

OpenTheo

#189 Brexit, Abortion, Race and Critical Theory (Replay)

October 12, 2023



Ask NT Wright Anything - Premier

From the archives: Tom tackles a variety of questions on 'hot button' political issues that have been sent in, including the place of faith in politics, abortion, racism and 'critical theory'. • Subscribe to the Ask NT Wright Anything podcast: <https://pod.link/1441656192> • More shows, free eBook, newsletter, and sign up to ask Tom your questions: <https://premierunbelievable.com> • For live events: <http://www.unbelievable.live> • For online learning: <https://www.premierunbelievable.com/training> • Support us in the USA: <http://www.premierinsight.org/unbelievableshow> • Support us in the rest of the world: <https://www.premierunbelievable.com/donate>

Transcript

Before we get into today's episode, I want to let you know about a special e-book that's yours to download free today. It's called Five Ways to Connect with God, Ancient Practices for Modern Times. I believe it's safe to say that in today's fast-paced culture, we're all seeking more rest and less chaos.

Only then can we find true connection with our creator. Five Ways to Connect with God offers five unique spiritual principles to Christians who may be feeling dry when it comes to their prayer life or spiritual fervor. These include practices such as choosing a word for the year, the power of one phrase prayers, the importance of cultivating thankfulness, and more.

Some of these principles are hundreds of years old, yet they offer us fresh ways to connect with the Living God today. Download your copy of Five Ways to Connect to God by visiting premierinsight.org forward slash resources. That's premierinsight.org forward slash resources.

And now it's time for today's podcast. Welcome to this replay of Ask NT Wright Anything, where we go back into the archives to bring you the best of the thought and theology of Tom Wright. Answering questions submitted by you, the listener.

You can find more episodes as well as many more resources for exploring faith at premierunbelievable.com. And registering there will unlock access through the newsletter to updates, free bonus videos and e-books. That's premierunbelievable.com. And now for today's replay of Ask Enith Right Anything. Great to have Tom Wright with me again for another edition of the podcast.

And today we're tackling your questions on politics, on things like abortion, race, even critical theory, some hot button issues that we're going to be looking at today that have come in. And I mean politics in general, Tom, you and Avid follower of what's going on in the political world. Up to a certain point, one gets a bit tired with certain things.

I mean, we have over the last few years been dealing with this Brexit thing. And I think like a lot of people, I got to the point where I just didn't want to hear another news item about Brexit. And I think in a sense, what happened in Britain was that the whole country just said, oh, I was so tired of this.

Just do it and get on with it. Yeah, I think that was genuinely partly what caused the part, partly behind that huge swing towards the Tories. Well, people just want it to get done.

And it was interesting because that functioned as the second referendum that a lot of people were asking for, because a lot of places where the Labour Party got in, actually, if you add the Conservative vote and the Brexit Party vote, that would have, would have won. Would have won. Which means that not only did they have the sizeable majority 80 or so seats, but there were another 40 or so seats.

It could have gone that way. Where the majority of people voted for Brexit, which was extraordinary. And a lot of us are still kind of living with the fallout.

And what on earth does that mean? How's it going to work out? And does anybody know? Life is not dull, politically, in Britain at the moment. I think that the part of the problem becomes that people treat it like watching a football match. And yeah, it's rather fun.

Stogging out and is our team going to win the drama? But actually, these are major serious issues which affect the life and the livelihoods and the security of millions of people. And I would like to see some of the people who are really in the strong positions of leadership being more obviously seen to be taking that fact very, very seriously. I know there are many people in politics who do, but so that yes, it's fascinating.

And it's all to do with power. That power is one of those things like beauty and justice and so on, which we all know it matters, but we all find it difficult. And I think for many of us growing up in Western democracies, we kind of assume that our system is fine.

And other people have silly systems and we're glad we don't live there. And then when our system throws up something that we don't like, oh dear, what just went wrong? And

that itself is a very interesting question which many wise Christians have addressed, but not a lot of people in the churches know how to address. Well, there are obviously differences between the UK and the US system, but also some similarities.

