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Man's inhumanity to man

A Biblical Perspective of the World-Wide "Black Lives Matter" Protests

I have been burdened to write this article because of the ever increasing news media clamour, surrounding the protests purporting to be in response to the death of George Floyd in the USA.

It think it has alarmed some Christians that amongst that clamour have been heard increasingly what might be termed 'ill-conceived anti-white mantras', shouted out mostly by the young and immature! Though they can be heard coming from the 'old and immature'!

That the white nations have sinned against black nations surely none will deny. Yet, just as Solomon said that "there is no man that sinneth not," 1Kings 8:46, even so may it be said that "there is no nation or tribe that sinneth not."

Indeed, the protests embody the sad trends of evil wrought by one nation against another throughout the ages. Those that protest against the evil wrought against George Floyd do so by inflicting many very great wrongs on many against whom they protest.

Have not innocent people been robbed and plundered in the name of protest? Has not property valued at £millions been destroyed in the USA, France and here in the UK, in the name of 'justice for George Floyd'? Have not policemen been attacked and injured, and in the USA, murdered, by those supposedly expressing 'righteous indignation'?

These things illustrate the sad history of mankind's 'Inhumanity to man'! Wrong is done and in retaliation more wrong is done and so it goes on!

I wish to try and show that "If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" Psalm 130:3. In truth "there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not," Ecclesiastes 7:20.

Of course, this no excuse for our sins and they must be acknowledged and repented of but let us all, before condemning others, have a long hard look at ourselves!

Many here in Ulster who have been prominent in these protests have also been prominent in supporting the terrorist campaigns of Irish Republicans, which resulted in the slaughter of thousands of innocent men, women and children, not to mention the very extensive destruction of property.

How can the protests of such be seen as anything other than expressions of the utmost and contemptible hypocrisy and wickedly opportunistic displays of defiance against law and order since the protests have taken place, despite warnings that they are breaking the 'lockdown' restrictions?

"God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, for we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent," Acts 17:24-30.



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Racism is neither new nor is it basically an issue between the black and white races!

Winston Churchill is linked with the phrase 'man's inhumanity to man' but he was not the originator of the saying. The words are found in a poem by Robert Burns.

'A Dirge'

Many and sharp the num'rous ills
Inwoven with our frame!
More pointed still we make ourselves
Regret, remorse, and shame!
And man, whose heav'n-erected face
The smiles of love adorn, -
Man's inhumanity to man
Makes countless thousands mourn!

Though, as some think, it may be that the Scotsman adopted his phrase from the words of a German philosopher, Samuel von Pufendorf (1632-1694) who when he was forty-one, wrote, "More inhumanity has been done by man himself than any other of nature's causes."

Biblical

These variations are but repetitions of a clear Biblical doctrine, though perhaps those who have coined them in the past may have been unaware of that. The Bible says: ". . . the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty," Psalm 74:20. The apostle Paul, in his summary of man's inherent depravity and wickedness quotes, among other writers, the Psalmist (Psalm 14:1-3, 53:1-3), when he says: "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God," Romans 3:10-19.

The Bible abounds with similar declarations, none more potent than that of Eliphaz the Temanite in Job 15.16. "How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?"

It is from this depravity that the subject that features so large in the news today has its origins.

Racism is but one manifestation of 'man's inhumanity to man'! Other expressions of this evil are less headline-grabbing! However, no less depraved are the daily assaults that litter our news bulletins. Men, women and youths, are daily reported as being guilty of the abuse, often unto death, of their family members, neighbours and utter strangers and that frequently, without cause!

What of abortion, a crime of which the whole of societies are guilty! Countless millions of unborn babies are daily done to death and that quite legally and without apparent compunction, throughout the so-called 'civilised' world!

Many engaged in the 'BLM' protests of today would quite readily support the practice of aborting the unborn. How hypocritical it is to put on the face of outrage at the events which overtook George Floyd, whose death was a shameful and criminal thing, and at the same time support the murder of innumerable unborn children



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If only people were aware of the root cause of 'man's inhumanity to man', then such protests as we see taking place on our streets would at least be a little more discerning and judicious! Protest there ought to be for there are many reasons for human beings to protest against the behaviour of their fellow human beings. But, let us be aware of the universal guiltiness that rests upon us all regarding 'man's inhumanity to man'. As Paul said: "There is none righteous, no, not one."

