette, rev. with notes and additions by Lysander Dickerman (Boston: J. H. Mansfield & J. W. Dearborn, 1890), 253-254. Compare the earlier 1877 edition of this work in regard to Negroes; Pierre Montet, *Eternal Egypt*, trans. Doreen Weightman (New York: New American Library of World Literature, 1964), 118; Steindorf and Steele, *When Egypt Ruled*, 98; Walter A. Fairservis, Jr., *The Ancient Kingdoms of the Nile and the Doomed Monuments of Nubia* (New York: New American Library of World Literature, 1962), 140.

⁶⁵See, e.g., Aage Bentzen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 2d ed. vol. 2, *The Books of the Old Testament* (Copenhagen: G. E.C. Gad Publisher, 1958), 153, defines Cushi as "the Ethiopian," "the Negro"; Henry Preserved Smith, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Samuel* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899), 359, writes "negro"; Roland de Vaux, *The Early History of Israel* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978), 329, calls Phineas "The negro"; Fleming James, *Personalities of the Old Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1978), 38, with reference to Moses' Cushite (Negro) wife; Rolf Rendtorff, *The Old Testament: An Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 236, in regard to the name of Zephaniah's father, Cushi is Ethiopian, the negro; Robert H. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1941, 1948), with respect to Amos 9:7 writes: "Negroes of Africa," etc.

to the grandson of Aaron, brother of Moses.⁶⁶

Ancient Greek writers, Herodotus in particular, according to the judgement of a great number of outstanding translators, referred to the Egyptians of his time (450 B.C.E) as being Black with kinky hair.⁶⁷ The early Christian commentator, Theodore of Mopsuestia, also refers to the Egyptians in his day (350 C. E.) as Black, according to Robert M. Grant's translation of a portion of Theodore's commentary on the "Song of Solomon."⁶⁸

With reference to Asiatic Cush, archaeologists, anthropologists, historians, and others attest to a Black/Negro presence from time immemorial (not just since the days of the slave trade), in South Asia along

⁶⁶That the name "Phinehas" is the Hebrew form of the Egyptian term, *Pa-neshi*, i.e., the Nubian/Negro, has been observed for at least one hundred fifty years by numerous scholars in commentaries, dictionaries, histories, etc.

⁶⁷What Herodotus said and meant with reference to the color and race of the Egyptians of his day has been debated vigorously over the past two hundred years. Cf. Frank J. Yurco, "Were the Ancient Egyptians Black or White?" *Biblical Archaeology Review*, 15 (September/October 1989): 24-29; "Queries and Comments," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 16 (January/February 1990): 14-16; "Queries and Comments," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 16 (March/April 1991): 12-14. Opinions are about equally divided between those who believe, and those who do not, that Herodotus was identifying the ancient Egyptians with what we call Negroes. Most interestingly, George Rawlinson, in his translation of Herodotus, uses the term "black," stating that that was what Herodotus meant literally. However, he rejects the accuracy of Herodotus' usage in his *History of Ancient Egypt*, vol. 1 (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1882), 103. His translation may be found in *The History of Herodotus*, Book II, ed. Manuel Komroff (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1956), 115. Another source that employs the translation "black" is *Herodotus: The Histories*, trans. Aubrey De Selincourt, ed. E. V. Rieu (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1954), 140.

⁶⁸Robert M. Grant, *The Bible in the Church: A Short History of Interpretation* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1958), 78.

the shores of the Indian Ocean eastwards to India and beyond to the islands of the Pacific. Archaeological discoveries have established a civilization in India known as the Indus River Civilization and identifies it as Negroid.⁶⁹ The archaeologist, Marcel Dieulafoy, discovered the ancient Elamites with their high culture to have been Negroid;⁷⁰ and Maspero, upon the basis of Dieulafoy's finds, agrees with that identification.⁷¹

Somewhat in agreement with Dieulafoy and Maspero was A. H. Sayce, who wrote with reference to the "black-headed race" of Akkad: "As, however, M. Dieulafoy's excavations on the site of Susa have brought to light enameled bricks of the Elamite period on which a black race is portrayed, it may mean that the primi-

⁶⁹See Custance, *Noah Three Son's*, 72, footnotes 22 and 23, for references to the Indus Valley Civilization as Negroid, quoting V. G. Childe and S. Piggott; see especially Wayne B. Chandler, "The Jewel in the Lotus: The Ethiopian Presence in the Indus Valley Civilization," in *African Presence in Early Asia*, ed. Ivan Van Sertima and Runoko Rashidi (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1988), 81-105.

