

The Non-Christian Nature of Marxism

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Introduction

Marxism is one of the most impactful philosophies in the history of mankind. It refers to the political and economic theories formulated by Karl Marx, a German philosopher who lived from 1818 to 1883. Marx's most well-known works include the *Communist Manifesto* (1848) and *Das Kapital* (1859). Marxism initially consisted of the three related ideas of a philosophical anthropology, a theory of history, and a radical economic and political program.¹ More specifically, Marx claimed that capitalism is just one stage in the historical progression from inferior economic systems to superior ones. Marx held that every society throughout history has been divided into different social classes which drive conflict. Within the capitalist framework, Marx claimed that society consisted of two classes: the bourgeoisie, or the business class who control the means of production, and the proletariat, or the workers whose labor produces valuable economic goods. In Marx's view, the bourgeoisie profit at the expense of the proletariat, who they exploit by means of low wages and poor working conditions. As the political and economic inequalities between the upper and working classes continue to grow, Marx predicted that the proletariat would increasingly become alienated from capitalism. This would, in turn, inevitably lead to the proletariat forcefully overthrowing the bourgeoisie and implementing a new, classless, egalitarian society under a system known as communism. In Marx's estimation, communism would represent the peak of economic and social evolution, and its utopian scheme would eventually render the state unnecessary.² The fundamental tenets of the communist political program warrant further examination.

Key Marxist Principles

In the second chapter of *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx details ten policies that advanced, communist countries should implement. However, the first three policies are the most noteworthy and relevant in demonstrating the non-Christian nature of Marxism. They are the "abolition of property in land and application of all rents of land to public purposes; a heavy progressive or graduated income tax, and abolition of all rights of inheritance."³

Christianity and Marxism

Despite the radical nature of most of these policies, some insist that Marxism is indeed Christian. As Reverend William Barber II stated at a Democratic National Committee meeting this past summer, "If someone calls it socialism, then we must compel them to acknowledge that the Bible must then promote socialism because Jesus offered free healthcare to everyone and he

¹ Henri Chamber, "Marxism." *Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Marxism>

² "Marxism." *Investopedia*. <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/m/marxism.asp>

³ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. *The Communist Manifesto*. (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1848), p. 26-27.

never charged a leper a co-pay.”⁴ The author continues: “The Bible says that a nation will be judged by how it treats the poor, and the sick, and women, and the immigrant. The Bible says that God makes it rain on the just and the unjust alike. If you want to call caring for folk ‘socialism,’ then the Constitution is a socialist document – because it calls us to promote the general welfare and to establish justice.”⁵ Additionally, Richard Salsman, a *Forbes* contributor, who himself holds a negative view of Christian values and deems sacrifice as a vice, believes that Jesus held to Marxist principles.⁶ However, the radical tenets of communism stand in stark contrast to Biblical principles. A closer examination reveals that the abolition of private property, a heavy progressive income tax, and the abolition of all rights of inheritance heavily contradict Biblical principles. Also, Jesus did not advocate Marxist principles, and 20th century communist regimes that were inspired by Marx slaughtered tens of millions of people. Furthermore, despite its anti-religious bias, Marxism has the structure and core beliefs of a religion, only that it puts its faith in humanity and the historical process rather than God. All of these facts overwhelmingly prove that communism is a wholly immoral political philosophy that stands fundamentally opposed to Biblical principles.

Property Rights

Private property rights are ordained by God Himself. Private property was granted to mankind at creation as a mechanism for fulfilling their calling to fill the earth and subdue it. Dr. Walter C. Kaiser notes the following: “It was at creation that God the Creator committed the world and its resources to humanity (Gen. 1:28-29). It was because the man and the woman were made in the image of God that they were commanded to subdue the created order and to exercise dominion over the whole of it. As a result, God granted dominion to this first human pair under his law, but he did not grant his sovereignty to them, for God alone is Lord and the only sovereign over all.” While the term “private property” is never explicitly mentioned in Scripture, the concept is inferred throughout.⁷

