

Some Thoughts on Social Justice and Jesus

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Social justice is not a terminology found in the Bible, but it is a concept that resides in the Scriptures. The big problem is that those on the so-called Christian left (hereafter referred to simply as the “Christian left”) who bandy about this phrase derive their notion of social justice from secular roots rather than biblical ones.

In order to win the day and curry favor with the “unfriendlies” all about us, some professing believers are going back to the kitchen and serving up a long-retired Social Gospel menu garnished with socialist or Marxist rhetoric. Life never ceases to amaze.

In reality, if we have a scintilla of understanding of what Jesus and the NT teaches us, we would know that there is no way that we can carry out the Great Commission as Jesus commanded His apostles to do and, at the same time, impress a godless world of unbelievers with our cultural value and relevance without giving away the farm. They just don’t get it, and we show we just don’t get it *either* when we take that tact.

So, for those reasons, I think it is worth talking about the cause of “social justice” as a concern of the Church.

I expect that most thoughtful believers, if asked what this phrase means to them, they would answer something on this order:

“Social justice exists when, in the administration of justice and in social relationships, the system and its citizens are color-blind, gender-blind, money-blind, power-blind, status-blind, and also blind to any and every advantage or privilege that might pervert inequity and due process. Or more simply, we have social justice when all do or are required to do what is right by their neighbor in every relationship and circumstance, regardless of who they are and how much or little they have.”

Conceptually I too am on board with that answer, though I recognize that it is idealistic in this sinful world and therefore *can be never remotely achievable*. Within the redeemed community, it is more realistic. But even there, given the mixed multitude that comprises our churches, social justice is a noble aim that we can never expect to fully attain.

It is important to remember, in contrast to the way the “Christian Left” portrays social justice, that when this concept is taught in the Old Testament, God did not expect or require rank-and-file members of the theocracy to determine for themselves whether or not their leaders were meeting the standard. And even if they determined that their leaders were, in fact, unworthy, they were never to become political vigilantes or revolutionaries in order to set matters right on a corporate basis. To speak up about such matters is morally in bounds, but to tear up is not. It is for God, not the private citizen, to hold power brokers and unjust judges to account.

This policy would carry over to the churches in principle. Yes, as churches, we have a prophetic voice and *can* and *should* use it when there are miscarriages of justice, wrong instead of righteousness, and gross inequities in our social arrangements.

Even so, the Church is not God's minister of justice in our democratic society. This role belongs to the government, good or bad. And it is God who holds the government responsible. We can speak out against irresponsible government and its arms and agencies, but it is not our place, in left-wing style, to convulse society, stir up revolution, and take on the government except *when it begins to infringe our duties to God*.

We must keep our eyes on the ball. This means knowing our business or mission in the world and sticking to it. Our business as the Church is to make disciples, not to remake society. If, in the power of the Spirit, enough disciples are made, then of course society will, to some extent, experience a different moral complexion for the good. Still, we know that this world is ultimately the "Titanic," and therefore our role is not to spend our time "polishing its brass." We are here to save men "from this perverse generation," as Peter famously told his hearers on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:40).

God never called us to renovate society, but by the grace of God, one by one, little by little, to redeem lost individuals in it. And this means proclaiming and practicing the Gospel of Christ, not replacing it with a social gospel (a la Walter Rauschenbusch), or a gospel of economic redistribution of wealth, or anything else of that kind (in a socialist or Marxist style).

Nowadays in left-wing political rhetoric, we hear a lot about "social justice." And many professing believers, especially millennials, who are trying to find common ground with the culture, are picking up on that mantra and joining the march to make the world a better place.

What's wrong with that?

At first blush it sounds like a concern every Christian should share. After all, the phrase evokes the image of God's people coming to the rescue of the weak and the helpless. Then, the downtrodden, whose cares and needs tend to get ignored or trampled upon by the privileged and powerful who live by the worldly golden rule ("them that has the gold makes the rules"), would be liberated from their oppressors.

