

A Survey of CRT and An Introduction to the Dangers it Poses to the Body of Christ

Daniel Rangel
April 8, 2024

Introduction

The rapid growth and adoption of the “woke” movement in the United States by politics, organizations, enterprises, and society in general, has presented the Church of Jesus Christ with both novel and revived theological challenges. One of them is the allegation that Christianity has perpetuated systematic racism, a claim that has led many to advocate for the integration of the Critical Race Theory (CRT)¹ philosophy into practical Theology. Championing this integration is Robert Chao Romero, whose work *'Christianity and Critical Race Theory: A Faithful and Constructive Conversation,'* argues that Theology may benefit from leveraging the ideology of justice from CRT. This paper will concentrate on contesting the proposed integration, drawing upon Romero’s work as a critical counterpoint. The argument will commence by providing a brief etymological and historical introduction to the word and concept of race. Subsequently, the Biblical concept of race will be explored, ultimately offering the claim that Scriptures pay little or no attention to the present concept of race, understood as the categorization of people by physical traits, specifically skin color. Once solidifying the idea that race is most probably a social construct, the paper will proceed to expose the Marxists roots of CRT to demonstrate its incompatibility with the Christianity. Finally, the potential detriment of adopting this view into practical Theology will be presented.

It is crucial to clarify at the outset that this paper draws a distinction between race and culture. Consequently, when employing terms like “race” or “racism,” the focus will be solely on the aspect of skin pigmentation.

¹ Critical Race Theory is referred to as CRT henceforth.

The Etymology and Historicity of Race

The word race did not gain a seat in the English language until the nineteenth century.² Moreover, the concept behind the word, as understood in contemporary context, is not an archaic one, as it is not found in ancient Greek or Roman civilizations.³ In actuality, it was not until the 16th century that the concept of race, based on skin color, commenced to gain major traction.⁴ Some etymologists agree that the word can be traced back to the Latin “*radix*,” meaning root, which in medieval Latin evolved into “*racemus*”⁵ (meaning cluster of grapes) and was later employed metaphorically to denote someone’s pedigree, although it did not require connotations of skin pigmentation.

Once the relationship between race and skin color gained territory, the field of science sought to establish this connection biologically during the 18th and 19th centuries. It was then that figures such as Johann Friedrich Blumenbach emerged, promoting the five main categorizations of race: Caucasian, Mongolian, Malayan, Ethiopian, and American. However, modern biological research discards scientific support for race,⁶ revealing it to be a social construct, rather than a genetic determination.⁷

² Benjamin Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*, (NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 1.

³ George M. Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History*, (NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 17.

⁴ Guido Bolaffi, Raffaele Bracalenti, Peter H. Braham, and Sandro Gindro, eds., *Dictionary of Race, Ethnicity and Culture*, (London: SAGE Publications, Limited, 2002), 241.

⁵ Oxford English Dictionary, s.v., “*race* (n.6), *Etymology*,” December 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/6086213112>; Harper Douglas, “*Etymology of race*,” Online Etymology Dictionary, Accessed February 21, 2024, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/race>.

⁶ Massimo Pigliucci and Jonathan Kaplan, “*On the Concept of Biological Race and Its Applicability to Humans*,” *Philosophy of Science* 70, no. 5 (December 2003): 1161–72, doi:10.1086/377397, 1166; Kazuko Suzuki and Diego A. von Vacano, *Reconsidering Race: Social Science Perspectives on Racial Categories in the Age of Genomics* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2018), ix.

⁷ Suzuki and Vacano, *Reconsidering Race: Social Science Perspectives on Racial Categories in the Age of Genomics*, x.

Race in the Bible

As helpful as science and history are in finding the origins of the idea of race, they are not sufficient. Given that humans are the bearers of race, it is necessary to consult the beginning of humanity before the beginning of race can be found. For this, an appeal to the Bible is imperative, since this paper deems it the ultimate source of all truth.

Although the concepts of culture and ethnicity are abundant in the Biblical text, the term and concept of race are never mentioned.⁸ From the beginning of creation, humans are defined according to the image of God, not their physical appearance⁹ (Gen. 1:27). Even when descriptions of a person's physical attributes are given (Gen. 29:17; Gen. 39:6; 1 Sam. 9:2; 1 Sam. 16:12; 2 Sam. 14:25-26), the records lack mention of skin color.¹⁰ The only Biblical text that does specify the color of someone's skin is found in Song of Solomon 1:5 but scholars agree it denotes a sun tan, rather than race¹¹. This gives ground to the argument that the Bible does not introduce division of people by skin color. Such a statement, in consequence, leads to the proposition that the Scriptures do not deem it a crucial aspect to spiritual or social life. The Biblical text expresses that true identity is found in Christ alone (Col. 3:11). Not in the tone of their epidermis.

