

CONFRONTING SOCIAL EVILS

By Dr Conrad Mbewe

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INTRODUCTION

- The very first question on your minds will be, “What are social evils?”
- By social evils, we loosely mean anything that humans deliberately do that causes unjust suffering to fellow human beings. This excludes corrective discipline, which invariably includes suffering. It also excludes suffering caused by natural disasters (e.g. tornadoes, earthquakes, tidal waves, hurricanes, floods). Finally, it excludes suffering caused by humans unintentionally (such as death and injury through “friendly fire” in war; car, plane and train accidents; medical mishaps and more).
- We have in mind evils such as broken families, human trafficking, etc. For instance, J D Barry and C A Smith say, “Today, an estimated 27 million people are enslaved globally, and human trafficking is a \$32 billion industry.”

- John Piper imagines today's popular list of social evils to include, "...racism, or global warming, or abortion, or limited health care for children, or homelessness, or poverty, or the war in Iraq, or white-collar crime, or human trafficking, or the global AIDS crisis, or rampant fatherlessness, ...or the treatment of illegal aliens, etc."
- D. Groothuis says, "'Man's inhumanity to man' is writ[-ten] large on the face of history, giving us the most graphic and gut-wrenching exhibits of death camps, torture, poverty, rape, racism and terrorism."
- The question in this workshop is, "How do we as Bible colleges ensure that such social evils are biblically confronted?"

THE ROLE OF BIBLE COLLEGES

- The role of Bible Colleges is to be the arm of the church that trains preachers and teachers of the Word of God.
- The lecturers must be role models of responding as a Christian to today's challenges.

TEACHING ON THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

- Our students will never be able to confront this matter of social evil until they have a biblical answer to the problem of evil. “How can a good and powerful God co-exist with evil (i.e. human suffering)?” The world grapples with this and ends up with (1) Atheism, (2) A God with finite power or knowledge, or (3) A God who is capricious and malicious.

- The Christian Faith processes the problem of evil through the grid of creation, fall, redemption, and glorification (see Jesus' example in Matthew 19:3–9). In the redemption stage, social evil (1) brings us to the end of ourselves and to seek God, (2) gives us a Saviour through injustice, (3) and gives us a new humanity who love God and people. It is the last category that educates and works out of love to come up with systems and institutions that address social evils.

PUTTING FIRST THINGS FIRST

- John Piper argues for preachers to concentrate on preaching the new birth rather than confronting social evils directly because the latter are not the most important issues. He says, “They are life-and-death issues. But they are not the most important, because they deal with the relief of suffering during this brief earthly life, not the relief of suffering during the eternity that follows. Or to put it positively, they deal with how to maximize well-being now for eighty years or so, but not with how to maximize well-being in the presence of God for eighty trillion years and more.”