What Christian wouldn't be sympathetic with an agenda like that? Wouldn't Jesus be all over that like green on grass?

But there is a problem with that picture, as there almost always is with almost anything emanating from the left wing of the ideological spectrum. As I've already intimated, it turns out, upon closer inspection, that their version of "social justice" is not exactly what the phrase might suggest it is about.

Social justice *per se* is a virtue every Christian supports because it is part of the gospel lived out. Which is to say, by definition, that it is impossible to be a Christian and not champion and practice social justice in its biblical sense.

The problem is that disingenuous people happen to be very crafty at the language games and are quite clever at hijacking virtuous terminology to mask their less than virtuous agenda. With non-believers there are always traps. They are very skillful at making bad things sound good.

Like disguising killing the innocent and voiceless pre-born under the user-friendly guise of “a woman’s choice” and “women’s health.” We must be careful of dancing with the Devil. And when someone cozies up to the liberal left wing, he or she will soon be playing footsie with a heartless predator.

Social justice, as it is used in common parlance today, is a noble-sounding ideal, but get below the surface to its assumptions and agenda, and it’s as ugly and base as the murderous totalitarian (both Communistic and National Socialistic) regimes of the 20th Century.

This caution is necessary because it is so easy for the politically naïve to get sucked in by these verbal gymnastics and imagine themselves joining a cause to “make the world a better place,” when actually they will wind up only making matters worse. As presently configured on the Left, the social justice movement has co-opted a biblical concept and perverted it into something completely incompatible with biblical values and standards.

How so?

For one thing, social justice, as it is conceived by the left-wing and secular humanists, operates on the premises of materialism. The good life reduces to financial equality or something like it. Oppression is not having your fair share of the Rock. That is not the standpoint of Jesus.

Secondly, among the oppressed, the Left includes persons or groups as “victims” that I would call “vicious” and vice-mongers. Among those whose causes they champion are persons who are often notoriously rancorous, venomous and even uncivilly ferocious, from predatory to perverted. Even so, these left-leaning folk want to drum up our sympathy and support for these fake victims rather than real victims, all the while they go (with hard hearts) running right past those who are truly victims, truly hurting, and truly oppressed. (I’ll come back to this.)

But can’t we at least find common ground on the poverty issue? Not really, because the left-wing vision of helping has a distinctly socialist or Marxist flavor. Their idea of helping the poor is more of the Robin Hood variety. Though historically socialism has always failed miserably, their solution is still basically to take from the rich (a deceptively broad category) who supposedly have too much and don’t deserve it, and would redistribute it to the poor who have too little and (supposedly) deserve it a lot more.

That model of social justice has nothing in common with the biblical ideal.

In addition, those on the left wing share a romantic vision of the poor (i.e., they are the good guys and when they aren't, it is the fault of their rich and powerful exploiters). Moreover, it is impossible for the rich and powerful to be just (unless, of course, the rich and powerful happen to be left-wing apparatchiks like George Soros). Unfortunately, their image of the poor and oppressed is about as true to reality as Rousseau's misty-eyed concept of the so-called Noble Savage.

As we mentioned above, this whole left-wing social justice project, once we get beneath its idealistic surface, is rooted in a barren, materialistic worldview. That worldview grounds the good life in economic well-being. Such a rooting ought to give pause to any disciple of Christ (who is tempted to drift leftward) in his or her aspiration to make the world a fitter place for human occupation.

