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“Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. ‘For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways’, says the Lord. ‘For as the Heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts’.” Isaiah 55:6-11

How can you tell the difference between real guilt and false guilt?

Corporate Guilt or Personal Responsibility?

We live in an age of guilt manipulation, where many reject the concept of an objective standard of right and wrong. Yet, while denying personal responsibility, many will accuse whole nations of corporate guilt.

A Brazilian Confession

An example of this was seen at the Cape Town 2010 Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelisation. On the final Sunday, at the Africa regional meeting, a delegation from Brazil asked to speak to the African participants. Their spokesman then read out a very long declaration, which in very categorical terms declared their guilt for the Slave Trade: “We are guilty of having kidnapped Africans from their homes, transported them across the Atlantic, to excavate our mines and to build our cities.”

“Forgive Us and Punish Us!”

The Brazilian spokesman declared: “Our children deserve to be taken from us and forced to be your slaves, to be buried in unmarked graves beneath your cities!” In these, and in many other words, the Brazilians bewailed their guilt, confessed their sin and pleaded with the African delegates to forgive them for this evil and to regard the Brazilians as their own slaves, to do with as they wished.

Should Descendants be Held Accountable for The Actions of their Ancestors?

Evidently the Brazilian participants were sincere and their declaration of repentance indicated humility, and a genuine desire to make right the wrongs of long ago. However, as I sat in the auditorium listening to this, the Scripture came to mind: ***“The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.”*** Ezekiel 18:20

Confessing Someone Else’s Sin

Were these humble, dedicated Christian Brazilians really personally responsible for the evils of the slave trade? Of course not.

Would Two Wrongs Make a Right?

Would it be just for their sons to be sold into slavery in this generation? Would such a wrong make right the wrongs of long ago?

Is it Biblical?

Then one of the African participants made the comment that it was a pity that this apology had not come from the delegates from Europe, or the United States of America.

From the nodding heads and exclamations of agreement all around me, it was evident that many in the auditorium agreed with this sentiment. But is it Biblical?

Sin is Specific and Personal

In the Bible sin is very specific. It is the violation of the Law of God. Repentance in the Bible is specific and personal. We are guilty when we disobey one of God's Commandments. Sin is failing to worship God alone, it is making, or worshiping, an idol, taking God's Name in vain, desecrating the Sabbath, dishonouring our parents, taking innocent life, committing adultery, stealing, bearing false witness and being covetous. In the Bible guilt and repentance are specific and personal, not vague and national.

Restitution is to be From the Villain to the Victim

There was some discussion about the needs for restitution from America and Europe for the slave trade, but Biblical restitution is to be made by the culprit to the victim – directly and entirely. Restitution is not meant to be some political scam, a cover for corruption, where restitution is demanded from people who didn't do the crime, to be distributed to people who weren't the victims.

What about the Ongoing Arab Slave Trade?

If the 300 year European and North American involvement in the Atlantic Slave Trade was to be discussed, then why not the 1,400 year Arabic involvement in the Slave trade in North Africa, Central Africa, East Africa, in the Indian Ocean and the Middle East?

The African Slave Trade

In fact, as the president of Benin pointed out some years ago, everyone in Africa is descended from those who were both the victims of the slave trade, and descended from those who were participants in the slave trade. It is a fact of history that almost every tribe in Africa practised slavery, as part of their criminal justice system, and enslaved neighbouring tribes. The Yao people of Malawi carried out slave raids on the Bemba and Chichewa of Zambia. The Madagascans enslaved Mozambicans. The Ovambo enslaved the Bushmen. The Matebele enslaved Shona people. Congolese tribes enslaved the Pygmies. In Loziland, the paramount chief of the Barotse abolished slavery only in 1906. Ethiopia abolished slavery in 1942. Saudi Arabia only abolished slavery in 1962. Peru abolished slavery in 1968 and India only in 1976. Yet, there are still officially over 27 million slaves in the world today, mostly in the Muslim world.

Britain's Legacy of Setting the Captives Free

It seemed most unreasonable to single out Great Britain in demands for reparation, for her disgraceful involvement in the slave trade, considering that it was Britain who first pioneered the abolition of the slave trade from 1807. From 1809 the British government mobilised its navy to search suspected slave ships, even foreign vessels, on the high seas. For a century, the Royal Navy was dedicated to setting the captives free, going far beyond clearing the oceans of slave ships, to boldly sailing up unchartered rivers and creeks to storm slave stockades, freeing captives at every turn. The British representative at the Congress of Vienna insisted on Abolition of the slave trade being included in the International Treaty. After the Battle of Waterloo, this treaty was signed by all the European powers (with the exception of Portugal), on 9 June 1815.

War Against Slavery

For anyone to demand of Great Britain a further apology, for its part in the transatlantic slave trade, betrays an ignorance of history. Britain's involvement in the slave trade, from 1713 – 1807, was indeed disgraceful. But, led by William Wilberforce, the British nation more than atoned for its guilt in this vile trade in human flesh, by not only setting every slave in Britain free in 1772, but by outlawing the slave trade in 1807, mobilising her navy to suppress the slave trade throughout the 19th Century, and setting free all slaves in any territory in which Britain had influence, or control, in 1833. No other nation has done more than Great Britain in fighting and opposing the slave trade.

