

MARX'S HISTORICAL MATERIALISM

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MARX'S HISTORICAL MATERIALISM AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE CHURCH

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## MARX'S HISTORICAL MATERIALISM AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE CHURCH

Heavily referenced in much of the current American political and social spheres, Karl Marx has become, in many ways, a buzzword. Although the phrase or adjective of Marxism is used at what seems like an increasing rate in a present array of groups and individuals, I have found that it at many times lacks its true and proper historical understanding. The lack of historic referential understanding might not be particularly unique to this generation or cultural context, but like with anything, flippantly using or living out of a philosophical idea or concept always has consequences. Similar to Christian beliefs, the foundations and history of any worldview are unequivocally important in understanding to which direction an ideology is taking you.

Currently, though, the philosophies of Karl Marx and their application of them are making an appearance both inside and outside of the Church. For this, we [Christians] must understand both historically how they have played out and how that informs where they might be taking us today.

Some would argue for the application of Marx's theories and philosophies specifically in American and Western culture today, and others would suspend the idea that his philosophies on materialism, history, and conflict theories have been an influence upon both political and societal ideologies. Although both ideas have been credibly argued for or against, this paper will serve as an exploration of Marx's philosophy on the nature of history, his reason for taking his position, and the influence which historical context had on his views. Additionally, as this paper will serve as an exploration of his philosophy on the nature of history, I will critically analyze and evaluate it in light of both reason and scripture. I will briefly discuss my position and philosophical idea that I have coined as "the great two equalizers of mankind" to then point fellow Christian believers to the importance of both understanding Karl Marx's influence, the significance of his philosophy on history, and why we must refute much of what he teaches in light of scripture.

Lastly, I will make an argument for how Karl Marx's philosophies have, I believe, permeated and influenced churches today; making it all the more pertinent to both understand and discuss this particular topic. The allure of Marx's ideas is easy to see. At first glance, the ideas of revolution, changing the world, and advocating for those that are perceived to be oppressed seem to co-align with a Biblical worldview. This, among other reasons, is why I argue that it is incredibly important to both understand and compare all ideologies to the authority and inerrancy of scripture. For that, Marxist beliefs are ones we cannot ignore, and instead must be argued against in accordance to the authority of the Bible.

### *Introduction*

To begin, one must ask, what is the study of the nature of history? In addition, why does it matter in light of both the context of Karl Marx and where we find ourselves today? The definition of history, simply put, is the "sequence of events in past time of importance to human beings. Used both of the actual facts constituting that sequence and also of written accounts of that sequence." (Frame, 2015, 756)<sup>1</sup> Therefore, when studying or writing on the nature of history, one is most often aiming to look at the past course of sequential events in order to better understand where society is going in the future. Just as a doctor needs a medical history of a patient in order to best prescribe medicine or treatment, philosophers have often looked at the nature of history in the same way.

In the case of Karl Marx, he spent much of his career aiming to both understand and philosophize the nature of history. Influenced by Hegel, Marx flipped Hegel's logical dialectic to one of materialism. In order to understand Marx's view on the nature of history, we have to start

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<sup>1</sup> John M. Frame, *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing Company, 2015, 756)

with the fact that Marx believed and asserted that human life is wholly based on a more material reality and thus that one's mind is actually the result of a material process (Frame, 2015, 282). Additionally, Marx believed that the job of the philosopher was not to interpret the world in a different way than others but to change it (Waton, 1921, 9)<sup>2</sup>. This is fundamental in the understanding of Marx's philosophy on the nature of history because events in history, he maintained, were motivated by people's ability to accomplish material prosperity. As asserted in his *Communist Manifesto*, Marx believed that history and society exists in class struggles such as freeman-slave, oppressed-oppressor, and bourgeois-proletarians (Marx, 1848, 14)<sup>3</sup>. Since society exists in class struggles, history is then determined by such conflicts. According to Marx, one must look at the nature of history always in relation to the materialistic well-being within the class structures and struggles. When studying Marx's historical materialism, one should ask who and how we determine what such material is essential and needed within class struggles. Since this is the basis for conflicts in history for Marx, the what and why behind material necessities is essential in deciphering such conflicts. It would seem that according to Marx, what humans deem both necessary and essential is determined by a collective, but that even begs the question as to which collective group decides this? In the view of Marx, the only way for humans to survive is to work as a collective to change the world aiming to have it fit the needs of people (CrashCourse, 1:27, 2017)<sup>4</sup> But what are the needs and who gets to decide them? With no sole source of objectivity, I would argue, such views leave much room for subjectivity.

