

Marc Roby: We are continuing our break from studying theology to look at some current topics of great importance from a Christian perspective. In our last session we showed how the K-12 public education system in this country has deteriorated dramatically over the past 50 years and how much of that can be attributed to a concerted effort by zealous Marxists like Bill Ayers and Angela Davis. Their real goal is to destroy this country from within in order to make room for a new socialist nation that can become part of a world-wide communist utopia. Dr. Spencer, you said last time that you needed to say a bit more about the history of public education in this country. What more would you like to say?

Dr. Spencer: Well, first, I think it is important for Christians to realize that this war against Christian values is not a new problem. In Ephesians 6:11-12 the apostle Paul commands us to, "Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."¹

Our real enemy is Satan. He uses all kinds of things to attack us and Marxist ideology and its neo-Marxist offspring are just tools in his hands. You really see this when you look at the history of public education in this country.

Marc Roby: And I remember that Whittaker Chambers said that Marxism is the second oldest religion, it dates back to Satan's tempting Eve to sin in the Garden. But how do you see this when you look at the history of public education in America?

Dr. Spencer: Well, the neo-Marxist critical theory and its offspring are fairly new, but even prior to that public education in America has been decidedly anti-Christian for quite some time, at least in terms of the individuals most prominent in establishing and directing its course. I want to be clear that I am not speaking about the average individual teacher. Most teachers, even today, try to do the best job they can of educating our students. Unfortunately, it doesn't take many who are zealous to indoctrinate our children into their ideology for it to have a huge impact. Good teachers know that it isn't their job to provide the moral or religious education of their students. They freely leave that up to the parents and Sunday Schools.

Marc Roby: And rightly so we would say. But what about the zealots and the movers and the shakers so to speak?

Dr. Spencer: Well, we need to go all the way back to the utopian socialist Robert Owen. We discussed his experimental voluntary socialist community called New Harmony in Session 165. But even before he tried that experiment, he had publicly presented his views on education. He

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wrote a collection of essays called *A New View of Society*,² and then printed them and gave them out. He had a completely materialist view of man. He saw employees as nothing more than sophisticated machines that could be programmed to perform better.

Marc Roby: Which sounds very much like Karl Marx and all the communist leaders who have followed him.

Dr. Spencer: It does. They understand that communism cannot work with men the way they are. In speaking to a group of textile mill owners in the early 1800's Owen asked them, "If then due care to the state of your inanimate machines can produce you such beneficial results, what may not be expected, if you devoted equal attention to your far more wonderfully constructed, your animate machines?"³

Marc Roby: Wow. I thought maybe you were exaggerating a bit when you said he thought people were just complex machines, but that is what he actually said.

Dr. Spencer: Now to be fair, he was concerned with making changes that would make their work safer and their lives better, but of course the changes would also make them better workers and the mills more profitable.

The real problem though, and my only point right now, is that he had a completely materialistic view of human nature. He ignored the soul and he ignored sin. Our astute listeners, with better memories than I have, may recall that when his New Harmony experiment failed, he attributed the failure to the people. In his view, they simply were not trained to have the proper mindset for a collectivist or communal living arrangement.

Marc Roby: Yes, I do remember that. I also recall that his son had a more realistic appraisal of why the experiment failed.

Dr. Spencer: He did, you're quite right. And his son, Robert Dale Owen, was also influential in the early development of public education. According to Wikipedia, he "secured inclusion of an article in the Indiana Constitution of 1851 that provided tax-supported funding for a uniform system of free public schools, and established the position of Indiana Superintendent of Public Instruction."⁴

Marc Roby: That's very interesting.

Dr. Spencer: Even more interesting is a man named Orestes Brownson. He was an associate of Robert Dale Owen, and later converted to Roman Catholicism and renounced his involvement in

² Robert Owen, *A New View of Society: Essays on the Principle of the Formation of the Human Character, and the Application of the Principle to Practice*, Printed by Richard and Arthur Taylor, 1814, Available at https://www.google.com/books/edition/A_new_view_of_society_Or_Essays_on_the_p/mptzHV5J5w0C?hl=en&gbpv=0

³ Ibid, pg. xi

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Dale_Owen, accessed on 9/23/20

socialist utopian ideas.⁵ He had worked on public schools with Frances Wright, who was an early feminist and utopian socialist who had worked with Robert Dale Owen at New Harmony.⁶

In a speech he gave in 1853 he spoke about his involvement in setting up public schools and said, “The great object was to get rid of Christianity ... The plan was not to make open attacks on religion, ... but to establish a system of state, we said, *national* schools, from which all religion was to be excluded, ... and to which all parents were to be compelled by law to send their children. Our complete plan was to take the children from their parents at the age of twelve or eighteen months”⁷.