The fact is, Jesus bluntly trashed that notion (that the good life is found in greater material well-being). A certain man once complained to Jesus (Luke 12) that his brother had shafted him in the division of the family inheritance. To remedy this inequity, he implored Jesus to somehow force his brother to redistribute the goods so that he had a more equitable slice of the family wealth. (One will note a proto-socialist ring to all this.) Notably, our Lord flatly *refused* this role as irrelevant to His earthly mission. Warning first against greed, which had just reared its ugly head in the spirit of the angry sibling, our Lord then disabused His followers of the myth that prosperity is the key to human felicity:

“Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed. For not even when one has abundance (including the poor being enriched from a rich man's store) does his life consist of his possessions.” (verse 15)

Ah, there's a reality check! Left-leaning Christians risk getting sucked into socialist-like thinking in their concern for the plight of our planet's poor or the struggling neighbor next door. Should you be one of those, you might want to take a step back and check your ideological bearings. The Left is not headed in a biblical direction. It is not working off the same sheet of music.

Yes, caring about the plight of the unfortunate is a good thing, just like loving our children is a good thing. However, as the Proverbs teach us, “the compassion of the wicked is cruel” (Prov. 12:10). Sometimes our misguided compassion (think Welfare State) can in effect produce all the damage of hate. Their “solutions” not only fail to solve the problems; they make matters worse.

The aforementioned Welfare State is a classic example. Even if their proposals do not actually make the predicament of the poor worse (and it can be argued that they do), they almost always make the “beneficiaries” worse people.

For example, I grew up in a working-class family in the southern West Virginia coal fields where I saw that first hand. Incrementally it largely ruined the character of a once-proud people. The reality is, one cannot “subsidize” people out of poverty. Perhaps one can give poor folks a way to earn a stable and sustainable living, but continuous handouts over time leach the pride and dignity out of any human being.

There is a right way and a wrong way to address human problems. Let us care, but not be careless about it.

Jesus was not about a social gospel (nor was the early church). He was about spiritual good news that would set people free from the penalty and power of sin, and about lifting mankind out of its most fundamental poverty. Only *this* remedy sets people free from the oppression of the world, the flesh and the Devil (John 8:32).

Our Lord made it clear enough that giving everybody a bigger piece of the pie in no way creates your best life now. So why should Christian people camp out there as if economic uplift is what Heaven is most concerned about? That project does not address the root problem of either the rich or the poor. What the poor (and the rich) most need is Christ, not cash or status. How come so much of the “Christian Left” almost never focuses on that? That puzzles.

Anything less is a Band-Aid. Now if programmatic humanitarian endeavors function as a tactical bridge for bringing these folks the Gospel and to the knowledge of Christ (as did the healings of Jesus), then bring it on. But anything less essentially aborts our Christian mission. The real urgency in this world is to get people off the “Titanic,” not to feed and clothe them while the ship is sinking.

Clearly then, the Church should not adopt a mission that Jesus himself flatly refused as beneath His project. Hence, it seems to me that those professing believers who lean left and are sympathetic to socialistic notions for achieving some sort of economic parity betray a concerning tincture of an all-too-temporal and crass materialistic worldview. To me at least, they seem to see money and things mattering more than they did to Jesus, and that is a troubling priority.

In addition, it is hard to understand how they envision economic uplift for the poor as a more compelling or meaningful preoccupation than Gospel proclamation. And that really does seem to be the case. I say that because that seems to be all they really talk about.

Here I may be misunderstood. There is no notion on my part, just because money and material things really aren't the answer to abundant life, that we who have more should ignore the problem, turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to the cries of the unfortunate, refusing to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and put a roof over the heads of the homeless. Not at all.

In fact, historically speaking, (and very few millennials in particular have much sense of history) Christians have always been at the forefront of the compassion brigade. Nobody does “compassion” better or more consistently than Bible-believing Christians. During my lifetime we have brought both “soup and salvation” to the helping equation. It has been evident that those who hopes are most firmly fixed on Heaven have been those who have cared the most deeply for those with no hope on earth. We have been generally the first to open our hearts and our wallets, and the last to turn the poor away from the door. That spirit, however, is our Christian reflex; it is not our Christian mission. It wasn't with Jesus nor was it with the apostles.