And I can see a lot of commonalities between what we've been going through in this part of the world and what the Trump phenomenon has thrown up as well in the US. But here's someone who's writing in from a sort of neutral position, I suppose, in Canada. Darryl asks, hi Justin Tom, love the podcast, in both the US and Canada, we are ramping up to elections.

There's always a certain demographic within the church that wants to influence the government. At one level, I totally understand. At another level, I find myself nervous when people start talking about how we need more Christians in government.

With the spoken or unspoken agenda of having a government serve a particular view of a Christian agenda. On the other hand, people like Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch from Australia, Rick McKinley from the US and others, have been writing a lot about how we can learn from the Hebrew exile experience. In short, our role is to be faithful and obedient to the life God has called us to and not necessarily to change a particular government.

Could Tom please offer some comment on this? Thanks, Darryl. Wow, another great question. We often have great questions on this podcast.

This one deserves a whole book. And indeed, such books exist. Not by me, by other wise people who have actually studied this in more detail than I have.

If one says, no, we don't need more Christians in government, what is one saying? That actually you'd be content for the government to be run by atheists? I would always rather have people in positions of power and responsibility who were saying their prayers, who were worshiping God, the creation of Redeemer, who were reading the Bible, who were praying for God's wisdom to guide them and their country. And that doesn't mean that I have a set of 25 particular Christian issues that I'd want them to be pushing, although there may be some cases where there are some things which could and should be done. I mean, a generation ago in Britain, we had big debates about whether Sunday should be kept as a special day or not.

And there were some from a very strong right-wing position who I think just wanted to have Sundays like they always remembered it when they were growing up. And others who were saying, look, hardly anyone goes to church anymore. Why shouldn't we place Bort on Sundays? But actually, there were some serious issues underneath all that about the employment situation of people who would be forced to work right through a weekend and so on and so forth.

And those didn't really surface because the debate was too polarized between the libertarians, although actually it was big businesses driving it and the kind of almost backward looking more fundamentalist types. And that's a real problem. But the idea that we don't want Christians in government would really be scary.

And it seems to be perfectly possible that from time to time, there will be some governments in some countries that really are more in tune with things that God wants to do in the world. I mean, that was really hard. But eventually, the people were campaigning and they got the thing through in a way which was by no means a foregone conclusion.

And if you'd said, no, no, no, where Christians, we should stay out of that, then it would still be carrying on. I mean, the French Revolution is believed in libertarianity and fraternity, but they certainly weren't abolishing slavery. There's a lot of things which the great enlightenment movements were just not dealing with.

And it was left to Christians to say, no, something's going on here. And so we need to do that. And the question of the exile experience, this tends to be the reaction when people see the wickedness of a particular government and say, well, we just have to be the community in exile.

We have to say our prayers and try and shine a light. I think of people like Dietrich Bonner for under the third right. And you know, once Hitler comes to power, which was on the back of a big democratic vote, he was voted in by a large majority.

Then the confessing church just had to say, all we can do at the moment is to say our prayers and to teach and to pray and to wait. And of course, it was a long tragedy that worked itself out. And so it seems to me, there is no one size fits all here.

It's got to be a matter of discernment of wisdom in particular situations. And then there are different biblical models, which will fit at different times. People have often said, well, you've got Romans 13, where Paul says that the powers of be ordained by God, and you've got Revelation 13, where it seems that the powers that be have gone all demonic.

And I think Paul would say the powers stop being demons when they stop being gods. That when Paul says the powers that be ordained by God, he means that they are not God. And then one of the most important principles in all of this is in John 18 and 19, when Jesus is arguing with Pontius Pilate about kingdom and truth and power.

And in John 19, Pilate says to Jesus, don't you realize that I have the authority to have you killed or released? And Jesus says, you couldn't have that authority over me unless it were given you from above. Therefore, the one who delivered me to you has the greatest sin. In other words, even Jesus says to Caesar's representative, that God the Father has put Caesar in authority over him Jesus.

