

Pastoral Reflection – June 23, 2020 – “The Other Side of the Cup”
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These days, with anti-racism being in the news, I’ve been reading Drew G.I. Hart’s book, *Trouble I’ve Seen: Changing the Way the Church Views Racism* (Herald Press, 2016). One of his stories in the book has got me rethinking the way we define racism. Hart, who is African American, talks about a young white pastor who “had reached out to me hoping that we could get to know one another and, more specifically, so that we could dialogue across the racial divide.” As they met for tea, this pastor had used a cup as an illustration for their dialogue. “Drew, he said, ‘This cup has writing on my side of the cup and a logo on yours. ... Because I can’t see what is on your side of the cup, I need you to share with me your perspective so that I can see things from your standpoint,’ he explained. ‘Likewise, you need me to share *my* point of view so that you can understand the world from my vantage point.’”

But while this may seem like an egalitarian approach, Hart says that this is not quite accurate to how things work around race and power. “I explained that, in fact, I *did* know what was on his side of the cup. This is because I have learned Eurocentric history written from a white perspective. I have read white literature and poetry. I have learned about white musicians and artists. I have had mostly white teachers and professors through every stage of my educational process. I have read lots of white authors and have heard white intellectuals give lectures on a variety of topics. I have been inundated by white-dominated and controlled television and media. I have lived in a mostly white suburban community, and I have lived on a predominantly white Christian campus. The truth of the matter is that I wouldn’t have been on track to a PhD without becoming intimately familiar with the various ways that white people

think. My so-called success means that I have had to know what it takes to meet white standards, whether they are formal or informal.

“After explaining why I already knew what was on his side of the cup, I continued on. I noted that in contrast to me, he most likely could go through his entire life without needing to know black literature, black intellectual thought, black wisdom, black art and music, or black history. That is, he could choose to never engage with or be changed by the range and beauty of the black community. Nor would he be penalized for it. ... This is even more so the case for most white Christian communities, which willfully ignore the diverse gifts of the black church tradition. Black faith and tradition are rarely looked to as worthy sources for learning about how to practice spiritual disciplines, embody daily discipleship, and share in Christian community.”¹

In our own context, Indigenous and European settler perspectives form two “sides of the cup.” These are not the only two sides in our multicultural society, but are two sides where reconciliation is deeply needed. As a spiritual practice, I have joined the virtual Reconciliation Challenge, where I choose a weekly action for 8 weeks and share about it in the facebook group created for this.² In light of Hart’s story, I am seeing this as a way of actively listening and learning about what’s on the “other side of the cup.” I know some of you are doing your own reading and learning about the “other side of the cup” these days.

- *What have you learned that was new or surprising?*
- *What can we do as a church community to live out this commitment to right relationships and reconciliation?*

¹ Drew G.I. Hart, *Trouble I’ve Seen: Changing the Way the Church Views Racism* (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2016), 24-25.

² To learn more or join this group hosted by Reconciliation Saskatoon, visit:
https://www.facebook.com/events/938980696540202/?event_time_id=938980703206868