



Stefan Lochner - Last Judgement

Rediscovering Christian Justice and Mercy

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Preface

This collection of meditations is intended to challenge the Mainline denominations in general, and the Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA) in particular, on the issue of political action within context of the Christian faith. For the past 60 years (at least) that political action has been tied with ever increasing fealty to secular Progressive ideology¹.

This merging of religious and secular ideology is so complete that it has become virtually impossible to find separation between them. If secular Progressivism embraces abortion on demand (even up to the moment of birth), the Mainline denominations fall into line. If secular Progressivism decides on a policy of open borders and nullification of immigration laws, the Mainline follows suit. And, if secular Progressivism decides to embrace Identity Politics, Critical Race Theory and Wokeness; resulting in rioting, murder, mayhem, arson and looting, the Mainline enthusiastically agrees. The same statements can be made about policies on “climate change,” criminal justice, marriage, foreign policy and other major issue areas.²

But the domain with the longest and deepest collaboration has been in policy towards the poor and oppressed. The Mainline has completely absorbed the socialistic, paternalistic policies of Progressivism. In effect, the Mainline has taught, for generations, that Progressive policies are indistinguishable from Christian teaching in this space.

This situation has led the Mainline leadership into a devastating dead end, where they feel compelled to maintain support for utterly, catastrophically failed policies out of political fealty to a secular group. And this support trickles down into the local churches, leading to an oppressive pall over discussion and debate on these issues.

My personal experience is that Progressives feel completely comfortable about making partisan political statements, including in worship and from the pulpit, under the assumption that they are indisputable Christian doctrine. Parishioners and pastors who don't agree feel powerful pressure to keep their views to themselves since they have been deemed to be non-Christian or even anti-Christian by the powers that be. To speak up in opposition thus places them outside the circle of Christian compassion, leaving them open to sometimes vicious personal attack (which I have personally experienced on numerous occasions)³.

But the situation has become so dire for the actual poor and oppressed that to remain silent smacks of cowardice. Perhaps forty or fifty years ago we could have given our Progressive leaders the benefit of the doubt about the wisdom of these policies. But after sixty years of

¹ See *The Progressive Riot*.

² See *A Denomination's Debacle*, “A Debacle's Ingredients: Radical Progressive Politics” for a more complete discussion.

³ *ibid.* “A Debacle's Ingredients: Abusive Behavior” for a more complete discussion.

increasingly horrific failure, leading our poor and oppressed to lives of chaos, crime, addiction and, yes, poverty, there is no moral or spiritual ground left upon which to stand.

In fact, it's far worse than that. The Mainline church has unmistakably thrown its support to the cruel and powerful in our society, thus helping the powerful to maintain their iron-clad lock on the poor and oppressed. The Mainline marches in lock-step with the Teachers Unions who work tirelessly to ensure there are no options to our failed public education system for the poor. They march in lock-step with the Mainstream Media and Social Media as they ignore devastating policy failure and cancel anyone who dares to criticize. They march in lock-step with the government institutions whose power rests on continuation of the Welfare State and the Security State.

By so doing any semblance of distinctive Christian thought has been erased. Mainline Christianity doesn't exist above the trenches of partisan political struggle. It provides no guidance or guardrails to political debate. It delivers no insights that might humble the powerful or cause fear in those determined to impose their will. No, it has become just a small cog in the powerful secular Progressive machine.

It's long past time that this Progressive hegemony in the Mainline is openly challenged. It is fundamentally unChristian for a church to be influenced, or even dominated, by a secular ideology regardless of its source and content. Christianity is not politically "Conservative" or "Progressive" or "Libertarian" or any other. It stands above and apart from all human ideology, judging us, not serving our ideological desires. If ever there is to be found a way back from this precipice of destruction it will be by reclaiming the understanding of our common, sinful frailty and our common need for open, diverse, honest discussion that hopes for the best in ourselves and others.⁴

So this short set of meditations seeks to restart that debate. Along with debate comes criticism, proposals, new information and sometimes hurt feelings. We can either cling to our infantile demands for psychological, spiritual and ideological conformity or grow up and engage in the rough and tumble of open discourse. Perhaps then, as we together develop a distinctively Christian understanding of human community, people might begin again to take Christianity seriously.

⁴ See Appendix A: The Suppression of Debate in Churches for a detailed discussion.

Introduction

If I had to pick one Bible verse that serves as the mantra for Mainline Christianity it would be Micah 6:8.

**He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.
And what does the Lord require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God.**

Micah 6:8

While my preference would be a verse uttered by my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, this verse from the Prophet Micah is a worthy touch-stone for the practical living out of our faith. However, what is unworthy is Mainline Christianity's embrace of secular Progressive political ideology as the definitional source for "justice" and "mercy," and its utter lack of humility in application of these definitions.

What has occurred over the past sixty years is the merger of secular Progressive politics and Mainline Christianity to create a new religious/political ideology, with secular Progressivism (as embodied by the Democrat Party) the dominant partner. This excerpt from *An Anxious Age: The Post-Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of America* by Joseph Bottum provides a concise summary of the beginning of this religious/political ideology.

Formed in the victory of civil rights activism, a new version of the social gospel movement became the default theology of church bureaucrats in the Mainline. The churches "increasingly turned their attention to the drafting of social statements on a variety of contemporary problems," as the religious historian Peter J. Thuesen has noted, and their statements "revealed a shared opinion among Mainline executives that the churches' primary public role was social advocacy."

As the years have passed the position of anyone to the Right (or otherwise deviating) of the Democrat Party has become untenable. This situation was well described in the 2017 Wall Street Journal article by Libby Sternberg titled "Why Not a Day of Rest From Politics?"

Yet I do all this knowing that my church is effectively a political adversary. I am a Republican. The Episcopal Church, like many mainline Protestant denominations, supports a "social justice" agenda that reads as if it were pulled straight from the Democratic National Committee Platform.

Consequently, whereas Christianity had in the past been the wellspring of Western political thought it now operates as a mere receptacle. And so any hope for a distinctly Christian understanding of justice and mercy has been lost for the foreseeable future.

But Christianity is a faith built on hope and rebirth. So no defeat can be viewed as final and no situation can be viewed as hopeless. I will therefore seek to meditate on the Christian virtues of justice and mercy with the goal of rediscovering their Christian meaning and purpose.

What follows is not comprehensive nor is it a fully organized argument. Rather, it is a series of meditations on key topics relating to the theological understanding and practical application of Christianity as it relates to political thought. While I trust that useful concepts will emerge, I also understand that Christianity's vast (actually infinite) scope prevents any one person or group from presuming final authority.

That final authority will ultimately be made apparent by Christ's return. In that glorious and terrible moment we will finally see how justice and mercy is meted out by the infinite mind of God. At that moment we will also, all of us, finally learn to be humble before God, as no worldly power or idea will provide protection from God's final judgement.

Mainline Christianity and Progressive Politics

Before diving into the details some foundational thoughts on the relationship between Mainline Christianity and Progressive Politics are in order.

Opening Thoughts

Religion and politics can't help but mix. In fact, it is inconceivable that the committed follower of a bona fide religion would be able to completely isolate their faith beliefs from their political beliefs. So, I will not be arguing for a separation of religion and politics. However, this doesn't mean that the mixing of these domains is without challenge and outright danger.

In what follows I will focus on this issue at the scope of my actual experience, that being a Mainline Protestant Christian. Even here the scope will often narrow to my specific denominational experience, that being a member of the Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA, 1983 to present) and one of its predecessors, the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (UPCUSA, 1958 to 1983).

My experience of Christianity and politics has led me to an uncomfortable place. For, although I fully support our Christian faith as the authoritative wellspring of political thought, I also find that this relationship has been undermined and, more recently, utterly reversed.

I served as a Commissioner⁵ from my local church to the Presbytery of Chicago in the 2010s. In that role I witnessed General Assembly Moderator, Heath Rada's comments to the April 18, 2015, Presbytery of Chicago Assembly meeting. He had precious little to say about the Gospel of Jesus Christ. However, he had a lot to say about the effectiveness of the PCUSA's social advocacy. In fact, the central theme of his "pep talk" was something to the effect of 'Rejoice sisters and brothers! The PCUSA is a highly regarded little cog in the Progressive political machine!'

These comments, originating from the denomination's highest office holder confirmed my worst fears. Little in the way of confirmation was needed, as I had been shocked and disturbed by the highly politicized nature of deliberations in the Presbytery up to that point.

Previous to Moderator Rada's comments I had an encounter with the Presbytery's highest executive at a luncheon. I don't recall most of the conversation, but near the end he paused and said something to the effect of "You realize that this is a Progressive Presbytery." The entire conversation was pleasant and friendly. I think he was trying to point out that I was kidding myself if I thought that my views were going to make a difference in the Presbytery's direction. And, he was certainly right about that.

⁵ A Commissioner is elected by a local church in a Presbytery to represent that church at Presbytery meetings.

But the real impact of this comment was to correct a misconception on my part. Up to that point I had been thinking about the Presbytery's behavior in strictly theological terms. His comment made me realize that the true center of the Presbytery's identity is political Progressivism. Of course, the realization that the Presbytery was driven by a secular and often godless human ideology increased my sense of alienation.

Confronting the Absurdity

I'd like to focus on the following question:

What is the likelihood that two organizations, the first driven by the passions and practicalities of contemporary human ideology / politics, and, the second built on Scriptures written by dozens of authors from approximately 1500 BC to 100 AD concerning the eternal, loving and just God — Father, Son and Holy Spirit — would uniformly arrive at virtually identical moral conclusions and policy prescriptions?

The natural answer for most people would likely be “pretty much zero.” That is, the differences in both the sources and deliberative processes are so vast that it would be absurdly unlikely. And yet, this is the very absurdity upon which most Mainline Protestant denominations are built.

That is, we are supposed to accept that the uniform agreement between a human political movement (i.e., Progressive Leftism) and Mainline Christian denominations is a natural and credible outcome. But, it is actually an incredible outcome, and one that any committed Christian, regardless of their personal political beliefs should find troubling. Note well that it would be equally incredible and troubling if a Christian denomination uniformly agreed with Conservatism, Libertarianism, or any other secular human movement.

So, if this result didn't happen by chance, then why did it? Could it be because the Democrat Party, the practical vehicle of Progressive Leftist politics, is under control of the Mainline Protestant denominations? Given the consistently shrinking membership of Mainline denominations and clearly increasing secularism in the Democratic Party, this idea is exceedingly unlikely.

The most likely answer is that, having lost faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and rejected Biblical authority, the mainline leadership grasped the straws of “social justice” and secular political activism as the only means of maintaining any plausible reason for existing as an organization. That is, having rejected God's power and purposes they had no choice but to replace these with secular political power and purposes.

I'm certainly not alone in this position. For example, this excerpt from Edward R. Norman's *Christianity and the World Order* makes the same point.

Christianity today is, in this sense, being reinterpreted as a scheme of social and political action, dependent, it is true, upon supernatural authority for its ultimate claims to attention, but rendered in categories that are derived from the political theories and practices of contemporary society.

I suppose that a committed Christian who is also a committed Progressive Leftist might be able to square this circle. However, even for them, doesn't the subjugation of Jesus Christ and His Gospel under the authority of a secular, partisan political movement seem theologically and morally untenable? For the rest of us, are we willing to cede our faith in Jesus Christ and the interpretation of His purposes in the world to the Democrat Party?

I certainly do not cede these things to the Republican Party. Yes, I am a registered Republican and usually (but not always) vote Republican. But this isn't because I believe that this party has a monopoly on morality, let alone Christian truth. Nor do I find anything close to uniform alignment between the Republican Party Platform and my Christian beliefs. No, in a two-party Republic I usually vote (often holding my nose) for the candidate that I believe will do the least damage.

Every citizen is entitled to their own political beliefs. However, no-one is entitled to avoid criticism if they are so absurd so as to claim that their secular political party and Christian derived policy prescriptions are always and forever in near perfect alignment. That is precisely the implicit claim of our Mainline denominational leadership. And, it is long past time that we confronted the absurdity of this situation.

The Mainline Progressive Bubble

A Revealing Incident

Let me share an experience from the floor of the Presbytery of Chicago. A large committee had created a draft statement on evangelism that was under review. We were asked to split into small groups to discuss the draft. A colleague from my local church and I asked two Commissioners, one younger and the other older, to join us. They were more than happy to do so, and we started the discussion.

We pointed out that the draft as written seemed to be less about Christian evangelism than it was about multiculturalism. For, as far as we could tell there were minimal claims to any truth or value for Christianity. Rather, it appeared to be just about getting along with all other religions and cultures.

This observation elicited an immediate angry reaction from the older Commissioner. Rather than engaging in debate on this point they walked away while audibly speaking into the air about "haters" and "racists."

The younger Commissioner remained engaged. However, their response was that dozens of PCUSA elders and clergy of all races, sexual orientations, genders and cultures had come together to generate this text, so, it had to be correct because the creating group was so diverse. We pointed out that there was also the dimension of philosophical / theological diversity, which we didn't see represented in the document. They responded with the blank stare of one who is hearing something incomprehensible.

Thinking back on this incident years later I realize that the responses of these two Commissioners are representative of the two types of bubbles within which our leadership live. These bubbles need not be separate, but can be, in effect, two layers that create hermetic isolation.

The Social Bubble

The younger Commissioner was more than happy to continue our discussion to the end of the allowed time. They showed not the slightest anger about or disapproval of our position. Rather, they seemed amazed to be speaking with two such strange humans. We elicited not anger, but rather curiosity.

Surely, even living in Progressive Chicago they must have been aware of people who hold strange, inexplicable beliefs. However, here were two actual people, on the floor of the Presbytery of Chicago who were stating these beliefs. What an unexpected and unique cultural experience!

Thus, we find here the bubble of social isolation, in which a person simply doesn't personally interact with anyone who challenges their beliefs. Everyone, of all races, cultures, sexual orientations and genders, in their wondrous diversity, agrees on the same thing! It's not that they aren't aware that there are strange people who somehow have tragically not been brought into the Progressive fold, it's that they simply don't engage with any actual people like that.

The Ideological Bubble

The older Commissioner knew full well that people like us exist. And, within the hearing of only a few of our words they walked away in utter disgust. For, in their world, people who were stupid enough to say such things out loud could only be motivated by vile evil. She had zero intention to engage with such moral and ideological deviants. So, away she walked, speaking our condemnation into the air as the haters and racists that we surely had to be.

Our Current Sorry State

The social Progressive bubble has predominated among the social elite for a long time. For example, consider the, by current standards, innocent statement by Pauline Kael after the 1972 Presidential election.

I live in a rather special world. I only know one person who voted for Nixon. Where they are I don't know. They're outside my ken. But sometimes when I'm in a theater I can feel them.

But in our contemporary experience the ideological bubble clearly now dominates most of our institutions, be they secular or religious. Even worse, the line between Progressive politics and religious belief has been utterly erased. There are so many examples from which to choose, but one that I consider telling fell from the lips of no other than Nancy Pelosi, Democratic leader of the House of Representatives (emphasis added).

And I say, this will be a little not in keeping with the spirit of the day of unity, but I say they *pray* in church on Sunday and *prey* on people the rest of the week, and while we're doing the Lord's work by ministering to the needs of God's creation they are ignoring those needs which is to dishonor the God who made them.

You see, it takes the rhetorical skills of the highest ranking elected Democratic politician to so seamlessly combine their political and religious bigotry into a single steaming statement of contemptuous hatred.

Of course, former Democratic senator from Wisconsin Russ Feingold (a Progressive favorite) has made perhaps the most disgusting and definitive statement in this regard (emphasis added).

The lesson from Charlottesville is not how dangerous the neo-Nazis are, ... It is *the unmasking of the Republican party leadership*. In the wake of last weekend's horror and tragedy, let us finally, finally rip off the veneer that *Trump's affinity for white supremacy is distinct from the Republican agenda* of voter suppression, renewed mass incarceration and the expulsion of immigrants.

Yes, indeed, "finally, finally," the vile evil motives of all Republicans, hidden for generations, have been revealed for all to see!

Finally, lest you imagine that our PCUSA leadership is not within this same ideological bubble, consider the actions and statements of our past Co-moderator. The General Assembly elected the Rev. Denise Anderson as a co-moderator at its 222nd meeting. She wrote this in her blog on June 12, 2016, concerning the Orlando massacre by an Islamic terrorist (emphasis added):

This particular gunman took out fifty people in one night. How many LGBT sisters and brothers have we — the Church — gradually and systemically killed over a longer period of time? *He and we have been in the same business. We're simply not as efficient as he was.*

...
Sadly, *many in our own ranks aren't too idealistically different from this gunman.* And, though he may have been a “lone wolf,” this kind of hate does not develop in a vacuum. It is nurtured. It is facilitated. It is given permission to thrive and grow. It is provided with a safe space. Church, for whom/what will we provide sanctuary? I believe God is calling us to make that decision today.

The Senior Pastor from one of our largest churches (Fourth Presbyterian in Chicago) has similarly vented her spleen after the 2016 Presidential Election. Fourth's Shannon J. Kershner, said this in a sermon.

It is about the impact, the impact that very loud hate is being expressed in some extremely vivid ways since Tuesday night.

In particular, that hate is being expressed primarily by people who look like me or who love like me or who believe like me, expressed against those who do not fit those categories. Allow me to tell you a few stories of which I have firsthand knowledge.

She goes on to list (unverified) cruel statements and actions all by (unverified) people who supposedly supported Mr. Trump for President. Only in passing did she mention the violence, hate and viciousness that regularly occurs on the Progressive Left. This is the kind of intellectual fraud that is rampant in her circles. The Rev. Kirshner went on to say this in her sermon.

If we, people who follow Jesus Christ regardless of our race or class or any of those demographic markers, if we choose to remain silent in the face of such racism, heterosexism, and xenophobia because it is easier that way or because we don't want to hurt each other's feelings or because these stories aren't our stories or because it feels safer to keep each other at arm's length or because we don't like conflict or because we are afraid of being seen as partisan—if we, as a congregation and as disciples, do not speak out against the powers and principalities of hatred that have been given permission to be expressed and to flourish, then we are in danger of losing our witness to the crucified and risen Christ.

Yes, all of us irredeemable deplorables who don't love the Progressive god are haters and worse. You heard it from the Senior Pastor of the most rich and powerful church in the Presbytery of Chicago. Now go out there and get in the faces of these sub-human irredeemable deplorables!

Were I a member of Fourth Presbyterian who has sympathy for why someone might not vote for four more years of Progressive governance, or worse, actually voted for Donald Trump, I would burrow deep underground and play dead. And really, aren't they, with regard to their moral standing, already dead to the likes of the Rev. Shannon J. Kirshner?

Finally, am I the only one who finds it deeply ironic that Rev. Kirshner says people who "believe like me" are on a hate-filled rampage? Mirror, meet pastor.

Comment

What can possibly be said about the state of religious belief and practice in the Progressive ranks? We are told (by our Progressive "betters") that the Christian thing to do is to look away and pretend that all is well. And yet, I can't help but recall what the Westminster Confession says about the Ninth Commandment. It says that we are bound to avoid [7.255]

... concealing the truth, undue silence in a just cause, and holding our peace when iniquity calleth for either a reproof from ourselves, or complaint to others ...

It's long past time that we non-Progressives stopped silently allowing the Progressive Left to assault our persons and positions. No, I don't mean to respond in kind (i.e., dishonest cruelty). But rather to defend our theology, ideas and positions with solid information, firmness of purpose and respect for others.

The Consequences of Progressive Bubble-dom

Some may be wondering why I'm not being even-handed about the issue of bubble-dom. In particular, why focus only on "progressive bubble-dom?" The answer is that, although it is theoretically possible for a conservative, libertarian or other politically positioned person to live in a bubble, the fact that Progressives dominate our culture (mainstream media, Hollywood, etc.) and institutions (education, unions, high tech industry, professional organizations, etc.) means that non-Progressives have a much more difficult job of maintaining a bubble's boundary. Certainly many non-Progressives withdraw into groups that share their beliefs. However, even within that group it is nigh impossible to avoid the onslaught of Progressive ideas and policies as they move through everyday life.

Some of the consequences were introduced in the previous section. But another major consequence is refusal to engage in respectful, productive discussion with non-Progressives.

Progressive's all too common presumption of a moral, intellectual and theological superiority prevents them from engaging as peers with those holding opposing perspectives. I certainly am not claiming that this problem is uniformly the case as I personally know numerous members of this group who engage on the merits. However, I believe the argument can be credibly made that,

due to their undeniable success in occupying most key positions of social and organizational power, the Progressive movement has become far too dependent on intimidation at the expense of persuasion.

This strategy is pursued by never acknowledging opposition as being legitimate and by insisting that opposing points of view are motivated by moral defects. Thus they are not seeking to persuade peers to see their point of view, but rather using social and/or organizational force to obtain submission. Those who have read the previous section will have no trouble recalling cases where senior leaders in the PCUSA have aggressively utilized these tactics. It is the accumulation of these defects that has led to our current sorry state, in which any disagreement on policy degenerates into cruel name-calling.

The racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, Islamophobic — you name it.

This irresponsible descent into character assassination over the slightest deviation from Progressive group-think has seriously torn our nation's social fabric.

There was a time in my (more distant) memory when the epithet “racist” was reserved for application to only those who identified themselves with or vocally aligned their opinions with groups that were openly racist in their ideology. Yes, it was understood that all people develop stereotypes and preferences that are unfair or stigmatize others, with the victims most often being black. However, these moral failures didn't rise to the level of “racist.” That is, the assumption was that a person existed within acceptable moral bounds unless something that they said or did clearly proved the opposite.

Although there were steps along the way, the major break in this social assumption occurred with the election of Barack Obama to the Presidency. For, to our shock and dismay, those of us who opposed his administration's *policies* found ourselves regularly accused of racism because the head of that administration happened to be black.

In fact, so out of control did this situation become that the accusation of racism didn't even have to be connected to a racial issue. For example, I was personally accused of being a racist (by an Elder in the PCUSA no less) while arguing for the position that Christian marriage is defined by Christ Himself to be the union of one man and one woman.

So, when a few hundred KKK and other white-supremacists gathered in Charlottesville to publicly demonstrate for their evil, hateful beliefs, and, one of these people committed murder, there was great need to discuss the issue of racist ideology in numerous public settings. Many honorable, well meaning leaders and people did just that.

However, the problem is that, with the epithet of “racist” having been applied so indiscriminately and carelessly to literally millions of people, and, current Progressive leaders explicitly using the tragedy in Charlottesville to do this very thing, when many people heard the

word “racist” they reasonably wondered if it was being directed at them. So, when this topic was discussed, it was done within context of a “poisoned well” situation.

Thus, our nation’s ability to reasonably discuss what is surely an important issue has been undermined by irresponsible use of the very term required to hold that discussion. This is one tragedy among many that have rendered our Republic incapable of making progress in so many areas.

Yes, there is plenty of blame to go around for this current political and cultural collapse. Many others have made excellent critiques of conservative and other group’s failings. They should be listened to and their points carefully considered. However, until the Progressive Left, including the PCUSA’s leadership, exits its bubble and rejoins the rest of humanity on terms of mutual respect the healing process cannot begin.

The Question of Good Intentions vs. Good Results

Mainline Christian leaders primarily justify their aggressive leftist political activity by claiming it is simply following the Bible's teaching to care for the poor and oppressed. In so doing they make the unstated assumption that it is only leftist political policies that can accomplish this care. But over the past 60 years as the utter failure of Progressive solutions to improve the lot of our poor and oppressed have become unavoidably manifest, our Mainline leadership has doubled, tripled and quadrupled down in support. In this section I will discuss the substitution of intentions for results that enables our Progressive leadership and laity to continue the charade that their leftist solutions are the only true path for delivery of Christian compassion.

Opening Thoughts

What is the proper relationship between intentions and results from the perspective of political policy choices? Particularly when those choices cause the human and social wreckage wrought by the Welfare State, where entire communities descended into generations of broken families, hopelessness, violence, addiction, and yes, poverty. One would have thought that our moral betters would have been so appalled by this situation that a massive effort at reformation and renewal would have been long ago pursued.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Rather, the poverty industrial complex has been on an unending campaign to prevent any reform and to expand failed policies to new areas of our society.

If there is doubt about this conclusion, I simply ask when was the last time that Progressives, Christians or otherwise, admitted failure for the current welfare policies and then proposed fundamental reforms? Yes, they have proposed doubling and tripling down on those same failed policies, but doing more of the same certainly is not fundamental reform. Moreover, when anyone dares to question the effectiveness of current welfare policies, let alone propose actual reform, they are shouted down as racist, selfish, uncaring and unChristian.

The Chicago Experience

I have lived for the past 39 years in the Chicago suburbs. Over that time the City of Chicago has been governed exclusively by the Democrat Party, which is home for the Progressive political movement. As a member of the PCUSA I have seen how Progressive politics dominates the Presbytery of Chicago and a significant part of the local churches. And, over that significant time period, I have consistently witnessed the obstructionist Progressive party-line that demands continuance of failed policies. The results have been catastrophic for the city's poor.

Murder

Here's how John Kass has described the city's murder situation [in the Chicago Tribune](#).

How bad is the bloody violence in Chicago, where more than 700 people have been murdered so far this year and thousands have been shot in the street gang wars?

The gangs keep shooting, the survivors mourn, police morale is down, anti-police sentiment is up and the mayor says some cops have gone fetal.

And the politicians do nothing in the bloody city. Street gang violence in Chicago is as bad, if not worse, than the record-setting death years of the 1990s.

But there is no penalty for Democratic politicians who sit back in the Democratic city and do nothing to compel tougher sentences for gun crimes to keep the most aggressive shooters off the streets.

Some say this a gun issue. But that's a con job. There are many guns in the suburbs, yet suburbanites aren't slaughtering each other.

This is a street-gangs-with-guns problem, on the South and West sides of Chicago.

