

2014

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Recommended Citation

Stranske, Tim (2014) "An Introduction to the Twisselmann and Draycott Articles," *Justice, Spirituality & Education Journal*: Vol. 2014 , Article 5.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.biola.edu/jsej/vol2014/iss2014/5>

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AN INTRODUCTION TO THE TWISSELMANN AND DRAYCOTT ARTICLES BY TIM STRANSKE

AN INTRODUCTION

Solomon (Proverbs 18:17) indicates that hearing one side of an argument sounds convincing until you hear the opposing point of view. The next two articles discuss conceptions of social justice, both emanating from scholars that have studied biblical theology and social justice, applying those fields of study to educational systems. Twisselmann, a public school teacher of philosophy and adjunct professor at Biola University, questions whether critical theory's lack of a metaphysical component provides any valid grounding to make social justice judgments, while Draycott, a theologian at Talbot School of Theology, argues for Christians to humbly seek common ground with others in our pluralistic society, teaching social justice to our young.

Twisselmann argues that since the postmodern social justice conception based on critical theory refuses metaphysical grounding, it lacks any meaningful fulcrum to differentiate right from wrong. When postmodern theorists value every culture as "right for themselves" and independent of any outside evaluation, there can be no ultimate "right" or "wrong" when cultural groups disagree. This becomes important when a person or group seeks "justice" that involves people or people groups from different systems or cultures. In a clash of cultural values related to justice, whose conception of justice ought to be utilized? And, who should make this decision? Twisselmann argues that the postmodern-based critical theory lacks the ability to answer these types of questions; therefore, one of the postmodern-based critical theory's central components, social justice, will elude its proponents. Twisselmann suggests that a biblically-based metaphysical conception of social justice provides the grounding needed so that a Christian might pursue social justice in a more coherent way than those using a postmodern philosophical basis to pursue social justice.

Draycott agrees that "justice cannot make sense without truth," but argues that we live in a multicultural world without agreement on fundamental issues. Though only the heart changed by the good news of Christ's death for sin will understand and have the Spirit-empowered ability to live out the social justice envisioned in Scripture, we must live in and teach our children to live in a pluralistic world where social justice is "active and malleable." Draycott claims that the differences in definitions of what is just in our pluralistic world are often not "infinite" but actually quite manageable through democratically negotiated social communication. Where Draycott differs from Twisselmann's argument the most is that Draycott believes Twisselmann "privileges choice . . . in ways that may become hostage to fortune . . ."; whereas, Draycott believes that our social communication necessarily requires the consideration of other's feelings. Exercising freedom in groups where others do not have the means to exercise that freedom can produce unjust situations.

Both authors use the illustration of first graders who purchased ice cream at school while their less-affluent peers looked on . . . are the ice cream purchases a choice without social justice implications? Is the first-grade teacher right to use this socioeconomic difference as a teaching tool regarding social justice? Is it right to consider the teacher a champion of the "oppressed," less-affluent children by calling for a boycott of the school's store?

As you read these two articles, analyze how both authors apply biblical guidelines to social justice issues in our schools. Where is there agreement? Where is there disagreement? With whom do you resonate? Are there errors or questions related to the authors' application of biblical principles? Is there a way to synthesize their ideas into a unified model? As you consider Twisselmann's and Draycott's viewpoints on social justice, how might you extend your own thinking about spirituality, justice and education?



TIM STRANSKE

Tim Stranske (BA Biola University, PhD Claremont Graduate University) was born and Khartoum, Sudan, raised and educated in the 50's and 60's, and has a heart for Africans. After spending 28 years as a teacher and administrator in preschool-12 schools, Tim began working at Biola University full-time in 2003. He teaches educational psychology and philosophy of education at Biola University and serves as the Assistant Dean of their School of Education.