Two of the Ten Commandments assume this right. Exodus 20:15 states, “You shall not steal.” Pertaining to this verse, Kaiser writes, “with this command, not only was the principle of individual ownership recognized, but it also thereby regarded as criminal all attempts to take that property from a person in a fraudulent way and to then regard it as one’s own.”⁸ Also,

⁴ Ralph Reed, “Ralph Reed rejects claim Jesus was a socialist; Bible is not ‘a religious Communist Manifesto.’” *Christian Post*. August 27, 2019. <https://www.christianpost.com/news/ralph-reed-rejects-claim-that-jesus-was-a-socialist-bible-is-not-a-religious-communist-manifesto.html>

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Bill Flax, “Do Marxism and Christianity have anything in common?” *Forbes*. May 12, 2011. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/billflax/2011/05/12/do-marxism-and-christianity-have-anything-in-common/?sh=41d322da6877>

⁷ Jay W. Richard, “The Biblical Roots of Private Property.” *Institute for Faith, Work, & Economics*. May 23, 2013. <https://tifwe.org/the-biblical-roots-of-private-property/>

⁸ Ibid.

Deuteronomy 5:21 prohibits covetousness by commanding, “You shall not set your desire on your neighbor’s house or land...or anything that belongs to your neighbor.” Also, the 23rd chapter of Genesis is dedicated to detailing Abraham’s purchase of a plot of land for his wife Sarah. This passage indicates that economic and legal standards for the buying and selling of private property were already in effect in 2000 B.C. Additionally, humans can be rewarded for their work, which would constitute private property in the form of compensation. Kaiser references 1 Corinthians 9:9-11 as support for humans being “entitled to appropriate rewards for their labors.” Accordingly, withholding wages is condemned by verses such as Leviticus 19:13. Furthermore, property can be acquired by means of “industriousness, wisdom, and the development of insight,” as articulated in Proverbs 10:4, 13:4, and 14:23; Proverbs 3:16; and Proverbs 14:15, respectively. Finally, the modern concept of private property rights is rooted in thousands of years of traditions, laws, and customs, as refined by Christian theology. Kaiser notes that “private property is both a gift and a certain type of power God has entrusted to humanity as stewards. It was God’s intention that mortals should be equipped with this gift and power and that under God they should exercise dominion over the earth.”⁹

Income Taxes

Besides the elimination of private property rights, Marx’s main economic priority was the implementation of a substantial progressive income tax. Such a tax system entails that the tax rate substantially increases for upper income individuals. In fact, American socialists such as Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez favor raising the top marginal tax rate to 70 percent. However, as the Tax Foundation has eloquently explained, America’s income tax system is already substantially progressive in nature.

In 2016, the bottom 50% of taxpayers, which includes those with adjusted gross incomes (AGI) below \$40,078, earned 11.6 % of the nation’s total AGI, yet paid only 3% of the nation’s income taxes that year. By contrast, the top 1% of all taxpayers, which included people with AGI at or above \$480,804, earned 19.7% of the nation’s AGI in 2016, yet paid 37.3% of the nation’s federal income taxes that year. Accordingly, the top 1% of taxpayers alone provided more revenue than the bottom 90% of taxpayers combined, who contributed 30.5% of all income taxes. The wide discrepancy in the amount of income taxes paid is a direct result of the higher income tax rates levied on upper-income individuals. The bottom 50% of taxpayers have an average of a 3.7% federal income tax rate, the top 50% to 25% have a rate of 7.8%, the top 25% to 10% have a rate of 10.7%, the top 10% to 5% have a rate of 14%, the top 5% to 1% have a rate of 19.2%, and the top 1% of income earners pay a rate of 26.9%. This latter rate is approximately seven times the rate which is paid by the bottom 50% of income earners.¹⁰

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Robert Bellafiore, “America already has a Progressive Tax System.” *Tax Foundation*. January 11, 2019. <https://taxfoundation.org/america-progressive-tax-system/>

