The New Sin

I admit that I am old, and for that reason alone, I am not up on things modern, you know, style, acronyms of the youth and activities of those younger than myself. In fact, increasingly, everyone is younger than I am.

I suspect that I am expected to go away, totter off to take a nap and become senile and acknowledge my uselessness to the world. After all, I am a white male, with some degree of education, and a history of success in several endeavors. That, in and of itself, makes me suspect.

But here’s the deal – I was raised in a Christian home, married in a church and got several degrees in theology. The context that I chose for my life and behavior was and is, Christian. I always though that sin was a behavior, or lack thereof, and that it had to do with volition – the will. That fit with my faith and with our legal system: Break the law = Bad, go to jail. Break the commandments = also bad, repent.

But I am hearing a new matrix being touted today that deeply concerns me. It is the definition of sin as something that is not volitional but cultural. It is the state of being in a social context that makes one sinful, simply by being who they are.

I’ve heard the term ‘social justice’ and have watched some ministers wrestle with it and awkwardly try to placate those who charge them with being sinful for being outside of or ignorant of the structures and contexts of social justice. But it appears that patronage will not work or atone for this sin, because it is not what you have done but it is for what you are.

Now this is confusing for this old man for it is not an action of a volition but a state of being that is wrong. And the more I look into it the more confused I become. Here is my confusion…

Christianity teaches that there are certain actions that people do that are self-destructive or destructive to others that are sinful. When you do these things, you should feel guilts and repent, turn yourself around and go the other direction. The continuum is: Sin – guilt – repentance – forgiveness – grace – acceptance. But this new sin is not for an act but for a state of being. Therefore, guilt is inappropriate, so the result is shame. Shame on you for being who you are, what you are, or even existing. In this case, there is no repentance or avenue for forgiveness because there is no volition and no possibility of not being you!

Are you confused with me yet?

Here is the premise of ‘social justice.’ It is not OK for us to be equal at the starting line, the end result must be equal outcomes. If you are born into a social context that is white, Christian and you are male, hetero-sexual and like to succeed at your tasks in life, then you are the oppressor. Your context is the oppressor. Your nature, friends, family and your religion also, is oppressive to those who are disadvantaged by your existence. You are part of the problem that has eventuated into social disparity and social suppression. You do not have to feel it, or thank it, or acknowledge it. You are bad for just being!

My problem is, if I switch my theology and get rid of my Christian faith, what else can I do to see the justice exists? I think that I am in deep trouble here, for, in my early working like, while continuing my education, I served as a police officer. I actually put people in jail for being bad. So, this, of course, taints my posture with another unmentionable social stain. I was ‘the man,’ and, then became the preacher man. Now, under social justice measurements, I am doomed and there is no repentance or grace.

The fact it, the entire social justice movement has become a new religion with new definitions for sin and new structures for acceptance. But it does not provide for a point of entrance. I cannot get in, because I am doomed to be me.

The core value of Christianity is love. We do not propose that God has love as a commodity to sell or to give, it is the belief that GOD IS LOVE! He is incapable of anything else. It is that open door that welcomes anyone, everyone, to come into the door of grace and to be right with God. It provides fellowship, supports relationships, allows for new life and becomes a brotherhood of saints, all acknowledge our failures but also accepting the provisions of God’s love, grace and empowerment. Nothing is impossible for those who love God.

But this new church of social justice is different, in fact it is antithetical. If you do not fit the homogeny of the oppressed, there is no hope, no repentance and you cannot claim ignorance, for you are guilty, not for your actions, but for being who and what you are.

Here is a slice of humanity that has identified with their pain and the failed side of their humanity. Their demands are impossible and their emotions are filled with blame and hatred for the traditional values of our Judeo-Christian world. They have chose to define context rather than to find peace, to excuse their failures by blaming rather that embracing. They are fertile ground for Christian love and acceptance and forgiveness, but patronage will not suffice. We cannot try to appease or to become what is demanded. It is not possible.