⁸ Jillian Stinchcomb. "Race, Racism, and the Hebrew Bible: The Case of the Queen of Sheba." *Religions* 12, no. 10 (September 1, 2021): 795, 2.

⁹ J. Daniel Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race*, (London: InterVarsity Press), 2016, 47; Owen Strachan, *Christianity and Wokeness: How the Social Justice Movement Is Hijacking the Gospel - and the Way to Stop It*, (Washington, D.C.: Salem Books, 2021), 31.

¹⁰ Due to the intricacies of the meaning of Song of Solomon 1:5-6, the verse is acknowledged but not included in the list.

¹¹ Iain M. Duguid, *The Song of Songs: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL, USA: IVP Academic, 2015), 84; Duane Garrett and Paul R. House, *Song of Songs and Lamentations, Volume 23B, Word Biblical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan Academic, 2018), 131-132.

Racism in the Bible

Though racism is not explicitly condemned, the rebuke against it is included in the Biblical idea of justice. The Bible condemns racism by virtue of its broader moral framework, which consistently denounces all forms of wrongdoing against one's fellow human beings. Promoters of CRT, as Romero and Liou, prove a lack of satisfaction with the Biblical concept of justice, ultimately appealing to worldly alternatives.

Romero ventures to connect racism with the Biblical text, but fails. He posits that the “glory and honor of the nations” in Revelation 21:26 speaks about the cultural wealth of the different ethnic groups,¹² but he fails to deliver the role of race in the passage. In addition, while objecting for the existence of systematic racial discrimination in America,¹³ Romero concedes that the idea of a racial majority oppressing a racial minority is Biblically absent, even in the most explicit records of systematic discrimination. He agrees that the types of discrimination within the scope of these records are ethnic in nature, at most.¹⁴ Yet, he employs Biblical instances of ethnically driven discrimination as support for the longevity of racism.¹⁵

The interchangeability between race and ethnicity/ culture is a lucid characteristic of his book, as he tends to juxtapose Latino vs White,¹⁶ a concept that stands contrary to one of his opening claims, namely that latino does not have to equal non-white.¹⁷ In reference to racial

¹² Robert Chao Romero and Jeff M. Liou, *Christianity and Critical Race Theory: A Faithful and Constructive Conversation*, (United States: Baker Publishing Group), 33.

¹³ Romero and Liou, *Christianity and Critical Race Theory*, 38, 61.

¹⁴ Romero and Liou, *Christianity and Critical Race Theory*, 61.

¹⁵ Romero and Liou, *Christianity and Critical Race Theory*, 42.

¹⁶ Romero and Liou, *Christianity and Critical Race Theory*, 13.

¹⁷ Romero and Liou, *Christianity and Critical Race Theory*, 13.

minorities he uses ethnic descriptors such as ‘Asian’, ‘Latino’, ‘African-American,’ among others. Nevertheless, when concerning Anglo-saxons/ caucasians he consistently uses the term ‘white;’ a label that he seldom, if ever, substitutes with an ethnic identity. This observed pattern is consistent with a core principle of CRT thought, where color-based profiling of caucasians is fundamental to its underlying framework. As in CRT philosophy, Romero considers ‘color blindness’ detrimental to the problem of racism.¹⁸ Therefore, in the face of silent Biblical records about racism and racial profiling, Romero encourages the Church to integrate CRT into its Theology as the solution to the problem.¹⁹

The Origins of CRT Ideology

Adopting new ideologies into the interpretation of Scripture is always a dangerous process. It is the duty of every Christian to examine every line of thought before incorporating it into their Theology (1 Jn. 4:1). Thus, the origins, foundations, and arguments of CRT must be analyzed under the light of the Biblical truth to decide whether it is in accordance or contrary to Christian principles.

The origins of CRT can be attributed to an earlier theoretical framework known as Critical Theory (CT),²⁰ developed in Frankfurt, Germany.²¹ Eventually, the CT framework was promoted and developed in the U.S. primarily by various legal scholars such as Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, Kinberlé Crenshaw, Richard Delgado, among others. Due to the fact that the

¹⁸ Romero and Liou, *Christianity and Critical Race Theory*, 102-103.

