

Are You ‘Woke’ or Awake?

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It seems as though “wokeness” ideology is taking over our society with everyone from churches, to schools, to giant corporations seeing who can be the most “woke.” Generally, “woke” ideas emphasize feelings over facts, pretend that individuals determine reality for themselves (i.e. your “truth”), put a priority on affirming feelings, ideas, or behaviors rather than willing someone’s actual good, and often deny even the ability to know objective truth. Being “woke” means you have become enlightened to the alleged systemic oppression of various groups and you vow to fight for “social justice” which usually means working for equal economic and social outcomes in a given context.

In reality, the current popular understanding of “social justice” that undergirds the “woke” movement is the opposite of the good all humans should pursue and is anything but just (i.e. giving someone their due). Historic Christianity, and even things like logic and science, are seen as oppressive, racist, bigoted, etc. Today’s “woke” culture is tearing our society apart and erecting barriers to people considering the true Gospel and the freedom it provides. While acknowledging the need to combat actual instances of racism and bigotry, the Church should summarily reject the major notions of “wokeness” ideology, critical race theory (CRT), “white guilt,” and “white fragility” for several reasons.

False Ideas and Fallacious Thinking

One reason to reject such thinking is that many of these ideas are built upon the false notion of standpoint epistemology that essentially rejects the ability of, or even need for, humans to know objective truth about reality. As one evangelical professor says, “CRT scholars ‘reject the prevailing orthodoxy that scholarship should be or could be “neutral” and “objective.”’ ... Human beings are perspectival knowers. We learn about, see, and treat things from tradition-bound perspectives. Our scholarship, then, never arises from a neutral, objective view from nowhere.” This, however, is a completely self-defeating proposition as it itself claims to be an objective truth about “scholarship” that somehow transcends his own “tradition-bound perspectives.” Sadly, this type of thinking saturates both the CRT movement and the Bible and philosophy departments of many evangelical institutions. Carried to its ultimate end, such thinking makes biblical exegesis subjective if not meaningless.

In addition, “woke” ideology is largely built upon the idea that every individual is either racist or anti-racist. Any reasons one provides to prove he is not a racist is used as evidence for his alleged racism. This dichotomy is in fact a false dilemma and the logic underpinning it is fallacious. Even further, these ideas violate the command of Jesus to love God and love others (ex. Love your enemies; Love keeps no record of wrongs; Love wills the good of others; etc.). They remove any personal responsibility and choice from individuals and place guilt on a

collective group of people simply because of their skin color. This is the epitome of collectivist and racist thinking. While individuals are certainly impacted and influenced by the societal structure which they have experienced, ultimately individuals are responsible for their own behavior.

Loving Our Neighbors Well

It's time to love our neighbors well by boldly standing for truth and goodness. The Apostle Paul says, "Do not participate in the useless deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them ... For this reason it says, 'Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.' So then, be careful how you walk, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of your time ..." (Eph. 5:11-16, NASB). Classical natural law thinking found in scholars such as Thomas Aquinas gives us an objective basis, common to all human beings and consistent with God's inerrant Word, from which we can fight the real evils of racism and bigotry while also shining light on the unfruitful ideas of the cult-like movement of "wokeness."

Edward Feser recognizes the irony, "The currency of the term 'social justice' originated in Thomistic natural law theory. ... It has to do with the just or right ordering of society as defined by strong families and cooperation between husband and wife in carrying out their respective roles for the sake of children and elders, solidarity and cooperation between economic classes and other social groups, and scrupulous attention to subsidiarity in the state's relationship to the 'little platoons' of society." Good philosophy (such as classical natural law theory) and good theology give us the needed tools to expose the "wokeness" ideology standing in the way of the Gospel.

To effectively engage with this "woke" culture, you will need a deeply integrated understanding of theology, philosophy, and apologetics—the bedrock of an accredited degree or certificate from Southern Evangelical Seminary and Bible College (SES). SES is committed to training believers to effectively proclaim the Gospel, engage bad ideas in the public square, and defend objective truth and goodness. As SES co-founder, Dr. Norman Geisler, said, "[Apologetics] is opening the door, clearing the rubble, and getting rid of the hurdles so that people can come to Christ."

We cannot love our neighbors well and lead them to the feet of Jesus if we sacrifice truth and goodness on the false altar of "wokeness" ideology. It's time to wake up.