

What is Social Justice?

When I think of social justice, I am reminded that a standard working definition—giving everyone their due—is really about worth. The English word worth comes from the same root as worship, and there is a close connection. To worship is to give God the reverence due to Him because of who He is. To provide social justice is to arrange the way we live together in society that gives respect to every person because of who he or she is.

Ray Pennings (Director of Research, Senior Fellow, Cardus)



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Social Justice News for Redeemer CRC Members

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2010

HELPING THE POOR: COMMUNIST OR CHRISTIAN?

On March 2, 2010 Glen Beck's radio show (USA) attacked the idea of "social justice"; telling Christians that that they should "run as fast as you can" from any church that preached "social or economic justice" because those were code words for Communism and Nazism.

Beck managed to outrage Christians in most mainline Protestant denominations,

African-American congregations, Hispanic churches, his own Mormon Church and Roman Catholics who have in their tradition something called "Catholic social teaching." Social justice encourages one not only to help the poor, but also address the conditions that keep them poor.

Social justice is not a perversion of the gospel; it is the heart of the gospel. How can you ignore the image of Jesus laboring as a carpenter who went on to spend his time with the poor; who, with his disciples lived with few if any possessions; who advocated tirelessly for the poor in a time when poverty was considered to be a curse; who consistently put the poor in his parables and who died with just a single seamless piece of clothing to his name.

Liberation theology is not Marxism disguised as religion. It is Christianity presented in all its scandalous fullness.

Glenn Beck's opposition to "social justice" and "liberation theology" is all the more difficult to understand because of his cloaking of himself in the mantle of devout believer.

"Look to God and make your choice," he said during his March 2nd rally.

If he looked at Jesus more carefully he would see someone who made a choice.

For the poor.



Excerpted from an article by Rev. Bob Ripley in the Sarnia Observer, Sep04, 2010

In my understanding, "social justice" stems from two awarenesses: (1) we don't own anything—everything has been given to us as a gift by the Creator; (2) each of us is loved so deeply by that Creator that he was prepared to sacrifice the life of his Son for us. Whether human beings are born into much or into little, these same two basic specifications apply. Social justice, then, is the responsibility to share these goods (and note the ethical implications of this word), whether physical, psychological, intellectual, or emotional.

And this matters for our cultural moment for two reasons: (1) we are more aware than ever before of the lack of goods of our brothers and sisters both here and around the world; (2) responding justly to the lacks of others is the commandment of the Lord Jesus, both for their welfare and for our own spiritual health.

Deborah Bowen (Professor of English, Redeemer University College)

"Social justice" should win some kind of prize for buzz word of the year. It's plastered all over campuses, publications, and pulpits. But we're not at all sure what we mean by it, and the term has accrued some substantial baggage across the political and theological spectrum.

Cardus

October 22, 2010 - Symposium

Calendar

- World nations and civil society groups meeting at the UN Climate Conference in Cancun from (Nov29-Dec10)
- World Aids Day (Dec 1)
- National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women (Dec6)
- Human Rights Day (Dec10)
- South Sudan historic self-determination referendum on ending the North-South civil war in Sudan (Jan9)

Good News



Sarnia-Lambton Amnesty Action Group

Join us for an hour of letter-signing/writing

On the 1st Wednesday of every month the Sarnia-Lambton Amnesty Action Group gets together at 7:00 at River City Centre (former YMCA building on Mitton Street) to learn more about world human rights issues and sign pre-written letters on those topics.

2011 Wednesday Dates Jan 5, Feb 2, Mar 2, Apr 6, May 4, Jun 1, Jul 6, Aug 3, Sep 7, Oct 5, Nov 2, and Dec 7

Canada's signing of UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Assembly of First Nations National Chief Shawn Aïinïchut Atleo stated that Canada's endorsement of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is a positive development that sets the stage for a new approach to building stronger First Nations and a stronger Canada.

"Today is important, not as the culmination of our efforts, but as the beginning of a new approach and a new agenda," the National Chief stated. "Canada's apology for the residential schools in 2008 was a critical moment to acknowledge the pain of the past. Endorsing the Declaration is the opportunity to look forward and reset the relationship between First Nations and the Crown so it is consistent with the Treaties and other agreements with First Nations upon which this country was founded. In endorsing the UN Declaration, Canada is committing to work with us as a true partner to achieve reconciliation as instructed by the courts in Canada.

Aung San Suu Kyi has been released!

After spending 15 of the past 21 years unjustly held under house arrest, Myanmar's pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi is finally free.

The Nobel laureate was just one of 2,200 political prisoners in Myanmar punished simply for engaging in peaceful political activities.

One Step Closer to a Poverty Elimination Plan - the November 17 release of the Federal Poverty Reduction Plan: Working in Partnership Towards Reducing Poverty in Canada

This report was the result of a three-year study by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and Status of People with Disabilities (HUMA).

Poverty is about more than money. It is a complex issue that requires a comprehensive approach that addresses housing, childcare and social exclusion – in addition to living wages and income supports. Overall, the report is excellent. It demonstrates a clear understanding of the complexity of poverty in Canada. It shows that MPs across the political spectrum have heard the stories of Canadians, and in particular the stories of Canadians living in poverty. It presents an emerging consensus that things need to be done differently, and that by working collaboratively – across federal government departments, with other levels of government, and in partnership with many sectors of society – things can be done differently.



Justice is what love looks like in public
 Professor Cornell West - from the film *Examined Life*

CRC Justice Seekers

let justice roll on like a river

JusticeSeekers.ning.com is an online community for Christian Reformed folks to discuss, inform, and share their thoughts on justice with others in the denomination.

<http://justiceseekers.ning.com/groups>

This newsletter is a publication of the Social Justice Team of Redeemer Christian Reformed Church, Sarnia ON

If you would like to participate in the work of the Redeemer Social Justice Team, please contact Thea deGroot 519-542-5009 or theadegroot@sympatico.ca; Dana Petko; Helen VanSligtenhorst or Lea Wassink

Articles in this newsletter excerpted from "*The Advocate*" a paper and portal serving Christian Reformed social activists by the Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action of the CRC: www.crcjustice.org and *Kairos Times*, a monthly e-newsletter of KAIROS, the social justice organisation of eleven Canadian churches and church agencies. www.kairoscanada.org and of Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ)'s monthly newsletter *OLA* <http://cpj.ca/index.html> and the *Mobile Justice Newsletter* of the Committee for Contact with the Government (CCG) http://www.crcna.org/pages/ccg_mobilejustice.cfm