**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]](#footnote-0) 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.

**The etymology and historicity of race**

The word race did not gain a seat in the English language until the nineteenth century.[[2]](#footnote-1) 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]](#footnote-2) In actuality, it was not until the 16th century that the concept of race, based on skin color, commenced to gain major traction.[[4]](#footnote-3) Some etymologists agree that the word can be traced back to the Latin *“radix,”* meaning root, which in medieval Latin evolved into *“racemus*[[5]](#footnote-4)” (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]](#footnote-5) revealing it to be a social construct, rather than a genetic determination.[[7]](#footnote-6)

**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]](#footnote-7) From the beginning of creation, humans are defined according to the image of God, not their physical appearance[[9]](#footnote-8) (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]](#footnote-9) 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 race[[11]](#footnote-10). This gives ground to the idea that the Bible pays no attention to the aspect of skin color. Such a statement, in consequence, leads to the proposition that whether race is genetically coded or a mere social construct, the Scriptures do not deem it a crucial aspect to spiritual or social life.[[12]](#footnote-11)

**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,[[13]](#footnote-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,[[14]](#footnote-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.[[15]](#footnote-14) Yet, he employs Biblical instances of ethnically driven discrimination as support for the longevity of racism.[[16]](#footnote-15)

The interchangeability between race and ethnicity/ culture is a lucid characteristic of his book, as he tends to juxtapose Latino vs White,[[17]](#footnote-16) a concept that stands contrary to one of his opening claims, namely that latino does not have to equal non-white.[[18]](#footnote-17) In reference to racial 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 CTR thought, where color-based profiling of caucasians is fundamental to its underlying framework.[[19]](#footnote-18) As in CTR philosophy, Romero considers ‘color blindness’ detrimental to the problem of racism.[[20]](#footnote-19) 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.[[21]](#footnote-20)

**The origins of CRT thought**

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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 origin, foundations, and arguments of CTR 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),[[22]](#footnote-21) developed in Frankfurt, Germany by a group associated with the Institute for Social Research.[[23]](#footnote-22) 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 coinage of the CRT initialism is often attributed to Crenshaw,[[24]](#footnote-23) her work, in particular, will be analyzed to explain the origins of the framework. Kimberlé Crenshaw’s influential contribution to CRT and her prominent seat within the field can be largely linked to her development of Intersectionality thought.[[25]](#footnote-24) The term ‘Intersectionality’ was first introduced in 1989 inCrenshaw’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 that in order to truly understand the marginalized groups of society, the full scope of systemic oppression must be examined.[[26]](#footnote-25) According to Crenshaw, the systems of oppression are not only the product of individual prejudices, but rather, they are profoundly entrenched in societal structures,[[27]](#footnote-26) supported by the dominant groups who benefit from the status quo. In other words, society is divided into two groups, the oppressors and the oppressed. One does not need to make significant progress in reading Crenshaw’s article to notice its resonance with the words of Carl Marx. That is, in effect, because Intersectionality is significantly influenced by Marxism, as Ashley J. Boher points out.[[28]](#footnote-27) In her book *Marxism and Intersectionality : Race, Gender, Class and Sexuality Under Contemporary Capitalism,* Boher exposes in depth the “significant amount of overlap, discussion, and cross-pollination between the intersectional tradition and the Marxist tradition…[in which][[29]](#footnote-28) Many of the intellectual precursors of intersectionality were committed Marxists and/ or socialists.”[[30]](#footnote-29) Considering Intersectionality’s emergence from CT, it is not surprising to read that for most critical theorists, Karl Marx is considered the originator.[[31]](#footnote-30) CT, and subsequently Intersectionality, though they have matured into their own independent theoretical frameworks, remain inextricably connected to their Marxist roots. Thus, in order to fully understand them, it is crucial to have a grasp of at least the core underpinnings of Marxist ideology.

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, in other words, the bourgeoisie.[[32]](#footnote-31) As radical as the idea of a proletarian revolution is, it was not the most radical idea emerging from the Manifesto. Marx believed that in order for the revolution to take place and 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.[[33]](#footnote-32) The thought of the dissolution of the family and religion, with a particular emphasis on the dissolution of Christianity, eventually found a home in the mind of one of history's most well-known Marxists, Antonio Gumsci, a Sardinian who is better known in history for his role as one of the founders of Italy’s communist party. Gumsci was greatly inspired by the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and, in effect, this 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.[[34]](#footnote-33)

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. The answer to the question posed appears self-evident, and although it is, the train of logic that leads to the answer is more intricate than a simple no, primarily because many, as Romero and Liou, approach the dilemma in the name of social justice. Thus, it does not merely suffice to assert that an ideology like CRT—emerging from a broader framework characterized by anti-Christian values—should be rejected. A more elaborate answer must be offered detailing why it should be dismissed, even when it purports to uphold the “more than two thousand verses of Scripture that speak of God’s love and justice…”[[35]](#footnote-34) Romero and Liou seem to treat this conundrum with utilitarian eyes,[[36]](#footnote-35) dismissing the Marxists foundations of CRT with the pretext of yielding a greater good, namely justice.[[37]](#footnote-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.