The U.S. tax system remains disproportionately burdensome to the rich even after other, more regressive forms of taxation, such as payroll and excise taxes, are factored in. The lowest quintile (bottom 20%) held 4% of the total U.S. share of pre-tax income, yet paid less than 0.5% of the total amount of U.S. federal taxes. Additionally, the second quintile held 9% of pre-tax income and paid 4% of federal taxes, the middle quintile held 14% of income and paid 9% of taxes, the fourth quintile held 20% of income and paid 17% of taxes, the 81st to 99th quintile held 38% of income and paid 43% of taxes, and the top 1% held 17% of pre-tax income yet paid 26% of all U.S. federal taxes.¹¹

The American tax system is disproportionately burdensome towards the rich. Such a stark imbalance in tax rates contradict Biblical ideas of fairness. Romans 2:11 notes, “For God shows no partiality.” Proverbs 16:11 states, “a just balance and scales are the Lord’s; all the weights in the bag are his work.” In Exodus 23:6, God commands, “You shall not pervert the justice due to your poor in his lawsuit.” Job 8:3 ponders the following: “Does God pervert justice? Or does the Almighty pervert the right?” Finally, Psalm 106:3 proclaims, “Blessed are they who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times!”¹²

Inheritance

While Marx explicitly called for the abolition of all rights of inheritance, the Bible undoubtedly endorses this right. Proverbs 13:22 observes that “a good man leaves an inheritance to his children’s children, but the sinner’s wealth is laid up for the righteous.” Also, Proverbs 20:21 notes that “an inheritance gained hastily in the beginning will not be blessed in the end.” Additionally, Colossians 3:23-24 states, “Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.” Furthermore, Acts 20:32 says, “and now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.” Finally, Ephesians 1:11-14 proclaims, “In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.”¹³

Jesus and Socialism

Many people on the political left dare to claim that Jesus Himself was a socialist. However, as Lawrence W. Reed notes, there are many reasons for why this is not the case. First, Jesus never endorsed the government ownership of major industries, central planning of the economy, or

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² “97 Bible verses about Fairness.” *Open Bible*. <https://www.openbible.info/topics/fairness>

¹³ “100 Bible verses about Inheritance.” *Open Bible*. <https://www.openbible.info/topics/inheritance>

forced redistribution of income. Reed notes that Jesus never endorsed a government bureaucracy that would allocate resources, pick winners and losers in the economy, tell entrepreneurs how to run their own businesses, compel workers to join unions, impose minimum wage and maximum price requirements, or even raise taxes. Second, while Jesus did state that the people of His time should “render unto Caesar that which is Caesar’s and to God that which is God’s,” this statement was made in response to the Pharisees attempting to trick Jesus into endorsing tax evasion. Ironically, one of the charges brought against Jesus which led to His crucifixion was tax evasion. Third, Jesus commanded believers to love, pray, be kind, serve, forgive, be honest, to worship God, to grow in character and spirit, and to help the poor. However, these commands were designated for believers, and they were voluntary, not mandated by a centralized bureaucracy. In fact, Jesus undermines the notion that government can eliminate poverty in Matthew 26:11 and Mark 14:7 when he states, “the poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want.” Fourth, in Luke 12:13-15, Jesus is approached with a request to redistribute income: “Master, speak to my brother that he divideth the inheritance with me.” Jesus replied, “Man, who made me a judge or divider over you?” Jesus then proceeded to rebuke the man for his envy, a view that He would likely still adhere to if the man had sought to achieve the redistribution by means of the government. Fifth, and finally, Jesus implicitly criticized socialist principles with the Parable of the Talents and the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard.¹⁴

In the Parable of the Talents, Jesus tells about a man who gives a portion of his wealth in the form of coins to three servants of his. When the man returns, he finds that the first servant safeguarded his share by burying it, the second managed to multiply his share by putting it to work, and the third invested his and reaped the greatest benefit of the three. The wealth-generating man is deemed to be the hero of this parable, while the first servant was excoriated to the point of having his share given to the third servant. This parable illustrates the vital importance of investing wealth, a key component of the capitalist economy. In Jesus’s Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard, capitalist virtues are yet again affirmed. When some workers complained of differences in the rate of pay from other workers, the employer defends his right to engage in voluntary contracts with his employees. By means of this parable, Jesus not only defended private property, but the core capitalist principle of the law of supply and demand as well.¹⁵

