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IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, THE SON, AND THE SPIRIT OF DIVERSITY: MULTICULTURALISM GOES TO COLLEGE

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SYNOPSIS

“Multiculturalism and diversity,” a twentieth-century-born vision among the intellectual, political, and religious elite has established a new and prevailing orthodoxy in the West, especially on America’s college campuses, both secular and religious, and in the media. This vision is religious in character, for it anoints all who embrace it with a “special state of grace.” Those who do not share their vision receive chastisement for being mean-spirited.

This new orthodoxy that imposes a demand for what it calls diversity simultaneously imposes a demand for uniformity of thought and belief. The new orthodoxy has no tolerance for any diverse belief or idea that thoughtfully and critically assesses its claims and its uncritical acceptance. Those who embrace “multiculturalism and diversity” in the cause of tolerance are intolerant of every person who will not tolerate their vision, the new orthodoxy.

The issue at stake is not *whether* we should welcome diverse peoples among us, but *on what principles* we should welcome them. No one can possibly oppose the embrace of diverse peoples and at the same time retain a credible confession of being a Christian. The gospel of Jesus Christ obligates us to love and to embrace all who are Christians despite nonconfessional differences, whether racial, social, or sexual. The burden of this article concerns the clash of orthodoxies, the conflict of visions, and the hostility of multiculturalism’s worldviews toward Christianity.

Of all tyrannies, a tyranny sincerely exercised for the good of its victims may be the most oppressive. It would be better to live under robber barons than under omnipotent moral busybodies. The robber baron’s cruelty may sometimes sleep, his cupidity may at some point be satiated; but those who torment us for our own good will torment us without end for they do so with the approval of their own Conscience.¹

Whether it is coincidental or there is any integrated relationship between the two, observant eyes have recognized a discernible increase with which advocates have pushed “multiculturalism and diversity” in the United States of America, especially on America’s campuses and in the media, since the Berlin Wall came down and the Soviet Union and its satellites collapsed and fragmented.² A twentieth-century-born vision among the intellectual, political, and religious elite has established a new and prevailing orthodoxy in the West.³ Thomas Sowell describes this vision: “What is important about that vision are not only its particular assumptions and their corollaries, but also the fact that it is a *prevailing* vision—which means that its assumptions are so much taken for granted by so many people, including so-called ‘thinking people,’ that neither those assumptions nor their

corollaries are generally confronted with demands for empirical evidence. Indeed, empirical evidence itself may be viewed as suspect, insofar as it is inconsistent with that vision."⁴

This vision is religious in character, for it anoints all who embrace it with a "special state of grace."⁵ To believe in the vision is the way to gain the moral high ground. All who disagree with this prevailing vision are not merely wrong; they are "in sin."⁶ The anointed, those enlightened with this vision for the world, look on all who disagree with their vision not merely as benighted, but morally inferior. Those who do not share the vision lack compassion and need "to be made 'aware,' to have their 'consciousness raised.'"⁷

Visionaries admonish those who "do not get it" for being "mean-spirited," and they expose the "real reasons" that ground any resistance to the vision of the anointed.⁸ The strategy of the enlightened is to regard it unnecessary to discuss religious, moral, social, and political questions on their merits. The tactic is to demonize all who question, challenge, or oppose the new orthodoxy; to do so is to incur the greater guilt of "insensitivity."

This vision's new orthodoxy, "multiculturalism and diversity," has marched through the ivy-adorned arches of colleges and universities and has ensconced itself in their stately quadrangles. It is preached in chapels where formerly the gospel rang out. In place of the gospel it imposes a new virtue that none dare call by its proper name—"preferentialism." The new orthodoxy's gospel institutes policies and procedures that include "affirmative action," a system of moral redemption that assuages the consciences of those in power. This orthodoxy publishes a new and burgeoning lexicon called "political correctness" that governs all speech in an endeavor to police all thought and persists in suppressing questions and objections from the benighted.

This new orthodoxy that imposes a demand for what it calls *diversity* simultaneously imposes a demand for *uniformity* of thought and belief. It has no tolerance for any diverse belief or idea that thoughtfully and critically assesses its assumptions, its claims, its assertions, its belief system, its indiscriminate imposition, and its uncritical acceptance. Those who embrace "multiculturalism and diversity" are intolerant of every person who will not tolerate their new orthodoxy.

