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The Political Correctness Fallacy

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In modern day America, there are things you cannot say out loud if you do not want to be blasted in public as a bigot, a hater, or an ignoramus. For instance, referring to a person as "a cripple" used to be perfectly acceptable. At some point, that word offended some people so they changed it to "handicapped person." Now even that is considered offensive to some and "disabled" is the politically correct term. Use something different and you are considered to be causing offense. Other examples include: gay vs. homosexual, Negro vs. African-American, stewardess vs. flight attendant, and so on. Using the wrong term is considered "politically incorrect."

On a surface level, one might wonder why this is such a big deal. But it is, and this topic is a bit more complex than it might appear on the surface. Someone, or some group, must decide what is offensive and what is not – and there must be some basis for doing it. And this is where we run into problems. Who gets to decide what is offensive? Different people have different opinions about this. For instance, some Native Americans are offended by the term "Redskin" and want the word banned from use in society. This has led to some of them calling for the name of the Washington Redskins football team to be changed. Other Native Americans, though, are not offended at all, and even support the team keeping its name.

Often, the people who become offended have some kind of social or political agenda they are promoting. What is the right way to sort this out?

What is the Issue?

In a nutshell, political correctness can be defined as the avoidance of vocabulary or actions that are considered offensive, discriminatory, or judgmental. In modern times, politically correct language is primarily promoted by so called "cultural leaders" on the "progressive left."

The primary focus of this effort relates to matters of race, ethnicity, and gender, but also extends to religion, patriotism, and other cultural arenas. Political correctness is, essentially, an attempt to control the moral forms that people in society must follow.

There is a huge problem with this, however. The progressive cultural leaders who push this agenda have no objective basis for making their moral evaluations. All of their pronouncements are strictly expressions of arbitrary personal beliefs and preferences. In other words, it is not the terms themselves that are offensive, but the underlying values the terms represent – even if the understanding of the values in question have no objective moral foundation.

The Presuppositions of Conflicting Notions of Political Correctness

No one likes to hear judgmental, discriminatory, or offensive language – well, at least most people don't. That said, when the language police have authority to censure a person's words based on their own personal preferences, we run into an entirely different issue: we have moved out of the arena of personal preferences and into the arena of societal control. At this point, Christians and Naturalists have an entirely different view of how things should go down.

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Biblical Theism

The Bible is quite clear about what kind of language is acceptable and what kind is not. We are told directly that lying is sin, bearing false witness is sin, slander is sin, bigoted language is sin, and vulgar language is sin. God is not pleased with any of that, and people who use language in that way will be judged by God.

But an important distinction needs to be made. The particular words people express are not the real problem. They are only a symptom of the problem. The real problem is what is inside of a person's heart. Biblical teachings highlight the evil that is expressed in the world by people's language, but it never harps on the language itself. The Bible is only concerned with the root of the problem. When a person's heart is changed, the language will automatically follow suit.

So when people who hold a biblical worldview speak against the use of judgmental, discriminatory, or offensive language, it is not really the language itself that is being addressed. It is the evil underlying the language, along with the effect it has on those it is directed toward. Christians are not nearly as interested in the particular words being said, as they are the person's life who is saying them.

Of course, there are Christians who act in a legalistic way and try to suppress certain language just because they don't want to hear it. But a true biblical worldview is based on a different motivation. It is certainly true that most Christians do not want to hear ugly language and will try to mitigate it. However, the reason is not simply a matter of personal preference, it is a matter of the effect it has on the lives of those expressing it, those who are forced

to hear it, and those it is directed toward.

This topic is very broad, so it is impossible in an article like this to share a full systematic study on the matter. However, there are numerous verses that speak of the proper way people should express themselves that can at least be mentioned. The following verses are all taken from the ESV.

Exodus 20:16

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Leviticus 19:18

You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.

Psalms 15:1-5

O Lord, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart; who does not slander with his tongue and does no evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach against his friend; in whose eyes a vile person is despised, but who honors those who fear the Lord; who swears to his own hurt and does not change; who does not put out his money at interest and does not take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be moved.

Proverbs 12:22

Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who act faithfully are his delight.

Micah 6:8

He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Matthew 5:8

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

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Matthew 15:18-19

But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.

Romans 14:10-12

Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Galatians 6:7-8

Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

Naturalism

The foundational concepts of political correctness are rooted in a naturalistic worldview. Naturalism is the belief that there is no such thing as a supernatural reality. It is easy to see how this plays out when it comes to studying nature, but when it comes to a consideration of values and morality, a more difficult element emerges. If there is no supernatural reality, it is not possible for there to be any absolutes when it comes to morality. Since, though, it is impossible for humans to live life without some kind of moral framework, and Naturalists

dismiss out of hand the possibility of an absolute transcendent morality, morality must be made up by those in society who have the power to impose it.

The question then becomes, "Where do these people get their values?" Essentially, they must borrow their moral ideas from other value systems and declare them true by decree. Interestingly, in Naturalism, even politically correct values that Christians might consider good, have no absolute basis. If certain Naturalists accept some particular "Christian" value, their reason for holding it has an entirely different purpose from that of a Christian. The purpose of moral values in Naturalism is ultimately nothing more than survival, and the particular moral values that are imposed on a society are strictly utilitarian and not based on what could actually be called "Truth."

Is the Secularist View of Political Correctness True?

Political correctness is an attempt to control individuals, or even an entire population, by manipulating the use of language. It is the arbitrary determination, by powerful people in a society, as to what can or cannot be said regarding topics that are important to the ones in power.

So what makes political correctness different from pronouncements of right and wrong by Christian or most other religious groups is its arbitrary nature. When Christians speak of something being wrong or immoral, it is based on a revelation from God. The naturalistic beliefs of those promoting political correctness are nothing more than personal preferences.

Another difference is that in spite of certain things being acknowledged as wrong by Christians, New Testament teachings do not sanction human punishments for wrong words or wrong thinking. Ultimately the pun-

ishment is in God's hands. Not so with political correctness. For Naturalists, those who hold politically incorrect beliefs must be punished.

Because of its arbitrary nature and lack of any kind of objective moral foundation, political correctness does not reflect the actual nature of reality. It is an expression of Naturalism – which has no objective basis for its claim to be Truth.

What is the Answer?

In an ultimate sense, the only way the injustice of political correctness will ever be turned around is for Christians to begin getting serious about how they express their faith as they live and work out in the culture. The reason for the mess in the first place is that a large enough number of people in society have accepted, and chosen to live by, naturalistic beliefs. Sadly, many of these people actually consider themselves Christians. But considering oneself a Christian does not make it so. Actual believers in Jesus Christ are people whose lives have been changed by him, and who will stick their necks out to take Christ into the culture.

One of the ways to do this is to become active in some way that outwardly pushes back against the evil that is being thrust upon society. There are numerous groups that are doing this kind of work, and I would personally urge Christians to involve themselves in this kind of activism.

However, if political activism is all that is done, the end result will not be Christian. There is one step more that must be taken in addition to the activism. It must be undergirded with a genuine commitment to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. Anyone who advocates for a cause – even a seemingly good cause – without the purpose being to bring people into a relationship with Christ, is ultimately advocating for a secular purpose. And a secular purpose does not advance God's purpose.

What can we do to change a culture that has gone over the deep end? We must get out in the middle of it and confront it with the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is not just to challenge evil words and deeds. This is not just to "express our opinion" on cultural topics. And it is not just to advocate for Christian beliefs. We must actually share the gospel message with people in a way that is understandable, and that actually draws them into a personal relationship with Christ. Only then will we begin to see the kind of change that reverses the damage political correctness causes.

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