¹⁹ Romero and Liou, *Christianity and Critical Race Theory*, 32

²⁰ Critical Theory Referred to as CT henceforth

²¹ Voddie T. Baucham, *Fault Lines: The Social Justice Movement and Evangelicalism's Looming Catastrophe*, (Washington, D.C.: Salem Books, 2021), 5.

coinage of the CRT initialism is often attributed to Crenshaw,²² her work, in particular, will be analyzed briefly. Kimberlé Crenshaw's influential contribution to CRT can be largely linked to her development of Intersectionality thought.²³ The term 'Intersectionality' was first introduced in 1989 in Crenshaw's paper *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics*, where she explores the idea of systemic oppression.²⁴ According to Crenshaw, the systems of oppression are not only the product of individual prejudices, but rather, they are profoundly entrenched in societal structures²⁵ by those who benefit from the status quo. In other words, society is divided into two groups, the oppressors and the oppressed. Such an idea closely resembles the words of Carl Marx. That is, in effect, because Intersectionality was significantly influenced by Marxism, as Ashley J. Bohrer points out.²⁶ Bohrer exposes the "significant amount of overlap, discussion, and cross-pollination between the intersectional tradition and the Marxist tradition...[in which]²⁷ Many of the intellectual precursors of intersectionality were committed Marxists and/ or socialists."²⁸ In fact, for most critical theorists, Karl Marx is considered the

²² Jacey Fortin, "Critical Race Theory: A Brief History," The New York Times, last modified November 8, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/article/what-is-critical-race-theory.html>

²³ Ashley J. Bohrer, *Marxism and Intersectionality: Race, Gender, Class and Sexuality Under Contemporary Capitalism* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2019), 71.

²⁴ Although Crenshaw's paper was originally founded on the aspects of race and sexuality in particular, the structure of her arguments has been broadly generalized in later subsequent scholarship to accommodate for other types of marginalization beyond these categories.

²⁵ 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* 1989, no. 1 (1989), 145-146.

²⁶ Bohrer, *Marxism and Intersectionality*, 71-72.

²⁷ Brackets mine.

²⁸ Bohrer, *Marxism and Intersectionality*, 31.

originator.²⁹ CT, and subsequently Intersectionality, though they have matured into their own independent theoretical frameworks, remain inextricably connected to their Marxist roots.

Marxist ideology at its core is about creating a social chasm. In the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx elaborate on the idea of class struggles within a society. The conflict is between two groups, those who control the means of production—whom they call the bourgeoisie—and the working class—referred to as the proletariat—who the bourgeoisie benefit from. The system that enables the separation of these two classes and yields exploitation and instability they call capitalism. The solution to the conundrum, according to the manifesto, is a proletarian revolution to overthrow the oppressing system, namely the bourgeoisie.³⁰ Additionally, Marx believed that in order for the revolution to be successful, society needed to rid itself of other impeding systems, such as the family, which is based in capital and private gain, and religion, since it dulls people to the harsh reality imposed by the oppressors.³¹ This thought later found a home in the mind of one of history's most well-known Marxists, Antonio Gramsci who was greatly inspired by the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. An event that led him to adopt Vladimir Lenin's interpretation of Marxism. Subsequently, he integrated and developed this interpretation in his theoretical work in which he claimed that until the Western culture was not dechristianized, it could not be decapitalized.³²

²⁹ Lihat Bradley Levinson, *Beyond Critique: Exploring Critical Social Theories and Education* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 26

³⁰ Robert S. Smith, "Cultural Marxism: Imaginary Conspiracy or Revolutionary Reality?" *Themelios* 44, no. 3 (2019), 436–465.

³¹ Smith, "Cultural Marxism: Imaginary Conspiracy or Revolutionary Reality?," 440, 443.

³² John Fulton, "Religion and Politics in Gramsci: An Introduction." *Sociological Analysis* 48, no. 3 (October 1, 1987): 197–216.

