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What Lives Matter?

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Once again, the issue of racism has moved front and center in American social discourse. In many ways it is a difficult matter to deal with. One reason it is difficult is because there is so much emotion attached to it. But another reason is that it is defined in different ways. This ends up causing a lot of confusion because people think they are talking about the same thing when they are not, and it causes them to talk past one another without even realizing what they are doing.

What is Racism?

So, before we go any further, let's look at the different definitions of racism. We need to first determine exactly what it is we are dealing with.

The first definition of racism is: "A belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities, and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race." This is the definition used by white (or black or any other racial group) supremacists to justify treating people of other races in an inferior way. The percentage of people who actually believe this definition is very small, and is certainly not the belief of the VAST majority of Americans.

The second definition states that racism is: "A doctrine or political program based on the assumption of racism, and is designed to execute its principles." This definition is the one used by apartheid governments that believe the races must be socially segregated. Using this definition, laws and policies are implemented to make

racial segregation a reality in society. This is illegal in America, so is also not the one that is at play in society.

The third definition says that racism is "racial prejudice or discrimination." This definition is one that addresses personal beliefs and attitudes. It refers to individuals who hold the belief that they are better, in various ways, than people of other races. Sadly, this is one of the terrible plagues of the human race (an expression of sin in the hearts of individuals), and is found in people of all races and ethnicities.

The fourth definition is a bit more complex, and seems to be the one that is being put forth by those who want to see change occur in American society. This one defines racism as "a political or social system founded upon racism." People using this definition believe that America was founded on principles that were inherently racist, and that racism is built into the very structure of every institution in modern society. They believe that because of this "systemic racism," racial minorities, particularly black Americans, are disadvantaged as they try to make their way in society.

It is people who hold a belief in this last definition who are the impetus behind the "defund the police" movement, and who want to destroy America as it currently exists in order to remake it based on a different political model.

Who Are the People Who Believe in Systemic Racism?

Determining the identity of those who are asserting "systemic racism" is more difficult to ascertain than should be the case. There are actually a couple of

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identifiable categories of people who fit into this grouping.

One of these categories consist of individuals who are not affiliated with any particular group, but have bought into this kind of thinking. A large percentage of these people have been taught this mindset in school where it is the dominant way of thinking. While most of these people may not be affiliated with any particular group, they do often sympathize with organized groups that operate based on this thinking, and are willing to support them in various ways.

These people generally believe there is discrimination against certain people in society simply because of the color of their skin, and they simply want it to stop. They believe in the ideals of freedom that are enshrined in the U.S. Constitution, and want everyone to be able to pursue life, liberty, and happiness without feeling that they are also having to deal with being suppressed in some way because of their race.

Another category of people who believe in systemic racism have a different mindset. These believe that the remedy to the problem is to radically transform society from a capitalist, free market system to one based either on some form of Marxism or Anarchism. Those in this category tend to affiliate with some specific group to actively advance the belief that society is built on systemic racism. These groups work to promote actions in society to bring about a change in the actual governing structure of the country.

So, in the protests that have been occurring in the wake of the killing of George Floyd, there is a mixture of both of these groups – both passionately wanting the perceived dis-

crimination to stop, but having two entirely different objectives. As a result, there are two different expressions of protest that are also evident. One expression consists of those who are passionately, but peacefully, protesting what they feel to be injustice. The other expression is composed of people who have moved beyond peaceful protest, and have fomented violence in their attempt to force political change in the country. (Note: Among those in the violent category, there are also other groups that have been using the opportunity to loot or to promote other agendas. It is not the purpose of this article to deal with these other groups.)

As we examine the makeup of the protests, it is also evident that there are two main groups that are front and center in the more violent elements of this protest movement. These two groups have completely different ultimate agendas, and, interestingly, one group is primarily white, and the other primarily black.

The primarily white group is called Antifa. This name is actually a contraction of the name Anti Fascist. The name they have chosen is actually rather ironic, as they are, themselves, the very definition of fascistic.

Antifa is an extremely decentralized group that has allegiances in many areas. The common theme uniting those who participate in political activism as Antifa members is that they are extreme left-wing militants, and they believe that using violence to promote their cause is legitimate. Their ultimate goal is to overthrow civil society as it currently exists in order to create a Socialist or Communist government, or some form of anarchist system. They are simply using the opportunity fostered by the racial strife to promote their Marxist agenda.

Black Lives Matter is also a radical leftist organization with a similar agen-

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da, but they have an entirely different focus. Their stated mission is to "eradicate white supremacy and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes." While their goals are purely race based, they also promote many of the same left wing causes as Antifa regarding such issues as sexual identity, gender identity, gender expression, economic status, ability, disability, religious beliefs or disbeliefs, immigration status, and location. They consider the slogan "Black Lives Matter" to be a rallying cry for ALL Black lives striving for liberation (though not necessarily for black lives that do not support their agenda). They also claim to embody and practice justice, liberation, and peace in their engagements with one another. While they don't specifically preach violence in the same way as Antifa, people from within the movement have been known to participate in violent acts – particularly against the police.

