
PRIVILEGE, OPPRESSION, AND THE GOSPEL: A BIBLICAL RESPONSE TO INTERSECTIONALITY

Mike Moses*

INTRODUCTION

Intersectionality is a new but fast-growing ideology that is sweeping through the college campuses, social media feeds, and public spaces of America. Those who have never heard of intersectionality have likely been admonished to “check their privilege.” Terms like “systemic oppression,” “microaggression,” and “safe space” have entered the common vernacular. An American with an eye on current events will be familiar with movements like Black Lives Matter and the Women’s March. Though many Americans have never heard of intersectionality, most are familiar with the terminology it employs and the movements it has birthed.

Having begun as a subset of neo-Marxist identity politics, intersectionality moved beyond theory and has become for many a full-fledged worldview, with its own dogma, evangelists, prophets, and warriors. Because of its façade of compassion, many Christians are drawn into its orbit. But we must not be naïve to the presuppositions and agendas underlying the ideology of intersectionality. This paper will explain intersectionality, expose major discrepancies between its ideology and biblical truth, demonstrate how its fruits are damaging to its opponents and to its adherents, and present gospel ideology as the best alternative. The worldview of intersectionality, though borrowing inconsistently from Christian ideals, is incompatible with biblical ethics.

UNDERSTANDING INTERSECTIONALITY

Because of its novelty, intersectionality is often misunderstood. Before critiquing the intersectional worldview, we must first comprehend its definition, origins, and subsequent ideology.

Definition

Patricia Hill Collins, a primary originator of intersectional theory, explains it as “a way of understanding and analyzing the complexity in the world, in people, and in human experience.” She argues that “people’s lives and the organization of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social

* MIKE MOSES is assistant pastor of Harvest Bible Church in Westland, Michigan, and is pursuing a ThM degree at Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary.

division, be it race or gender or class, but by many axes that work together and influence each other.”¹ Kathrine Boyer defines intersectionality as “the *intersecting systems of privilege and oppression*.”² Individuals who find themselves in more than one “oppressed” category, such as a black woman or a disabled lower-class man, experience a “matrix” of oppression that makes their experience exponentially more challenging than those who find themselves in only one oppressed category.³ Joe Carter explains:

An intersectional activist might recognize that black men in America have suffered oppression. But the heterosexual Christian black man may be considered more “privileged” than a white homosexual Wiccan transgender woman (i.e., a white man). The thinking goes that while the black man may be a racial minority, the “trans woman” is affected by a “matrix of oppression”: discrimination because they’re a “woman” (even though they are a man); discrimination because they are a sexual minority; discrimination because they are a religious minority, and so on.⁴

Rather than being viewed as isolated categories, all forms of oppression are “interconnected and mutually reinforcing”⁵ in an “interlocking system of hierarchy and power.”⁶

Origins

Intersectional theory has its roots in Marxist and post-Marxist schools of thought, including Critical Race theory.⁷ It is a direct descendant of feminism, though it ad-

¹ Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge, *Intersectionality* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2016), 2.

² Kathrine A. Boyer, “Intersectionality 101: Understanding Your Privilege and Oppression,” *Odyssey*, July 18, 2016, <https://www.theodysseyonline.com/intersectionality-101-understanding-your-privilege-oppression> (emphasis hers). She goes on to explain, “Privilege is when someone doesn’t have to face an institutionalized form of oppression, and oppression is when they do have to face it.”

³ See, for example, Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 59: “Imagine a black woman [who may be] a single working mother . . . She experiences, potentially, not only multiple forms of oppression but ones unique to her and to others like her.”

⁴ Joe Carter, “What Christians Should Know About Intersectionality,” *The Gospel Coalition*, March 29, 2017, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/what-christians-should-know-about-intersectionality/>. A white Christian man could make two sinful choices—identify as a woman and convert to Islam—and immediately be seen as intersectionally oppressed: a transgender lesbian “religious minority”!

⁵ Christina Hoff Sommers, “The Threat to Free Speech,” *Commentary*, June 22, 2017, <https://www.commentarymagazine.com/american-society/christina-hoff-sommers-threat-free-speech/>.

⁶ Andrew Sullivan, “Is Intersectionality a Religion?” *New York magazine*, March 10, 2017, <http://nymag.com/intelligencer/2017/03/is-intersectionality-a-religion.html>.

⁷ This is evident in the writings of intersectional theory founders Kimberle Crenshaw and Patricia Hill Collins, and is also noted by Sullivan (“Is Intersectionality a Religion?”) and

vances beyond moderate versions of feminism.⁸ Despite earlier movements with similar emphases,⁹ it is nearly universally acknowledged that Kimberlé Crenshaw is the matriarch of intersectional theory. In 1989 she published a landmark paper, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics.”¹⁰ Crenshaw was the first to employ the “intersection” analogy to describe how black women are uniquely oppressed because they can be victims of both racism and sexism.¹¹ She cited three court cases¹² in which black women were discriminated against in a way that black men or white women would not have been.¹³ Crenshaw raised an important issue of justice in the legal field. However, within this groundbreaking paper

Hoff Sommers (“Threat to Free Speech”). Jordan Peterson, *12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos* (Toronto, ON: Random House Canada, 2018), 306, traces its influences through Marxist humanism, Horkheimer’s Frankfurt School, and Derrida’s postmodernism. Because of these influences, this paper will occasionally address the larger categories of neo-Marxist thought and Critical Race theory.

⁸ Leslie McCall, “The Complexity of Intersectionality,” *Signs* 30 (Spring 2005): 1771, notes that intersectionality has been called “the most important theoretical contribution that women’s studies, in conjunction with other fields, has made so far,” while feminist Christina Hoff Sommers is one of the most outspoken critics of intersectionality. Summer Jaeger, “Why Feminism Can’t Save You” (video), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6WkGwY0i6Fo>, posted from Sovereign Nations, 2017, places intersectionality within Third-wave feminism.

⁹ In the 1970s, the Combahee River Collective noted the simultaneous influences of race, class, gender, and sexuality; see “The Combahee River Collective Statement” (April 1977), Circuitous.org, <http://circuitous.org/scraps/combahee.html>. In the early 1980s, Angela Davis wrote about the unique challenges faced by black women; see Angela Davis, *Women, Race and Class* (New York: Random House, 1981).

¹⁰ Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics.” *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 140 (1989): 139–67.

¹¹ See *ibid.*, 149: “Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them. Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in the intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination.”

¹² *DeGraffenreid v General Motors*, *Moore v Hughes Helicopter*, and *Payne v Travenol* (*ibid.*, 141).

¹³ Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection,” 149: “Black women can experience discrimination in ways that are both similar to and different from those experienced by white women and Black men. Black women sometimes experience discrimination in ways similar to white women’s experiences; sometimes they share very similar experiences with Black men. Yet often they experience double-discrimination—the combined effects of practices which discriminate on the basis of race, and on the basis of sex. And sometimes, they experience discrimination as Black women—not the sum of race and sex discrimination, but as Black women,”

she introduced certain ideas which would lead intersectional theory far beyond legal justice for black women. She indicated that layers of oppression should apply as well to class, physical ability, and (notably for our purposes) sexual preference.¹⁴ In response to studies bemoaning the lack of black fathers in homes, she criticized “patriarchal assumptions.”¹⁵ From the very beginning, then, intersectional theory presumed the validity of various sexual preferences and rejected male leadership within families.

Ideology

Intersectionality begins by acknowledging in individuals a “set of characteristics that supposedly constitute personal identity.”¹⁶ Today, intersectionality’s categories of oppression include not only race and gender but also gender expression, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, physical and mental ability, religion (excluding Christianity),¹⁷ language, age, physical attractiveness, body size, occupation,¹⁸ education, and more. In each category, those who are in the minority and/or those who lack power are considered to be oppressed. The more categories of oppression an individual can claim, the more intersectionality is intended to advocate for them.