What your experience is I know not. But I at least can testify that, never in all my years in any church, have I seen anyone turn away a truly needy person at the door. Maybe you have, but not I. In terms of liberality and compassion, the left wing, “Christian” or otherwise, cannot match the heart and help of evangelicals at home or abroad.

Though I don’t have the statistics in hand at the moment, I do recall a study that showed that conservative Christians are far more charitable than the general population. And that includes liberals who are always championing the cause of the poor, but on a personal basis they typically sacrifice very little.

We do a lot better job of putting our money where our mouths are. And unlike the Left (of any stripe), our tact is to personalize compassion rather than politicize it (by attempting to compel the government to be the Santa Claus of the poor and disadvantaged). The Left always wants Big Government to do the heavy lifting. We evangelicals are in the better habit of enlisting Big Hearts and reaching into our own pockets to help the truly needy. But here’s the key: We are always ready and desirous to bring the message of Christ in the process.

The strictly humanitarian types (a constituency that tends to populate the Left) is only about the *soup* part. It tends to recoil at the *salvation* part. And that distaste is something that any believer attracted to the narrow humanitarianism of the left wing needs to think twice about. For their impetus derives, as I stressed above, from a purely temporal, materialistic worldview that mistakenly believes that it can put everything right if only everybody has a stable and sustaining income in their pockets. Nonsense.

Back in 1997, a Christian charity, then called Northwest Medical Teams, invited a group of Portland-area pastors to go deep into Mexico to see their work there. I must say they had it dialed in. Working with some of the most wretched poor that one could ever imagine, desperate souls living on trash dumps and drinking water unfit for animals, this group was doing a remarkable job of tending to their immense material and medical needs while training many for jobs that would allow them to make a decent living.

Yet at the same time they were programmed to aggressively reach those indigent people for Christ. The humanitarian aspect was just a compassionate bridge to demonstrate the love of Christ to those needy people . . . a platform from which to introduce as many as would hear the Gospel so that their real, eternal needs might be met. The material and medical help, a very significant outlay was, in the minds of the founder and the organization, secondary to the main thing---getting those dear people save and rescued out of their most fundamental poverty, which was spiritual famine. That’s the right way.

Unfortunately, that organization has now changed. Right down to its name. Today they are under new management whose vision is, so far as I am aware, strictly humanitarian. No evangelistic thrust. They fit right in with the “Christian Left’s” ideals. We no longer support them because they, and those like them, don’t get it.

Here is a truth that those on the left wing need to comprehend: If somehow material poverty could be magically eradicated this very year, all medical crises relieved, and

every famine arrested, nothing would fundamentally change in this world. That is because fallen human nature with all its sinful urges would stubbornly remain intact and, like weeds, always come back in force. Shortly the same old problems and disparities would reappear, not to mention 10,000 other vices that have bedeviled human existence on this planet since Adam.

Economic parity, or even relief, would not remedy the ultimate evil on this earth: death and estrangement from God our Creator. Again, life simply does not consist in the abundance of one's possessions. How many of the foolish and unhappy rich have already discovered that, as they vainly attempt to fill up that God-sized vacuum in their materialistic souls with all the money, pleasures, properties, play things and paramours their money can buy. One could dump buckets of money extracted from the rich on the poor, but at the end of the day they would still be lost.

That "solution" would be as worthless as trucking sweets to parched travelers wandering lost in the Mohave Desert. They may love and long for sweets, the goodies may even distract them temporarily from their peril, but if the object is to save them, what they need is not sugar, but water and the way out of the searing heat. The Left with its social justice mantra is basically all about sustaining the perishing with provisions of sweets in the burning desert. We are about bringing them the water of life and saving them from certain death.

Part II - The Tolerance of the Left Wing of Social Injustice

Now I come back to the second great fault of the "social justice" mantra of the Left that I mentioned earlier. And I will personalize this.

