

Saturday, October 21, 2023—Awake Thou That Sleepest: The Wokeism That Matters

Introduction

- Ephesians 5:14—being “awake” is the opposite of being asleep. The verb rendered “awake” is in the imperative mood i.e., Paul commanding the body of Christ to “awake.”
- According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), the English adjective “woke” means: “1. Awake; not (or no longer) asleep.” So being “woke” is the opposite of being asleep.
- As a believer, if you’re not “woke” you should be? Our apostle commands it!
- So, if we are going to be “awake” or “woke” we need to understand what it means. As with many things in our modern culture being “woke” or “wokeism” can mean different things to different people.
- In this message we will covering the following points:
 - A Short History Of The Word “Woke”
 - Untangling The Terminology Matrix
 - Refeudalization & Cancel Culture
 - Biblical Wokeism

A Short History Of The Word “Woke”

- According to the OED, “woke” was first used in the adjective sense noted above in an African American speech in 1891. A second sense is also noted that reads as follows:
 - “figurative and in figurative contexts. Originally: in a state of awareness or vigilance; spec. well-informed, up-to-date. Now chiefly: alert to racial or social discrimination and injustice. Frequently in stay woke (often used as an exhortation).

In later use perhaps popularized through its association with African American civil rights activism (in recent years particularly the Black Lives Matter movement), and by the lyrics of the 2008 song Master Teacher by American singer-songwriter Erykah Badu, in which the words I stay woke serve as a refrain.

In more recent use sometimes derogatory, esp. as a means of characterizing such alertness (or the political and social views stereotypically associated with it) as doctrinaire, self-righteous, or pernicious.

For an example of metaphorical use of woke up in a political context, see quot. 1943 at woke up adj.”

- According to a July 19, 2023, article written by Domenico Montanaro for [NPR](#) the term “woke” originated within “Black culture,” in order to convey the idea of “being politically conscious and aware.” The word was used in protest songs dating back to the early 20th century. A 1938 song by Huddie Ledbetter titled “Scottsboro Boys” is cited as a case in point. In this song about the alleged rape of two white girls by nine black boys, Ledbetter can be heard singing, “So I advise everybody, be a little careful when they go along through Alabama - stay woke, keep their eyes open.” So, according to Elaine Richardson is a professor of literacy studies at the Ohio State University, the term, “comes out of the experience of Black people of knowing that you have to be conscious of the politics of race, class, gender, systemic racism, ways that society is stratified and not equal.” ([Montanaro](#))
- Google extends the meaning of “woke” to include LGBT rights with the following definition:
 - “Woke is an adjective derived from African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) meaning "alert to racial prejudice and discrimination". Beginning in the 2010s, it came to encompass a broader awareness of social inequalities such as racial justice, sexism and LGBT rights.” ([Google](#))
- After providing definitions that are very similar to the ones outlined above Merrian-Webster.com provides the following definition under the heading, “disapproving:” “politically liberal or progressive (as in matters of racial and social justice) especially in a way that is considered unreasonable or extreme.” ([Merrian-Webster](#))
- In a recent video I made reviewing the book [*The Rise And Fall Of Dispensationalism: How The Evangelical Battle Over the End Times Shaped a Nation*](#), I used the word “woke” to describe the perspective from which I perceived the author to be writing. The author responded by sending me an email objecting to my use of the word “woke” on account of the fact he subscribes to traditional gender roles. All of that to say, the word “woke” currently possesses a myriad of meanings depending on who is speaking and how the word is being used. Generally, the word in modern parlance includes concepts of social and racial justice the entire LGBTQ+ agenda as well as extreme environmentalism.
- How did we get to the place where the issues commonly associated with the word “woke” were commonplace within our society?

Untangling The Terminology Matrix

- Wokeism in all its forms is based upon something called Critical Theory which is a more recent recast of Conflict Theory first enunciated by Karl Marx.
- Marxian Conflict Theory can be summarized as follows:
 - Society = Different classes competing for limited/scarc resources.
 - Haves vs Have Notes; Capitalists vs Workers; Bourgeoisie vs Proletariat.