The result is responsibility. And you have to bear that responsibility. And that's what the early Christians were struggling with.

I think it answers a lot of the questions actually. The early Christians like the early Jews weren't particularly bothered about how people got to acquire power. They were very concerned about what people did with power once they got it and would hold up a mirror to them and a critique to them.

And our modern systems aren't good at doing that. I mean, it strikes me that this question very much comes on the heels of what many people are seeing in the US as Donald Trump appealing to a certain Christian base, conservative Christian base. And we know that a lot of these vote came from white evangelicals in the USA.

And a lot of people are seeing this as a sort of, well, the Christians happy to support a man who in morally is very questionable in various ways, as long as he's sort of doing the things they want in terms of abortion law or certain ethical issues and so on, as long as he. And I think that's the question has been, you know, is that the way it works? Is that the way that Christianity goes forward is on the basis of having a strong man in power who can force force that way? I mean, I think, again, the trouble is, Thomas Jefferson said 250 years ago that democracy works when you have an educated electorate. And neither in this country nor in American or anywhere else that I know, do we have a totally educated, we have a more educated electorate than used to be the case.

And especially because we all live in an electronic age, well, there's actually too much information out there. And the fact that we can be so easily manipulated by that, that's part of the problem, that you get information, you also get disinformation. And the news broadcasters choose who they want to show how and so on.

And we kind of know that's going on, but it's hard to get blasted. So yes, I think there are a lot of people who would class themselves as white evangelicals who are horrified at the way in which quote, white evangelicals unquote, had supported Trump. So I as a Brit can't really get involved in that except to say, I hear voices from several different quarters, some of whom are enthusiasts, some of whom are very worried indeed.

And many of whom are saying, no, no, no, the lines have all been blurred. We've got to think more clearly and there have to be better ways forward than this. Another interesting question here from Bob in Salem, Oregon says, well, he's a big fan of the US forms of government as you'll find out, Republican democracy with tripartite divided government and checks and balances that recognize God given inalienable human rights is a great system of government.

It protects the dignity of human beings made in the image of God. Yet its protections are based on the recognition of mankind's fallen nature. These principles of the image of

God in and yet the fallenness of humans come from Genesis.

Monarchs throughout history have usually oppressed the citizens and violated their God given rights. So why weren't the flaws of monarchy as a system of government recognized early in the Old Testament and a prescription given there for the protections of a Republican democracy such as was established by the founders of the US system. Why did it take 4,000 years of fumbling for humans to come up with such a system? God knew it would eventually be figured out.

Why didn't he tell Moses about that? Great question. I have to congratulate Bob. I mean, it's lovely the way he's put it.

People used to say, why did God wait all that time before sending Jesus? And now he's saying, why did God wait all that time before sending Washington and Jefferson and all the rest of it? And I want to say, what's wrong with this question? Something a bit odd about this. And indeed, I do know some people, I sometimes quote my friend and former colleague Ed Sanders, American New Testament scholar who in an autobiographical essay says that he sees the Jews of Jesus day and Jesus and Paul as pointing towards a form of human freedom and flourishing, which he said really came about through John Locke and Thomas Jefferson in the 18th century. And that now it's rather sad because it doesn't seem to be working out quite the way we thought it would.

But in other words, we have shifted the eschatological focus. Jesus becomes a forward pointer to the real thing, which is the birth of modern democracy. And I want to say, I agree with Vincent Churchill that democracy is the worst possible form of government, except for all those other forms you've been tried from time to time.

Because I agree that absolute monarchy, and again, it's it's Lord Acton, power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely. But there's a difference in monarchy and tyranny. And that's normally been recognized that monarchy is a working with a community and a giving leadership to a community.

Tyranny is simply, I'm going to do this and get out of my way. I'm coming through. And I think what Bob says about monarchy actually spills over into tyranny.

And of course, there are very few monarchies of the absolute sort left in the world today. And most like our monarchy is a highly negotiated and complex system, which actually, in a way is a tripartite or multipartite divided government. And I suspect that like a lot of British people, I'm not convinced it's perfect, but I can't yet see my way to any other system.