I personally cannot stand to see anyone unjustly discriminated against for the accidents of life, regardless of race or ethnicity. On the other hand, I cannot stand to see people of any kind who engage in criminal or totally irresponsible social behaviors play the victim (or support those who victimize themselves). These need to be held accountable for their outrageous conduct. It's called "social justice," you know.

To see an illegal immigrant gun down a beautiful young woman in broad daylight on the streets of San Francisco for no just cause and then see an insane *San Francisco* jury set him free is social injustice beyond comprehension. Only in a twisted place like that could anybody with a conscience condone such a verdict and not blush at opposite policies protecting criminal aliens in the name of social justice! Talk about twisted.

Do you recall any outrage from left-wing political organs about this spectacular miscarriage of justice? Why not? You might think twice about pitching your Christian tent on that side of the fence. That tells a story right there---and it is not a good one.

No way can we Christians condone or excuse in the name of Christ that miscarriage of justice without denying everything we are about.

There is more and more of that mob justice in places like South Central LA, Ferguson and Baltimore. People who have grievances against the System or the police and have

painted themselves victims of the Man are going out and doing awful things to the innocent just to make their point, even when the evidence suggests they are more victimizers than victims.

Nobody is justified in airing their grievances by taking out their sense of victimization out on the innocent. Social justice, biblically considered, will not tolerate indiscriminate retaliation or mob hysteria that metes out murder and mayhem and maliciousness on whomever those who feel “oppressed” happen to meet.

Reaction to any injustice, assuming it was truly that, is perfectly natural. However, in a just society we must demand that those hot emotions be sufficiently bridled and properly channeled so that the guiltless are not victimized by the violence or lying accusations of the hateful.

True Christians cannot allow themselves to get ideologically in bed with persons or groups who actually think that the end justifies the means and are therefore all too willing to sacrifice the faultless on the inequitable altar of their twisted ideas of social justice.

For instance, I am totally appalled by the social injustice inflicted on perhaps innocent persons when they are “convicted” and ruined before they have ever had their day in court and not allowed to be innocent until proved guilty. That goes for a secret Ku Klux Klan lynching or a left-wing lynching orchestrated by that unholy trinity of its politicians, the Fourth Estate, the Academy, and entertainment figures such as we saw in the recent Kavanaugh circus. An accusation on the thinnest of evidence was put forward, and all the fangs came out in defense (ostensibly) of sexually abused women everywhere. No matter. One female CBS personality tweeted that she was proud that she had help ruin his (the judge’s) life.

That is what left-wing social justice really looks like, you who claim to be part of the “Christian Left.” Whatever happened to innocent until proven guilty? As a matter of fact, whatever happened to innocent until at least one looks guilty? But the ideological hysteria on the left is so out of control that justice no longer matters, just ideology.

We Christians must draw our lines in the sand, and they need to be where the Bible draws them when it comes to who is a victim and who is criminal and a scoundrel.

Another example: Because the Scriptures condemn homosexuality (and make no mistake, they do), I cannot approve or condone such activity or same-sex marriage (a contradiction in terms). It is impertinent to me, as a Christian for whom the Scriptures are the final authority in all matters of faith and practice, if nowadays, the canons of political correctness are giving the green light to what history has always condemned. This age is known for its vast accumulation of information, but not for its wisdom. That will catch up with us all too soon. With God, Sodom was not a protected space.

That said, I as a Christian must stand up against any who would bully or beat up a homosexual, just as we should not put up with anyone bullying or beating up a fornicator, or adulterer, or a liar or a thief. As messed up as we may be spiritually as a result of the Fall, all should be treated respectfully as human beings created in the image and likeness

of God. That does not mean approval for mean or deviant or hurtful behaviors, but it does require that, while we condemn what God condemns in the way of bad behaviors, we treat all human beings, so far as they will allow us, with love and compassion as the case may call for, and that includes standing up for them when they are treated unjustly.

