

SOCIAL & ETHICAL ISSUES GROUP

HUMAN RIGHTS, GOD'S VALUES?

Human rights law should be uncontroversial.

It should be there to enable society to live peaceably with each other, and yet some people would claim it has taken an unexpected path and been used more to promote individual rights and demands rather than being of general benefit. More often than not it fails to recognise the responsibilities we all have to our society, and creates dissension.

Human rights law in its present form can be traced back to the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, written with the best of intentions to readdress the brutality of World War 2. It has been the precursor of subsequent legislation, most notably for us the European Convention on Human Rights.

What about sin?

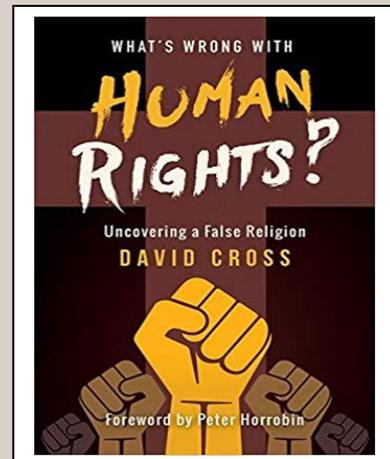
In **What's Wrong with Human Rights?** David Cross argues that there is a basic flaw in human rights law because it is based on a system which fails to reflect Biblical principles. He summarises this by saying. *'Let's be very clear: the Bible certainly tells us that we each have innate value, but because of mankind's sinful rebellion against God we have no innate rights. The world finds sin to be an embarrassing concept.'*

Many Biblical truths are challenged by the concept of human rights. For example

- human rights would claim that every person is born free, yet Scripture states that we are only free in Christ (1 Peter 2.16, Galatians 5.13)
- shouldn't an individual be able to do what he likes if it doesn't affect others? The reality is that, whether we can see it or not, our sin does affect others. See Ezekiel 44.12
- it is the state, or an international organisation like the UN, which has the authority and sovereignty over our lives. Jesus says otherwise – 'I have been given all authority in heaven and earth' (Matthew 28.18)

Just as in Old Testament times we frequently read of the people of Israel 'doing what was right in their own eyes',

The 70th anniversary of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights was marked late last year. This month we review a recent book which argues that human rights law fails to match up to Biblical standards



so David Cross criticises human rights because there is no acceptance of absolutes; ideas of human rights will inevitably vary from society to society and from generation to generation. *'Once the unchanging plumb line of God's truth is abandoned in favour of the moving pendulum of secular humanism there is no limit to what society can decide is right.'*

One right trumps another

What many of us are most aware of when we hear about human rights in the media is that a hierarchy of human rights is being created. One person will claim that his right has priority over someone else's. If the courts agree, then one person's right trumps that of someone else; hardly a remedy for peaceful existence. We saw an example of this recently in the Ashers Bakery case where the Christian bakery owners believed that their right not to be forced to create a cake promoting same-sex marriage was just as important as the customer's right to demand to have his order satisfied.

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Human Rights: God's Rights cont'd.

It would be easy for us to be persuaded that human rights can only lead to benefits for our society. Certainly some minority groups and individuals may have had unjust situations corrected. However human rights law has also been used to challenge basic concepts such as the right to life (both at the beginning and end of life), and freedom of belief and expression.

What's Wrong with Human Rights? is recommended as a clearly written, Biblically-based book which encourages us to apply God's word to this area of growing significance for our society.

Published by Sovereign World at £11.99 for 184 pages.



Read another Christian viewpoint on human rights published in The Scotsman newspaper last month.

The article is on the Social and Ethical Issues section of the SBC web site.

RESPONDING TO THE TRANSGENDER ISSUE

In the last newsletter we highlighted an article from Evangelical Alliance on transgender. EA have now greatly enhanced their resources on this topic including a 32-page biblical and pastoral guide to the issue, and video interviews with people whose lives have been affected. You can view all this information at <https://tinyurl.com/y8tx3a78>



CONFUSED BY UNIVERSAL CREDIT?

Universal Credit is the new social security system being rolled out across the UK. Problems have emerged in its administration and many people dependent on financial help from the state have been left in considerable disadvantage.

A group of churches – including the Baptists – have produced a report which explains how Universal Credit is failing to meet its objectives.

You can find the report (11 pages long but includes a 1 page summary) at

www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/issues/poverty-and-inequality/#UniversalCredit



Attention all students!

Just Love is a national organization which wants to inspire and release every Christian student to pursue the Biblical call to social justice.

With branches in around 20 university cities and town in the UK – including Glasgow, Edinburgh and St Andrews – Just Love offers support and training to students keen to start up a Just Love in their university or college.

Find out more at <https://justloveuk.com/>

Just Love in Durham:

