

POSITION STATEMENT ON SOCIAL JUSTICE VS. BIBLICAL JUSTICE

Due to significant cultural forces pushing into and against the tenets of biblical Christianity using a narrative of “Social Justice,” the following introduction and assessment of this movement is necessary to guard the church from secular philosophies taking root. We affirm the assertions of the Dallas Statement on Social Justice (2019) as an apt response to the basic contours of this movement at the present cultural moment, and we offer this Assessment as a helpful tool and guide.

Three Primary Reasons Give Rise To The Need For Such Awareness Within The Church

- “Social Justice” is here to stay as a cultural movement and identity
- “Social Justice” is not a slightly misguided approach to a good thing, but rather an outworking of a contrary worldview with unbiblical foundations
- The Church is particularly susceptible to being misguided by this unbiblical philosophy due to our (super)natural love for justice, compassion, and unity

Three Particular Goals For This Brief Overview

- Understanding how “Social Justice” differs from Biblical Justice in its worldview and goals
- Understanding how Critical Race Theory has become the dominant approach to achieving “Justice” in the public sphere
- Understanding how the Church can guard itself from becoming a soft target for proponents of Social Justice

UNDERSTANDING BIBLICAL JUSTICE

Definition: an individual command requiring equal treatment of every person based on God’s standard of “right,” combined with compassionate care for the disadvantaged

- “Justice” = Impartial Treatment of Individuals
 - Law –
 - Impartiality in Legal Disputes: Exod 23:1-3,6-8; Lev 19:15 / Deut 19:15 / 16:18-20 /24:14-16
 - Impartiality in emulation of God: Deut 10:17-18 / 32:3-4 | James 2:1-10
 - Impartiality esp. by the King: 1 Sam 8:3, 2 Sam 8:15, 1 Kgs 10:9
 - Wisdom – Job 29:10-17, Psa 9:1-10, 33:1-5 (esp by the “King / Messiah” – Psa 72:1-2)
 - Prophets – Isa 1:16-17, 10:1-2; Jer 22:2-3 (esp. by the “Messiah” – Isa 9:7, 32:1-2, 42:1-4; Jer 23:5)
- Compassionate Care for the “Poor” (primarily involving voluntary “sharing”)
 - Mark 14:7, Rom 12:15, Job 30:25, Heb 13:3,16, Gal 2:10, 6:10, 1 Tim 6:17-19, 1 John 3:17-18

Note – these texts and more assume that there will always be “inequities” among God’s people and in the world. These realities do not inherently point to some injustice, oppression, or racism, but rather provide an opportunity for compassionate care and sharing. They are not

necessarily a “wrong” to be confessed and repented of, but rather an occasion to show a kind of love the world does not typically experience (Jn 13:34-35).

UNDERSTANDING “SOCIAL JUSTICE”

Definition: a philosophical strategy to engineer a society in which there are equal outcomes for all classes of people based on human standards of what is “right,” even if it involves unequal treatment of some (thus a violation of Biblical Justice).

To understand this definition / goal, consider the stated Origins & Beliefs of the Social Justice Movement (in their own terms).

1. **Origins:** in sociology (social science of understanding society as a whole)
 - a. **Conflict Theory** – Karl Marx (1850-80s) – society consists of varying groups of people all competing (in conflict) for a limited amount of resources.
 - b. **Hemogeny** – Antonio Gramsci (1920-30s) – developed Marxist teachings to assert that social control is maintained by those in power primarily through conditioning individuals to accept their power (political, economic, cultural)
 - c. **Critical Theory** – Frankfurt School (1940s-today, Columbia University) – disappointed with the inability of Marxist / Communist ideals to be absorbed in Western societies, a group of Marxist academics expanded Conflict Theory to focus on identifying the structural, invisible “systems” of societies that were imbedded (subconsciously) in groups of people through social conditioning (hemogeny). Thus, they stopped looking for any “actual” oppressors or acts/laws of oppression by certain classes, and began to point out inequities they saw among people groups as evidence of invisible / systemic oppression going on (since that is how Marx / Gramsci say all societies work).
 - d. **Postmodernism (20th Century)** – Broad idea among 20th Century social scientists that prefers discourse over objective truth, experience over facts, story-telling over debate. Stems heavily from Critical Theory and Hemogeny, and thus cynically views absolute knowledge claims and value systems as socially-constructed and typically used by those in power to keep their power and thus untrustworthy.
 - e. **Critical Race Theory** – insert “race” into ideas of Critical Theory, such that the most prevalent “invisible” systems of oppression are by one race over another. Dominant races condition a society to their oppression to serve the dominant race. Most today put this in terms of white vs. black/brown.

