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**From the Selected Works of Trevor O'Reggio**

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**White Too Long: The Legacy of White  
Supremacy in American Christianity [Review], by  
Robert Jones.**

Trevor O'Reggio



Available at: [https://works.bepress.com/trevor\\_oreggio/114/](https://works.bepress.com/trevor_oreggio/114/)

[Jones, Robert. \*White Too Long: The Legacy of White Supremacy in American Christianity\*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2020. 336 pp. Paperback. USD 17.00.](#)

*White Too Long* is one of the most damning and searing indictments of white American Christianity ever written. In the opening pages of the book, Obrey Hendricks, visiting scholar at Columbia University, describes it as a “work of rare courage, conviction, and analytical acuity. Part memoir, part brilliantly social history, it passionately lays bare the complicity of white Christianity in America’s ongoing plague of racism” (foreword). Tracing America’s history from colonial times to the age of Trump, Robert Jones demonstrates how intractable white supremacy has become in the DNA of American Christianity.

The book is divided into seven pulsating chapters. In chapter one, Jones reflects on the present state of white American Christianity and suggests that “after centuries of complicity, the norms of white supremacy have become deeply and broadly integrated into white Christian identity, operating far below the level of consciousness” (10). In chapter two, Jones goes back to the history of the United States of America and shows how American Christianity was influential for the architects and builders of white supremacy. In chapter three, the author reveals how the religious traditions and theology of this kind of American Christianity sanctioned bigotry, violence, and indifference toward African Americans. In the following chapter, he shows how the United Daughters of the Confederacy rewrote the history of the Civil War and convinced the nation to accept their (Confederate) version of history by building confederate monuments and celebrating confederate leaders and soldiers as heroes. They even changed the school curriculum and textbook to reflect their views. In chapter five, he analyzes several current surveys indicating that “white American Christians” are generally more racist in their attitudes than Americans who have no Christian affiliation. The same surveys also reveal that these white Christians believe they are not very racist. In chapter six, Jones offers a ray of hope to his readers by identifying some white Christians and other whites in America who confront white supremacy and understand how it has impacted their present reality. In chapter seven, the author tries to end on a positive note by showing a way forward, suggesting how racist white American Christians can heal themselves and bring about racial justice. He challenges them to acknowledge their moral failings and their need for repentance and to find ways to provide restitution to their victims.

By analyzing American Christianity, Jones takes us on a journey drawing from his own life story, history, and public opinion. As a detective, he demonstrates that American Christian theology and institutions have been the central cultural tent upholding the very idea of white supremacy. Unlike other scholars who assert the complicity of American Christianity with

racism, Jones goes beyond that and boldly asserts that “white Christians have not been simply complacent or complicit. Rather, as the dominant cultural force in America, they have been responsible for constructing and sustaining a project to protect white supremacy and resist black equality” (6). He cites the present infatuation of white evangelicals with Donald Trump as continuing evidence of their support of white supremacy.

Reflecting on his own story as a backdrop, Jones describes the role of white Christianity in the gruesome drama of slavery, “lynchings, and massive resistance to racial equality, all to maintain white racial innocence. Through every chapter white Christianity has been at the ready to ensure white Christians that they are alternatively—and simultaneously—the noble protagonists and the blameless victims. And the dominant white supremacist culture that American Christianity has sustained has returned the favor by deflecting any attempt to trace the ideology to its religious source” (20–21).

Jones sets out to demolish this pervasive lie of white supremacy permeating the culture by demonstrating that American Christianity is the originator, architect, and sustainer of white supremacy in America. He challenges white Christians to confront their moral failings as the only way forward to salvage the integrity of their faith. Like the Old Testament prophet Micah, who called Israel to repentance because they oppressed the poor, like a skilled surgeon using the knife of historical and social science analysis, theological critique, and the acuity of a journalist, Jones pulls back the curtain and exposes the cancer of white American Christianity—white supremacy. He reveals how they have cuddled this demon in their bosom while covering it with a veneer of Christian piety and respectability. By exposing this cancer, he is hoping that it can be excised so healing can take place.

In his concluding chapter, Jones calls for a reckoning by this kind of American Christianity combined with white supremacy, which involves confession and repair. Using the historic narrative of the “mark of Cain” that many white Christians used in the nineteenth century to justify their oppression of blacks, the author reverses this interpretation and puts it on white American Christians. In his own words: “It is white Americans who have murdered our black and brown brothers and sisters. After the genocide and forced removal of Native Americans, the enslavement of millions of Africans, the lynching of more than 4,400 of their surviving descendants, it is white Americans who have used their faith as a shield to justify our actions, deny our responsibility, and insist on our innocence. We, white Christian Americans, are Cain” (230–231). He continues, “Despite our denials, equivocations, protests, and excuses, as the biblical narrative declares, the soil itself preserves and carries a testimony of truth to God. Today God’s anguished questions—‘Where is your brother?’ and ‘What have you done?’—still hang in the air like morning mist on the Mississippi River. We are only just beginning to discern these questions, let alone find the words to voice honest answers”

(231). These poignant words of confession coming from a white Christian are only the beginning of what is necessary from white Christians in general to begin the process of healing. Will this ever happen? This is a call for each of us in our way to do something, and this author has shown us an alternative path.

In light of the recent movements for Black lives calling for social justice, this book takes on greater relevance and should be required reading for all who seek justice in this area. The author has carefully crafted, deeply researched, and persuasively argued a historically well-documented and powerful account of white American Christianity's role and legacy in the ideology and practice of white supremacy. He has challenged white American Christianity to face up to its responsibility and take courageous action to restore its moral soul.

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[Keener, Craig S. For All Peoples: A Biblical Theology of Missions in the Gospels and Acts. Baguio City, Philippines: Asia Pacific Theological Seminary Press, 2020. v + 108 pp. Paperback. USD 14.00.](#)

Craig Keener is a NT scholar, widely respected for his detailed research and comprehensive documentation in his commentaries on NT books. The best known of these commentaries is perhaps his encyclopedic four-volume commentary, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* (Baker Academic, 2012–2015). Although the current volume is a bit different than most of his previous works in terms of its brevity, Keener still engages in his usual insightful exegetical study of biblical texts. The brevity of this volume is in line with the Asia Pacific Theological Seminary Press Occasional Paper Series's goal "to produce smaller books comprised of articles that deal with theological, anthropological and missiological issues relevant to serving God in Asia" (v).

The book is divided into five chapters. In the first three chapters, Keener reflects on the missional thrust of the Gospels according to Matthew, John, and the book of the Acts of the Apostles respectively. To best achieve his purpose, Keener remains faithful to the same theological method of analyzing the missiological contribution of the above mentioned biblical books—he uses a key text in each of the three books (Matt 28:19–20; John 20:21–22; Acts 1–2) to elaborate on their unique missional perspective. In chapter four, Keener reflects on the NT image of the church as "One New Temple in Christ" and concludes that the best way for believers to demonstrate their unity in Christ is to let their loyalty to Christ be translated into their "loyalty to one another as God's family, above all ethnic, cultural, and earthly kinship connections" (96). In the fifth and last chapter, Keener refutes the widely held misconception of Christianity as a European movement. His reflection on Acts 16:8–10 from a historical and geographical perspective highlights the fact that the gospel is Asia's gift to Europe and the rest of the world.