Anthony Esolen observes the selective, biased nature of this list:

Born-again Christians are not included in the intersection, or coal miners from Appalachia, or blue collar workers whose life-spans are contracting, or men who are ten times more likely to die at work than are their sisters, or Catholics committed to the moral law, or bakers who decline to help celebrate *Sodom resurgens*, or children whose lives have been maimed by divorce.¹⁹

Intersectionality has become a “philosophy of human identity.”²⁰ Advocate Vivian May describes it as idealistic, with “utopian goals of eradicating inequity, exploitation, and supremacy, both at the micropolitical level of everyday life and at the

¹⁴ Ibid., 151.

¹⁵ Ibid., 164. Crenshaw’s downplaying of the importance of fathers in the home is in spite of loads of evidence. Voddie Baucham, *What He Must Be: . . . If He Wants to Marry My Daughter* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 22, notes that fatherless American children are nearly four times more likely to live in poverty than those raised by two parents, and are far more likely to drop out of school, experience emotional and behavioral problems, and commit suicide.

¹⁶ Elizabeth Corey, “First Church of Intersectionality,” *First Things*, August 2017, <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2017/08/first-church-of-intersectionality>.

¹⁷ Boyer, “Intersectionality 101.”

¹⁸ Many intersectional activists attempt to remove the stigma of “sex work”; see Melinda Chateauvert, *Sex Workers Unite: A History of the Movement from Stonewall to SlutWalk* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2013).

¹⁹ Anthony Esolen, “The Church of Intersectionality Offers Nothing for Sinful Man,” *Crisis*, August 3, 2017, <https://www.crisismagazine.com/2017/church-intersectionality-offers-nothing-poor-sinful-man>.

²⁰ Denny Burk, “Two Ways in Which Intersectionality is at Odds with the Gospel,”

macropolitical level of social structures, material practices, and cultural norms.”²¹ By focusing entirely on group identities, intersectionality departs from “universal liberalism” which focused on “universal human rights which would then free individuals to follow their own paths.”²² For this reason, even many mainstream liberals see intersectional theory as extreme. According to David French, “it’s identity politics on steroids, where virtually every issue in American life can and must be filtered through the prisms of race, gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity.”²³ Rosaria Butterfield writes that intersectionality is “the belief that who you truly are is measured by how many victim-statuses you can claim, with human dignity only accruing through the intolerance of disagreement of any kind.”²⁴

Influence on Christians

Well-meaning Christians may be enticed by intersectionality’s framework because of our commitment to biblical ideals such as compassion, empathy, charity, and equity. For example, Joe Carter (editor at the influential evangelical website The Gospel Coalition) rejects certain aspects of intersectionality but endorses its “valuable contributions,” such as its elucidation of the “multiplier effect” of structural oppression. He even recommends reading biblical narratives, such as the story of Ruth, through the lens of intersectionality.²⁵ Jarvis Williams (The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary), while rejecting unbiblical views of gender, gives an unqualified endorsement of the intersectional framework: “Men would do well to listen to our marginalized evangelical sisters and sisters of color to learn the ways the intersection of race and gender subjects them to oppressive experiences in certain evangelical spaces.”²⁶ Nate

DennyBurk.com, July 19, 2017, <http://www.dennyburk.com/why-intersectionality-may-be-at-odds-with-the-gospel/>.

²¹ Vivian M. May, *Pursuing Intersectionality, Unsettling Dominant Imaginaries* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 5. Crenshaw, Cho, and McCall identified “three overlapping ‘sets of engagements’ in intersectionality studies: application of an intersectional framework; discursive debates about the scope of intersectionality as a theoretical paradigm; and political interventions that deploy an intersectional lens”; see Ange-Marie Hancock, *Intersectionality: An Intellectual History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 7.

²² Helen Pluckrose, “The Problem With Intersectional Feminism,” *Areo*, February 15, 2017, <https://areomagazine.com/2017/02/15/the-problem-with-intersectional-feminism/>.

²³ David French, “Intersectionality, the Dangerous Faith,” *National Review*, March 6, 2018, <https://www.nationalreview.com/2018/03/intersectionality-the-dangerous-faith/>.

²⁴ Rosaria Champagne Butterfield, “The Best Weapon Is an Open Door,” *Desiring God*, May 5, 2018, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-best-weapon-is-an-open-door>.

²⁵ Carter, “What Christians Should Know About Intersectionality.”

²⁶ Jarvis Williams, “Intersectionality and Reconciliation in Our Churches,” *The Witness*, February 16, 2017, <https://thewitnessbcc.com/intersectionality-and-reconciliation-in-our-churches/>. Williams continues: “Black, brown, and white evangelical men—all working to pursue reconciliation and justice in their respective denominations and churches—must remember we do not and cannot understand the marginalized trauma that our black, brown,

Collins, SBTS grad and founder of the Revoice conference, states that “the intersectional feminist goal of addressing unique forms of suffering that are caused by intersecting forms of oppression is necessary” for Christians.²⁷ From a non-evangelical angle, Nancy Ramsay (Brite Divinity School) proposes that “adopting an intersectional theoretical approach amenable to the values and commitments of our field will enhance our efforts as pastoral theologians seeking to analyze, engage, and resist oppression and privilege.”²⁸

Alastair Roberts notes a pattern in “sections of Christianity and even evangelicalism, where people are elevated, deferred to, shielded from criticism, or otherwise treated as morally superior in no small measure because they belong to some historically oppressed class.”²⁹ Philosopher Rene Girard surmised, “Since the Christian denominations have become only tardily aware of their failings in charity . . . they are particularly vulnerable to the ongoing blackmail of contemporary neo-paganism.”³⁰ Christians have at times committed terrible sins and been guilty of inexcusable prejudice. Can intersectionality show Christians a more compassionate way forward?

INTERSECTIONAL IDEOLOGY IS INCOMPATIBLE WITH BIBLICAL IDEOLOGY

At first glance, there may appear to be substantial common ground between Christianity and intersectional theory. Bible believers understand the pervasive nature of sin and its effects on society. Recipients of the grace of Jesus long to show mercy and oppose injustice. In the redeemed heart there ought to be no place for hatred or mistreatment of any kind. However, Christians must refuse to be drawn into intersec-

and white evangelical sisters often experience in white, male-dominated, Christian spaces.”

²⁷ Nate Collins, *All But Invisible: Exploring Identity Questions at the Intersection of Faith, Gender, and Sexuality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 237. Though claiming a conservative view of gender and sexuality, Collins states that followers of Jesus have possibly “been guilty of a baptized form of heteronormativity” (258) and claims that “a gospel-centered ethic calls Christians to subvert straight privilege” (262). He refers to “gender and sexual minorities” (69) and equates the phrase “going to church while gay” with the well-known phrase “driving while black” (269).

²⁸ Nancy Ramsay, “Intersectionality: A Model for Addressing the Complexity of Oppression and Privilege,” *Pastoral Psychology* 63, no.4 (August 2014): 453. From a broadly Reformed perspective, Jeff Liou (Fuller Theological Seminary) states that Critical Race Theory’s “insistence on race-consciousness is a major contribution to what would otherwise be Kuyperian abstract-ness”; see Jeff Liou, “Taking Up #blacklivesmatter: A Neo-Kuyperian Engagement with Critical Race Theory,” *Journal of Reformed Theology* 11 (2017): 99.

²⁹ Alastair Roberts, “No, Black Women Didn’t Save Evangelicalism,” *Alastair’s Adversaria*, December 14, 2017, <https://alastairadversaria.com/2017/12/14/no-black-women-didnt-save-evangelicalism/>.

³⁰ From Rene Girard, *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2001), quoted in Roberts, “No, Black Women Didn’t Save Evangelicalism.”

tionality's framework, because its overarching worldview diverges irreconcilably from the biblical Christian worldview.³¹

Intersectionality Wrongly Blends Categories of Oppression

Within intersectionality's list of oppressed groups, some categories are fixed and others are not. Nobody chooses the ethnicity or gender into which they are born. Nobody chooses to be born with a physical or mental disability. However, one can choose one's sexual behavior, or choose to defy one's God-given gender. Choosing to act in sexually deviant ways does not make one "oppressed," biblically speaking.³² Those who are born into a particular socio-economic class may have the prospect of moving into a different class. Religious belief is not fixed. We can improve our physical attractiveness, to an extent. We can learn new languages. We can choose or change our occupations. Treating these various categories and groupings as if they were all parallel is simply not a truthful way to view the world. Consider how the Bible addresses each category. Is this group oppressed, biblically speaking? If so, what should justice look like, biblically speaking?