⁷⁰Cf. Marcel Dieulafoy, *L'Acropole de Suse d'après les fouilles exécutées en 1884, 1885 sous les auspices du Musée du Louvre* (Paris: Librairie Hachette et Cie, 1880), and others who make reference to his finds, such as: Gaston Maspero, *The Struggle of the Nations: Egypt, Syria and Assyria*, ed. A. H. Sayce (London: Society For Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1925), 32, footnote; Sayce, *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion as Illustrated by the Religion of the Ancient Babylonians* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1888), 99, footnote 4; Cheik Anta Diop, *The Cultural Unity of Negro Africa: The Domains of Patriarchy and of Matriarchy in Classical Antiquity* (Paris: Presence Africaine, 1962), 106-111, and *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality*, ed. and trans. Mercer Cook (New York: Lawrence Hill & Company, 1974), 103-107; J. A. Rogers, *Sex and Race: Negro-Caucasian Mixing in All Ages and All Lands*, vol. 1 (St. Petersburg, FL: Helga M. Rogers, 1967), 58-59.

⁷¹Maspero, *Struggle of the Nations*, 32.

tive Sumerian population of Chaldes was really black-skinned."⁷² Indeed, as far back as the year in which I was born, an African-American scholar, the anthropologist Arthur C. Custance, in his book, *Noah's Three Sons*, was in full agreement with Dieulafoy.⁷³ Arguing against a scholar who had said that the phrase referred to black hair, William H. Ferris, an African American, wrote, ". . . if he had referred to the black hair of the Semites . . . he would undoubtedly have used the term, 'the black haired race.' Therefore, the only logical inference from the term 'black-headed race' in Hammurabi's code is that the native Babylonians were a Black and Negroid race."⁷⁴

Custance identifies not only the Sumerians but also the Canaanites as Blacks upon the basis of the phrase, arguing convincingly that the description makes no sense with respect only to the color of their hair.⁷⁵

That the Natufians, the early inhabitants of Palestine, were Negroid has been asserted by both archaeologists and anthropologists.⁷⁶ Similarly, the claim that

⁷²Sayce, *Lectures on Origin and Growth*, 99.

⁷³Custance, 72.

⁷⁴William Henry Ferris, *The African Abroad or His Evolution in Western Civilization, Tracing His Development under Caucasian Milieu* (New Haven: Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor Press, 1913), 521.

⁷⁵Custance, 72. Cf. Runoko Rashidi, in "Africa in Early Asian Civilizations: A Historical Overview," and "More Light on Sumer, Elam and India" in *African Presence in Early Asia*, ed. Van Sertima and Rashidi, 14-53; 163-177.

⁷⁶On the Natufians as Black, see especially Diop, *African Origin*, 265-266; Drake, *Black Folk*, 154-156; Charles S. Finch, III, "Africa and Palestine in Antiquity," in *African Presence*, Van Sertima and Rashidi, 187-197; Joseph E. Harris, ed. *Africa and Africans as Seen by Classical Writers*, The William Leo Hansberry African History Notebook, Vol II (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1977),

the aborigines of the Jordan Valley region were Negroid is attested further by archaeological locations south-east of the Sea of Galilee and around the city of Gedor. Concerning the latter site, the Chronicler wrote, "They of Ham dwelt there of old" (I Chronicles 4:40).

Giving an overview of peoples of Asia with Black/Negro affinities, Sir Harry H. Johnston, famous Africanist, who later was quoted by H. G. Wells in his *Outline of History*,⁷⁷ wrote in the volume *The Negro in The New World*:

The Elamites of Mesopotamia appear to have been a negroid people with kinky hair, and to have transmitted this racial type to the Jews and Syrians. There is a curliness of the hair, together with a negro eye and full lips, in the portraiture of Assyria which conveys the idea of an evident negro element in Babylonia.⁷⁸

b) Mediterranean Lands

Archaeologists, historians, and classicists note a Negro presence in Cyprus as far back as 1800 B.C.E., and, on the Island of Crete, to 1500 B.C.E. In Crete, Blacks/Negroes are depicted as members of the armed forces. Dating from the fifth century B.C.E. Negroes appear in Persian and Greek armies, as well as in Italy and Sicily—all this during the biblical period and within

51; Harry L. Shapiro, *The Jewish People: A Biological History*, The Race Question in Modern Science Series (New York: Columbia Press, 1961), 114.

