

## LESSON 2

# CULTURAL MARXISM

In this lesson, the core worldview at work behind wokeness and various other facets of today's cultural upheaval is identified. The fatal flaw of this worldview is outlined. The only transcendent solution is presented from Scripture.

**Soli Deo Gloria** is advanced as a necessary step towards clarity in responding to cultural Marxism.



"Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways;  
the point is to change it."

**Karl Marx**

## TOOL OR WORLDVIEW?

Does woke inform or interpret? Is it an analytical tool or a worldview? What is the difference and why does it matter?

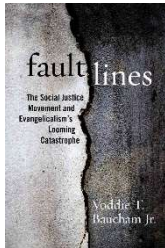
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In his book, *Fault Lines*, Voddie Baucham draws attention to a resolution that was submitted to the Southern Baptist Convention for adoption in 2019. What happened, he says, "was nothing short of scandalous." The original resolution read, in part: "WHEREAS, critical race theory and intersectionality are founded upon **unbiblical presuppositions** descended from Marxist theories and categories, and therefore are inherently opposed to the Scriptures as the true center of Christian union." It was "revised" to read: "WHEREAS, Critical race theory is a **set of analytical tools** that explain how race has and continues to function in society, and intersectionality is the study of how different personal characteristics overlap and inform one's experience."<sup>22</sup> The rewrite itself demonstrates an ideological shift. Baucham goes further and exposes the subversive danger in its language: "This is the crux of the matter: The million-dollar question is whether CRT is a worldview or merely an analytical tool. In other words, are there worldview assumptions that must be accepted in order to apply the tool? ... How, then, can CRT be viewed or used as 'a set of analytical tools that explain how race has and continues to function in society'? *Tools don't explain; worldviews do.*"<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Baucham, 143.

<sup>23</sup> Baucham, 144. Emphasis mine.



## THE CULTURE'S WORLDVIEW

"Like people, cultures also have worldviews, and these worldviews shape the society." Attentively, Glenn Sunshine goes on to explain:

For example, what people believe is real determines what is taught and what is studied, as do ideas concerning the nature of knowledge; questions of ethics shape laws: concepts of humanness influence everything, from the structure of families to whether or not to hold slaves to principles of law and justice and to who has what rights.<sup>24</sup>

Before our culture's woke surge, he insightfully underscored the importance of understanding a culture's worldview, including its development:

To understand a culture or a civilization, you have to understand its worldview, since all of its successes and failures are largely the product of the basic ideas that shape the society. In fact, the society's worldview will inevitably shape the culture around its ideas, which means that the logical implications of these ideas will inevitably be followed by the culture if it survives long enough. And if you want to understand why and how a civilization changes over time, you need to track the evolution of its dominant worldview.<sup>25</sup>

To rightly respond to wokeness, we must understand its philosophical origins—the social theory behind its ideology—and its intentions. It is not enough to read woke arguments. Understanding the worldview from which the arguments come is necessary and indispensable to effective cultural engagement.

## IDEOLOGICAL ROOTS

Woke ideologies are rooted in cultural Marxism. What is that? A form of Marxism applied to cultural inequalities. As with Marxism, it dogmatically offers a diagnostic explanation and solution to a culture's systemic corruption. To better understand the connection between woke and cultural Marxism, we must understand a bit more about the original vision of Karl Marx.

## KARL MARX

Karl Marx was a social philosopher from Germany, born of Jewish parents in May of 1818. The world he was born into was "a place of animated intellectual interaction, with various schools of thought

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<sup>24</sup> Sunshine, 15.

<sup>25</sup> Sunshine, 16.



developing around many points of view having to do with the purpose of life, the nature of government, and the engines of history.”<sup>26</sup> Marx studied and applied the views of Georg W. F. Hegel, a significant contributor to German idealism, which called for radical confidence in human reason. In this school of Enlightenment thought, “the goal is not to achieve an idea that corresponds with the object of thought; it is to *be* that object of thought.”<sup>27</sup> He was also influenced by Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-78), who “rejected the doctrine of original sin and held instead that it was the advance of civilization that had corrupted society. Therefore, civilization, as represented by capitalism, royal government, and a long-established church, needed to be rejected. Man must immerse himself in a back-to-nature movement.”<sup>28</sup> The abhorrent scenes of the French Revolution were the result of Rousseau’s philosophy.

## ATHEISM

**Marxism is first of all atheism.** This is its most foundational principle—everything else flows from this. In the words of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Marxism “abolishes all religion.”<sup>29</sup> Unashamedly this is articulated in the Marxist catechism, entitled *The Principles of Communism*: “All religions so far have been the expression of historical stages of development of individual peoples or groups of peoples. But communism is the stage of historical development which makes all existing religions superfluous and brings about their disappearance.”<sup>30</sup>

Marx not only constructed his ideology on atheism, he viewed Christianity as a barrier to his ideal:

Marx described religion (particularly Christianity) as an ‘**opiate**,’ a kind of drug given to the poor by the rich to persuade them that revolution is not needed. Under the influence of the opiate, they come to think that they will get their due reward through normal social change and, eventually, a reward ‘in the sky, by and by.’ So Marxists regard religion as a barrier to revolution and therefore a barrier to truly radical social change.<sup>31</sup>

## MATERIALISM

From an atheistic worldview, it follows that a major feature of Marxist thought is materialism. Marx believed that human thought was the outcome of material processes, that human life was based not

<sup>26</sup> Dave Breese, *Seven Men Who Rule the World from the Grave* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1990), 59.