Socialist principles are implicitly criticized elsewhere in the New Testament. The apostle Paul states the following in 2 Corinthians 9:7: “Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” This verse indicates that government-mandated redistribution of income cannot be justified on Biblical grounds. Additionally, 2 Thessalonians 3:10 notes: “For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.” Since the welfare state often incentivizes dependency and discourages innovation, government-sponsored

¹⁴ Lawrence W. Reed, “Was Jesus a Socialist.” *Foundation for Economic Education*. January 5, 2020. <https://fee.org/articles/no-jesus-wasnt-a-socialist/>

¹⁵ Ibid.

social welfare programs are in violation of the principles espoused by this verse. Finally, Reed notes that the Good Samaritan is held in high esteem because he personally and voluntarily helped the stricken man on the side of the road rather than place this responsibility at the government's doorstep.¹⁶

Communist Oppression

Since the Bolshevik Revolution brought the communists to power in Russia in 1917, Marxist dictatorships have taken the lives of tens of millions of people throughout the globe. In Russia alone, no less than 20 million Soviet citizens were killed either from direct regime terror or by means of its disastrous economic policies. This figure does not include the millions who perished in the wars, famines, and epidemics that plagued the vast Soviet landscape as a result of Bolshevik policies. This loss of life came in the following forms: 200,000 killed during the Red Terror of 1918-1922, 11 million perished from famine and dekulakization, 700,000 executed during the Great Terror of 1937-1938, 400,000 more executed between 1929 and 1953, 1.6 million perished during forced population transfers, and 2.7 million died in the Gulag, special settlements, and labor colonies. Additionally, nearly one million Gulag prisoners released during World War II into Red Army penal battalions faced near certain death, partisans and civilians were killed in the postwar revolts against Soviet rule in the Baltics and Ukraine, and dying Gulag prisoners were released before they perished so their deaths would not be counted in official statistics. In addition to the tens of millions of deaths caused by the Soviet regime alone, other communist regimes in Eastern Europe, China, Cuba, North Korea, Cambodia, and Vietnam are collectively responsible for the deaths of tens of millions of other people. The total number of people who perished from communist terror in the 20th century is approximately 100 million.¹⁷ The widespread genocide committed by Marxist regimes stands fundamentally opposed to Biblical teachings. Genesis 1:27 states, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." Exodus 20:13 explicitly commands, "You shall not murder." Leviticus 24:17-18 states, "Whoever takes a human life shall surely be put to death." Similarly, Genesis 9:6 notes that "whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image." Finally, Exodus 21:12 states, "Whoever strikes a man so that he dies shall be put to death."¹⁸ These passages clearly prove that God has created humans in His divine image, He greatly cherishes them, and detests the killing of innocent people to the point that the death penalty is commanded for murderers. Not only can Marxism not be Christian, but the widespread death and destruction that Marxist regimes have unleashed provokes the wrath of God.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ David Satter, "100 years of Communism – and 100 million dead." *Wall Street Journal*. November 6, 2017. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/100-years-of-communism-and-100-million-dead-1510011810>

¹⁸ "94 Bible verses about value of Life." *Open Bible*. https://www.openbible.info/topics/value_of_life

Marxism and Religion

While some argue that Marxism is Christian in nature, the Bible clearly does not approve of Marxist principles. Friedrich Engels, the co-author of *The Communist Manifesto*, was well aware of this. He stated, “If some few passages of the Bible may be favorable to communism, the general spirit of its doctrines, is, nevertheless, totally opposed to it.”¹⁹ Marxism is anti-religious in general and strongly anti-Christian in particular. When he eulogized at Marx’s funeral, Engels claimed that Marx’s greatest insight was that “men must first of all eat, drink, have shelter and clothing before they can pursue politics, science, art, religion and the like.”²⁰ Jesus, on the other hand, made the exact opposite claim in Matthew 6:31-33: “Therefore do not worry, saying ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ...But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.”²¹ Karl Marx was also firm in his anti-religious viewpoints. In 1844, he remarked in “A Criticism of the Hegelian Philosophy of Right” that “the first requisite of the happiness of the people is the abolition of religion.”²² Marx also famously denigrated religion as the opiate of the masses.