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<sup>2</sup> Harry Watton, *The Philosophy of Marx*, (New York, The Marx Institute, 1921, 9)

<sup>3</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* Vol. One, (Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1969, 14)

<sup>4</sup> CrashCourse, *Karl Marx & Conflict Theory: Crash Course Sociology #6*, April 17, 2017, Video, 1:25, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gR3igiwaeyc&t=275s>.

I will dissect both this and the historical context of Marx's thoughts later in this paper. Additionally, I believe there is much to be argued against as Christians with regard to Marx's philosophy on the nature of history. I will argue against Marx's philosophy on the nature of history from both scripture and a philosophical idea that I have labeled as the two great equalizers of mankind. This idea focuses on the fact that we are all born in the image of God (Gen 1:26-28 [ESV])<sup>5</sup> and all are born as sinners through Adam (Rom 5:12 [ESV]).<sup>6</sup> Through the lens of a reformed Biblical worldview, I will argue that his [Marx] view of the nature of history negates these two foundational characteristics of mankind, and therefore, creates struggles and conflicts antithetical to both the teaching and solutions for such found in the Bible. For this reason, among others which I will discuss, I believe Christians must reject Marx's philosophy wholeheartedly as being applicable in relation to a Biblical worldview. As stated previously, I would not assert that someone should negate understanding Marx's philosophies at all. In fact, I think the opposite. We refute the philosophy of Karl Marx not by our presuppositions and second-hand knowledge of him but by aiming to understand all of what he teaches in light of scripture.

As with all texts, context is essential in understanding the motive and intended meaning of the author. Therefore, I will begin with Karl Marx's upbringing, background, and the history of the culture and world around him at the time of his life and philosophies before expounding his philosophy of the nature of history altogether.

*Karl Marx*

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<sup>5</sup> Genesis 1:26-28, Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced employ the *English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016)

<sup>6</sup> Romans 5:12 (ESV)

Karl Marx was a 19th century philosopher, writer, and thinker. He was born in 1818 in Trier, Prussia (now Germany). He came from a lineage of famous rabbis, but his family converted to Protestant Christianity solely due to the barriers that Jewish people faced professionally and economically at the time (Wolff, 2017, 1).<sup>7</sup> Although born to a line of Rabbi's, Marx was not a religious man by any stretch. In fact, he was an atheist. He famously wrote in his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* that, "religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people" (Marx, 1844, 1)<sup>8</sup>.

Karl attended university in both Bonn and Berlin. He studied history, law, and philosophy, and he received his doctorate degree at the age of 23 (Kaidantzis, 2002, 1).<sup>9</sup> While at university, Marx became captivated by the teachings of G.W.F Hegel. Specifically, Marx's fascination centered much around what determined the direction and history of a society and mankind. Marx was part of a radical group called the Young Hegelians, leading early on to much dissension against his philosophies and future in academia. Due to the radical nature of Marx's philosophies, he fled to Paris in 1843 (Kaidantzis, 2002, 1). It was during his time in Paris that Marx developed a close friendship with Fredreich Engels. The friendship between Engels and Marx was one of utmost importance with regard to Marx's philosophical writings and theories. Eventually, as we will read, this friendship led to the combination of philosophies resulting in the

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<sup>7</sup> Jonathan Wolff, *Karl Marx*, (The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Winter 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), accessed November 21, 2020, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/marx/>