If we go back in time to the first generation of mankind born into this world we encounter the first most blatant instance of 'man's inhumanity to man'. I refer to the first case of murder, and it a case of fratricide!

"And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him," Genesis 4:8. While this was the first 'manifested' evidence of man's depravity, it was not the origins of the same!

Adam's disobedience of God's command, found in Genesis 2:16-17, is the fountainhead of all the cruel wickedness that has ever taken place amongst men. "And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Paul explains this event and its consequences. "For as in Adam all die," 1 Corinthians 15:22.

Our Westminster Shorter Catechism succinctly states this truth.

"Q14: What is sin?"

Answer: Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God.

Q15: What was the sin whereby our first parents fell from the estate wherein they were created?"

Answer: The sin whereby our first parents fell from the estate wherein they were created, was their eating the forbidden fruit.

Q16: Did all mankind fall in Adam's first transgression?"

Answer: The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity; all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression.

Q17: Into what estate did the fall bring mankind?"

Answer: The fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery.

Q18: Wherein consists the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell?"

Answer: The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell, consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called Original Sin; together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it.

Q19: What is the misery of that estate whereinto man fell?"

Answer: All mankind by their fall lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all miseries in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell for ever."

That is a most perceptive summary of the teaching of the Bible on the issue of man's fall into sin and its world-wide consequences. Genesis chapter two gives us an historic account of the matter and the rest of the Bible supplies an exposition of the ramifications and record of that disaster and of course, God's merciful remedy whereby sinners may be saved from the eternal outcome of sin.



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As I have already stated, racism is but one manifestation of 'man's inhumanity to man'! It is but one mark of the dreadful moral disease with which all mankind is afflicted, even as a persistent cough or a high temperature are but symptoms of Covid-19!

The first manifestation of man's depravity was Adam and Eve hiding from God. "And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden," Genesis 3:8. The offspring of this pair of defiant delinquents have engaged in the same defiant concealment ever since! Despite the innumerable forms of religion that litter the earth, many of which bear some resemblance to true religion, mankind by nature is not a seeker after God but rather a hider from God! As Paul said, "There is none that seeketh after God," Romans 3:11.

Turning his back upon the presence of God, mankind has sought the darkness of godlessness. The world of godlessness is a dark place and the most dreadful events are common place! We have already quoted the words of the Psalmist: ". . . the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty," Psalm 74:20. Cruelty amongst men is not an abnormality. No, it is the norm. That is evidenced shortly in the activities of Adam's offspring by the murder of Abel by his brother Cain. What heightens the wickedness of Cain's crime is the fact that Abel has given no cause for Cain's animosity. The crime arose from the bitterness of Cain toward the Lord and true religion. Cain chose to go his own way and reject the instruction of the Lord with regards to how it was that the Lord would have men worship Him. The Lord required a sacrifice, the shedding of blood on an altar, as a central act of true worship. It was by this means that man was to be reminded of the death sentence that hung over his head as a result of sin and that the death sentence could only be removed from man by the death of a substitute. It was a picture of Christ dying on the cross. A Calvary centred worship has ever been the requirement of God of those who would find acceptance with Him.

Cain rejected God's way. Genesis 4:3-4 states: "And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering." Cain rejected the way of the shed blood of the Lamb of God, symbolised in the sacrifice of Abel by his offering of 'the firstlings of his flock.' While Abel's offering of the lamb was respected (the word used means 'to look upon'), Cain's worship was rejected for he did not obey God and offer the lamb, a token of his faith in the promised Redeemer, the 'Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,'" John 1:29.

Cain, angry at God's rejection of his sacrifice, took out his vexation upon his brother Abel who had been accepted by the Lord. There you have, in embryo, the very character of every religious dispute that has ever taken place since, and the source of persecution directed toward the true people of God! Man hates being told that his works will not please God and that there is no hope of salvation by that path and that Christ has said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me," John 14:6. That simple and basic truth, which would have been what Abel spoke to his brother about (Genesis 4:8) is what has raised the murderous ire of the unsaved man ever since!