2. Re-Definitions: postmodern definitions typically depart from normal definitions of words

- a. **Critical** – not looking to analyze facts, data, or test theories with actual real world events (for no need to test our Marx / Gramsci’s theories; they are accepted as fact). The goal is to identify underlying, hidden, subjective experiences of oppressed people
- b. **Theory** – not an idea to be validated, but an unquestioned “law” upon which further social “laws” are built into a way of viewing / running the world. Most people would call this a “worldview.”
- c. **Racism** – no longer unequal view of and treatment of by an individual of one race against another... but rather the inherent, inescapable characteristics of all the structures of society which condition all people to profit white people. Therefore according to CRT, you don’t have to have any actual racist people or acts to have “systemic racism.”¹

¹ Latasha Morrison, *Whiteness 101* (quoted in Baucham, *Fault Lines*, p. 82) – “Racism is a system of advantages based on race, involving cultural messages, misuse of power, and institutional bias, in addition to the racist beliefs and actions of individuals.”

- d. **Oppressed** – those of the non-dominant race who by default experience “inequities” of outcome in employment, education, finances, housing, happiness, etc., etc..
- e. **Oppressor** – any member of the dominant (white) race, regardless of whether or not they purpose, feel, or even want to oppress anyone, simply because they live in a system that favors them
- f. **Oppressive Systems** – all systems of a society in which there are not equal outcomes for all classes. Some of these are founded on...
 - 1. Merit – systems in employment, education, etc. that reward higher levels of skill, intelligence, education, hard work are inherently oppressive to non-whites.
 - 2. Facts – analytical approaches used to objectively evaluate and compare statistics, data, outcomes, etc. do not properly take into account the stories of the oppressed, and therefore are inherently racist.
 - 3. Equal Treatment under the Law (Civil Justice) – when equal sentences are handed down equally for white and blacks, this is inherently oppressive – for the victims of oppression should not be held equally accountable for their response to the very systems that are continually oppressing them vs. advantaging them.

3. Goals of Social Justice Movement:

- a. NOT to reform racist laws / systems – for since in America most all truly racist systems have been removed (such as Jim Crow laws and redlining housing districts), new injustices (i.e., inequities) must now be identified, because according to Marx / Gramsci / Frankfurt School they always exist (even when they don’t).
- b. NOT to stop racist behaviors – for individual racist behaviors are not the real problem, and in fact only further help the cause by providing more and more “stories” to tell to convince people that racism is inherently there. Thus, typically CRT / SJW are not concerned with the objective facts of any case of police brutality, because whether a crime was actually committed or not, such an event serves as an appropriate metaphor for the historical cultural oppression of blacks by the systems of this nation. CRT is not interested in personal biblical repentance and restoration, but societal reform.
- c. According to CRT proponents:
 - 1. To identify racist systems, condemn them, remove them, replace them with structures where every race receives (i.e., subjectively feels) the same historically weighted outcome. This end-game is to be pursued regardless of any individual’s merit, objective facts, or personal history, and regardless of any unequal treatment of individuals (whites) necessary to accomplish it.
 - 2. To convince whites that it is not enough to not be racists, they must become “antiracists” – meaning to acknowledge CRT’s worldview and view of racism (and all forms of oppression) as inherent to the current system, and assist Social Justice Warriors in tearing down the systems that presently exists until a “just” society emerges in which all classes of people share equally in the limited resources in this world (i.e., equal outcomes).

4. Tactics of Social Justice Movement:

- a. Ibram X. Kendi – *How to Be an Antiracist* – “What’s the problem with being ‘not racist’? It is a claim that signifies neutrality. ‘I am not a racist, but neither am I aggressively against racism.’ But there is no neutrality in the racism struggle. The opposite of ‘racist’ isn’t ‘not racist.’ It is ‘antiracist.’”
“The job of the Christian is to liberate the oppressed peoples from their oppression.” (@DrIbram, 9/27/20)

- b. Latasha Morrison – *Be the Bridge: Pursuing God’s Heart for Racial Reconciliation* – “You will need to examine your own life and the lives of your ancestors (i.e., all white people) so you can see whether you have participated in, perpetuated, or benefited from systems of racism. (8) *Whiteness 101: Foundational Principles every White Bridge Builder Needs to Understand* – “making things right costs something, often power, position, or money.”
- c. Ibram X. Kendi – Department of Antiracism²
To fix the original sin of racism, Americans should pass an anti-racist amendment to the U.S. Constitution that enshrines two guiding anti-racist principals: Racial inequity is evidence of racist policy and the different racial groups are equals. The amendment would make unconstitutional racial inequity over a certain threshold, as well as racist ideas by public officials (with “racist ideas and “public official” clearly identified). It would establish and permanently fund the Department of Antiracism (DOA) comprised of formally trained experts on racism and no political appointees. The DOA would be responsible for preclearing all local, state and federal public policies, investigate private racist policies when racial inequality surfaces, and monitor public officials for expressions of racist ideas. The DOA would be empowered with disciplinary tools to wield over and against policymakers and public officials who do not voluntarily change their racist policy and ideas.