⁷⁷H. G. Wells, *The Outline of History*, 2 vols., rev. Raymond Postgate (New York: Garden City Books, 1949), 44.

⁷⁸Harry H. Johnston, *The Negro in the New World*, with a new introduction by George Shepperson (New York & London: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1910, 1969), 27.

the biblical world.⁷⁹

Finally, I examined all the evidence supplied by the categories in the light of ancient Jewish accounts. That the Table of Nations has racial implications, if only by inference, is so stated by some liberal main-line, as well as by traditionally conservative, scholars.⁸⁰

⁷⁹The following are among numerous sources of information on Blacks in the several Mediterranean lands: James E. Brunson, *Black Jade: The African Presence in the Ancient East and Other Essays*, intro. Runoko Rashidi (Dekalb, IL: James E. Brunson and Kara Publishing Company 1985), particularly Part IV, "The African Presence in the Ancient Mediterranean and Aegean Isles," 121-144; Brunson, "The African Presence in the Ancient Mediterranean Isles and Mainland Greece," in *African Presence in Early Europe*, ed. Ivan Van Sertima (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1985), 36-65; W. E. B. Dubois, *World and Africa*, 121; Joseph E. Harris, *Africa and Africans*, 31-51; John G. Jackson, *Introduction to African Civilizations*, introduction and additional bibliographical notes by John Henrik Clarke (Secaucus, NJ: Citadel Press, 1970), 76-77; John G. Jackson, *Man, God and Civilization* (New Hyde Park, NY: University Books, 1972), 250-253; Vassos Karageorghis, *Blacks in Ancient Cypriot Art* (Houston, TX: Menil Foundation, 1988); Frank M. Snowden, Jr., *Blacks in Antiquity: Ethiopians in the Greco-Roman Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1970); Snowden, "Iconographical Evidence on the Black Populations in Greco-Roman Antiquity" in *The Image of the Black in Western Art*, vol. 1, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 133-245; Snowden, *Before Color Prejudice: The Ancient View of Blacks* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 14-16.

⁸⁰Among scholars who regard the Table as having racial significance are the following: Gleason L. Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), 217-220; William G. Blaikie, *A Manual of Bible History*, rev. Charles D. Matthews (New York: Ronald Press Company, 1940), 11; E. A. Wallis Budge, *A History of Ethiopia, Nubia and Abyssinia*, vol. I (Oosterhout, Netherlands: Anthropological Publications, 1970), 4; Herbert E. Ryle, *The Book of Genesis* (Cambridge, [England]: University Press, 1914), 131-132; Frank Knight Sanders and Henry Thatcher Fowler, *Outlines for the Study of Biblical History and Literature* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), 2; Charles E.

Unfortunately, some of the latter, on theological grounds, tie the Table with the curse in Genesis 9.⁸¹ And, interestingly enough, one conservative scholar relies upon Wright's and Filson's *Westminster Atlas* as proof that the Table is racial, at least in part.⁸²

Regarding the "Ham stories" in Talmud and Midrashim, a question arises as to whether or not the ancient rabbis really viewed Ham and his sons as literally black. Moreover, there were reasons for hostile feelings towards the children of Ham. For they, especially the Egyptians and Babylonians, had been the chief oppressors of their ancestors. At the same time, the Canaanites were the most immediate enemies of those who had taken possession of the land. As for the Midrashim, many of their interpreters lived among Egyptians whom Philo described as being akin to asps in their dispositions.⁸³

After weighing the evidence, I concluded that on the basis of our American definitions of Black/Negro, the following are legitimate affirmations:

- The Hamites of the Table of Nations were Black.
- The ancient Elamites and Sumerians were Black.

Silberman, *Crisis in Black and White* (New York: Random House, 1964), 172-173; D. J. Wiseman, ed., *Peoples of Old Testament Times* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), xviii, 262-264; George Ernest Wright and Floyd Vivian Filson, ed., *The Westminster Historical Atlas to the Bible*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956), 26.

