



Cultural Marxism with Dr. Voddie Baucham

Voddie Baucham

Cultural Marxism isn't exactly a term or concept that many people are familiar with or want to discuss at dinner. Yet, in recent years it's become increasingly relevant in our culture.

How should the church respond?

A passage in 1 Chronicles provides great insight. At this point in the biblical narrative, David stands ready to inherit the kingdom, and as he prepares to assume his throne, men gather to him to strengthen his army and help stabilize the nation.

Of course, David needed seasoned troops – soldiers and commanders loyal to him and the kingdom, his mighty men of valor who fought alongside him and protected him while he lived in exile from King Saul.

But David also needed wisdom, insight, and understanding... he needed men who understood the times and could instruct him how to lead in the cultural moment. And that's exactly what he found. After listing the divisions of the troops who rallied to his side, 1 Chronicles 12:32 reads...

From Issachar, men who understood the times and knew what Israel should do—200 chiefs, with all their relatives under their command.

King David looked to 200 chiefs who had understanding of the times, commanded respect, and knew what Israel needed to do.

We need the same thing in the Church today. We need people who understand the times and can speak with authority into the issues of our cultural moment. And one of those pressing issues is Cultural Marxism.

Christians need to understand this social, political, and economic ideology so we can engage in meaningful conversations with those who espouse it.

This requires that we explore three fundamental topics

1. Why terminology matters and how to clearly define Cultural Marxism.
2. Why this issue must be addressed at this critical point in our culture.
3. How many of the popular traits of Cultural Marxism embraced today are actually antithetical to the gospel.

Sticking our head in the sand is not an option. Christians must hash these issues out and counter them with biblical truth that leads to life and health for our families and culture.

First, it's important to note that Christian opposition to Cultural Marxism does not equate to ignoring legitimate social issues.

Racism is real, and it's a sin. Oppression is real, and it's a sin. Hatred is real, and it's a sin.



Arguing against Cultural Marxism does not mean that we are unwilling to acknowledge or engage on these real issues. God cares about them, and so should His people.

But if we are to bring biblical hope and truth to issues such as racism or oppression, we cannot do it through the lens of Cultural Marxism. And that's exactly what the church is in danger of doing if we support some of the agendas promoted in our culture today.

So what exactly is Cultural Marxism?

First, Cultural Marxism and classical Marxism are two different things. Classical Marxism is an economic system developed by Karl Marx. Very few, if any, evangelical Christians would willingly identify as classical Marxists because of what we know about Communism and Karl Marx's antagonistic view of religion.

Cultural Marxism, however, isn't an economic system, and many of its ideas have infiltrated the discourse even among Bible-believing Christians. Cultural Marxist theory arose in the wake of World War I, decades after Karl Marx died, as Marxists of the time tried to understand why capitalism didn't fall like Karl Marx predicted it would.

Two ideas central to Cultural Marxism developed out of this period: cultural hegemony and access to mass information.

Cultural hegemony refers to the rule maintained by those in power (hegemony) through ideological or cultural means. This domination is usually achieved through social institutions which allow those in power to control the values, worldview, behaviors, and norms of society.

In our culture today, the cultural hegemony – the ruling class – is viewed as patriarchal, made up of white, male, heterosexual, cisgendered, able-bodied, native-born Americans. Anybody who does not fit those descriptors is considered a minority, regardless of actual demographics. For example, even though women make up more than 50% of the population, they are considered a minority.

Why does that matter? Because this idea of cultural hegemony also goes on to state that everybody who's not part of the ruling class is a victim of the cultural hegemony established by those individuals. As a result, all minorities are at war with those in power.

The question, then, is how do you overthrow that power. Classical Marxism expected this to occur naturally as the working class rose up in a revolution against the ruling class. But that never happened.

So Cultural Marxists took a different tack. Instead of focusing on an economic revolution, they advocated a cultural revolution that overthrew the supposed cultural hegemony.

Now, how do you do that?

One of the first proponents of Cultural Marxism, Antonio Gramsci, believed the way to change the hegemony was to control the robes of society, meaning the people who wear robes such as judges, professors, pastors, politicians.

He aimed to leverage those positions in order to educate and mobilize the masses against the hegemonic power.



Does that sound at all familiar?