Man's depraved nature then is the source of the world's domestic, national, interracial and interfaith disputes and conflicts. Such animosity does not belong to one religion or one race or one community. All are guilty of such hatred toward fellow human beings.

All mankind has been created by God. As Acts 17:26 states, God "hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth." We all have a common origin and differ not in essence, one from another! No race is inherently superior to the other. Men have taught the opposite of this and still do. But it is false as a simple consideration of the achievements that are to be seen amongst men, physical, intellectual and moral, demonstrably show. There have been those of the white, black, red and yellow-skinned races (if I may put it crudely and parochially) who have excelled their fellows in learning and skills. There have been civilisations which enjoyed great social advantages while neighbours lived in comparative ignorance and primeval darkness. That has happened periodically throughout the world, indicating that to no nation belongs an inherent superiority!



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World history records the exploits of the nations of the earth in the earliest ages. 'Superiority' was enjoyed by one nation over others only for it to slip away and be assumed by another. Thus we have the Egyptian, Babylonian, Persian, Grecian, and Roman eras. This cloak of advantage and dominance was worn for a season by one nation then taken away by another, only for the process to continue! We have all watched the nature videos and the battles between the lion males and the taking over of the pride by a younger, stronger male and the older lion deposed, even as he had but a few years previously, defeated and toppled the previous 'king'!

Oh if only we would learn from the book of nature and see illustrated there the great truths God has stated in His Word.

It has to be noted that there is ONE very special nation in the world. That fact is stated on a number of occasions by the Lord in His Word. That people is Israel.

"For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth," Deuteronomy 7:6.

That fact has riled more nations and people than any other! Today, the Islamic nations of the Middle East, among others, have been most vocal in their hatred of the Jewish people. However, that hatred may be traced right back to the very emergence of the Israelite nation. Indeed, it has been the chief feature of the history of that nation. It is so today and the Bible says that it will continue to be so until the Lord Jesus comes again and that to deliver His 'special' people from such persecution!

"Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east," Zechariah 14:1-4.

Now, it is true that God in His mercy has caused other nations to enjoy a measure of advantage over their neighbours in this gospel age in a manner akin to the advantages enjoyed by favoured Israel. An example of the elevating influence of the gospel is seen in Paul's words to the Ephesians.

"This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another," Ephesians 4:17-25.

The transformation wrought in this people by the receiving of the gospel message undoubtedly elevated them socially and morally, and with the industriousness that would follow, bring them a harvest of comforts and civic peace and tranquility.

As it was with the man delivered from the power and dominance of the devil by the Word of Christ, so it has been with individuals and communities. "And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid," Mark 5:15. The people were afraid because the transformation was so amazing and truly 'unearthly'! We can easily understand how life would have become so much more superior for that man as a result of the gospel.



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Impact

That impact has been seen amongst nations. As the blessing of God upon Israel, enjoyed whenever they walked humbly in obedience to God, lifted them above other nations, so it is still. The Queen of Sheba, following her visit to Jerusalem to meet with Solomon, said: "It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard. Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom. Blessed be the LORD thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the LORD loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice," 1Kings 10:6-9.

Were men honest and unbiased, they would acknowledge that where the gospel has gone, it has brought like benefits and advances. In our own nation, the British Isles have benefitted greatly from the entrance of the gospel many centuries ago. Of course, not everyone in these islands embraced the gospel. It only was, at best a minority. Nevertheless, the minority acted as salt and preserved the land from many of the social and moral ailments that plagued other lands to a much greater degree. What's more, out from these islands went forth an influence that benefitted many, many other nations. Now again, we must state that such an influence was not unstained by man's depravity. As there was a Judas amongst the apostles, even so there was amongst those that sought to carry gospel benefits to other nations, those who with the greed of a Gehazi (2 Kings 5:20-27), served their own avarice and purloined for themselves the riches found amongst those nations to which more honourable men sought to bring the gospel.

Greed

Man, in his greed, saw in his fellows a commodity by which he could be enriched. The trade in slaves is, to me, one of the cruelest and most wretched of crimes. I have often pondered the scene which must have followed the raids upon African villages, often by Islamic Arab bands it must be stated, when young and mature men and woman were taken away to be sold in the slave markets. They would never be seen again by the families from which they were so wickedly taken, nor indeed, would it be known by those families what had happened to them.