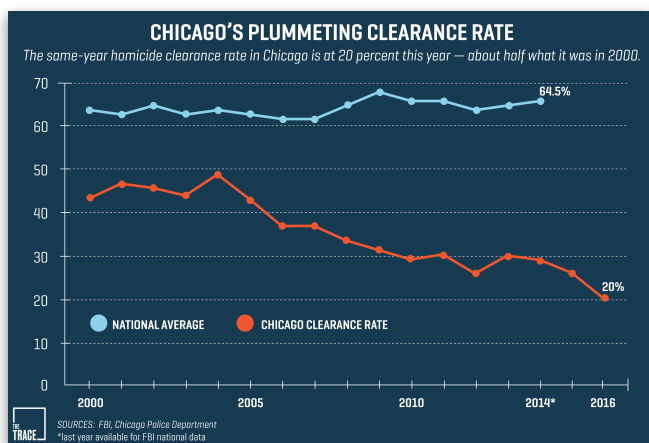
And calling it anything else is a distraction to give cover to the politicians.

If there is a downside, it is only for the dead and the maimed and their families.

And there is a downside for police, too. Because if something goes wrong, the cop is the headline.

Yet what of the politicians who do nothing? They really have nothing to lose. And they're doing just fine.

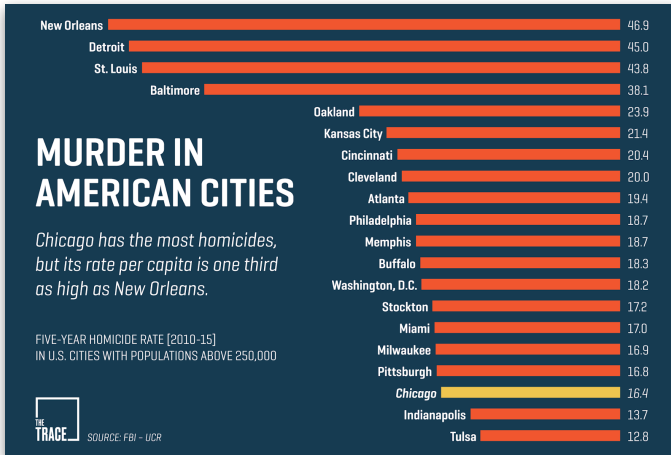
Another reason for Chicago's tragic murder situation is utter failure by the authorities to solve these crimes in the first place. Don't look away, Chicago Progressive do-gooders, the city



that has been under your control for generations has a murder case clearance rate of less than one-third the national average. Yet, I hear virtually nothing from our Progressive betters about this appalling failure of Chicago's governing authorities.

But, as terrible as Chicago is from a total number of murders perspective, it is far from the worst in terms of murder rate.

The following figure shows the worst 2010-2015 murder rate (i.e., murders per capita) numbers for cities with populations greater than 250,000.



And, who has been governing these cities for generations, well, Progressive Democrats! To begin, note that the City of New Orleans has been governed by Democrats since 1872. The following image from National Review allows us to see that the other four of the top five murder rate cities have also been continuously run by Progressive Democrats for generations.

When I hear Progressives address this

issue at all, it's at least 90% about gun control. Apparently they believe that in minority communities inanimate objects called guns hold a magical power over the inhabitants, causing them to commit murder. The fact (as explained by John Kass above) that guns lack this magical power in suburban and rural communities gives them not the slightest pause. For people who tend to shout "racist!" at the slightest deviation from their party line, this looks like a pretty shaky glass house.



Education

Over this same time period Chicago's public school system has performed disgracefully. With regard to educational performance, the Illinois Opportunity Project states that:

... of CPS high school students who graduate in four years, less than 20 percent of them will be considered "college ready."

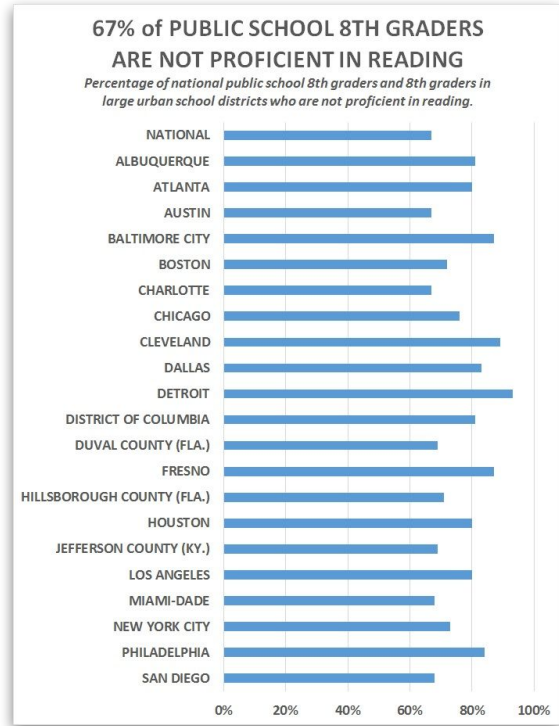
With regard to financial responsibility the story is just as horrible, as documented by The American Interest.

Chicago's public school system is on the verge of facing financial insolvency, and it's not because selfish taxpayers have been starving it of revenue—both the Windy City and the state of Illinois have significantly higher than average tax rates. Much of the school district's acute fiscal distress can be chalked up to mismanagement, plain and simple—short-sighted decisions by blinkered public

officials who chose to mortgage the school system’s future against pension benefits for current retirees. Crain’s Chicago Business reports that CPS is finally drowning under the weight of interest on debt it has accumulated over the last decade ...

Once again, Chicago’s utter failure to educate its children is only one specific case of a general situation, as is shown by the figure to the right. As reported by the federal government, only 33 percent of public-school eighth graders scored proficient or better in reading in 2015 and only 32 percent scored proficient or better in mathematics.

Does this abject failure of public education in our cities, which primarily affects the poor, bother our Progressive betters? It’s hard to conclude yes after decades of watching them support the status quo with a ferocity that leaves no doubt as to their purpose.



What Really Matters?

These catastrophic failures, despite the incessant insistence on their benevolence by Progressives, Christian or otherwise, forces us to wonder about the relationship between intentions and results. That is, if someone does things or supports policies because of “good intentions,” is that sufficient in and of itself as an act of Christian charity? Or, does their moral responsibility extend to the realm of demonstrable results? These two philosophies lead to very different attitudes towards how best to help the poor, with corresponding differences in practical policies.

Defining the Contending Philosophies

In the previous section I introduced the idea of intentions vs. results based philosophies with regard to public policy. However, in order to make real progress, a far more detailed description of each is required. The following sections are intended to meet this requirement.

Intentions-Based Philosophy

Given that I’m obviously not a member of this group (i.e., Progressives) , the challenge is to identify a model that adequately covers the known facts. I do have the advantage of significant

Progressive engagement due to my life experiences. Following is my enumeration of these known facts (priority order is not indicated by the numbering).

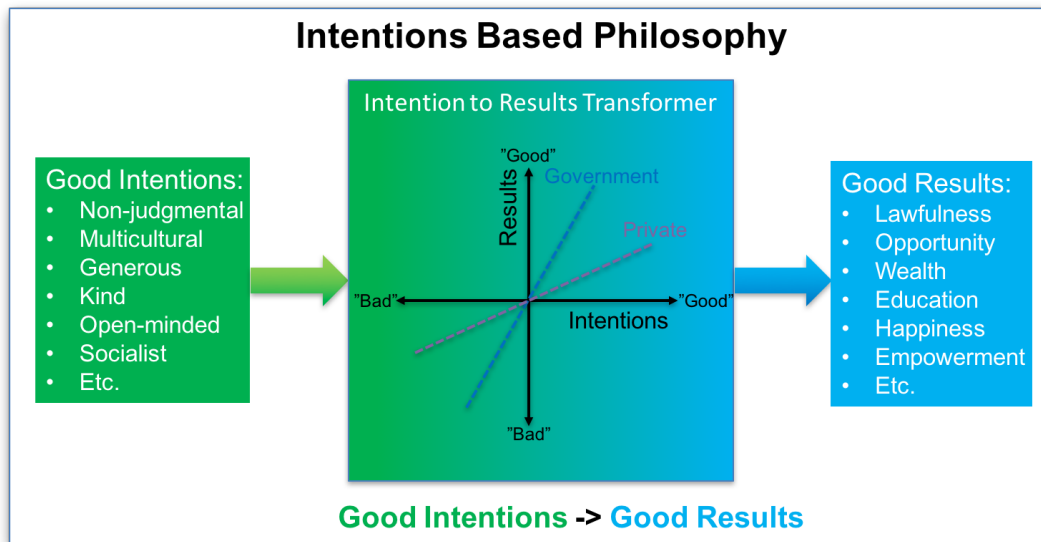
1. The having of “good intentions” is absolutely determinative to the obtaining of “good results.”
2. An increase in the application of “good intentions” will create a corresponding increase in “good results.”
3. “Good intentions” always translate into “good actions,” for example:
 - 3.1. Non-judgment means that there will be no criticism of behavior or attitudes by the intended recipients of public policy
 - 3.2. Generosity means that there is no limit to the amount of money that will be poured into given social programs, regardless of their results
 - 3.3. Open-mindedness means that all ideas that are supportive of a leftward policy trajectory are valid, while any idea that questions a leftward policy trajectory can only be motivated by “bad intentions.”
4. There are no “good intentions” other than those defined and approved by the Progressive political movement, and, they can be changed at any time, for any reason.
5. The having of “bad intentions” (as defined by the Progressive movement, see above) guarantees the outcome of “bad results.”
6. There is no such thing as tradeoffs between competing goods.
7. Any other factors beyond “good intentions” and their associated “good actions” are at best of secondary importance to the obtaining of “good results.”
8. There are no such things as unintended consequences, good or bad. That is, all societal consequences are determined by intentional acts.
9. There is no such thing as “good intentions” leading to “bad results” or vice versa.
10. The application of government power is by far the most effective means by which to implement policies that are motivated by “good intentions” and thus must lead to “good results.”

Given these facts (obviously they will be disputed by some), I have generated the following model.

I won't belabor the correspondence between the facts and resulting model, which should be obvious to most readers. However, a few additional comments are in order.

Firstly, note the direct relationship between intentions (with associated actions) and results. This feature is significant because it explains what, to me at least, has been a mysterious aspect of Progressive behavior. That being, no matter how catastrophic the failure of their policies, they respond with absolute certitude that the results are the best possible. Conversely, when

confronted with non-Progressive alternatives they respond with the same certitude that these



would make the situation worse.

This response makes sense if their model is that since their intentions are “good” this leads directly to results that are the best possible. And, since the alternatives come from people with “bad” intentions, then they can only lead to “bad” results.

Secondly, note that the “good” results for this model are only made possible by the Progressive’s intentions and actions. Thus, they are the heroes and the recipients are the beneficiaries.

This feature helps me understand their visceral hatred of capitalism and love of socialism. For, in a capitalist system people with “bad” intentions apparently create “good” results. This possibility is anathema to Progressives. However, with socialism, only those with “good” intentions (in their utopian fantasy) are allowed to create “good” results (in the same utopian fantasy). This narcissistic need to be the clearly identified heroes who deliver peace and plenty to the beneficiaries explains how they can continue to demand socialism no matter how many flesh and blood humans die and suffer under its pathetic failures.

Finally, note that, because the government is believed to be the most effective transformer of intentions into results, Progressives live in an absolute need to control the government and use it to deliver their “good” results.

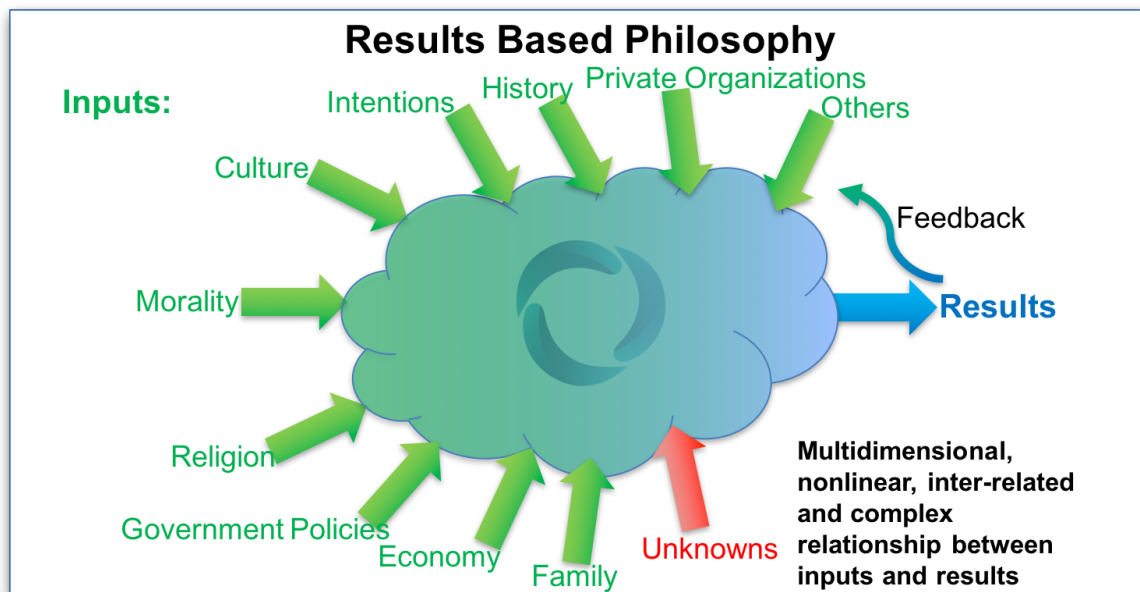
I’m sure that some will criticize this model because it makes Progressives appear to be simple-minded. My initial response is, have you recently attempted to engage in substantive debate with a Progressive? Yes, I’m certain that buried within the Progressive movement there are those with a far more sophisticated mental model. However, they are likely maintaining a very low profile give the current climate.

Results-Based Philosophy

People who focus on results as opposed to intentions tend to develop a radically different view of how the world works. For, virtually anyone who has had the responsibility to deliver defined results finds themselves in a humbling situation. That is, although they are held accountable for the defined results, they find that there are a myriad of inputs that are outside of their control but that have powerful impact on the results. This experience creates two important facts:

1. The scope and depth of pursued results are carefully limited to those that could credibly be obtained in the world as it actually exists
2. Efforts to achieve these results incorporate mechanisms intended to address the uncertainties created by the larger set of input variables, many of which are outside of direct control. Some of these include:
 - 2.1. Alternatives should the original plan falter (e.g., “Plan B”)
 - 2.2. Feedback mechanisms that allow information created during the plan’s execution to be captured, analyzed and used to modify the original plan
 - 2.3. Risk assessment for the plan, in which those uncontrolled input factors are identified and assessed with respect to the plan’s likelihood of success.

Given these considerations, I have generated the following model.



This model differs from the previous in two critical respects. First, it presumes a large number of inputs with highly variable controllability (from virtually zero to relatively high). Second, it doesn't claim to define how these inputs are combined to create the result. In this it follows the concept of “dispersed knowledge” in economic theory, that being:

the notion that no single agent has information as to all of the factors which influence prices and production throughout the system.

The modification of this definition for purpose of this model might be: “the notion that no single agent has information as to all of the factors which influence the results of a given policy being applied throughout the system.”

It’s not that adherents to this model consider themselves to be incapable of generating results. Rather, they are far more respectful of the complexity / uncertainty associated with their pursuit and mindful of limitations in the choice of goals. This fact generally creates an evolutionary as opposed to revolutionary mindset regarding the nature of societal change. It also creates a conservative bias, that seeks to limit the speed of change so as to allow for information feedback and mid-course correction.

Finally, a fundamental difference is that there are no certain “heroes” in this model. Yes, people and organizations can create more and less influence on the results, but there is no way to directly trace “good” results back to anyone’s “good” intentions. But, that’s fine for this model’s adherents if the results are actually good.

Are There Credible Alternatives?

One means by which Progressive Christians (and other Progressives) could maintain their dominance in good conscience is to claim that, although results of their policies aren’t necessarily good, there are no credible alternatives. This position is easy to maintain within their bubble due to their assumption that only people with “bad intentions” criticize their policies. However, anywhere outside of their bubble they struggle to sustain the intellectual and moral credibility of their position.

The reason for this is that there are credible alternatives to Progressive social policy. These challenges come both from within and outside of their carefully maintained bubble. However, due to their narcissistic need to be always right, always the hero, Progressives have used their positions of institutional power to crush any and all opposing views and the people who hold them. The following two case studies, separated by 50 years, of Progressive oppression of criticism and alternative proposals will sufficiently make this point.

Intentions vs. Results Case Study: The Moynihan Report

The chasm between intention-motivated vs. results-motivated anti-poverty policies was revealed over 50 years ago. The instigating event was a 1965 report titled *The Negro Family: The Case For National Action*, which has become known as the Moynihan Report. The author

was Daniel Patrick Moynihan, a sociologist serving as Assistant Secretary of Labor under President Lyndon B. Johnson.

This seminal but controversial report was revisited in a 2005 City Journal article titled “The Black Family: 40 Years of Lies.” The tag-line is “Rejecting the Moynihan report caused untold, needless misery.” A key excerpt follows (emphasis added).

Read through the megazillion words on class, income mobility, and poverty in the recent New York Times series “Class Matters” and you still won’t grasp two of the most basic truths on the subject: 1. entrenched, multigenerational poverty is largely black; and 2. it is intricately intertwined with the collapse of the nuclear family in the inner city.

By now, these facts shouldn’t be hard to grasp. Almost 70 percent of black children are born to single mothers. Those mothers are far more likely than married mothers to be poor, even after a post-welfare-reform decline in child poverty. They are also more likely to pass that poverty on to their children. Sophisticates often try to dodge the implications of this bleak reality by shrugging that single motherhood is an inescapable fact of modern life, affecting everyone from the bobo Murphy Browns to the ghetto “baby mamas.” Not so; it is a largely low-income—and disproportionately black—phenomenon. The vast majority of higher-income women wait to have their children until they are married. The truth is that we are now a two-family nation, separate and unequal—one thriving and intact, and the other struggling, broken, and far too often African-American. So why does the Times, like so many who rail against inequality, fall silent on the relation between poverty and single-parent families? To answer that question—and to continue the confrontation with facts that Americans still prefer not to mention in polite company—you have to go back exactly 40 years. That was when a resounding cry of outrage echoed throughout Washington and the civil rights movement in reaction to **Daniel Patrick Moynihan’s Department of Labor report warning that the ghetto family was in disarray. Entitled “The Negro Family: The Case for National Action,” the prophetic report prompted civil rights leaders, academics, politicians, and pundits to make a momentous—and, as time has shown, tragically wrong—decision about how to frame the national discussion about poverty.**

That “resounding cry of outrage” occurred because Mr. Moynihan dared to challenge the then Progressive party line that it was only “the system” that stood between the black community and full equality in American society. Let’s return to the City Journal article for a clear explanation.

For white liberals and the black establishment, poverty became a zero-sum game: either you believed, as they did, that there was a defect in the system, or you

believed that there was a defect in the individual. It was as if critiquing the family meant that you supported inferior schools, even that you were a racist. Though “The Negro Family” had been a masterpiece of complex analysis that implied that individuals were intricately entwined in a variety of systems—familial, cultural, and economic—it gave birth to a hardened, either/or politics from which the country has barely recovered.

Note that, in 1965, the Progressive party line focused on “the system” as opposed to “good intentions” (although we have now gone full circle with the current focus on supposed “systemic racism”). However, the utility of these two ideas is similar, that being something over which Progressives imagined they have direct control, and, that can be changed by government power to gain the desired results. Note also that already the epithet “racist” is being applied to anyone who deviates from the Progressive party line on how best to improve the lot of the minority community.

However, correspondence between the report’s alternate viewpoint and the previous section’s description of the results based philosophy is striking. For, Moynihan’s perspective of “complex analysis that implied that individuals were intricately entwined in a variety of systems—familial, cultural, and economic” correlates exceedingly well with the results model description of “a large number of inputs with highly variable controllability.” Also note that culture, family and economy, along with others in a variety of inputs, correlates well with the above description of Moynihan’s philosophy.

Thus, at the very beginning of the “war on poverty,” the Progressive powers that be explicitly rejected the results based philosophy of public policy in favor of one that simplistically and erroneously allowed them to pretend hero-ship for themselves. This self-serving decision has indeed “caused untold, needless misery.” However, we shouldn’t expect an acknowledgement of this cruel failure by the intentions based Progressive community.

Intentions vs. Results Case Study: Professors Amy Wax and Larry Alexander

The Sin

In August of 2014 two tenured professors, each holding an endowed chair, published an article titled “Paying the price for the breakdown of the country’s bourgeois culture” in the Philadelphia Inquirer. They are Amy Wax from the University of Pennsylvania Law School and Larry Alexander from the University of San Diego Law School.

These two authors described the social norms and personal behaviors that were generally supported prior to the 1960s and that continue to enable productive, fulfilled lives to this day, those being:

Get married before you have children and strive to stay married for their sake. Get the education you need for gainful employment, work hard, and avoid idleness. Go the extra mile for your employer or client. Be a patriot, ready to serve the country. Be neighborly, civic-minded, and charitable. Avoid coarse language in public. Be respectful of authority. Eschew substance abuse and crime.

While they might have gotten away with praise of these once obvious virtues, they committed unpardonable sin against the Progressive idol by recommending that these virtues be uplifted once again in today's culture. They didn't mince words.

... restore the hegemony of the bourgeois culture. ... will require the arbiters of culture — the academics, media, and Hollywood — to relinquish multicultural grievance polemics and the preening pretense of defending the downtrodden. Instead of bashing the bourgeois culture, they should return to the 1950s posture of celebrating it.

The Progressive Response

The Progressive response was eerily more like the Cultural Revolution in 1966 China than the operating of academic freedom in a liberal democratic republic, with these brave authors being denounced as racist (and worse!). Here's a quote from a statement by 54 Penn graduate students and alums.

We call for the University of Pennsylvania administration — Penn President Gutmann and the deans of each school — as well as faculty to directly confront Wax and Alexander's op-ed as racist and white supremacist discourse and to push for an investigation into Wax's advocacy for white supremacy. We believe that such statements should point directly to the historical and sociopolitical antecedents of Wax's hate speech, and to disallow hate speech whether shrouded in respectability or not.

Refusal to Bend the Knee

For their part, neither author backed down. Amy Wax's response was both lucid and unflinching.

What the objections boil down to is that the bourgeois virtues are somehow racist, or somehow cause racism—contentions that I and my co-author expressly contest, of course ... But if, indeed, bourgeois values are so racist, the progressive critics should be out there in the street demonstrating against them, stripping them from their own lives, and forbidding their children to practice them. They should be chanting, 'No more work, more crime, more out of wedlock babies, forget thrift,

let's get high!' ... Of course, there's little chance we're going to see anything like that, which shows the hollowness, indeed the silliness, of the critiques."

Larry Alexander's response was no less powerful and persuasive.

The charges of racism, white supremacy, etc. are, sadly, the predictable responses of those who can't refute the claims we made ... And those charges are laughable, given that I was a civil rights marcher and have a multi-racial family. But, of course, when you don't have the facts on your side, you resort to calling names. Pathetic!

Perhaps this wisdom backed by courage and conviction will be a turning point where the vicious Progressive campus mob is finally repulsed and discredited. I certainly hope so, but regardless there are significant lessons here for our discussion of intentions vs. results.

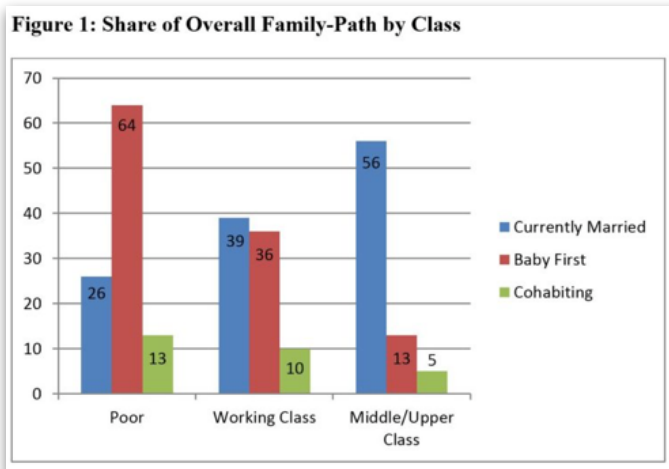
The Implications

Professors Alexander and Wax have transgressed against Progressive theology by daring to point out that intentions the Progressives have defined to be "bad" can lead to good results. That is, their position violates "facts" 4, 5 and 9 that underpin the intentions based philosophy.

For, to assign higher value to norms that are derived from pre-1960s America is seen by Progressives as an act of racist judgmentalism. It also violates the "good intentions" associated with multiculturalism, "kindness" and "open-mindedness."

So, were their argument allowed to stand, the simple-minded Progressive model of only "good intentions" creating "good results" would be disastrously undermined. Clearly, norms that honor marriage, fidelity, family, work and honesty would be enforced by discouraging the opposites of these virtues. But, this would be "bad" by Progressive ideology, so to the barricades comrades!

Professor Wax's response, in which she throws the hypocrisy of the upper middle class



Progressives back in their faces is particularly powerful. For, as is demonstrated by an article in the Federalist titled "The Research Proves The No. 1 Social Justice Imperative Is Marriage," the primary differentiating factor between well-off and less well-off social groups is an intact, committed family structure.

The key figure from this source is shown to the left. Note that for the Poor

a baby arrived prior to marriage at almost five-times the percentage of the Middle / Upper Class. Also, the Middle / Upper Class is currently married at more than twice the percentage of the Poor. Thus, it is very likely that the Middle / Upper Class critics of Professors Wax and Alexander are living their own lives in accordance with bourgeois culture while recommending that the Working Class and Poor not do the same.

Were we to start playing by the Progressive Left's rules, and, assume the worst about their motives (as opposed to commenting on their public actions and statements) we might say: "That's certainly a way to limit the pool of competitors for Middle / Upper Class jobs!" I doubt they would like this treatment even though it's far gentler than what they are saying. What they fail to realize is that by virtue of their policy preferences and behavior, they have assumed a level of moral hazard that makes them highly vulnerable to legitimate, powerful criticism.

The Moral Hazard of Intentions Based Policy

Mainline Christian politics (from the leadership and organizational perspective) is often virtually indistinguishable from secular Progressive politics. The only difference is that a sentence here or there in Mainline political statements might mention Jesus or the Bible or something else vaguely religious in origin.