<sup>8</sup> Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, (Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher, Paris, 1844, 1), accessed November 27, 2020, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/critique-hpr/intro.htm#05>

<sup>9</sup> Janet Beales Kaidantzis, *Karl Marx*, 2002, accessed November 21, 2020, <https://www.econlib.org/library/Enc/bios/Marx.html>

famous *Communist Manifesto*. Fleeing to Paris was ultimately one of Marx's first run-ins with having to leave countries due to the radical nature of his ideas. He was ordered to leave Brussels in 1848 by the Belgian police, and as a result went back to Paris (Bernstein, 1939, 323).<sup>10</sup> Upon Marx's second return to Paris, it is important to note the state of society at the time. France was in the midst of a revolution, and this ultimately led to the important conflict struggle between bourgeois and proletarians in Marx's *Communist Manifesto*. Between the anguish of a country's revolution, Marx and Engel wrote and published this work asserting the ideas that we have seen influence many societies, governments, and movements thereafter.

The 19th century French Revolution, caused by much of the discontentment and distaste for the French monarchy and King Louis XVI, the French led a movement towards better economic outcomes for the people (History.com, 2009, 1)<sup>11</sup>. As seen in the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engel assert the idea that there is much conflict between what are called the bourgeoisie and the proletarians. According to Marx and Engel, the bourgeoisie are "the class of modern capitalists, owners of the means of social production and employers of wage labour. By proletariat, the class of modern wage labourers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labour power in order to live." (Marx/Engels, 1888 English edition, 14).<sup>12</sup> Within their writings, Marx and Engel had much to say in relation to economics. Marx's view on economics directly correlates to his philosophy on the nature of history. Since, as Marx argued, conflicts in history are as a result of material well-being, his views on economy and what he thought resulted in the best model is wholly related to his understanding of the

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<sup>10</sup> Samuel Bernstein, *Marx in Paris, 1848: A Neglected Chapter*, (Science & Society 3, no. 3 (1939): 323-55, accessed November 21, 2020, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40399257>

<sup>11</sup> History.com Editors, *French Revolution: Timeline, Cause, & Summary*, (History.com, November 9, 2009), accessed November 30, 2020, <https://www.history.com/topics/france/french-revolution#:~:text=The%20upheaval%20was%20caused%20by,did%20his%20wife%20Marie%20Antoinette.>

<sup>12</sup> Marx/Engels, 14

nature of history. The struggle between proletariat and bourgeois was one of what he perceived as material and economic prosperity disparities.

Although Marx was a Young Hegelian, he claimed to have “turned Hegel on his head”. Borrowing from his idea on the dialectic, or “discussion and reasoning by dialogue as a method of intellectual investigation” (Merriam Webster, 2020)<sup>13</sup>, Marx asserted not that logic was at the center of societal dissension but rather that material was. Although Marx borrowed from Hegel in that history was based upon the dialectics of society, his view differed in that the conflicts were not between reason but that “the conflicts are the plain, sometimes violent conflicts of opposing economic groups, of different classes, and the conflict is created by any economic group exploiting or oppressing another economic group” (Goodrich, 2020, 1)<sup>14</sup>. We see this idea play out throughout his writings. Marx’s emphasis on the conflict between an oppressed group and the oppressor continually stood at the forefront of how Marx viewed history. If we are to change the world, Marx maintains that we do so by the equality of materialism.

In the *Communist Manifesto*, the bourgeoisie were discussed as being the oppressors and the proletariat being those of the oppressed. The bourgeoisie held control over the proletariat as a result of modes of production and exchange for such work. France, at the time of the *Communist Manifesto*, had been under a feudalist society where the elite, or oppressor group, did not have to work for just for their next meal as did the proletariat<sup>15</sup>. In contrast, the oppressed, or the proletariats, were working to produce both for themselves and for the bourgeoisie. This led, Marx observed, to a surplus of goods. Instead of this surplus being used to create equal material

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<sup>13</sup> Merriam Webster’s Dictionary, s.v. “dialectic”, accessed November 27, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dialectic>

