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## **The Social Justice Heresy - Part 2** **A Christian Response**

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In part 1 of this article, we looked at a definition of Social Justice and how it exists in modern society. You can read part 1 at: <http://www.marketfaith.org/2021/01/the-social-justice-heresy-part-1-what-is-it/> We pick up here dealing with how Christians need to interact with and refute this heretical belief.

### **Why Social Justice Is Confusing for Christians**

Being concerned with people's temporal needs is something Christians have expressed since the very beginning of the Christian faith. It is a very Christian concept. However, in modern times the nature of this concern has been distorted in many Christian circles by people who have turned it into something that is actually not Christian. To sort this out, it is necessary for us to understand the biblical concept of salvation, then compare it to the understanding of salvation promoted by social justice warriors.

### **Biblical Salvation**

Based on biblical teachings, salvation is a process. It has a beginning point that is referred to as justification, a middle part that is deemed sanctification, and a final part called glorification.

Justification occurs when a person invites Christ into their life based on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. When an individual takes this step, God declares the guilty sinner not guilty of sin because the sacrificial death of Christ pays the penalty for that person's sin. Sanctification is that part of the salvation process that lies between

justification and glorification. It begins at the moment of justification and is the ongoing expression of a Christian's transformed life as they seek to conform their lives daily to the image of Christ. This part ends at physical death. The final part of the salvation process is glorification, and begins at physical death. At that point, believers enter the very presence of God to dwell with Him eternally.

As we consider the notion of Christian social concern, we must understand it as an expression of the sanctification element of our salvation. Christians care about people in need because of the love they have for God and their desire to love what he loves – and he loves his creation. As we notice people in need, what we are witnessing is an expression of the Fall that God is working to rectify. He created the world to be perfect in every way, but that was wrecked by the Fall as sin entered the world. To remedy the sin problem in the life of individuals requires a change of heart. This happens as they invite Christ into their life and the Holy Spirit takes up residence in the Christian's body, thus transforming their life. But as long as individuals live in the material world, the problem of sin remains – both in the individual's spirit and in his body.

As we look at God's revelation, we can see that He wants to redeem the whole person – both the spirit and the body. But that cannot be done without first taking care of the sin problem. So, as we look at taking care of people's material/social needs, it is evident that this is not an end in itself. It is totally incomplete without the spiritual part of man's problem also being addressed.

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### Social Justice Salvation

In its essence, the Social Justice Movement, as it appears within Christian circles, is nothing more than the outward expression of various forms of theological liberalism with its foundation in naturalistic philosophy. There are various forms of this liberal theology such as higher criticism, liberation theology, postmodern theology, existential theology, and others. In the past, the social expressions of these beliefs were primarily referred to as the social gospel, but has evolved over the years to its present state.

These days, there are entire denominations that embrace modern day liberal theology. For them, salvation is not based on Christ's atoning work on the cross, but on political and economic liberation. They believe that the Christian's main work in this world is political and economic, and that the very reason Christ came to earth was to "free the oppressed" from their political and economic oppressors. Based on their beliefs, this "purpose of Christ" has now been passed down to modern day Christians.

In general:

- They don't believe in miracles.
- They believe in moral relativism, where morality is decided by "society."
- They believe Jesus' work on earth was to "help the least of these" (See Matt. 25)
- They generally support abortion and other non and anti-biblical social policies.
- They believe in promoting the "collective" (Socialism), with salvation being a collective process, and with no focus on personal salvation for individuals.

The social justice concept is particularly associated with certain

groups of Christians who see resolving people's social needs as the highest priority of Christianity. For them, individual salvation as taught in the Bible is a wrong way to consider the Christian faith.

While the underlying worldview beliefs associated with the social justice movement actually have their origin in Naturalism, those naturalistic beliefs have seeped into many schools of theology. Certain theologians, over the years, have sought to interpret the Bible using the concepts of naturalistic philosophy, and have developed the various theological approaches mentioned above. Essentially these are all approaches that express naturalistic philosophy using the religious vocabulary found in the Bible. In doing this, they redefine certain key words such as grace, salvation, love, and even God, to mean different things than what the Bible actually expresses.

For instance, in Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus shares the parable of the sheep and the goats. In the parable, Jesus speaks of judgment by contrasting those who will inherit the kingdom with those who will not. The righteous are designated as sheep while the unrighteous are the goats. In explaining why the sheep are righteous, Jesus listed the kind things they did for people on earth and said, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." Then, in explaining why the goats are unrighteous, he said, "Whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me." Those who believe in social justice theology interpret this passage to mean that salvation is based on the good deeds Christians do for those in need on earth. With that, they basically ignore the plain teaching of the text which actually has to do with judgment. They literally redefine what the Bible means regarding sin, heaven, hell, salvation, and, of course, "justice."

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## So Why the Confusion?

As Christians come into contact with this social justice theology, it is easy for them to become confused if they are not aware of how biblical vocabulary has been redefined. When they hear the usual biblical terminology, they associate it with the theology that they are familiar with – which they consider to be true. The only problem is, while the vocabulary may be familiar, the meaning being fostered by the vocabulary is false. This redefining of words, then, confuses those who do not understand what is going on.