Up to now I have been indirectly describing the "moral hazard" associated with the intentions based policy philosophy used (though certainly not exclusively) by Progressives (Christian or otherwise). A useful definition for this term is:

Moral hazard is a situation where somebody has the opportunity to take advantage of somebody else by taking risks that the other will pay for. The idea is that people might ignore the moral implications of their choices: instead of doing what is right, they do what benefits them the most.

It's now time to directly call out the key dimensions of moral hazard into which Progressivism has fallen headfirst.

Votes and Political Power

In the 2016 presidential election candidate Donald Trump asked black voters: "What do you have to lose by trying something new?" Candidate Hillary Clinton wasted no time in answering that question: "What do black people stand to lose under Trump? Everything!" Her response adds additional evidence to the conclusion that Progressives literally believe that Republican's "bad intentions" will inexorably lead to "bad results."

However, this incident also illuminates a massive moral hazard for Democrats. For, given that they depend on 90%+ of black votes for continuance of their political power, isn't it far more

certain that the Democrat Party would lose “everything” were the black community to lessen their level of support?

So, given that current welfare, education and crime policies (among others) have created this massive block voting by the black community, the downside to any reforms that might lead to improvements in their lot could be political death. Given the stakes, is it really credible that Democrat politicians, bureaucrats and supporters are so morally superior that they are immune to such a temptation? I say absolutely not.

Codependent Relationships

If your self-image is that of a Progressive “hero” who delivers the best possible results to the designated “beneficiaries” because of your “good” intentions, then it could become acceptable for those beneficiaries to remain in need. If you have been a “beneficiary” and become dependent, then you also could come to desire that the Progressive “heroes” remain in power. This codependence can tempt both sides into supporting a failing status quo.

Hate-Based Self Esteem

If your self-image is that of a morally superior “hero,” then besides the need for “beneficiaries” there is the need for “villains.” However, beyond providing “proof” of your own moral superiority, “villains” also can become objects of hate. That’s because the “heroes” can begin to believe that, “villains” exist not because they make honest errors or hold mistaken beliefs, but because they harbor “bad intentions.” The Progressive moral model demands that the world be split into “heroes,” “villains” and “beneficiaries.” Thus, our shared humanity can be denied, creating a world with greater strife and violence. And so, Progressives obtain their fraudulent fantasies of moral superiority at the expense of other human beings and create a debased culture in the process.

Works-Based Salvation

If you are a Christian who erroneously seeks a works-based mark of salvation, you might well be drawn to the easy moral superiority promised by adherence to Progressive politics. “Evidence” for a works-based salvation can be most easily found by comparing oneself to others. Is there currently a more potent, visible ideology that allows the manufacture of accredited “heroes” and “villains” than Progressivism? And, if you are a Mainline Progressive Christian leader, might the temptation to encourage such false belief in order to advance your preferred political policies be strong?

There is another dimension to this theological error, that being the narrowing of Christian virtue and vocation to only those acts directly associated with Progressive sources. Thus, for example, were a person in their private-sector job to enable creation of many well-paying jobs (through honest, hard work) throughout the world, it may not count as “good works” in the Progressive Christian worldview. That’s because, by their blinkered definition, these works were not motivated by approved “good intentions.”

Therefore, those of us who define our Christian vocation as encompassing all of our lives are yet regularly harangued by believers who only allow their pet Progressive Christian projects to be included in “good works.” They literally don’t appear to care that we are generating good results outside of their narrowly defined domain.

Of course, I am not here thinking of good works as having anything to do with our salvation in Christ. Rather they are thank-offerings for that undeserved grace by which we have been saved through Christ Jesus.

Finally, trusting souls are told that slavish adherence to secular Progressive positions makes them into “super Christians.” That is, because of their superior Progressive-derived “good intentions” they hold a special place of authority in the church. From that fraudulent perch they decide what works are actually Christian. They also sometimes imagine that they are free to misinterpret the Bible as necessary to bring its teachings into line with the positions determined by the secular Progressive elite.

Concluding Thoughts

This analysis may explain why Progressives have such a powerful compulsion to claim moral superiority. For, by virtue of the scope and aggressiveness of their ideology they unavoidably place themselves in positions of great moral hazard. Only by presuming that they have moral purity and perfection far beyond that of normal humanity can they convince themselves that their power will not result in bad, even evil results. Of course, this presumption is built from pure fantasy, as they are made of the same fallen moral material as is everyone else. However, the fact that they so convince themselves of falsehood makes them far more dangerous when in power, and far more fragile and unstable when they are on the outs.

Politics and Our Pastors

Opening Thoughts

I'm going to make the optimistic assumption that there are pastors in the PCUSA who are either apolitical or even politically centrist. This assumption is most likely to hold for older pastors, as the denomination's debacle over gay marriage literally emptied its seminaries of non-Progressive students.

So, were such a proverbial pastor to exist, what might be their experience regarding the intersection of politics and religion? Before this question can be adequately addressed we need to define the opposing camps with which a pastor will have to contend.

We are currently a nation splintered into contending groups who appear to have lost the ability to communicate, let alone cooperate, with each other. These groups can often (there are numerous exceptions) be roughly divided into two primary camps.

The first is populated by people who tend to define themselves by associations and interests outside the realm of politics. To them, though politics may be an important part of life, other domains like faith, family, neighbors, sports, etc., have clear priority. Although there is no agreed name for this group, I'll refer to them as the "**commoners**." This name is justified not by any presumption of lower ability or value, but rather by the fact that they see themselves as part of a common heritage and culture. Thus, they have appreciation for the nation and those through whom it was formed and maintained. If there is a central organizing principle for this camp it is opposition to the idea that the nation must be "fundamentally transformed" in order for it to be valued.

The second camp draws in people who see themselves as intellectually, morally and ideologically superior to such an extent that they are the natural leaders of our nation. These people value academic degrees, career success, political power and personal accomplishment above virtually everything else. Although the largest and most vocal component of this group is the Progressives, it is clear that there are also many members of the Conservative intelligentsia and political class who see themselves this way. For obvious reasons I will call this group the "**elite**."

While the elite are by definition much smaller in numbers than are the commoners, many people yet look to the elite as their political guides and/or are influenced by them through various forms of education and media. Thus, the elite wield significant democratic power. They wield overwhelming institutional power, having taken over virtually all educational, entertainment, government bureaucratic, news, legal and international organizations, among others (including the Mainline denominations).

One key differentiation between the elite and the commoners is that the elite consciously know who they are and carefully control who gets to be a member. Commoners generally don't see themselves in terms of group identity, so are far more amorphous. Therefore, while the Progressive dominated elite are cohesive, self-aware and disciplined, commoners are individualistic and unorganized.

The Political Influence on Our Pastors

Congregational

Because of these differences in group awareness and organization a pastor will feel a generally consistent pressure towards leftist policies and an inconsistent, ambiguous pressure towards rightist policies. Therefore, while pastors will be held accountable to a consistent political standard by elites, there will be a less clear standard against which commoners will hold them.

In such an environment only the most intentionally committed and self-aware pastor will be able to resist the leftward push from the congregation. For the expectations of the Progressive elites will be clearly defined and strongly conveyed. The consequences of opposing, or even resisting their pressure will be immediate and painful. However, the expectations of the commoners will be variable and unorganized. The consequences of opposing their interests will be rarely even felt. In this dynamic a pastor, even one that prefers a centrist or apolitical stance, will find themselves powerfully pushed leftwards.

I am by no means absolving pastors of their moral and spiritual failure in this regard. Rather, I am attempting to explain a dynamic by which pastors, as frail, fallen humans can be influenced by the intimidation of an organized and powerful clique. By so doing perhaps we commoners can begin to think more clearly about the situation and how it can be corrected.

There is a far more insidious means by which our pastors could be influenced into compliance with the elite program than direct pressure. Think of it as a "stick and carrot" approach. The stick is direct and organized demand for cooperation. But the carrot is the promise that, if the pastor cooperates, they will be protected by a socially potent clique.

Having been raised as a pastor's kid I can tell you with confidence that pastors are under levels of emotional, social and spiritual stress that is far beyond what most of us parishioners will ever experience. Quite aside from politics, a pastor must deal with situations of grave illness, death and disfunction on a regular basis. They are expected to know exactly what to say in situations where there is nothing that can be said that will bring immediate relief. They are also expected to soothe the most terrible spiritual fears and to confirm the validity of conflicting

theological beliefs. My career has placed me in many tough situations, but I never imagined that they were worse than those that my father experienced.

So a pastor often finds themselves vulnerable to the emotions surrounding tragic situations that occur with regularity in the congregation and its extended social/familial reach. Imagine then the temptation if it becomes apparent that, by supporting the political goals of an organized, self-aware and aggressive clique, you will be granted their protection and even placed on a pedestal? It would be great, and often overwhelming.

The disorganized and individualistic commoners in the congregation would not be able to (or even want to) make a counter offer of anywhere near the same protective value. And why would they? For there is no settled party line among them. They don't even want politics to dominate their lives, let alone the life of the church. And thus the pastor may have only one real option if they desire protection from the emotional and spiritual warfare that surrounds them.

Once again, I'm not attempting to justify but rather to understand.

Organizational

If you are a pastor in a Mainline denomination you have already made the conscious choice to embrace the uniform Progressive activist nature of its governing organizations. In the PCUSA that primarily means the Presbyteries (local church governance, for example, the Presbytery of Chicago) and the General Assembly (national governing body).

Thus, if you are a pastor in the PCUSA, your professional status and advancement are tied to organizations that don't simply lean Left, but rather are hard core political Leftist machines. And they are Leftist machines because they are dominated by radical Progressive activists. In such an environment the powerful, sustained pressure on all members is not just to parrot leftist talking points, but to take concrete actions that advance the radical Progressive political agenda. Silence, which is now interpreted as "violence" is certainly not tolerated.

Yes, a pastor can to some extent avoid this pressure by rare attendance at Presbytery meetings, but they cannot avoid the power of the Presbytery and General Assembly in the setting of policy. Nor can they completely isolate themselves from their leadership's influence on themselves, other pastors and members. That is, Progressive activist pastors and members will be supported and encouraged by the entire organizational hierarchy while anyone out of Progressive lock step will be isolated and disenfranchised.

What percentage of PCUSA pastors want to or can resist this perpetual pressure to actively support Progressive positions, be it in conversation, direct action or from the pulpit? Yes, there may be a few out there. But they are likely isolated and fearful of the vicious cancel culture that dominates our major institutions.

How Can We Respond?

The situation in which our pastors are being corrupted by secular Progressive politics places us “commoners” in a painful quandary. The most natural, obvious means of opposition would be to organize ourselves into a cohesive counter-group that pushes pastors to the Right with the same or greater force than Progressive Christians push them to the Left. It would also be necessary to counter the protection racket of Progressive Christians by punishing pastors for Leftist positions and supporting them for Rightist positions. But in this way lies chaos, hate and madness.

As Christians, we simply must not reflect the practices that have led to this catastrophic situation. By so doing we would simply accelerate and intensify the forces already at work to destroy the church, its members and pastors. Also, we “commoners” simply cannot organize ourselves into the Borg-like entity that is the contemporary Left. That is, we cannot surrender our agency, morals, individuality and thoughts to an external force without losing ourselves. To do so would be an act of surrender to the dark forces that animate the totalitarian Left.

So, what then to do? Well, a good first step would be to finally acknowledge the truth that has been staring us in the face for decades, but which we have intentionally sought to ignore — that our local churches, denominational bodies and general society are dominated by an elite Progressive cohort who hate Christianity as founded by Jesus Christ and who seek to destroy Liberal Democracy, which will be replaced with their fantasy of utopia (but will actually be a totalitarian gulag). If we dare to face this terrible reality then we will finally be in position to say NO!

We “commoners” have varying ideas about how society can best be organized. We have varying theologies and faith experiences. Successful opposition can’t mean picking one and then supporting it like zombies. No, any success that doesn’t add to the destruction must be organized around the idea that it is fundamentally unChristian for a church to be influenced or even dominated by a secular ideology regardless of its source and content. We therefore must hold our pastors accountable for fidelity and completeness to God’s Word in their teaching.

God’s Word is not politically “Conservative” or “Progressive” or “Libertarian” or any other secular ideology. It stands above and apart from all human ideology, judging us, not serving our ideological desires. Thus God’s Word will sometimes be found to support this or that political position. But that is incidental. God’s Word judges all of our lives, from our intimate, hidden sins to our public, political actions.

So, we must demand that the Progressive Christians abandon their false and destructive claims to a moral, intellectual and spiritual superiority. We must demand this not because we

claim that exalted position for ourselves, but rather because we understand that we all “**sin and fall short of the glory of God.**” For if ever there is to be found a way back from this precipice of destruction it will be by reclaiming the understanding of our common, sinful frailty and our common need for open, diverse, honest discussion that hopes for the best in ourselves and others. But ultimately our Salvation rests only in the mercy of Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

(2 Chronicles 7:14, NIV)

May God have mercy upon our souls.

The Pacification of the Christians

One of the primary means by which believing Christians are seduced into compliance with secular Progressivism as the embodiment of Christian compassion is by the careful, purposeful curating of Scripture. By this deceitful means Christians are exposed to only those Biblical passages that can be twisted into conformity with whatever Progressive policy position is in force at that time. Conversely, all Biblical passages that cast doubt on or contradict Progressive positions are carefully hidden away. One of the most powerful of these curating efforts is the notion that it a Christian's duty to passively accept ideas that clash with their conscience.

Opening Thoughts

Were someone to demand the single most dominant tenet of Mainline Christianity, numerous credible responses come to mind. One might be that Jesus Christ showed unconditional love and equality for all people. Another could be that the Bible, though inspired by God, is “the words of men, conditioned by the language, thought forms, and literary fashions of the places and times at which they were written” [Confession of 1967].

However, the tenet that easily has similar credibility to these two is that Jesus Christ was uniformly gentle, meek and mild; and therefore a true Christian must adhere to this pattern at all times. This idea is a generalization of Christian pacifism, which relates specifically to the use of force in human conflict. That is, the pacifism when faced with physical aggression is generalized to passivity when faced with less extreme forms of aggression (e.g., verbal conflict).

The issue isn't that this tenet is explicitly false, but rather that it is purposefully so incomplete and constrained that it leads to a false conclusion. Over fifty years ago, J. I. Packer discussed this issue in the introductory essay to John Owen's 1959 book, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*.

However this may be (and we shall say more about it later), the result of these omissions is that part of the biblical gospel is now preached as if it were the whole of that gospel; and a half-truth masquerading as the whole truth becomes a complete untruth.

If “gentle Jesus, meek and mild” is only a “half-truth masquerading as the whole truth,” then we are bound to ask of what this “whole truth” consists. The best summary that I have found was written by Jonathan Edwards (“The Admirable Conjunction of Diverse Excellencies in Christ Jesus,” 1736).

If Christ accepts of you, you need not fear but that you will be safe, for he is a strong Lion for your defense. And if you come, you need not fear but that you shall be accepted; for he is like a Lamb to all that come to him, and receives then

with infinite grace and tenderness. ... Though he is a Lion, he will only be a lion to your enemies, but he will be a lamb to you.

Note that Pastor Edwards describes Christ as both a Lamb and a Lion. The Lion metaphor originates in Genesis 49 where Jacob speaks final words to all of his sons prior to death.

Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons will bow down to you. You are a lion's cub, Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness—who dares to rouse him? The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his. He will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch; he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes. His eyes will be darker than wine, his teeth whiter than milk.

Genesis 49:8-12

It is generally agreed that this is a prophecy that Jesus Christ will arise from the House of Judah. And He did through King David's line.

Christ is also referred to as a Lion in Revelation, where this tie of the eternal Messiah to the House of Judah is explicitly expressed.

"Then one of the elders said to me, 'Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals'"

Revelation 5:5

C. S. Lewis uses Christ the Lion as a pattern for Aslan in the Narnia series, where this striking description is rendered.

"Aslan is a lion - the Lion, the great Lion." "Ooh" said Susan. "I'd thought he was a man. Is he quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion"... "Safe?" said Mr Beaver ... "Who said anything about safe? Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you."

Christ is indeed infinitely good, but He is certainly not safe, as explained by the Apostle Paul:

Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he

must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For he 'has put everything under his feet'

1 Corinthians 15:24-26

Christ the Lion will return in glory to judge the quick and the dead. For those not found to be In Christ that judgement will be terrible.

“For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again.” ...

“Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.”

Matthew 24:21, 30, 31

This is Christ the Lion who is ignored, hidden or explained away by most of our contemporary pastors. This aspect of Christ is by no means limited to the End Times, but rather was displayed in His actions and words while here on earth.

So, the contentions to be explored are that:

1. Many of our contemporary Christian pastors preach a “part of the biblical gospel ... as if it were the whole of that gospel; and a half-truth masquerading as the whole truth becomes a complete untruth.”
2. The part of the gospel very often left out is the understanding of Christ the Lion who is good but not safe.
3. These exclusions and evasions lead Christians into great error concerning their response to evil and injustice in this life.

I will not demand that you take my, J. I. Packer’s, Jonathan Edward’s or C. S. Lewis’ word for these contentions, but will rather explore the Bible’s actual testimony as demonstration.

Exploring the Bible’s Full Testimony

No Mainline Christian needs be reminded of all the many Scriptural passages that teach meekness and peacefulness. Thus, there is no doubt that Jesus and His Apostles did indeed teach these virtues as the preeminent aspects of Christian life.

However, we must ask if this preeminence is absolute or conditional. That is, are there occasions in which strong argument, even denunciation are appropriate in Christian life? Are there even times when physical violence in defense of others or yourself is allowed? It turns out that as you look at all of Scripture you will find the answers to both of these questions is a clear YES.

The following Scriptural passages show that for Jesus Christ Himself and His Apostles the normative virtues of meekness and peacefulness are not absolute. In fact, there are occasions in which it would be sinful to meekly and peacefully accept the power of evil.

Jesus Christ

The most well known example of Jesus responding in anger and even violence to an evil situation is “the clearing of the temple.” This incident is recorded in both the Gospels of Matthew (see below) and John (2:13-17).

And Jesus entered the temple of God and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer’; but you make it a den of robbers.”

Matthew 21:12, 13

Too many of our pastors have viewed this as an isolated, unfortunate incident that can be ignored with regard to understanding how to live a Christian life. This situation was well analyzed by Wilbert F. Howard in his Interpreter’s Bible exposition on John 2:13-17. He uses this occasion of Christ’s wrath to discuss how Christ’s true nature can be utterly distorted by a selective, partisan interpretation of Scripture’s teaching.

But the mind of men is ingenious in fashioning difficulties for himself and finding ways of thwarting God’s gracious purposes towards him. And what if we so misread Christ that the portrait of him in our minds is not authentic, but a caricature? What if our misconception of him makes Christ himself an idol that hides the true God from us; because we accept only such facts about him that happen to appeal to us, and blandly overlook, or stubbornly refuse to see, others no less evidently there, but which we choose to think less worthy of him, and which will not fit into the conception to which we have come, less by diligent and

humble study of the Scriptures than by excogitating⁶ for ourselves an idea and an ideal of what the Christ should be?

The fact is that it's easy to find other striking examples of Jesus Christ responding with the opposite of meekness and peacefulness to a situation. In Matthew 23, He verbally assaults the "teachers of the law and Pharisees" with a withering denunciation.

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness."

"You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?"

Matthew 23:27, 28, 33

The above is only a partial excerpt of this harrowing verbal attack. And yet, our pastors claim that to "follow Jesus" is to be always meek and mild, always accepting of any situation or statement.

But perhaps you are still holding out by thinking something along the lines of "Sure, Jesus was violent towards unbelievers, but He would never behave in this manner towards fellow Christians." I must tell you that you would be completely wrong.

Shortly after the Apostle Peter declared Jesus to be "**the Messiah, the Son of the living God**" (Matthew 16:16) Jesus predicted His death. Peter responded to Christ's statement, saying, "**Never, Lord! This shall never happen to you**" (Matthew 16:22). This resulted in the following powerful reprimand by Jesus.

Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."

Matthew 16:23

These are only selected examples of Christ responding in anger. Others can be found in Mark 3:5 and Luke 13:32. Finally, take note of the Apostle Paul's explicit confirmation of this aspect of God's nature in Romans 11:22.

⁶ to think out, plan or devise

Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off.

So, when our pastors tell us that a Christian, to truly “follow Christ” must always be meek and peaceful, they are communicating only a part of the Gospel. The undeniable fact from Scripture's testimony is that Jesus Christ, when faced with situations of open rebellion against God's will, reacted with both physical and verbal violence. The “meek and mild” pushers want us to ignore this fact, or, if we insist on taking note claim that these incidents are Jesus somehow behaving out of character.

Here we return to Wilbert F. Howard in his Interpreter's Bible exposition on John 2:13-17.

Surely our understanding of what Christlikeness is must be gathered, not from such incidents that we choose to select and to regard as typically Christlike, but from the whole of his life and character and conduct. For not only now and then, but always and in every situation, Christ did the perfect thing to do. He was as Christlike here in the temple as when dying for us on the Cross. Here to he was revealing God as truly as on Calvary. For, declares Paul with assurance, in God there is kindness—and severity (Rom. 11:22). And the one is as divine and glorious as the other. For what if he were not: were only flabbily good-natured, ready to make no fuss about our sins and to pretend that they do not matter greatly, and so push us through! ...

And as for ourselves, if Christ is always to be followed, it is clear that while our usual rule of conduct is a frank, free, patient forgiveness, there are times when we must not forgive; when, as Hugh Mackintosh says bluntly, “Lack of indignation at wickedness is a sign, not of a poor nature only, but of positive unlikeness to Jesus Christ.” We must not so misread Christ that he becomes an ugly idol, blinding our understanding, and hiding the true God from us. The wrath of God is never thought of in scripture as opposed to his holiness. It is a necessary part of it.

The Apostles

Were it necessary to be always meek and mild to “follow Christ” then we would expect to see this characteristic prominently displayed in the Church being built by the Apostles. Nothing could be further from the truth.

In fact, lists of Bible verses on the topic of “Church Discipline” include many dozens of examples. It turns out that the Apostolic Christian church was riven by conflict, and by the exercise of discipline in many forms (some drastic). And yet most of our contemporary pastors

pretend that somehow this is all ignorable because there are other Biblical passages that do indeed teach peacefulness.

But they err greatly in presuming the right to pick and choose which aspects of God's Word are worthy of inclusion and which are not. In a Mainline denomination the institutional pressure is to do just that. This pressure must be resisted and rejected by clergy and laity alike if we truly want to know and follow Christ.

So, let's look into a few of these Biblical passages that are carefully ignored by our teachers of "meek and mild" Christianity. I will limit myself to the New Testament, not because the Old Testament isn't relevant, but rather because of the false assumption that the New Testament is the reason for the "meek and mild" uniform standard of conduct. This section could go on to thousands of words were I to document and discuss all of the Bible passages that deal with conflict and discipline. So, for brevity, here are just a few selected passages for you to read and consider.

Galatians 2:11-14

The most important incident of open conflict in the early church was between no other than the Apostles Paul and Peter!

But when Peter came to Antioch, I had to oppose him to his face, for what he did was very wrong. When he first arrived, he ate with the Gentile believers, who were not circumcised. But afterward, when some friends of James came, Peter wouldn't eat with the Gentiles anymore. He was afraid of criticism from these people who insisted on the necessity of circumcision. As a result, other Jewish believers followed Peter's hypocrisy, and even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.

When I saw that they were not following the truth of the gospel message, I said to Peter in front of all the others, "Since you, a Jew by birth, have discarded the Jewish laws and are living like a Gentile, why are you now trying to make these Gentiles follow the Jewish traditions?"

In this incident the Apostle Paul openly confronted the Apostle Peter (The Rock upon whom Jesus Christ said His church would be built) for error and hypocrisy. He did not meekly accept what was clearly an anti-Gospel act on Peter's part. And yet, we are taught to meekly accept anything taught by our Mainline leaders because that is "the Christian thing to do." No, Paul did the Christian thing by confronting a destructive failure on Peter's part.

Matthew 18:15-17

“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.”

The Apostles were clearly following this teaching by Jesus as they built the church. Note that Jesus is expecting conflict in the church and therefore is describing how it should be handled, including the last step of excommunication.

1 Corinthians 5:5

You are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

This is an example of utilizing extreme, harsh measures in the hope that a soul can be saved. We allow souls to run unopposed towards perdition rather than cause any worldly discomfort.

Romans 16:17-18

I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.

Ah yes, the smooth talker who convinces us that they are teaching the Gospel while they are actually pursuing godlessness, power and worldly position. Remember, the Gospel is a scandalous insult to our human pride.

1 Timothy 5:19-20

Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear.

Obviously this is understood to cover extreme cases. But make no mistake, there are far more extreme cases than there should be because of the false “meek and mild” piety taught and accepted in our congregations.

Acts 5:1-11

But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, and with his wife's knowledge he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last. And great fear came upon all who heard of it.

Peter didn't hesitate to confront a church member who was deceitful.

Titus 1:10,11,13b,14

For there are many rebellious people, full of meaningless talk and deception, especially those of the circumcision group. They must be silenced, because they are disrupting whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach—and that for the sake of dishonest gain. ... Therefore rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the merely human commands of those who reject the truth.

My denomination (the PCUSA) is saturated with “rebellious people, full of meaningless talk and deception” who shamelessly distort and deceive. I have written a 300+ page book documenting this scandal.

This all brings us back to J. I. Packer's thesis that the “old gospel” has been supplanted by a “new gospel” that is so purposefully partial that it has become a fraudulent gospel. And the entire purpose of this fraudulent gospel is nothing less than to replace God with humankind as the center of Christianity.

But in the new gospel the centre of reference is man. This is just to say that the old gospel was religious in a way that the new gospel is not. Whereas the chief aim of the old was to teach men to worship God, the concern of the new seems limited to making them feel better. The subject of the old gospel was God and His ways with men; the subject of the new is man and the help God gives him. There

is a world of difference. The whole perspective and emphasis of gospel preaching has changed.

From this change of interest has sprung a change of content, for the new gospel has in effect reformulated the biblical message in the supposed interests of “helpfulness.” This “gospel” may be more pleasing to our prideful sin, but it is a lie that must be confronted, not meekly accepted.