<sup>27</sup> John M. Frame, *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology*, 1st Ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2015), 270.

<sup>28</sup> Breese, 61.

<sup>29</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Capital; Manifesto of the Communist Party*, vol. 50, Great Books of the Western World (Chicago, IL: Robert P. Gwinn, 1990), 428.

<sup>30</sup> Frederick Engels, *The Principles of Communism* (1847), Principle 23.

<sup>31</sup> Frame, 284–285.



on immaterial realities (truths, absolutes, principles, ethics, laws, thought, etc.) but exclusively on material reality.

## ECONOMIC DETERMINISM

Since Marx believed that ultimate causes were material, not mental, he concluded that the ultimate causes of conflict in the world were economic. He divided the world into two classes, the “haves” and the “have nots.” The “haves” were the oppressors and the “have nots” were the oppressed. In his terminology, the “haves” are the **bourgeois** and the “have nots” are the **proletariat**.

This connection is crucial to the defining mark of political Communism, in which Marx’s first principle was: “Abolition of property in land and application of all rents of land to public purposes.”<sup>32</sup> Why? Because Marx’s utopian vision included an **equality of outcome**. Justice would be measured by **equal distribution** of wealth.

## CLASS STRUGGLE

In Marx’s view, class conflict defines human history. He saw this as a primitive stronghold against human evolutionary progress.<sup>33</sup> He said, “every form of society has been based, as we have already seen, on the antagonism of oppressing and oppressed classes.”<sup>34</sup> Elsewhere, he claims, “The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of **class struggles**. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed stood in constant opposition to one another.”<sup>35</sup> He taught that the prosperity of the owners (bourgeois/oppressors) was at the expense of the workers (proletariat/oppressed). In this arrangement, “conflict is an unavoidable consequence. There is no possibility of reconciling the two parties so that they can live together in peace. They can only jostle for position until a full-scale class war breaks out.”<sup>36</sup>

## STRUCTURAL

The word **systemic** identifies something as being of or pertaining to a system. Marxism, originally and in its cultural variants, necessarily insists on structural and systemic revolution. It does not tolerate improvement. The entire system must be torn down and rebuilt. In his original vision, this

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<sup>32</sup> Marx, 429.

<sup>33</sup> “Marx was an admirer of **Charles Darwin** (1809–82), and it is interesting during this period to see how Hegel’s philosophical theories intertwine with Darwin’s biological ones” (Frame, 282).

<sup>34</sup> Marx, 424.

<sup>35</sup> Marx, 419.

<sup>36</sup> Frame, 283.



pertained to capitalism—the economic enemy of communism. Marx wrote, “The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communist revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Workingmen of all countries, unite!”<sup>37</sup> Even if this means by force:

If the proletariat during its contest with the bourgeoisie is compelled by the force of circumstances to organize itself as a class; if by means of a revolution it makes itself the ruling class and, as such, sweeps away by force the old conditions of production, then it will, along with these conditions, have swept away the conditions for the existence of class antagonisms and of classes generally.<sup>38</sup>

In the 1890 German Edition of the *Manifesto*, Engels criticized “the manifold types of social quacks who wanted to eliminate social abuses through their various universal panaceas and all kinds of patch-work,” commending the oppressed class who “demanded a radical reconstruction of society, convinced that mere political revolutions were not enough.”<sup>39</sup> Theologian, John Frame, acknowledges that while oppression is real, systemic revolution is not necessary to overcome it:

Christians were in the vanguard in abolishing the slave trade and slavery itself, also in the care of orphans and widows, improving education, encouraging science and art. But Marx thought that religions and liberal social movements should not be encouraged. In his view, they were counterproductive because they waste precious time and energy and do not get to the root of the problems. The real problems, he and later Marxists argued, are **structural**. They cannot be solved until there is a radical change in the very nature of society.<sup>40</sup>

## ETHICS

It is important to note that Marx rejected any concept of objective right or wrong. Morally, he was a relativist. But his version of relativism was bound to the oppressed class. This, in part, is why the problem is systemic and cannot be resolved by individual change.

Communism has never concealed the fact that it rejects all absolute concepts of morality. It scoffs at good and evil as indisputable categories. Communism considers morality to be relative. Depending upon circumstances, any act, including the killing

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<sup>37</sup> Marx, 434.

<sup>38</sup> Marx, 429.

<sup>39</sup> Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1964), 127.

<sup>40</sup> Frame, 284.



of thousands, could be good or bad. It all depends upon class ideology, defined by a handful of people.<sup>41</sup>

Though speaking without reference to the woke cultural situation, Frame is insightfully helpful:

Often when young people become Marxists, they claim, unlike Marx himself, to be following conscience. They become socialists or communists because they think that only Marxists “care” about the poor. In this discussion it is important to point out that Marx and his philosophically sophisticated followers carry out their program not out of moral conviction, but out of a conviction that class warfare is scientifically inevitable, and their desire to be on the winning side. For example, the American Communist Party praised Hitler when he made a pact with Stalin. But when Hitler violated that pact and attacked the Soviet Union, the party changed its ethical judgment of Hitler. The ethics of Marx are essentially relativistic, though relative to class rather than to individual preference.<sup>42</sup>