The United Kingdom, France, Portugal, Spain, indeed all of the Europeans nations, to one degree or another, are deeply stained by this evil practice. The United States suffers still the consequences of its early settlers introducing slavery into its domain. The United Kingdom benefitted financially from this satanic trade and that is written into our history. That stain cannot not be expunged though it has been widely acknowledged with shame by the nation's leaders for centuries, and it is to be remembered that the earliest campaigners against the trade were British.

Today

It has to be said that the trade continues today. I need only refer to recent court cases where families, usually residents in the UK from Middle Eastern countries, have been found guilty of keeping slaves amongst their staff members. However, slavery is in existence to a much greater scale throughout the world in many so-called 'civilised' and 'advanced' nations.

Furthermore, the Bible reveals that such a trade will continue until the return of Christ. The great commercial enterprise, emerging at the end of this age, and which will have the Antichrist at its heart and which will be situated in Babylon will, we are told, trade in slaves.

Consider these words from the Book of the Revelation where the merchants of the future Babylonian empire will lament at its downfall with these words.

"Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come. And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: the merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and



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silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, and cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men. And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all. The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, and saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, and cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city! And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate. Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her," Revelation 18:10-20.

Note that 'slaves' were one of the items of 'merchandise', the loss of which these merchants lamented over!

Pride

It must be noted that when the Lord chose Israel He warned her about pride. Elevation by the grace of God is often followed by pride as men forget the source of their privileges, and attribute them to their own abilities. Following on from the verse in Deuteronomy that we quoted earlier, we have these words from the Lord to Israel. "The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: but because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt," Deuteronomy 7:7-8. Thus the Lord removes any cause for pride. He went on to repeat this truth to the Gentile peoples in this age who benefitted from His mercy.

"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ," Ephesians 2:4-13.

Isaac Watts summed the matter up in his hymn:

No more, my God, I boast no more
Of all the duties I have done;
I quit the hopes I held before,
To trust the merits of thy Son.

Nations that have been blessed and raised up by the grace of God to enjoy much of this earth's bounty, have no room to boast. Sadly however, boast many did! And boasting they deceived themselves into thinking themselves better than others and began to lord it over others, gradually coming to believe that what they had become was of themselves and due to their superiority over others. That, sadly, led to racism with the dreadful misery that sprang from such!



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Voice

Only one voice is raised against such a tendency and which guides us as to how to truly avoid it. It is a voice that has echoed down through the ages but has ever been neglected. The voice said: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," Leviticus 19:18. Such a royal law was built into the Ten Commandments. "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's," Exodus 20:12-17.

Paul said that the Law of God could be summed up simply. "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," Galatians 5:14.

Here is the antithesis of social, racial and national strife!

May I stress that, contrary to what many believe today, racism is not exclusively white races against black races? There can be no denying that element within global racism but it would be very wrong to think that is the end all and be all of racism.

Genocide

No, in very recent times, we have seen black against black in the most evil racially motivated genocide. I need not go into details for there is an abundance of documented evidence of genocide in Sudan and in Rwanda. There have been inter-tribal wars in Kenya and South Africa and many other African nations in ancient and more modern times.

Amongst the 'white' races we have had cases of genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina by Serbians and in Armenia by the Turks. Joseph Stalin conducted horrific slaughter against his own people. We have had the unspeakable slaughter of 6 million Jews by Hitler's Germany.

Likewise in the Asian races such as China and Cambodia there have been the most appalling acts of genocide. Just prior to the outbreak of World War II, Japanese forces slaughtered tens of thousands of the inhabitants of Nanking in China.

This is a very incomplete list for history is filled with accounts of the slaughter of neighbour by neighbour since almost time began. Indeed, that is the chief and dominating element of history! And it will continue until that day when "He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire," Psalm 46:9.

The person spoken of by the Psalmist as ending wars is the Lord Jesus. It will take place at His return to rule and reign over the earth. "And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more," Isaiah 2:4.

Until that day, sadly, we will have to live amidst racism and man's inhumanity to man!

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