

The Canvas of Creation: A Biblical Response to the Heresy of Racial Superiority. By Drew Poplin. Pittsburgh, PA: Crown & Covenant Publications, 2025. 55 pages. \$8.00 Softcover

Truth may trend one way or the other within the society of our day, but for the Lord's churches, "truth is immortal," and that includes the truth of all men and women being created equally in the image of God, of one blood, with no superiority of one so-called "race" against another. Drew Poplin, associate pastor of the First Reformed Presbyterian Church of Durham, North Carolina, has contributed to this eternal topic with a timely work entitled, *The Canvas of Creation: A Biblical Response to the Heresy of Racial Superiority*. We are thankful to see a good contribution on this important subject, which is something the Lord's churches should teach on as they study the Scriptures, regardless of societal trends.

Poplin begins his book with a definition of "Kinism," a word that is much less familiar to modern English speakers, but which we agree is the more precise word to use when attempting to talk about "racism." He defines it as: "a belief system that advocates for racial and ethnic separation, claiming that such segregation is divinely ordained. The word is derived from "kin," and promotes the idea of "maintaining one's own kin" or "loving one's own kind" as biblical ideals" (vii).

In his introduction, Poplin starts with an appeal to God's diverse creation, full of colors of equal value and worth, and which rightly and with much benefit can be mixed together. He rightly identifies the current resurgence of Kinism and "Race Realism" as connected with the advent of internet and social media platforms, and that this "is not just a problem "out there"" (2), but is creeping into churches, affecting churches, and that "many people who are very active online, especially young men, are simply wrestling through these issues" (3). Poplin observes that Kinism promotes segregation, and that at its root "is the belief in racial supremacy, or Race Realism. This is the claim that the various races of mankind are not equal, but instead are hierarchical, with one ordained by God to have authority and rule over the others as a superior over his inferiors, as a mature father over his helpless children" (4). Regarding the term "race realism" Poplin notes:

"Race Realism, which is ultimately just real racism, is a recent term that unashamedly regurgitates old theories of racial superiority - the kind of godless views supported by the likes of the first generation Darwinists, eugenicists like Margaret Sanger, and murderous dictators like Adolf Hitler" (4). This is a significant point that Poplin makes which is often ignored in this discussion. Any conversation about racism or anti-semitism must always make the link with Darwinian evolution, which by definition is inherent Kinism.

Beyond the link between Darwin, Sanger, and Hitler to Kinism, Poplin gives a defense of why Kinism may rightly be labeled heresy as the title of the book proclaims. His reasons are 1) the Apostle Paul declared that Peter's Kinism was not in step with the truth of the gospel as seen in Galatians 2:14, 2) heresy by definition is an act of division, which is exactly the goal of Kinism, and 3) Kinism is contrary to and incompatible with the grace of God (4-5). He will cite the 2025 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of America's statement on this matter (6)

and give a helpful answer to the question “Does this retroactively condemn our fathers and mothers in the faith who have gone before us and held to this view to one degree or another?” (6).

In chapter one Poplin shows that Kinism is contrary to nature despite the fact that, “This is the law of nature” has become the cry of Kinism” (9). He goes through the four classical logic causes of nature: formal, material, efficient, and final, and shows that each one in fact does not support Kinism. Appealing to several scriptures as well as the Westminster Shorter Catechism, the author demonstrates that, “The Bible does not utilize the category of race as it is so commonly used today, as an artificial sociological classification having to deal primarily with outward characteristics that have developed over time from adaptation to historic places of origin” (11). He also does a word study on *ethnos*, and shows that “Revelation 7:9 provides three clarifying descriptors of the term” (12), which he identifies as, “shared political identity (tribes), familial identity (peoples), and cultural identity (languages)” (12). He says, “ethnicity, as defined by the infallible rule of faith and life, is a category far more complicated than the skin-deep superficiality of race” (12), and “The Kinist likes to point out - just like every atheistic sociologist - the great differences between American sub-cultures in order to legitimize his claim that blacks and whites and every shade in between are different ethnicities. It is doubtful that these “sub-cultures” are really as foundationally different as the Kinist’s exaggerated claims” (12).