British Restitution

The British spent millions of pounds in suppressing the slave trade, and sacrificed much blood in fighting to set the captives free. Britain also invested vast amounts of money into developing Sierra Leone as a free and independent state, where liberated slaves could settle.

American Restitution

The United States, for their part, engaged in a bloody civil war, in part to set all slaves free, at a cost of over 650,000 of their own people dead. The United States also heavily invested in establishing Liberia as a free state where liberated slaves could settle.

White Slaves

Some participants at the congress made the comment that all whites are to blame for the slave trade, yet the word 'slave' comes from the East European '*Slavs*'. Most of the slaves in the Roman Empire were white people. St. Patrick, the English missionary to the Irish, was once a slave himself, kidnapped from his home in England and taken to Ireland against his will. Millions of whites were enslaved by Muslims throughout the Middle East from the 7th

Century onwards. Many were kidnapped from coastal towns by Muslim pirates. In 1526, over 200,000 Hungarian Christians were dragged off to slavery in Turkey.

The Blame Game

If all whites are to blame for the slave trade, which a few whites, over 200 years ago, were involved in, are all blacks to blame for the murders and massacres which many tribes engaged in over the last 200 years? What about the Arabs, who are still involved in the slave trade today?

Blaming the Benefactors

Considering that many whites opposed the slave trade, and that the British Empire did the most to end the slave trade, is it reasonable to blame Britain for an evil that she vigorously fought against, and eradicated, throughout the 19th Century? What about great emancipators, such as Dr. David Livingstone, Samuel Baker, Dr. James Kirk, Henry Morton Stanley, and other dedicated emancipators who set countless captives free?

Ignoring Past Accomplishments and Present Realities

Are claims for restitution from Great Britain and the United States reasonable, when both these nations abolished the slave trade over 200 years ago? Bearing in mind that both Britain and the United States have invested many billions of pounds and dollars into developing Africa, should the demands for restitution not more rightly be demanded from the Arab world which has been enslaving Africans and waging *Jihad* against Christians to the present day?

How Far Back do we Go?

How far are we to go in corporate and national guilt? Must the Italians repent for, and do restitution for, the devastations, wars, aggressions and enslavement of the Roman Empire?

Must the Greeks do restitution for the conquests of Alexander the Great?

Are the Iranians to do restitution for the invasions and oppression by the Persians?

Are the Danes and Norwegians responsible for the death and destruction caused by the Viking raids?

What restitution should be required of the French for the devastation caused by the Napoleonic wars?

What about the Japanese for atrocities committed in World War 2?

Have the British and Americans undertaken sufficient restitution for bombing whole cities like Hamburg and Dresden, incinerating hundreds of thousands of men, women and children in civilian centres?

What about Contemporary Crimes?

What restitution has been done by the United Nations and Organisation of African Unity for destroying Rhodesia and installing Mugabe's murderous regime in Zimbabwe?

What restitution have the Cubans undertaken for the wholesale atrocities and massacres perpetrated in Angola?

Have the World Council of Churches and their associate members duly repented, apologised publicly and undertaken restitution for supporting and financing terrorists who murdered missionaries in Rhodesia?

Have the Congolese undertaken national repentance for the massacres of hundreds of missionaries and tens of thousands of Christians in the Sumba Uprising in the 1960s?

Have the Kenyans apologised, and repented for, the Mau Mau murders and mutilations?

What about ANC supporters for the petrol bombs, necklace murders, landmines and car bombs?

Are Whole Races Guilty for the Crimes of Some?

If all whites are guilty for what some whites did over 200 years ago did, are all blacks guilty for what some blacks have done in murders and mutilations of missionaries and farmers more recently?

It is Unreasonable to Blame Christians for what Pagans Have Done

No, it is not reasonable to blame Protestant Christians for what Catholic Inquisitors and Conquistadors may have done centuries ago. Christian whites are not responsible for what pagan whites have done at other times and places. It is not fair to blame Christian blacks for what non-Christian blacks have perpetrated.

Psychological Guilt

Biblically, true guilt is when I personally violate a specific Command in Scripture. False guilt, or psychological guilt, is a result of selected focus, distortion of reality and ignorance of history. It is vague and it involves guilt manipulation.

Forgiveness and Freedom

When we repent of our personal guilt in violating God's Commands the result is forgiveness, freedom, healing and restoration. However, you can repent for false, or psychological, guilt every day for decades, but you will never find freedom and forgiveness from false guilt – because the devil is a hard taskmaster.

Condemnation Enslaves

The Holy Spirit brings conviction of sin, but the devil brings condemnation. You can easily tell the difference. Conviction by the Holy Spirit leads to Repentance. On the other side of repentance is forgiveness, freedom, healing and restoration. By way of contrast, condemnation from the devil and his disciples paralyses and enslaves us.