Why CRT Is Not Biblically Acceptable

An analysis of CRT and its Marxist roots, even one as superficial as the one offered by this paper, should lead the Christian mind to think critically on whether the Christian church should adopt a system whose foundations are intrinsically anti-Biblical, anti-God, and anti-Christian. Romero and Liou argue in favor of CRT by approaching the dilemma in the name of social justice. Notwithstanding, Romero, knowing the emergence of CRT from a framework characterized by anti-Christian values, resolves to adopt it claiming it purports the “more than two thousand verses of Scripture that speak of God’s love and justice...”³³ This approach is quite utilitarian in nature.³⁴ The Marxists foundations of CRT cannot be discounted with the pretext that it yields justice.³⁵ The hurdle with this procedure is that Marxist justice and Biblical justice are not even close in character.³⁶

From the outset, CRT is a man-made philosophy that usurps God’s place by defining justice and dignity, an action that pertains only to God (Psa. 89:14). Moreover, an examination of the character of figures like Marx, Eagles, Mussolini, and Gumschi, will detail demonic behavior and thought. Is this the type of people Christian should share in thought with? Certainly not (2 Cor. 6:15)! Therefore, the fact that CRT champions justice does not mean it champions Biblically defined justice. It must be understood that social justice does not always equal Biblical justice,

³³ Romero and Liou, *Christianity and Critical Race Theory*, 20-21.

³⁴ It is important to note that neither Romero or Liou claim to adopt a utilitarian philosophy on their approach, but rather, these are solely my own deductions upon analyzing their work as a whole. It is also necessary to express what I mean when I say Romero and Liou dismiss the Marxists roots or CRT. I do not purport that they fail to acknowledge them, they do. However, I simply mean that they deem CRT worthy of integration with Theology in spite of it.

³⁵ Romero and Liou, *Christianity and Critical Race Theory*, 20.

³⁶ It is surprising that the same group of individuals in the Church who refute Charles Darwin’s definition of creation and Friedrich Nietzsche’s definition of morality, see no problem with leveraging Karl Marx’s definition of justice.

and in particular not the current idea of social justice.³⁷ For this reason, among others, CRT is not a Biblical approach to justice and it fails reconciliation with Scriptures.

Potential Perils of CRT

The fact that the modern concept of race is not found in the Biblical text, as exposed at the beginning of this paper, does not imply God's lack of interest on the subject. He is the author of creation and as such, the skin color variety among human beings pertains to no other than Him (Act. 17:26). This variation is an intentional part of His creation; a display of His Creativity. God, the greatest artist to exist, demonstrates that any delightful canvas entails at least two colors of paint. In consideration of this truth, it is incumbent upon Christians to recognize that all individuals are regarded equally in God's sight. His sovereignty foresaw humanity's tendency to correlate skin color with behavioral patterns and chose to absent this aspect of mankind from the pages of His Book.

God has not made a divide among his creation,³⁸ it is only right to disallow this privilege to man-made philosophies like CRT. As elucidated at the beginning of the paper, the principal goal of CRT is to create a division between two groups, the oppressed and the oppressors.³⁹ The problem of disunity is perhaps the greatest danger CRT poses to the Church. Though supporters of CRT in Theology like Rome and Liou pose that the framework offers aspects of justice and unity lacking in the Church, the lethargic history of Marxism proves otherwise. Any definition of justice that generates division within the body of Christ is not Biblical. On the contrary, it is

³⁷ Baucham, *Fault Lines: The Social Justice Movement and Evangelicalism's Looming Catastrophe*, 8; John MacArthur, "Is the Controversy over 'Social Justice' Really Necessary?," Grace to You blog, August 13, 2018, <https://www.gty.org/library/blog/B180813>.

³⁸ John Piper, *Bloodlines: Race, Cross and the Christian* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2011), 234–40.

³⁹ "Colorado Christian University, 'Statement on Critical Race Theory,' accessed April 8, 2024, <https://www.ccu.edu/about/position-statements/statement-on-critical-race-theory>."

demonic. Paul warns multiple times against division, in spite of the cause (Rom. 16:17-18; 1 Cor. 12:25; 1 Cor. 3:1-4; Eph. 4:4; Php. 2:1-4). Examining other Marxists frameworks beyond CRT, purports the claim that they tend to end in the division of its participants, generating lethargic results.

Another peril pertaining to CRT ideology is that it is not conformed with the Biblical definition of justice⁴⁰ but presumes to have a better one. Such an attitude is arrogant and assumes a function attributed to God alone. God's people are called to act justly (Mic. 6:8; Isa. 1:17; Psa. 82:3-4; Mat. 23:23; Gal. 6:10 but not to define justice.

There is yet another danger that CRT introduces to the body of Christ. This is that it promotes for Christians to be on the defensive about injustice done to their person. This paper will discuss the intricate topic of whether a Christian should react in defense or not when their rights and human dignity is violated. However, it may be argued that the principle of suffering the wrong is by far more remarked by the Holy Scriptures than that of self-defense (Matt. 5:38-39; Rom. 12:17-19; 1 Cor. 6:1-8; 1 Cor. 13:5; Col. 3:13; 1 Pet. 3:9). For these, among other reasons, CRT must be rejected as part of sacred Theology.