<sup>14</sup> Barbara Goodrich, PhD., *Hegel and Marx on Dialectic*, (University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado, 2020, 1), accessed November 27, 2020, <https://www.ucdenver.edu/faculty-staff/bgoodric/Pages/Hegel-and-Marx-on-Dialectic.aspx>

<sup>15</sup> CrashCourse, 2:00

well-being among the classes, Marx wrote that it resulted in exploitation of those being oppressed. Marx taught and advocated for what is called the “labor theory of value” where the actual value of an item is based on the labor that it took to create it (Frame, 2015, 283)<sup>16</sup>. It is important to note, though, that Marx did not believe that this issue of oppressed vs oppressor was one of a morally-based. Rather, Marx believed that he had “discovered scientific laws governing history. To him, indeed, there is no objective right or wrong. There is only what is right for the advancement of one’s class. So the ethics of one class will be opposite to the ethics of the rival class” (Frame, 2015, 283).

Marx spends paragraph after paragraph in the beginning of the *Communist Manifesto* pressing all of which he claimed were actions of the oppressor over that of the oppressed. The exploitation that Marx deemed the proletariat faced was due to them being in a class that could only profit from their labor and not the material that was used for production; a class which then led to oppression from bourgeoisie, or capitalist groups, that owned both the material and production. History is not a study of the conflicts in war or thought, Marx asserts, but in materialism as it relates to the forces and relations of labor. As a result of this constant dialectically material oppressor-oppressed conflict we see throughout society, Marx proposes that something must be done to counter it in order to advance one’s class.

This proposition says that there must be a new social order; a social order, according to Marx, that “does away with these evils altogether” (Marx, 1848, 47)<sup>17</sup> In Marx’s view, these evils were the capitalist or oppressor groups. This new social order is again centered around the perceived material disparities that Marx and Engel observed in society. Their ideas on how to combat the oppressed-oppressor conflict they deemed as a component of the nature of history,

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<sup>16</sup> Frame, 283

<sup>17</sup> Marx/Engels, 47

was much to do with creating a utopian world where all was equal. This “critical-social utopia”<sup>18</sup> was one aimed at peace, equality, and abolishment of the oppressed-oppressor conflict. It was to be achieved through a revolution that overthrew the capitalists and ultimately resulted in a communist state. This revolution did not disapprove of the use of violence in order to overthrow the oppressor. Rather, as Marx writes, “the force in the hands of the old ruling class can suffice to maintain the old conditions. The class representing the new mode of production will amass the power necessary to overthrow the old regime. It must do this violence; and sooner or later it is bound to win” (Marx, 1844, xxvi)<sup>19</sup>. This revolution between the proletariat and bourgeoisie was to be a face-off, being bloody if necessary, leading to the establishment of a utopian paradise. Somehow, according to Marx, society would no longer be led by material prosperity once this utopian-type world is achieved and will eventually work together for the greater good of society as a whole (Frame, 2015, 285)<sup>20</sup>. The nature and conflicts of history were not as a result of all being evil or the logical dissonance of mankind, but rather, because of the need to overthrow and revolutionize the nature of history where society existed in oppressor-oppressed groups as a result of dialectic materialism.

With not just a slightly high emphasis on material and economic equity and prosperity, but an altogether philosophical basis, Marx clearly does not take an Orthodox Christian standpoint on the whats and hows of conflicts and their relation to the nature of history. Additionally, his proposed solution on how to overthrow such perceived disparities and conflicts does not in any way rule out violence. In fact, Marx and Engel deem it as necessary if those

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<sup>18</sup> Marx/Engels, 45