Thoughts on Why

There are likely numerous intersecting reasons for why so many Mainline pastors and parishioners work so diligently to convince their fellow Christians to be always “meek and mild.” If there is one uniting theme it is that of control. In the following sections I will explore two of these dimensions of control enabled by this partial and therefore false Gospel teaching.

Therapeutic Religion

We ended the previous section with the point made by J. I. Packer that the new gospel is focused on making humans “feel better.” It is obvious that by confronting another person with accusations of misbehavior or incorrect ideas we will most likely (in the short run) make them feel worse rather than better. This goes double (at least) for one Christian confronting another Christian. Thus, a gospel centered on humans and focused on advancing their self esteem will need a savior who teaches that we must always be “meek and mild” in order to be a true follower.

Now consider how this new (false) gospel intersects with the victim-based morality of identity politics and intersectionality. By virtue of their claims of victimhood entire groups of humans are placed beyond criticism regardless of their behavior. For Christians who have been conditioned to be always “meek and mild” there are virtually no intellectual or theological defenses to the acceptance of these ideas. Thus, any demands made by these groups (or made by those claiming to support them), regardless of how non-Biblical or even anti-Christian, are given the presumption of validity.

This strategy has been utilized to drive Christians to abandon the definition of Christian marriage and to justify the superposition of secular neo-Marxist ideologies (for example, Critical Race Theory) onto Christian theology. We “meek and mild” Christians dare not resist lest we find ourselves accused of being mean to the certified victim groups in whose supposed interests these ideas are being advanced.

Scriptural Distortion and Dishonesty

Once the “meek and mild” Christian imperative has been internalized it is much easier to smuggle false doctrines into Christianity. It’s also far more difficult to defend true but “not nice enough” doctrines.

On the false doctrine side, all that has to be done to create credibility is to show that the new (false) doctrine makes people feel better and/or advances the interests of certified victims. With regard to Biblical justification even a single verse can be extrapolated to cover the entire ideological scope.

Thus, we are confidently told by environmentalist that since the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. (Genesis 2:15) we are therefore compelled to accept their positions on “global warming” or the number of parts-per-million of a given chemical in the air. After all, to not agree means that we don’t care about “the earth.” It doesn’t matter if their policies actually harm, say, the poor by denying them the electric power necessary for economic advancement in order to limit carbon emissions. What matters is that we can “feel good” about our commitment to environmental justice.

In other cases Bible verses can be twisted into saying the opposite of what they actually meant or even created from thin air. One infamous case is Barack Obama’s claim that the Bible teaches us to be “**our brother’s keeper**” as a justification for his Progressive policies. Here’s one example”

“But part of that belief comes from my faith in the idea that I am my brother’s keeper and I am my sister’s keeper; that as a country, we rise and fall together.”

But the actual Biblical passage has nothing to do with one person being another’s keeper. No, it has to do with the first murderer attempting to hide his guilt from God.

Now Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out to the field.” While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. Then the Lord said to Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?” “I don’t know,” he replied. “Am I my brother’s keeper?” The Lord said, “What have you done? Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground.”

Genesis 4:8-10

But, since the then President was presumed to be helping people he was given a complete pass.

The most egregious use of false Scripture was by Presidential Candidate Pete Buttigieg in an attempt to *justify abortion up to the time of delivery*. Here’s the quote:

Right now, they hold everybody in line with this one piece of doctrine about abortion, which is obviously a tough issue for a lot of people to think through morally. Then again, there's a lot of parts of the Bible that talk about how life begins with breath, and so even that is something that we can interpret differently

In fact there is no place in the Bible where life is defined to begin only at an infant's first breath. But there are dozens of verses in the Bible that define the unborn to have life. But, since Mr. Buttigieg claims to be a "nice" supporter of women's rights (to abort their child at any time they wish) he gets to make up Biblical teaching out of thin air.

All of this Scriptural falsehood and much more is smuggled in under the cloak of "being nice" or "being helpful." By these means our Christian theology has been twisted to support secular, partisan political ideologies. And it is by this means that Christians are shamed and fooled into seeing support of these secular ideologies as requirements of their faith.

The Wages of Thoughtless Altruism

Once the fullness of Christian thought and practice has been hollowed out and replaced by helpless passivity something must be added to fill the spiritual void. That something is the thoughtless practice of altruism.

Opening Thoughts

Have you noticed that so much of our moral reasoning has been reduced to the level of mere sloganeering? Anyone who drives has encountered the “COEXIST” bumper sticker on numerous



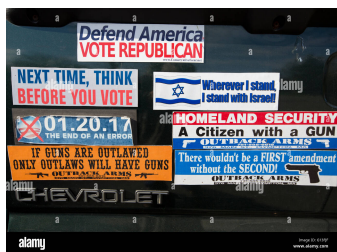
occasions. While I’m certain that these bumper stickers are often plastered on cars with the best of intentions, I have grave doubts that any of the underlying issues are being addressed. For example, does it advance the cause of peace between the Palestinians and Jews in the Middle East by placing the Star of David near the Muslim Crescent? Are Christianity and Satanism

reconciled by placement of the Cross and the Pentagram in the symbology? I could go on, but I hope the point is made.

A more recent example of morality through sloganeering is the lawn signs that you see primarily in upper middle class, overwhelmingly white neighborhoods. Have “black lives” been materially improved since May 2020 due to these slogans? If you asked the homeowner “What is a woman?” would they be able to provide a clear answer? Does their belief that, “global warming is real” add scientific credibility to the hypothesis under debate? Does the tautology that, “love is love” advance moral reasoning or understanding in any appreciable way? Finally, do any of these loving, compassionate sentiments apply to Trump supporters, to Republicans, to Independents, to conservative Christians, among many others? My lived experience is not in the slightest.



This problem is clearly bipartisan, as shown by this vehicle’s owner. While it’s true that I



I agree with some of these sentiments, I doubt that anyone is moved one way or the other by this over the top display. In fact the sheer magnitude gives one the sense of desperation. I would shy away from engaging this person in conversation on any nontrivial topic for fear of somehow exceeding allowable opinion. After all, even a large SUV has space limitations for bumper stickers, so there are likely dozens of other issues that have been settled forever by

deployment of a slogan.

As the title of this section says, my purpose is to discuss the concept of altruism as applied to morality. In particular, my primary focus will be how altruism is used and abused within the Christian faith. My contention is that altruism has been reduced to the level of a thoughtless slogan that is used to avoid the need for careful thought in our lives and theology. The result is a situation in which Christianity becomes a tool by which secular ideologies can be illegitimately justified by claimed adherence to Christian theology.

The Greatest Commandments

Were you to interview one-hundred professing Christians it's my guess that ninety of them would identify altruism as a (if not the) central theological concept in Christianity. Now, this result is not without Biblical support. In fact the idea of altruistic behavior as Christian permeates Scripture, for example:

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Philippians 2:3-4

or from the Old Testament:

“When you have finished paying all the tithe of your produce in the third year, which is the year of tithing, giving it to the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, so that they may eat within your towns and be filled,

Deuteronomy 26:12

So, without doubt, altruism is an important Christian grace.

But, the fact that altruism is a key Christian good doesn't necessarily mean that it is absolutely central to the faith. Were we to seek out one Biblical passage that summarizes the absolute center of Christianity the result would likely be Matthew 22:36-40. For it is here that our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, is explicitly asked about what is central. Remember, at this point in time the New Testament didn't yet exist. So, the Gospel message preached by Christ and then His Apostles was based specifically and explicitly on the Bible as it then existed, the Old Testament.

“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Matthew 22:36-40

What I ask you to notice about these statements by Christ is that the ultimate focus is on the individual. It is all of an individual’s faculties that are called upon to love God. This fact is in absolute opposition to the conception that loving God is best expressed by collective political and social action.

But it is in the second greatest commandment that individual self-interest is most powerfully asserted. For, in loving our neighbors it is ourselves, our own individual interests, that are held up by Christ as the standard. This really shouldn’t be a surprise. For in this world our most powerful natural imperative is to protect and preserve our own life and interests. Therefore, when Christ holds up our own individual self-interest as the standard He is demanding the highest of we fallen humans.

My purpose here is not to attack the altruistic aspect of the Christian faith, but rather to place it in the proper context. For if the notion of collectivist, altruistic action is placed at the center of Christianity then great damage is done to both the Gospel and the Church’s mission. That’s because collectivist altruism is a secular ideological concept that is in opposition to the Gospel’s focus on the individual, both in terms of salvation and behavior.

This position doesn’t deny the many and important communal aspects of Christianity. We are indeed called to be a community of Christians in the Church, and, to seek unity of purpose through our common unity with Christ. But we are not saved as a community, rather as one individual soul at a time. And, our communal power as the Church is enabled by the integration of each individual’s gifts into the common work to teach the Gospel to the world. We do not lose our individuality as Christians. Rather our individuality is put to its highest purpose.

Salvation

Let’s say that you still have doubts about my claim that, at its core, Christianity is focused on the individual’s soul. In the previous section I explained how one of the most famous sayings of

Jesus Christ is indeed focused on the individual. But what about the most famous verse in the Bible, John 3:16:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

This verse begins with a worldwide scope, which is certainly embracing collective humanity. However, in the second part the focus narrows to the individual and their belief. So yes, the Gospel of Jesus Christ demonstrates God's love for the world, but actual salvation occurs for the individual.

This interpretation becomes more obvious when we examine the context within which this verse occurs. So, here is John 3:1-15.

Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him."

Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again."

"How can someone be born when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!"

Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

"How can this be?" Nicodemus asked.

"You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him."

So, when Jesus tells Nicodemus that he must be “born again” in order to receive “eternal life” the explicit focus is on the individual. Yes, we are born into a community, but each one of us emerges from the womb as an individual, self-contained life. And each event of salvation occurs at that individual level. Given this Gospel focus on the individual is it any wonder that Western Civilization, under the influence of Christianity, organized itself around the individual?

Of course, the Bible also teaches on collective action and responsibility (e.g., the Church, government, families, etc.). However, if we allow the collectivists among us to twist God’s Word to their ideology then we have failed to preach the Gospel as it exists.

Practical Applications

Perhaps it’s time to move from theological meditation to practical application.

Loving My Neighbor as Myself

Have you noticed how collectivist altruistic Christians often violate this teaching directly from Jesus Christ? I live, work and worship in the affluent suburbs of Chicago. And I can tell you that the Progressive elite (be they Christian or not) don’t appear to love their neighbors in Chicago’s impoverished minority communities “as themselves.”

If a school district in one of these affluent communities started to “graduate” functional illiterates or allowed violent chaos in the classroom I guarantee that it wouldn’t be allowed to go on for generations. No, it would be dealt with in all haste, as their children’s future economic viability and personal safety would be on the line.

But in the City of Chicago these same people often defend and support a public school system that does just that and worse. I have been living here for going on forty years and have yet to hear a Progressive elite show the slightest interest in trying a significant new policy to improve the education outcomes of Chicago’s minority community. No, they are lock-armed with the most powerful force in Chicago politics — the teacher’s union. They will apparently allow this failure to go on indefinitely — as long as the Democrat Party continues to get the overwhelming majority of minority votes.

The same thing holds for violence and murder. The Progressive altruistic left will apparently let the slaughter go on indefinitely in Chicago’s minority communities by refusing to: uphold the existing gun laws, send murderers and violent criminals to prison, encourage family formation and reduce dependency. If 1% of the mayhem occurring in Chicago’s minority communities showed up in their neighborhoods there would be an immediate demand for change. But, apparently these altruistic Progressives think that minority communities are fine with living in appalling violence indefinitely.

No, Chicago's minority communities are not loved "as myself" by the Progressive elite. Rather, they are assumed to have standards for education and crime that are far below those of the wealthy Progressive elites. If these people actually loved these minority communities "as themselves" the schools and crime in Chicago would have been fixed forty years ago, and our entire society would be benefiting from the skills and innovations emanating from this suppressed, abused community.

Upholding My Rights is Good, Not Selfish

One of the most insidious statements that I repeatedly hear from Progressive elites is that it's selfish to demand my rights as an American be upheld. This statement is made under the assumption that the only Christian response to government encroachment (but only if the government is run by Progressive Democrats) is to willingly give up my rights (e.g., free speech, bear arms, peaceably assemble, etc.).

But the opposite is actually true. By me demanding that my right to free speech be upheld even though the powers that be find them offensive, I am upholding a general principle that applies to other times, groups and situations. For example, there was a time when the idea of gay marriage was considered offensive to the powerful majority. It is the principles of free speech and assembly that allowed those holding these opinions the freedom to successfully make their case in the public sphere.

But these Christian collectivists don't see it that way. Rather, they assume that because they currently hold the power this situation can be extended forever by taking away the rights of opponents. That's not "loving their neighbor." No, that's oppressing any neighbor who doesn't adhere to their ideological beliefs, which is moving towards totalitarian.

The Consequences of Censorship

But, of course, these people don't understand that suppressed thought and speech doesn't just evaporate. No, bad ideas go underground where they can fester and grow. Thus, bad ideas can become worse and (secretly) more popular. But this censorship also deprives the community from considering good ideas that, though not ideologically pure, could help us improve.

All of this deceit is enabled by the false notion that a response is only Christian if it is completely self-sacrificial. Yes, Christ's going to the cross for us was perfectly self-sacrificial. But neither Christ nor His Apostles demand that we believers meet that standard in every act.

By the way, if they really believe in this concept, I expect that these collectivist altruists will:

- Open their homes to anyone who has need and wants food, shelter, entertainment, etc.
- Give up their positions of power and wealth to those less fortunate

- Give all their money and possessions to the poor
- Send their children to Chicago Public Schools and bring minority children to their schools
- Open their communities to criminals by publicly stating that law will not be enforced
- Consider the needs of Trump voters as more important than their desires.

I could go on, but the point is made. These people who use the idea of altruism to manipulate their fellow citizens into submission to collectivist tyranny fall far short of the standard they set. If successful, it is they who will wield (and benefit from) the unopposed power, which is the diametric opposite of altruistic.

Closing Thoughts

It's not my purpose to undermine the Biblical understanding of altruism. As I have previously pointed out, the Bible unmistakably teaches altruism as a component (but not the whole) of a Christian life.

However, it is my purpose to expose and oppose the use of altruism as a mask covering the wickedness of the collectivist totalitarians among us, most definitely including those in the church. For it is by the fraudulent misuse of altruism that they smuggle their secular ideology into Christianity. And the organizations calling themselves "Christian" that have most completely, most aggressively embraced this ungodly evil are the Mainline denominations.

The Biblical understanding of altruism involves the desire to and practicalities of actually seeking to improve the lot of oppressed or unfortunate people. The fraudulent collectivist understanding of altruism is the desire to and practicalities of using oppressed or unfortunate people as tools by which elite Progressive's lust for power can be advanced. The difference is vast, but well-meaning Christians can be all too easily deceived into supporting the latter.

For example, using the Biblical concept of altruism, Christians would be at the forefront of work to provide Chicago's minority communities with alternatives to the utterly failed and discredited public school system. There would be no thought of "this is the best that can be done for these people" or "I don't want these people competing with my children for the best jobs." No, the unfortunate people living in these oppressed (by the dominant Progressive political class) communities would be viewed as children of God with all the value and potential of all other human beings. There would be no thought of political gain or economic advantage. No, the thought would be that it's a scandal that the human beings in these communities have been subjected to educational malfeasance for generations and it has got to stop.

But, through the secular collectivist concept of altruism Christians are hoodwinked into supporting, for generations, the interests of a Progressive elite whose power rests on the unending subjugation of minority communities to educational failure. The Democrat politicians

continue to rake in the votes, the bureaucrats maintain their privilege and the teachers union holds on to its power. And, the deceived Christians become an integral part of that machine of cruel oppression through their belief that they altruistically care about these minority communities.

They are fooled by the sleight of hand by which the amount of money offered is substituted for the supposed outcome desired. That is, Christians are convinced that by demanding ever more money for Chicago Public Schools they are seeking the best interests for minority communities. But quite the opposite occurs. All the politicians, bureaucrats and teacher unions become more powerful while all the minority families suffer absolutely scandalous educational results without the slightest hope of improvement. And, all that money and power is directed into the collectivist Progressive political structure, thus ensuring unending control over, and destruction of, human lives.

A second sleight of hand deception is the substitution of intent for results. That is, Christians are convinced that as long as their intentions are pure it doesn't matter in the slightest if actual lives are improved. In fact, the corruption can become so deep that Christians come to almost welcome continued suffering because otherwise the recipients of their good intentions would disappear. This destructive codependency between giver and receiver can create a powerful disincentive to actually solving the underlying issues. This dynamic is often referred to as "moral hazard."

Similar arguments can be made concerning crime, homelessness, illegal immigration and welfare, among others. This is why it's difficult for many Christians to embrace the social ministries offered by their churches and denominations. It's not that they don't want to help the poor and oppressed. Rather, it's the clear sense that "help" is only a mask covering the true intent, which is the maintenance and feeding of the evil, oppressive collectivist secular political project. That project is diametrically opposed to altruism as taught in the Bible, and those in and outside the church who engage in this deception must be confronted and corrected. Otherwise an entire new generation of Christians will be fooled into supporting evil in the name of following Christ.

Following Christ?

Opening Thoughts

If you are a member of a Mainline Christian denomination you have likely been incessantly told to “follow Christ” by participating in programs that have a distinctive political leaning. That distinctive leaning is almost uniformly Leftist Progressivism. If you read the Introduction then you are already familiar with this quote describing this situation, from *An Anxious Age: The Post-Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of America* by Joseph Bottum.

Formed in the victory of civil rights activism, a new version of the social gospel movement became the default theology of church bureaucrats in the Mainline.

The churches “increasingly turned their attention to the drafting of social statements on a variety of contemporary problems,” as the religious historian Peter J. Thuesen has noted, and their statements “revealed a shared opinion among Mainline executives that the churches’ primary public role was social advocacy.”

So, as has been discussed in the previous two sections, to “follow Christ,” has been reduced to passivity in the presence of sin and unthinking approval of altruistic solutions. This faulty understanding of “following Christ” is illuminated in the following excerpt from a book by Matt Walsh titled *Church of Cowards: A Wake-Up Call to Complacent Christians*.

So when Christians are urged to be “compassionate,” we know what is really meant: Shut up and go with the flow. Mind your business. Don’t make people feel bad about their choices. This is not only not compassionate; it is, in fact, the exact opposite of compassionate. True compassion is a strong and vibrant and heroic thing. Compassion comes from the Latin for “co-suffering.” To be compassionate towards others is to take on their suffering, to share in their pain in the hopes of guiding them towards a good end. Christ showed us the most perfect form of compassion when He came and suffered and died for the sins of man. Christ’s passion was compassion, co-suffering. He took on our pain and felt it for us.

But to suffer for our sins, He first had to see them and recognize them for the dirty, deadly things they are. To be compassionate to us amidst our sin He had to be unaccepting and intolerant of our sin. This is what compassion means. It is suffering. It is sacrifice. Compassion is not always polite. It is rarely easygoing. It is never enabling, never passive. Its aim, ultimately, is Heaven. That is the sort of compassion we receive from Him, and it is the sort of compassion we should give to others.

The faux compassion we are called to these days is just indifference by another name. The “compassionate” person of this sort really cares primarily about his own comfort. Helping others overcome sin and temptation would make him uncomfortable because it would force him to confront the darkness in his own soul, so he says nothing and does nothing, and he tells himself that his selfishness is love and his cowardice is courage. His compassion is a compassion entirely devoid of compassion. In fact, his compassion is a grave injustice. When he says we ought to “accept” all “lifestyles,” however sinful, and that we ought never speak of Hell or call anything a sin, he is doing actual harm to his brothers and sisters in Christ. It’s not just that he’s failing to help them, but that he’s actively hurting them.

At this point some might be thinking: “But what about the capture of the Evangelical denominations by the Reactionary Right?” I’m certainly aware of this issue, and to the extent that it is true the Evangelical Church should repent of it. But my personal experience is with the Mainline Church, so may the Evangelicals deal with their problems and I will deal with those near to me.

And, that, “near to me” problem is that the definition of “following Christ” is organically related to participating in ministries that to one extent or another advance the program of secular Progressive Leftism. Thus, I participate in a Christian denomination where to “follow Christ” is, in effect, to support a social justice agenda that reads as if it were pulled straight from the Democrat National Committee Platform.

But I reject the claim that, “following Christ” is accomplished by the means demanded by my denominational leadership. In fact, I will claim and attempt to demonstrate that they are deceiving their followers on this crucial point.

Central but Ignored Characteristics of Christ’s Healings

I have been addressing how Mainline theology distorts the person and purpose of Jesus Christ to advance its secular, partisan political agenda. I have also addressed how these distortions and deceptions have twisted our ministries of compassion into counterproductive, if not destructive directions. Had the events of 2020 not occurred I well may have considered this previous work to be sufficient. However, those events exposed the extent to which these false ideas have corrupted the very foundation of Christian charity. Therefore a deeper dive is required.

I’d like to begin by identifying and discussing four Biblically based points about the nature of Christ’s healings. As in other cases, I propose that we seriously seek and follow Scripture’s actual testimony. If you are a member in a Mainline denomination you already know all the

arguments for why “following Jesus” is identical to supporting whatever the current Progressive Party Line demands. So I’m here going to bring to your attention aspects of Christ’s healing (i.e., acts of compassion) ministry that call this conclusion into question.

Jesus Brought Tangible Healing

This point may seem so obvious that it’s silly to mention, let alone lead with. And yet I will eventually leverage this uncontroversial fact to evaluate the ways in which Mainline religious institutions approach their ministries of compassion. So, let it be stated simply that in the vast majority of cases the consequence of an act of healing by Jesus was sight, health and wholeness restored. But of greater significance, a human soul was healed and made new.

I fully and thankfully acknowledging that there are a myriad of wonderful ministries within Mainline churches that bring tangible help and healing to people in great need throughout the world. My following comments thus do not in the slightest apply to these ministries. However, particularly as we move into the leadership cadre, we begin to observe a stubborn partisanship, an inflexible ideological framework and a misanthropic disdain for the actual results of their “solutions” to social problems.

Let me explain by becoming specific. I have lived in the Chicago metro area for 39 years and counting (that’s almost two generations). Over that long time period the Presbytery of Chicago has been utterly unwavering in its support of the Progressive political power structure that dominates Chicago and surrounding communities. This support includes:

- The monopolistic public school system that has thoroughly failed to educate our disadvantaged children while enriching the teacher’s unions;
- A judicial system that is a revolving door for gang members who wantonly murder each other and kill innocent bystanders (all too often including children) using guns while simultaneously demanding ever more gun laws on law abiding citizens;
- A public welfare system that has devastated and continues to destroy family formation in disadvantaged communities, thus ensuring higher levels of neglect, poverty, addiction and criminality.

Accompanying this utter refusal to acknowledge, let alone respond, to these generations of pathetic policy failure, our spiritual leaders continually pose as superior moral beings whose intentions are always the best. But, after generations of failure; after generations of suffering, death, depravation and subjugation to these failed policies, we at some point must draw conclusions about the reality of their motives and purposes. Their motives are also illuminated when we observe how they, with their secular Progressive allies, close ranks to destroy anyone

who proposes credible reforms to this power structure that virtually guarantees them worldly power.

It's utterly corrupt in every sense of the word to seek the destruction of people who see the suffering of the Welfare State's supposed beneficiaries and offer reforms to improve their lives, all while maintaining the very policies that led to the catastrophe. Make no mistake, this entrenched, vicious coalition of Progressives, including many Christian organizations, is absolutely committed to preventing even the smallest reforms to the Welfare State. And this commitment exists in spite of well over 50 years of failure. I simply ask, are these the actions of people who are committed to results that demonstrably raise others out of poverty? Or are they the actions of people who are content for the supposed beneficiaries of their compassion to fall ever deeper into hopelessness, violence, and despair? I contend that almost 60 years on it is utterly credible to conclude the latter.

We do not have Christ's miraculous power to immediately heal the broken and raise up the disadvantaged. But we should follow Him by insisting that our ministries of compassion and policy positions actually demonstrate tangible benefit. By our scandalous refusal to do so we do the opposite of "following Christ."

Jesus Healed Specific, Individual People

The focus for Jesus was almost uniformly on an individual, specific person rather than the group to which they belonged. By so doing He raised up the value of each individual person as a unique creation. Thus although the West is regularly criticized for its focus on individualism, we can yet trace the origin of this perspective directly back to the Person and Purpose of Jesus Christ. That's not to deny that we have distorted and debased individualism through our fallenness. But it is crucial to understand that our valuing of people as individual creations is deeply Christian.

But some might respond that Jesus did indeed take actions that powerfully affected groups of people. Two examples that immediately come to mind are women and the Samaritans. Yes, Jesus did indeed by His actions bring these two (and many other, including children) groups up from positions of inferiority. But, He never did so by claiming that they were "victims" as a group. No, He did so on an individual basis treating the women and Samaritans whom He encountered with love, compassion and respect.

The closest Jesus approached to a group identity perspective may have been in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Here the Samaritan is shown to be the supposedly inferior outsider who is actually the most true to the Kingdom of God. However, Jesus certainly didn't say that the Samaritan was morally superior because he belonged to a "victimized" group. No, He was saying

that the group from which you come does not determine your intellectual, moral or spiritual standing before God.

This point is made abundantly clear in Christ's encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well. After she brings up the differences between the Samaritans and the Jews Jesus says this.

“You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews.”

John 4:22

Thus Jesus doesn't give the Samaritans an unearned superiority because of their “victim” status. But, because of their shared humanity through God's act of creation He draws them and all humanity up towards the Truth that ultimately unites us as Christians (and directs us to see that humanity in all others while hoping that they too are to be found in Salvation through Christ).

Jesus Didn't Diminish or Deny the Human Agency of Those He Healed

This is an absolutely crucial point. The Biblical testimony is clear that Jesus simply didn't seek to diminish the responsibility of people whom He healed for their beliefs or behavior. Yes, He responded to their need and/or faith with compassion and healing. The most obvious example here is the woman caught in adultery in John 8:2-11.

At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”

“No one, sir,” she said.

“Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.”

This compassion is clearly not the cheap counterfeit practiced by our Mainline leadership. For them compassion for the needy means convincing them that there is nothing that they can do to solve their problems other than vote for the Progressive regime. That is, they treat the victims of their “compassion” as subhumans who lack the agency to think and act for themselves. They are assumed to bear no responsibility for anything that has befallen them. No, everything is caused by some unseen, undefinable outside force (e.g., systemic racism) that controls them like puppets on a string.