Conflicting Views of Racism in American Culture

Obviously, the beliefs about the origin and meaning of racism that are presently being expressed in society are not unified. If they were, we would not see the kind of conflict that is happening. Conflict only occurs when there are competing viewpoints facing off against one another. And it is these competing viewpoints that we must understand.

Even though there are different groups with differing agendas that are acting in ways that is causing the civil strife, the source of the conflict itself does not lie within these groups. The source of the conflict actually lies in conflicting beliefs that are held in society at large – only part of which is associated with these groups.

Generally speaking there are two competing viewpoints that represent

two different worldviews – Naturalism and Biblical Theism. Those on the Naturalism side of the conflict believe that the values America was founded upon are racist, and that society needs to be fundamentally transformed in order to correct the problem. The other philosophy is based on the belief that the philosophy underlying the political and legal system of American society as it was founded is good – and those who believe this, think that any wrongs that exist are not found in the system itself, but in bad actors within the system.

Naturalism

The naturalistic worldview beliefs are notably represented in the conflict by Antifa and Black Lives Matter. Naturalism is the belief that the only thing that exists is the natural universe. That being the case, there is no God, so there is no possible source for objective moral values.

These groups do, of course, hold moral values. In fact, the actions they are taking on the street are an effort to force their moral values on the rest of society. It is just that their moral values have a relative source – they have to make them up for themselves. And even within those movements there is a certain amount of dissension because different people have different ultimate objectives.

Based on their naturalistic beliefs, it is not the individual that has priority, but the collective. That being the case, they consider it good and proper to enforce unity of thought by whatever means necessary. In the activity on the streets, that "whatever means necessary" includes violence.

There is another point that is also important in this discussion – ending racism is not the ultimate goal of people in this category. Ending racism is seen by some as one byproduct of the goal, but the ultimate goal is a society transformed into a social-

ist, communist, or anarchist utopia. As such, the issue of racism, in the current circumstance, is a convenient tool, and will be used as such as long as it is considered useful. But make no mistake about it, if the concept of racism begins to get in the way of the larger goal, it, too, will be swept aside along with all of those who do not agree with the larger goal.

The truth of this assertion is obvious on the Black Lives Matter website. The group does not promote anti-racism. It promotes a view that the black race is superior, and it has very specific criteria for promoting their goal. Those criteria do not include all black people – only those who agree with their leftist political agenda. They do not have any concern about the black population that is not working to promote their political goals. They never have anything to say about the black on black crime that is responsible for 85 - 95% of the murders of black people in America. And they certainly have no compassion for any black police officers that are killed in the line of duty. The agenda is ultimately political, not racial. Ending racism, based on a naturalistic worldview, is not, and never will be, an ultimate goal.

Biblical Theism

Biblical Theism, in this societal conflict, is represented by the traditional American values of true justice and equality. This is not to say that America has always lived up to its ideals, but the ideals are in place to strive toward.

A biblical worldview asserts the beliefs that:

- every life is as valuable as every other life,
- justice is an absolute and not based on social, political, or any other, circumstances,
- equality focuses on equality of opportunity, not equality of outcome.

Biblical values are understood to have come from an objectively true source, and they apply to everyone, regardless of any circumstances. So, when it comes to the topic of race:

- the fact that every life is considered as valuable as every other life means that there should not be any racial distinctions at all when it comes to who matters in society. People are valuable because they are human beings, and it has nothing to do with race.
- the fact that justice is an absolute, and is not based on social, political, or any other, circumstances, means that justice is truly color blind. When justice must be meted out because of some offense, it is done strictly based on the rule of law, and not any other factor. The concept of "social justice," where various "aggrieved" populations are singled out for extra protections, is not a biblical idea – and does not represent actual justice. True justice is based on the rule of law, not on race.
- the fact that equality focuses on equality of opportunity, not equality of outcome, means that every person is able to pursue their dreams based on merit, not on status. People do, of course, come from many different circumstances, and those different circumstances provide unique possibilities. Many of the opportunities, as well as the obstacles, that come up in life are based on these differing life circumstances. It is also true that because of various kinds of biases, unfairness sometimes makes its way into people's circumstances. But the ideal based on biblical Theism is that unfairness, of any kind, is wrong.

Based on biblical Theism, racism is always wrong – no matter what direction it comes from. In God's economy, all people are created in his image and are valuable. Human beings are called on to look at people the way God looks at them.

So, What Lives Matter?

So are there problems within the justice system, and do injustices sometimes occur? Absolutely! But what must be understood is that it is not the system that is bad, but certain people within the system. When there are injustices, the solution is not to destroy the system, but to correct the wrongs.

Another thing that is critical to grasp is that God's ultimate goal regarding mankind is spiritual and eternal, not material and temporal. As we live our lives in the material world, it is certainly fine and good to strive for one's

best, and to seek to correct injustice. But these things are not ends in themselves. The ultimate end is God's purpose.

So when it comes to race, what race does God consider to be of utmost value? It is not any race that is defined by skin color – it is the human race. Mankind was created in his image for the purpose of relationship with himself. As such, ALL LIVES MATTER! The very idea of making distinctions between groups of human beings, based on race for instance, is simply not a biblical concept.

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