Race, gender, and sexual preference are universally acknowledged as categories of oppression by intersectional theorists. Without question, black individuals have faced severe injustice in America's history. But intersectionality would have us see the harassment of transgender individuals or the teasing of an overeater or perceived "microaggressions" on a college campus as the same kind of oppression.³³ This moral

³¹ This was notably acknowledged by two evangelical groups in 2018. The Presbyterian Church in America's report on racial and ethnic reconciliation states: "We reject Marxism and Socialism, and all ideologies based on either one or both. . . . We reject 'intersectionality' not based solely on biblical norms. . . . We reject human identities that demand precedence over identity in Christ"; see "Racial and Ethnic Reconciliation Study Committee Report," June 13–15, 2018, <https://www.pcaac.org/racial-and-ethnic-reconciliation-study-committee-report/>. "The Statement on Social Justice and the Gospel" states: "We deny that the postmodern ideologies derived from intersectionality, radical feminism, and critical race theory are consistent with biblical teaching"; <https://statementonsocialjustice.com>, September 4, 2018.

Neil Shenvi and Pat Sawyer, "Critical Theory and Christianity," August 17, 2018, Free Thinking Ministries, <https://freethinkingministries.com/critical-theory-christianity/>, agree: "Opposition to racism and sexism does not require the acceptance of critical theory. We dare not 'baptize' secular thinking under the naive assumption that it will fit seamlessly into a Christian worldview. . . . More often than not, critical theory functions not just as a tool, but as a worldview. It offers us a comprehensive narrative for understanding all of reality, from our fundamental problem as human beings (oppression) to its fundamental solution (liberation). Thus, it will compete with Christianity as the governing, functional lens through which we see the world. Either Christianity will displace our commitment to critical theory, or critical theory will displace our commitment to Christianity. We can't have both."

³² E.g., Matt. 19:4; Rom. 1:26–27.

³³ Heather MacDonald: "During the wave of Black Lives Matter campus protests in the

equivalence is frankly insulting to those mistreated blacks who did not choose the skin that they were born with.³⁴ Women have often suffered abuse at the hands of sinful men, and Christians should unequivocally condemn that behavior. This does not mean that we should deny the complementary differences between the sexes (e.g., Eph. 5:22–33) or explain away the Scriptures that reserve certain leadership roles for men (e.g., 1 Tim. 2:12; 3:2).

A believer who is enticed by intersectionality must be aware that biblical Christianity is at odds with fundamental intersectional tenets. Intersectional theorist Vivian May states that Christians may not be viewed as oppressed because “the church . . . has been a place where hetero-patriarchal forms of power have reigned in pernicious ways.”³⁵ Christians who are unwilling to deny the Bible’s teaching on sex and gender roles are unwelcome at the intersectional table.

Intersectionality Shifts Responsibility from the Individual to the Collective

Following the precedent of neo-Marxist critical race theory,³⁶ intersectionality does not address individual agency but instead deals with societal groups. Boyer states plainly: “It’s not about you as individuals, it’s about the systematic institutions of

fall of 2015, black Princeton students announced self-pityingly: ‘We’re sick and tired of being sick and tired.’ This was a phrase first uttered by Fannie Lou Hamer, a civil rights activist who grew up on a Mississippi cotton plantation and who was beaten in the 1950s for trying to vote. She had grounds for being sick and tired of being sick and tired. But any Princeton student who feels as though he’s oppressed . . . is out of touch with reality”; from Heather MacDonald and Frank Furedi, “The Campus Victim Cult: A Dialogue about Why Colleges and Universities Have Become So Hostile to freedom of Thought,” *City Journal*, Winter 2018, <https://www.city-journal.org/html/campus-victim-cult-15644.html>.

³⁴ Jonathan Haidt, “The Age of Outrage: What the Current Political Climate is Doing to Our Country and Our Universities,” *City Journal*, December 17, 2017, <https://www.city-journal.org/html/age-outrage-15608.html>, contrasts the identity politics of Martin Luther King Jr., which “framed our greatest moral failing as an opportunity for centripetal redemption,” and intersectionality, which perpetuates endless grievance and conflict. Sociologist Frank Furedi concurs: “Today’s radicals have certainly adopted some of the rhetoric of old-fashioned leftism, but they’ve reformulated it into a therapeutic identity politics that would be unrecognizable to the antiracists of the 1960s”; see Mac Donald and Furedi, “The Campus Victim Cult.”

³⁵ May, *Pursuing Intersectionality*, 31.

³⁶ Samuel Sey, “Social Justice is a Threat to Human Rights and the Gospel,” *Slow to Write*, October 12, 2018, <https://slowtowrite.com/social-justice-is-a-threat-to-human-rights-and-the-gospel/>: “The critical theorists and Neo-Marxists from the Frankfurt School in Germany . . . rejected universal rights or human rights as a basis for justice. They essentially rejected liberty for individuals as the hallmark for justice in society. They believed, instead, that parity between groups were the mark of justice in society. They rejected individualism and embraced collectivism. They did not define justice as equality of opportunity; they defined justice as equality of outcome.”

oppression.”³⁷ This is difficult to square with the Bible’s emphasis on personal responsibility.³⁸ Nor is it a helpful approach in the real world. Chloe Valdary argues:

Intersectionality’s greatest flaw is in reducing human beings to political abstractions, which is never a tendency that turns out well—in part because it so severely flattens our complex human experience, and therefore fails to adequately describe reality. As it turns out, one can be personally successful and still come from a historically oppressed community—or vice versa. The human experience is complex and multifaceted and deeper than the superficial ways in which intersectionalists describe it.³⁹

Christians may acknowledge that certain blessings and advantages tend to fall upon certain groups of people within a society. The majority culture within a nation will typically enjoy certain benefits and be more likely to avoid certain prejudices. But the problem is not having “privilege” (if that misleading term must be used⁴⁰), the problem is abusing “privilege” rather than stewarding it well. “Privilege” will not necessarily lead to oppression, if individuals with power use their position to love and help others.⁴¹ If a “patriarchal” husband loves his wife and children by leading them in a strong, selfless manner, is this not the intent of the role God bestows on a man? And if several men have failed in their role, the answer is not to rebuke the collective and “smash the patriarchy”;⁴² the answer is to rebuke individuals who miss the mark.⁴³ God “will render to each one according to his works” (Rom. 2:6), and, accordingly, we ought to respect others enough to treat them as individual moral agents.

³⁷ Boyer, “Intersectionality 101.”

³⁸ E.g., Ezek. 18:20; 2 Cor. 5:10. God’s Word addresses nations, churches, and families, but not identity groups.

³⁹ Chloe Valdary, “What Farrakhan Shares With the Intersectional Left,” *Tablet*, March 26, 2018, <https://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/258364/what-farrakhan-shares-with-intersectional-left>.

⁴⁰ The opposite of *oppression* is not *privilege*. But in Marxism-influenced frameworks those terms are opposites, and *privilege* carries a pejorative connotation.

⁴¹ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 151, notes, “While the Old Testament undoubtedly contains many passionate expressions of God’s concern for justice for the oppressed, it also contains warnings about the chaos which arises when there is no strong government [and] about the role of a just ruler in God’s merciful guiding of human affairs.”

⁴² Peterson, *12 Rules for Life*, 304–05, explains that “the so-called oppression of the patriarchy was instead an imperfect collective attempt by men and women, stretching over millennia, to free each other from privation, disease, and drudgery.” He notes as an example that anesthesia and the tampon, both of which have helped countless women in childbirth and in day-to-day life, were developed by men.

⁴³ The concept of national repentance is seen in Scripture, but is connected with a covenantal context. However, Christians should desire for their governmental authorities to implement laws and policies that are righteous (Rom. 13:3–4).

