

***A Word from Woody. . .***  
**“Marxism and Our Polarized Nation”**

Back in the early 1980's a friend gave me Klaus Bockmuehl's book *The Challenge of Marxism: A Christian Response*. I expressed a feigned interest in the book, and promptly found a place for it on my bookshelf. It remained there, unread, until last year. Who would have thought that 30 years after the fall of the Soviet Union such a book would become so relevant in our nation which is alarmingly polarized? From my reading I can see there are at least two reasons for this new infatuation with Marxism.

First, we live in a country which is becoming increasingly non-religious, secular, and thus we are hungering for meaning. With God increasingly out of the picture, especially for idealistic young adults, our nation is finding it hard to embrace the resulting meaninglessness of life, the nihilism. We simply were not built for such an existence. Something *must* fill the void. This is where Marxism becomes appealing.

Many today believe that the answers in life don't lie in a belief system which is seen as God-centered, others-absent, mean-spirited, intolerant, racist, patriarchal, and bigoted against other religions. Indeed, in their view this is exactly what Christianity is. Bockmuehl believes this is when Marxism starts to appeal. “Marxism is nothing less than a program for creating a new humanity and a new world in which all present conflicts will be solved, a world in which humanity will totally rule over nature and at the same time be totally reconciled to it. To shape a society of—paradoxically—total individual freedom and, at the same time, the complete realization of communal life, is the aim of Marxism. One cannot go far wrong in assuming that Marxism is a secularized version of the kingdom of God. It is the kingdom of man. . . For too long religion has been unable to grant humanity the realization on earth of this lifelong dream. So man himself has taken over” (p. 17). From what I understand, Karl Marx (1818-1883) thought that his ideas of re-shaping societies/governments would naturally occur. But this did not happen, in large part because as the rich got richer in capitalism, the middle-class common worker benefited as well. I.e., no democratic country would actually vote for Marxism, because there was no pressing need for it. So over the years Marxists realized they had to take matters into their own hands and force, by violence, a takeover of the society/government to become Communist, a

totalitarian one-party political expression of Marxism. We have seen this in Russia, China, and Cuba. In the U.S., one need not be reactionary and claim that all on the ideological left are Marxist. However, many of their ideas are as they push for an economy of socialism—like universal healthcare, many social justice initiatives, and redistribution of wealth. We also see an effort to de-construct our current social society through such ideas as defunding the police, looser border enforcement, sanctuary cities, and re-defining family and gender—all of which could easily result in chaos and anarchy where a Marxist ideology would fill the void. For example, the organization (not the slogan) Black Lives Matter states on its website under “What We Believe”: “We disrupt the Western-prescribed nuclear family structure requirement by supporting each other as extended families and ‘villages’ that collectively care for one another, especially our children, to the degree that mothers, parents, and children are comfortable.” This view should disturb us, since the disruption of the nuclear family would result in seriously damaging what is widely known in sociology as the “gold standard”, families led by a father and mother. The fact that the slogan “Black Lives Matter” is ubiquitous-- as it is found etched on t-shirts, streets, and a NBA basketball court-- only confuses the matter where people may think the organization is being endorsed. Perhaps the confusion is intentional. We also see further de-struction of the family where gender is now something chosen, not something with which one is born. A case in point is a recent article in *Time* magazine (September 21-28, 2020, pp. 94-97) written by sociologist Dr. Kyl Myers, who has had a baby named “Zoomer” with her partner. She and her partner have decided to let Zoomer choose “their” gender— Myers uses the third person plural “their” to protect Zoomer from others’ gender oppression. The article ends with the specious advice, “Instead of us telling the children who they should be, maybe it’s the children who will teach us how to be. We just have to get out of their way.” One wonders how far to take this advice. Should it be included in such areas as whether and when the child should take a bath, do chores, and be educated? Myers’ advice is nothing short of a sharp reduction of parental influence, and this fits nicely with Marxism.

The second reason I suspect Marxist ideology is gaining popularity is that the church has often become insular. Once our faith becomes simply “me and Jesus” and we don’t share the gospel, respectfully interact with others of an opposing point of view, and serve others in need, the gospel becomes completely irrelevant. Why go to church when a peace rally would more directly help others?

And why stand up for a gospel which is becoming increasingly controversial and risk being socially shunned or our livelihoods canceled? I.e., the Marxist critique of Christianity holds some water. The advice of Bockmuehl needs to be heeded: “When we speak of the reality of God, we tend to sound as though we are speaking about life on Mars—no one knows much about it and even if one did, it would not make a difference in everyday life. So, more than anything else, we need the experience of God’s healing presence in our personal and social lives. Experience and deed are the best answers to arguments, and the concrete reality of God is the most effective means to counter atheism. We need to pray: ‘let us, Lord, experience your reality and make it visible to other people’” (p. 81). As Jesus Himself said: “Anyone who resolves to do the will of God will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own” (John 7:17)

Beloved, may Jesus use us in our polarized nation as we face a monumental presidential election on November 3<sup>rd</sup> to point them to His loving and holy presence. May our broken nation and world see in you and me the power of the gospel lived out.

Yours in Christ,

Woody