

CHRISTIAN STIFF-NECKEDNESS EXTRAORDINAIRE

To borrow a common expression, from the former Pastor of my home church, I recently had an “Ah-Hah” moment. I woke up one morning and learned that I am a Marxist! How did I know? A prominent radio-vangelist told me so. The proof, according to this media-connected Pastor, was that I am advocating for social justice.

This radio-vangelist, I found out, was spearheading a movement—even a petition--signed mostly by White Christians, declaring social justice to be un-Christian. In the course of this journey, I pinched myself, early on, and dispelled this temporary delusion, by recalling all of the dozens of Biblical Scriptures I had found in only a couple of hours—and only a partial list—underpinning Christian responsibility to advocate for Biblical justice on issues such as racism, poverty, modern slavery, and similar issues of mistreatment, oppression, abuse and injustice. One of these passages, Isaiah 58, v. 8a, says, after Isaiah (inspired by God) cites fighting injustices, oppression and economic hardships, “Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear” (NIV). Now I don’t believe that Karl Marx a fanatical atheist (a synonym for insanity, to think that you can disprove an entity light years beyond your level of understanding), would ever give God credit for anything. Whew, relief!—assured that I won’t have to show up at the radio-vangelist’s church with a hammer and sickle shirt as a scarlet letter. The Isaiah passage is indeed a refreshing reminder that God is the author of everything righteous, including justice for the oppressed, discriminated against, marginalized and abused.

The propagation of this anti-social justice, anti-racial reconciliation, and ultimately anti-Bible nonsense, has severe collateral consequences, as evidenced by a protégé of this radio-vangelist insulting the Reverend Thabiti Anyabwile, an African American Christian brother of the highest integrity and Biblical doctrine—by calling him a leftist radical agitator. (Thabiti graciously but truthfully rebutted the personal attack). So the chasm of division in the churches with racial overtones just grows wider, to the detriment of the American Christian church and the great USA.

This protégé of the radio-vangelist went on in his blog, with his Marxist reference to social justice, by recounting a conversation he had with a woman at his church. In his words, the woman would keep mentioning the need for social justice, and he would consistently circle back to: just focus on the Gospel!—as if the two were totally separate.

If I were present for that conversation, I would--after assuring this protégé that my Biblical justice advocacy has nothing to do with socialism—pose a question: okay, so there have been tens of millions of unborn children slaughtered via

abortions. So we are to say nothing about it, because it is not the “Gospel discussion?” Then let’s bring it closer to home: a teenage girl, a relative or close friend, is kidnapped off the street by traffickers and forced into the sex trade, and the poor girl is threatened and beaten if she resists. We can’t say anything about it, because it is not the “Gospel discussion!”

Of course, the argument of the protégé then collapses. Or maybe it is worse: He is cherry-picking the justice issues, only to conform to a political or ideological agenda. Some justice is cool, but we ignore other justice issues. Or, to paraphrase a stereotype cited by a close Christian brother of mine: “Advocate strongly for the cause of the unborn but have no hesitation about throwing the marginalized, abused and suffering people outside of the womb under the bus.” This type of vulgar Christian stereotype—politicizing and secular ideologizing the Gospel—is pandemic in sections of the Christian church, offending millions of Christians, especially minority believers, and turning countless young adults away from the Gospel because of their perceptions of Christian hypocrisy. Spiritual mass murder out of ignorance and insensitivity, or worse.

Of the countless Scriptures on Biblical justice, I highlight one of the key ones that comes out of the mouth of Jesus Christ: Matthew 23, v. 23b: “You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—JUSTICE (my emphasis) mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former” (NIV).

In Acts 7, v. 51, the Christian disciple Stephen refers to the religious leaders of the time as “stiff-necked.” That is because they were not only going against God, but were totally unrepentant about it. Likewise, these anti-social justice Christians show no remorse, even after being counseled privately and publicly by wise Christian leaders, and asked to be teachable and humbly enter into discussion toward unity and reconciliation. I personally attempted to contact the radio-vangelist and was ignored.

Esteemed civil rights activist Sherilyn Ifill impressed me with her insights from a secular angle, presented in the book “A Perilous Path”, that she co-authored:

“They (victims of civil rights abuses) stood up and confronted the most powerful country in the world. And to its credit, the most powerful country in the world didn’t kill them all. Didn’t do it! Killed some. But didn’t kill them all. (my emphasis) AND INSTEAD MADE SOME EFFORT TO TRANSFORM ITSELF AROUND THE THINGS THAT WE THINK OF AS THE PILLARS OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT.”

Applying those words to today’s Christian church, why in the heck can’t the church assure that only the fringes of the church are doing the spiritual killing,

while the bulk of the Bible-centered, spirit-filled church stands strong, very publicly, with truth against the horrors of modern slavery, residual racism, White nationalist terror, continued racial disparities in key life activities, a largely segregated church, and the remaining damage from generations and even centuries of horrific cultural genocide? The Bible-believing Christians must place racial reconciliation and Biblical justice as the driving engine and not the caboose on the train. To paraphrase

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., let justice ring out across the America as the Christians take the message boldly to media organs, personal advocacy, and determined actions. Then watch the promise of Isaiah 58 explode across the USA with revival!

I am not naming the radio-vangelist, his protégé, or other misguided naysayers in their reactionary movement. Their names have been outed already in some media organs. I do not judge their faith. They are well versed in the Bible and are doubtlessly very good people, following God in many ways, and Evangelizing countless people. But the same could be said of the Christians in the church who were driving vile racism for more than 400 years in the USA, as documented by several historians. Like the Biblical Pharisees, these Christians were beacons of virtue in many ways, but had evil blind spots subverting love and justice.

Most tragically, it was the same attitude cited by the radio-vangelist's protégé—we only talk about the Gospel, not the social activities going on in the world—that enabled these American Christian Pharisees to terrorize millions of Blacks and other minorities, and place a hideous stain on America's great legacy; the impacts of which we are still experiencing. Let us not repeat the same tragic mistakes of many well-meaning Christians from previous generations.