- Have Notes/Workers—rise up and overthrow their oppressors = Dictatorship of the Proletariat
- Classless Society—all things held in common.
- Except for the Russian Revolution these Marxian Revolutions did not occur in the manner that Marx forecasted. This caused some Marxists intellectuals in Frankfurt, Germany (Frankfurt School) to rework Marx’s Conflict Theory into what is known today Critical Theory.
 - Critical Theory = reworked Conflict Theory of Marx.
 - Oppressors vs Oppressed
- Add to this the concept of “hegemony” as developed by the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci and you have the makings of an all too familiar paradigm in our day.
 - “. . . developed this concept to explain how domination and control not only through coercion, but also through the voluntary consent of both the oppressed and their oppressors to maintain the status quo. Gramsci redefined hegemony as “a complex interlocking of political, social, and cultural forces [i.e., education, law, politics, economics, and religion.]” (Baucham, xiii)
- According to Critical Theory, “hegemony” is what takes place when a dominant group imposes its ideology on the rest of society. The application of Critical Theory to society has become known as Critical Social Justice (CSJ).
 - CRT = Critical Theory applied to race.
- According to Voddie T. Baucham, author of *Fault Lines: The Social Justice Movement & Evangelism Loom Catastrophe* the CSJ mindset extends the concept of “hegemonic power” to all of the following:
 - “. . . white, male, heterosexual, cisgendered, able-bodied, native-born, and Christian.” (Baucham, 207)
- According to the CSJ textbook *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice* “Christianity is part of the oppressive hegemony.” (Baucham, 207)
 - “*Christian hegemony* refers to the dominance of Christian observances, hold days, and places of worship without regard for those of non-Christians. In the U.S., Christian hegemon refers to normalized Christian norms that are accepted as intrinsic to our national identity, even as a test of patriotism.” (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 256)
 - “*Christian privilege* refers to the social advantages held by Christians in the U.S. who experience social and cultural advantages relative to non-Christians. Having privilege with respect to normative Christianity means participation in “the assumptions underlying institutional rules and the collective consequences of following those rules.” Christian

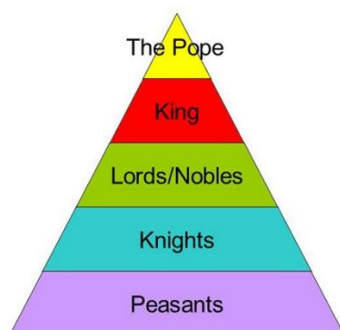
privilege is generally unacknowledged by those who hold it, because it is maintained through the pervasive but largely invisible culture of normative religious practices.” (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 256)

- Statements such as these are emblematic of the “classic Gramscian-Marxist view of hegemony.” Baucham warns that “the language here [Christian privilege] is exactly the same as the language used to describe white privilege.” (Baucham, 208)
 - “The significance of Christianity in U.S. life and the challenges it poses for minority religions is a social justice issue that requires the kind of historical knowledge and structural/cultural analysis we use to understand other forms of oppression that stand in the way of social justice.” (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 255)
- Translation, Christianity is oppressive and stands in the way of social justice. The same CSJ definitions, principals, standards, and approaches that apply to CRT to “deliver the oppressed from their oppressors,” apply to Christians as well.
 - “In other words, substitute “Christian” for “white” and “people of color” for “other religions,” then apply the exact same CSJ definitions, principles, standards, and approaches in order to deliver the oppressed from their oppressors. Houston, we have a problem.” (Baucham, 209)
- How long before Christians are asked to “check their privilege?” Believers need to beware of CSJ as Neil Shenvi writes in the following blog entry:
 - “If we give *carte blanche* to anyone waving the banner of antiracism or social justice, we may find ourselves committed to a whole host of ideas and causes whose legitimacy or wisdom we are no longer even permitted to question.” ([Shenvi](#))

