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Critical Theory and Its Incompatibility with Christianity; Isaiah 1:12-17

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Introduction – Isaiah 1:17 is clear. As repentant people, people of God, believers, we are to cease to do evil, learn to do good, seek justice, correct oppression. Orphans and widows were commonly mistreated and oppressed, so that's why Isaiah gives orphans as an example of a group that needs an advocate to make sure they are treated justly and widows would be a group easy to be oppressed. The NT example of Isaiah 1:17 is James 1:27 – religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction (seek justice, correct oppression), and to keep oneself unstained from the world (cease to do evil, learn to do good).

So when we as believers see injustice or oppression taking place, we are to speak out, stand for those who are being mistreated, and we are to pursue just treatment of everyone.

Now enters this worldview philosophy called critical theory, or when it is specifically applied to racism is called critical race theory. It teaches that oppression and social injustice occur on a widespread basis such that the very social and institutional structures of our country were established in such a way that elevates one group as the oppressors and forces the masses to be oppressed. This is called hegemonic power or the hegemony. Therefore, in order to free the oppressed groups, two things have to occur. (1) the oppressors have to divest themselves of their power over other groups, (2) the oppressed have to acquire power and liberate themselves by dismantling all structures and institutions that subjugate and oppress. In other words, critical theory calls for a cultural revolution. A moral and cultural revolution to achieve social justice, liberate the oppressed, and end oppression.

How are we as believers to respond to critical theory that seeks to end oppression if we are called as believers to “correct” oppression? Because there are elements of critical theory in which we would agree from a biblical basis. Do we believe racism exists? Yes, we do. We believe that because we believe the Bible teaches the doctrine of original sin. We are all born sinners. As soon as we are able to make moral decisions, we choose to sin because we have a sinful nature. Racism

is sin. It is to belittle, mistreat, hate, or abuse another individual who is created in the image of God solely on the basis that they do not look like we do or are not from our group. III. "Bullying" Racism is found throughout history and throughout the world today because of the problem of sin. Do we believe that entire structures and institutions and civic policies can be sinful, racists, or oppressive? Yes, we do. When you put a group of sinners together, you are sure to find sin among their structures. Do we believe in the existence of hegemonic power? Yes, we do. As Christians we fight against the hegemony of our entertainment industry and social media culture every day because it has massive sway over our lives and our children, constantly pulling them away from a biblical worldview. There are no perfect people and there are no perfect systems because all humans are sinners.

So if we find agreement in these areas, why do we refuse to embrace critical theory or join movements that are based on critical theory? The foundational, doctrinal truths and answers of Scripture to these issues are far different.

- I. What is Critical Theory?
 - a. History of critical theory.
 - i. Karl Marx. A German philosopher, born in 1818 and died in 1883. His view of history came from another German philosopher by the name of Georg Hegel, who lived from 1770-1831.
 1. Hegel believed history was circular. (The Bible teaches that history is linear.) He developed the Hegelian dialectic which is composed of three parts: the thesis, the antithesis which contradicts the thesis, and the synthesis which is the resolution between the thesis and antithesis. And that pattern just continues and forms history.
 2. Marx picked up that dialectic and applied to political theory. In his model you have the system, the oppressors (the thesis), you have the masses, the oppressed (the antithesis), and the resolution is revolution (the synthesis).
 3. Marx identified 3 stages of history that follow this pattern, with each succeeding stage overthrowing the

previous stage (circular). 1. Ancient world. 2. Feudalism. 3. Capitalism.

4. Marx lived in the age of capitalism and argued that it must fall. Capitalism, Marx argued, oppresses the masses. He also said religion is the opiate of the masses. If you can keep the masses deceived in religion, you can keep control over them. The hegemony remains in power. Karl Marx was an atheist and materialist.
 5. So the masses, the working class, must stage a revolution in order to enter a new, improved stage of political history.
 6. Marx called this new era socialism, and his works formed the foundation of the communist regimes that began to appear in the 20th C.
 7. (BTW – have you heard any professors in our universities or politicians on capital hill decry capitalism, CEOs, corporations, and billionaires, and call themselves socialists lately?)
 8. Did you know that our former president, Barak Obama, was influenced by Marxist ideology in college and his pastor for 20 years held strongly to the religious version of Marxist thinking, known as liberation theology? That explains why President Obama pushed so hard for abortion right as a woman's right and pushed the LGBTQ agenda further than any previous president.
 9. This political theory just described is known as classical Marxism. But classical Marxism failed because only a few nations followed Marx, entered a revolution against capitalism and came out on the other side as communist.
 10. Communism and socialism actually do not address the issues they seek to answer. They actually create more issues and problems, result in less freedoms and less opportunities, and more oppression. You simply trade industry rulers for political rulers, who are known as dictators.
- ii. So now enters what is known as cultural Marxism.