Intersectionality Unjustly Presumes the Views and Experiences of Individuals

A major problem with viewing society primarily in terms of group identity is that individuals are inaccurately represented. Not all women share the same ideals. Not all blacks have been oppressed.⁴⁴ Not all able-bodied persons have escaped mistreatment. Not all transgenders believe someone should be fined for not using their preferred pronoun.⁴⁵ Yet, intersectional theorists attempt to speak for entire groups, despite vehement disagreement from many within those groups. According to former feminist Helen Pluckrose, “women of color, the LGBT and disabled people are to be found along the whole range of the political spectrum and subscribe to a vast array of ideas, whilst intersectionality is decidedly left-wing and based on a very specific ideology.” She adds:

It is not enough to be a woman or even to be a feminist. One must also subscribe to critical race theory, queer theory, trans equality, and anti-ableism discourses. . . . The problem is that most women are not any kind of feminist, most people of color are not scholars of critical race theory, many LGBTs are indifferent to queer theory, and disabled people are not particularly likely to consider this part of their political identity. . . . It is clearly misguided to assume that by listening to intersectionals, we are listening to women, people of color, LGBTs, and the disabled. We are, in fact, listening to a minority ideological view dominated by people from an economically privileged class who have had a university education in the social sciences and/or the necessary leisure time and education to study intersectionality, critical race theory, queer theory, and critical analyses of ableism.⁴⁶

How do intersectionals respond to this type of objection? Political science professor Elizabeth Corey observes: “The answer to any individual protest is always (a) false consciousness, (b) ‘internalizing the oppressor,’ or, if all else fails, (c) the structural

⁴⁴ According to Critical Race Theory, race is “a rough but adequate proxy for connection with a subordinated community,” regardless of actual subordination; see Duncan Kennedy, “A Cultural Pluralist Case for Affirmative Action in Legal Academia,” in *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement*, ed. Kimberlé Crenshaw (New York: The New Press, 1995), 162.

⁴⁵ When Peterson protested about the possibility of fines for refusing to use the “preferred pronouns” of transgender individuals in Canada (Bill C-16), he received around 40 letters from transgender persons, all but one of which were supportive of his stance; see Jordan Peterson, “The Rising Tide of Compelled Speech,” Queen’s University Talk, March 5, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MwdYpMS8s28>.

⁴⁶ “The Problem With Intersectional Feminism.” In a later article, Pluckrose recalls meeting a “trans woman” who experienced problems “when trying to advocate for freedom of speech and classical liberalism,” and “an Indian cognitive scientist” who was “accused of racism and sexism for advocating science and reason in his classes”; see Helen Pluckrose, “This Is Why We Need To Talk About Diversity,” *Areo*, March 3, 2018, <https://areomagazine.com/2018/03/03/this-is-why-we-need-to-talk-about-diversity/>.

oppression argument that makes our self-assessment irrelevant.”⁴⁷

This approach affects Christians directly. Vivian May claims that intersectionality’s “Black feminist origins and politics are not optional,”⁴⁸ admitting that “intersectionality is not (and does not aim to be) neutral.”⁴⁹ According to May, intersectionality should not be employed by black women who happen to be conservative Christians because their “heteronormative privilege” results in their employing intersectionality “oppressively,” allegedly due to their investment in “respectability politics.”⁵⁰ When Katie Shellnut of *Christianity Today* complained that the Women’s March excludes female pro-life groups, *Medium*’s Ruthie Johnson (also a professing Christian) told her to “stop appropriating intersectionality.” Johnson insisted that intersectionality is not intended to assist Christians because “Christianity has found itself over and over more on the side of the oppressor than the oppressed.”⁵¹ It is sadly ironic that pro-life women are allies for an oft-oppressed group, the unborn!⁵²

It is far better for Christians to follow the apostle Paul’s instruction to “regard no one according to the flesh”⁵³ (2 Cor. 5:16).⁵⁴ Let us not view individuals primarily in terms of the categories into which the world places them. Let us view individuals according to biblical anthropology, and evaluate them according to their choices.

INTERSECTIONAL IDEOLOGY REDUCES COMPASSION AND EMPATHY

Now that we have explored a few significant ways in which intersectional ideology diverges from biblical ideology, let us examine whether or not this worldview purporting to be compassionate actually fosters compassion. Scripture says, “You will recognize them by their fruits” (Matt. 7:16), and the fruits of intersectionality are prejudice, injustice, and totalitarianism.

⁴⁷ Corey, “First Church of Intersectionality.”

⁴⁸ May, *Pursuing Intersectionality*, 30.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁵¹ Ruthie Johnson, “Stop Appropriating Intersectionality: A Response to Kate Shellnut at *Christianity Today*,” *Medium*, January 30, 2017, <https://medium.com/@ruthie.johnson/stop-appropriating-intersectionality-af1f511c00f9>.

⁵² This raises fundamental questions: Who gets to decide which groups are oppressed? And by what standard?

⁵³ Homer A. Kent, *A Heart Opened Wide: Studies in 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1982), 88: “Since Paul had become a believer . . . his outlook had been changed and he no longer looked at others from a purely human standpoint. It is common for people to judge one another by such human and external standards as wealth, race, family, personality, and skills.”

⁵⁴ All Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version (ESV).

Intersectionality Increases Prejudice and Division

Viewing people primarily in terms of identity groups does not tend to bring the human race together. Elizabeth Corey explains:

One major goal of intersectional theorists is to distinguish increasingly fine-grained markers of oppression, separating people into ever smaller classes with distinct interests. To wit: While women may constitute a large group, the group of disabled black women is far smaller. This group's interests are not necessarily the same as those of Latinx lesbian women. Indeed, these groups may even be at odds in significant ways. In this respect, then, intersectionality divides rather than unites.⁵⁵

Noted psychologist Jordan Peterson has observed that because numerous factors characterize humans, and each human falls within multiple categories, an individual may fall into an infinite number of sub-groups. Ironically, then, intersectionality's "group identity can be fractionated right down to the level of the individual."⁵⁶

Along with dividing humanity, intersectional theory enables prejudice toward the "privileged." Corey observes,

In demonizing non-radical political views, white men, and tradition in general, intersectionality theorists make precisely the same mistake they so vehemently abhor: They classify people in terms of names and characteristics that they often have not chosen, and then write them off as enemies.⁵⁷

An example of this prejudice is seen in Robin Parker's "System Justification Theory." Parker, director of the Beyond Diversity Resource Center, reinterprets dozens of common statements in racial discourse that he sees as "microaggressions." When a white person says, "I don't see color," we are to interpret that person as meaning "*I don't have to take any responsibility to change inequities.*" "I believe that we're all just human beings," means "*I want to hide my feeling that some people are superior to others or more deserving of societal benefits.*"⁵⁸ We are encouraged to reinterpret others' words, as long as they are the words of the "privileged."

This is not the fruit of love, but of enmity. This should not be surprising, as socialist thinking "found its motivation in hatred of the rich and successful, instead

⁵⁵ Corey, "First Church of Intersectionality." Anthony Esolen concurs: "The people who talk about 'intersections are essentially divisive. They sow resentment and envy. If Asians are 'over-represented' in the sciences—and by what conceivable measure could you arrive at the correct representation?—it must be attributable to systemic hocus-pocus, and not to their families or their hard work"; Esolen, "The Church of Intersectionality Offers Nothing for Sinful Man."

⁵⁶ Peterson, *12 Rules for Life*, 316.

⁵⁷ Corey, "First Church of Intersectionality."

⁵⁸ Robin Parker, "Decoding Modern Racial Discourse: A System Justification Theory Approach," Beyond Diversity Resource Center, <http://s554342444.onlinehome.us/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/decoding.modern.racial.discourse.pdf>, emphasis his.

of true regard for the poor.”⁵⁹ Let us judge others by the content of their character, not by the color of their skin (or other externals)! “Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment” (John 7:24).