⁸¹Cf. Unger, *Archaeology, Old Testament*, 73-77.

⁸²Archer, *Survey, Old Testament*, 217-220.

⁸³Salo W. Baron, et al., *Great Ages and Ideas of the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 133. In speaking of Philo, he writes: ". . . He was at no pains to conceal his contempt and distrust of the unfriendly Egyptians In one passage he speaks of the Egyptians as an evil seed, whose souls represent a mixture of the venom of asps and the bad temper of their crocodiles."

- The ancient Jewish ancestors were Ethiopians and/or Egyptians.
- Hebrew-Israelite population (since the days of the Exodus) had a sizeable minority of Blacks during a long period of their history.

My mind was changed according to the perspective from which I viewed reality; and it was changed from acceptance of a Hamite view that excludes Blacks/Negroes from the Biblical World to a Hamite view that regards Blacks/Negroes as having been either the founders of ancient civilizations in the Near and Middle East or as sizeable and recognizable elements within the populations. White scholars, generally, have ignored that presence for several reasons: ignorance, intentional elimination through definitions, refusal to acknowledge Blacks/Negroes because Negroes were invisible as they have been, for example, in American religious and secular history.

V. Black/Negro Presence in the Bible

A. Genesis and Extra-Biblical Literature

Having thus established a Black/Negro presence in the Biblical World, I was finally able to deal with that same presence in the Bible itself in lectures and seminars. At first, only characters considered to be historical were included, beginning with the Hebrew patriarchs. Later, after learning that a majority of Americans believe God to exist in human form, to be white, and to resemble God as portrayed by Michaelangelo in the Sistine Chapel, I added peoples and personalities who appear in the first eleven chapters of Genesis. And,

noting that far more about Blacks in the Bible exists in extra-Biblical literature than in the Bible itself, I gave my lectures the title "Black Peoples and Personalities in and from the Bible."

B. Cushite in David's Army

Unfortunately, the Cushite in David's army (2 Samuel 18), is not treated as a Negro, one of the Philistine warriors from Crete who composed David's special troops, but as slave and a despised messenger.⁸⁴ Henry Preserved Smith, in his *The Books of Samuel*, published in 1899, holds a similar view. One can forgive Mr. Smith's ignorance, if not his racism, because, at the time of his writing, Sir Arthur Evans had not uncovered and publicized the great Cretan civilization. It is distressing recently to receive a publisher's catalog in which H. P. Smith's book is still offered for sale, as if it were first published in 1993! I wept upon reading the note on 2 Samuel 18:19-33 in the *Oxford Annotated Bible, Revised Standard Version*, which is as inaccurate if not as racist as Smith's comment. Discovering that the same note is in the *New Revised Standard Version*, unchanged after a generation, I sobbed uncontrollably. Note that the annotated Bibles refer to the authority of the eyewitness account in 2 Samuel as Ahimzza or some other person, but never the Cushite. Now, I would nominate him as the eye witness, who, even if he had been a slave, most likely was able to read and write as well as any other of the eyewitnesses might have been.

⁸⁴Smith, *Books of Samuel*, 359.

C. Ebed-Melech, Cushites in Amos and Isaiah, Zephaniah

Ebed-Melech, the rescuer of Jeremiah from the cistern, changes identity from a slave to a dignified official of State, serving in the Court of the king of Judah. Ethiopians and Cushites had served in a similar capacity since the days when Black kings from Africa came to the aid of King Hezekiah. The Cushites referred to in the books of Amos and Isaiah are no longer treated as barbarous, despised because of their black color; little known because of their distant homeland, as is the case, with so many commentaries (current as well as those a hundred years ago when authors had more excuse for their ignorance of Cushite history). They are now considered as saviors of Judah as well as of Egypt at critical periods in their histories.⁸⁵

⁸⁵For such negative views, see, among others: George B. Caird, "The First and Second Books of Samuel," vol. 2, in *The Interpreter's Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1952), 1141-1142; S. R. Driver, *The Books of Joel and Amos* (Cambridge, [England]: Cambridge University Press, 1898), 219; Driver, *The Minor Prophets* (New York: H. Frowde, Oxford University Press, 1904), 172; James Luther Mays, *Amos: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 157; Cf. Jacob M. Meyers, "Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah," in *The Layman's Bible Commentary*, vol. 14, ed. Balmer H. Kelly (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1959), 147, who writes: "The Ethiopians, the traditional slave nation." See also Smith, *Books of Samuel*; John Merlin Powis Smith, "A Commentary on the Books of Amos, Hosea and Micah," *The Bible for Home and School Series* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1914), 65; J. M. Ward, "Cushi," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962).