### Actual Justice vs. Social Justice

So, as we look at the theology the Social Justice Movement is based upon, we can say that it is a half truth. It takes the idea of justice (which is a biblical concept) and distorts it just enough to turn it into something different (basically redefining the term to mean something non-biblical). You see, social justice is not actual justice. Actual justice means that EVERYONE is judged according to a single criteria based on their own personal actions. Social justice judges people based on their material circumstances.

To promote their beliefs, social justice advocates actually do attempt to use the Bible. We saw one example above (which we will also look at more deeply), but there are others.

For instance, beginning with the Lord's prayer, in Matthew 6:10, Jesus admonished His followers to pray, "your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Christians, both as people of faith and as American citizens, have pondered how to accomplish that in our current social environment. Many have called for Christians to join or start movements for change as an explicit expression of following this guidance. For the social justice warrior, that means attempting to create utopia on

earth – generally advocating the use of government power to do it.

Another prominent passage they try to use to promote their social justice beliefs is Matthew 25:31-46 – the passage we mentioned above. But rather than using the entire passage in context, they select one phrase from the passage and interpret it based on their non-biblical theology. They interpret the phrase "doing it unto the least of these" to mean that doing social service is the very purpose of God's work in the world – which it is not.

One other passage that is often cited, again out of context, is found in Luke 4:18-19. In this one, Jesus is quoting Isaiah 58:6 and applying it to Himself. It reads:

*"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

Once again, the social justice crowd interprets this incorrectly. For one, they apply to the church a prophesy that was intended to be applied to the coming Messiah. Additionally, they interpret it in a way that has a purely temporal meaning. The true meaning, however, goes well beyond the temporal and is focused on proclaiming the message of eternal life to humanity.

### Justice vs. Righteousness

Justice is a *legal* concept and is ultimately settled by God. However, it also has implications in this world as human beings create and manage societies. Legal efforts in the world always go by some moral code, but do not, themselves, define morality. The morality of a legal code is defined by what society considers right, or righteous.

The way justice is thought of in a society will be based on the moral beliefs used to interpret it. "Justice" that based on a non-biblical approach can mean almost anything. Social justice, for instance, is based upon naturalistic moral beliefs, and is relativistic. Justice founded upon biblical beliefs will end up promoting equal justice under the law.

Righteousness, on the other hand, is a *moral* concept. That which is objectively right is modeled (and revealed) by God. It is up to man, then, to understand and imitate it. This is done by discerning from the Bible what God has revealed to be right, then imitating that by doing right in the world on an individual basis.

So in the social justice movement, what we have is a situation where people confuse justice and righteousness. They assume a particular moral point of view is right (righteousness), and assert that those in society who do not receive their proper portion of the societal pie have been dealt with unjustly by society. The problem is, their standard of righteousness is not based on the teachings of the Bible, but on naturalistic philosophy. Thus, rather than having a definition of justice that is based on biblical beliefs, they see justice through a naturalistic lens. So even though they use the imagery of the Bible to describe their moral approach to justice, their actual practice of justice is skewed in a way that makes it non-biblical. Without the ability to make this distinction, Christians will engage a non-Christian practice thinking, all the while, that it is Christian.

### **How You must Interact with These People**

When you begin to interact with people who self-identify as social justice warriors, you must keep in mind that their social justice concepts are an actual expression of their religious faith – whether they are self-identified Christians or not. Remember, not all religious faith is based on belief in God. There are secular religions. Thus, if you want to be able to effectively communicate with people who hold these beliefs, you must begin your interaction by knowing the underlying tenets of their faith.

One of the first things you must realize is that, to them, everything is political. Even their concept of salvation is material, not spiritual. They see salvation as "freeing the oppressed in society from their oppressors," and it is done using political and economic actions. So, to begin sharing a Christian witness in a way that they will understand, you must also be able, and willing, to "argue" about politics, economics, and religion. You will have to do this, though, in the context of explaining biblically "why" their point of view is wrong.

Beyond that, in order to have personal credibility in their eyes, you must also be ready to walk the Christian walk. This means a willingness to stand up against injustice as an expression of your Christian faith, no matter where it is found.

But also remember that standing up to injustice cannot be defined the way they do it. They define injustice based on naturalistic (usually Marxist) beliefs, not biblical ones. They define it based on a legalistic approach that is informed by Cultural Socialism, not by biblical morality. Never allow yourself to get sucked into their definition of justice.

You probably know some of these people. And while many of them claim to be Christians, they don't know Christ. When they promote their political and economic beliefs, they are witnessing to you. Thus, if you want to be able to communicate effectively to them, you must know their beliefs and how their beliefs diverge from the truth.

Let me give you an example. *Vai tu vari runat Latviesu valodu?* Unless you speak Latvian, you probably didn't understand this question. It is not that you can't understand its meaning, it is just that I would need to say it in English for you to understand. I asked, "Do you understand the Latvian language?"

The point here is, non-believers speak a different conceptual language. When you share the gospel with someone who is a social justice warrior, even if they understand your spoken words, they likely don't understand the conceptual meaning of your message. When you speak of salvation in Christ, they interpret your meaning in material terms to mean "liberation of the oppressed from their economic and political oppression." Thus, there is a great need for Christians to understand worldview concepts.

There is a massive lost world out there that needs Christ. To be a missionary to them, you will have to learn their conceptual language. It is time for Christians to reimagine Christian discipleship. Learning worldview concepts is the best place to start.

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