The problem with CRT, however, extends beyond its rise from a theory historically marked by blood and Christian persecution. A central concern is that it is a man-made philosophy that aims to define justice and dignity, Biblical concepts defined and governed only by God. History has proven repeatedly that attempting to define justice outside the Biblical scope always results in havoc. 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, and in particular not the current idea of social justice.[[38]](#footnote-37)

The attempt to mingle the Marxist ideology of social justice with Biblical justice is not new nor peculiar to Romero. During the second half of the twentieth century, just before Intersectionality gained traction in the United States, a movement under the title of *Teologia de Liberacion* (Liberation Theology) saw an increase in popularity in Latin America, particularly within the Catholic church. Prior to the emergence of Liberation Theology, other movements had aimed to merge political activism—specifically within the branch of social justice—into Theology. Nonetheless, the culmination of this endeavor came until 1971 by Gustavo Gutierrez’s publication, *Una Teologia de Liberacion* (A Theology of Liberation), thus providing the first systemic statement of the movement.[[39]](#footnote-38) Gutierrez’s attempt in his Theology of Liberation was to emphasize the social concern for the ostracized with the purpose of achieving their liberation from the political, economic, and social systems that oppressed them through a “theology that was rooted in the social context of faith.”[[40]](#footnote-39) Words that are echoed by Romero’s ideology. Other theologians behind the thought of Liberation Theology included Hugo Hassman and José Miguez Bonino, all of whom, along with Gutierrez, acknowledged their debt to Marxist analysis.[[41]](#footnote-40) The theological framework offered by Liberation Theology proved so successful that eventually, it produced a variety of “Liberation Theologies”[[42]](#footnote-41) not restrained to race such as, Feminist Theology and Gay and Lesbian Theology.

The intellectual train that takes individuals like Romero and Liou to force an alignment of the Biblical teaching of justice with a Marxist framework like CRT can be grasped, even in disagreement. Conversely, comprehending the path that leads to a framework that approves and promotes a clear prohibition of Scripture, as it is same-sex relations, requires a strenuous mental leap. But neither of these two theological mistakes are Biblically justified. Both are guilty of the same problem, they arise from a dissatisfaction with the Biblical definition of justice or failure to stay within the boundaries of the Scriptural text,[[43]](#footnote-42) a problem that shall be addressed next.

**Detriments 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 variety among human beings pertains to no other than Him (Act. 17:26). The variation is an intentional part of His creation…

(conclusion is under work. The conclusion will connect the purpose of the etymology and historical concept of race and the emphasis on Marxism within the CRT framework. It will end by exposing the dangers that CRT will bring into the church. A Biblical approach to the solution of racism is not within the scope of this paper, thus it won’t be included).

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1. Critical Race Theory is referred to as CRT henceforth. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. Benjamin Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004), 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. George M. Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History,* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2002), 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. Guido Bolaffi, Raffaele Bracalenti, Peter H. Braham, and Sandro Gindro, eds., *Dictionary of Race, Ethnicity and Culture,* (London: SAGE Publications, Limited, 2002), 241. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
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. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
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* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018), ix.. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
7. Suzuki and Vacano, *Reconsidering Race: Social Science Perspectives on Racial Categories in the Age of Genomics*, x. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
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. Add another support [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
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, (Washingtown, D.C.: Salem Books, 2021), 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
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. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
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. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
12. I need to find this resource [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
13. Robert Chao Romero and Jeff M. Liou, *Christianity and Critical Race Theory: A Faithful and Constructive Conversation,* (United States: Baker Publishing Group), 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
14. Ibid., 38, 61. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
15. Ibid., 61. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
16. Ibid., 42. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
17. Ibid., 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
18. Romero and Liou, *Christianity and Critical Race Theory: A Faithful and Constructive Conversation,* 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
19. I need to find this resource [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
20. Romero and Liou, *Christianity and Critical Race Theory: A Faithful and Constructive Conversation,* 102-103. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
21. Ibid., 32 [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
22. Critical Theory Referred to as CT henceforth [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
23. Voddie T. Baucham, *Fault Lines: The Social Justice Movement and Evangelicalism's Looming Catastrophe,* (Washingtown, D.C.: Salem Books, 2021), 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
24. 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 [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
25. Ashley J. Bohrer, *Marxism and Intersectionality: Race, Gender, Class and Sexuality Under Contemporary Capitalism* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2019), 71. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
26. Although Crinshaw’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. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
27. 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. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
28. Bohrer, *Marxism and Intersectionality: Race, Gender, Class and Sexuality Under Contemporary Capitalism,* 71-72. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
29. Brackets mine. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
30. Ibid.,31. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
31. Lihat Bradley Levinson, *Beyond Critique: Exploring Critical Social Theories and Education* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 26 [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
32. Robert S. Smith, “Cultural Marxism: Imaginary Conspiracy or Revolutionary Reality?” *Themelios* 44, no. 3 (2019), 436–465. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
33. Smith, “Cultural Marxism: Imaginary Conspiracy or Revolutionary Reality?,” 440, 443. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
34. John Fulton, “Religion and Politics in Gramsci: An Introduction.*” Sociological Analysis* 48, no. 3 (October 1, 1987): 197–216. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
35. Romero and Liou, *Christianity and Critical Race Theory: A Faithful and Constructive Conversation,* 20-21. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
36. 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, for they do. However, I simply mean that they deeme CRT worthy of integration with Theology in spite of it. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
37. Romero and Liou, *Christianity and Critical Race Theory: A Faithful and Constructive Conversation,* 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
38. 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. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
39. David Tombs, *Latin American Liberation Theology,* (Boston, MA: Brill 2002), 119–120. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
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41. Paul E. Sigmund, "The Development of Liberation Theology: The Marxist Phase," in *Liberation Theology at the Crossroads: Democracy or Revolution?* (New York, 1992; online edn, Oxford Academic, October 3, 2011), https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195072747.003.0005, accessed March 6, 2024. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
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