## FAMILY

How does family get involved in the discussion? In Marx’s worldview, the family was a part of the system that needed to be overthrown. Since God no longer defined morals, he saw the traditional family as merely an expedient of capitalism, and therefore a social hindrance to progress—if not a social evil. “Marx taught that families based on natural law and Judeo-Christian values breed inequality and feed on greed and systemic oppression.”<sup>43</sup> He explicitly stated in the *Manifesto*, “Abolition of the family! ... Do you charge us with wanting to stop the exploitation of children by their parents? To this crime we plead guilty.”<sup>44</sup> In *Principles*, it is stated that Marxism “will transform the relations between the sexes into a purely private matter which concerns only the persons involved and into which society has no occasion to intervene. It can do this since it does away with private property and educates children on a communal basis, and in this way removes the two bases of traditional marriage – the dependence rooted in private property, of the women on the man, and of the children on the parents.”<sup>45</sup>

## REVOLUTIONARY

Saturday, March 17, 1883, Friedrich Engels said these telling words in his eulogy at the funeral of Karl Marx:

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<sup>41</sup> Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, cited by Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: A Christian Worldview*, 5:368

<sup>42</sup> Frame, 283, footnote 55.

<sup>43</sup> Erwin Lutzer, *We Will Not Be Silenced* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2020), 22.

<sup>44</sup> Marx, 427.

<sup>45</sup> Engels, *Principles*, Principle 21.



For Marx was before all else a **revolutionary**. His real mission in life was to contribute in one way or another to the overthrow of capitalist society and of the forms of government which it had brought into being... Fighting was his element. He fought with a passion, a tenacity, and a success such as few could rival. ... Marx was the best-hated and most-calumniated man of his time. ... His name and his work will endure through the ages!<sup>46</sup>

Indeed, "Few philosophies have changed the world as much as Marx's. But that change has been almost entirely for the worse. Indeed, it has been the source of monstrous evils. In the name of Marxism, socialism, and Communism, millions of people have been killed and imprisoned in horrible conditions. Marx himself did not intend for his philosophy to cause such atrocious levels of death and suffering. But he certainly bears some responsibility for the results of his philosophizing."<sup>47</sup> There is no wonder why Marxism is responsible for so much destructive conflict and unnecessary death. Marx promoted rebellion and anarchy. He "held that because authority by its very nature is oppressive, all authoritative structures and institutions must be destroyed."<sup>48</sup>

#### DESTRUCTIVE METHODS OF MARXISM

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn is a man who understood Marxism not merely in theory but as one who suffered under its consequences.<sup>49</sup> Solzhenitsyn wrote:

I am very much aware that eastern Slavic orthodoxy, which, during the sixty-five years of Communist rule, has been subjected to persecution even fiercer and more extensive than that of early Christian times. ... 15,000,000 peasants were brought to death for the purpose of destroying our national way of life and of extirpating religion from the countryside. ... Hatred of religion is rooted in Communism. ... Khrushchev simultaneously rekindled the frenzied Leninist obsession with destroying religion. ... The ruinous revolution has swallowed up some sixty million of our people.<sup>50</sup>

Dave Breese writes, "Marxism has produced the greatest degree of social, physical, and moral ruin the world has ever known."<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Cited by Breese, 57.

<sup>47</sup> Frame, 286.

<sup>48</sup> Johnson, 45.

<sup>49</sup> See Francis A. Schaeffer, 5:368.

<sup>50</sup> Cited by Breese, 74.

<sup>51</sup> Breese, 79.



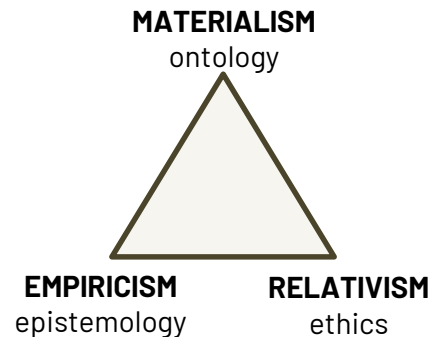
## A WORLDVIEW

In 1979, speaking of Marxism, Francis Schaeffer insightfully warned:

We must not sit back and think, *It could never happen here*. Worse still, we must not be confused into thinking the issue is principally or only military or economic power. The issue is more subtle, more immediate, a cancerlike growth which is in our midst right now—the materialist philosophy which underlies the Western humanistic world-view. Marx may have proposed an economic system different from our own, but we have shared his basic world-view.<sup>52</sup>

This worldview is atheistic naturalism. Johnson plainly states, “The worldview of social justice is rooted in atheism, relativism, and the denial of a universal standard of right and wrong. And it began with Karl Marx.”<sup>53</sup> Marx, in postulating the utopian outcome of his ideology, stated, “Law, morality, religion are to him so many bourgeois prejudices, behind which lurk in ambush just as many bourgeois interests.”<sup>54</sup> In other words, the goal of Marxism is to abolish law, codes of conduct, and religion—this would be utopia. These only “lurk in ambush” as servants in the oppressor’s interest.

Rejecting God, Marx constructs a man-centered worldview that ultimately lacks any justification for meaning and purpose. Personhood has no basis because all being is merely accidental materialism. Because of this, man decides his own meaning. Marxism “abolishes eternal truths.”<sup>55</sup> Man decides his own truth. Empiricism, which is knowledge based purely on sensory perception, is the only means of true knowledge. And because there is no universal objective truth, ethics are reduced to relativism. In fact, Marxism, “abolishes all religion, and all morality.”<sup>56</sup>



As for **charity**, Marxism does not tolerate other worldviews within its realm. Unlike Christianity which holds to absolute truth thriving in and not of a relativistic world, Marxism is a militant worldview entirely in and of the world holding relativistic views absolutely. As such, it fundamentally requires the overthrow of other worldviews. Marxism is a state religion that promotes a certain social structure. Christianity is inherently independent of the state—it transcends the nations and their

<sup>52</sup> Schaeffer, 5:368.