Marc Roby: That’s truly amazing, and they wanted to start with toddlers. This man Owen had a lot of influence.

Dr. Spencer: We could go into more, but that is enough for now. Education has been an important part of the socialist agenda from the very beginning. In the Communist Manifesto Marx and Engels gave what you could call a ten-point plan for socialism, and free education for all children in public schools is the tenth point.⁸

Now, on its face, that may sound like a perfectly good thing. But it is clear that in communist regimes education is synonymous with indoctrination. The purpose is to create cogs to fit into the socialist machine, not to create intelligent, well-informed citizens able to think for themselves, which is usually the goal thought of in democratic systems of government.

Marc Roby: Yes, that is a huge difference.

Dr. Spencer: It is a critically important difference, but our schools have been moving in the direction of indoctrination for a long time. Let’s now fast-forward to the 20th century and look at John Dewey, who is a man many of our listeners have probably heard of. He is sometimes called the father of progressive education and he helped the Frankfurt school, which we have spoken about as the originator of critical theory, get established in the Teachers College at Columbia University.⁹

Marc Roby: I’ve certainly heard of him. He was a secular humanist as I recall.

Dr. Spencer: Yes, he was. In fact, he was strongly opposed to Christianity. He was one of the signers of the original Humanist Manifesto I in 1933. The first affirmation of that Manifesto says that “Religious humanists regard the universe as self-existing and not created.”¹⁰ And the

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orestes_Brownson, accessed on 9/23/20

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frances_Wright, accessed on 9/23/20

⁷ Orestes Brownston, *An Oration on Liberal Studies, Delivered before the Philomathian Society, of Mount Saint Mary’s College*, June 29, 1853, pg. 19, available at <https://archive.org/details/orationonliberal00brow/page/n1/mode/2up>

⁸ Great Books, Vol. 50, pg. 429

⁹ Alex Norman, Frankfurt School Weaponized US Education Against Civilization, The Epoch Times, November 5, 2019, available at https://www.theepochtimes.com/frankfurt-school-weaponized-u-s-education-against-civilization_3137064.html

¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humanist_Manifesto_I, accessed on 9/23/20

fourteenth affirmation says that “humanists are firmly convinced that existing acquisitive and profit-motivated society has shown itself to be inadequate and that a radical change in methods, controls, and motives must be instituted. A socialized and cooperative economic order must be established to the end that the equitable distribution of the means of life be possible.”¹¹

Marc Roby: It is interesting that they refer to themselves as “Religious humanists”. And their socialist views are obvious from the fourteenth affirmation.

Dr. Spencer: That’s very true. And there was another humanist named Charles F. Potter, who also signed that declaration. He also founded the First Humanitarian Society of New York, and his advisory board included John Dewey and Albert Einstein.¹²

Marc Roby: Alright, that’s a fascinating connection. But why do you mention Potter?

Dr. Spencer: Because he wrote a book called *Humanism, a New Religion*. And in that book he wrote that “Education is thus a most powerful ally of Humanism, and every American public school is a school of Humanism. What can the theistic Sunday-schools, meeting for an hour once a week, and teaching only a fraction of the children, do to stem the tide of a five-day program of humanistic teaching?”¹³

Marc Roby: Well, he lays it right out there, doesn’t he? At least in his view, the public schools were in direct opposition to Christianity. Given his comment about Sunday Schools, he obviously thought the “five-day program of humanistic teaching” was in direct opposition to them.

Dr. Spencer: Yes, he was very clear about his purposes. And remember the speech given by Orestes Brownson almost a hundred years earlier, from which I quoted a few minutes ago? He said, “The great object was to get rid of Christianity ... The plan was not to make open attacks on religion, ... but to establish a system of state, we said, *national* schools, from which all religion was to be excluded”. They all understood that if you teach children from a purely materialistic worldview, you are going to go a long way toward creating materialists!

Now, as I noted, I don’t think that is the goal of most teachers, but even when it isn’t the goal, when the atheist’s materialistic view is assumed in science and history and all mention of God is either banned or relegated to the status of myth, there is a very strong influence exerted on young minds. And then when you throw in a few zealous teachers, the influence becomes even stronger.

Marc Roby: I think that point is abundantly clear.