Poplin will also argue that “further distinctions (such as Native American, Asian-American, African-American, European-American, etc)...only serve to separate what is a true, natural commonality of ethnicity” (12-13). He also appeals to Galatians 3:28 noting, “The way this verse is written in Greek, which is reflected in the translation quoted above, links “Jew nor Greek” with “slave nor free,” and yet speaks distinctly of “male and female.” Why? It is because ethnic and economic categories can, in some sense, change over the course of a lifetime, while a man and woman cannot change his or her sex” (13). The author’s bigger point is valid, but the translation issue (in this case he is citing the ESV) is curious and needs further exploration. It would be helpful for Poplin to footnote or endnote a commentary on this point although admittedly that may be beyond the scope of his purpose (Timothy George’s New American Commentary by Broadman Press might be one example). Returning to the main issue, Poplin wryly observes, “This is the great irony of those who believe in the supposed superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race: That name is an admission of the melding of two races, or ethnicities (Angles and Saxons), together” (14).

This first chapter will conclude with several interesting thoughts, including, “That God made men and women is grace; that we know the difference between a man and a woman is nature” (15), and, “It is the propagation of Christianity which eradicated slavery and is able to return a renegade and runaway slave “no longer as a bondservant but more than a bondservant, [but] as a beloved brother” (Philem 16)” (15). Both these points could be defended in an expanded second edition. Another point which we will come back to is Poplin’s use of Acts 17:26. We have long argued that this is one of the key if not the single key verse against racial

supremacy of the Darwin, Sanger, Hitler variety. Unfortunately, Poplin cites this crucial passage from a Critical Text translation, in this case the ESV, which reads, “And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place” (15-16). He goes on to conclude about Acts 17:26: “This passage is detrimental to the Race Realists in two ways” (16) which he enumerates as, “every human is descended from a single father and mother, twice: Adam and Eve after the fall, and again Noah and his wife before the flood. This means that, going back far enough, we all have the same racial heritage, belonging to the human race” (16), and, “This verse is as much “in favor” of the mixing of races as the segregating of them because it is a simple confession of the absolute sovereignty of God in human history (16). Again, we agree with his bigger point and rejoice that he is making it, but his point is greatly undermined by his use of the Critical Text and the ESV for several reasons. Firstly, the Textus Receptus and KJV read, “and hath made of one blood all nations for men for to dwell on all the face of the earth.” This phrase “one blood” is the strongest possible way to refute racial superiority and Darwinian racism and kinism, showing that “all nations” (*ethnos*) are “made of one blood (*haima*).” This teaching is utterly reprehensible to the white supremacist, the nazi, the segregationist and all those who espouse Kinism in any form. Think of the difference between Poplin’s statement, “we all have the same racial heritage” versus saying “we all have the same blood.” The omission of the word “blood” by the Critical Text greatly weakens this teaching. Secondly, the ESV reads “from one man,” but no word for “man” appears in the Greek text at all. The ESV adds that word into the text without letting the reader know that with the benefit of italics or a footnote. Kinists could easily argue that all the text is claiming is that God made all people from “one something,” and that that something could simply be from the ground, but not the exact same ground for all people, or something like that. Thirdly, it is well known that one of the two founding fathers of the modern Critical Text was Fenton John Anthony Hort, who was himself a horrible racist, white supremacist, and proponent of Kinism of the highest order. We may be certain that he would disagree with Poplin’s thesis. It would be most beneficial to the purpose of Poplin’s good book, if in the second edition he would return to the text of the Protestant Reformation and the Westminster divines, and make sure that all Bible quotations and citations are from the Authorized Version. We will have one final thought on this subject toward the end of our review.

In chapter two, Poplin shows that Kinism is contrary to the law of God. He refutes the notion that “certain persons are prone to particular sins by virtue of their race - they simply cannot help it” (17). Both James 1:14-15 and Job 15:14 are cited to demonstrate that “sins of individuals do not proceed from their belonging to any race other than the human race, being born of their father Adam” (17), and Poplin affirms that “personal sin comes from our heritage in Adam, not our heritage in Asia, Africa, or Europe” (18). He skillfully interacts with Titus 1:12-13, stating, “there is a general legitimacy to stereotypes, or else they would not be so commonplace” (18), but reminds, “The black African and the white Viking were guilty of the same kind of barbarisms, and the remedy for this is the freedom which comes through belief in the Gospel and obedience to the perfect law of liberty” (18). He also notes that “the commands