Intersectionality Leads to Mistreating and Silencing the “Privileged”

In a critique of various forms of liberation theology, Lesslie Newbigin wisely observed in Old Testament narratives that “the victims of today’s injustice frequently become tomorrow’s oppressors.”⁶⁰ Because intersectionality views humanity exclusively within oppressed/oppressor groups, it is not surprising to hear anecdotes in which hostility against a member of an “oppressor” group is overlooked or even encouraged. Recently, a staff member at a Stanford house rejected a white student’s request for graffiti containing the word “cracker” to be removed from school property. The student was told that “white cis straight men” have not been “marginalized by society,” so “white people have to take a backseat” to marginalized communities “because they are disproportionately larger and more dangerous.”⁶¹ Though this incident pales in comparison to the severity of other racial injustices, the rationale used by the staffer is disturbing and indicates a growing trend. In intersectional theory, mistreatment of the “oppressed” is the only mistreatment that matters. And solutions offered by intersectionality look more like retaliation than reconciliation. Bill Barlow writes in *The Harvard Law Record*:

Critical Race theory not only directs how to structure the university, but also how to structure the relation of the individual to the state. Racially-based taxes, racially-based employment quotas, racially-based redistributions of wealth: none would be beyond the theoretical horizon of Critical Race theory. All are justified by an appeal to inadequate racial justice, an appeal that can neither be proved nor disproved, an appeal that can just as easily be used for naked racial subordination. All fall within a context where speech labeled as “hurtful” and “racist” could be punishable by law, and opponents of the racial regime would be silenced.⁶²

Not only does intersectionality open the door to mistreatment of those within “privileged” groups, it also closes the door to ideas and input from the “privileged.” French explains that “intersectionality privileges experiential authority, with each distinct identity group able to speak conclusively and decisively only about their own

⁵⁹ Peterson, *12 Rules for Life*, 196.

⁶⁰ Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 151.

⁶¹ Anna Mitchell and Philip Clark, “‘I Hope We Have No Crackers Here’: EBF Staff Sanction Racial Slur,” *The Stanford Review*, <https://stanfordreview.org/i-hope-we-have-no-crackers-here-ebf-staff-sanction-racial-slur/>.

⁶² Bill Barlow, “Racism, Justified: A Critical Look at Critical Race Theory,” *The Harvard Law Record*, February 29, 2016, <http://hlrecord.org/2016/02/racism-justified-a-critical-look-at-critical-race-theory/>.

experience.”⁶³ Those outside the identity group must remain silent and listen, then act as “allies”—parrotting the perspective of the identity group. Fredrik deBoer has labeled this “the politics of deference,” a “theory that suggests that people of a progressive bent have a duty to suspend their critical judgment and engage in unthinking support of whoever claims to speak for the movement against racism and sexism.” One problem with this approach, as observed earlier, is “the question of who, exactly, we should just listen to when different members of marginalized groups disagree, as they inevitably will.” A larger problem is its denial of individual agency: each person’s obligation to follow his conscience.⁶⁴ The biggest problem is that the marketplace of ideas becomes monopolized by progressive, self-appointed spokespeople for the “oppressed.” Alastair Roberts notes, “Feminism, gender, and race theory have become human shields that prevent us from challenging key persons, agencies, social realities, and ideas directly. These theories serve to elevate and mobilize unhelpful instincts and to close down the discourse.”⁶⁵ When “privileged oppressors” disagree with intersectionality, their words are labeled “a form of violence,” leading to an attack on free speech.⁶⁶ According to Christina Hoff Sommers, “Silencing speech and forbidding debate is not an unfortunate by-product of intersectionality—it is a primary goal.”⁶⁷

James 1:19 instructs believers to “be quick to hear, slow to speak.” These are wise words, and Christians should be known for listening and sincerely endeavoring to understand. But the words of James are not only for those in “privileged” groups. For everyone, regardless of their status, there is “a time to keep silence, and a time to speak” (Eccl. 3:7)

⁶³ French, “Intersectionality, the Dangerous Faith.” Elevating personal experience is the fruit of intersectionality’s postmodern roots.

⁶⁴ Fredrick deBoer, “Elena Ferrante and the Politics of Deference,” *The Towner*, October 26, 2016, <http://www.thetowner.com/elena-ferrante-politics-deference/>.

⁶⁵ Alastair Roberts, “A Crisis of Discourse—Part 2: A Problem of Gender,” *Alastair’s Adversaria*, November 17, 2016, <https://alastairadversaria.com/2016/11/17/a-crisis-of-discourse-part-2-a-problem-of-gender/>.

⁶⁶ Law Professor Mari Matsuda, in “Public Response to Racist Speech: Considering the Victim’s Story,” *Michigan Law Review* 87, no. 8 (1989), 2321, blatantly states: “formal criminal and administrative sanction . . . is an appropriate response to racist speech.”

⁶⁷ Christina Hoff Sommers, “Intersectional Feminism: What Is It?” (video), posted from *The Factual Feminist*, March 30, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cYpELqKZ02Q>. Some progressives dismiss the concept of civil dialogue as a racist construct. In a recent *Howard Journal of Communications* article, two university professors “draw upon critical whiteness studies (CWS) to understand how civility within higher education is a racialized, rather than universal, norm”; see C. Kyle Rudick and Kathryn B. Golsan, “Civility and White Institutional Presence: An Exploration of White Students’ Understanding of Race-Talk at a Traditionally White Institution,” *Howard Journal of Communications* 29, no. 4 (2018): 2.

INTERSECTIONAL IDEOLOGY LEADS TO HOPELESSNESS

Those who care about compassion and justice should oppose intersectional thinking because it lacks compassion and justice. Not only does intersectionality hurt those who disagree with it, it also hurts those who subscribe to it. Despite promising hope for the oppressed, it is a hopeless ideology.

Intersectionality Promotes Perpetual Victimhood and Grievance

The ideology which recognizes multiple layers of victimhood has earned the nickname “The Oppression Olympics.”⁶⁸ Intersectionality bestows the higher moral ground to victims, so claiming and retaining victim status is of utmost importance.⁶⁹ Summer Jaeger has done excellent work explaining how victimhood bestows capital and credibility within this worldview: “According to intersectionality, the more oppressed you are, the deeper your understanding is of life and society.”⁷⁰ Bari Weiss calls intersectionality “a kind of caste system, in which people are judged according to how much their particular caste has suffered throughout history. Victimhood, in the intersectional way of seeing the world, is akin to sainthood; power and privilege are profane.”⁷¹ The *European Journal of Social Psychology* published a study which confirmed that “struggle for victimhood recognition can foster intergroup conflict.”⁷² Christina Hoff Sommers describes this type of situation produced by the “Oppression Olympics.” During an annual meeting of the National Women’s Studies Association, the women were divided into groups based on “healing needs.” Then, on their own initiative, these groups subdivided again and again. The black lesbian group sent away those with white partners because they were deemed to be “privileged.” A subgroup of women with allergies formed a caucus and issued a set of de-

⁶⁸ A University of Kansas study found evidence of “competitive victimhood” which led to “the expectation that one should feel guilty for being in a high-status group” see Daniel Sullivan, Mark J. Landau, Nyla R. Branscombe, and Zachary K. Rothschild, “Competitive Victimhood as a Response to Accusations of Ingroup Harm Doing,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 102, no. 4 (2012): 778.

⁶⁹ Denny Burk, “Two Ways in Which Intersectionality is at Odds with the Gospel,” says: “Within college campus subculture, one’s moral authority can be enhanced by intersecting identities of oppression. This kind of a social dynamic incentivizes grievance based on identity. In that way, it entrenches social divisions rather than healing them.”

⁷⁰ Jaeger, “Why Feminism Can’t Save You.”

⁷¹ Bari Weiss, “I’m Glad the Dyke March Banned Jewish Stars,” *The New York Times*, June 27, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/27/opinion/im-glad-the-dyke-march-banned-jewish-stars.html>.

⁷² Laura De Guissmè and Laurent Licata, “Competition Over Collective Victimhood Recognition: When Perceived Lack of Recognition for Past Victimization is Associated with Negative Attitudes Towards Another Victimized Group,” *European Journal of Social Psychology* 47, no. 2 (March 2017): 148–66; the quote is from the article abstract.

mands against dry-cleaned clothes and hairspray.⁷³ How could this perpetual subdividing produce genuine empathy and true justice? Tragically, when everyone tries to claim victim status, true victims of injustice are more likely to be overlooked.