It is not as though no one warned us of these things, for George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and *1984* forecast, for young and old alike, the power of "newspeak," the orthodoxy of *language as power*. Given the seductive power of its speech code, however, "multiculturalism and diversity" allures evangelicals in churches, colleges, seminaries, and publishers to embrace it as commensurate with the gospel. Many Christian colleges in the Coalition of Christian Colleges (now the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities—CCCU) consequently began to christen the worldview of multiculturalism without adequately assessing it, and put it to work in earnest in 1991, when the council established the Racial/Ethnic Diversity Initiative.⁹

CREATIVE ANTI-REALITY

Multiculturalism is a political-social-cultural-educational-theological ideology or worldview that is an aspect of a constellation of intellectual movements of the twentieth century that derive from preoccupation with *the will to power*¹⁰ and especially with the use of *language as power*. Multiculturalism derives from the "critical theory" of the Frankfurt School, which influenced American academic institutions and culture through the principal figures Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and Herbert Marcuse.¹¹ Also fundamental to the emergence of multiculturalism is critical theory, or deconstructionism (often used interchangeably), the literary theory of Jean-François Lyotard, Jacques Derridá, Michel Foucault, and others. Critical theory has embedded itself inextricably in every academic discipline.¹²

Deconstructionism and critical theory threaten every realm of intellectual life, especially in the academy, by rejecting a priori that there are any reasonable and authoritative answers to life's fundamental questions, and also by reducing everything to an exercise of political conflict that vies for power in matters of class, sex, and race.¹³ Imposing multiculturalism on academic curricula is nothing less than "an assertion of political power in the name of the exploited and oppressed, rather than an intellectually

defensible reform.”¹⁴ In so doing, they look on critics and criticisms of their agenda, no matter how well reasoned, as benighted and “as politically retrograde and unworthy of intellectual respect.”¹⁵

The intellectual movements of the twentieth century gave birth to a new orthodoxy—postmodernism—with its multifaceted manifestations, including the cultural, religious, and moral pluralism associated with multiculturalism.¹⁶ J. P. Moreland summarizes:

On a postmodernist view, there is no such thing as objective reality, truth, value, reason, and so forth. All these are social constructions, creations of linguistic practices and, as such, are relative not to individuals, but to social groups that share a narrative [about the world]....Postmodernism denies the correspondence theory [i.e., truth is that which corresponds to reality], claiming that truth is simply a contingent creation of language which expresses customs, emotions, and values embedded in a community’s linguistic practices. For the postmodernist, if one claims to have the truth in the correspondence sense, this assertion is a power move that victimizes those judged not to have the truth.¹⁷

If postmodernism is the larger theoretical philosophy of which multiculturalism is a substantial aspect, multiculturalism is postmodernism’s reach to infiltrate the institutional, educational, religious, cultural, social, and political arenas with its philosophy, through its lexicon of “political correctness.”

“Multiculturalism,” “pluralism,” and “diversity” are all terms capable of exploitation because of their equivocal qualities.¹⁸ These terms are purposefully slippery, in keeping with their designers’ view of language as power. Academic administrators, academicians, politicians, racial activists, journalists, religious leaders, and others all consequently and routinely employ these words with equivocation,¹⁹ usually because they have not reflected adequately on the fact that those who coined these expressions did so knowing the ingenuity of equivocation to advance their ideology or worldview, using language as power to achieve social engineering.²⁰ Because these expressions are purposefully slippery, those who are ingenuous slide between uses without awareness, but others who are lubricious or slippery do so with clever intention.

The worldview of multiculturalism assumes cultural relativism, including religious pluralism, as its foundational belief.²¹ There is no universal truth; Christianity can hold no exclusive claims.²² It is the belief that each culture is to be judged relative to its own standards, including its religious beliefs, for there are no universal standards by which to assess the value, worth, or rightness of the world’s cultures.

Multiculturalism proudly flies its banner of virtue, which it calls *tolerance*. This *tolerance*, however, is not the Christian grace that once influenced and shaped social virtue. The Christian grace is kind forbearance toward people with whom we differ, not merely in external matters such as culture, but even in fundamental beliefs and ways of living. That forbearance of persons does not show acceptance of the beliefs that govern their sinful manner of life. Multiculturalism hijacks the jargon of Christianity but redefines it with its own moral code.

