

the SDA Church. In omitting its contributions, there appears to be a bias, though perhaps not intentional.

A Scripture Index and a Subject and Author Index complete this volume and make it useful. I highly recommend this work as an aid to the study of the book of Revelation for students, pastors, and teachers who want to broaden their perspectives and understand views other than those they already cherish. For those who want to be told the answers or to confirm their own presuppositions, this is not the book; they will only be confused and disappointed.

Edwin Reynolds

Matsuoka, Fumitaka. *The Color of Faith: Building Community in a Multiracial Society*. Cleveland, OH: United Church Press, 1998. viii + 143 pp.

Fumitaka Matsuoka is vice-president for academic affairs and dean of the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, CA. He authored *Out of Silence: Emerging Themes in Asian American Churches* (United Church Press, 1995). In *The Color of Faith* he uses an interdisciplinary approach to tackle the raging question of how race shapes people in the USA. His ideal is to explore the “interplay between race and the faith community” (vii). He succeeds in this in the four chapters of this book, each of which requires careful, contemplative reading and re-reading.

Chapter 1, “The Spiritual Pain of Interracial Estrangement and a Yearning for a Different way of Coming Together as a People” (1-24), describes the long, painful history of the lack of communication (silence) among people in the USA. Certain historical realities (e.g., slavery, immigration exclusion laws, and the internment of Japanese-Americans at the start of WWII), cannot be ignored. US society is fragmented along lines of difference such as race, class, culture, and ethnicity. This breeds estrangement. It is characterized by the loss of dialogue “that engages people in relationships. Silence and suspicion of others govern our societal life” (3). Therefore, there is an urgent need for people to come together. Violence, injustice, intolerance, and all those *-isms* that erode trust among people, must be obliterated. They must be replaced with true communion that focuses on peoplehood, justice, mutual respect, the equality of all humanity, and shared value. It is the responsibility and duty of the Christian community to promote these qualities. The church can no longer reflect the flaws of US society, some of which are deeply embedded in the collective memory of several groups. The church must avail itself of the divine mandate to effect healing, human relatedness one to another, disarming rage, and building trusting relationships. This is the goal of communion.

Chapter 2, “How Does Race Shape People? Ways of Speaking about Race” (25-56), deals with precisely these two issues. With regard to the first, Matsuoka contends, “When the identity of racial groups is shaped by opposition to others,

especially in a climate of fear, distrust, rejection, and violence, then a shared peoplehood is extremely difficult to achieve" (25-26).

When one race feels itself dominant above others, it regards itself as absolute, and assigns "infinite significance" (28) to its culture. This ideology of "choseness," says the author, "is a powerful expression of idolatry" (*ibid.*). When this happens, it decays the sense of the worth and value of others.

Looking at others as objects, we make them part of an objective world with which we do not enter into relationship. Making an idol of one's own group ensues. One becomes blind to others' histories, the gifts they bring to the world of humanity, and the experience of empathy in relationship. (29)

With regard to the second issue, Matsuoka recognizes that "any attempt to provide a comprehensive definition" (42) of race is difficult. Biological sciences claim that race definition is meaningless, but "in the social sense race is indeed a reality" (45). Pursuant to this, he provides a poignant critique of four ways of speaking about race:

(1) Historically, race has been discussed along the lines of the black/white division in the USA (39). But there are so many highly visible, multifaceted groups in the US today that this way of talking is largely defunct.

(2) The idea of a color-blind society that promotes individualism over the group is also outlandish (as was demonstrated in the highly publicized O. J. Simpson trials).

(3) The promotion of "group culture," which ascertains that a "group's social behavior" is "an all-embracing explanatory force" (45), fails to reckon with the dynamics and fluidity of human interactions.

(4) Critical Race Theory maintains "that people's perspectives on events are overwhelmingly determined by their racial background" (48). But this deals primarily with "racial and ethnic separateness" (49), not with bringing people together.

Matsuoka posits another view, "Speaking of People Theologically" (50-56). In this way, we "confess our finitude and the goodness of creation, sin and the promise of redemption rooted in Christian convictions about the nature of God, humanity, and the church" (50). This allows us to denounce sin and announce grace. It enables Christians to welcome all peoples regardless of differences, even as we build "household" (51).

Chapter 3, "Racism as a Monopoly of Imagination" (57-96) is a treatment of evil, defined as "both negation of relationship and absence of direction for a collective human life" (57). It is so pervasive that it dominates institutions, social structures, and the very core (imagination) of both the dominating and dominated. It brings injustices, devaluation and marginalization of people, victimization, and estrangement. This is the nature of the evil of racism. It is "an obstacle to the formation of a common peoplehood" (58), a "sign of unredeemed creation" (61).