Dr. Spencer: In 2013, Obama’s Education Secretary Arne Duncan wrote that “As Nelson Mandela says, ‘Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.’”

¹¹ Ibid

¹² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Francis_Potter, accessed on 9/23/20

¹³ Charles F. Potter & Clara C. Potter, *Humanism, a New Religion*, Simon and Schuster, 1930, pg. 128

Education is the key to eliminating gender inequality, to reducing poverty, to creating a sustainable planet, to preventing needless deaths and illness, and to fostering peace.”¹⁴

Marc Roby: Now, that statement Duncan quoted from Mandela could certainly be taken in a very positive way, education *can* be a powerful tool for changing the world by improving the lives of people.

Dr. Spencer: Yes, that is obviously true. But, unfortunately, Duncan then added a statement that made his social agenda for the schools perfectly clear. The first thing he mentions is gender inequality ...

Marc Roby: To which I would say, *vive la difference!*

Dr. Spencer: And I would agree with you. But, unfortunately, he wasn't referring to the God-given differences between men and women. He then mentions reducing poverty, which can obviously be a good thing in itself, but is that the second purpose of education? It is certainly an indirect *result* of a good education if people put it to use, but sadly, that is again obviously not what Duncan intended. He then goes on to mention creating a sustainable planet and so on. This is a social agenda. It is *not* basic education. All parents, especially Christian parents, need to be in charge of their children's education.

Marc Roby: You aren't saying everyone should home-school their children, are you?

Dr. Spencer: No. Home schooling can be very good, but private schools and a good system of public education are both good too. Not many parents are equipped to do a good job of teaching their children the intricacies of English grammar, algebra, basic physics, history and so on, especially not all the way through high school. But public schools should not be in the business of ideological indoctrination. And parents and society should not put up with having a substantial portion of the available time taken up with the so-called social justice causes and activism. That is not the proper role for public schools.

And the social justice topics being taught now are very destructive. They produce young people who are unhappy, angry, resentful, jealous and entitled.

Marc Roby: That's a strong statement.

Dr. Spencer: But I think it is accurate. If you are a child with black or brown skin in our public-school system you are being taught that you are oppressed, you are a victim. And implicitly you are being taught that it is hopeless for you to rise above your position as a victim except by revolution and identifying with your group. If you are white, you are being taught that you are irredeemably racist, independent of anything you have ever said or done. All that you and your family have are the result of white privilege.

¹⁴ Arne Duncan, *Education: The Most Powerful Weapon for Changing the World*, April 23, 2013, available at: <https://blog.usaid.gov/2013/04/education-the-most-powerful-weapon/>

In addition, you are taught that you are entitled to all sorts of things. You hear a lot these days about everyone having a “right” to a job, to health care, to a comfortable place to live, a good retirement and so on. But there is no such entitlement. Everyone should and, for the vast majority of cases, *does* have the *opportunity* to have these things in our country, that is why so many people want to come here.

Marc Roby: Well, certainly immigration reform is yet another hot topic at the moment.

Dr. Spencer: It is, and I don’t think we want to spend any time discussing that. But for those who think this country is so awful and that socialism is so good, I have one question. Why is it that countries built on a Marxist plan, like the old USSR, Communist China, North Korea and Cuba to name just four, have to restrict people to keep them *in*, while the United States is having discussions about how to keep people *out*? I don’t see a huge number of people wanting to move to China, Cuba or North Korea. They don’t have a problem with illegal immigration.

Marc Roby: That’s certainly a valid point.

Dr. Spencer: There is so much more that we could say about the history of Marxism and its massive failures with the concomitant loss of life and misery it has caused, but I think we have said enough to move on to look at some of the manifestations of Marxist and neo-Marxist ideas in our present day.

Angela Davis said that Herbert Marcuse always used to tell his students that “When truth cannot be realized within the established social order, it always appears to the latter as mere utopia.”¹⁵ But this statement wrongly presupposes that heaven on earth is achievable, and that Christians and other conservatives oppose these Marxist ideas simply because they would require a disruption to our existing social order. But that is absolute nonsense. We oppose these ideas because they are stupid and wicked. History has shown that they simply do not work and they produce mass suffering, that is why they are stupid. They ignore the obvious reality of human sin. And they are built on a materialist worldview that rejects God and makes man ultimate, which is why they are wicked. Christians cannot support these ideas.

Marc Roby: We don’t, of course, believe that our existing social order is perfect. There is a lot of room for improvement.

