



Fault Lines – Critical Social Justice

By Voddie Baucham

In his 1976 book *The Mirage of Social Justice*, economist Friedrich Hayek wrote, “I have come to feel strongly that the greatest service I can still render to my fellow men would be that I could make the speakers and writers among them thoroughly ashamed, ever again, to employ the term social justice.”

Hayek understood what the term “social justice” means and where it comes from. And as a result, he was passionate about ridding our collective vocabulary of it. That was nearly half a century ago, and the term persists being used – to even greater degrees in recent years than ever before.

The issue of social justice is one of the most in-vogue topics in society today. I often use the metaphor of fault lines to think about the issue because it’s clear there is a definitive dividing line around the topic of social justice that has even run through the Church, with Christians on both sides.

Why is this a vital issue among Evangelical Christians? It’s an important issue because God demands justice, and we’re committed to justice as those who follow the Lord Jesus Christ. So when a terminology or an ideology about justice creeps into the culture and then into the church, people can be swayed by that terminology, even if it happens to be foreign to a biblical understanding of justice.

Many well-meaning Christians are using the term social justice, but they don’t really know what it means. Micah 6:8 has often been used by Christian proponents of social justice. It says...

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.

Clearly, God does demand justice. Injustice is sin. So it’s imperative for Christians to develop a biblical framework for practicing true justice.

The first thing we must do is deal with issues of terminology. Then we need to determine how to respond.

We’ll start with the Bible. From Micah 6:8 we know that God demands justice. [See also Hosea 12:6, Amos 5:24, Isaiah 30:18, Luke 18:7, Hebrews 10:30]

The question that we have to answer is “what is justice?” Biblical justice is the righteous application of the law of God. We do not show favoritism to the rich or to the poor (Leviticus 19:5). Now, is that what the term social justice means? The answer to that question, quite simply, is no. The Oxford Dictionary of the English language defines social justice as...

Justice at the level of a society or state as regards the possession of wealth, commodities, opportunities and privileges. See also distributive justice.



So, social justice is about the distribution or redistribution of wealth, commodities, opportunities, and privileges. That's what social justice means.

One of the words often used in regard to social justice is equity. Not equality, but equity. Equality means everyone is treated the same way. Equity is about equal outcomes and equal distribution. Through this lens, then, inequities equal injustice. This is very important to note, because this is oftentimes where we find ourselves missing each other in conversations and disagreements about these issues.

Take, for example, racial injustice. What is racial injustice? When people use the term racial injustice, what they mean is a lack of equity between people of various racial groups. So, in terms of income, if one group, as a whole, has lower incomes than another group as a whole, that's racial injustice. But this assessment doesn't apply across the board.

The contemporary secular view says that racial injustice only occurs if the group with a higher average income has been labeled as an oppressor group. This is a very important distinction. Asians, as a group, make more money than white people. Yet we never refer to that as racial injustice against white people. Because whites are the "oppressor" group.

It's here that we uncover the underlying Marxist assumptions in these ideas. The Marxist assumption of the oppressor/oppressed paradigm is central to the concept of social justice. As a result, not all inequity is seen as racial injustice. Nigerian immigrants have higher incomes than white folks, but we would never call that racial injustice. And it's not just about income. In terms of incarceration, white people are incarcerated at higher rates than Asians. But we would never call it racial injustice. Do you see the flaw?

This thinking is antithetical to biblical truth. How would the critical social justice movement interpret certain passages of scripture? Take for example the parable of the talents, in Matthew 25. There is a man who leaves his servants with a number of talents. He leaves one with five talents, he leaves one with two, another one with one.

Now, already there's a problem because he didn't give everybody the same number of talents. And who's telling this story? Jesus is telling this story. This is hugely problematic for social justice advocates already, unless the rest of the story tells about how this person is evil because he didn't give everybody the same number of talents.

The master goes away, and he comes back. Each man received rewards according to what he had done with the talents entrusted to him. But that's not the social justice ending to that story. The social justice ending goes like this...

"You got 10, give me five. I'm going to give one to the guy with four, and I'm going to give four to the guy with one, and that way there will be equity because everybody ends up with five."

That's what the critical social justice movement advocates. This comes from the Marxist ideology of critical theory, and the assumptions that the world is divided between oppressors and the oppressed. The oppressors establish the rules and fundamentals of the societies they dominate in order to benefit themselves at other groups' expense.