While intersectionality is high on pseudo-concern, it is low on true empowerment.⁷⁴ Alastair Roberts states, “the typical feminist political victory takes the form of persuading some other agency to do something or intervene on their behalf. It . . . rests upon the existence of some more fundamental power that acts as one’s patron and comes to your aid against other parties.”⁷⁵ Persons deemed oppressed are essentially told they are powerless until the minds of those “in power” are changed, or until power changes hands. Jonathan Haidt adds:

The new moral culture of victimhood fosters “moral dependence” and an atrophy-ing of the ability to handle small interpersonal matters on one’s own. At the same time that it weakens individuals, it creates a society of constant and intense moral conflict as people compete for status as victims or as defenders of victims. . . . This is why we have seen the recent explosion of concerns about microaggressions, com-bined with demands for trigger warnings and safe spaces.⁷⁶

This framework denies any accountability or opportunity for the “oppressed.” Jordan Peterson argues, “If you buy the story that everything terrible just happened on its own, with no personal responsibility on the part of the victim, you deny that person all agency in the past (and, by implication, in the present and future, as well). In this manner, you strip him or her of all power.”⁷⁷ In modern American society, people of Asian heritage are at the top of most educational and economic measurables.⁷⁸ Rather than use past injustices and prejudices to excuse a perpetual state of victimhood, a

⁷³ Sommers, “Intersectional Feminism: What Is It?”

⁷⁴ According to Frank Furedi, “We’re no longer teaching our young people proper values, such as character and resilience. Instead, we merely validate them. From their earliest days of school, we teach them that they are weak individuals in need of constant therapeutic support”; see MacDonald and Furedi, “The Campus Victim Cult.” Alastair Roberts, “A Crisis of Dis-course, Part 2,” states that intersectionality “infantilizes perceived victim, minority, or vulner-able groups (women, persons of colour, LGBT persons, disabled persons, etc.), perceiving them as lacking in agency and desperately in need of care and protection. When persons from such groups enter into the realm of political or academic discourse, they must be protected at all costs. Unsurprisingly, this completely undermines the manly code that formerly held, whereby anyone entering onto the field of discourse did so at their own risk, as a combatant and thereby as a legitimate target for challenge and honourable attack. The manly code calls us all to play to strength, whereas the maternal instinct calls us all radically to accommodate to weakness.”

⁷⁵ Roberts, “A Crisis of Discourse—Part 2.”

⁷⁶ Jonathan Haidt, “Where Microaggressions Really Come From: A Sociological Ac-count,” *The Righteous Mind*, September 7, 2015, <https://righteousmind.com/where-microaggressions-really-come-from/>.

⁷⁷ Peterson, *12 Rules for Life*, 80.

⁷⁸ Thomas Sowell, *Intellectuals and Race* (New York: Basic Books, 2013), 4–5.

large percentage of Asian Americans have overcome these obstacles and have made the most of their opportunities. This is an outstanding example to other groups which may consider themselves marginalized.⁷⁹

We live in a fallen world, and genuine injustices take place every day.⁸⁰ But intersectionality does not teach its adherents to love their enemies or to bless those who persecute them. French observes, “In the church of intersectionality, grace is nowhere to be found.”⁸¹ Nor does this ideology acknowledge significant progress in our society’s empathy and tolerance. When will things be improved enough? There is no measurable resolution in sight,⁸² only fruitless, unremitting complaint for past wrongs.⁸³ Keeping entire groups in a perpetual state of victimhood and grievance hinders those who are truly oppressed from maximizing opportunities.⁸⁴ Peterson states, “Aggrieved victimhood produces first resentment, then envy, then the desire

⁷⁹ See Sowell’s *Discrimination and Disparities* (New York: Basic Books, 2018) for a multifaceted examination of current economic disparities between races in America.

⁸⁰ Kevin DeYoung, in “Is Social Justice a Gospel Issue?” The Gospel Coalition, September 11, 2018, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/social-justice-gospel-issue/>, worked his way through the major justice passages in the Bible: Leviticus 19, Leviticus 25, Isaiah 1, Isaiah 58, Jeremiah 22, Amos 5, Micah 6:8, Matthew 25:31–46, and Luke 4. His conclusion was: “We should not oversell or undersell what the Bible says about justice. On the one hand, there is a lot in the Bible about God’s care for the poor, the oppressed, and the vulnerable. There are also plenty of warnings against treating the helpless with cruelty and disrespect. On the other hand, justice, as a biblical category, is not synonymous with anything and everything we feel would be good for the world. Doing justice means following the rule of law, showing impartiality, paying what you promised, not stealing, not swindling, not taking bribes, and not taking advantage of the weak because they are too uninformed or unconnected to stop you.”

⁸¹ French, “Intersectionality, the Dangerous Faith.”

⁸² J. T. DeCuir and A. D. Dixon, “‘So When It Comes out, They Aren’t That Surprised That It is There’: Using Critical Race Theory as a Tool of Analysis of Race and Racism in Education,” *Educational Researcher* 33, no. 5 (2004): 27, note that “Racism is a permanent component of American life.” Duncan Kennedy, “A Cultural Pluralist Case for Affirmative Action in Legal Academia,” 164, promotes “race-conscious decision making as a routine, non-deviant mode, a more or less permanent norm.”

⁸³ The *Harvard Educational Review* published an article demonstrating that “white privilege pedagogy” and its demand for confession have in fact created a “dead end for antiracist action”; see Timothy J. Lensmire, Shannon K. McManimon, Jessica Docker Tierney, Mary E. Lee-Nichols, Zachary A. Casey, Audrey Lensmire, and Bryan M. Davis, “McIntosh as Synecdoche: How Teacher Education’s Focus on White Privilege Undermines Antiracism,” *Harvard Educational Review* 83, no. 3 (Fall 2013): 410.

⁸⁴ Thomas Sowell, *Intellectuals and Race*, 128, has observed that the solutions proffered by identity politics are usually “policies or actions that enhance the role, power, prestige and economic flourishing of the race industry itself,” even if they are “demonstrably counterproductive in their effects on the people in whose name the race industry speaks.”

for vengeance and destruction.”⁸⁵ He suggests an alternate approach to life:

The ancient Jews always blamed themselves when things fell apart. They acted as if God’s goodness—the goodness of reality—was axiomatic, and took responsibility for their own failure. That’s insanely responsible. But the alternative is to judge reality as insufficient, to criticize Being itself, and to sink into resentment and the desire for revenge. . . . Have you taken full advantage of the opportunities offered to you? Are you working hard on your career, or even your job, or are you letting bitterness and resentment hold you back and drag you down? . . . Are there things that you can do, that you know you can do, that would make things around you better?”⁸⁶

It is convenient to ascribe all suffering to oppression, but that would be inaccurate⁸⁷ and counterproductive. Intersectional ideology offers no hope, no healing, no restoration. True empowerment places individuals in a position to develop and use their gifts and abilities.

Intersectionality Advances a Destructive Agenda

Those who support intersectionality are also harming themselves in a larger sense: they are (often unwittingly) advancing a socio-political agenda which, if successful, would radically alter and severely weaken society. Advocate Vivian May admits that “intersectionality is not (and does not aim to be) neutral,”⁸⁸ and that its ultimate vision “calls for dismantling systemic oppression (in its myriad forms and guises).”⁸⁹ While dismantling oppression seems like a good thing, this vision of dismantling involves no common ground or compromise with conservative Christians. Intersectional leader Patricia Hill Collins blatantly stated: “You cannot bring these two worlds together. You must be oppositional. You must fight. For me, it’s a line in the sand.”⁹⁰ Education⁹¹ and family are two strategic battlefields of the fight. Corey notes:

⁸⁵ Peterson, *12 Rules for Life*, xxxiv.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 157.

⁸⁷ “The fact that power plays a role in human motivation does not mean that it plays the only role, or even the primary role” (*ibid.*, 311).

⁸⁸ May, *Pursuing Intersectionality*, 28.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 5–6.

⁹⁰ Collins is quoted in conversation with Corey, “First Church of Intersectionality.”