Jesus Didn't Use His Healings to Advance a Secular Political Agenda

There is no doubt that Christ's teachings have had a massive impact on human politics for two-thousand years and counting. How could it be otherwise given His inversion of natural (i.e., fallen) human thought where “the first become last” and each child, woman, Samaritan, human is revealed to be of immense value?

BUT, this impact was not achieved by tying His Gospel to any human political project. In fact, Jesus regularly denied that His purpose was for worldly political change. One place where this becomes obvious in Christ's confrontation with Pilate at his trial (John 18:33-36).

Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?”

“Is that your own idea,” Jesus asked, “or did others talk to you about me?”

“Am I a Jew?” Pilate replied. “Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What is it you have done?”

Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place.”

And yet, we find our Mainline leaders incessantly claiming that this Gospel is absolutely synonymous with whatever secular Progressive policy is currently in favor. Thus by their false teaching there is no difference between the demands of Christ's Gospel and those of the Progressive worldly regime!

Now that I've identified and discussed the four central but ignored characteristics of Christ's healings the next step is to consider their relationship to current Mainline ministries.

Understanding the Deception

One of the most important boundaries within Christianity is between those who view their faith as allegiance to an eternal, just and merciful God and those who view their faith as a means by which to achieve their worldly goals. Of course, no one is completely on one side of this boundary. We all move back and forth between these two positions, often without realizing that we are so doing. For example, it's perfectly normal for a Christian who holds a particular political philosophy to consider it to be based on a proper understanding of Scripture and/or on our experiences as part of a faith community. These beliefs should be moderated by the understanding that there are other Christians who come to opposing conclusions based on that same Scripture and very similar experiences.

But we all likely know Christians whose beliefs are not in the slightest moderated in this manner. Be they partisans of the Left, Right or Other, they live in a spiritual world hermetically sealed from opposing ideas. To them the Bible clearly teaches Capitalism, or Socialism, or Environmentalism, or Nationalism, or on and on. The only way to sustain such beliefs is to, consciously or not, ignore huge sections of Scripture. But perhaps even more dangerously it is sustained by viewing the purpose of our faith and of the Scripture that informs it as merely a tool by which our political beliefs can be justified and propagated.

Our Christian communities would greatly benefit from the humble acknowledgment that the transformation of God's eternal Truth into our temporal world is fraught with peril and uncertainty. This by no means allows us to accept any and all positions. Nor does it demand that we submit to sinful ideas. What it could enable is the faithful exploration of this transformation among believers with significantly different perspectives. However, if you are a Christian in a Mainline Protestant denomination you most likely find yourself being told that the only legitimate path to "following Christ" (particularly with regard to helping the poor) is to support every policy and belief that is currently dominant in the secular Progressive Left.

This is a "Motte and Bailey" deception⁷. Here it is for the issue of helping the poor.

- Identify a statement/position that is generally assumed to be obviously true/virtuous (the Motte)
 - "Jesus Christ teaches us to care about and for the poor and oppressed among us."
- Place adjacent to that true/virtuous position a radical, indefensible proposal (the Bailey) that claims to address the problem being discussed

⁷ See Appendix B: The Motte and Bailey Deception Strategy for a detailed explanation.

- “The most virtuous way for a follower of Christ to care about/for the poor and oppressed is to support government funded and administrated programs whose stated purpose is to care about/for the poor and oppressed.”
- If anyone criticizes the Bailey, claim that this is the exact equivalent of attacking the Motte
 - “So, since you oppose large government programs to care about/for the poor and oppressed you want them to suffer while you prosper, which is the opposite of following Christ!”
- When the criticizer backs off because they don’t want to be seen opposing a true/virtuous idea then the social Christian justice advocate throws the Bailey in with the Motte and the argument has been won.
 - “So you agree that the only way for Christians to follow Christ in care for the poor and oppressed is through large government programs!”

By this means millions of otherwise sensible Christians have been convinced to thoughtlessly support policies and programs that have not only utterly failed to achieve their stated objectives, but that have actively encouraged the destruction of the very poor/oppressed that they claim to help. Perhaps 30 years ago a Progressive Christian could credibly claim that the jury was still out on the consequences of the Welfare State on its supposed beneficiaries. However today as we witness the fourth (at least) generation of broken families, rampant criminality (e.g., gangs), economic depravation and spiritual despair in the very group that the Welfare State claims to benefit, we cannot with a clear conscience allow these claims to go unchallenged. Not at least if the real goal is to care about/for these people.

But, as with so much of our institutional collapse into corruption and deceit, that clearly is not the real goal. No, the real goal is to create a cohort of voters who live in such brokenness, criminality, depravation and despair that they accept the dependency that drives all of this and thus vote overwhelmingly for the political party that provides the meager sustenance upon which they depend.

And for the Christians who drive this deception the goal is not to care about/for the poor and oppressed, but rather to be seen on the street corner yelling loudly that they care about/for them. If the opposite of their boast actually occurs, well so what? For they have their reward already.

The Big Con and the Army of Grifters

Opening Thoughts

There are many reasons that I reject the leadership of the PCUSA in general and that of the Presbytery of Chicago in particular. But there is one experience as a Commissioner to the Presbytery of Chicago that stands out as particularly destructive of any confidence.

Presbytery meetings are generally held in host churches. So in the Presbytery of Chicago we would meet in a variety of member churches in the city and suburbs. One of these meetings was held at an inner-city church as the minority community murder rate was spiking. As you can easily imagine this issue dominated much of the discussion at that meeting.

Presbytery meetings then were organized as a mixture of worship and business activities. A central part of the worship component was a sermon by a guest pastor or the pastor of the host church. On that particular day the host church's pastor preached.

The sermon explicitly addressed the rising tide of violence and despair occurring in that pastor's local community. His description of the chaos, fear and hopelessness was vivid and convincing. I found myself being moved as the sermon progressed towards its climax. And then, out of the blue, the sermon concluded with:

“And so give us more money!”

The entire cohort of Christian saints immediately responded with a thunderous standing ovation. I, stunned by this turn of events, stood but did not clap. The pastor stood in his pulpit surveying this scene with grim satisfaction. I have no idea if he noticed my lack of applause, but certainly those nearby couldn't have missed it.

I'm now sorry that I stood at all. In fact, the most honorable and courageous response may well have been to walk out.

For this pastor had crafted a sermon that used the suffering of his own community as the foundation upon which to build a pathetic grift (to acquire money or property illicitly). The idea that any marginal increase in the welfare program dollars sent to this community would improve the situation is absurd on its face. In fact, given the utter failure of these programs, including the descent of the communities they “serve” into multi-generational poverty and dependence, more money could credibly make things even worse.

But no such thought went through the minds of the movers and shakers of the Presbytery of Chicago. No, they are true believers in the secular Progressive political movement and see themselves as committed activists in this cause. By so doing they have aligned themselves with the worldly power structure of the Chicago Democrat Machine. Yes, I'm certain that there were many in that audience who stood and applauded with mixed feelings, if not a guilty conscience.

But to have not participated as modeled by their elite betters could have led to social death and moral leprosy.

This incident provides a practical introduction to this section. In what follows I will explore the scope and nature of the army of grifters who work incessantly to pull off the big con.

An Elite Caste of Grifters

The specific personal experience described in the previous section is representative of a general situation within the West. That situation is the transformation of our institutions from the purposes for which we granted them responsibility and trust to those that negate, if not purposefully destroy, that which we thought they were protecting.

So, the grift in play is that members of various (and most) elite institutions accept the pay, perks and power of their positions under the pretense that they are doing so in furtherance of the responsibilities and obligations of those institutions. But in reality they are using those positions as staging areas for execution of a partisan political campaign that seeks the destruction of the goods for which their institution was created to support and defend.

The consequences of this grift are two-fold, those being:

1. The institution itself is “hollowed out” in that it no longer can or even wants to pursue its founding purpose
2. The purpose that the institution actually pursues is antithetical to its founding purpose.

An article titled “[Did Populism Start A 21st Century Anti-Clerical Revolution?](#)” contains a helpful overview of this institutional scandal.

I had often read the term clerisy used in today’s context to describe the NGO-media-academic-professional activist class, and thought of it mainly as a propaganda term. Now that the dust has settled, I do think the clearest way to understand the simultaneous class and culture war nature of populism that made it different to existing right and left categories is that it was a struggle between the clerisy – a vast secular moral teaching class created in the 20th century who accrue power, set the terms of moral virtue and prestige and parasite existing wealth through producing and maintaining ideology – and those who found themselves outside the clerisy, subject to its punitive rules without gaining any benefits from its parasitic existence.

The key operative term in this description is parasitic. That is, this cadre exists by extracting money from the productive parts of society. In a healthy society this elite cohort fulfills purposes that have important value, but that may not be adequately or appropriately supported by the free market. I do suggest that some of these institutions may well do a better job within the

competitive environment. But for reasons beyond the scope of this section past decisions have placed them outside of this domain.

The Big Con

Perhaps I've convinced you (or at least got you wondering) that there is an army of grifters out there who use their official positions of responsibility as platforms from which to advance unrelated partisan political goals. This army thus takes all of the money, prestige, power and influence associated with their official positions and use them only secondarily (at most) to exercise their official duties. As a consequence the organizations they run are hollowed out and repurposed as just another vehicle for Progressive political action. If you wonder why so many of our major institutions have become utterly incompetent at executing on what was their original purpose, this is a major if not the dominant cause.

But "the big con" behind all of this gift is the claim that it is their commitment to that original purpose that compels them to undertake this partisan political activism. In our universities the professors and administrators claim that it is their unfailing adherence to intellectual truth that drives their activism. And, in our Mainline churches the pastors and administrators claim that it is their unfailing adherence to their Christian faith that drives their activism. They are deceiving us.

No, these people making up this army of grifters have perverted and rejected their original missions, converting their positions and their institutions into cogs in the Progressive/Woke political machine. They attempt to destroy or drive out anyone who holds even the slightest opposing views. They will falsely claim that Critical Race Theory is Christian. They will lie to your children, claiming that totalitarian socialist power is the only means of creating a just society. And, they will pretend that their faith and intellect compels them to believe and act in this manner. By so doing they seek to demoralize any opposition by implying it must arise from evil or ignorant intent.

This army has conquered most of our institutions. It runs most of our government agencies, educational system, corporations, media, sports, churches and large cities (among others). But they cannot win unless a clear majority of citizens willingly submit to their illegitimate power. They are doing everything possible to demoralize and diminish any possible opposition. They know that this is their time and they need to move fast to consolidate their position, and they are.

The question of if we will submit now hangs in the balance. If we do submit we will have earned our fate as serfs in the new caste system. If we fight back in sustained, nonviolent rejection then we can reclaim our rightful, God given place as free citizens of a Republic seeking freedom and justice for all.

Woke Christianity

Opening Thoughts

Up to this point my comments have tended to be general in nature. That's fine, since the ways in which partisan politics seeps into our churches is both varied and unpredictable. However, this discussion would be incomplete were I to stop at the general. For the most dangerous, insidious challenge to orthodox Christianity facing us right now is the invasion of Wokeness into our churches.

The claim that Woke ideology has successfully invaded Christianity in the United States is indisputable. We can be absolutely sure that if this ideology has gained a solid foothold in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC, the largest Protestant denomination in the nation), it is already powerful in all the Mainline denominations.

However, Wokeness is only the most recent ideological fashion to plunder Mainline denominations. They have long ago demolished all theological and social barriers that separate Christianity from partisan political activism. And that political activism is explicitly and enthusiastically hard left-wing, that is, Progressive.

The question to be addressed is if Woke ideology is comparable with, or a legitimate extension of orthodox Christian theology. My experience is that the Christian leaders who embrace Wokeness choose implicit as opposed to explicit arguments to support this position. That is, they bring up the issues of racism and justice, say that Christ in particular and God's Word in general (usually with a few Biblical quotes thrown in) oppose racism and injustice, and then say that the proper Christian response is application of Woke concepts and conclusions.

However, note well: this is an argument of adjacency, not of logical demonstration. Thus, it is just another Motte and Bailey⁸ argument in which the Motte is the Bible's opposition to racism and injustice and the Bailey is the conclusion that the only proper means by which Christians should respond is to submit to Woke ideology.

This section is devoted to understanding and assessing this threat to Christianity. Given that this issue is murky to most readers and contains a blizzard of academic terms, I will begin by discussing key concepts and their associated definitions. I will then explore the psychological, philosophical and spiritual foundations upon which the Woke invasion of the church sits. I will then discuss the practical means by which Wokeness is advanced in the Christian Church, that being the implicit or explicit use of ideas from Critical Race Theory (CRT). This section will conclude with a few closing thoughts.

⁸ See Appendix B.

Definitions

Were I to fully cover all the concepts associated with Woke ideology this section would go from necessarily to overwhelmingly tedious. I will therefore limit the following definitions to only the absolutely essential concepts and use footnotes to cover the secondary terms. The reader is welcome to dig deeper into these secondary areas if they share my gluttony for punishment.

Woke

The definition of “Woke” is difficult to pin down because this concept spans so many of the pathological concepts running havoc in our society (e.g., Identity Politics⁹, Intersectionality¹⁰, Utopianism, Cultural Marxism¹¹, Critical Race Theory, etc.). Perhaps this description from The Federalist is a sufficient definition.

Once one is woke to the systemic oppression of this world order, he sees things differently and no longer conforms slavishly to the acceptable manners and behaviors of “the system.” He becomes antinomian, rejecting all law, because the laws only support the oppressive system.

On these terms, violence against the system is not aggressive, but a defense of his emerging self. Who would fault an innocent man for violently breaking free from his prison? That violence also extends to language, because language animates the constructs making up the system. The archons¹² use language to craft the structures by which the un-woke mindlessly view reality. Not only language, but all the communicative icons constructing the psychic architecture of culture are slated for iconoclasm¹³

⁹ A tendency for people of a particular religion, race, social background, etc., to form exclusive political alliances, moving away from traditional broad-based party politics.

¹⁰ The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

¹¹ The core ideology of historic Marxism in which the concept of class is replaced with the with the concept of identity (i.e., Identity Politics).

¹² rulers

¹³ The action of attacking or assertively rejecting cherished beliefs and institutions or established values and practices.

Critical Theory

Critical Theory has become the Left’s “theory of everything” by which any and all of their actions and beliefs can be justified. A high-level summary follows.

Critical theory is a broad area of knowledge that originated with the Frankfurt School¹⁴ in the 1930s and has expanded and evolved dramatically since then. It has spawned entire disciplines such as Critical Race Theory, Critical Pedagogy, and Queer Theory and is highly influential within the social justice movement. Contemporary critical theory views reality through the lens of power, dividing people into oppressed groups and oppressor groups along various axes like race, class, gender, sexuality orientation, physical ability and age.

A deeper, broader explanation is provided in this section from a post by Andrew Sullivan called “The Roots Of Wokeness.”

We need to understand that all these words have one thing in common: they are products of an esoteric, academic discipline called critical theory, which has gained extraordinary popularity in elite education in the past few decades, and appears to have reached a cultural tipping point in the middle of the 2010s. Most normal people have never heard of this theory—or rather an interlocking web of theories—that is nonetheless changing the very words we speak and write and the very rationale of the institutions integral to liberal democracy. ...

... the core truth of our condition, this theory argues, is that we live in a system of interlocking oppressions that penalize various identity groups in a society. And all power is zero-sum: you either have power over others or they have power over you. ... All power is gained only through some other group’s loss. And so the point became not simply to interpret the world, but to change it, to coin a phrase, an imperative which explains why some critics call this theory a form of neo-Marxism.

The “neo” comes from switching out Marxism’s focus on materialism and class in favor of various oppressed group identities, who are constantly in conflict the way classes were always in conflict. And in this worldview, individuals only exist at all as a place where these group identities intersect. You have no independent existence outside these power dynamics. I am never just me. I’m a point where the intersecting identities of white, gay, male, Catholic, immigrant, HIV-positive, cis, and English all somehow collide. You can hear this echoed in the famous words of

¹⁴ A group of researchers associated with the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt, Germany, who applied Marxism to a radical interdisciplinary social theory.

Ayanna Pressley: “We don’t need any more brown faces that don’t want to be a brown voice. We don’t need any more black faces that don’t want to be a black voice.” An assertion of individuality is, in fact, an attack upon the group and an enabling of oppression.

Just as this theory denies the individual, it also denies the universal. There are no universal truths, no objective reality, just narratives that are expressed in discourses and language that reflect one group’s power over another.¹⁵ There is no distinction between objective truth and subjective experience, because the former is an illusion created by the latter. So instead of an argument, you merely have an identity showdown, in which the more oppressed always wins, because that subverts the hierarchy. These discourses of power, moreover, never end; there is no progress as such, no incremental inclusion of more and more identities into a pluralist, liberal unified project; there is the permanent reality of the oppressors and the oppressed. And all that we can do is constantly expose and eternally resist these power-structures on behalf of the oppressed.

Here we have begun to see the outlines of Critical Theory’s cultural context and political power base.

Dr. Voddie Baucham, Jr.; Dean of Theology, African Christian University, Zambia, provides the connection between Critical Theory, politics and Christianity in a [video by Founders Ministries](#). Following is a transcript of that segment.

Dr. Baucham: And the reason that women are considered a minority is because the idea in critical theory is hegemony. Right? OK, the people who established the hegemony, they are the oppressors and it’s not minority/majority, right? It’s oppressor and oppressed. And we use the term minority to refer to oppressed groups. And so even though there are more women than there are men, because the hegemony is white, male, CIS gendered, heterosexual, you know so on and so forth, able bodied and Christian. And that’s the other thing. OK, Christian is part of the hegemony as well. So because that’s part of the hegemony anybody who’s not part of that is part of the oppressed and needs to be liberated from the hegemony which includes biblical Christianity.

So, I have identified three important insights, those being:

1. Critical Theory is a foundational component of the entire Leftist, Progressive project;
2. Critical Theory is embedded in Christianity, and;
3. Critical Theory is fundamentally anti-Christian.

¹⁵ This sentence is referring to the philosophical area called “postmodernism.”

Don't look away. This is what the radical Progressive Left is doing right under our noses. The question is, will we take note and then do something about it?

Critical Race Theory

One of the challenges associated with discussing Critical Race Theory (CRT) is generating a comprehensive, accurate definition. This occurs because CRT is both a highly technical academic theory of law and a highly effective propaganda tool. Although the academic aspect is certainly foundational, it is the propagandistic aspect that directly affects our lives.

It has been widely reported that CRT "training" has invaded many of our major government institutions. In 2020 the Trump Administration issued an Executive Order that attempted to suppress this practice (the Executive Order was canceled by the Biden Administration so is no longer available to the public).

The main value of this document is its definition of what specifically constitutes CRT's core ideas. This description is highly credible because:

- It is based on actual CRT training material;
- In order for the Order to be effective, it must accurately and comprehensively identify the key tenets of CRT. If it fails to do so then it can be effectively nullified by showing that the actual ideas included in CRT training are different from those identified in the Order.

So, here is that definition of CRT as a set of propagandistic ideas.

(1) one race or sex is inherently superior to another race or sex; (2) the United States is fundamentally racist or sexist; (3) an individual, by virtue of his or her race or sex, is inherently racist, sexist, or oppressive, whether consciously or unconsciously; (4) an individual should be discriminated against or receive adverse treatment solely or partly because of his or her race or sex; (5) members of one race or sex cannot and should not attempt to treat others without respect to race or sex; (6) an individual's moral character is necessarily determined by his or her race or sex; (7) an individual, by virtue of his or her race or sex, bears responsibility for actions committed in the past by other members of the same race or sex; (8) any individual should feel discomfort, guilt, anguish, or any other form of psychological distress on account of his or her race or sex; or (9) meritocracy or traits such as a hard work ethic are racist or sexist, or were created by a particular race to oppress another race.

Systemic Racism

Points (2), (3), (6), (7) and (9) of the above CRT description can be organized under the concept of "Systemic racism." It's difficult to find a clear, generally accepted definition of this

term. In fact, the Woke Progressive Elite prefers to use it without any definition, the better by which to apply it to any issue or situation. My personal definition of “systemic racism” follows.

It’s unmeasurable and undefinable but is everywhere and it can magically manifest itself in any person, event or institution based on the feelings of the “oppressed” or those “speaking for the oppressed.” If you deny any of this then it is proof positive that you are a racist and white supremacist.

If the Woke Progressive Elite refuse to define “systemic racism,” that doesn’t mean that it can’t be. One means is to do a deep dive into the Critical Race Theory (CRT) literature and attempt to synthesize a credible definition. That’s what James Lindsay does in his discussion with Allie Beth Stuckey (“[It’s Vital That Christians Understand This About Critical Theory | Guest: James Lindsay | Ep 431](#)”). In order to remove the fog of impenetrable academic jargon that obscures their ideas, Mr. Lindsay uses a metaphor to identify the core ideas within “systemic racism” thinking.

James Lindsay: Another thing that we can say about systemic racism is when you say everything and everywhere, just how preposterous this idea is. ... When I was out on a walk with my wife around our block ... I noticed a car went by really fast. ... All of a sudden, I had this whole understanding of “systemic” things ... Imagine that I tripped ... over a bottle that was laying on the sidewalk and I knocked my wife into the road right at the wrong time and she got hit by the car. Who’s at fault and what’s the systemic explanation? [It] would be: well, we have a system that involves people buying and driving cars. If our system didn’t have cars, then we wouldn’t have that. If ... we didn’t have a culture that drank alcohol ... then that beer bottle wouldn’t have been there for me to trip over.

... the idea is that now we have this whole economic system where the very existence of beer and the very existence of cars and thus the people who purchase and indulge in cars or beer ... that would rely on those things and name those things as good ... everybody who’s involved in those industries, everybody who’s involved in propping up those industries, which means everybody, bears some moral complicity ... for the fact that my wife died by me tripping over the bottle and knocking her into a car. That’s [how] systemic thinking actually works. ...

[The] argument is that you have to just keep expanding until you get to the point where all white people and all people who benefit from whiteness are complicit in whiteness and are therefore complicit in racism and white supremacy and must therefore be able to be identified as such as people who are complicit in racism and white supremacy. In other words that they are racists and white supremacists, and this is a terrible way to think. ...

What's impressive about this metaphor is that it's simple enough to be clear but complex enough to capture the key ideas. So, let's review: A man walking with his wife trips on a beer bottle and accidentally knocks her into the path of a speeding car, resulting in her tragic death.

Were a "normal person" to determine blame they would focus on aspects such as: (1) the possible inattention of the husband to his surroundings, (2) the person who threw the beer bottle onto the sidewalk and (3) the speeding car driver. Note that all of these considerations focus on human agency and behavior, and likely none of them would be considered to be a primary cause worthy of condemnation. No, it would likely be seen as a tragic sequence of events that led to a terrible consequence with no one at primary fault.

But that's not how the supporters of systemic racism see it. In their world view no one has any agency and there are no behaviors that could have prevented the tragedy. No, it is the impersonal, diffuse environment in which cars are built, bought and driven; where beer is brewed, consumed and the bottle discarded that leads to the result. There are no possible reforms such as laws against littering or better speed limit enforcement that can be implemented. No, only the utter destruction of the social-economic system that leads to the existence and use of cars and beer is sufficient to meet the crisis. This is insanity and idiocy made credible only by careful obfuscation of the truth.

Allie Beth Stuckey: Yeah, it's an awful way to think. Because ... in your metaphor they would also say that [it] is ... some kind of systemic problem where everyone associated with even the manufacturing of the beer and the car is morally implicated. They would say you can't ... point to people who are successful who are black to say that that's not systemic racism. So even if you didn't trip over the beer can and you didn't push your wife in front of the car, she didn't die, they would still say the fact that those impediments existed, the fact that those risks existed even if you didn't trip and nothing bad happened, that is still evidence of a systemic problem. And still, everyone is morally implicated so that's why you can't talk about well hey, nonwhite people in America are ... more successful than nonwhite people anywhere else on earth.

Allie Stuckey adds another layer of depth onto the metaphor. She points out that, by systemic racism's reasoning, no actual tragedy need occur to condemn the entire system. No, since the system is responsible for beer bottles on the sidewalk and cars on the road it callously creates deadly risks that shouldn't be allowed to exist. This is how we can end up with the appalling spectacle of billionaire Oprah Winfrey interviewing multi-millionaire Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, both bemoaning their struggles against systemic racism in their opulent Santa Barbara neighborhood.

This is the wicked madness that we would be allowing were CRT to achieve its goals. No sane person would want to live in such a world. But the Woke Progressives are betting that most sane people will not understand CRT's real meaning and purpose until it is too late.

Foundations

Given my claim that the above concepts are insane and destructive, one might wonder how it is that otherwise sane people could fall under their spell. My contention is that, right under our feet, the psychological, philosophical and spiritual foundations have been transformed in ways that enable insane ideas to gain acceptance.

Psychological

Over the past few years I've been struggling to understand what appears to be ever increasing levels of troubling, even bizarre behavior within Western Civilization. An article by Wilfred M. McClay called "The Strange Persistence of Guilt" comes closer to providing a workable hypothesis than anything I've seen. Dr. McClay contends that, having expunged religious faith from our minds, we are left helpless before the feelings of sin that haunt us. Feeling that sin but also being helpless to integrate it into a redemptive framework, we strike out irrationally at each other. And so, we come to the crux of our current psychological predicament, that being the increasing inhumanity in our supposed pursuit of social good untethered to religious faith.

What makes the situation dangerous for us, as Fredriksen¹⁶ observes, is not only the fact that we have lost the ability to make conscious use of the concept of sin but that we have also lost any semblance of a "coherent idea of redemption," the idea that has always been required to accompany the concept of sin in the past and tame its harsh and punitive potential. The presence of vast amounts of unacknowledged sin in a culture, a culture full to the brim with its own hubristic sense of world-conquering power and agency but lacking any effectual means of achieving redemption for all the unacknowledged sin that accompanies such power: This is surely a moral crisis in the making—a kind of moral-transactional analogue to the debt crisis that threatens the world's fiscal and monetary health. The rituals of scapegoating, of public humiliation and shaming, of multiplying morally impermissible utterances and sentiments and punishing them with disproportionate severity, are visibly on the increase in our public life. They are not merely signs of intolerance or incivility, but of a deeper moral disorder,

¹⁶ Paula Fredriksen, is the Aurelio Professor of Scripture emerita at Boston University.

an Unbehagen¹⁷ that cannot be willed away by the psychoanalytic trick of pretending that it does not exist.