For views of a positive nature see: Richard S. Cripps, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Amos* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1929); Driver, *Isaiah: His Life and Times* (London: James Nisbet Company, 1888), 91-92; Hughell E. W. Fosbroke, "The Book of Amos," in *The Interpreter's Bible*, vol.

Zephaniah the prophet, instead of being identified at best as the son of a "negro" temple slave, according to Aage Bentzen and his followers,⁸⁶ or as the son of a Black African mother and a white Judahite father, according to Gene Rice of Howard University Divinity School,⁸⁷ is viewed most probably as a native Black Judahite related by blood to none other than King Hezekiah.

D. Moses and His Family

Even though my modifications in the preceding instances are radical, they cannot compare with the changes made regarding Moses and his family. Originally, my concept of Moses was based upon resources such as Rudolf Kittel's *Great Men and Movements in Israel*,⁸⁸ Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver's *Images of Moses* wherein Moses is presented "as of a six-foot frame, with

6, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon Cokesbury Press, 1962), 848; George Buchanan Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Isaiah*, 1-39 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1912), 306-318; John Edgar McFadyen, *The Book of the Prophecies of Isaiah*, The Bible for Home and School Series, Shailor Matthews, General Editor (New York: Macmillan Company, 1910), 130-133; Sayce, "Second Interim Report on the Excavations at Meroe in Ethiopia, Part II, The Historical Results," *Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology* (1912): 53-65; J. Skinner, *The Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, chaps 1-39 (Cambridge, [England]: The University Press, 1897), 138-143; Hans Walter Wolff, *Joel and Amos: A Commentary on the Books of the Prophets Joel and Amos* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977).

⁸⁶Bentzen, *Introduction*, 153.

⁸⁷Gene Rice, "The African Roots of the Prophet Zephaniah," *Journal of Religious Thought*, 36 (Spring-Summer, 1979): 21-31.

⁸⁸Rudolf Kittel, *Great Men and Movements in Israel*, trans. Charlotte A. Knoch and C. D. Wright (New York: Macmillan Company, 1929).

blue eyes and blond hair,"⁸⁹ Fleming James' *Personalities of the Old Testament*,⁹⁰ Michaelangelo's statue of a gigantic Moses with horns, and, occasionally, as depicted by Cecil B. DeMille's movie, "The Ten Commandments."

Consider, however, that:

- the Biblical report indicates Moses being born in Egypt and was therefore an African;
- he bore an Egyptian name and was educated in Egypt as an upperclass Egyptian nobleman, with all the wisdom of the Egyptians;⁹¹
- he was identified as an Egyptian by Jethro's daughters⁹² which he did not deny, as Rabbi Silver recognized and admitted;⁹³
- he was a Hebrew (the term refers not to an ethnic or racial group but to a social class);⁹⁴ and
- he was a member of a tribe of Levi which was most likely a priestly tribe of Egyptian "Hebrew"

⁸⁹Daniel Jeremy Silver, *Images of Moses* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1982), 13.

⁹⁰James, *Personalities Old Testament*, 38.

⁹¹Acts 7:22.

⁹²Exodus 2:19.

⁹³See Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, trans. from the German manuscript by Henrietta Szold, vol. II: *From Joseph to the Exodus* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1909-1938), 292-293.

⁹⁴For the reference of the term "Hebrew" to a social class cf., e.g., Ronald E. Clements, *Exodus*, The Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge, [England]: University Press 1972), 14; John H. Hayes and J. Maxwell Miller, ed. *Israelite and Judean History* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977) 249-250; Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1987), 101-102.

provenance, not an historical Israelite tribe.⁹⁵

Concerning Moses' wife, the following views are inaccurate:

- a Negro slave girl, a member of the "mixed multitude";⁹⁶
- an African Cushite princess, wife of Moses,⁹⁷ whose marriage was not consummated because Israelites did not cohabit with the children of Ham;⁹⁸
- a "white" Cushite Midianite.⁹⁹

Rather, I describe her as a Negro woman—even as does Fleming James,¹⁰⁰ based on the fact that Blacks/Negroes were inhabitants of Cush whether in Africa or Asia.

