

Should We Worry About Not Being “Inclusive”?

Christianity And the Excluded

It is often said, by church leaders, clergy, and other Christians, that the Church should strive against exclusion, and fight against the evils which the excluded face. Often, they cite the words and actions of Jesus, the friend of the poor and sinners. What they don't often say is that the world and society that Jesus knew, and our own, are very different.

In Jesus's day, the leaders and rulers of society – the top people – were (excepting the Roman overlords) religious (monotheistic) men, or rather leaders of the national religion, and “gatekeepers” of the Temple and the synagogue, the people who could decide if, or if not, ordinary people were “within” the covenant of Moses, or excluded. The “sinners” and outcasts (who the Chief Priests, Scribes, and Pharisees proscribed – effectively, excommunicated) were all people who would have actually *wished* to be (religiously) on the “inside” and accepted, and were made to feel their exclusion very keenly.

None if any of this holds today. Church leaders and senior clergy are in almost all cases comfortable middle-class people, but they hardly have the wealth, power, and status enjoyed by merchant bankers, senior politicians, MDs of large commercial companies, and celebrities. Society's predominant religion, if there is one, consists of the nostrums and shibboleths of political correctness, diversity, and so-called “equality”, and church leaders in our society only have influence and status in so far as they are able to acquire some visible connection with those sovereign concerns.

The socially excluded, likewise, are very different from those Jesus knew. Yes, there are the materially poor, but much more numerous are the spiritually poor. In so far as the materially poor are excluded, they may well be excluded from jobs, adequate livelihood and housing; but the exclusion that is really thrown in their faces is the glittering world of media success and the resultant wealth and hedonist “lifestyle”; the people who control our world are the ones that have done the excluding there. The spiritually poor are only poor in *our*, Christian, eyes; they are “excluded” (from the Gospel) only by their own desires; they don't want to be on the “inside”, to be acceptable to clergy and religious people (since if they did, they quickly would). In the sense that Jesus knew “excluded” people, such people are not with us today, and Christians should stop reproaching themselves for their own supposed shortcomings or wrongdoings.

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