

To Be White and Christian

TO BE BOTH a white Christian and a white American is to be caught between two warring factions. We may not like this, and we often struggle to acknowledge the depth of the conflict, but both of these identity sources remain at war as they vie for supremacy in our lives.

To be born white in America is to be instantly thrust into this war. Robin DiAngelo effectively demonstrates some of the ways that the ideology of white supremacy is designed to have immediate impact on our emerging sense of identity:

Think about it like this: From the time I opened my eyes, I have been told that as a white person, I am superior to people of color ... We are born into a racial hierarchy, and every interaction with media and culture confirms it—our sense that, at a fundamental level, we are superior. And the thing is, it feels good. Even though it contradicts our most basic principles and values. So we know it, but we can never admit it. ... We have set the world up to preserve that internal sense of superiority and also resist challenges to it.

Becoming a Christian who is also white should mean rejecting the ideology of white superiority. Our allegiance to Jesus should enable us to recognize that this ideology is antithetical to the Bible, as is any system, ideology, or narrative that attempts to position one group of people as superior. The gospel should instead position us to draw our identity from a different source.

The thrust of this book is to strengthen our ability to live from our identity in Christ while rejecting the ideology of white superiority. So how do we manage the disorientation that comes with the internal

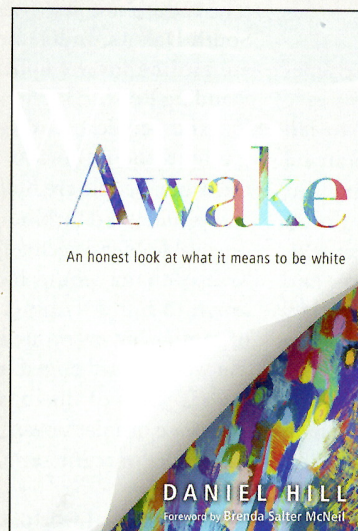
civil war sparked by this struggle? In the same way that it would be naïve for new Christians to presume that conversion comprehensively and immediately removes sin from their lives, so it is naïve to assume that conversion keeps us from drawing our sense of identity from the ideology of white superiority. A good way to think of it is that conversion gives us the *ability* to *begin* divesting ourselves from the grips of white superiority.

The transformation of sight is often a painful process, just as all true growth is. As we move

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toward the brilliance of the light, we discover how much darkness was in us at each stage. This is a disorienting and confusing process, and if we don't lean into the grace of God, we are tempted to depart from the journey of transformation. Therefore, one of the most important things to remember is that, despite the disorientation that comes with a crisis of identity, it's a gift to be embraced. Each time we discover a new manifestation of white superiority that's informing our identity, we can courageously admit it, confess

it, and replace it with the words of God. We remember that we have been identified by God and named as the beloved. We remember that we have been baptized into both the death and the resurrection of Christ. We remember that we are new creations, sent into God's world as ambassadors of reconciliation. ■



*From White Awake by Daniel Hill.
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