And certainly the idea of getting rid of the monarchy and having a republic, I look around our politicians and I think which of these people would I like to see as my head of state? And the answer is absolutely none of them. Thank you very much. And I thank God for

the Queen and all that she's done.

I mean, quite literally, she is a remarkable lady. But so I agree that we have to have a recognition of human beings made in the image of God. God, but I would put it like this, God wants his world to be wisely ordered.

He wants human beings to reflect his wise ordering into the world. And he will hold them responsible for doing that. And that's so whether it's Caesar who has come to power by murdering his predecessor, the church still has a responsibility to say to Caesar, do you realize what you're doing? And you are responsible before the Creator God for that.

Or somebody like Hitler who was elected, as I said before, by a massive majority. The church still has the responsibility to hold up the mirror to power. The crucial passage here is in John 16 when Jesus says, when the Spirit comes, he will convict the world of sin and righteousness and judgment and spells that out.

What does that mean? Means that when Jesus followers receive the Holy Spirit, they have the responsibility to say to the world, you're getting it wrong on sin. You're getting it wrong on judgment. You're getting it wrong on righteousness and spell that out and follow it through.

Because it really doesn't matter in the ancient world. As I said before, how people come to power, they come to power in all sorts of ways. Sometimes it looks democratic, but it's been fiddled behind the backs.

And who knows the ancient world had its ways of doing what some people say was done at the last election with people interfering electronically. There's always manipulation. What matters, the real problem with democracy is this.

Okay, this is important. I can see the cogs turning. The whole thing is important.

In the 18th century, the Enlightenment savours the thinkers thought they could get the results of the Christian worldview without paying the price of allegiance to the Christian God. And they thought therefore that if the people became divine, the voice of the people is the voice of God, then this would mean that the people will always get it right. Now we know perfectly well that that didn't happen in ancient Athenian democracy.

It didn't happen in modern German democracy. Maybe it doesn't happen in modern British democracy or American. Who knows? Only time will tell.

But the point is, our systems then say once we have voted, we are deciding to give you four or five years where you can basically follow through your agenda. And you can say that you've got a mandate because we voted for you. That is very, very dangerous.

Circumstances change, policies change. The church, the followers of Jesus, always have

the responsibility the day after the vote and thereafter to say no. Yes, you were voted in.

We are trusting you to be a good wise leader ruler. But that means you must do this and you must not do that. And you can't settle back and say, okay, we voted for you.

So do what you like. That is an abdication of Christian responsibility. I do sometimes wonder whether Bob's question almost reminds me of some of my American friends who seem to almost treat the American constitution on the level of a divinely inspired document.

I know, I know. But but but that is that is part of the ideology. It's same in France.

You know, the question of are we being loyal to the revolution is still on the table. This podcast is an outreach of premier insight and it's only made possible by the gifts of listeners like you. That's why we're eager to thank you for your gift to support today by sending you a copy of supernatural encounters.

Should I believe this brand new ebook from premier insight unpacks different viewpoints of supernatural experiences such as angelic encounters and what we can draw from them. We dive into questions like do near death experiences give credible support to the possibility that there is life after death or can they be explained away as mere physical phenomena. And what is the evidence of the existence of angels? Again, this ebook is our thanks for your gift to help even more Christians grow in wisdom and truth.

To get your copy of supernatural encounters, should I believe simply go to premier insight.org slash nt right. That's premier insight.org forward slash nt right. Thank you for your support.

Let's go to another hot topic, a specific one that often is a political issue in the USA, especially. Josephine Nashville says abortion is becoming a hot topic again here in the United States. Is the Bible clear on this issue? I was raised to believe that it was wrong, but a friend said his pastor claimed that being pro-life was another issue that would turn people off from the church.

I'd love to have the confidence to answer with truth and love when this issue comes up among my friends. I think part of the problem is that some pro-life campaigners have actually campaigned violently, which has seemed to many a contradiction in terms. You know, the horrible tales of doctors being shot outside abortion clinics and so on.