<sup>53</sup> Johnson, 29.

<sup>54</sup> Marx, 424.

<sup>55</sup> Marx, 428.

<sup>56</sup> Marx, 428.



social structures. Christianity is often criticized for the absence of command to change social institutions. But far from a flaw, this testifies to the wisdom of God in preserving the purity of the transcendent gospel—which is the only true hope of true liberty and perfect peace. True biblical Christianity destroys racism, social injustice, abuse, oppression, exploitation, hostility, and conflict through the proclamation of the gospel. It knows that the truth of Christ will set people free from sin. Therefore, Christianity is not afraid to promote free speech and religious liberty within a society. In contrast, Marxism seeks to establish a society of supposed equality by forcing structures, policies, and systems on people. Instead of promoting freedom of speech, it insists on “political correctness,” censorship, and other methods of communication control. In other words, religious and thought liberties are threatened. Marxism is not charitable.

## WORLDVIEWS COMPARISON

CHRISTIANITY		MARXISM
ONTOLOGY		
1. <b>God</b>	Personal, relational, moral God	“As nontheists, we begin with humans and not God, nature and not deity.” <sup>57</sup>
2. <b>Creation</b>	Matter is contingent and dependent	Matter is ultimate reality
3. <b>Humanity</b>	Made in God’s image to glorify and enjoy Him forever; moral culpable; fallen in sin; in need of reconciliation with God	A cosmic accident; born completely innocent and ignorant
EPISTEMOLOGY		
4. <b>Truth</b>	Both general and special revelation from God; all truth derives from and reflects God; Scripture is the only authoritative source of moral truth	No absolute authority; human reason sufficient; science is the only reliable source of truth
5. <b>Plight</b>	Hostility with God has brought hostility with man; sin has brought a curse and ruin to a good creation; suffering has a purpose	Artifact of nature; no purpose to suffering
6. <b>Hope</b>	God is our hope, in the gospel of Christ for redemption, reconciliation, restoration, resurrection, and eternal life with God and His redeemed in His kingdom forever	Improve present temporary conditions of a dying life experience through revolutionary political, economic, and social change

<sup>57</sup> The Humanist Manifesto II. <https://americanhumanist.org/what-is-humanism/manifesto2>



ETHICS		
7. <b>Ethics</b>	God determines what is right and wrong; justice is determined by what is right in God's eyes; these are revealed in Scripture	No objective absolute standards; "moral values derive their source from human experience. Ethics is autonomous and situational, needing no theological or ideological sanction. Ethics stem from human need and intent" <sup>58</sup>
8. <b>Afterlife</b>	Retributive justice in hell or everlasting joy in heaven (new creation) with God for all who are reconciled to God	None
9. <b>History</b>	Providential and teleological (for God's intended ends)	Accidental and evolutionary
10. <b>Society</b>	God has given and defined human sexuality, marriage, and family as foundational to His purposes and order in creation; government is appointed by God; cultures are intended for God's glory and man's joy	Man defines himself, his sexuality, and his social structures for the good of the state community

## THE ACADEMY

Today, cultural Marxism comes to us from the academy. This has been its incubator. Erwin Lutzer notes that cultural Marxism is "a form of Marxism that is widely taught in many universities and assumed by elitists as the theory that best explains the inequities of our society and our best hope for curing them."<sup>59</sup> He goes on to point out, "It promises 'hope and change,' income equality, racial harmony, and justice based on secular values rather than Judeo-Christian morality."<sup>60</sup> Responding to a New York Times article written in 2018 by David Brooks, Albert Mohler says:

Speaking of the younger militants on the left, he says they, "Tend to have been influenced by the cultural Marxism that is now the lingua franca of the elite academy." What's so important there is that David Brooks, in the pages of the New York Times, uses that important phrase, cultural Marxism, and he means it. The background of that is the fact that so many of the left are saying that cultural Marxism is the boogie man of the right, that it's an invented position amongst conservatives, but that is not so, and David Brooks says so right here in the pages of the New York Times. What is driving the left is indeed nothing less than a form of cultural Marxism, which has been

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Lutzer, 21.

<sup>60</sup> Lutzer, 21.



taught on college and university campuses for a long time, and is now, as he says, the lingua franca. It is the symbolic universe in which the younger progressives live.<sup>61</sup>

## WOKE ROOTS

Woke roots which come from Critical Theory trace back to Marx's Conflict Theory. Voddie Baucham explains this development:

After the Marxist revolution failed to topple capitalism in the early twentieth century, many Marxists went back to the drawing board, modifying and adapting Marx's ideas. Perhaps the most famous was a group associated with the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt, Germany, which applied Marxism to a radical interdisciplinary social theory. The group included Max Horkheimer, T.W. Adorno, Erich Fromm, Herbert Marcuse, Georg Lukács, and Walter Benjamin and came to be known as the Frankfurt School. These men developed Critical Theory as an expansion of Conflict Theory and applied it more broadly, including other social sciences and philosophy. Their main goal was *to address structural issues causing inequity*. They worked from the assumption that current social reality was broken, and they needed to identify the people and institutions that could make changes and provide practical goals for social transformation. ... In the social sciences, "critical" is "geared toward identifying and exposing problems in order to facilitate revolutionary political change." In other words, it implies revolution. It is not interested in reform.<sup>62</sup>