If I see someone robbing them, or stealing their car, or giving them a beat down, I do not stand by and say, "Oh, whatever, they are sexual deviants, they deserve it." The same with an illegal alien. Their illegality must be challenged. However, we cannot stand by when we can help it and just let wicked, hard-hearted people walk all over them and take advantage of their status, to abuse them.

There is a difference between what people are doing and what they are. Even a criminal is a human being. It should roil our blood if we see someone treating a criminal like dirt just because of his or her record. Let the System deal with the record. That is biblical. But let us protect their dignity as fellow human beings.

The Left does not make that distinction. How do I know? Because of the utterly hateful and contemptuous way they treat those who differ with them. Typically they despise their opposition and would not shed a tear if we all disappeared into a gulag or death camp. Do I really believe that? Yes. Remember Hillary: we are the deplorables.

Any Christian has to think two, three times, yes, even ten times before cozying up to those on that side of the ideological fence. To pander to their will is a grave mistake. You cannot get to Christ and His mission and purpose for your life from there. No way.

If the left wing really and truly cares about social justice in the normal sense of the term, it is a mystery to me (and ought to be to any Christian who aspires to see a more just society) why those folks never join the battle against Big Abortion and its baby-slaughtering machine. How could any humane person not see the inhumanity of this horrific practice? How could we fail to shame not only those who provide the machinery, but also those who crave their unconstrained sex life so much that they are willing to take advantage of the Murder Maw to permit themselves the pleasure without consequences or responsibility?

The Left is deeply concerned about the social injustices inflicted on society by Big Business. And there is no question that unchecked capitalism can chew up and spit out little people (and some not so little). But strangely, those captured by that ideology seem totally unconcerned by Big Unions who can do the same thing and force their unwilling members to fund what they do not even countenance. Where's the justice in that?

Where are they in the face of burgeoning anti-Semitism in our colleges and universities, and in fact all over the world? And why, oh, why would they side with Palestinians who only want the death of Israel? Where is their sense of justice?

What about the destructive effects of an out-of-control welfare system that compounds more social problems than it cures? Do they care?

What about these extreme environmentalists who would rather protect a salamander than preserve communities and those businesses upon which their livelihoods depend? Do they care? Not that I can see. Not a whit. Rather, they support this injustice regularly.

What about property taxes that overburden many people and even run them out of their homes and off their property because they can't keep up with the taxes. Is that not a scandal? Not a peep from that side.

And what about Christophobia? Evangelical Christians are a minority group in this country and one of its most socially despised and religiously mistreated by our local, state and federal governments. Yet why is the Left swifter to stand up for Muslims than for Christians?

What about public schools that treat freedom of religion as *freedom from religion*? Where is their protest? Why do Christian parents increasingly feel that the public schools are neither healthy nor safe environments for their students? Yet not a word from the Left except in support of the status quo.

What about universities where Christian students who speak up are reviled and mocked in the classrooms and basically shut down by left-wingers?

We could go on and on cataloguing social injustices that the Left cares nothing about, so much so that it is clear that its agenda is quite narrow and self-interested. Social justice is really a misnomer for what they are up to. Let Christians beware.

Part II cont.

This brings me to an important question: What is the attraction of some Christians to the left wing? Why would any devout Christian be a fellow traveler with an ideology that, throughout modern history in its various iterations and nuances, has consistently had one common strain: distaste for, if not hostility to, apostolic Christianity. I know no exception.

I may have some of it figured out.

1. A Reaction to Excesses

In some instances that leftward drift is possibly an overreaction (i.e., the pendulum effect) to the excesses of the so-called Christian Right (which contains both true and false believers) as well as the evangelical megachurch phenomenon. I could see this happening, for I myself have been scandalized by some of these.

For instance, the institutional narcissism among Protestant megachurches can make one want to throw up. Who can abide something posing as evangelical Christianity that seems more about the Big Egos, the Big Show, the Big Events, the Big Splash, and the Big Numbers than about the Great Commission with their offerings of the heretical theology of cheap grace (antinomianism) and costless discipleship that would make the apostles scream.