⁹¹ Peterson, *12 Rules for Life*, 305, notes: “Disciplines as diverse as education, social work, art history, gender studies, literature, sociology and, increasingly, law actively treat men as oppressors. . . . They also often directly promote radical political action . . . which they do not distinguish from education.” University staff are equipped with strategic resources such as Brooke Barnett and Peter Felten, eds., *Intersectionality in Action: A Guide for Faculty and Campus Leaders for Creating Inclusive Classrooms and Institutions* (Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, 2016).

Intersectional scholars proudly proclaim their goal: to smash the neoliberal, corporate, heteropatriarchal academy and then to reinvent it in a way that rejects traditional notions about what universities are meant to do. These scholars also want to redefine the family and to abolish the “binary” of man and woman.⁹²

In the end, the goal is to cast off Judeo-Christian Western culture. Sociologist Jonathan Haidt astutely observes:

Here’s the strategically brilliant move made by intersectionality: all of the binary dimensions of oppression are said to be interlocking and overlapping. America is said to be one giant matrix of oppression, and its victims cannot fight their battles separately. They must all come together to fight their common enemy, the group that sits at the top of the pyramid of oppression: the straight, white, cis-gendered, able-bodied Christian or Jewish or possibly atheist male. This is why a perceived slight against one victim group calls forth protest from all victim groups. This is why so many campus groups now align against Israel. Intersectionality is like NATO for social-justice activists.⁹³

Likewise, René Girard noted this ideology’s desire “to turn the Ten Commandments and all of Judeo-Christian morality into some alleged intolerable violence, and indeed its primary objective is their complete abolition.” Observance of a moral law “is perceived as complicity with the forces of persecution” that are essentially religious. For the progressive, happiness is found “in the unlimited satisfaction of desires, which means the suppression of all prohibitions.”⁹⁴

Casting off Christian-influenced Western culture (with its emphasis on individual dignity, responsible agency, and transcendent accountability)⁹⁵ and replacing it with a Marxist-type society would be incredibly shortsighted and incalculably destructive. Lest we forget:

When Marxism was put into practice in the Soviet Union, China, Vietnam, Cambodia and elsewhere, economic resources were brutally redistributed. Private property was eliminated, and rural people forcibly collectivized. The result? Tens of millions of people died. Hundreds of millions more were subject to oppression rival-

⁹² Corey, “First Church of Intersectionality.”

⁹³ Haidt, “The Age of Outrage.”

⁹⁴ In addition, Girard observed that this is a perversion of the traditionally Christian regard for genuine victims: “The most powerful anti-Christian movement is the one that takes over and ‘radicalizes’ the concern for victims in order to paganize it. The powers and principalities want to be ‘revolutionary’ now, and they reproach Christianity for not defending victims with enough ardor. In Christian history they see nothing but persecution, acts of oppression, inquisitions”; Girard, *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*, 180, quoted in Roberts, “No, Black Women Didn’t Save Evangelicalism.”

⁹⁵ Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Viking, 2015), 128, explains that Christianity’s entry into the West, with its belief in a loving and tripersonal God, brought with it a radical new emphasis on individual dignity and responsibility.

ing that is still operative in North Korea. . . . The resulting economic systems were corrupt and unsustainable. The world entered a prolonged and extremely dangerous cold war.⁹⁶

Christians should beware of allowing society rather than Scripture to define justice. Samuel Sey notes:

Social justice was the basis for stripping rights away from Jews in the Khmelnytsky Uprising. Social justice was the basis for discrimination against Jews in the Soviet Union. Social justice was the basis for the holocaust in Nazi Germany. Social justice is the basis for South Africa's initiative to strip property rights from White farmers. Social justice is the basis for stripping a pre-born baby's right to life.⁹⁷

If we desire to see needy people helped, there are far better alternatives than socialism.

Western culture has not been without its flaws, but economist Thomas Sowell counsels: "The misuse of history to condemn evils common around the world [such as slavery] as if they were peculiarities of the West has serious practical implications." Western culture has "provided a prosperity, a freedom, and a security rare to non-existent over much of the rest of the world."⁹⁸ Peterson notes Western culture's "comparatively uncorrupt political and economic systems, the technology, the wealth, the lifespan, the freedom, the luxury, and the opportunity."⁹⁹ Even the poor and "oppressed" in Western cultures fare exponentially better than the poor in many other cultures. Within Western cultures some Christians have been agents of injustice, but many other Christians have brought about justice and human flourishing. Opposition to Christian-influenced Western culture is not ultimately driven by a concern for the marginalized, but by a desire to replace traditional moral values with an equally dogmatic progressive "morality."¹⁰⁰

Because of God's common grace, many unbelievers are resisting this dangerous agenda. A number of non-Christian sources have been quoted approvingly in this paper because they recognize the wisdom of certain Christian ethics such as truth-telling, personal responsibility, respect for individuals, the importance of family, lim-

⁹⁶ Peterson, *12 Rules for Life*, 306.

⁹⁷ Sey, "Social Justice is a Threat to Human Rights and the Gospel."

⁹⁸ Thomas Sowell, *Black Rednecks and White Liberals* (New York: Encounter Books, 2005), 271.

⁹⁹ Peterson continues: "To think about culture only as oppressive is ignorant and ungrateful, as well as dangerous. This is not to say . . . that culture should not be subject to criticism"; *12 Rules for Life*, 302–03.

¹⁰⁰ Heather MacDonald observes that to many student radicals, "their colleges and their country are unequivocally racist, sexist, homophobic, and fascist. They have not the slightest hesitation about passing unrelenting, unappealable moral judgment on anyone who does not fit in those intersectional categories of transcendent victimhood. . . . These social-justice progressives have a form of morality just as rigid as the world's most dogmatic religions"; MacDonald and Furedi, "The Campus Victim Cult."

itation of human government, and objective justice. Christians may engage unbelievers in the public square by making an appeal to the beneficial societal effects of these values. But because Christians have been transformed by the gospel, we have even more reason to reject intersectional ideology.

THE GOSPEL PROVIDES THE BEST WAY FORWARD

A number of cultural commentators have noted that intersectionality is frequently accompanied by a religious-type fervor.¹⁰¹ A week after students at Middlebury College in Vermont responded disruptively and violently to a controversial speaker,¹⁰² Andrew Sullivan wrote a brief but oft-cited article asking, “Is Intersectionality a Religion?”

It posits a classic orthodoxy through which all of human experience is explained—and through which all speech must be filtered. Its version of original sin is the power of some identity groups over others. To overcome this sin, you need first to confess, i.e., “check your privilege,” and subsequently live your life and order your thoughts in a way that keeps this sin at bay. The sin goes so deep into your psyche, especially if you are white or male or straight, that a profound conversion is required. . . . The only thing this religion lacks, of course, is salvation. Life is simply an interlocking drama of oppression and power and resistance, ending only in death. It’s Marx without the final total liberation. . . . If you happen to see the world in a different way, if you’re a liberal or libertarian or even, gasp, a conservative, if you believe that a university is a place where any idea, however loathsome, can be debated and refuted, you are not just wrong, you are immoral. If you think that arguments and ideas can have a life independent of “white supremacy,” you are complicit in evil. And you are not just complicit, your heresy is a direct threat to others, and therefore needs to be extinguished. You can’t reason with heresy. You have to ban it. It will contaminate others’ souls, and wound them irreparably.¹⁰³

David French surmises that intersectionality is spreading like wildfire on campuses and in liberal groups “in part because it is filling that religion-shaped hole in the human heart.”¹⁰⁴ But though intersectional ideology serves a religious purpose for

¹⁰¹ Andrew Sullivan, followed by Corey, Esolen, French, and others.

¹⁰² Sullivan, “Is Intersectionality a Religion?,” described the March 2, 2017 incident: “A group of conservative students at Middlebury College in Vermont invited the highly controversial author Charles Murray to speak on campus about his latest book, *Coming Apart*. His talk was shut down by organized chanting in its original venue, and disrupted when it was shifted to a nearby room and livestreamed. When Murray and his faculty interlocutor, Allison Stanger, then left to go to their car, they were surrounded by a mob, which tried to stop them leaving the campus. Someone in the melee grabbed Stanger by the hair and twisted her neck so badly she had to go to the emergency room (she is still suffering from a concussion). After they escaped, their dinner at a local restaurant was crashed by the same mob.” (“

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ French, “Intersectionality, the Dangerous Faith.” A number of intersectional fruits

many, and has even seduced some Christians, the gospel of Jesus stands in stark contrast and provides a better hope and true healing. For those who truly hunger and thirst for righteousness, the gospel is enough.