Dr. Spencer: That is obviously true. And when you listen to someone on the far left speak, they often speak about wanting things we can all agree with, like less violence, less poverty, less bigotry. The problem isn’t always with their stated goals, it is with the fact that their proposed solutions make things worse, not better, because they are built on a fundamentally flawed worldview that ignores God and ignores human sin. And as we have seen, true Marxists aren’t really concerned with incremental improvements in our nation. If we allow ourselves to be deceived by their publicly stated goals, rather than looking at their actions, we will pay a very

¹⁵ *Angela Davis on Protest, 1968, and Her Old Teacher, Herbert Marcuse*, Read from Marcuse's Graphic Biography by Nick Thorkelson, edited by Paul Buhle and Andrew T. Lamas, available at <https://lithub.com/angela-davis-on-protest-1968-and-her-old-teacher-herbert-marcuse/>

dear price. What we are seeing in many cities in our country these past few months is, essentially, mob rule. Mob rule can never bring about meaningful change, it can only bring about revolution. No less a sage than Abraham Lincoln spoke about this very fact.

Marc Roby: Now what did Lincoln have to say about this?

Dr. Spencer: Well, in January of 1838, a young Lincoln gave a speech in Springfield, Illinois.¹⁶ It was his first known public speech and the subject was some recent mob violence that had been going on. Lincoln spoke about the fact that our government is more conducive to the ends of civil and religious liberty than any other government in the history of the world. He also spoke about the fact that prior to his time, man's baser principles had been held in check by first, a common enemy ...

Marc Roby: Which, of course, was Great Britain. The Treaty of Paris, which ended the revolutionary war, was signed in 1783, only 55 years before this speech was given.

Dr. Spencer: That's right. There were still people alive when he gave this speech who could remember the revolution. And the second thing he said kept people's baser principles in check was, essentially, the unity of purpose in trying to make this grand experiment called the United States of America succeed. But he then said, in a way only Lincoln could, that these two checks on our baser instincts "were the pillars of the temple of liberty; and now, that they have crumbled away, that temple must fall, unless we ... supply their places with other pillars, hewn from the solid quarry of sober reason." And then, speaking about the passions involved in the revolution, he said that "Passion has helped us; but can do so no more. It will in future be our enemy. Reason, cold, calculating, unimpassioned reason, must furnish all the materials for our future support and defense."

Marc Roby: That is a wonderful statement, as one would expect from Lincoln.

Dr. Spencer: He had pondered, early in the speech, what enemy might destroy our country given our geography and other advantages. He said, "At what point then is the approach of danger to be expected? I answer, if it ever reach us, it must spring up amongst us. It cannot come from abroad. If destruction be our lot, we must ourselves be its author and finisher."

Marc Roby: That is certainly an important point. The greatest danger comes from within. In our previous session, you quoted Jesus, who in Mark 3:25 said that "If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand."

Dr. Spencer: That's right. And, as I noted, the main reason for Lincoln's speech was to address mob violence. Addressing that directly, he said that "by the operation of this mobocratic spirit ... the strongest bulwark of any Government, and particularly of those constituted like ours, may effectually be broken down and destroyed – I mean the attachment of the People."

¹⁶ Abraham Lincoln, *Address Before the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois*, January 27, 1838, available at: <http://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/lyceum.htm>

He explained that those who are prone to violent crimes will be emboldened by mob violence and those who are peace loving will soon lose their attachment for a government that is impotent to protect them. If that happens with too many people, the government will fall.

Marc Roby: Which is exactly what the Marxists want to have happen in this country.

Dr. Spencer: That is exactly right. And I think Lincoln hit the nail on the head. Our government must stop this violence and we all, as a people, must have reason – cold, calculating, unimpassioned reason as our guide. We, as Christians, should lead the way. Governed by the Bible. We know God’s purpose for us, which is to live for his glory. We know our place, which is that of dependent, sinful creatures in need of forgiveness. And we know our priorities, which are given to us by the Bible. If we use our reason in submission to these biblical truths, we can be a wonderful force for good in this country. If we are naïve and lazy and fail to forcefully oppose what is going on, we may find ourselves losing the liberties we enjoy today.

And so, in the upcoming sessions I want to address specific examples of how neo-Marxist ideologies are being used to tear this country apart and what our response, as Christians, should be.

Marc Roby: Very well, I look forward to beginning that conversation next week. And now, let me remind our listeners that they can email their questions and comments to info@whatdoesthewordsay.org. We will do our best to answer.