<sup>19</sup>Marx/Engels, Introduction xxvi

<sup>20</sup> Frame, 285

within the oppressed group decide it as such (Singh, 1989, 9)<sup>21</sup>. These, among other assertions mentioned on their view of the nature of history, go in direct opposition to how a Biblical worldview outlines the nature and purpose of history. With even just a brief look at how Marx's philosophy on the nature of history has played out in both the Bolshevik revolution and China, this alone should cause all Christians to utterly reject it. Even more, as Marx does not in any way claim to live under the objective truth of scripture and instead calls religion an opium to society (as if to dull the senses of those being "oppressed"), his philosophy should be refuted; for anything that is not built on the foundation of God's inerrant Word [the Bible], is no truth at all. Marx's idea on there being those that are oppressed and exploited by groups or individuals is not unique to him. The idea of justice and working on behalf of those that are oppressed are in fact discussed in the Bible, and it is there alone that we are to form our worldview in opposition to or in correction of both Marx and much of post-modern society deems as revolutions and solutions.

*Personal Analysis and Significance on Christianity and the Church*

As stated throughout this paper, it is my view that we are to reject Marx's philosophy on the nature of history as being both accurate and attaining solutions for the world's problems. I do not, though, disagree with Marx that there are cases of oppression and exploitation in our society. Where we differ is both in the why behind oppression and the solution for it. To begin, let us look at the why behind oppression, conflict, and exploitation exist throughout history and currently today. For this, I have developed a philosophical idea I call the great (in importance) two equalizers of mankind.

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<sup>21</sup> Rustam Singh, Status of Violence in Marx's Theory of Revolution, (Economic and Political Weekly 24, no. 4, 1989): PE9-E20. Accessed November 27, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4394305>

The first “equalizer”, from scripture, is that God made male and female in the image of God and the likeness of God (Gen 1:26-28 [ESV]). We are to be reflections of God in the way we live our lives. Through the dominion of creation, being fruitful and multiplying, and subduing and filling the earth, we [mankind] are made “little lower than the heavenly beings, crowned with glory and honor” (Psa 8:5-6 [ESV])<sup>22</sup>. Although we are all made in the likeness and image of God, and as a result of significant value and worth, we live this out imperfectly each day; which leads to the next “equalizer” of all mankind - sin nature. “Sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned -” (Rom 5:12 [ESV])<sup>23</sup>. Additionally, Romans 3:23 teaches that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.<sup>24</sup> The two great equalizers, I believe, are extremely important in establishing when building a worldview on the nature of history and the conflicts, oppression, and exploitation Marx teaches are in society. They are important in both understanding and belief first because scripture, which I believe is inerrant and our ultimate authority, teaches as such. Additionally, they are important in living out because we see how the negation of these fundamentals of our faith are played out throughout conflicts in history.

In practice, when an individual or group of people removes (internally and plays out in action) one of the equalizers from another individual or group of people, conflict and at times oppression arises. In theory, if those in leadership at the of the Bolshevik revolution had retained a belief and understanding that all are sinners and all have intrinsic worth and value because of their image bearer equalizer quality, murder and torture would have not been an action taken; for if we live out of the truth that all are made in the image of God and therefore have unique worth and value because of who [God] created them, the idea of oppression and exploitation would not

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<sup>22</sup> Psalm 8:5-6 (ESV)

<sup>23</sup> Romans 5:12 (ESV)

<sup>24</sup> Romans 3:23 (ESV)

be an action left to take. Although this is what would happen in theory, we know that such actions and evil are as a result of the other equalizer and truth that all have sinned are by nature children of wrath (Eph 2:3b [ESV])<sup>25</sup>.

I am not arguing for attempting to pursue a utopian world as a result of living out of the truth of the two great equalizers; for one is impossible as a result of that very sin nature that exists in all of us. Instead, I am urging all Christians to retain this belief in light of what Marx teaches on who is evil (the oppressor) and good (oppressed). Do oppressed-oppressor conflicts exist in society? Absolutely, but we [Christians] should never exalt one of these groups as being less sinful than the other. Additionally, Christians do not combat such oppression or exploitation in the manner that Marx asserts. His view of the necessity of revolution of one class over the other serves as an example of how removing the equalizer of sin nature from a group or individual results in antithetical [to the Bible] teachings and results in society. As we have learned, Marx believed that the oppressed group needs to revolutionize and potentially use violence in order to overthrow those they deem as oppressing them. This results in an exaltation of one group over another; as if to say the sin that lives in me is less than that which lives in you.