The Gospel Provides the Best Identity and the Best Foundation for Unity

Christians should avoid identity politics because we have an infinitely more significant identity than our skin color or gender can provide: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession” (1 Peter 2:9). All other identities pale in comparison to one’s union with Christ: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). Christians do not need intersectionality; we already have a worldview which equally values different ethnicities, various socio-economic classes, and both genders. The Biblical worldview is sufficient to address the sin of partiality that remains in so many hearts. In the church, we must view ourselves and each other in light of Christ and reject worldly identities.

Though intersectionality claims to champion diversity,¹⁰⁵ the best kind of diversity is achieved by the blood of Christ, which “ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation” (Rev. 5:9). The best kind of harmony is produced by Spirit-filled believers who are not guilted into “checking their privilege” but are motivated by grace to follow the law of Christ: “Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly” (Rom. 12:16). The “lowly” may be a disabled black woman, or a middle-class white redneck. Either way, we do not haughtily live according to worldly categories, but humbly aim to see all people as God sees them.¹⁰⁶ We respect people not because of their identity class, but because they are made in God’s image. As Newbiggin articulates, this was the example of Christ:

Jesus shocked the established authorities by being a friend to all—not only to the destitute and hungry, but also to those rich extortioners, the tax-collectors, whom all decent people ostracized; the shocking thing was not that he sided with the poor

are named in Rom. 1:21–31. Worshiping the creature rather than the Creator leads to sexual impurity, homosexuality, covetousness, malice, strife, pride, invention of new kinds of evil, family breakdown, and approval of others’ sins.

¹⁰⁵ Sowell, *Intellectuals and Race*, has observed that artificially forced racial diversity on college campuses often leads to greater polarization, because people still tend to identify with their ethnic groups. Diversity for the sake of diversity alone does not produce true diversity.

¹⁰⁶ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1998), 669, notes: “Those who are humble show genuine love toward all people, regardless of their rank or station in life. . . . The redeemed community should be marked by humble concern for one another and all should be treated as valued persons made in the image of God and redeemed by him.”

against the rich but that he met everyone equally with the same unlimited mercy and the same unconditioned demand for total loyalty.¹⁰⁷

The church is filled with imperfect believers (and some false converts), and has often failed to meet this ideal.¹⁰⁸ But Jesus is still the answer, and the gospel still provides a better way.

The Gospel Leads to Humility, Gratitude, and Forgiveness

While Christians ought not be naïve regarding historical and social dynamics, it can be misleading to focus primarily on the oppression or victimization of one's identity groups. Oppression is not an identity, it is an action. Every human is guilty of countless sins against God and others, and are all accountable for the sins they have actually committed¹⁰⁹ or endorsed.¹¹⁰ People hurt other people, not primarily because of their identity groups or others' identity groups but because of their selfishness and pride.¹¹¹ Even if all societal power structures were instantly reversed, people would still act like sinners. Everyone on this planet is a wretched sinner in desperate need of God's grace: "All, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin" (Rom. 3:9). That is true even for those who can claim multiple layers of oppression.¹¹² Those who have tragically been victims of terrible sins have in turn mistreated others and rebelled against their Creator. The Samaritan woman in John 4 is often noted as a prime biblical example of the intersectionally oppressed: a foreign, religiously ostracized, lower-class woman.¹¹³ Jesus's interaction with this woman was counter-cultural and gracious. But notice that Jesus refused to get drawn into a discussion about identity groups (v. 9). Instead, he addressed her sin (v. 17)! He did not approach her primarily as an oppressed woman, but as a sinner in need of the living water. Then the Savior gloriously revealed himself to her as the promised Messiah (v. 26).

¹⁰⁷ Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 151.

¹⁰⁸ A number of troubling anecdotes from American history may be found in Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

¹⁰⁹ "The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself" (Ezek. 18:20).

¹¹⁰ "Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them" (Rom. 1:32).

¹¹¹ "Judaism and Christianity hold that people are not basically good. Leftism holds that people are basically good. Therefore, Judaism and Christianity believe evil comes from human nature, and leftism believes evil comes from capitalism, religion, the nation-state (i.e., nationalism), corporations, the patriarchy, and virtually every other traditional value"; see Dennis Prager, "Leftism as a Secular Religion," *The Daily Signal*, August 28, 2018, <https://www.dailysignal.com/2018/08/28/explaining-the-left-part-iii-leftism-as-secular-religion/>.

¹¹² Leviticus 19:15 reminds us that poor and rich alike must be judged by the same standard of righteousness.

¹¹³ Johnson, "Stop Appropriating Intersectionality."

Jesus is willing to save any type of sinner who will repent of his or her sins and believe in him. Again, the words of Newbigin are fitting:

Jesus was rejected by all—rich and poor, rulers and people—alike. Before the cross of Jesus there are no innocent parties. His cross is not for some and against others. It is the place where all are guilty and all are forgiven. The cross cannot be converted into the banner for a fight of some against others.¹¹⁴

“If anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself” (Gal. 6:3). It has often been stated that the ground is level at the foot of the cross.¹¹⁵ This ought to lead to humility in every Christian, not pride of status or pride of victimhood. This ought to lead to gratitude in every Christian, not envy of those with more “privilege.” This ought to lead us to forgive one another, as the Lord has forgiven us (Col. 3:13), not to remain perpetually aggrieved.¹¹⁶ For those who have truly been hurt by the powerful and advantaged, Jesus is a better savior than intersectionality.

The Gospel Provides Grace for Responsible Living

Having experienced the saving grace of Jesus, Christians must “walk as children of light,” pursuing what is “good and right and true” (Eph. 5:8–9). This means taking responsibility for our lives, working for our food (2 Thess. 3:10), and caring for our own (1 Tim. 5:8). As Galatians 6:5 exhorts: “each will have to bear his own load.” Responsible Christian living also means loving our neighbors and our enemies, showing mercy to the needy even when they don’t look like us, as the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:33–35) and the early church (Acts 4:34–35) exemplified. As Galatians 6:2 exhorts: “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” Whether a believers’ status in life has provided him with many advantages or few advantages, whether she is a steward of five talents or two talents or one (Matt. 25:15), each is called to use his or her God-given gifts to bless others.

CONCLUSION

The worldview of intersectionality, though borrowing inconsistently from Christian ideals, is incompatible with biblical ethics. This paper has explained intersectionality, exposed some major discrepancies between its ideology and biblical truth, and demonstrated how its fruits are damaging to its opponents and to its adherents. Even

¹¹⁴ Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 151.

¹¹⁵ John Piper, *Bloodlines: Race, Cross, and the Christian* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 151–52, notes: “Having certain ethnic or religious advantages proves to be of no advantage. And not having certain ethnic or religious advantages proves to be of no disadvantage. The reason is that faith in Christ, by its very nature, looks away from distinctives (positive or negative) that you have in yourself and looks to God’s free grace in order to be justified and have eternal life.”

¹¹⁶ Christians must trust God to bring justice to wrongs that cannot be righted here on earth: “Leave it to the wrath of God” (Rom. 12:19).

non-Christians may recognize the harmful effects of intersectionality's socio-political agenda. But Christians may go even further in contrasting the bad news of intersectionality with the good news of the gospel of Jesus. May God's redeemed people, and others within our influence, be astonished by the unifying, humbling, forgiving, empowering grace of our Lord.

Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free;¹¹⁷ but Christ is all, and in all. Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. (Col. 3:11–15)

¹¹⁷ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), 149: "Outside the Christian fellowship those barriers [racial, religious, cultural, and social] stood as high as ever, and there were Christians on the one side and on the other. From the viewpoint of the old order these Christians were classified in terms of their position on this side or that of the barriers. But within the community of the new creation—'in Christ'—these barriers were irrelevant; indeed, they had no existence."