With respect to other members of Moses' family, I note that all or most of them have Egyptian/Nubian

⁹⁵As demonstrated by the meaning of Phinehas, the name of Aaron's grandson, Moses' family was of Egyptian-Nubian origin. It is highly likely that the tribe of Levi was of Egyptian priestly origin. A valuable contribution to the subject is: Aelred Cody, *A History of Old Testament Priesthood*, *Analecta Biblica: Investigationes Scientifcae in Res Biblicas* 35 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969).

⁹⁶So D. S. Margoliouth, "Ethiopian Woman," in *A Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 1, ed. James Hastings (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898).

⁹⁷Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, II, X, 2, trans. William Whiston in *The Works of Flavius Josephus* (Hartford, CO: S. S. Scranton Co., 1905).

⁹⁸See Ginzberg, "Legends," 287-288 ". . . he went not unto Aboniah, nor did he turn his eyes toward her . . . nor ally thysself by marriage with any of the children of Ham . . ."

⁹⁹This is the most common assumption; it regards all Midianites as "white" Caucasians.

¹⁰⁰James, *Personalities*, 38.

names, even as does Moses,¹⁰¹ and that this family, composed of Levites only, bears such names. I exclude the possibility that they were Israelites with Egyptianized names.¹⁰² The family itself, as Albright vigorously asserted, contained a Nubian element.¹⁰³ His assertion was based upon the meaning of the name Phinehas which, borne by a grandson of Aaron, has for more than one hundred fifty years been related to the Egyptian term *Pa-nehsi* and translated as Nubian/Negro.¹⁰⁴

And, to be sure, I emphasize the Black/Negro identity of the family, and trace it through the Bible. So not only do we have a Black hero as in the case of Aaron's grandson, praised in Pentateuch and Apocrypha, but scoundrels such as Hophni and Phineas, sons of Eli.¹⁰⁵ In the end Moses is still upheld, if not as the author of the entire Torah, then of parts of it, and of the Bible.¹⁰⁶

V. Conclusion

The analysis presented in this work was developed between 1970-1974, utilizing available resources.

¹⁰¹It is generally recognized that the names Moses, Aaron, Hophni, Phinehas, Merari, Putiel, etc. are Egyptian-Nubian.

¹⁰²Cf. Cody, *History Priesthood*, 39-41.

¹⁰³William Foxwell Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity: Monotheism and the Historical Process* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1946), 193-194; Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan: A Historical Analysis of Two Contrasting Faiths* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1968), 165.

¹⁰⁴Numerous recent Bible commentaries, dictionaries, encyclopedias, histories, etc., conservative and otherwise, give this translation.

¹⁰⁵Cf. 1 Samuel 2:12, 34.

¹⁰⁶This view, of course, regards Jesus of Nazareth as the one greater than Moses. Cf. Acts 3:22-25.

During the intervening years, continued reading confirms my conclusions. Consequently, the two questions raised in the Introduction of this paper can now be answered positively:

- 1) Blacks/Negroes were, without question, participants in the development of civilization in the ancient world.
- 2) Blacks/Negroes not only appear in the Bible, they are present among many of the outstanding individual personalities in the Biblical text. Moreover, they are the authors of much of the content of the Old Testament.

With reference to the "momentous change" from the Eurocentric to the Black Perspective, mentioned in the Introduction, I can now exclaim:

My heart is fixed!
My mind is made up!
I am now Black—
More objective and universal in my views
with respect to Biblical studies!

During the intervening years, continued reading has
been my constant. Consequently, the two questions
raised in the introduction of this paper can now be
answered positively.

First, the Black/White relationship without question
is an area of intense interest to a wide variety of
scholars. The present work is a contribution to
the study of Black/White relations in the United
States. It is not only a study of the Black/White
relationship, but also a study of the Black/White
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the United States. It is a study of the Black/White
relationship in the United States. It is a study of
the Black/White relationship in the United States.

My heart is black
My mind is made up
I am a Black man

More of the text and arrived in my hands
with respect to Black/White relations.
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