This is how you gain power. By promising various groups of people that you will advocate for them. That's why you can have so many white male, heterosexual, cisgendered, able-bodied, native-born American politicians who present themselves as representatives of the people who are not any of those things. That's how Cultural Marxism works.

The other key element of Cultural Marxism is leveraging mass media to control access to information. This is done by reducing everything to discussions of race, class, gender, and sex.

This element of Cultural Marxism began with a collection of scholars in Frankfurt, Germany, after World War I that became known as The Frankfurt School. They saw people becoming passive recipients of political and ideological information through mass media. They theorized that this experience made people intellectually inactive and politically passive as they allowed mass produced ideologies and values to wash over them and infiltrate their consciousness.

Because of what happened in World War I, this group of scholars left Germany, and in 1935 they came to New York and became affiliated with Columbia University. So what views and concepts did the Frankfurt School give us?

Critical theory, from which critical race theory derived, political correctness, and multiculturalism, just to name a few.

As a result of these ideologies, we have all been taught over time, through our media and our educational systems, to view ourselves not as part of a whole, but as part of subgroups who, in some way, are being oppressed by the hegemonic power that rules and governs our culture. And the more subgroups you can identify yourself with, the more oppression you can claim.

All of this flows out of the ideas of Cultural Marxism.

When people use the term racism today, you have to be careful to understand what people are talking about. Because when people say racism, they could mean an individual who has racist, prejudicial ideas toward other individuals. Or they could just be saying that a person is part of an inherently racist cultural hegemony.

This means that now you have racism without a racist. How does one handle that? Racism is an issue that lies in the heart of an individual. You counter it with the biblical truth that we are all made in the image of God and Christ died for all regardless of race, sex, or status. But how do you deal with racism that supposedly exists because of cultural hegemony? Cultural Marxists depend on political and social pressure to change the power structure, to topple the hegemony.

That is why these ideas matter, because this is an agenda, not just an idea. It's a disruptive, transformative agenda. And it's an agenda that needs to be recognized, and an agenda that needs to be confronted.

But there's another problem with this agenda that's more sinister. The sinister part of the Cultural Marxist agenda is that it never addresses real pain, real sin, real brokenness.

There is no doubt that we have problems in this nation that need to be addressed. We have to deal with them. There is brokenness that has to be fixed. But in our current climate, to blame anything but the system and the cultural hegemony is to blame the victim.



That means that whatever pathologies there are that need to be addressed don't get addressed because it's the system's fault.

We've created an environment where people are divided up into constituencies and subgroups. Ironically, this actually creates stereotypes. We look at people in relation to the system and what the system is doing or has done to them, or what it needs to do for them. But this approach moves us away from addressing the sin and hurt of individuals in any meaningful way.

It doesn't need to be an "either/or" proposition. It doesn't have to be that either we address individuals in their sin and their brokenness, or we look at problems with the systems. Why do we think we have to choose between advocating for laws to change in the area of abortion – which disproportionately affects people of color – or proclaiming the gospel to change the hearts of young women, so that they won't kill their babies?

When we choose to talk about these tough issues in certain terms, and when we accept certain ideologies and agree with certain premises, the end result is that if you don't find yourself on the right side of this, you're disqualified.

So, what do we do with this?

First, Christians need to counter these divisive ideologies – within the Church and within our society – by proclaiming the truth of Galatians 3:28, that in Christ there is now neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free. No male nor female. We're all one in Christ.

Unfortunately, Cultural Marxism has exposed a false unity in the body of Christ. Just look at how quickly we dismiss another brother or sister in Christ because of where they fall on a particular social issue.

This world is suffering from real pain and brokenness. It's the hurt that comes from the grip of sin in people's lives and on this broken world. Only the church can bring the hope of Jesus into that mess and heartache. But we must love the gospel enough and we have to love one another enough to be bold and speak the truth.

Take Your Study Further

To learn more about Cultural Marxism and the Social Justice movement, read Voddie's book, Fault Lines: the Social Justice Movement and Evangelicalism's Looming Catastrophe (Salem books)

For verses about unity in Christ, see: 1 Corinthians 1:10 & 11:9, Galatians 3:26–29, Ephesians 2:14, Colossians 3:11

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