Despite its staunch opposition to traditional Christian morality and theology, as well as religion in general, Marxism has a quasi-religious aspect to itself. While Christianity is rooted in the belief in a Theistic God, with Jesus Christ being the redemptive agent of mankind, Marxism is rooted in the belief in an all-power central government, with the Marxist bureaucracy being the hope of the world.²³ The religious component of Marxism is further explained in R.C. Sproul’s *The Consequences of Ideas*. Marx’s eschatology is predicated on a predetermined view of history that anticipates the following chain of events: capitalism will move into a period of overproduction; wages will be reduced; the worker’s purchasing power will be reduced; a surplus of goods will be created; a war will be started to use up the surplus; postwar stress will end in the system’s self-destruction. Marx anticipated that the state would control the entire means of production, and then usher in a classless, stateless society of equals across the world. Marx viewed this communist state as a heaven on earth.²⁴ This rosy illustration was deified by Marx’s subsequent followers, even as his ideas continued to wreak havoc on people throughout the earth.

The religious element of Marxism violates core Biblical principles. First, the atheistic framework that Marxism operates in is specifically condemned by Scripture. Jude 1:22 claims, “And have mercy on those who doubt.” Psalm 14:1 states, “the fool says in his heart, “There is

¹⁹ “Is Marxism Compatible with the Christian faith?” *Got Questions*.
<https://www.gotquestions.org/Marxism-Christian.html>

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Bill Flax, “Do Marxism and Christianity have anything in common?” *Forbes*. May 12, 2011.
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/billflax/2011/05/12/do-marxism-and-christianity-have-anything-in-common/?sh=614765a36877>

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ R. C. Sproul. *The Consequences of Ideas* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2000), p. 146.

no God.” They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds, there is none who does good.” Ephesians 4:18-19 notes that “they are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.”²⁵ Despite the atheistic presuppositions of Marxism, this ideology idolizes an all-powerful state as God and glorifies the idea of a perfect, future society here on earth. These unrealistic aims are undoubtedly a form of idolatry, which Scripture clearly forbids. Jonah 2:8 says, “Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love.” Leviticus 19:4 proclaims, “Do not turn to idols or make for yourselves any gods of cast metal: I am the Lord your God.” In 1 Corinthians 10:14, God commands the following: “Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.”²⁶

Conclusion

Marxism is one of the most radical and destructive political philosophies in the history of mankind. Contrary to the insistence of some on the left, the fundamental tenets of Marxism directly contradict core teachings of Christianity. While Christianity affirms property rights, implicitly condemns unfair and disproportionate taxing schemes, and approves of the right of inheritance, Marxism holds to the opposite position on all of these issues. Additionally, there is no substantial evidence for, and plenty of Biblical evidence against, the claim that Jesus Himself was a socialist. Furthermore, the vast amounts of death and misery caused by Marxist dictatorships throughout the 20th century contradict the value of human life as upheld by Scripture. Finally, while Marxism operates in an atheistic and materialistic framework, it is a religion in the sense that it puts faith in the power of government and in humanity. Such misplaced faith violates Biblical commands against idolatry. For all of these reasons, it is clear that one can either be a Christian or a Marxist, but not committed to both of these contradicting worldviews at the same time. Therefore, Christians must be vigilant at all times so they can discern Marxist principles cloaked as Christianity from true Christian principles. Christians would be wise to listen to the words of Hebrews 4:12, which reads, “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”²⁷

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²⁷ “100 Bible verses about Discernment.” *Open Bible*.
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