Conclusion

This paper began by exploring the concept of race and upon the analysis argued that God does make skin-color segregation among human beings.⁴¹ Sequentially, it was proved that CRT violates this principle by creating a divide. In consequence to this, the paper proposed that CRT does not conform to Biblical truth and therefore must be discarded. The intention of this article

⁴⁰ Ligonier Ministries, "Christianity or Critical Theory," accessed April 8, 2024, <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/christianity-or-critical-theory>.

⁴¹ Colorado Christian University, "Statement on Critical Race Theory."

has not been to reject that all social movements are unbiblical. But rather to advise for a more analytical approach to world philosophies that claim to enhance the doctrine of the Church.

Certainly, there have been civil rights movements in the past that have helped the Church see its shortcomings, as in the case of the abolition of slavery or the Civil Rights Movement. However, all frameworks not conforming to the Scriptures must be rejected.

Glory to the Almighty King, Jesus Christ!

Luke 17:10

Baucham, Voddie T.. *Fault Lines: The Social Justice Movement and Evangelicalism's Looming Catastrophe*. WA, D.C.: Salem Books, 2021.

Bohrer, Ashley J. *Marxism and Intersectionality: Race, Gender, Class and Sexuality Under Contemporary Capitalism*. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2019.

Bolaffi, Guido, Bracalenti, Raffaele, Braham, Peter H., and Gindro, Sandro, eds. *Dictionary of Race, Ethnicity and Culture*. London: SAGE Publications, Limited, 2002.

Colorado Christian University. "Statement on Critical Race Theory." Accessed April 8, 2024.
<https://www.ccu.edu/about/position-statements/statement-on-critical-race-theory/>.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989, no. 1 (1989): 139-167.
<https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8>.

Douglas, Harper. "Etymology of race." Online Etymology Dictionary. Accessed February 21, 2024,
<https://www.etymonline.com/word/race>.

Duguid, Iain M. *The Song of Songs: An Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015.

Garrett, Duane, and Paul R. House. *Song of Songs and Lamentations, Volume 23B. Word Biblical Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2018. Accessed January 2, 2024.

Hays, J. Daniel. *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race*. United Kingdom: InterVarsity Press, 2016.

Isaac, Benjamin. *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004. Accessed February 20, 2024.

Levinson, Bradley. *Beyond Critique: Exploring Critical Social Theories and Education*. NY, NY: Routledge, 2016.

Ligonier Ministries. "Christianity or Critical Theory." Accessed April 8, 2024.
<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/christianity-or-critical-theory>.

MacArthur, John. "Is the Controversy over 'Social Justice' Really Necessary?" Grace to You blog. August 13, 2018. <https://www.gty.org/library/blog/B180813>.

Fortin, Jacey. "Critical Race Theory: A Brief History." The New York Times. Last modified November 8, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/article/what-is-critical-race-theory.html>

Fredrickson, George M. *Racism: A Short History*. REV-Revised. Princeton University Press, 2002.

Fulton, John. "Religion and Politics in Gramsci: An Introduction" *Sociological Analysis* 48, no. 3 (October 1, 1987): 197–216.

Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "*race* (n.6), *Etymology*." December 2023.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/6086213112>.

John Piper, *Bloodlines: Race, Cross and the Christian* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2011), 234–40.

Pigliucci, Massimo, and Jonathan Kaplan. “*On the Concept of Biological Race and Its Applicability to Humans.*” *Philosophy of Science* 70 (5): 1161–72. doi:10.1086/377397.

Romero, Robert Chao, and Jeff M. Liou. *Christianity and Critical Race Theory: A Faithful and Constructive Conversation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2023.

Smith, Robert S. “Cultural Marxism: Imaginary Conspiracy or Revolutionary Reality?” *Themelios* 44, no. 3 (2019), 436–465.

Stinchcomb, Jillian. “Race, Racism, and the Hebrew Bible: The Case of the Queen of Sheba.” *Religions* 12, no. 10 (September 1, 2021): 795, 2.

Strachan, Owen. *Christianity and Wokeness: How the Social Justice Movement Is Hijacking the Gospel - and the Way to Stop It*. WA, D.C.: Salem Books, 2021.

Suzuki, Kazuko, and Diego A. von Vacano. *Reconsidering Race: Social Science Perspectives on Racial Categories in the Age of Genomics*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Tombs, David. *Latin American Liberation Theology*. Boston, MA: Brill, 2002.