As Research Fellow Shelby Steele of The Hoover Institution notes, in America, “the virtue of tolerance becomes a corruption of democratic fairness—you don’t merely accept people of different races; you *validate* their race or ethnicity as a currency of power and entitlement over others.”²³ Steele rightly observes,

This is the perversion of social virtue that gave us a multiculturalism that has nothing to do with culture. The goal of America’s highly politicized multiculturalism is to create an atavistic form of citizenship—a citizenship of preferential status in which race, ethnicity, and gender are linked to historic victimization to justify entitlements unavailable to other citizens. Culture is a pretext, a cover. The trick of this multiculturalism is to pass off atavisms as if they were culture. So people think they are being “tolerant” of “cultural diversity” when, in fact they are supporting pure racial power.²⁴

The originators of multiculturalism did not conceive it so as to spread existing culture. “Culture gets in the way of multiculturalism.”²⁵ The new orthodoxy instead works to forge a new culture that paternalistically supplants the old as it suppresses real “diversity and reduces everyone to interchangeable beings whose differences we must *not* learn about—making nonsense of literature and history along the way.”²⁶

REDEFINING RACISM

Postmodernism's multiculturalists embrace the Enlightenment and Modernist view of human nature with its inherently abstract notion of the equality of every person to such an extent as to abolish not only social hierarchies, but also the idea of honor itself. Accompanying its corruption of "forbearance of persons" to "tolerance of ideas," multiculturalists consequently pervert the classic virtue and Christian grace of *honor* (e.g., Rom. 12:10; 13:7) into *recognition* or *validation* of virtually every deviancy except that which deviates from the new orthodoxy.²⁷ In America, where the majority of society became "stigmatized for past betrayal of principles, and...those principles themselves were emblems of duplicity," remorse without moral principle gave birth to multiculturalism, the new social and cultural orthodoxy.²⁸ Multiculturalists, in their moral crusade, consequently erase necessary and proper distinctions between right and wrong or good and evil and replace these categories with *proper* and *improper* or *appropriate* and *inappropriate*. Their new morality defines as inappropriate and worthy of severe censure anyone or anything that endeavors to impede their righteous cause.

Advocates of multiculturalism redefine racism to include everything from lynching to the slightest innocent ruffling of the racial sensitivities of a hypersensitive person, and in so doing, they trivialize actual racism.²⁹ Whether one innocently observes laudatory and distinguishable qualities about a racial group or another person screams savage and contemptuous racist insults to deride and ridicule the same group, then, multiculturalists condemn both equally as racism. At its worst, the former may be called bad etiquette, and at its best the latter is still racial hatred, but multiculturalism's moralists deem both to be acts of racism that equally require public humiliation and apology.³⁰ It is unconscionable to place in the same category the racist-born brutal murder of James Byrd (June 7, 1998),³¹ who was dragged to death behind a pickup truck, and an innocent comment, done with no malice, yet received as racist by one who is hypersensitized to do so.

Because the ideology of multiculturalism is founded on *cultural relativism*, it is also committed to enforce its speech code of political correctness;³² thus, with impunity black comedians punctuate their comedic acts with words that multiculturalists would denounce as "hate-speech" if any white person were to use the same words, with an exemption for any well-known white political leftist who embraces multiculturalism.³³ Numerous anecdotal examples readily come to mind to illustrate this fact. Thomas Kochman, for example, claims,

Where whites use the relatively detached and unemotional discussion mode to engage an issue, blacks use the emotionally intense and involving mode of argument. Where whites tend to understate their exceptional talents and abilities, blacks tend to boast about theirs. Where white men, meeting women for the first time, defuse the potency of their sexual messages...black men make their sexual interest explicit and hope to infuse their presentations with sexual potency.³⁴

Although Kochman is white, he receives no accusation of racism or call to apologize for such offensive remarks, for he advocates multiculturalism, and his views are popularly embraced among blacks.

Multiculturalists excoriate whites for congenital racism ("institutionalized racism"), yet they exhibit racism themselves. Their worldview convinces them to view skin color as intrinsically determinative of culture, which concerns group and individual identity, mores, values, character, and thinking patterns. Multiculturalists, not their critics, confound skin coloration with culture when they talk about "black culture" and "white culture," as if levels of pigmentation determine culture. The paternalistic behavior of multiculturalists toward nonwhite people in the cause of multiculturalism indicates that they view color of skin as an intrinsic determiner of culture, a culture that renders its members victims and in need of preferentialism in the form of "affirmative action." For example, when college admissions and student enrollment personnel use "affirmative action" strategies to identify prospective students as "minorities" and to give preferential treatment to those whose applications show that they are nonwhite, does this not betray the belief that culture is determined on the basis of skin color?³⁵

Multiculturalism is a seductive philosophical vision of and for the world that recruits its unsuspecting advocates by the power of language as it exploits language as power. It powerfully allures with its speech code of virtuous-sounding political correctness. It infiltrates the lexicon of any religious belief system, and

in the process it imperceptibly transmogrifies religious expressions and belief systems, including Christianity, to adjust to its values, virtues, and message. It seduces many to suppose that its suppression of ill-mannered speech with “political correctness” is of a piece with Christian virtue and compatible with the Christian gospel.