And who does not get nauseated with those politically supercharged evangelicals who seem to think that God is the Great Republican in the Sky who is all about restoring America to its (supposedly) original Christian foundations (an historical myth) and who set out in “Saul’s armor” (i.e., with political rather than spiritual weapons) to reverse the drift of the country into secularism and keep Republicans in power. God bless America, your best life here and now.

Then, too, on the fringes of the Christian right wing, running rampant in Pentecostal circles, is this abominable amalgam of Prosperity, Word of Faith and New Apostolic Reformation characters (practicing simony as they literally sell to the unwary prophetic gifts and access to the supernatural through mystical and occultic techniques). Rather than implore believers to take up their crosses and follow Jesus wherever He leads, they challenge them to call material wealth into existence and to bask in the lap of earthly luxury whenever they want. About all that these frauds have in common with the apostolic faith is some hijacked vocabulary that bamboozles the ignorant.

Are these excesses on the right any part of the equation that tilts some Christians left? I don’t know, but what I do know is that two wrong turns don’t make a right.

2. Prideful Independence

Second, I have noticed that some young(er) people who like to identify with the Left share an unflattering common denominator. They tend to be prideful individualists who dislike being painted with common colors. This is part of their persona, just like some kids at school who want so badly to stick out from the common herd, will bedeck themselves in strange garb and rad hair to attract attention. Thus, these feel some need to set themselves apart from the Christian mainstream by adopting unexpected or controversial positions like the runt sophomore who likes to shock his classmates by his professed atheism as a token of his independence.

Fortunately, some of these may eventually be cured by grace and maturity. Knowing their self-absorbed and insecure type all too well, I realize the majority will probably drift from biblical moorings further and further out to sea into irrelevancy so far as true Kingdom work is concerned.

3. Stop-Gap Compassion

A third impetus for leftward leanings, some might argue, is more straightforward. These believers profess to possess Christian compassion for the quandary of the world’s poor and oppressed, a concern that the rest of us supposedly care too little about and do little for. Where that self-righteousness explanation fits, it is remarkably uninformed.

The constituency of the NT church was predominantly the underclass (1 Corinthians 1:26-28). As we know from the Book of Acts and the epistles, the early church cared for their own and shared with one another. Down through church history that biblical ethic has never disappeared from the DNA of those whom we might fairly designate as apostolic (i.e., biblical) Christians. In fact it has flourished among us to this day.

As I suggested in Part I of this essay, I believe no sector of the human race in the modern world has been more compassionate or generous toward the poor and the down-trodden than Bible-believing Christians. And through their influence, the face of the Western world has been changed for the better, including the economic betterment that we enjoy to this hour. The motherlode of compassion and liberality for 2,000 years has been found in the Christian church in its various faces.

4. A Misguided Quest for Relevance

A fourth incentive for some to turn left is a search for relevance in the Secular City. It is no secret that the game is on to shut us out of the public square, and to mute our voice. Indeed, to a great extent, that campaign has been successful. The elites and the brokers of public opinion really don't care too much what we have to say simply because they don't think our message is credible, nor do they believe our mission is important. They never have and never will until Christ returns. Nothing about that should surprise.

Actually it is the culture that is irrelevant. It is irrelevant because it is out of touch with reality, and that spells insanity. If I am in a house of lunatics, and they all happen to believe that everything that I have to say is as worthless as a hill of beans, I don't get in a big twist about it, I don't go into despair over it, and I don't panic if they don't come around. It's their pitiful problem and their harsh consequences.

Besides, I know that the word and work of God will not be thwarted by an army of puny cultural pretenders. They don't decide the outcome. God does. He is sovereign. And the minute He wants to grab the cultural microphone and speak overtop all the secular noise He can do that. So, many of us just need to go about doing His business His way and let things work themselves out.