Is Colonialism to Blame?

At the congress I also heard some people grumbling about colonialism. However, the blaming of all the ills of Africa on colonialism reveals an ignorance of history. Much of Africa was not colonised

, but became protectorates as part of the European crusade against the slave trade. Sudan was once a colony of Egypt, but never of Britain. Sudan became a protectorate of Great Britain. Similarly, Lesotho and Swaziland were never colonies, but protectorates. Britain's involvement in Malawi was primarily to end the slave trade there and set the captives free.

To End Slave Raids

Most of North Africa came under European control in response to raids by Muslim Barbary pirates on Southern Europe. The colonisation of North Africa began as campaigns to close down the slave markets and prevent the ports of North Africa from being used for slave raids on Southern Europe.

Developing a Continent

The fact is that Africa was in a desperate state in the mid 19th Century. Yet, in a few generations, European involvement brought about a dramatic improvement in the standards of living of millions of Africans - many benefits and blessings of civilisation, medicine, literacy, education, roads, railways, bridges, aircraft, telecommunications, trade and industry, tourism, jobs, employment, freedom and the Gospel.

Benefits and Balance

On balance it is clear that there were far more benefits and blessings to the European involvement in Africa than burdens. Never, in all of history, has any continent done more to aid in the development of another continent. Future historians will look back in amazement at how Europe benefited Africa in less than a century. European settlers fed the starving, cared for the sick, liberated nations in bondage and uplifted the standards of living to unprecedented levels.

Rewriting History

Yet, another example of guilt manipulation can be seen in a most dishonest book, which is being promoted on shelves at this time: *"The Kaisers Holocaust."* What this book ignores is the context of centuries of incessant inter-tribal genocide and the ravages of the

Herero

and

Damara

who were

annihilating

and enslaving the other tribes of South West Africa (Namibia). Local chiefs pleaded with the missionaries to request colonial intervention. The Rhenish Mission requested the involvement of Great Britain, but their colonial authorities claimed that they were too thinly spread and overcommitted elsewhere. Aside from annexing Walvis Bay, the only potential sea port on the coast, the British had no further interest in South West Africa.

German Intervention

At this point the missionaries approached the German Chancellor, Otto von Bismarck, who persuaded the Kaiser to send a small detachment to attempt to bring peace to the warring tribes of South West Africa. This they achieved in a remarkably short time. When the Herero revolted against this new rule of law the result was the War of 1904 to 1905. Missionaries, settlers and officials were murdered and mutilated and the Kaisers' soldiers responded with decisiveness to put down the rebellion. This was done to the applause and approval of the other tribes in South West Africa who had all suffered for far too long at the hands of the Herero and Damara. That this defensive war has now been reinterpreted in such a sinister and manipulative way is outrageous. ***"Woe to those who call evil good and good evil; who put darkness for light and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and prudent in their own sight."*** Isaiah 20:21

Ignorance Leads to Exploitation

Ignorance of history makes one susceptible to guilt manipulation. Communism not only seeks to re-write history, but to hijack and pervert Christianity. Both in the Soviet Union and Red China the commissars set up public confessions where landowners would confess to being “*bourgeois*”
“*enemies of the people*”.

Public repentance and confession sessions to humiliate the previous elite, and thereby to lift up the Commissar and Communist Party members, was seen as part of “class warfare.”

National Repentance

There is a place for national repentance before God. Ezra 9, Nehemiah 9, and Daniel 9 are examples where prophets led the people of God in repentance of behalf of the sins of the nation. However, this repentance was based upon specific transgressions of God’s Law and this national guilt was confessed to God, not to men.

Personal Repentance

When we are guilty of breaking God’s Commandments we must humble ourselves, seek God’s face, turn from our wicked ways and pray. We should humbly kneel before God in full surrender, praying the Psalms, working through the Ten Commandments, listing out our sins and naming them in repentance and confession before Almighty God.

Restitution

Then we should do Restitution, such as Zacchaeus, returning, repairing and restoring. Reconciliation with family members and friends is also a natural outworking of Repentance before God. We should list the people with whom we need to make right with. Make that appointment. Initiate that phone call. Write that letter.

Are You Personally Guilty?

Are you guilty of idolatry? Blasphemy? Disrespect? Desecrating the Lord's Day? Malice? Immorality? Theft? Greed? Gossip? Pride? Envy? Covetousness? Selfishness? Bitterness? Unforgiveness? If God was to speak to you today, what sins would He confront you with? You know He wouldn't be bringing up other people's sins from long ago. He would be dealing with what you personally are responsible for and guilty of. *"The lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life."*

Ensure that Your Relationship with God is Right

We have enough sins of our own that we are personally guilty of, without wasting our time following the political agenda of guilt manipulators seeking to get rich out of other people's misfortune.

□ ***"If you abide in My Word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free ... Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed."*** John 8:31-35

"Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him when He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man His thoughts; let him return to the Lord and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

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