for strict separation between Israel and the surrounding nations were religious, not racial; and ceremonial, not permanent" (18), citing Deuteronomy 7:3-4. He declares, "Any time the Scriptures are distorted in their doctrine, they will always be twisted in their application" (20). To this we would remind that the way to distort doctrine is to change words (as in Acts 17:26), hence the need for a biblical doctrine of preservation and a received text mindset. Poplin's point here is that "Kinism claims that it is wrong for one race to intermix with another, and yet cited above are five positive examples of intermarriage commended by the Lord in his Word" (21). His application of Scripture is very good in this chapter, particularly how the parable of the good Samaritan builds on Leviticus 19 in relation to the subject at hand. He observes, "You are to love your neighbor, and everyone you encounter is your neighbor" (22), and concludes, "In many ways, Kinism has crept up as an over-reaction to the popularization of Critical Race Theory, which is a philosophy driven by envy" (23).

Chapter three explores ways in which Kinism is contrary to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, specifically as it relates to the incarnation ("God was manifest in the flesh," I Timothy 3:16), and the grace of God. Poplin notes, "The Word made flesh was, is, and will always be, a Jew from Nazareth" (26). The gap between man and God is infinitely more severe than any so-called racial differences, and God has reconciled sinners unto Himself in Christ. The author explores this in detail, showing that, "All Christians are equal in Christ - foreigner and Israelite bound together in a common inheritance" (28), and furthermore that, "the entire union of Jesus and his church is described in the allegory of the Song of Songs, as an interracial marriage. In the Song, our Lord is white and ruddy (5:10), and the church is the Shulamite woman who is "very dark, yet lovely" (1:5)" (29). Poplin concludes this chapter citing the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, chapter 1, paragraph 8, to make the point that, "as the Gospel in these last days is to go to the nations, the apostles wrote in the common language of the known world. Our faith and fellowship are to be shared by all peoples, and we are to do so in love, which leaves no room for envy or boasting" (30).

Chapter four shows how Kinism is contrary to the Nature and Government of the Church. Poplin again cites the WCF showing that "the church is the communion of saints, and accordingly we all have gifts to offer and duties to fulfill in the life of the church, indiscriminate of our physical heritage" (31). This chapter reflects the author's Reformed Catholic ecclesiology, but is no less potent against the heresy of Kinism as it relates to Christian living. He affirms, "Our greatest affinity is not the natural affinity of blood and soil, but of Spirit and truth" (32), and he makes good use of Acts 13, showing that, "Three Jews and two Africans serving in the same Presbytery, doing the same work of praying and preaching, and the roll is called simply in passing...There is no thought given to their family tree, but only to the Father above; no consideration to color, but only to Christ; no deference to skin, but only to the Spirit" (33). Poplin concludes this chapter by declaring: "Any philosophy then, which would seek to make one people superior over another people has no place among the people of God" (35).

Chapter five deals with the very significant topic of answering the primary historic argument of Kinism from Scripture, namely "Noah's curse on Ham" from Genesis 9:24-27.

Poplin gives two exegetical reasons why this passage cannot be used to prove that “as Ham is the father of the African nations and Japheth of the European nations, the descendants of Ham are thus commanded and ordained to be the servants of the descendants of Japheth” (37). The author rightly demonstrates that, “Very simply, the curse is on Canaan, and not upon Ham and his entire lineage” (38), and show that the purpose of this message being recorded in Israel’s pentateuch was for their comfort, wherein, “God will take care of the Canaanites, and Israel is about to be the means used to fulfill his promise to Noah” (38), as fulfilled in Deuteronomy 20:16-17 and the record of Joshua (cf. Joshua 9:23, Judges 4:23, et.al).

Secondly, Poplin gives an overview of the purpose of curses within biblical theology. He notes that, “curses are recorded for the benefit and instruction of the church, not of pagans. Oracles against the nations by the prophets are given to Israel, not to those nations to be destroyed. Imprecations said long ago remain as reminders to the Israel of God today and not to the cursed” (39). He goes on, “God is teaching the church in all ages that he often permits reprobate nations to receive earthly blessings, while we receive spiritual blessings mingled among earthly sufferings” (40). Poplin helps the reader see that whether it is the age-old defense of slavery or the modern day white supremacists, the twisting of this passage through eisegesis cannot overcome the biblical exegesis of it. “The prophetic curse pronounced by Noah was never about the race of men, but the grace of God. Canaan was made a servant to the true Son of Shem, the Lord Jesus Christ” (41).