And yet, in the end, even this inspired meditation appears to fall short. For, after making a powerful case that Western Civilization is failing due to rejection of its Judeo-Christian foundations, Dr. McClay ends by, apparently, recommending a “social utilitarian” perspective for rediscovery of religion’s value.

I argue that the PCUSA and many other denominations have already pursued this path to utter failure. That is, we have argued that the value of Christianity is its usefulness as a tool (only one among many others) by which to identify and then advance the social good.

What Dr. McClay may not understand, and many of our denominational leaders certainly do not understand, is that Christianity’s power for advancing the social good is a consequence of actual, real belief. And, without that real belief as a first thing, Christianity can’t be anything more than a derivative, inefficient and unreliable vehicle for social change.

It is only through real belief in Christianity’s foundational truths made available to flesh and blood people that there is any hope for humane social change. Neither you nor I can presume to know or control the paths of God’s providence working through a Christian community.

The events that built Western Civilization were filled with violence, cruelty and injustice, which is not surprising to a Reformed Christian. But, somehow, by a Divine Providence that transcends human understanding, out of this chaos of sin there yet emerged a culture that began to affirm the value of each human being as an individual, unique creation of a Sovereign God. And, from that affirmation grew a civil tradition that, incompletely and imperfectly, sought to advance those humane values.

Philosophical

A discussion between James Lindsay and Allie Beth Stuckey provides valuable, accessible insight into the philosophical foundations of Woke worldview. This secular philosophy underpins Progressive Christianity, so it’s important to include that dimension of the discussion. This background is essential to truly understanding the differences between orthodox Christianity and the Woke version of “Christianity.”

Note that the following transcript is heavily edited. This was necessary because both Mr. Lindsay and Allie Stuckey were developing fairly complex ideas as they talked. Therefore there were false starts, sentences that started with one idea and morphed into another, asides and isolated phrases. So my editing sought to isolate their ideas in their own words while removing extraneous and/or confusing text.

¹⁷ unease, uneasiness, discomfort, malaise, discomfiture, discontent

As we enter into the transcript, Mr. Lindsay is discussing how Georg Hegel's¹⁸ philosophy concerning the dialectic development of human ideas can lead to the emergence of a human created god (the Weltgeist¹⁹) who enables the eschaton²⁰. This may all seem pretty esoteric and remote, but I assure you it is not. Yes, few members of the Woke caste (or anyone else for that matter) understands this foundational source. However, if we are ever going to effectively repulse this monstrous heresy then it's essential to understand its roots.

James Lindsay: So, the ideas of the world evolve as people go through this process of negating bad ideas and then finding a higher synthesis and he [Georg Hegel] had this idea of an absolute spirit that he talks about, or an absolute that is the equivalent for him of deity. It is in fact often treated as though it's the same God as the Christians talk about, but it's not. And the idea for him is that this god becomes aware of itself when enough dialectic²¹ has happened, when the Weltgeist gets to the right place and has merged fully ... with the state. And at that point the eschaton occurs because the absolute becomes aware of itself and understands that it is the absolute. And in other words you now have a utopia that has been built on earth and is enshrined in the state. ...

Setting aside all of the terminology, can you doubt that this paragraph accurately describes the ideas and policies being pursued by the Woke cast, be they Christians or not? Note carefully that the world-spirit being described is brought into being by the perfecting of an ideology that then is used to dominate the world.

James Lindsay: So, what you have here in Christianity, you have a God that is I AM, the I AM, the Alpha and the Omega, that which is before everything and after everything, I AM eternal, I AM never changing, I am Yahweh. And so, you have this idea of a God that's eternal and outside of the circles of the world, in fact He is sovereign over the circles of the world.

Although Mr. Lindsay is not a Christian, he does understand and appreciate Christianity. So he accurately describes the Christian God, clearly showing how fundamentally different He is from the Weltgeist.

¹⁸ Georg Hegel (1770 – 1831) was a German philosopher. He is considered one of the most important figures in German idealism and one of the founding figures of modern Western philosophy, with his influence extending to the entire range of contemporary philosophical issues, from epistemology, logic, and metaphysics to aesthetics, philosophy of history, philosophy of religion, political philosophy, and the history of philosophy.

¹⁹ The “world spirit” concept, designates an idealistic principle of world explanation, which can be found from the beginnings of philosophy up to more recent time

²⁰ The final event in the divine plan; the end of the world.

²¹ inquiry into metaphysical contradictions and their solutions

James Lindsay: Whereas in Hegel you have an absolute that becomes. It's not a God. That is, a god that becomes, and it becomes through the process of constantly criticizing and poking at the world and our ideas about the world and changing them. And Hegel saw this as being perfected by being entrusted to an increasingly perfect and increasingly powerful state. ... Marxists translated that into the material realm by saying that capitalism will give way to socialism and then eventually the state will become redundant when we realize we no longer need a state. And then we'll have a communist utopia, which has never happened.

Here Mr. Lindsay has made explicit his comparison of the Christian God and the Hegelian Weltgeist. But he also mentions how this Hegelian concept has been picked up by the Marxists and integrated into their ideology. This is important because many of the Woke/CRT leadership are Marxists. Thus the connection between Hegel and Marxism is important to establish.

James Lindsay: And so, you have to understand that this is the process behind it, and the basis [of] their deity is this god that's becoming by our process of picking at the world, and it is not a God that is, it is a god that becomes by picking at things. ... And as a judge ... that says, "Were you on the right side of history or were you not?" at the very end of this process when it [Weltgeist] becomes aware.

Note that there is no grace, no forgiveness, no mercy in this judgement by the Weltgeist. There is only "yes" or "no."

James Lindsay: So, you can see how this becomes a god of Progressivism because progressive progress away from these evils is kind of taken as the axiomatic thing that's happening. And so, the more time goes by the more of that will have occurred.

It isn't necessary for a Woke Progressives to consciously know and understand this philosophical foundation as they pursue their vision of utopia. But it is there nonetheless. And, in particular, it is there for a professing Christian who embraces Progressivism and/or Wokeness, undermining their Christian faith by negating it and replacing it with a false god. These ideas will be further explored in the following section.

Spiritual

A recent book, titled *American Awakening: Identity Politics and Other Afflictions of Our Time* by Joshua Mitchell adds specificity to the charge that spiritual decay in the Mainline Church is a primary cause of our current religious disaster.

"If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not within us."

Who, today, has the strength to endure the wound that that admission would cause or reveal, to start each day bearing it, because the wound is in us and we

cannot alone heal it? Here is the Cross the mainline churches in America found too difficult to bear. Identity politics offers a shortcut; it retains the categories of transgression and innocence, but purports to solve their inscrutable riddle by looking outward at others rather than into the internal abyss we can never fully fathom or fully command. I stated the problem long ago. We are all Adam. “I did not do it; it was Eve’s fault.”

Having lost faith in Biblical Christianity, the Mainline leadership abandoned the internal redemptive perspective and embraced the external pursuit of “social justice.” Thus, Christian faith has been corrupted beyond recovery by a secular, human-centered ideology that pretends to be an extension of orthodox Christianity.

But, how does this corruption of Christianity occur in practice? To explore that question we reenter the discussion between James Lindsay and Allie Beth Stuckey where Allie Stuckey summarizes her understanding of James Lindsay’s comments.

Allie Beth Stuckey: What you’re describing is a completely different narrative of what eternity looks like, of what the human timeline looks like. ... Progressive Christianity brings another gospel. It brings another form of salvation, another definition of sin and salvation and savior. It’s not the same thing as orthodox Christianity. But you’re actually showing why it’s not just a different gospel but it’s an entirely different understanding of the history of the world and the trajectory of the world. And another reason why all of these theories are incongruent and I think probably created to be purposely incongruent in a replacement of the Christian understanding.

This short statement conveys the core of what I have been trying to say about Progressive Christianity. For when God’s Word becomes irrelevant, you consider equality with God to be attainable, Jesus Christ becomes an avatar for your secular political ideology, your Christian faith becomes conformed to this world, and the concept of sin is if not abolished, then distorted beyond Christian recognition; you end up with “another gospel ... another form of salvation, another definition of sin and salvation and savior.” And note, this description is not being made of the most extreme Woke Christians, but rather of the larger group of Progressive Christians.

The tragic fact is that Progressive Christianity has claimed a fantasy island of human righteousness and built upon it illusory cathedrals dedicated to the human creativity, adaptability and raw will to power that underlies the reimagining of God. They are no longer bound to the authority of Scripture, but rather by the authority of their own beliefs and feelings.

Why should we be surprised when people who have already swallowed and digested massive error would not be defenseless against the next higher level of apostasy? Let’s return to the transcript.

James Lindsay: It would be actually like saying Jesus doesn't realize that he's Jesus until we get the perfect theology, and it becomes the one global state. That would be the idea. And then suddenly by the process of these priests or whoever, it's figuring out the proper Jesus and enforcing it on everybody. Jesus would suddenly realize "Oh that's me!" and then come back down. That would be the kind of picture, and you can see how freaking heretical that is.

Yes, I do.

Allie Beth Stuckey: In the Christian sense we also understand that He [Jesus] came to liberate us from the oppression of sin and that the true liberation is in eternity when there won't be any suffering, there won't be any sin. But we believe that's a future state, really outside of the time in which we exist. ...

James Lindsay: This [Woke ideology] believes they can force it to happen in normal material reality.

Yes, a core imperative of Progressive Christianity is, by human will, to create the Kingdom of Heaven on earth regardless of if it is actually bringing up Hell.

Allie Beth Stuckey: I saw this very well-known Christian say the other day that until we see Christianity not as a means of salvation but as a means of liberation from oppression we will continue to see Christian terrorism, which is just crazy. ...

What they believe is ... that people like me, and even people like you, will stop the utopian state from coming. And if that is your religion, if that is your goal, if you believe that "Kingdom Come" means Hegel's kingdom then you're going to get all of the infidels out of the way, you're going to push people to the side because that is your eternal goal. So your argument is that this is a whole other faith, it's a whole other world view, and its adherents are a lot more merciless than ... Christianity.

This is the new level of insanity and vicious evil that has been unleashed into Progressive Christianity by Wokeness.

James Lindsay: On some level there is genuinely the belief that we could have a perfect world if everybody who didn't have the right beliefs somehow got taken care of whether they're educated, whether they're removed, whether they're liquidated. ...

And I don't think that's true, but we'll take it as an assumption that OK fine, we'll pretend it's true if everybody is on the same page. Well, the problem is some people won't be on the same page. So, what do you do, try to convince them? [If] you can't convince them then you start killing them, you start to get rid of them.

Now it's by character assassination and cancelation. But the bloodlust cannot long be satiated by these half-measures. People who are canceled can still speak and exist. They can still oppose the arrival of utopia.

Allie Beth Stuckey: So, to put it in a Christian phrasing that it's your job to build God's Kingdom rather than your job to stay faithful and await faithfully Christ's return for Him to establish that Kingdom. ...

That's the argument we have between people who are theologically conservative and professing Christians who hold to CRT. We say, "Look, the Gospel regenerates hearts, ... and the Bible is very clear in First John that you can't love God and hate your brother" ...

The argument is: is it just the Gospel that can do those things? ...

So is it the "Gospel" or is it the "Gospel And." What I try to explain, and I think you even try to explain even though you're not a Christian, is that the Gospel can't be the "Gospel and CRT" because CRT has its own gospel, its own theology, its own "biblical Canon."

CRT is not a logical extension of Christianity. It is rather designed from the ground up to destroy and replace Christianity. Shame, shame on those Christian pastors who have led their trusting parishioners into this hellish evil.

Critical Race Theory: Tip of the Anti-Christian Spear

It is demonstrable beyond any reasonable doubt that Critical Theory and its application to race, Critical Race Theory, are not just inconsistent with Christianity but rather hate Christianity and want to utterly destroy it. Let's begin making the case by excerpting the top-level summary from the [Britannica site](#):

Critical theory, Marxist-inspired movement in social and political philosophy originally associated with the work of the Frankfurt School. Drawing particularly on the thought of Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud, critical theorists maintain that a primary goal of philosophy is to understand and to help overcome the social structures through which people are dominated and oppressed. Believing that science, like other forms of knowledge, has been used as an instrument of oppression, they caution against a blind faith in scientific progress, arguing that scientific knowledge must not be pursued as an end in itself without reference to the goal of human emancipation. Since the 1970s, critical theory has been immensely influential in the study of history, law, literature, and the social sciences.

Let's pause to focus on the first word to be associated with Critical Theory: Marxist. Marxism is an atheistic, materialist ideology that has delivered over 100 million corpses and

billions of ruined lives in its bloody pursuit of utopia. In a sane world my work would be done now. But, it is not, so on I go. I focus on two people: Max Horkheimer and Herbert Marcuse to represent Critical Theory because they are cited early in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy as founders of CT.

Max Horkheimer

A summary of Horkheimer's views on religion can be found in this paper (emphasis added).

As such, this study is a content analysis of the critical theory of religion of Max Horkheimer, the Director of the so-called Frankfurt School, which was developed throughout almost all of his writings and later interviews from 1926 to 1973, the year of his death. According to Horkheimer, religion is the expression of human anguish and suffering that contains an implicit if not explicit indictment of the existing antagonistic social totality. Religion thereby also gives expression to the human longing for that which is beyond the existing socio-historical totality. **Rather than projecting this cry of agony and hope of a better future society or life into the abstract form of a God, Horkheimer materialistically redirects such religious expression back to the economic mode of social production and the social structures from which such suffering comes.** Religion as the expression of human misery thereby becomes a practical historical force of resistance against all forms of social exploitation and domination in the hope of creating a better, more reconciled future society.

It is the conclusion of this study that Horkheimer's dialectical, materialistic critical theory of religion can help reconcile the modern antagonistic dualism between the secular and the religious dimensions of human consciousness and action through **the dialectical negation of religious longing for the totally Other into a critical social theory** and praxis that seeks a more free, just, rational, and happy future society.

Note that while Horkheimer acknowledged the power inherent in religion, his intention was to redirect and utilize that power to advance the atheistic materialism of his Marxist ideology.

Herbert Marcuse

Marcuse is the originator of the concept "Repressive Tolerance." He considered Christianity to be a fundamental source of oppression that had to be destroyed to enable the revolution (emphasis added).

And, if necessary, education and indoctrination must be supplemented by revolutionary violence. Marcuse is quite clear about this. He refuses to posit a moral equivalence between the violence perpetrated by classical liberals and the violence committed by subversives. The former is evil; the latter is justified. In fact, he argues that since history is not made by ethics, ethics are of no importance. In other words, might makes right. The ends justify the means. He writes that oppressed minorities — and this means people who lack wealth or prestige or acceptance — have the right to extralegal violence if they exhaust all legal means. No one has a right to judge them immoral or unethical. (Think: Black Lives Matter and the call to kill cops.) **Marcuse offered a program for annihilating Christian culture and classical liberalism** and replacing it with Libertarian Marxism. He had takers.

Those takers became college professors and journalists and foundation presidents and “community organizers” and artists and musicians. They have wielded massive influence on the West from 1960-2016. Their vision is the commanding social vision of our time, working out its implications right before our eyes.

We should not be surprised that an atheist Marxist materialist would seek to annihilate Christian culture. However, you may be surprised to learn that far beyond the “college professors and journalists and foundation presidents” and “community organizers” and “artists and musicians” many pastors who call themselves “Christian” support this same godless revolution from within the church.

Derrick Bell

I have discussed the relationship between two fathers of Critical Theory, Max Horkheimer and Herbert Marcuse, and Christianity. A summary of this relationship could be that, as atheist, materialist Marxists they opposed Christianity as a necessary consequence of their ideology. However for the father of Critical Race Theory, Derrick Bell, we have a man who explicitly believed that Christianity is a foundational source for the creation of racists (emphasis added).

In my writing, I have focused on the economic, political, and cultural dimensions of racism, suggesting its permanence because of the social stability it provides in a system that contains great disparities in income and wealth But I want to raise .. .the possibility of a deeper foundation growing out of **an undeniable fact. Most racists are also Christians.**²²

²² Derrick Bell, speech at the Nat'l Black Law Journal 25th Anniversary Conference: Racism's Religious Perspective (Nov. 18, 2005).

Note that this statement was made in 2005, which is over forty years after the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Yes, it is undeniable that in and before the 1960s Christianity in the United States had often been highly segregated, and racism was a foundational reason for it. However, after forty years of struggle to atone for and reverse this stain it is entirely reasonable to attribute Bell's 2005 statement to extreme animus towards Christianity itself.

This situation is complicated by the fact that Bell claimed a faith that is vaguely related to Christianity, as described in [this passage](#).

It has long been apparent in Bell's writings that religion has been a signal part of his life and work," and this has become increasingly overt in books such as *Gospel Choirs* and *Ethical Ambition*. Bell has documented his religious upbringing in the Protestant Black church and his continuing religious faith. He describes himself as Christian, but his faith is not cabined by traditional Christian doctrine. Bell finds Christian literalism to "trivialize the depths of [the Bible's] meaning and the universality of its message." The depth of biblical meaning fortifies rather than waters down or destroys belief. For Bell, "God is there, even if not in the form I had long imagined." This faith that takes on the challenges of contemporary criticism is one that Bell also locates in Niebuhr. Bell's religiosity is finally something not so much a matter of doctrine but something located in the heart: a deep-seated faith, a core affect, a guiding belief. Bell's drawing upon the music and message of the spirituals and gospel hymns, what he has often called a "theology in song:" is particularly revealing of his faith.

However, this claim to belief in Christianity is utterly undermined by Bell's [explicit rejection of Christianity's central claims](#).

We know, for example, that the Resurrection of Christ could not and did not happen as a matter of science; yet, Christian religion calls on the faithful to accept the Resurrection.

Unfortunately, the PDF file of Bell's article does not allow for text extraction. Therefore I use the following screen shots to excerpt the details of Bell's rejection of Christianity and claim that Christianity is inherently a racist faith.

The Christian Bible, for example, is filled with stories of Jesus' virgin birth, the miracles he performed, his resurrection and reappearance after his execution, and his ascension into Heaven. Based on our knowledge of science, we know as a literal matter that these events could not have happened, and yet proclaimed belief in them is a prerequisite for membership in most Christian denominations. Contradictory explanations are not welcomed by the Church as Galileo Galilei and a long list of scientists learned in the sixteenth century, before and since.

One need only read the Bible to learn that in the earliest writings about Jesus by Paul (circa 50–64 C.E.) there are no miracles, no virgin birth, and the resurrection is not understood as physical resuscitation.² The first Gospel by Mark (circa 70–72 C.E.) offers the first reports of the miracles.³ The virgin birth is introduced by the second gospel to be written, Matthew, in the early eighties.⁴ The resurrection, understood as physical resuscitation is introduced, or at least strongly emphasized, by Luke (circa 88–95 C.E.) and by John (circa 95–100 C.E.).⁵ Rather clearly, as more time passed following Jesus' death, the gospel writers had to work harder to show what an important life Jesus had led. Thus, the later the account of the beginnings of Christianity, the more miraculous the details have become.⁶

In modern divinity schools and in the writings of theologians, there is no question as to what the gospel writers were doing. For a variety of reasons, though, this knowledge has not filtered down to those who sit in the pews of our churches Sunday after Sunday.⁷

Bell's rejection of Christian doctrine.

The uses of religion to justify racism are too obvious to require explanation, but it is worth mentioning the paradoxical connection between racism and Christianity. In support, I want to cite Professor George D. Kelsey who in his book, *Racism and the Christian Understanding of Man*, asserts that racism is an idolatrous faith. Initially, he acknowledges racism served as an ideological justification for the constellations of political and economic power expressed in colonialism and slavery, but he adds, “gradually the idea of the superior race was heightened and deepened in meaning and value so that it pointed beyond the historical structures . . . to human existence itself.”¹⁶ “Loyalty to what the self values.”¹⁷ Professor Kelsey is not surprised that by and large the racists of the modern world have been Christians. For many, it has been the other faith or one of the other faiths. And he is not dissuaded that racism is a faith because so many Christians are racists, explaining that it exists alongside other faiths, a testimony to the reality of polytheism in the modern age.

The concept of the superior race became the center of value and an object of devotion enabling every white person to gain a “power of being” through membership.¹⁸ As a complete system of meaning, value, and loyalty, the definition of a faith, it enables the most economically and culturally deprived white man to feel superior to any black. Kelsey cites Richard Niebuhr who defines faith as “trust in that which gives value to the self,” and “it is loyalty to what the self values.”¹⁹

Bell’s belief that Christianity is the source of racism.

Given that CRT has been accepted as a “tool” for use by the Southern Baptist Convention, embraced by a President who claims to be Christian and incorporated into the teaching at a supposedly “Biblical” seminary these facts might prove uncomfortable for many practicing Christians. But to Christians whose only real faith is in the conversion of secular, atheist cultural Marxism into raw political power through the false “Christianization” of this ideology it is all just fine and dandy.

Conclusion

The “fathers” of CT and CRT are atheistic, materialist cultural Marxists who deny and despise Christianity. And yet, Christian leaders who base their authority on their educational and ordination vows use these anti-Christians for doctrinal guidance. They also dishonestly pretend that their use of CT and CRT somehow converts these anti-Christian ideologies into orthodox

Christian teaching. Their teaching in this area therefore should be rejected by all faithful Christians as not just incompatible with, but in hateful opposition to Christ's Gospel.

How this Happens: The Alchemy of Deceit

The reader may reasonably wonder how, if the people and institutions that created Critical Race Theory (CRT) are atheists and rabid anti-Christians, did it get incorporated into the Christian church? To understand how we first must face up to a troubling reality. The effective "business model" embraced by too many of our Christian elite leaders and professors has almost nothing to do with the Gospel as understood by typical members. Rather, their purpose is to convert the political and social positions of the dominant secular Progressive elite into "Christian" theology. That is, they provide the means by which their members can be convinced to follow along with the secular Progressive project while maintaining their Christian consciences. And, that Progressive project now explicitly embraces what can only be described as totalitarian Marxism masquerading as racial justice (i.e., Wokeness).

So, professors and administrators at our "Christian" seminaries take in the atheist, Christ hating garbage produced by Critical Theory (CT) in general, and CRT in particular, and claim that they advance Christian concepts such as "justice," "mercy" and "love." By the Motte and Bailey strategy²³ among other means they convince their students that they can only live out their Christian calling by embracing these secular ideas now dressed up in Christian garb.

Those students, having graduated, called and ordained then spread out into the local churches and organizations using their credentialed authority to pass this message on to normal members. For members already inclined to Progressivism this is music to their ears. For non-political members this teaching causes them to doubt their understanding of Christianity, thus reducing their ability to resist the tide. Finally, there are some members who, regardless of their political leanings, realize that this is all anti-Christian garbage that will destroy the Church if left unchecked.

Make no mistake, CRT will destroy all Christian fellowship between people of different races, genders, orientations and political perspectives. CRT peddles hatred of others on the basis of immutable characteristics such as skin color and sex. It gives moral superiority to one group and moral depravity to another based simply on these immutable characteristics. It tells people who are "black and brown," women, homosexuals, transsexuals and many other groups that they are the victims of a systematic evil perpetuated by whites, men, heterosexuals and the cis-gendered. It thus creates hatred and resentment that will eventually blow apart the bonds of Christian fellowship.

²³ See Appendix B.

And here we enter the evil core of this movement. It is not made up of people who actually care about their fellow humans. No, it is made up of power hungry totalitarians who will happily sow hatred, death and destruction as long as they get to rule over the ruins. They imagine that they will then build a better world. But when your only real skill is death and destruction you will never be capable of building anything beyond a funeral pyre.

Yes, I know that the purveyors of this poison meet us with kindly smiles and claims of Christian fellowship. In some cases they are simply the well-meaning deceived, but in others this is just a facade covering their contempt.

Make no mistake, the future of the Christian Church in the United States is hanging in the balance. And if the Church succumbs there will be no hope for the nation.

Closing Thoughts

I was involved in a discussion among educated, upper middle-class people. One of them, perhaps the most credentialed of us all, exclaimed “Who could be against Social Justice!” This statement wasn’t part of a deep discussion on the nature of justice or how it can be best achieved. No, it was an isolated statement thrown out into the discussion. It seemed to be an attempt to delegitimize anyone who had concerns about the Social Justice movement. As in, “What kind of moral reprobate would oppose Social Justice?”

This is just another example of the intellectually vacuous nature of our contemporary thought and discourse. Even the most highly educated (actually, particularly the most highly educated) among us operate intellectually and morally at the level of political slogans. Sure, the two words “social” and “justice” when put together appear to imply something obviously good. But what if the actual policies and associated consequences of this “good sounding” movement create far less social justice and more murder, mayhem and poverty? And, for Christians, what if “Social Justice” as practiced in today’s secular politics is anti-Christian?

These redemptive qualities are completely foreign to critical social theory. In the zero-sum world of social justice power struggle, there is no “live and let live” tolerance. No win-win, or even compromise. No place for forgiveness, or grace. No “love your enemy.” No “first get the log out of your own eye” introspection. There is only grievance, condemnation, and retribution. Those labeled as bigots, haters, and oppressors must be destroyed. We are seeing this happen with alarming frequency in what is now called “cancel culture,” which is a bitter fruit of critical theory.

What if I decided to found a political movement based on the slogan “Perfecting Humanity”? Those two words when put together can sound very positive. Who could possibly oppose the goal of perfecting humanity? Wouldn’t we all be incredibly better off if the failures of human

nature could somehow be completely overcome? Of course, were I or anyone else to invite you into such a movement you should run far away. That's because the policies associated with seeking to perfect humanity inexorably lead to totalitarianism, societal collapse and often genocide.

The fact that supposedly highly educated people often say, "Who could be against Social Justice?" exposes a system of "higher" education that is more akin to a reeducation camp. Far too many emerge from this "education" as ideologically lobotomized warriors with no conscience of history, human frailty or sin and redemption. Their "education" has initiated them into the "woke" elite, who feel empowered to hold everyone else in utter contempt and ultimately to rule over them through the use of raw power.