The issue at stake is not *whether* we should welcome diverse peoples among us and embrace them but *on what principles* we should do so. No one can possibly oppose the embrace of diverse peoples and at the same time retain a credible confession of being a Christian. Likewise, to advocate any form of preferential policy for a “protected class” warrants rebuke, for such a posture is contrary to a credible Christian profession, for preferentialism is sin (James 2:9). The gospel of Jesus Christ obligates us to love and to embrace all who are Christians despite nonconfessional differences, whether racial, social, or sexual. The burden concerns what some have termed “the clash of orthodoxies,” “the conflict of visions,” or “worldviews in conflict”³⁶ and takes place in two realms: (1) public sector, including government, public policy, and academic institutions; and (2) private sector, including family, church, and academic institutions.

Will we be captured by and held captive to the culture around us, or will we critique the world’s culture biblically? Will we fear God or will we fear man? Will we yield the allegiance of our minds to the new orthodoxy or will we “take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5, NIV)? This is no mere academic exercise. It is an exercise in integrated Christian thinking toward a biblical worldview.

NOTES

1. C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 292.
2. See, e.g., Paul Edward Gottfried, *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Guilt: Toward a Secular Theology* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002).
3. Cf. Thomas Sowell, *The Vision of the Anointed: Self-Congratulations as a Basis for Social Policy* (New York: Basic Books, 1995).
4. *Ibid.*, 2.
5. *Ibid.*, 3. The imagery is Sowell’s.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. Cf. *ibid.*
9. Principal among the arguments the CCCU leaders borrowed from the secular multiculturalism worldview was the claim that “coalition schools failed to mirror the ethnic diversity of the surrounding culture.” James A. Patterson, *Shining Lights: A History of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 93.
10. “The will to power” is an idea credited largely to philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. Among other things, according to Nietzsche, “will to power” is the fundamental instinct or drive that animals and humans share, a drive that is more fundamental than self-preservation. It entails the drive to exert force to be master and to conquer resistance.
11. The Frankfurt School, established in 1923 as an independent division of the University of Frankfurt, was a group of researchers associated with the Institut für Sozialforschung (Institute of Social Research). Carl Grünberg, the institute’s first director, was an avowed Marxist and established the Institute on Marxism as the theoretical basis for all its programs of research in philosophy and the social sciences. With the rise of Nazism, the Institute sought and found refuge in Switzerland and the United States. The Frankfurt School and its critical theory thus infiltrated American universities with its “cultural Marxism.” See Joseph Yeager, “Cultural Communists,” *Frontpage Magazine* (<http://www.frontpagemag.com/Articles/Printable.asp?ID=7732>).
12. Biblical studies remains in an extraordinary state of flux: the various methods of critical theory have been used by biblical critics for some time now. These methods have raised questions about the Bible concerning race and ethnicity, indigeneity [or nativeness], gender and sexual difference, the human-animal binary, class and ideology, hegemony and subversion, the nature of history, texts and readers, and so on. Roland Boer, “Editorial,” *The Bible and Critical Theory*; 1. DOI:10.2104/bc040001).
13. Cf. comments by Amy Gutmann, ed., *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 20.
14. *Ibid.* Admittedly, Gutmann is speaking of deconstruction and not specifically multiculturalism. A proper critique nevertheless recognizes that the two are not separable but joined; thus, what she says of deconstructionism is also true of multiculturalism.
15. *Ibid.* See qualification in note 14.
16. Concerning philosophical pluralism, see D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 13–41.
17. J. P. Moreland, “Truth, Contemporary Philosophy, and the Postmodern Turn,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 48 (2005), 79–80. Advocates of multiculturalism contend that “race” is “socially constructed.” Henry Louis Gates, Jr., claims that the concept of race is a biological “misnomer” and merely a “metaphor,” for, “who has seen a black or red person, a white, yellow or brown person? These terms are arbitrary constructs, not reports of reality.” Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *Loose Canons: Notes on the Culture Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 48, 50.
18. On the exploitation of the newly coined use of “diversity,” see Peter Wood, *Diversity: The Invention of a Concept* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2003), esp. 82–98.