This view gives rise to a number of other terms we must understand if we're to develop a foundation for practicing biblical justice today. Words like "whiteness."



Whiteness is understood as a set of normative privileges granted to white-skinned individuals and groups which are invisible to those privileged by them.

White privilege, then, is a series of unearned advantages that accrue to white people by virtue of their whiteness. Then there's white supremacy, which is defined as any belief, behavior, or system that supports, promotes, or advances white privilege. You also have white complicity, which means white people, through the practices of whiteness and by benefiting from white privilege, contributing to the maintenance of systemic racial injustice through the practice of their own white privilege. And what is systemic racial injustice? Systemic racial injustice is the idea that systems are established and exist in order to perpetuate those inequities.

Another term to understand is white equilibrium. A supposed cocoon of racial comfort, superiority, and entitlement all rooted in an identity of being a good person, free of racism. Finally, there's the term white fragility. You've heard the term, maybe even seen the book. What is white fragility? It's simply the inability and unwillingness of white people to talk about race due to the grip that whiteness, white supremacy, white privilege, white complicity, and white equilibrium exerts on them, knowingly or unknowingly.

What then is the solution to all of this? How must it be addressed? For social justice proponents, it's addressed through the process of anti-racism. Now, anti-racism is not the same as not being racist. In fact, Ibram X. Kendi, in his book *How to Be An Anti-Racist* makes it very clear that being merely "not racist" is racist. People who talk about not being racist are operating from a previous definition of racism. This previous definition of racism saw racism as animosity, hatred towards individuals because of their race or ethnicity. It correctly identified racism as a sin in the heart of men.

The new definition of racism, on the other hand, centers on the idea of privilege and inequity. Therefore, anti-racism is about doing the work necessary to overcome and overturn these privileges to bring about said equity. Ibram Kendi proposes a solution, and it's one of the clearest examples of what's wrong with the idea of anti-racism. He proposed an anti-racist amendment to the US Constitution, and it tells you everything you need to know about this ideology and what it's working towards.

He begins by referring to racism as America's "original sin." That's the language he proposes for the amendment to the U.S. Constitution. This concept of America's original sin is very common with those who hold to critical social justice. That's what the 1619 Project is all about. How do you understand America? Is it the documents that we say define us? No. It's not 1776, it's not 1781, it's not 1787. It's not the Declaration, it's not our Constitution, or the ratification thereof. It's none of those things. It's 1619. Why?

Because 1619 is when slaves came to these shores, and slavery is America's original sin. And if you want to understand what America is, if you want to understand everything that's wrong with America, you have to go back to 1619. Slavery, in this view, gave birth to America.

Kendi's proposal continues... "To fix the original sin of racism, Americans should pass an anti-racist amendment to the U.S. Constitution that enshrines two guiding anti-racist principles." The first one, "Racial inequity is evidence of racist policy." How do you know a policy is racist? Because it ends in inequity.

But you have to assume the Marxist paradigm of oppressor/oppressed for this to work. This would only be applied if the inequity is to the disadvantage of groups who are deemed oppressed. In other words, the NFL and NBA, though they have an



overrepresentation of black males, are not racist because the underrepresented group (white males) are the oppressor. It's clear we're dealing with a different worldview here.

Principle number two is that "different racial groups are equals." He doesn't mean all races are equal ontologically as beings. He means that different racial groups are equal to the degree that if all things were equal, everybody would be equally represented everywhere. This has never been the case anywhere in the world in the history of mankind. There are certain groups of people that excel at certain things. Thomas Soul has done a magnificent job of demonstrating this in his writings with different groups of people who, regardless of where they go, end up dominating certain fields. So principle number two simply does not hold up to logical scrutiny.

The amendment would make unconstitutional any racial inequity over a certain threshold and set a certain quota demanded by the Constitution for racial representation in all areas of public life.

It would establish and permanently fund the Department of Anti-Racism comprised of formerly trained experts on racism and no political appointees. The DOA would be empowered with disciplinary tools to wield over policy makers and public officials who do not voluntarily change their racist policy and ideas. That's the end game and the ultimate manifestation of this ideology.

One of the charges I hear often is that I'm insensitive to the plight of "fill in the blank." That is ridiculous on its face. I operate as an apologist, so I can look at these ideas and their consequences and separate them from things that make my heart bleed. That's what we all need to do as Christians, especially as Christian leaders.