HOW SHOULD THE CHURCH RESPOND?

1. What can we “do” to stop this movement?

- Embrace Reality – you won’t stop this movement. It has already won the day. You are already on the “wrong side of history.” [but when has the true church ever been on the “right” side of this world’s version of history?]

Much like the unfounded theory of evolution, this movement has already taken hold of the vast majority of political, educational, cultural, and corporate entities. The largest entity still standing in its way is the Evangelical Church. Our concern ought to be less “saving our nation” as much as saving the church and saving individual souls.

But no reason to lose hope even for our nation – because this philosophy is still fairly “new” to most people, and the vast majority of those who are implementing its programs in America (primarily corporate & educational) are not convinced “warriors” but rather uninformed pawns who earnestly want to “right the wrongs.” Our political system has historically been particularly resistant to radical ideas taking hold too quickly. Yet because by design this movement has largely bypassed our political system in favor of taking the educational and corporate levers of power, our system of government is vulnerable to being quickly swayed by “public opinion” which translate into votes and dollars.

- Vie for truth
 - a. Inform others (esp. those in positions of political, organizational, educational leadership) of the facts / goals behind Critical Theory, and its departure from the core principles of an honest, liberal, free, open society.
 - b. Assist and encourage those who are appropriately speaking out against this movement i.e., see The Dallas Statement on Social Justice and the Gospel for helpful language in both affirmations and denials.

² Ibram X. Kendi, *Politico*, 2019... As quoted by Voddie Baucham, *Fault Lines*, 88-89.

- Align with the truth - you cannot stop this destructive “theory” from capturing the minds of the unbelieving, but you can refuse to go along with it.
 - a. Do not unwittingly support or “like” organizations or taglines that stem from worldly philosophies
 - b. Do not unwittingly repeat or repost its mantras or “stories” without carefully assessing the worldview being promoted
- Live the truth – seek to live by the principles of biblical justice and offer individual unbelievers the only source of true reconciliation (via the heart transformation in the Gospel). The Church’s primary calling is not to “win the culture” but to win souls and live out holy lives (which includes we living by principles of biblical justice). Thus one by-product of us living out just lives is that we become a “restraining influence” (2 Thess 2:6-7). That is, IF we are willing to firmly take our position on the “wrong side of history” when it comes to godless, anti-biblical philosophies and worldviews (Col 2:8).

2. What does Biblical Justice look like in action?

The same as it has always looked like for individual Christians...

- Believe in the Sufficiency of Scripture... we don’t need CRT to help us understand, resolve, and repent from racism or any other sin.
- Treat individuals equally regardless of ethnicity, class, status
- Proclaim the Gospel of forgiveness through Christ and live in reconciled community with other believers
- Assist and care for those especially disadvantaged around us (esp. orphans, widows, aliens, poor), with first attention to members of the church, Christians in general, and then the world as well.

A few Helpful Resources Critiquing CRT / Social Justice:

1. Voddie T. Baucham, Jr. – *Fault Lines – The Social Justice Movement and Evangelicalism’s Looming Catastrophe*, 2021 – esp. pages xi-xviii, Introduction, and Ch.3-6.
2. Dallas Statement on Social Justice – www.statementonsocialjustice.com
3. Neil Shenvi lectures and podcasts
4. John MacArthur sermon series, Social Justice & the Gospel (4 parts) – 2018
5. *Just Thinking* podcast – EP #108, Feb 23, 2021 [fair warning- 3.5 hrs long!]

Popular Resources Endorsing CRT / Social Justice:

1. Ibram X. Kendi – *How to be an Antiracist*
2. Latasha Morrison – *Be the Bridge: Pursuing God’s Heart for Racial Reconciliation*
3. Jemar Tisby – *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church’s Complicity in Racism*
4. Robin DiAngelo – *White Fragility: Why it is so hard for White People to talk about Racism; Is Everyone Really Equal?*
5. Recent Evangelical voices: David Platt, Jarvis Williams, Shai Linne, J.D. Greear, David Swanson