1. Cultural Marxism seeks to answer why classical Marxism failed. Why didn't capitalism go away? The ancient world faded away into history. Feudalism faded away into history. Why didn't capitalism fade away as Marx predicted?
2. So you have some new 20th C philosophers who adopted Marxist thinking and proposed that the revolution did not occur globally because Marx had failed to include a vital element in his theory. Marx failed to include culture. Thus comes the cultural Marxists. Most noted are Antonio Gramsci, Italian Marxist philosopher and communist politician, 1891-1937. Gramsci developed the idea of cultural hegemony, that is, domination through institutional structure. Those who hold the power have structured the institutions of the culture in such a way as to remain in power and dominate the masses. Cultural hegemony.
3. That is why the revolution didn't take place. The institutional structure, the hegemony, has held capitalism in place.
4. So if you want to change the culture, you have to change the hegemony. How do you change the hegemony? You have to control the robes. Who in Gramsci's day wore robes? Professors. Politicians. Judges. And Ministers. Once you control the educational, political, judicial, and religious realms of culture, you can have your revolution. You can change the hegemony.
5. (Our secular universities are promoting cultural Marxism, that's the academic term by the way, the popular term is critical theory. One of our two political parties have already adopted these ideas as their platform. Ill. When President Obama won the election, Michelle stated this was the first time she could be proud of her country! Ill. Did you hear Rep Omar just this week call for the dismantling of the freemarket and all systems of oppression? Our judges have been legislating from the bench for years now. And many

ministers across our land have adopted liberalism, progressivism, and liberation theology – all which have the social gospel in common – a false gospel.) The agenda of that collective is the radical transformation of this country. It's a gradual revolution.

6. Gramsci was followed by a group of German philosophers known as the Frankfurt School. They left Germany in WWI and landed in NY at Columbia University. They added a 5th component to Gramsci's 4 robes. They recognized that due to the rise of radio and newspapers, the masses were not thinking for themselves. They just took in whatever they heard or read. (ill. Age of Information) You also have to control the mass media to change the hegemonic power. The Frankfurt school gave us what is known today as critical theory.
 - b. Definition of critical theory. Reality is defined in terms of power, who has it and who doesn't have it. Every individual is either oppressed or an oppressor.
 - c. Everything comes down to who has power and who doesn't, who is oppressed and who is the oppressor. Individual facts do not matter – only the categories of power/no power. That's why the monuments must come down. It doesn't matter if the individual accomplished many great things, everything is reduced to oppression/oppressor. We don't build monuments to honor slavery. We built monuments to honor statesmanship, educational advance, etc. But all the good is wiped away and forgotten if the honored was also a slave holder. III. Statue of Abraham Lincoln
 - d. Categories of oppression are race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, and more.
 - e. So the evils of our day racism, sexism, capitalism, patriarchalism, heteronormativity, cisgender privilege, and evangelical Christian privilege.
 - f. So the people with power, the people with privilege, the people who are the oppressors, who also formed our institutions, therefore these people must be divested of their power and all these oppressive

institutions must be brought down are: white, male, heterosexual, cisgender, native born, able-bodied, evangelical.

- g. If you are one or more of those things, you are the problem. You are the oppressor. You brought racism and established racism in our institutions. You brought every other “ism” and established them in our institutions. That’s why the monuments have to go. That’s why the streets and the buildings have to be renamed. That’s why the anthem and July 4th are symbols of white supremacy. That’s why America is not a great nation at all. Ill. Colin K. What about all the good America does and has done? Are we perfect? No. Do we have sins in our past and issues to face today? Yes. But have we not done more than just evil and wrong? That’s why the police have to be defunded. Don’t remove the bad cops; dismantle the system. That’s why the 10 Commandments and prayer have to be removed. In order to stop the oppression that is structural, in order to stop the racism that is systemic, it all has to go. Rewrite the history. Start over. A moral and cultural revolution.
- h. If you are not one or more of those categories, you are the oppressed. So if you are non-white, female, homosexual, transgender, immigrant, disabled, or not a conservative evangelical believer, you must be liberated. The man is keeping you down.
- i. Now enters the term intersectionality. That means if you fall into more than one of those categories, the point of intersection is where you feel the greatest oppression.
 - i. So if you are non-white and female – that’s one point of intersection. If you are non-white, female, and homosexual, that’s two points of intersection. The more intersection, the more oppression.
 - ii. Now, have women been mistreated in our country? Absolutely. Have African-Americans and Native-Americans and Hispanics been mistreated in our country. Absolutely. As Christians we must not stand for any abuse or racism.
 - iii. However, is every form of opposing an oppression? Absolutely not. It’s not oppression to tell a woman, “Don’t kill your baby.” It’s not oppression to tell a homosexual, “You won’t find what you are looking for walking away from God.” Ill. Transgender.
 - iv. Truth is not oppressive. Truth sets you free!

- j. Do individuals sin and commit crimes? Yes. Are people treated unjustly? Yes. Are there policies and social norms that are unfair and biased and unjust? Yes!
- k. But the Bible's answer is not disrupt, dismantle, riot, and rebel. The Bible's answer for the individual is the gospel. The Bible's answer for the system is Truth.
- l. If you just tear down the structure and start a new structure, you've only replaced sinners with sinners. True transformation only comes when the heart is changed by the gospel. III. Burden