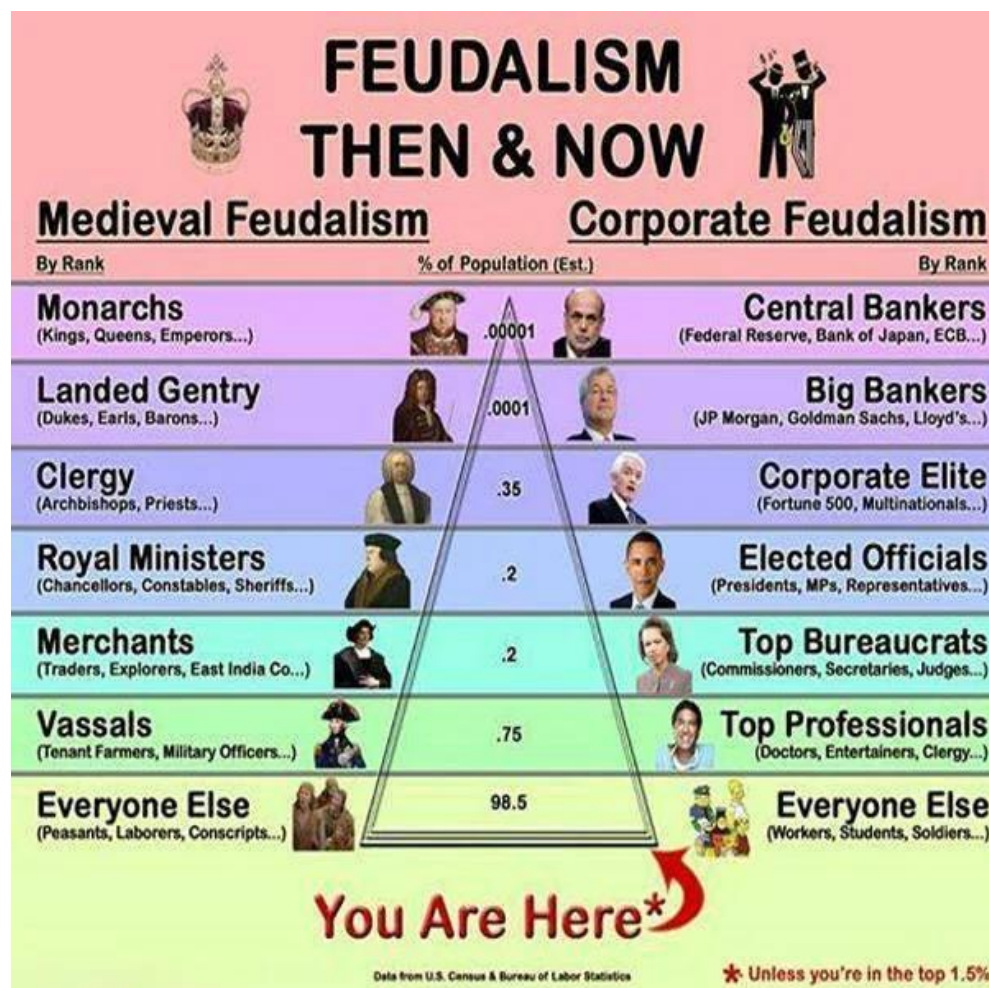
Refeudalization & Cancel Culture

- Refeudalization is a word used in political science to describe “the process of recovering the political mechanisms and relationships that used to define feudalism.” ([Wikipedia](#)) Consider the following feudal pyramid representing Medieval Europe.

Feudal Europe Power Pyramid



- In this system there was a *clerical class* that enforced the orthodoxy of the system. Violators were persecuted as heretics and excommunicated. Through this system the Catholic Church lorded over kings and the kingdom via the twin threat of: 1) excommunication, and 2) interdiction.
- Now consider the following pyramid comparing Medieval Feudalism with Modern Feudalism.



- Just as there was a *clerical class* in Medieval society to enforce the orthodoxy of system, today there is a *claricy class* that excommunicates through cancel culture and deplatforming.
- Unfortunately for Bible believers those presiding over the *claricy class* of our modern system have accepted CSJ in all its forms as the prevailing orthodoxy.

Biblical Wokeism

- Recall from the beginning of this message that “woke” means “awake,” according to the OED.
- The Bible never uses the word “woke” but it does use similar words.

- Wake
- Awake
- The King James Bible uses the word “wake” 4 times in 4 verses.
 - Jeremiah 51:39, 57—used in the context of God’s judgment of Babylon.
 - I Thessalonians 5:10—used in the context of being alive as opposed to dead.
 - Joel 3:9—used in the context of waking up the men of war to prepare for battle.
- Meanwhile the word “awake” used 42 times in 32 verses in the King James Bible. It is used in a variety of different contexts in the Old Testament.
- Paul uses the word three times when addressing the body of Christ of the current dispensation.
 - Romans 13:11-14—Paul instructs the body of Christ to “awake out of sleep” and “cast off the works of darkness” and “put on the armour of light.”
 - I Thessalonians 5:4-11—we are to be “woke” in the sense of not being asleep at the switch but rather watchful and sober knowing what is going on and the times in which we live.
 - I Corinthians 15:4—Paul commands the body of Christ to be “awake” (imperative commend) when it comes to righteous living.
 - Romans 16:19—how much time do we spend focusing on what is wrong versus what is right?
 - Ephesians 5:14—Paul’s commend to the body of Christ to “awake” is an illusion to similar calls issued to Israel in the prophets.
 - Isaiah 51:17; 52:1; 60:1
 - Ephesians 5:8-16—the body of Christ is not to partake in the darkness with the lost. Rather we are command to redeem the time because the days in which we live are evil.
- As believers we need to be “woke” in the sense being conscience and cognizant of the holy and righteous living we have been called to as members of the body of Christ.

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