The sixth and penultimate chapter seeks to explain what is at the root of the recent rise of Kinism. Poplin identifies “three patterns which emerge over time when reading or interacting with young men who have fallen into this snare: fear, bitterness, and father hunger” (43). Regarding the first point, he avers, “Kinists portray a genuine fear, even through all the ostentation and bravado of their jarring rhetoric...Themes about the great replacement of whites, the dismal future for our country, the safety of our families come up again and again” (43). Poplin is on the mark here, and there is a reason why the verb “monger” is often linked with “fear” in this context. He goes on to note, “The skin color of our descendants five generations from now simply does not matter; the important thing is whether or not we have passed on the heritage of our faith” (43). One cannot help but probe the faith of those who major on the fear of man (cf. Proverbs 29:25). Poplin rightly says that, “the reality is that Kinism is Pharoah’s fear in modern form” (44), citing Exodus 1:10. Regarding fear he concludes, “Kinists with their anonymous accounts need to love God and love others; but they also need to receive the love of God and, yes, to receive the love of their neighbor. They are afraid, and God has sent his Son out of love to drive that fear away” (44).

Next Poplin deals with the bitterness that is inherent in the modern Kinist movement, noting, “there is an underlying bitterness in the writings and conversations of Kinists and Race Realists, as well as from many in the modern Christian Nationalist movement” (44). He does a very good job showing how disenfranchised youth make up a significant part of this movement (no doubt that is the case with many unbiblical movements of the modern and postmodern eras), Poplin muses, “Wanting to build the home they never had, to have the tradition they never

received, and to defend the flag they never flew, these embittered men lash out - usually at liberals, blacks, and Jews whom they have never met and do not even know. What hope is there for their bitter heart? There is no other comfort for the restless soul than Jesus Christ" (44-45).

The third and final cause for the rise of Neo-Kinism is the "widespread lack of godly fathers who have led their family strongly in the faith; and this father hunger, as it is often called, has led many to look elsewhere to find role models and instruction" (45). Godly fathers are a true treasure, and sadly one that is often rare in the lives of the men who join this movement. Poplin concludes this subpoint by noting, "They are looking for someone to look up to, but are content with a screen they can look at" (45).

Seventh and finally, Poplin has a helpful chapter on practical applications in dealing with Kinism. He doubles down on his assertion that Kinism is nothing other than doctrinal heresy, and that it therefore ought to be hated by those who love God and His truth. He declares, "There is to be no covenant, no treaty, no parley with heresy...Let the Kinist boast of his fair skin, and he shall become whiter still with the leprosy of his heart" (49). In an effort to restore the brother or sister who has gone astray in this area, Poplin gives three practical considerations, first "to establish to what extent each person has an obligation in defending the truth. Not every Christian needs to go to battle on every issue or with every person" (50). Second, the need "to distinguish between leaders and followers, wolves and goats, predators and prey" (50-51), and he appeals to 2 Peter 3:16 in this regard. And finally, the "need to know how to speak when we are called to do so" (51). Appealing to Proverbs 26:4-5, Poplin reminds us to be good stewards of our time and not cast our pearls before swine. He notes, "Anonymous accounts are not interested in reasonable discussion, and pompous promoters of heresy are only looking for attention to grow their following" (51). And as it is often in our nature to over course correct, he cautions, "Self-loathing over your privileges is nothing but ingratitude towards God" (53).

We want to close by highlighting one of the author's final statements: "The almighty and all-wise God is bringing and will continue to bring good to his people, even from the agitations of Race Realists and Kinists, as we seek to respond faithfully by confessing the biblical teaching that we are one blood in Adam, and one Body in Christ" (52). We are so thankful for this book, and the skill and spirit in which it tackles this very important and timely topic. We would be remiss if we did not encourage the author to, in subsequent editions, return to the traditional text of the NT and faithful translations of it. When he refers above to "the biblical teaching that we are one blood in Christ," he is using language from the King James Version (following Tyndale) and the Textus Receptus, not the English Standard Version and the Critical Text. It will greatly strengthen his argument, and greatly equip his readers much better, if he chooses consistency over inconsistency at this point. Nevertheless, we heartily recommend this book and humbly commend the author for his efforts. May God use this volume to bring about scriptural practice in the Lord's churches as they "teach all nations."