

## White Too Long - Chapter 7

### Reckoning: Toward Responsibility and Repair

Where do we go from here? One of the most common responses to the question is that time will take care of most racial problems. While this response is tempting, especially when faced with the enormity of the problem, “such blind hopes misunderstand the nature of white supremacy, particularly its tenacious ability to endure from generation to generation.”

Responses of Southern Baptist Seminary and Virginia Theological Seminary

Reckoning with White Supremacy in American Christianity: etymology of the word *reckoning* highlights two branches of historical meaning: 1) to give a full verbal account of something (Old English) and, 2) notions of economic justice, a fair settling of accounts, confession and repair (Dutch and German).

The focus on *racial justice* rather than *racial reconciliation* takes white Christians onto difficult terrain. This is because the notion of justice involves repentance and the difficult questions of restitution and repair. (Luke 19:1-10, Zacchaeus)

Rethinking the “Mark of Cain”

Baldwin testimony before US House Select Committee (1968): “If we are going to build a multiracial society, which is our only hope, then one has got to accept that I have learned a lot from you, and a lot of it is bitter, but you have a lot to learn from me, and a lot of that will be bitter. That bitterness is our only hope. That is the only way we get past it.” This bitterness of coming to further acknowledgement of the harm we have done is the beginning of the path of freedom.

“And we have to accept, given the way white supremacy has burrowed into our Christian identity, that refusing to address this sinister disorder in our faith will continue to generate serious negative consequences not just for our fellow Americans but also for ourselves and our children. Inaction is a tacit acceptance of white supremacy inhabiting out Christianity.”

“One thing is clear: any lasting changes will necessarily involve extreme measures to eradicate the distortions that centuries of accommodations to white supremacy have created. Perhaps the most important first step toward health is to recover from our white-supremacy-induced amnesia.”