We need to be able to say on the one hand, "That was tragic and we need to address that," while saying, on the other hand, "This ideology is poison and it needs to be rooted out." One of the problems that we're having is that oftentimes we allow ourselves to be shamed into only doing the former and not doing the latter. But we have an obligation. The Apostle Paul makes that clear in 2 Corinthians 10. Look at what he says in verses 3–6

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete. Now before you skip to the second part that says, "take every thought captive," stop and consider the phrase "We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God." Christians are equally obligated to fulfill both commands in this passage.

The reason so many today shy away from the first command to destroy arguments raised against the knowledge of God is because of the 11th commandment. Do you know it? It says, "Thou shalt be nice." So if you say something, for example, about LGBTQ+ groups, people are more offended that you spoke out against that than they are about those lifestyles. These are Christian people. The same thing applies here. People get more offended about speaking out against ideologies than by the destructive ideologies themselves.

This also brings up the issue of tone. Someone will say "I understand your point, but it's your tone that's off." But here's what I've come to understand. They don't like a confident, direct, masculine tone. They want us to make our arguments but allow our



arguments to die the death of a thousand qualifications. It's what makes pastors preach messages on homosexuality or racial issues in ways they'd never preach on other issues.

Can you imagine a preacher saying, "I'm going to be preaching on drunkenness today, but here's what I want you to know. I love drunkards. I have friends who are drunkards. I am not here to condemn drunkards." You laugh because it's ridiculous, but that's exactly how many pastors begin a sermon on homosexuality.

What we need to understand is that it doesn't matter how hard we try to qualify statements. It's never going to be enough because their problem is not the tone, it's with the position we take. This doesn't mean that we just get to say whatever we want, however we want, and that there is never an issue with our tone. But we need to understand that, on these issues, usually when people say tone, what they mean is your ideas.

Another part of Critical Social Justice ideology is Critical Race Theory. It is an view that comes out of critical legal studies. There are four main tenets of critical race theory. Premise number one is that racism is normal. And when they say that racism is normal, they're talking about racism being America's original sin. It's the catch-all that explains everything we're dealing with today. America is racist to its core, and everything that we're seeing is a result of this racist core.

Principle number two is interest convergence, which argues that white people benefit from racism. And because they benefit from racism, they will not undo racism unless it is in their interest to do so. White people will not undo things for righteous reasons. In essence, interest convergence says that white people can't do the right thing for the right reasons ever. This means anybody who's teaching critical race theory is actually teaching that white people are irredeemable sinners in this area.

The third premise is this premise of anti-liberalism. This doesn't refer to liberal or conservative thinking. It means the heart of enlightenment and rationality. Ideas like meritocracy and objective truth. Critical Race Theory says these things come out of whiteness. And the last principle is that knowledge is socially constructed. And when it comes to issues of race, those who are oppressed have access to knowledge about this that oppressors don't. So in order to understand, we have to elevate minority voices for no other reason than their minority status. Sound familiar?

So the next time somebody says there are things that we can gain from critical race theory, just understand that all four of the premises of Critical Race Theory are antithetical to biblical truth.

That's why it's important to start with definitions and terminology. We need to fight for clear definitions and terminology. The dictionary is literally being changed before our eyes. We are now on our third iteration of the definition of racism. But here's what hasn't changed. The biblical idea of partiality. (See James 2:1–9, Acts 10:34–35, Deuteronomy 1:16–17) That hasn't changed. God's view of justice hasn't changed. We need to hold to those biblical ideas and expose the poisonous views antithetical to the truth of God's Word.

As leaders, we need to be vigilant of these ideologies coming into the church. Because critical race theory and critical social justice and anti-racism want to get away from the heart of man and deal with policies. And you cannot legislate sin out of the heart of men. Christians need to see these problems from a biblical worldview, from the perspective that these are heart issues that can only be solved with the gospel.



Take Your Study Further

For biblical passages about justice: See Micah 6, Hosea 12:6, Amos 5:24, Isaiah 30:18, Luke 18:7, Hebrews 10:30

For passages dealing with partiality, fairness, and equality in God's eyes: See Leviticus 19:5, Deuteronomy 1:16–7, Acts 10:34–35, Galatians 3:28, 1 Timothy 5:21, James 2:1–9

For encouragement to stand against false ideologies: See Matthew 7:15, 2 Corinthians 10:3–6, Colossians 2:8, 2 Timothy 4:3–4

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