19. Equivocal use of language entails use of words or expressions that are subject to two or more interpretations, often intended to mislead.
20. Elsewhere I describe the tyranny of political correctness. See A. B. Caneday, "The SBJT Forum: Racism, Scripture, and History," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 8.2 (2004): 87–88.
21. I am aware of the irony of speaking of the *foundation* of multiculturalism that is an aspect of postmodernism that repudiates *foundationalism*. I fully anticipate that those who cannot recognize the legitimate use of the imagery of *foundation* may likely have visceral responses that confuse the imagery with Enlightenment's and Modernism's *foundationalism*.
22. As argued by Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, *Divinity and Diversity: A Christian Affirmation of Religious Pluralism* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003). For a contrary view, see Wood, *Diversity*, 146–74.
23. Shelby Steele, "The Culture of Deference," *Academic Questions* 12, 1 (January 1999): 61.
24. *Ibid.* Steele continues, "In fact multiculturalism actually *suppresses* America's rich cultural variety, because much actual culture does not mesh with victimization."
25. Steele, "The Culture of Deference," 62.
26. Diane Ravitch, "You Can't Say That," *The Wall Street Journal* (February 13, 2004), W15.
27. See Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism and "The Politics of Recognition,"* with commentary by Amy Gutmann, Steven C. Rockefeller, Michael Walzer, and Susan Wolf (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992). For some instructive guidance on shortcomings of Taylor's essay, see Edward T. Oakes, "Attention Must Be Paid: A review of *Multiculturalism and the 'Politics of Recognition,'*" *First Things* 32 (April, 1993): 48–51.
28. Steele, "The Culture of Deference," 62.
29. Thomas Sowell wisely says, "Discrimination and segregation are and have been among the ugly facts of life in various countries around the world. These facts need to be confronted where they exist—not trivialized by having the terms applied by redefinition to situations where they do not exist, and where very different factors need to be confronted." Thomas Sowell, *Race and Culture: A World View* (San Francisco: Basic Books, 1994), 153.
30. Amoja Three Rivers thoroughly confounds bad intercultural *etiquette* and *racism* in her booklet entitled *Cultural Etiquette: "It is ethnocentric and racist to apply words like backward, primitive, uncivilized, savage, barbaric, or undeveloped to people whose technology does not include plumbing, microwaves, and micro-chips. Are people somehow more human or more humane if they have more technological toys?"* This citation is from the Internet essay (<http://communities.ic.org/90/4490.php>), derived from Amoja Three Rivers, *Cultural Etiquette: A Guide for the Well-Intentioned* (Gladstone, VA: Market Wimmin, 1991).
31. Carol Marie Cropper, "Black Man Fatally Dragged in a Possible Race Killing," *New York Times* (June 10, 1998), Section A, 16.
32. Cultural relativism is the belief that all ethical truth is relative to a given culture; thus, no one can ever say that a particular behavior is right or wrong, for it can only be right or wrong relative to a specific society.
33. Reflect on the minimal criticism of ex-Klansman Senator Robert Byrd (no relation to James Byrd) who used the term "white nigger" in an interview (Robert Byrd, interview with Tony Snow, *Fox News Sunday*, Fox News Channel, March 5, 2001), in a piece by Cedric Muhammad, "On Senator Byrd and 'White Niggers,'" *A Deeper Look*, Black Electorate.Com, March 12, 2001, <http://www.blackelectorate.com/articles.asp?ID=337>. See also Andrew D. Todd, "What Is a 'White Nigger' Anyway?" *History News Network*, January 20, 2003, <http://hnn.us/articles/1220.html>.
34. Thomas Kochman, *Black and White: Styles in Conflict* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 107, 131, quoted in Dinesh D'Souza, *The End of Racism* (New York: FreePress paperbacks, 1995), 271–72.
35. Observant individuals may add when D'Souza makes the case that even though generalizations concerning people groups are wholly legitimate, even necessary, "this is no case for group traits having a biological foundation." *The End of Racism*, 273.
36. I acknowledge echoes of the titles of three books: Robert P. George, *The Clash of Orthodoxies: Law, Religion, and Morality in Crisis* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2001); Thomas Sowell, *The Conflict of Visions: Ideological Origins of Political Struggles* (New York: William Morrow, 1987); and Ronald Nash, *Worldviews in Conflict: Choosing Christianity in a World of Ideas* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992).