I recognize that most people outside of the Christian belief would not recognize these two truths, but we see them from the authority of scripture as well as in practice when a group removes one in mind and heart. For Christians, we know that the unifying force between mankind is not equity and equality of material goods but God Himself. Jesus, who is God in the flesh and the very image of the invisible God (Col 1:15)<sup>26</sup> takes on one of the great equalizers (human flesh). Additionally, He [Jesus] became sin although He knew no sin (2 Cor 5:21)<sup>27</sup>, and unlike all of mankind, He conquered it. So, the unifying force between the two great equalizers

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<sup>25</sup> Ephesians 2:3 (ESV)

<sup>26</sup> Colossians 1:15 (ESV)

<sup>27</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV)

of mankind is not to find equity in material goods. First, one must recognize that those two equalizers exist in all mankind, and that the only way we truly treat others as image bearers and find unity in our sin nature is under the death and resurrection of Christ; the only way we love is because He first loved us (1 John 4:19)<sup>28</sup>. Moreover, the only way we overcome sin is through His [Jesus] conquering of it. Because if we aim to have unity through anything apart from Christ, it only results in either a false sense of unity or division among those who are not conformed to our subjective ideas. So, Christ took on both of what I coined the equalizers of mankind allowing us to look not to material well-being but to Him alone for unity among us.

In addition to the negation of these foundational truths from scripture, Marx believed the nature of history was as a result of a dialectical materialism. Materials, Marx deemed, were of utmost importance. This is another teaching which contradicts a Biblical worldview. The author of Hebrews 13:5 teaches believers to keep their lives free from love of money, and to be content with what they have<sup>29</sup>. In addition, we read in 1 Timothy 6:9-10 that “those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs<sup>30</sup>”. Historical materialism is in opposition to what all of scripture teaches is to be the pursuit of the Christian life. We are, according to scripture, to live for the glory of God; doing all things not in accordance with the world but with what God’s inerrant word teaches. We are not to live a life aiming at the storing up of treasures on this earth, but rather, as Jesus teaches, we are to lay up treasures in heaven alone<sup>31</sup>. If anything, Marx’s teachings on conflicts rising as a

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<sup>28</sup> 1 John 4:19 (ESV)

<sup>29</sup> Hebrews 13:5 (ESV)

<sup>30</sup> 1 Timothy 6:9-10 (ESV)

<sup>31</sup> Matthew 6:19-20 (ESV)

result of material pursuits should not come as a surprise to the believer in Christianity; for he who loves money will not be satisfied by it<sup>32</sup>. Additionally, since Marx does not live out of the objective truth of God's Word, the very subjective nature of who is good, evil, oppressed, and oppressor should be an immediate cause of rebuttal by Christians.

So, what is the significance of both Marx's philosophy on the nature of history and their consequences in action on the Church? Currently, I would argue there is a monumental significance due to the nature of Marx's theories evolving and finding a placeholder in of course society but more importantly the Church. To begin, let us remember our lives are to be characterized not to our conformity to the world around us, but by the transformational nature of the renewal of our minds in the word of God<sup>33</sup> and grace and mercy in Jesus Christ. Although an exhaustive list of the implications of Marx's philosophies within society and thereby some of the Church cannot be given in this paper, a current observation is useful. Marx, in some ways, predicted the evolution of the use of his view on the nature of history. Although the Communist Manifesto gave 10 steps for those of the oppressed group to take in order to overthrow the oppressor<sup>34</sup>, much was left to the discretion of whatever proletariat group there was at the time. We see the implications of this Marxist philosophy evolution first-hand in American society and a growing number of churches today.