Although there may be no discernible end to racism, Christians in churches, families, neighborhoods, and organizations must challenge this systemic evil “not by coercive force but by patient persuasion, exhibiting signs of righteousness and justice in their own being and acting even in the midst of what appears to be a hopeless situation” (60). Wherever racism raises its head, whether in housing, employment, health care (65-76), education (76-88), the criminal justice system (88-94), or any other place, those who challenge it must raise a “cry of protest and anguish [which] is a daring, courageous assertion that this unequal arrangement is not right, will not be accepted or tolerated, and must be changed” (95-96). They must stand with the resolute will and conviction, “We shall not be moved” (94).

Chapter 4, “Signs of Peopling amid the Adversarial Relationships across a Racial Divide” (97-127), gives voice to the stories of those who have the courage to stand against racism. Even as racism changes form but does not loosen its grip, we must take the risk, not merely in reforming the social systems that breed racism but also in introducing self-change. We need to recognize and acknowledge “the presence of evil within us personally and societally” (101). Racism is woven into the fabric of society, and even of the church, which at times has promoted the racial divide. However, we need to address such evil as mature Christians, characterized by honesty, engagement and commitment, action and service, genuine humanity, and love. We must proclaim, “‘Love is the way,’ love without violence, love without reprisals even in the midst of various expressions of human viciousness” (104). While in this age this may seem outrageous, inconceivable, and dream-like, we must be undaunted, knowing that “we are tied together not by our own blood, but by Christ’s blood” (103). This is what gives voice to a “new peoplehood” (109), that develops redemptive traditions which promote reconciliation (109-18), and effect community revitalization (118-21).

Matsuoka concludes (121-27) that “color blindness leads to further color division” (124). It is not a viable option. Christians, who have received the inconceivable love of God (Rom 5:8) must welcome each other as Christ welcomed us. We have to go beyond addressing programmatic social issues of race and elevate the Cross. It is the “symbol of the reality that insists that possibilities are given only through the experience of limits; that the way to victory lies through exposure to decay and perhaps death” (127).

This book is invaluable to anyone who is sensitive to the issue of racism. It is carefully researched (as evidenced by the notes on pp. 128-36), with a good index (137-43). In my opinion, the author has discussed a difficult and sensitive subject in clear tones with a truly warm regard for finding a Christian response to the problem of race in the USA. Nevertheless, I have two concerns:

(1) The author claims in the Preface that he is addressing the question “How does race shape people?” from a theological perspective. But his study is more of a treatise built on sociological, cultural, and anthropological observations.

(2) There is a paucity in the use of biblical data. This leads to the question of the role of the Bible in smashing "the dividing wall of hostility," a task which Matsuoka is convicted (vii) is the duty of the Christian church.

Kenneth Mulzac

McKnight, Scot. *A New Vision for Israel: The Teachings of Jesus in National Context*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999. 263 pp.

Scot McKnight is a coeditor for the *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* and the general editor for the Guides to New Testament Exegesis series. He wrote *Interpreting the Synoptic Gospels* and *A Light Among the Gentiles: Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period*.

This book is "an exploration of how the teachings of Jesus are to be configured in light of his mission to the nation" (ix). McKnight follows G. B. Caird, Marcus Borg, and N. T. Wright in their approaches, which are focused more on national and political elements than other approaches. He arranged his studies under these headings: "The Vision of Jesus: A Preliminary Sketch," "The God of Jesus," "The Kingdom Now Present," "The Kingdom Yet to Come," "The Ethic of Jesus: Conversion and Cost," and "The Ethic of Jesus: Morality."

In the discussion of "The God of Jesus," McKnight describes the holy God who calls Israel to repentance. Jesus represents God, who is the national God. In "The Kingdom Now Present," he emphasizes that "God's long-awaited and promised plans for the deliverance and restoration of Israel are now being fulfilled" (118). The kingdom was realized, in fact, in Jesus' table fellowship with sinners, in His offer of forgiveness, in His mysterious parables, and in His miracles. Jesus was ushering in the kingdom. He was the Prophet of the last day. Exorcisms and healings revealed the kingdom.

In "The Kingdom Yet to Come," McKnight characterizes the final kingdom as populated by those who associate with Jesus. Jesus was not certain of the time of the fulness of the kingdom. The future would begin with God's judgment in the form of the destruction of Jerusalem. The kingdom of God would be made up of restored national Israel. There would be an endless fellowship with the Father. It would be the consummation of history. Here McKnight excludes Gentile mission and Christianity from his discussion.

In "The Ethic of Jesus: Conversion and Cost," faith and repentance are focused on in the discussion of conversion to Jesus. Vocation, family, possessions, and self-denial were discussed in regard to the cost of conversion to Jesus. "The Ethic of Jesus: Morality" deals with virtues and attitudes under three major headings: righteousness and love in relation to God; humility, trust, transformation of self, and hypocrisy in relation to oneself; and love, forgiveness, mercy, and peace in relation to others.