Woke ideology is primarily built on race rather than economics. But its underlying worldview of oppressors and oppressed remains the same and it is not interested in reform. As a form of Marxism, it sees the cultural problems in America as systemic and therefore insists on nothing less than complete cultural revolution. To address racism within the current structure is seen as assimilationism, a form of Marx's opiate tactic. This is illustrated by best-selling author and leading woke proponent, Ibram Kendi:

[Walter] White wanted to transform the NAACP into an organization of "refined" folks like himself, whose mission was to go before courts and politicians to persuade the White judges and legislators to end racial discrimination. But in 1933, Du Bois wanted nothing to do with this method. He had finally turned away from **assimilationism**. He had finally turned toward antiracism. So, he took off from the NAACP, escaping the madness and bureaucracy, and headed down to Atlanta University to teach. He'd taken up a new school of thought. Inspired by Karl Marx, Du Bois broke ground on a new idea—antiracist socialism. He used this idea to move further into antiracism, even critiquing Black colleges for having White-centered curriculums or for having White teachers teaching Negro studies in Black schools.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Albert Mohler, "The Briefing," November 29, 2018, <https://albertmohler.com/2018/11/29/briefing-11-29-18>

<sup>62</sup> Baucham, xii.

<sup>63</sup> Ibram X. Kendi and Jason Reynolds, *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You* (Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2020), 151, Kindle.



Fundamentally, woke is a call for structural and systemic revolution. It is no mere criticism of an imperfect system. It is a replacement. One illustration of this is seen in the Black Lives Matter (**BLM**) organization (more on this in Lesson 3). Patrisse Cullors is co-founder of BLM. She identifies herself and her fellow organizers as “trained Marxists.”<sup>64</sup> The organization explicitly promotes the following:



We make space for transgender brothers and sisters to participate and lead. We are self-reflexive and do the work required to dismantle cisgender privilege and uplift Black trans folk ... We build a space that affirms Black women and is free from sexism, misogyny, and environments in which men are centered. ... We disrupt the Western-prescribed nuclear family structure requirement ... We foster a queer-affirming network. When we gather, we do so with the intention of freeing ourselves from the tight grip of heteronormative thinking, or rather, the belief that all in the world are heterosexual.

This is from the original What We Believe statement on the BLM website.<sup>65</sup> After some criticism, this statement was taken down and is now only viewable through an internet archive.<sup>66</sup> Notice that these excerpts are not first about racism. They explicitly include transgender, cisgender privilege, sexism, misogyny, men centered environments, the Western-prescribed nuclear family structure, and queer in what their agenda either promotes or seeks to dismantle. What do these things have in common with racism? Nothing, to be precise. But because they are seen as part of our culture’s Judeo-Christian structural tradition, they are part of the system which must be dismantled and replaced with cultural Marxism. Woke is not an analytical tool—it is a replacement worldview.

## NEW ENTRY OF AN OLD IDEOLOGY

Old threats often find new tactics. The worldview behind the woke banner is not new. To be sure, many of the players and plays are new but the game is the same. An old dogma is trying a new door, a worn-out force is confronting our culture in new clothes.

### TROJAN HORSE

Social injustices, racism, and related atrocities are a trojan horse through which atheistic Marxism is infiltrating our culture.



<sup>64</sup> Johnson, 32.

<sup>65</sup> <https://blacklivesmatter.com/about>

<sup>66</sup> <https://perma.cc/TA3B-GAJJ>



Way before woke, Glenn Sunshine wrote these insightful words: “A society’s worldview can change over time, resulting in changes in the culture. Worldviews generally evolve slowly ... Occasionally, worldviews are overturned in periods of social, political, or religious unrest.”<sup>67</sup> The events of 2020 have presented a unique scene of cultural unrest.

## **A NEW HUMANITY**

Cultural Marxism seeks what is possessed only in Christ’s church. Injustice is an artifact of sin. To be sure, no man-made system is perfect. Even the best systems are tainted by sinners in them. So Christianity does not deny that systems can be corrupt and that there are varying degrees of corruption in any given system. It insists, however, that all of society’s evils are ultimately owing to the human heart.

### **HEARTS CHANGE SYSTEMS, SYSTEMS DO NOT CHANGE HEARTS**

All injustice, all racism, all abuse, all crime—all evil comes out from the heart (Mark 7:21-22; Matthew 15:18-19; Proverbs 4:23; Romans 1:21-25; 8:5-7; Ephesians 4:17-18; Colossians 1:21). Unless the heart is changed, evil will continue. New social structure do not change desires. It is the substance not the structure that is the cause of our problems in society. But sadly, many are fighting the wrong thing.

When Jesus was asked about an episode of injustice in His day, He did not advocate changing the structure. He emphatically pointed directly to the individual heart (Luke 13:1-5). Systems do not change hearts, hearts change systems.

This does not give license to irresponsibility. The church alone has the light of the gospel. The church should influence the world around her, including the governing authorities. Christians who are also citizens of America should steward the gracious providence of a representative government and influence the world for practical, earthly, and common good. This is not to be confused with her mission. Nowhere in the New Testament do you see “make this world a better place” as an instruction to the church. Her mission is to preach repentance and faith in Christ alone, not change culture. Changed people change culture.

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<sup>67</sup> Sunshine, 16.



## THE PROBLEM AND SOLUTION

### BROKENNESS

*The grand plight of humanity is at bottom relational because sin is relational.* Every tragedy in the universe is owing to our relational rebellion against God. The whole creation is subjected to futility because of humanity's broken fellowship with the Creator (Romans 8:19-22). With sin comes conflict, division, separation, and death. Man's first sin brought death to his relationship with his Maker, and soon after with his brother (Genesis 4:8). Where the goodness of God is wanting, the evil of self-centeredness reigns; and self-centeredness spells the demise of fellowship.