Coined as things like Neo-Marxism, social justice, intersectionality, patriarchal hegemony, and feminism, one can see how the desire to revolutionize an oppressor group under the name of the oppressed is still ever-present. While I do not negate the real exploitation and oppression that still exists in some cases today, one can observe the pitfalls of some of these ideologies in both society and the Church. Since I am focused on the significance of

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<sup>32</sup> Ecclesiastes 5:10 (ESV)

<sup>33</sup> Romans 12:2 (ESV)

<sup>34</sup> Marx/Engels, 26

Marxist-influenced ideas on the Church, I will utilize examples related to such. For example, due much to feminist movements, there has been a push in some professing Christian circles to overthrow the idea that women cannot be Pastors and elders in churches. There are groups that push to revolutionize scripture's teachings on the roles of gender all in the name of oppressed vs oppressor ideologies. Additionally, we see a current push in many Christian-professing churches to address social justice movements. While the idea of bearing burdens and listening to the pains of our brothers and sisters is taught in much of scripture, the idea of overthrowing a perceived oppressor group so that the oppressed can take power in the name of social and material equity is not in line with scripture. Moreover, asserting that as a result of falling into one of the labeled oppressor groups should result in repenting is to assume a heart posture of those within your congregation or Christian community. Are we called to repent of our sins? Wholeheartedly! We are not, though, called to repent simply because a worldly label assumes to the nature of one's heart. For as scripture teaches, it is God alone that knows the hearts of all sons of man<sup>35</sup>.

More often less obvious than labels like proletariat and bourgeoisie, Marxist dialectical materialism and the need to overthrow oppressor groups based on material disparities is in fact, I believe, seeping into much of the Church. We are not to call all that seems to have hints of Marxist ideologies as being labeled as such. Rather, with much discernment and seeking God in all things, we [Christians] should look to the authority of scripture for how one should live in light of the influence of Marx's philosophy on the nature of history. Through both knowing and studying Marx's philosophies, the application of them in history, and how they are influencing the culture around us we can refute them in light of the Word of God; which is our ultimate authority over all things.

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<sup>35</sup> 1 Kings 8:39 (ESV)

*Conclusion*

As asserted above, Marx had no concept of the depth of the sin of mankind. Additionally, he did not believe that his philosophy on the nature of history was one of ethical conflicts or pursuits. Rather, he was purely driven by the economic prosperity of a class and historical materialism. To the unguarded ear, the idea of revolutionizing a society so that those being oppressed can stand on equal ground to those oppressing them is undoubtedly appealing. This is why we must not be swayed with the wind of culture or ideologies that are not driven by a Biblical worldview. As Christians, we are called to live lives aimed at bringing God glory in all we do. Paul taught that in weakness, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities that he was content. He was content in knowing that in his earthly weakness, he is ultimately strong in Christ<sup>36</sup>.

Marx taught that history was based upon class conflicts based on material disparities. In order to overthrow this, the suppressed class must overthrow the group exploiting them. If violence was to be taken, this was acceptable in order to work towards a false and secularized earthly paradise<sup>37</sup>. For Christians, we are to consider others as more than ourselves (Philippians 2:3) aiming to love because God first loved us. We do not live passively in the face of oppression and persecution, but we do not live according to the world's standards of revolution and overthrow those we deem as having more material well-being than ourselves. Rather, our lives are to be categorized by the new life we now have in Christ<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>36</sup> 2 Corinthians 2:10 (ESV)

<sup>37</sup> Rod Dreher, *Live Not By Lies A Manual For Christian Dissidents*, (Sentinel, New York City, NY, 2020, 25)

<sup>38</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)

Just through a study of how Marx's philosophies have resulted in millions of deaths and persecution, one would refuse to live by their teachings. Even more, rejection should be altogether accepted from a Biblical worldview. Ultimately, Marx's philosophies were not aimed at living out of the truth that we, as humans, are all equal both in our being made in the image of God and sinners separated from God apart from Christ's death and resurrection. For this, among many other reasons, Marx's philosophy on the nature of history is one followers of Jesus Christ cannot accept into their worldview and philosophy. To accept his utopian-view of an earthly paradise is to adopt a pseudo-religion antithetical to the authority and inerrancy of scripture.

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