

Article: Proposal to alter the constitution

Next Saturday, the 14th of October, we shall be called upon to cast a vote on the Voice Referendum. Arguments continue to be made from both the Yes and the No camps, each trying to sway the way people will vote. I am sure you all know what the Yes and No camps have been pitching (perhaps, like me, you are tired of it!) However, it is important for us to be informed since voting for a change to the constitution is no small thing. But is there a Biblical principle we can follow with this referendum?

The question we shall answer yes or no to in the referendum is the following: ***“A Proposed Law: to alter the Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice. Do you approve this proposed alteration?”***

We can approach this question from many angles, and many opinions abound. Lots of people come from different backgrounds and see the question in a different light than others. Some are passionate “yes” supporters, and some are “no” and will vote accordingly – after all, we do live in a democratic society. The biggest concern for me, however, is when I hear the argument made that suggests this is a race-based referendum where we are told by proponents of the voice that democratic institutions are not good enough for Indigenous Australians. Therefore, they need their own Indigenous-only, race-based body within the structures of government. Note well, race-based. Not only do they claim that having a race-based body will correct past injustices, but they also claim this is the only way to guarantee Indigenous Australians can have a say over the laws and policies that affect them.

If this were true, it would mean our democratic institutions are so broken they are unable to incorporate the ambitions and aspirations of Indigenous Australians.

Apart from anything else, this is a blatant denial of the reality that there are currently 11 Indigenous parliamentarians and an Indigenous Australian minister overseeing a multibillion-dollar government department.

But the idea of the voice is presupposed on the false notion that Australians are so divided by skin colour – black vs. white – that an institution of general function, like a democratic government, cannot act in the best interests of both.

Why? Because according to the world view that underpins the voice, white Australians are so irredeemably trapped by the privilege afforded to them by the colour of their skin and the racist structure of our colonising democracy that we couldn’t hear Indigenous Australians even if we wanted to.

That is exactly what is preached to us by the advocates of identity politics and critical race theory.

They say that conflict and oppression between races is inevitable and, worse, that we cannot escape these destructive forces because we are marked by our skin colour and the structure of our society. We cannot presume to speak for each other, and we cannot presume to act in each other’s best interests. A white politician can never fairly represent a person of colour, nor can a person of colour be fairly treated by a white-majority institution such as parliament.

Of course, this is a lie. Anyone can tell the truth, and anyone can act in the best interests of anyone else – because we are all humans first. These false ideas lead to the inevitability that the voice will become the woke voice. It won’t be the Indigenous voice, it will be the critical race theory voice, the identity politics voice.

The result of the voice will be a Constitution claiming that I, as a white man, am inescapably an oppressor to people of colour. It is a permanent statement that our nation is irredeemably segregated by a barrier to our shared humanity that cannot be scaled – our race.

Under this postmodern worldview, racism is a human condition. It’s not about individual acts of racial prejudice, it’s about the racist structure – the systemic racism – that is baked into us and all that we do.

Clearly, none of this is true and the reality is very different. Anyone can reach out a hand to help anyone.

It comes down to something Christianity reveals to us because we believe that one God made one man from whom all races are descended. There is one race, ultimately: the human race.

God’s Word settles this issue. There is only one race of people. This is clear from the history found in Genesis. In the beginning God created the first man, Adam. Then, He created the first woman, Eve, from the man’s side. Adam and Eve were our original parents, made in the image of God. All humans can be traced back to these two people. This is abundantly clear in Genesis 3:20, where Adam said Eve “*was the mother of all living.*”

God’s Word is clear. There is only one race. Acts 17:26 reads, “*And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings.*”

We can rightly talk about people groups, but only with the understanding that these groups represent what the Bible refers to as “tribes” or “nations.” People do have ethnic and cultural heritages that can be honoured and celebrated. But we are all one blood. Even in the midst of our differences, we are all the same.

The idea of races calls us to ask a serious question: if there are different races, then which race did Christ die for? The answer has eternal consequences.

All human beings are related. We all can trace our ancestry back to the first man, Adam. As descendants of Adam, we are all sinners. As sinners, we are in need of a Saviour (Romans 5:12).

Jesus Christ, the Last Adam, was born as a man, as a descendant of Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45). Because of this birth, He was able to serve as our Redeemer. He was crucified, died, and rose again. He overcame death, and those who put their faith and trust in Him need not fear death, for they inherit eternal life. *“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive”* (1 Corinthians 15:22).

Our democracy, as expressed in our Constitution, rightly presupposes the equality of every Australian. As the apostle Paul reminds us, the kingdom of God is colourblind, for *“there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus”* (Gal. 3:28).

Our temporal, earthly “kingdoms” do well to model the greatest kingdom of all. Our Constitution should remain colourblind. I hope and pray that whatever the outcome of the upcoming referendum, race had nothing to do with the outcome.