Consider again the Fall. The first break in fellowship was vertical, between God and man, and the very next was horizontal, between man and man. Sin brought separation; not only with God but also with one another. The evil of this self-centeredness grew with each generation. Racism, nationalism, classism, sexism, and every other form of strife and social division are the offspring of this original self-centeredness. Self-centeredness is why marriages fail; why families fight; why neighbors don't get along; why friendships miscarry. There can be no ultimate and pure fellowship among men whose fellowship with God is broken. This is why nations war. This is why there is so much unrest in the world and true peace remains unattainable by man. The Hebrew concept of *shalōm*—peace, wholeness, soundness, wellbeing, relational fullness, creaturely completeness—exemplifies the salvation of a broken heart before God. The absence of *shalōm* is the very cry of broken fellowship. All of these things reverberate the painful echo of the Curse and are designed to signal to the heart of man that he is out of fellowship with God. The vertical and the horizontal are clearly related.

God's very good design of plurality in oneness was manifestly broken at virtually every level. *Marriage*, the most foundational institution of society, was deeply impacted (Genesis 3:16). *Family* strife ensued and murder was born (Genesis 4:8). Even an entire *society* of people was divided because of their man-centeredness (Genesis 11:4-9). They were "one people" with "one language" (11:6), but because they were seeking to make a name for themselves (man-centered) to defy God (11:4), the Lord broke up their man-made *community* by interrupting their *communication* (11:7). Communication is vital to community. The consequence was devastating, resulting in dispersion (11:9). Among other things, this illustrates the place of communication if our relationships are going to experience the health of community—whether it be in marriage, family, church, or society.

The brokenness of human brotherhood has been universally felt since Cain and Abel, reflecting the even greater brokenness and separation that exists between man and God. A very sensitive nerve can be struck with the mention of broken relationships. Such a thought can awaken very deep pain.



This too is a cry from the Curse; a signpost from the Fall. So every form of strife, enmity, hatred, oppression, segregation, and schism testifies to the same source; every relational problem is a symptom of the same root cause: *man is a sinner, broken in his relationship to God and fellow man*. But here is the point that our text is introducing: *all who are in Christ share salvation, the barrier of sin is removed and fellowship with God and one another restored*.

## A NEW HUMANITY

*In Christ we are a new humanity*. By the sacrificial substitution of Christ, we who once were far off have been brought near to God (Ephesians 2:13) and one another (2:14). Consequently, we are now a new humanity (2:15). The church serves on the stage of the world to magnify the glory of Christ and His reconciling work (Colossians 1:20). While the world persists in the old humanity of unrelenting division and strife, with countless parties driving in different directions, the church is called to show forth the beauty of a new humanity that is characterized by oneness. The fellowship of the local church is designed to model a new humanity that lives in one body and one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God (Ephesians 4:4-6). The old humanity is one that is marred by “enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, [and] envy” (Galatians 5:20-21). But the new humanity in Christ bears the fruit of His Spirit, manifesting “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23). Notice how the newness of a redeemed individual is designed to foster the newness of a redeemed society—the restoration of *oneness in plurality*. And the oneness and unity of the church is purposed to make much of Christ (Philippians 1:27-2:11). Indeed, in the local church “there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free;” for we share a common participation in Christ who “is all, and in all” (Colossians 3:11; cf. Romans 10:12; 1 Corinthians 12:13). The church exhibits the love of Christ in such a way that “we regard no one according to the flesh. ... Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (2 Corinthians 5:16-17). The local church is the community of the new humanity that reveals the gospel.

This signals the hope of the ages; the foretaste of the ideal society; the restoration of fellowship with God and one another. This is why Paul continues by stating, “All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). The gospel is about fellowship through reconciliation, through Christ crucified. The church is entrusted with the message of reconciliation, a message that must be stewarded in both word and deed. We are ambassadors for Christ,



proclaiming—*in word*—the message of fellowship through reconciliation and living out—*in deed*—the fellowship of a new humanity that we have through the reconciliation that Christ has secured for us.

Our fellowship, then, is something of extraordinary significance. It realizes the societal ideal that ancients and moderns have sought after, to no avail. It stands in contrast to the brokenness of human relationships; displaying the vital link between the vertical and horizontal—God and man—dimensions. It furnishes a small sample of the reversal of the Fall, directing all attention to Christ, the author and perfecter of reconciliation, restoration, and a new creation. Our fellowship is designed to represent a new humanity, to be exhibited to the world and enjoyed by one another. It is purposed to be a blessed haven for the redeemed and a beacon of light for the world—a light of love, peace, relational joy, and hope.

## COMMUNISM

Some have suggested that the picture of the church in Acts 2:42-45 and 4:32-35 presents a caricature of communistic ideology. After all, according to Marx's *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, the goal of Communism is achieved "by the elimination of private property and its replacement by community of property."<sup>68</sup> Acts 2:44-45 says, "And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need." Communism seeks to eradicate the "class struggle," and as noted above, Christianity powerfully asserts that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female" (Galatians 3:28).