This is the putrid fruit of the poisonous tree of "Social Justice" that stands beyond reason or morality. This "Social Justice" has been made far more powerful and destructive through the incorporation of Critical Race Theory. And, it has been carefully tended by far too many of the highly credentialed teachers and graduates of "higher" education.

Social Justice vs. Christian Justice

Introduction

I have been consistently pushing back on this assumed equivalence between “social justice” and “Christian justice.” However, there has been a frustrating, persistent hole in my commentary. That being, while I have consistently and (I hope) credibly made the case that the “social justice” pursued by Progressive Christians is virtually identical to that proposed by the secular Left (and so is not Biblically sourced), I have been unable to properly explain the content of a distinctly “Christian justice.” The main cause of this deficiency is the diffused nature of the Bible’s teaching on this topic.

I suspect that my engagement with God’s Word exceeds that of many other Christians. And yet, were someone to challenge me by demanding I provide a comprehensive, clear summary of what “Christian justice” is, I would be at a loss. It therefore shouldn’t surprise that Progressive Christians have been exceedingly successful at smuggling in secular ideas taken from an ideological cadre that rejects Biblical authority. That is, since the concept of “Christian justice” is so difficult to isolate and understand, false claims made about a counterfeit called “social justice” are far easier to inject to a church.

It therefore came as a delightful discovery that a pastor named Phil Johnson has not just done this challenging theological work, but has also masterfully communicated the results. Pastor Johnson is part of the Evangelical branch of Christianity as opposed to the Mainline. However, there is significant interchange of ideas and influence between these two major branches of Protestant Christianity in the United States. So Pastor Johnson’s commentary on the history of “social justice” as a presumed Christian calling reflects brightly on the Mainline experience. And his meditation on the actual contents of “Christian justice” point clearly to where we have gone so wrong in the Mainline.

The source for what follows is a YouTube video titled “[Social Justice vs. Authentic Biblical Justice](#).” I used the Microsoft Word “dictate” feature to create a transcript which was then edited for punctuation and clarity of content (e.g., repeated words removed). I will enter this discussion mid-way, where Pastor Johnson begins to discuss the historical context for “social justice’s” replacement of “Christian justice” in the minds of most Christians. Of course, hyperlinked text in this transcript was added by me.

Let’s be honest, the current generation of Evangelicals, for the most part, have not learned about justice from the Bible. Most Evangelicals today are working with an idea of justice that owes more to modernism and postmodernism than it does to the Bible.

Justice, by the way, is not a theme that Protestants ignored until Walter Rauschenbusch discovered it and launched the Social Gospel movement. In the heyday of Protestant's modernist meltdown 100 years ago Rauschenbusch wasn't introducing an idea from Scripture that everybody had forgotten. He was changing the very idea and definition of justice. He simply redefined it so that in his language justice was all and only about social welfare.

And so begins this enlightening journey.

Origins

I continue with the transcript. This section is important because it explains the theological sources from which this false identification of social with Biblical justice originated. Today in Mainline churches this falsehood has been the party line for so long that most members don't have the slightest inkling that something is amiss. But something is indeed terribly amiss.

Walter Rauschenbusch, of course, is the father of the Social Gospel. The Social Gospel was a liberal theological movement that arose in the first half of the 20th century, swept through the denominations, and ultimately left them all spiritually void of life. Rauschenbusch and his followers traded the doctrines of sin and atonement and personal salvation along with doctrines like the deity of Christ and all the miraculous elements of biblical truth and Christian belief.

They got rid of those things and traded them for a social agenda that included government welfare and unionization of workers and other political schemes – social programs that they hoped would put an end to slums and poverty and alcoholism and ethnic wars and a host of other social problems. So that it was more politics than religion, and to the followers of this idea that was a good thing. They dismissed confessional Christianity as a set of theoretical doctrines rather than a practical way of life. That was how they thought. We don't need the doctrines of Christianity.

It would be so natural to doubt that this is an accurate description of what has happened in the Mainline church. But this clinical theological assessment doesn't even scratch the surface of the horrible reality. You need only read the chapters on the theological and political state of the PCUSA in *A Denomination's Debacle* to understand the depths to which we have fallen. Pastor Johnson continues.

And proponents of the Social Gospel were convinced that social work is the real gospel, a gospel of works. Rauschenbusch and his followers believed that if they could alleviate the pains of poverty, they would in effect be bringing the Kingdom of Heaven to earth; and the result was a pure unapologetic works-based system of

religion inherently and definitionally self-righteous. That's what always happens when you try to modify the gospel in any way. Their message was filled with calls to action and admonitions about what we must do for those to help those who are suffering.

This is one of the most appalling aspects of the reality in the PCUSA. We are theoretically a Reformed denomination who believe in salvation by grace alone, but in practice we are hard-core salvation by works. I have seen even the most talented, dedicated of orthodox Reformed pastors bewildered by the utter contradiction between what they believe and what the denomination demands in practice. Any pastor who attempts to teach salvation by grace alone is overwhelmed by the flood of works-based assumptions and overt demands.

And therefore, the good news of what Christ has done to save sinners faded into obscurity. They didn't talk about it, so justice eclipsed grace in the language of their confessions. In fact, they openly scorned classical evangelical convictions as pie-in-the-sky theology. You know, Colossians chapter 3 verses one and two might as well not have, in fact the whole of Colossians 3, might as well not have been in their Bibles. Verses 3:1 and 2 says if you then have been raised with Christ seek the things that are above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God, set your minds on the things above not on the things that are on the earth. But the social gospel was a kind of neo-Socinian religion. It was a completely earthbound belief system saturated with religious terminology that was married to themes that may have sounded biblical, but they were anything but spiritual.

This last sentence summarizes the "big con" of Social Justice Christianity. It places Biblical words, phrases and verses adjacent to Marxist/Socialist ideas and then claims that they are not differentiable from one another. It is Pastor Johnson's goal to explain the difference between Biblical Justice and Social Justice. Social Justice is the doctrine of Progressive Leftism, not of God's Word. But Social Justice Christians have convinced so many trusting members that these two utterly different doctrines are identical that it's an uphill struggle to correct the record. But struggle we must.

Pastor Phil Johnson now begins to unpack the underlying assumptions and practical implementation of "social justice" Christianity.

Most of you surely are aware of Jim Wallace and the Sojourners movement.

They have been trying since the 1970s to marry biblical terminology and evangelical themes to radical left wing political causes. And over the past decade or so, two decades maybe, they've been surprisingly successful at persuading younger evangelicals to join their cause. Their whole point is that leftist politics actually, they argue, is more compatible with the teachings of Christ than conservative politics. And one of their most successful strategies has been to

assume the social gospel's neo-Marxist flavored ideas about justice and then argue that we are not obeying the biblical commands to do justice unless we are supporting leftist political causes.

This is an absolutely critical point.

This was also ... one of the central themes of the Emerging Church movement at the start of this new Millennium. The emergent talked nonstop about social justice and basically assuming but never making the case that the justice spoken of in Scripture is the same idea of justice that was put forth by Walter Rauschenbusch and the Sojourners and the neo-Marxists. But, and here's an absolutely vital point, if you get nothing else get this: in biblical justice the principal concept is not human rights ... it's divine righteousness that's the underlying idea with biblical justice. And in fact, in both Hebrew and Greek the words that are translated in English Bibles as "justice" and "just," these are the very same words that are normally translated "righteousness" and "righteous."

Same word and no distinction is made between justice and righteousness in the original text of Scripture. The biblical idea of justice encompasses everything the Bible says about righteousness. ...

This is indeed a crucial concept. For whereas the ideology of "social justice" is human-centric, the biblical concept of "justice" is tied directly and inseparably to the nature of God Himself, that is, His righteousness. This by no means implies that biblical justice is unconcerned about human well being. No, our creator knows perfectly and precisely what is best for His creation. And, He speaks that knowledge in truth throughout Scripture. However, if we substitute a false set of assumptions about justice for those actually in Scripture then the entire field is corrupted.

In the Bible these are not separate ideas of the two English words "justice" and "righteousness." Righteousness is actually the more precise synonym. So how comprehensive is this idea? God Himself is the embodiment and the touchstone of righteousness. His character therefore defines what justice is. No person or culture that is steeped in unrighteousness and immorality and wicked behavior, unbelief, ungodliness; no one who revels in those things can legitimately claim to be just in the biblical sense of the term.

This last sentence is powerfully disruptive to the Progressive Christian cause. It is why they work with such single-mindedness, such intensity to divert our attention from God's Word and onto the secular culture as the source for justice.

The Four Components of Biblical Justice

Compassion

Pastor Phil Johnson now begins to identify and summarize the primary components of biblical justice as opposed to social justice.

So, what are the principal features of biblical justice? I want to highlight four of them for you. This is not comprehensive; this is a quick overview. But there are four aspects of biblical justice that that you must not miss starting with number one: compassion. Compassion, I want to start here and say emphatically that Scripture does indeed teach that as a matter of justice we have a duty both individually and collectively to meet the needs of poor and disabled and disadvantaged and suffering people in our communities. The passages of Scripture that plead for justice do frequently single out the special needs of orphans and widows. And Scripture also often stresses it's a particular duty that is incumbent on people who have means to minister to people who have needs.

Rich people who neglect this duty are condemned in the harshest terms throughout Scripture.

At this point there's not a bit of difference between what I've been hearing from the pulpit on "social justice" and biblical justice. So, the divergence certainly isn't over the idea that compassion for the poor and oppressed is a core (in fact the first in Pastor Johnson's judgement) component of biblical justice.

There are dozens of cross references scattered throughout the Law, the Prophets and poetic scriptures that urge compassion and threaten those who lack compassion with the harshest of judgments. Proverbs 31 verses 8-9: "open your mouth for the mute for the rights of all who are destitute open your mouth judge righteously defend the rights of the poor and the needy." Or Isaiah 11:7: "learn to do good, seek justice, correct oppression bring justice to the fatherless plead the widow's cause." And Deuteronomy 27 verse 19: "cursed be anyone who perverts the justice due to the sojourner the fatherless and the widow." So, to ignore compassion is also a perversion of justice.

Still no discernible difference between social and biblical justice is to be found. Perhaps Pastor Johnson is failing spectacularly in his goal.

But on this point of charity and compassion Scripture also includes some provisos that you will never hear from the typical social justice warrior today. And what Scripture teaches is that alms are for the truly needy, not for shiftless reckless or irresponsible people. Second Thessalonians 3:10: "if anyone is not willing to work then he's not to eat either." That's a principle of justice. Have you ever heard it

from a social justice warrior? And even for a widow to qualify for honor and financial support in the church according to First Timothy 5:5 she must be truly a widow left all alone who has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers day and night. In other words, authentic biblical justice and compassion discriminates between those who are truly needy and those who are merely idle or negligent or, worst of all, stubbornly pursuing self-destructive lifestyles. We're not to enable people like that.

Yes, as I have been arguing for years, policies that drive their recipients into despair, that lead to broken families, that condemn them to generations of dependence are not compassionate.

In fact, socialist style welfare is a system that does enable and enslave people like that. It condemns mothers and children to fatherless homes. It systematically perpetuates poverty, and it institutionalizes a degrading class system. The American welfare system is not compassionate by any biblical standard. And those who refuse to face up to its destructive effects are actually undermining, not upholding, biblical justice. In Mark 9:13 Jesus said to the Pharisees "Go and learn what this means. I desire compassion not sacrifice." I think Jesus might say to the average evangelical today go and learn what true compassion means if you think you've fulfilled your duty to the poor and disadvantaged by lobbying for government welfare programs. You haven't begun to grasp the biblical idea of either justice or compassion.

What can be said of the "average evangelical" must be said ten-times more to the average Mainline Presbyterian (or Methodist, or Lutheran, etc.). You have been sold a bill of goods that is ultimately at complete odds with any concept of biblical compassion. You have been taught to look with utter callousness upon the multi-generational catastrophe of partisan, secular "social justice" policies imposed upon the poor and oppressed, and justified as "Christian" by your leaders. Those policies have utterly failed to help the poor and oppressed. Quite the opposite, they have destroyed their lives and communities, with no end in sight. And yet they persist in their pursuit of these same policies and attack anyone who dares to suggest that perhaps we should change course.

Retribution

Pastor Phil Johnson here discusses the second key concept of biblical as opposed to social justice.

Here's a second feature of biblical justice and this is another aspect that you'll probably never hear in connection with all the rhetoric about social justice, but this is a major theme when scripture talks about justice, and it's this: retribution. Retribution — because God is just, he will not let one sin go unpunished. The

prophet Nahum opens his book with these words he says: “The Lord is a jealous and avenging God. The Lord is avenging and wrathful. The Lord takes vengeance on his adversaries and keeps wrath for his enemies. The Lord is slow to anger but great in power and the Lord will by no means leave the guilty unpunished.” Now notice that juxtaposition of God’s patience alongside his vengeance is very common in Scripture. Numbers 14:18: “The Lord is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love forgiving iniquity and transgression.” But he will by no means clear the guilty. His judgments are tempered with mercy. But don’t presume on the grace of God because it is still true what it says in Hebrews 12:29: “Our God is a consuming fire.” And God’s fierce judgment against sin is an important aspect of his justice. In fact, justice is not truly done until injustice has been punished.

I agree with Pastor Johnson that the idea of God’s retribution against sin is obscured in Christian social justice circles. A likely majority of them don’t believe in the biblical concept of sin, let alone God’s judgement and retribution against it. But they most assuredly do believe in social or political sin, and demand retribution of the most practical, most intimate kind for it.

So [this is] one of the things the social justice movement has utterly turned on its head. Isaiah 59 is a prophecy about justice and vengeance and in verses 14 and 15 of Isaiah 59 the prophet says, quote: “Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands far away. The Lord saw it and it displeased him that there was no justice.” He saw that there was no man, no one to intercede and so the Lord himself seeks to remedy this injustice. So how does he do it? Verses 17 and 18: “He put on righteousness as a black breastplate and helmet of salvation on his head. He put on garments of vengeance for clothing and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak. According to their deeds, so he will repay wrath to his adversaries, repayment to his enemies. To the coastlands he will render repayment.” That is describing a severe reckoning. ...

My guess is that the social justice crowd’s substitution of social-political sin for biblical sin, and the corresponding substitution of human retribution for it is along the lines of Pastor Johnson’s thought. If so he is implicitly countering this false idea by quoting biblical passages that place the source of retribution squarely back into the character of God.

Now here’s an interesting detail you will not find the English word justice as a noun anywhere in the King James version of the New Testament. It’s always translated righteousness in most modern English translations. There’s a different Greek word that has been translated as justice in the King James. It’s always translated judgment but in modern translations it’s translated I think more correctly as justice. ... And what it actually signifies is a judgment in the in the style of a reckoning, a just judgment. It’s usually translated judgment. That is its true meaning and it’s an important aspect of biblical justice. There is no justice at

all without vengeance against evil. That's true in society as well. Romans 13 says every legitimate law enforcement officer is a servant of God and avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. Those are Paul's words not mine, that's justice.

While I completely agree with Pastor Johnson that, "social justice" Christians ignore retribution as a key aspect of God's character, they certainly are not shy about using the human law enforcement apparatus to deliver retribution to "the wrongdoer." Of course, Pastor Johnson refers here to "legitimate law enforcement," which doesn't cover the activities of a secret police force as created by the Nazi's and Communists (among others). Nor do I believe it to cover the one-sided use of our laws to assault any non-Progressive individuals and organizations who appear to pose a threat to the elite caste's dominance.

I think the most important take-away here is that by placing the ultimate source of retribution in God we are powerfully warned against presuming ourselves to be capable of rightly deciding its scope or depth. However, in this fallen world there is the unavoidable necessity for retributive justice. So, if we seek to legitimately exercise this dangerous responsibility, we would do best by submitting ourselves to the teaching of Scripture.

For anyone wondering how the concept of retribution fits into salvation by grace, please stay tuned for the fourth key concept associated with biblical justice.

Impartiality

Pastor Phil Johnson here discusses the third key concept of biblical as opposed to social justice.

Here's a third aspect of authentic justice: impartiality. ... Impartiality is the one feature Scripture seems to stress the most when it reminds us that we owe our neighbors justice, not equality, not equity, impartiality. They aren't the same thing. It's not about equal outcomes or equal incomes. It's not about ethnic quotas that match our population percentages. It's about impartiality in the application of the law and its penalties, and its rewards. It's why justice is always pictured with a scale and a blindfold. This is the classical idea of justice — it's impartial. Authentic justice is always impartial. It's not shaped by ideology, it's not swayed by money, it's not strengthened by passion, it's not spread by hashtags. True justice requires that all systems and judgments and privileges and opportunities, all of them, be totally free from preferential treatment based on anyone's skin color or economic class.

I'm going to pause here and comment on the means by which the "social justice" Christians smuggle the ideology of Socialism into Christianity.

A Short Excursion into the Means of Deceit

This is where the ideals of “social justice” explicitly collide with those of biblical justice. The “social justice” Christians will always first attempt to hijack biblical teaching by claiming their policies are “Christian” through the deceit of argument by adjacency. But when there is no way around an explicit contradiction with Scripture they will fall back to deceit by omission. That is, they will simply omit from discussion anything from Scripture that contradicts their position.

Let me provide a practical example of these two means of deceit. In Acts 4:32-35 God’s Word describes the outpouring of charity associated with the primitive church.

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God’s grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.

Social Justice Christians often base their case for Socialism on this passage (among others). They do so by placing this description of voluntary, church internal sharing adjacent to the involuntary, government power sourced “sharing” of Socialism and claiming they are the same thing, and therefore that Socialism is biblical.

But later on in the story it becomes impossible to maintain this deception. At the beginning of Chapter 5:1-4 we read:

Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. With his wife’s full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles’ feet.

It is revealed that this offering was deceitfully made with terrible consequences to the couple. However, within the Apostle Peter’s condemnation there is something that the Social Justice Christians cannot allow to see the light of day.

Then Peter said, “Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? Didn’t it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn’t the money at your disposal? What made

you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God.”

There is simply no place in the Bible where the primacy of private property is more explicitly affirmed. This sentence also destroys any vestige of connection between the voluntary, Holy Spirit induced sharing of Christianity and the police state driven giving of Socialism. So, these Social Justice Christians simply lie by omission. That is, they simply leave out this statement by the Apostle Peter whenever this story is discussed. By so doing they make absolutely clear that the highest authority in their lives is Socialist ideological doctrine, not the clear teaching of Scripture.

Back to Pastor Johnson

Now Pastor Johnson goes on to show how uniformly and completely the idea of impartiality is integrated with biblical justice.

Social justice with all of its stress on quotas and affirmative action actually requires the opposite. That is unjust by any biblical definition. Even the Bible's stress on meeting the particular needs of the poor doesn't overturn this principle. Listen to Leviticus 19:15, "You shall do no injustice in court, you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great but in righteousness you shall judge your neighbor." Exodus 23 versus 2 and 3: "You shall not fall in with the many to do evil. Don't jump on whatever the bandwagon is, nor shall you bear witness in a lawsuit siding with the crowd so as to pervert justice. Nor shall you be partial to a poor man in his lawsuit." Deuteronomy 1:17: "You shall not be partial in judgment, you shall hear the small and the great alike, you shall not be intimidated by anyone for the judgment is God's." And the text we started with, Deuteronomy 16:19 "You shall not pervert justice." The very next phrase is "you shall not show partiality." God is no respecter of persons he shows no partiality that's a principle that is incompatible with the current notion of social justice.

All of this is carefully, explicitly ignored by the Social Justice Christians. In so doing they are worse than the Jesus Seminar. For while the Jesus Seminar is honest and transparent about their project to delete anything that challenges their Progressive ideology from the Bible, the Social Justice Christians do the same thing while deceitfully pretending to follow the teaching of Scripture.

Redemption

Pastor Phil Johnson here discusses the fourth and final key concept of biblical as opposed to social justice.

I need to wrap up [with] one more aspect of biblical justice: redemption. The greatest deficiency of all in this neo-Marxist concept of social justice is the way it condemns whole groups of people with no hope, and no possibility of absolution. Biblical justice offers full reconciliation and redemption, and this is the final point I want to make.

What I find so troubling is that supposedly Christian people have fully embraced this anti-Christian faith by claiming that it is a logical extension of Christianity. In one recent discussion I told a Christian that the Woke religion was a substitute for, not an extension of Christianity. He simply looked at me blankly, providing not the slightest response, be it verbal or emotional. One cannot be but deeply disturbed by such a non-response.

We've talked about the way justice is reimagined by postmodernists. We've talked about justice the way Scripture defines it. Now consider justice the way the Gospel applies it. You may be wondering, if the Bible says justice demands retribution for every wrong that is ever done, if God is too righteous to let any sin go unpunished, how could any sin ever be justly forgiven?

As you will see, the Scriptures provide a complete answer to this question. No such answer is provided by the demonic new Woke religion now infesting our churches. But first, Pastor Johnson shows how absolutely central is the concept of divine retribution for sin to biblical justice.

And scripture does say those things proverbs 11:21, "Be assured an evil person will not go unpunished." Exodus 34 seven: "God will by no means clear the guilty." Hebrews 22: "Under God's law every transgression or disobedience receives a just retribution." Jesus said that every sin, even the secret ones, will be brought out in the open and judged. Matthew 10:26, "Nothing is covered that will not be revealed nothing is hidden that will not be made known." True justice is not accomplished until every demand of God's righteousness is thoroughly and exhaustively fulfilled.

There is no sugar-coating, no obfuscation, no omission attempted. No, Pastor Johnson has no intent to hide the troubling truth about God's righteous retribution against sin.

And yet we know that God does forgive. Micah 7 verse 18: "Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression, he does not retain his anger forever because he delights in steadfast love." Numbers 14:18, the same verse that says God will by no means clear the guilty also says that he's slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love forgiving iniquity and transgression.

So, the Bible's apparent contradiction is openly illuminated.

So how is that possible? The Gospel explains how that's possible. Christ satisfied justice on behalf of those whom he saves. He bore the penalty of their sin when

he died on the cross. And so the Gospel declares, in Paul's words, his righteousness so that God might be both just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. This is how God justifies the ungodly without compromising his own justice. In other words, the Gospel is not only a message about the love of God, it's that, but it's not only that.

Yes, the Gospel encompasses both God's retribution on sin and His mercy in forgiveness of sin. We too often focus on the latter in order to ignore the former.

The true gospel message magnifies God's justice as much as it magnifies his love. And the truth is if God's judgment, his justice hadn't been fully satisfied our salvation would not be possible at all. In fact, all sinners would be, that's all of us by the way, would be damned forever without any hope of mercy. And that's what Scripture means in Hebrews 9:22 when it says without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. True justice is satisfied in the Gospel. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Yes! As in the words of Charles Spurgeon: *"Oh! to feel your sin, and yet to know your righteousness— to have the two together — repentance on account of sin, and yet a glorious confidence in the all-atoning sacrifice!"*

Christ has transformed justice so that instead of demanding our damnation God's justice affirms our redemption. Tamper with the biblical concept of justice and you destroy that truth, you undermine the fundamental truth of the Gospel. It is a serious evil. That's why so many of us are so passionately opposed to this notion of social justice, which changes the whole picture and devalues the Gospel and is threatening to decimate the Evangelical movement at the moment we must stand together and oppose it. And my prayer for all of you is that you will join the fight with us. Thank you.

Let there be no mistake. The Woke Christians have more than tampered with the truth of the Gospel. No, because of their ignorance of or open rebellion against the Gospel of Jesus Christ they have sought to replace the true Gospel with a lie. That lie supports their evil sense of pride, their presumed superior virtue, leading to the wickedness that now permeates our culture and institutions. Did they believe in a god beyond that of their own idolatrous ideology they would tremble before the righteous judgement of the eternal God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Christian Charity and Compassion Reconsidered

Opening Thoughts

It is long past time for Christians, particularly those who find themselves in Mainline Denominations, to reconsider their responsibilities with regard to charity, mission and compassion. For generations we have operated under the unexamined assumption that these Christian duties are best accomplished by the giving of material resources to the poor and oppressed. This assumption has driven both public policy and in person charitable efforts.

But at some point the question “Is it working?” must be asked and honestly answered if our goal is to truly benefit the poor and oppressed. And before that, we must determine the metrics by which we measure progress or lack thereof.

In the earlier section titled “Mainline Christianity and Progressive Politics” my primary goal was to examine the almost complete overlap of partisan Progressivism with Mainline political action. I introduced the specific case of Chicago, and pointed out that from the perspectives of crime and education Progressive public policies had not just failed, but had created an apparently permanent underclass. I closed this discussion with the following comments.

These catastrophic failures, despite the incessant insistence on their benevolence by Progressives, Christian or otherwise, forces us to wonder about the relationship between intentions and results. That is, if someone does things or supports policies because of “good intentions,” is that sufficient in and of itself as an act of charity? Or, does their moral responsibility extend to the realm of demonstrable results? These two philosophies lead to very different attitudes towards how best to help the poor, with corresponding differences in practical policies.

From there I examined in some detail the differences between “intentions based” and “results based” charitable philosophies, including two specific case studies. I also introduced and discussed the concept of “moral hazard” within context of Mainline Progressive politics and associated charitable activities. A useful definition for this term is:

Moral hazard is a situation where somebody has the opportunity to take advantage of somebody else by taking risks that the other will pay for. The idea is that people might ignore the moral implications of their choices: instead of doing what is right, they do what benefits them the most.

Sometimes the best way to move from theoretical to practical domains is through a “thought experiment,” which follows.

A Thought Experiment

Let's imagine that there is a group of people who self-identify as protectors of the world's poor and oppressed. Members of this group continually boast about their good intentions for and practical expertise in improving the lot of humanity. However, as a practical matter, we all know that what is said is not always what is actually in the heart. Therefore, there is need for a means by which to determine if these people really care first and foremost about improving the lot of the poor and oppressed.

Let's assume that in a specific nation the ideology and associated means by which these people propose to improve the world are embraced and implemented. And, that the leadership of this group publicly and forcefully voice their support.

But something goes terribly wrong, and rather than the expected advance towards utopia the country descends into poverty, chaos, violence and starvation. The fact of this utter failure is unavoidable and undeniable. Thus, the leaders of this group must decide how to respond.

Response #1

It turns out that these leaders do indeed care first and foremost about the plight of the poor and oppressed. Therefore, they enter into a state of public repentance followed by a ground-up reassessment of their ideology to determine what went wrong. Although they may not (or may) throw out all of their ideology, they do honestly look into where it has led to the policies that resulted in such terrible human suffering. After this process they reengage in the public debate, admitting their failures and seeking to advance updated solutions that they honestly believe will lead to improved human well-being.

Response #2

It turns out that these leaders didn't really care about the plight of the poor and oppressed. What they were really doing was to use their pretense of virtue to obtain the power by which to arbitrarily and capriciously rule over others. Therefore, they fall silent for a time and then begin making up excuses for this humanitarian catastrophe. These excuses place the blame everywhere but on the ideology and policies that they use in their advance towards worldly power. They never acknowledge that they had previously supported this practical application of their ideology in a specific country, hoping that it will all be forgotten.

They also, over time, have built a predictable track record of support followed by silence followed by excuses as their ideology repeatedly fails miserably to deliver the promised results.

And yet they continue pretending to be the morally superior elite whom we should follow with unquestioning obedience.

It is from here that I intend to begin a reconsideration of our Christian responsibilities with regard to charity, mission and compassion.

The Reconsideration

We as limited, frail beings can never be absolutely certain that any action will have the intended results. Were we to honestly review our actions as parents, congregants, children, friends, citizens and colleagues we would have to admit that many of our actions, though intended to advance the good, actually had decidedly mixed and even the opposite effect. In many cases the actual effects didn't become clear for months, years or decades after the fact. It is so easy therefore to neglect the issue of actual consequences given these experiences. Better, we imagine, to just follow our best intentions and hope for the best.

But then enters in the issue of sin. If we are willing to admit (and many people aren't) that we are corrupted by sin then even our intentions can't be confidently assumed to be good. Thus, we come to the terrible, humbling realization that our supposed good intentions may actually be bad intentions dressed up in our imaginations as good. This thought is too scandalous for many people, including Christians, to accept. Yes, they are happy to claim that others are motivated by evil intentions, but they are not willing to accept the same possibility for themselves. Oh, they may intellectually claim to accept the fault of, say, "White privilege," but by their selfless willingness to claim this sin they simultaneously are raised above it by their demonstration of a "higher consciousness."

Given these fraught issues it's easy to understand why busy, distracted people will dispense with the complexity and settle on good intentions as their moral guide. But here lies the road to Hell. It is so because this guide creates massive opportunity for manipulation and deceit. Note first that by accepting a superficial guide for their actions the people in question have telegraphed their vulnerability to exploitation. And, by limiting their moral reasoning to only that which occurs before any results occur these same people can be deceived indefinitely. Finally, use of a self-centered metric for merit makes people prone to seek the approval of others, particularly those others who occupy positions of power and prestige. In this fallen world there is no shortage of wolves who are happy to prey on this population of good intenders. Unfortunately the Christian Church is not immune to this evil.

The tragic truth is that, if we claim good intentions as our moral guide, then what we primarily want to accomplish is to feel good about ourselves. Thus the people whom we claim to

care for can easily become of secondary importance. Worst of all, the actual results of our efforts can become virtually irrelevant. But we can take precautions that reduce our vulnerability to this temptation that are both practical and effective, though requiring a bit more seriousness, patience and effort.

Another Thought Experiment

In order to explore the true nature this reconsideration, consider the following two theoretical cases.

Case 1

A Christian organization identifies a group of people who are undeniably oppressed and impoverished. They therefore develop support programs that minister to the individual members, families and organizations within this group. Over a significant time period (i.e., decades) wonderful supportive spiritual, personal, financial and organizational relationships are developed. Much that is good from a Christian perspective has clearly been accomplished.

However, over that same time period, although good is done, the overall environment in which this impoverished group lives not only doesn't improve, but in many respects gets demonstrably worse. For example, crime, including murder, increases. Schools utterly fail to provide even the most basic educational value to students. Family life remains dysfunctional and utterly chaotic.

The Christian organization is aware of this situation, but refuses to ask why it has occurred, let alone do anything about it. They rather continue their programs and ministries with only minor modifications. Beyond this, in their political action they oppose any proposals to significantly change the schools, public safety, personal / family incentives and economics. They thus, in effect, behave as reactionaries who deem the current policies and resulting environment to be the best that can be practically obtained.

Case 2

This case begins exactly like the first. However, after a long period of time, say twenty years, leaders in the Christian organization begin to ask serious questions. While they rejoice in the good that has been accomplished, they also mourn the fact that this impoverished group's situation has demonstrably grown worse. They begin to contemplate the tragic fact that, under the current set of social policies, the impoverishment (spiritual, educational, personal safety, economic, etc.) of this group will not be improved in any foreseeable timeframe. In effect, the

current social policies ensure that there will be an unending supply of victims to whom their Christian good works can be delivered.

If being kind to victims of impoverishment and oppression is the ultimate end of Christian compassion then this is a perfectly acceptable outcome. But these leaders reject this ultimate end. Rather, they conclude that the true ultimate end should be a situation in which this victim group no longer suffers under impoverishment and oppression at all. In this end they would no longer need the support of Christian charity but would rather take their place in society as peers rather than supplicants. Then the Christian organization, perhaps enriched by the contributions of this past impoverished group, could move on to other issues that appear most urgent.

But in order to pursue this new and better ultimate end the Christian leaders realize that they will have to confront the power interests that support the status quo. They realize that their ideas for reform, such as rebuilding of marriage and the family, will be met by accusations of evil motivation. Powerful political and social organizations will oppose reform of the schools, and will stoop low to attack the reformers. Anything that smacks of economic self-sufficiency will be denounced as greed even though a massive structure of bureaucrats earn a good living by doling out endless goods, services and money that breed hopelessness and dependency.

Commentary

I suppose some might contend that I've placed my thumb on the scales in describing the two cases. After all, they may argue, don't the Christian organizations who operate within the Case 1 framework also work to resolve the "root causes" of poverty and oppression? If you limit this critique to intentions then I may be able to agree. However, if we insist on results then there can be only strong disagreement.

I have already discussed this conflict between "intentions" and "results" in detail. Note that the intentions of the Christian organizations in Case 1 and Case 2 were initially identical. What differentiates them is their response to observing actual results over a significant time period.

The Great Society legislation that created what we now call the Welfare State was passed in the mid-1960s. At the time the stated intention was to end poverty and racism through aggressively expanded government action and new programs. Not surprisingly there was significant, though ultimately ineffective, opposition to this set of policies. However, there can be no doubt that the intentions behind the Great Society by most supporters were very good.

However, by, say, 1995, there could be no credible doubt that the Great Society had not just failed, but had condemned its intended beneficiaries to multigenerational dependence, poverty and hopelessness. This is why, though dishonestly said, President Clinton felt obliged in 1996 to say, "The era of big government is over" and sign Welfare Reform into law. However, any

reform of the Welfare State was anathema to the Progressive movement. Therefore, a coalition of Progressive groups, definitely including many Christian organizations, opposed and eventually overturned these reforms.

In context of what has been known since at least the mid-1990's this Progressive response is unforgivable (from a political as opposed to a religious perspective). Motivated by the tragic results of the Welfare State policies, reformers have repeatedly stepped forward with new approaches. What many proposed were ideas to recover the social and cultural capital that had been destroyed by the Welfare State.

It's legitimate to disagree with their proposals. In the best case that disagreement would be accompanied by counter-proposals seeking the same better ends. But it's utterly corrupt in every sense of the word to seek the destruction of people who see the suffering of the Welfare State's supposed beneficiaries and offer reforms to improve their lives, all while maintaining the very policies that led to the catastrophe.

Make no mistake, this entrenched, vicious coalition of Progressives, including many Christian organizations, is absolutely committed to preventing even the smallest reforms to the Welfare State. And this commitment exists in spite of well over 50 years of failure. I simply ask, are these the actions of people who are committed to results that demonstrably raise others out of poverty? Or are they the actions of people who are content for the supposed beneficiaries of their compassion to fall ever deeper into hopelessness, violence, and despair? I contend that over 50 years on it is utterly credible to conclude the latter.

What Should be Done?

I certainly don't expect Progressive individuals and organizations to embrace conservative ideas for welfare reform. However, even this position doesn't preclude the finding of common ground. For example, the Progressive community could say something like this:

“While we believe that conservative ideas on welfare reform are fundamentally flawed, we yet agree that the current set of welfare policies has not achieved their intended results. In fact, on numerous key measures of well-being the beneficiaries of welfare have significantly digressed over the past decades. Therefore, we will support an open discussion on what has gone wrong and why. From there we will support an open debate on the reforms necessary to correct past mistakes and increase the likelihood of future success.”

The tragic truth is that virtually no one finds this imagined statement by our Progressive elites to be in the slightest credible. This is because their power rests on the false assumption of

their intellectual and moral superiority. Thus they cannot survive if they ever admit to have been wrong. Not surprisingly then, what we have observed is retreat into reactionary positions from which any criticism of the Welfare State or proposal for welfare/education reform is viciously attacked. When “welfare reform” was passed in the 1990s the Progressive community pulled out all the stops to retard and ultimately reverse this initiative. The Progressive community continues to be opposed to “school choice” even though a majority of disadvantaged parents support it.

In the 1960s and 70s Mainline denominational leadership tied itself to the secular Progressive movement as the vehicle for positive social change. We can legitimately debate the wisdom of this decision within context of what was known at that time. However, from the 1980s on it has become progressively more clear that the Great Society and associated policies have had the opposite effect of those claimed to be intended by their supporters.

We Mainline Christians must seriously ask ourselves what we really are accomplishing by our continuing support of these destructive social policies. If we want an endless supply of people in poor and oppressed communities as recipients of our charity then by all means continue on. In that direction lies the continued affirmation of a godless elite class who value us only to the extent that we slavishly uphold their power and follow their political line. In that case Jesus’ words should burn in our souls.

“Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.”

“So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.”

Matthew 6:1, 2

If we want to actually improve the lives of the people trapped in these communities then we must open our hearts and minds to the concept of reforms that challenge the current Progressive orthodoxy. In that direction lies suffering, as we will be subjected to the full force of hatred that holds current policies in place. We will be called terrible names. Our motives will be attacked. Our Christian faith will be denigrated. Everything will be done that can be to make the world consider us pariahs. But if we reject their power to destroy we may actually through God’s grace find new paths that lead towards renewal and hope.

“If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the

world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. Whoever hates me hates my Father also. If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: 'They hated me without a cause.'"

"But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning."

John 15:18-27

Rebuilding a Caring Christian Community

The Christian faith is built on a tragic understanding of the human condition. That is, we understand human beings to be spiritually and morally fallen creatures who can only be redeemed by an unmerited act of grace by a merciful God. Given our fallenness, we Christians see ourselves to be in need of spiritual and moral regeneration that occurs only partially in this life. Thus we seek to build Christian communities in which acts of mercy and giving are taught and encouraged. It takes decades, even generations, for these lessons to grow into the new lives and new cultures that conform more closely with Christ's character.

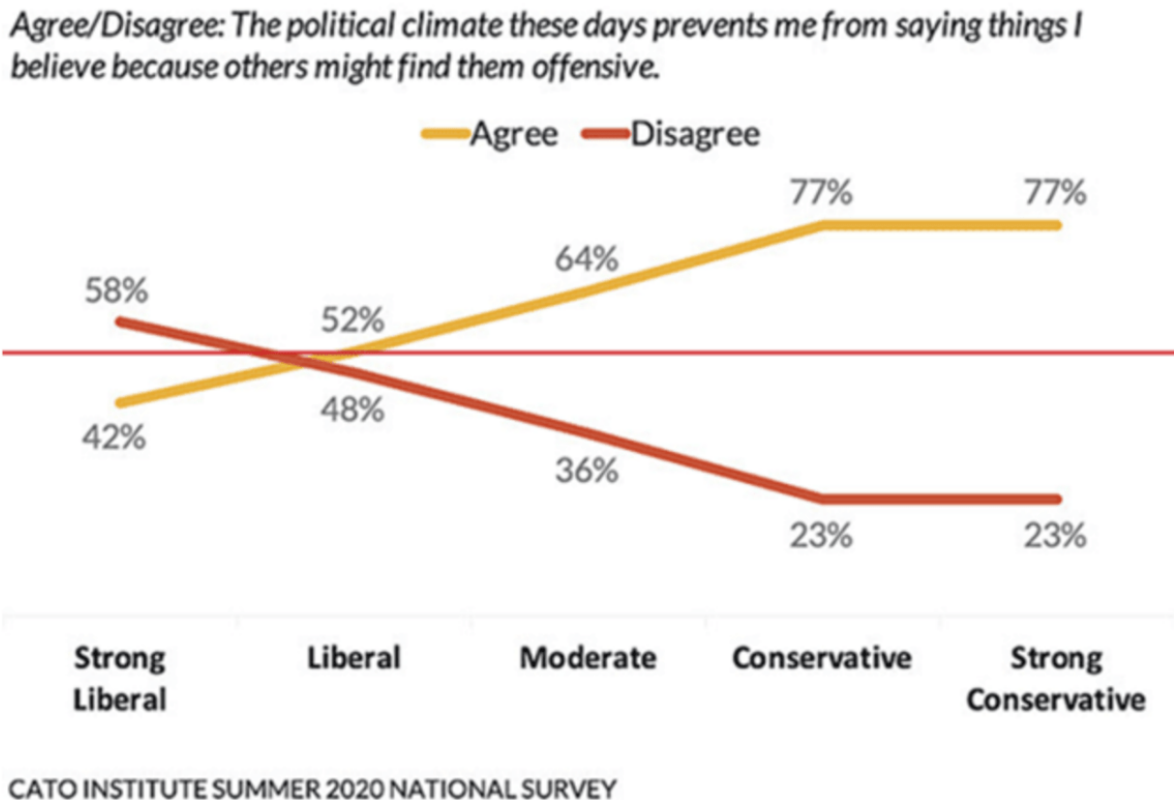
This tragic viewpoint doesn't excuse moral failure. Rather, it seeks to honestly face up to the nature of the challenge when we seek to build more caring, giving people and communities. We also know that even the most faithful Christian communities will yet be burdened by jealousy, selfishness, dishonesty and many other faults. We thus will always fall short of the ideal to which we aspire.

Our Christian faith doesn't immediately make us more moral than non-Christians and we are not Christians because of any inherent moral superiority. Rather, we are Christians because God through Christ has made known to us his love and mercy. He calls us to respond in thankfulness and faithfulness to this saving act in our lives.

Appendix A: The Suppression of Debate in Churches

The most crucial prerequisite for facilitating “conversations on issues that divide us” is a social environment in which people of differing perspectives can speak freely and openly. In such an environment people should expect that their ideas and opinions will be examined and criticized by others. However, people must not have their motives and character assaulted because of their ideas and opinions. Obviously I am here assuming that we are dealing with people of generally good faith, which is a completely reasonable assumption for members of a Christian church.

The sad, dangerous truth is that in our current social environment people with more conservative ideas are far less likely to express their thoughts. A recent [Cato Institute/YouGov survey](#) showed that the more conservative is a person the more they fear expressing their views in public. The summary graph for this result follows.

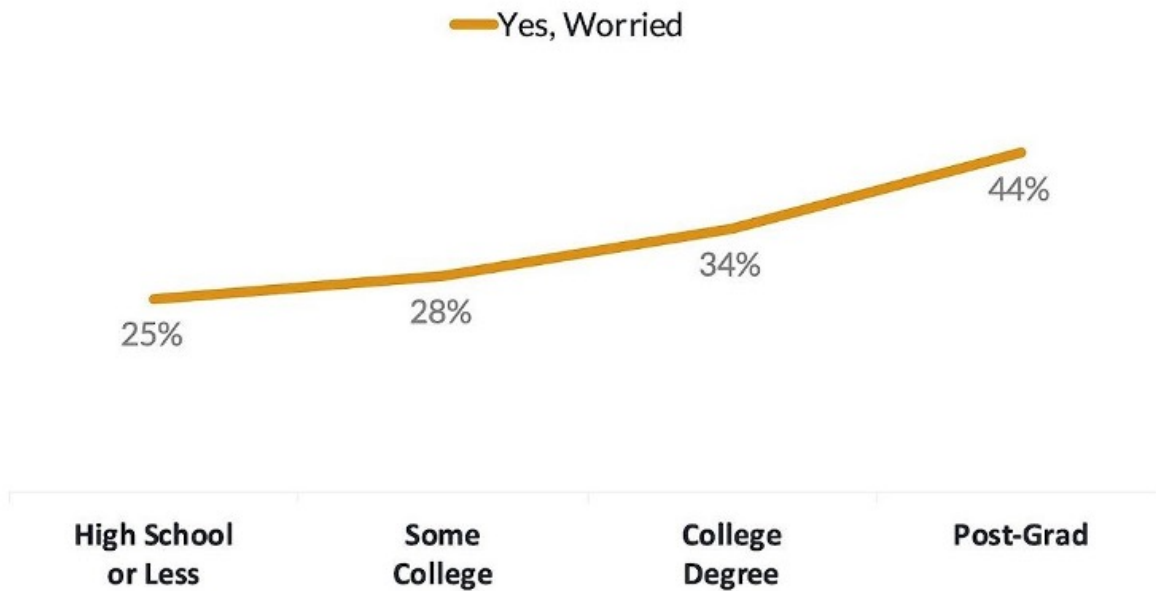


Note that the only political group in which there was majority disagreement with the proposition is “Strong Liberal.” Almost two-thirds of “Moderate” and over three-quarters of “Conservative” and “Strong Conservative” people felt strong social pressure to remain silent regarding their beliefs.

These fears are not irrational, as we all are well aware of “cancel culture” in general and of specific cases where people with non-conformist views lost their reputations and/or livelihoods. It is a sad fact that the members of our church, who tend to be more highly educated, fear reprisal the most.

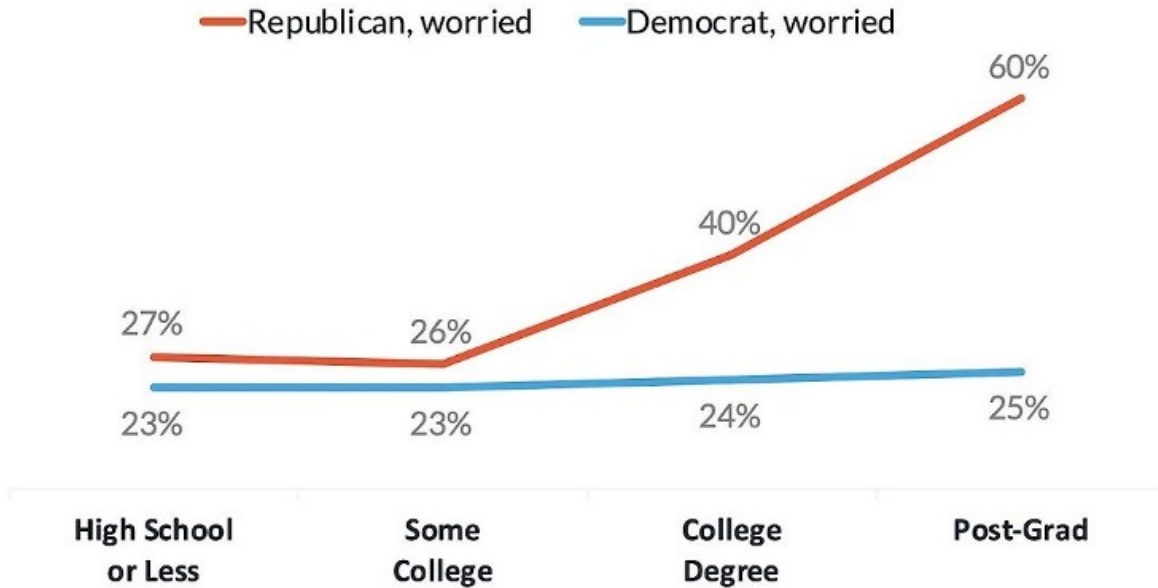
Americans With the Most Education Are Most Worried Their Political Views Could Get Them Fired or Harm Their Careers

Are you worried about losing your job or missing out on job opportunities if your political opinions became known?



But it is the following chart that is the most concerning. Whereas for Democrats the level of career fear is unrelated to education level, for Republicans fear more than doubles from low to high education levels. Thus, if the social environment that exists outside of a church has an impact on what is felt inside then we have a big problem — that being that we cannot effectively “facilitate conversations on issues that divide us” because conservative members feel socially constrained.

Republicans With the Most Education Are Most Worried Their Political Views Could Harm Them at Work



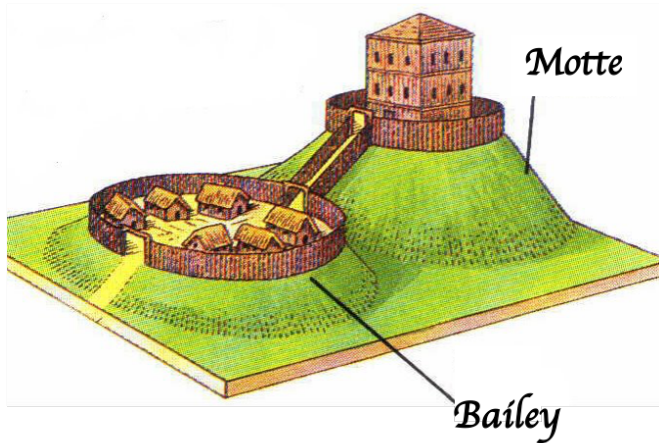
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I believe that this general social environment has to some extent penetrated into most churches. When talking to my more conservative (theologically and/or politically) friends I sometimes encounter an unwillingness to express their views outside of their close social circle. Others have complained that on the occasions in which politics are discussed in worship or education the perspective is almost uniformly progressive (and sometimes radically so).

It's difficult to deny that the general social environment is more supportive of progressive than opposing / differing viewpoints. If churches truly want to develop an environment where differing views can be constructively discussed then the essential first step is to ensure that all points of view are allowed equal footing. We need to trust that in a free marketplace of speech good ideas will tend to fare far better than bad ideas. But declaring certain ideas to be bad (either by implication or directly) before they have been explored creates a dangerous sense of disenfranchisement and disrespect among many members.

Appendix B: The Motte and Bailey Deception Strategy

This strategy for winning arguments by deception was introduced to me in a podcast by James Lindsay titled “[Stealing the Motte: Critical Social Justice and the Principle of Charity.](#)” Here he introduces the “Motte and Bailey” technique of argumentation. Here’s a summary from [Wikipedia](#) (called a fallacy in this definition).



The motte-and-bailey fallacy (named after the motte-and-bailey castle) is a form of argument and an informal fallacy where an arguer conflates two positions which share similarities one modest and easy to defend (the “motte”) and one much more controversial (the “bailey”). The arguer advances the controversial position, but when challenged,

they insist that they are only advancing the more modest position. Upon retreating to the motte, the arguer can claim that the bailey has not been refuted (because the critic refused to attack the motte) or that the critic is unreasonable (by equating an attack on the bailey with an attack on the motte).

Once again, while this theoretical definition is useful, it’s Mr. Lindsay who provides the examples of its practical application.

But maybe you’re reading something about the way kids of certain minority races don’t have equal shakes in our schools. Maybe they aren’t testing as well on average or something, and this is a problem. But something doesn’t quite sit right with you about the arguments they’re presenting because certain things don’t line up.

For example it’s clear that white kids aren’t testing on average as well as Asian kids but that’s not a problem. Except that it is, and the point being made is that black and Hispanic kids, I guess they are real minorities as opposed to Asians, need a leg up and that seems reasonable.

But to do this Asians need to be discriminated against somehow. I mean that was very famously a scandal at Harvard recently, and this is all necessary in order to achieve something that sounds really good, which is equity, and still something else

seems a little off – that this is all down to racism, there's no possibility that anything except systemic racism is the cause and white people are all to blame.

But again there's that weird Asian contingent where they are actually outperforming white people and so they have to be accused of being white adjacent or acting white or model minorities or something, and something about all of it just doesn't square up. But when you try to go through all the arguments about equity and why it's needed a lot of it seems important and it seems generally good. Then there's these weird parts, and you feel like you have to defend the "they just mean this more reasonable thing," but you still can't shake the feeling that something doesn't quite square up here. That's the feeling I want to try to explain today.

So to understand it we need to realize that critical theorists are playing a radically different game than the rest of us and this is a game that they've set up so that they are the only ones who can win. So what we have to do is we have to change the game that we're playing in order to stop the whole game from getting shifted to their rules which are set up so that only they can win. And when they win their political and social agendas get forced upon the rest of us, implemented into our institutions. And then we have to play their game even more and our game goes away. And the thing is we don't really realize that we're playing their game or playing into their game.

I should say in reality they have set up their game, so it looks like we have to play the way we usually play with, in principle, charity to their arguments, for example, but they're actually making use of that to forward their agenda.

So in fact one of the biggest ways that they do this is by manipulation of the principle of charity. They're not just letting but forcing other people to build and defend their Motte, which is the charitable easily defended interpretation of the view while they run amok in the Bailey, which is some radical activist aspect or application of it.

So, the "game" being played by advocates of Critical Theory is:

1. Identify a statement/position that is generally assumed to be obviously true/virtuous (the Motte)
 - "Black kids aren't doing as well as others on standardized tests and we need to find ways to close this gap."

2. Place adjacent to that true/virtuous position a radical, indefensible proposal (the Bailey) that claims to address the problem being discussed
 - “The only way to close this gap is to discriminate against Asian kids in college admissions.”
3. If anyone criticizes the Bailey claim that this is the exact equivalent of attacking the Motte
 - “So, since you oppose discriminating against Asians kids that means that you want to continue leaving behind the Black kids!”
4. When the criticizer backs off because they don’t want to be seen opposing a true/virtuous idea then the Critical Theory advocate throws the Bailey in with the Motte and the argument has been won.
 - “So you agree that the only way to close the gap for Black kids is to discriminate against Asian kids.”

If you are doubtful I challenge you to begin actively looking for the Motte and Bailey in arguments put forward by Progressive Leftists. You will not find it every time, but you will find it often enough to likely be convincing that this rhetorical technique is both common and effective.