And it seems that you can't defend the life of the unborn by threatening the life of the born. And unfortunately, just as we in Britain bundle up various issues and assume that if you vote in a rightwards direction, you're going to be okay on all those issues. Leftwards direction, you've got in the same way in America, abortion has become part of a package.

The people who are anti-abortion tend to be pro-gun, for instance, which to many people in the rest of the world seems utterly ridiculous. And so we need first to uncouple the issues. And then we need to say, isn't it interesting that in the first three or four or five centuries, just as the ancient Greek doctors would take an oath, among other things, not to procure abortions because abortions were quite frequent in the ancient world and pretty foul for the women involved, but often men would force women to have abortions and buy strange old-fashioned surgical methods, or taking particular medicines or whatever.

In the first three or four or five centuries, as far as you can tell, the early Christians like the Jews of the day, not only would not do abortions, they wouldn't do infanticide, which was very common. In those days, if you had more children than you actually wanted, you'd literally leave them out for the gypsies or the wolves or whoever. And especially if you'd had one daughter already, that's quite enough.

They're expensive and difficult. So any more girls just get rid of them. And the early Christians in Jews did not do that.

And there's a sense there of reverence both for the life of the unborn and the life of the recently born, which I think we need to go back to and say, what were they being obedient to? And it was a deep respect for and a reverence for the goodness of God's creation and the strange goodness of human procreation as part of God's command to be fruitful and multiply, and that you don't lightly tamper with that. Now, that doesn't absolutely settle the issue on all possible cases. For me, if I've had to counsel people who have been raped and some horrible person has violated them and they're carrying this person's child and they feel suicidal as a result of it, I would want to deal with that extremely sensitively.

And it's a really difficult thing. Likewise, if one knew that the child you were carrying was very severely deformed so that this child would maybe live a short but very unhappy life. I can see some arguments for saying, this is much better to do as it were a funeral in advance.

And but if that was so, I would say then a funeral is appropriate. But at that point, you raised questions. This came up in the Church of England General Synod many years ago.

And I remember listening to a debate in which people were saying, we need a form of prayers for use after an abortion. And the prayers were in effect saying, Oh, God, we commit to you this little life which we have decided to terminate. And I thought at that point, you cannot say that.

This is God's job not ours. So there are hugest use and very sensitive issues. And obviously on a sort of grand social level, the issues are complicated inasmuch as it's not always as simple as simply if you are pro-life, simply repealing all abortion laws.

Because obviously there are even statistics to show that under more if you like, governments, there were the abortion rates were lower than under more. So so it's it's it's if your overall goal is to reduce the number of abortions, it may not be quite as simple as simply abolition abortion. But absolutely.

And yeah, I think the perception from certainly the 60s and 70s, the sexual revolution of the 60s, where suddenly there was there were contraceptive pills. So people thought that actually the old sexual rules didn't apply. So there was a huge upsurgeon, unwanted pregnancies.

And then people said, it's all right, because we have an abortion as though that didn't matter. Now all that we know about psychology, et cetera, is that actually it does matter. And the mothers suffer long term as a result of this quite apart from the unborn children themselves.

So you hear where I'm coming from, but I would want to be very sensitive and pastorally aware of hard cases. I mean, it's interesting that this person says this pastor claim that being pro-life was an issue that would turn people off from the church. Is that because it's become so police? I would suspect it.

I would suspect that that's because of that, that people would say, Oh, you're one of those horrible right wingers, I'm and that's where the issues need to be uncoupled and where they need to be set out sensitively and wisely and with great care. But I think you see, part of that right wing objection is that abortion was being used and so it is being used as simply a who cares for contraception for people who've been sexually irresponsible. And I think faced with that, I want to say that is a kind of a second order bit of a responsibility to try to tidy up the first order bit of a responsibility.