So does Christian *koinōnia* bear the marks of a primitive Communism? Is it comparable, at least in part, to the Marxist ideology? *Absolutely not!* Christian *koinōnia* and Communism are not just different, they are incompatible opposites. Marxism is antichristian. Like Tertullian's famous dictum,<sup>69</sup> we may put it this way: *What has Communism to do with Christianity?* Answer: *Nothing.*

Appearances can be deceiving, and the greatest counterfeits are those that come closest in appearance to the real thing. Not that Communism seeks to mimic Christianity but that it proposes to offer a "gospel"—a salvation of sorts—for humanity. What Communism counterfeits is true community, fellowship, identity, and liberty. What it proffers is a godless deception.

<sup>68</sup> Frederick Engels, "Draft of a Communist Confession of Faith" in Volume 6 of MECW (1847), Answer 3.

<sup>69</sup> Insisting that the philosophical method of enquiry has nothing to do with the exegesis of divine revelation though they may appear related, Tertullian said, "What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church?" — Tertullian, *De praescriptione haereticorum*, ch. 7.



To link similarities between the New Testament church and Communism is to miss the big picture. They are respectively born out of antithetical worldviews. They represent opposing ideologies. Their starting points, their motivations, their means, and their ends are diabolically opposed.

The ***starting point*** of Communism is man and his material needs. At root it is a man-centered ideology that promises materialistic salvation. It fails to rightly interpret the plight of humanity, the groaning of creation, and the root cause of strife and struggle. Communism fails to comprehend the reality of human depravity and the pervasive power of sin. It is constructed on the dogma of materialistic evolution. But even more important, it fails to see the main point: *God!* Because it does not begin by valuing what is most valuable, its entire ideology fails.

In contrast, the starting point of Christianity is God, from which arises the disclosure of man's spiritual needs. Christian fellowship is born out of regeneration—it is the product of the new birth and the exercise of love. It originates with God and not man. It is the fruit of salvation and not the starting point to it. Christian fellowship is a God-centered communion of *life*, not just *material*. All material sharing in Acts reflects an intensified practice of love springing from the joy of fellowship with God and one another. Meeting material needs is the effect of—but not itself—the gospel.

The ***motivations*** of Communism are man-centered, self-seeking, and contradictory. (a) *Man-centered* because Communism is about the Commune and nothing higher—there is no greater reality to value. While the *us* is made more important than the *me*, all remains man-centered. Whereas the church is all about God and not the church—it is God-centered. The church exists to promote Christ and not the church. We also see that Christ is the cause of change and the church is the effect. Communism promotes itself because it is the almighty cause of change; and ultimately the supposed hope of utopia. (b) *Self-seeking* because the appeal of the system is that the individual will benefit from the collective power and resources of the Commune. (c) *Contradictory* because the individual becomes facelessly absorbed into the Commune. The consequence to this idea is that the importance of the individual is superseded and obliterated.<sup>70</sup> This can be nothing less than devastating to the true hope of humanity.

In stark contrast, the fellowship of Christians is a statement that upholds, rather than displaces, the value of the individual. Love is our hallmark and our fellowship its testimony. The motivation of Christian fellowship is the love that comes from God to us individually, manifesting itself corporately in the overflow of affection toward one another. It is designed to be a God-centered motivation and an other-oriented practice of love. Truly it is the work and fruit of the Holy Spirit, and therefore is

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<sup>70</sup> According to the “principle of community” people will be “compelled by this union to merge with one another and thereby supersede themselves” (Answer 21).



not the result of a synergy or system. While the church certainly blesses and benefits the individual, the Christian manifesto is to promote Christ—not self or community—for God’s glory and man’s joy.

The *means* of Communism is imposed policy and education. How will Communism achieve the elimination of private property and replace it with community property? The answer, according to Marx, is: “(1) By limiting private property in such a way that it gradually prepares the way for its transformation into social property, e. g., by progressive taxation, limitation of the right of inheritance in favour of the state, etc. (2) By employing workers in national workshops and factories and on national estates. (3) By educating all children at the expense of the state.”<sup>71</sup> The basic idea is that class differences arise from private property and account for all, or virtually all, of the social ills in our world. But the abolition of private property and the establishment of a uniform proletariat (working class) have nothing to do with what we see in the early church.

Contrary to imposed policy, all contributions were entirely voluntary in the church. In fact, the apostles taught that “each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7). This was God-centered giving, not imposed policy. It was motivated by sacrificial love and purposed to meet the needs of the needy rather than promote a comprehensive uniformity. The idea of social and economic equality is completely lacking. There was no policy against the continuance of private earnings or the ownership of private property. “There is no hint of either communal production or communal consumption. It was not organized, and is not to be seen in economic categories.”<sup>72</sup> To the contrary, we know that private ownership continued (Acts 12:12).

In the incident with Ananias and Sapphira, contrary to assumption, their guilt was not owing to the retention of certain proceeds from the sale of a piece of property, but rather to their dishonesty concerning the amount. Peter explicitly counseled Ananias, “While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God” (Acts 5:4). It was their own property at their own disposal even after the sale. The problem was that they had agreed to lie about the amount that they received for the sale of the property, evidently to show a feign generosity. Peter confirmed the matter with Sapphira, “Tell me whether you sold the land for so much.” And she said, “Yes, for so much” (Acts 5:8). Even this demonstrates a significant principle of Christian fellowship, namely that it is not the construction of a feigned oneness. The oneness in plurality designed to be experienced

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<sup>71</sup> Engels, “Draft of a Communist Confession of Faith,” Answer 18.

<sup>72</sup> J. Schattenmann, “Κοινωνία,” ed. Lothar Coenen, Erich Beyreuther, and Hans Bietenhard, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 642.



in the local church originates in the heart and is free from hypocrisy (Romans 12:9)—an impossibility of man made possible only by God.