5. A Need to Be Trendy

The trouble with these left-loving folks, at least as I have discerned it, is that they operate under no such confidence in the sovereignty of God. Also, as I said before, they seem to me to be the sophomoric kind who need to be trendy. They can hardly bear to be uninvited to the world's party.

My sense of them is that they really love the world to a degree they shouldn't and covet its approval to a degree that is perilous (1 John 2:15a). They want, it seems to me, to appease the world with their own little "war on poverty" a lot more than to please God by sticking to the Great Commission.

6. A Need for Approval

Here's the thing: they know they get no "points" from the media, from community leaders, no TV spots, no write ups in the papers for doing what Jesus and the apostles did. But, ah, humanitarian type things, now *this* the mavens of secular culture can endorse (so long as you don't go ruin it with all this "missionary" stuff about Christ. Just stick with the soup and leave out the salvation).

I perceive that it is that lust to be loved by the world (otherwise known as a search for relevance) that lures some Christians to pander to the Left. If that is correct, let them be warned by the words of the Apostle John, that if anyone loves the world (whatever form it takes), the love of the Father is not in him (1 John 2:15b). In short, that carnal craving raises a question about the very authenticity of one's Christian identity.

7. A Fear of Being Marginalized

Finally, related to this motivation, is not just an aversion to being culturally marginalized, but also, it seems to me, there is a strong reluctance to endure the stigma of the Cross, to take the mockery of a contemptuous culture, to be socially ostracized and to accept a status as a new, despised minority. The "Christian Left" is a species that is into pandering, trying too hard to plead for its acceptance by the watching world:

"Look, here, see me! I am not those you hate. See how I care for the poor and oppressed. If you knew me, you'd like me, not hate me."

Now, to the extent that perception is on target, it is really a sickening piece of social sycophancy. Don't we understand from the NT that the day we Christians are drawing the applause of the world, we are probably not on the right track? Who could read Jesus' words (John 15:18ff) and think that we can find a way to take up our cross and follow Him and yet have our culture cheering us on?

Here's the bottom line: darkness doesn't approve of light; it hates it (John 3:18ff). How can we ever expect to come up with a way of discharging the Great Commission that attracts to us less lightening than it attracted to Jesus? If His culture crucified Him, can we expect ours do any less to us?

Part III - The Hypocrisy of Left Wing Compassion

The compassion of the Left is so narrowly selective that one wonders, What's up? There are so many victims of various stripes, so many sufferers, so many oppressed by power, so many unjustly discriminated against, whose needs for help and support go begging and are flatly ignored by the left-wingers, that one cannot help but suspect in its selectivity some kind of agenda, some effort to push a select few to the top of the food chain, for some hidden reason and to let the others "go to hell," so to speak.

So why do they push "social justice" for some but not for others whose desperation is more obvious in many cases, whose needs are at least just as compelling as those the left wing makes so much noise about? And the same questions need to be posed to those who gravitate to the "Christians Left." For a lot of the poor, oppressed, disadvantaged and discriminated against are much closer to home than those that the secular left wing wants the world to rally around.

As I said before, I would be less skeptical of the motives of the "Christian Left" if their vaunted compassion for the helpless and downtrodden extended to unborn infants who are slaughtered on a daily basis in that giant Murder Maw called Planned Parenthood.

Can anyone provide a reasonable explanation why the Left and especially the “Christian Left” are so indifferent to the horror of abortion? Don’t tell me you care about the poor and the plight of illegals and parents being separated from their children when you have little compassion or sense of urgency for sparing pre-born children from being butchered at the hands of modern-day versions of Dr. Joseph Mengele (the diabolical Nazi doctor at Auschwitz). Since nobody can provide a rational justification for such an agonizing death of infants, I question the moral sincerity and sense of right & wrong of these left-wingers.

To me, that says it all: their program is not about taking on what outrages the heart of God, but pandering to the left-wing agenda.