That's not a good way to be. Another hot button issue, Joey Norris in Tempe, is it Arizona? I've never quite know how to pronounce that one. Says in the United States, and perhaps also the UK, the idea of race and racism, systemic or otherwise, has become quite prevalent in recent discussions concerning social justice.

I'm curious about whether Paul's corpus indicates how Christians might or ought to think about social justice and diversity in the body of Christ, particularly in relation to the powers and principalities of the world, which can so easily become oppressive regimes, as it were, for certain groups of people, and yet disproportionately favor others. To me, this seems like a dramatic twist to a proper biblical doctrine of creation. God, as we learn from the New Testament, shows no partiality.

Might all this have to do with the lie of which Paul mentions in Ephesians 4.25? I hope I've made my questions clear, and thanks again for the time and wonderful contribution. There's some quite specific questions as it relates to the way Paul talks about diversity, unity and diversity and Christ and so on. The fact that in today's culture, especially what

sometimes come to be called identity politics and this idea of certainly having to recognize the fact that many people would say their story has not been reflected in the way people have understood scripture because of race and so on.

Yeah, how do you deal with this? And is the way it's currently being talked about often in terms of race and racism? How do we kind of fit that into the way Paul speaks of diversity? Okay, again, we in order to get back from where we are to the New Testament and then come back again, as it were, we have to demystify some things. The issue of race in today's British or American societies is very much literally a black and white one. And in America, of course, that has the long history of American slavery and in which the British were complicit way back when, etc.

So white or what we call white, actually it's pink and yellow and stuff like that, as the norm and black of whatever sort, as the other. And as long as you polarize like that, you have a problem of one particular shape. In the first century, it wasn't like that at all.

In the first century Mediterranean world where Paul is going around, it's multi-colored. There are people from North Africa, there are people from a bit further south, there are people from what we call the Middle East, there are people from up North and skid there on up towards what we call Russia. People at no point in the New Testament, there's anyone mentioned skin pigmentation as being of any interest at all because it's a melting pot.

So when then Paul says in Galatians, there is neither Jew nor in Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, no male and female, you're all one in Christ Jesus. This is not me as a white man saying, you're all one and by the way, that means you're all honorary whites. I've had that said to me that when I've preached unity, I've had an African-American woman theologian say to me, you do realize that when people like me hear people like you say that, it sounds like you're saying, we run this club and you're very welcome in it.

And I was horribly patronizing and I just thought, oh my goodness. And we have to realize we are here on the cusp of this great shift from what we loosely call modernity to what we loosely call post-modernity, that modernity, modern western modernity says, it's all about being all part of one great saying economies of scale were all part of this great movement. And then post-modernity says, that big story is your big story and it has just squelched my little story.

That's what's going on in Brexit, by the way. People like workers in Sunderland where I'm near where I come from thinking this big European story has just ruined our little local story. And that is repeated all over the place.

So the real problem here is, I mean, just in Wellby the Archbishop of Canterbury said something in general, not long ago, about the church being institutionally racist for far

too long. The danger with saying that, and I know he agrees with me on this, is that it sounds as though we now have learned of course secular society has taught us that racism is bad. And oh dear, we in the Church have been racist too and so sorry we're disobeying that the modern secular rule.

It's not that at all. In so far as there is a secular vision of multiculturalism, that's a Christian vision from the very beginning that God is making a new humanity in which we're all a rich huggamugger of every nation and tribe and tongue. And that's what the church should have been modelling all along.

Sadly, the church in both East and West has not modelled it very well and has often collapsed back into ethnocentric churches, into linguistic group churches, into skin pigmentation color churches, black and white, etc. Without realising that this is a destruction of the New Testament gospel. I mean, I don't want to be too over the top about this, but I really think it is, which is why there has been great resistance in some quarters to what some of us have called the so-called New Perspectives on Paul, which is to say that the point of justification by faith is that all who believe, Jew and Gentile, slave and free male and female, are all part of the one family.