Christianity brought a new outlook, not a new order to society.<sup>73</sup> Man's heart will not change through a new social order; but his social dealings will change through a new heart. Conformity to an external system will never create a new humanity; internal transformation is humanity's only hope and this is exclusively the work of the Holy Spirit through the gospel of Christ crucified and risen.

Almost immediately upon the Spirit's arrival, we find the word "fellowship" (*koinonia*) for the first time in the New Testament. It is not found in Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, or Acts 1. But when the Spirit arrives, he brings with him an experience of fellowship that is the expression of their community. It is seen in their common life (Acts 2:44-45; Acts 4:32-35), a life that political systems (e.g., communism) have been unable to impose because such a common life can only flow from genuine community, which is the creation of God.<sup>74</sup>

Finally, the greatest of all antitheses is the *end*, or goal, of Communism. Communism seeks to create a classless and godless utopia; Christianity seeks the worship of God in the beauty of created diversity. Communism is the epitome of man-centered salvation. Its goal is to counter the Fall and the Curse in the strength of man's might and intellect. It starts without God, plans and labors without God, and ends without God—the glory of man is the chief end of Communism. Again, according to the *Communist Manifesto*, "All religions so far have been the expression of historical stages of development of individual peoples or groups of peoples. But communism is the stage of historical development which makes all existing religions superfluous and brings about their disappearance."<sup>75</sup> The philosophical goal of the communistic ideology terminates on man and sees man existing for the good of the Commune. This becomes, in this system, the highest purpose for which people unite. Such is opposite of Christianity. The church unites to draw near to God and extol His greatness, and leverages the assembly supremely to this end.

Christian fellowship is essentially part of the life of worship. It is the visible adornment of an invisible reconciliation. It is the expression of an enthusiastic love. It is the interaction of a "common faith" (Titus 1:4) and the celebration of a "common salvation" (Jude 3). It is the partnership of the gospel and the unity of ambassadors for Christ. It is the comforting, consoling, and counseling family of God.

Every man-centered system will be able to treat only the symptoms of the Fall. And this is to be expected. Man-centered solutions will always miss the big picture. Broken relationships are a

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 643.

<sup>74</sup> Daniel L. Akin, *A Theology for the Church* (B&H Academic, 2007), 398–399.

<sup>75</sup> Engels, *Principles*, Principle 23.



symptom of a much greater cause. The pain of it all is designed to compel us to cry out to God for deliverance from our own ways and look to Him for His way. The tragedy of strife, division, and hatred is meant to show us just how ugly and evil sin is. The entire predicament should drive us to see our despairing condition and our desperate need for God to save us—it should induce us to cast ourselves upon Him.

## HOPE OF THE WORLD

*The church models the hope of the world.* It dons the restoration of the true brotherhood of man in consequence to the restoration of the true fatherhood of God. Through the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ on our behalf, we are sons and daughters of God, and brothers and sisters of one another. The Christian life is the living-out of the actual family life of God's people. The blessedness of true Christian fellowship is no mere doctrine or sentiment—it is a foretaste of the horizontal dimension of salvation joy. Daniel Akin well summarizes our point here: "The church is the answer to the human quest for community, for there believers of all classes, races, and ages come together and find community in Christ."<sup>76</sup>

### CULTURE

Society needs nothing less than a complete structural and systemic revolution. It is time to disrupt, deconstruct, and dismantle the oppressive establishment and its institutions. Our problems are systemic and therefore cannot be cured by addressing individuals.

### CHRIST

For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, wickedness, racism, hostility, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, sexual immorality, sensuality, orgies, envy, coveting, deceit, slander, and things like these. Those who are hostile in mind do evil deeds. They are alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. God commands all people everywhere to repent of their personal sin, trust in Christ's substitutionary sacrifice for the forgiveness of their sins and reconciliation with God to be born again, receiving the promise of the kingdom of God in eternal life. Christ's kingdom is not of this world.

See Mark 7:21-22; Matthew 15:18-19; Proverbs 4:23; Romans 1:21-25; 8:5-7; Ephesians 4:17-18; Colossians 1:21; Galatians 5:19-22; Acts 17:30; 2 Corinthians 5:14-21; John 3:3-5; 18:36

<sup>76</sup> Akin, 399.



Let us labor to show Christ to our culture. Let us engage intelligently and reasonably, not with anger. Let us ask questions about what woke proponents believe the root of society's problems are and reason with them concerning the human heart. Let us ask those promoting woke ideologies what they truly want and show them the false hope of cultural Marxism and the true hope of Christ. Let Christ's church model the beauty of a new humanity in Christ—the very picture of hope for society.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What would you say to the claim that woke ideology is simply an analytical tool?
2. What are the key components to the worldview of Marxism (ontology, epistemology, and ethics)?
3. How does one's worldview shape one's understanding of society's problems?
4. How does one's worldview shape one's proposed solution?
5. How do you engage in an intelligent and profitable conversation about the evils of racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression and social strife with someone who is advocating woke ideologies? Regarding the source of the problem, what do you affirm? What do you deny?
6. Marxism is fundamentally built on hate and blame shifting. How does this engender social revolution rather than personal responsibility?
7. Why are societal ills systemic in cultural Marxism? Why is weeding out the bad apples, for instance, in law enforcement insufficient? Why does cultural Marxism call to "defund the police"?
8. What is assimilationism?
9. How does sexuality relate to racism?
10. What is the only true hope for a new humanity?