I've often had that sense that we're very concerned that more so than ever it would appear in our modern age about identity and people claiming their identity and so on. And Paul never, you know, the New Testament doesn't deny the different identities people have, but they're all transcended by our identity and Christ. Transcended by the identity in Christ, but it's very interesting that then Paul wants men to understand what it means to be a man in Christ, women, ditto, Jews, what it means to be a Jew in Christ, Gentiles, what it means to be a Gentile in Christ, and that there is a sense in which, at a second order, you are still those things, but with the Christ identity being the central one, the Christ identity is neither Western nor male only nor.

And just to kind of, again, this is very pertinent to the final question I wanted to throw in here, which is Thomas B. Newton in Austin, Texas, says, Dr. Wright, can you comment on critical theory and the social justice movement sweeping the world, especially college campuses, how is critical theory similar to and different from the biblical vision for social justice that you've explored? And obviously we've covered some of this just now, but I mean, for instance, I want her quite a fun bump into frequently on social media and elsewhere is some people, theologians, Christians in other parts of the world, saying, for too long, understanding of the Bible has been dominated by a white patriarchal sort of Western view, and now we need to hear the voices of Black theologians, of female theologians, of queer lesbian gay theologians, and so on, and that's the problem is that we've got to understand that every identity will have a different take on this. And part of the problem there is the different kinds of identities, even in the ones you just mentioned, because there are some identities which are, I would say, absolutely given, which are where you come from and what your gender is. And I know there's now

questions about fluidity there, etc.

I think Paul would be emphatic about the goodness of God's creation and that the identities you have come as a result of being part of that good creation and that that's not yours to fiddle around with, as it were. But then at the same time, that rich diversity in the early church was precisely about Jews who were on the margin suddenly discovering that their Messiah was the Lord of the world. Oh my goodness, how did that happen? And Gentiles from all sorts and particularly slaves and women who had been nobodies discovering that they had real major roles to play and God was giving them gifts of leadership or speaking whatever it was.

And so right from the beginning, it's about a transformation within a community where there is a loving acceptance and also an extraordinary vocation to grow up in precisely love of welcoming one another. That great thing at the end of Romans, welcome one another therefore, as Christ has welcomed you to the glory of God. And that is the moment of the transcending of identities in a larger family in which there is an enrichment rather than a loss from all that has gone before.

And just as we close out, I mean has used a couple of phrases here that may not be very familiar to everyone, critical theory, social justice movement, which has had different sort of connotation. Well, both of them have. Critical theory really goes back nearly a century to between the wars, people like Adorno and Walter Benjamin and so on, who were poking and prodding and trying to say, hang on, the great construct of the enlightenment, this big picture of all of reality that we got from Kant or Hegel or whoever.

That is in danger of making it impossible precisely for other voices to be heard. How are we to live with that? And then this has come through into sociology and come through into literary criticism. So you read Jane Austen's novels, for instance, in order to explore, hang on, what's going on with patriarchy in the late 18th century in Britain, what's going on with women's voices being heard.

And so people are coming with perfectly appropriate questions, they may not be the only questions to ask about Shakespeare or Jane Austen, but that's where it's often emerged. And the danger then is that sometimes the critical theory becomes the thing you're really studying. In other words, you're learning whether it's a politically correct or politically incorrect ideology, but you're learning an ideology and all the stuff that you ought to be studying is merely raw material for this ideology.

And then where's that ideology going? And that's where as a Christian, I would want to say, hang on, if there is a God-given vision in the New Testament of God's justice, of God's new creation, of God's transformation of reality in Christ and by the Spirit. Yes, this means justice. Yes, it means justice now, but is not at least some of this critical theory a way of trying to get that justice, but without paying attention to the God whose ultimate

concern it is.

Great stuff, in-depth stuff as well. And if you're interested in these kinds of issues, we've covered some of it in my unbelievable podcast as well. In recent episodes, you could look back over the past year or so.

But yeah, we've done a good old deep dive there on today's edition. Thank you very much, Tom, for answering those questions. Thank you.

And yeah, we look forward to you coming back again next time as we tackle some other tricky theological questions. But until then, we'll say goodbye and thank you very much. Thank you.

Thank you.