

Is Critical Race Theory Christian?

A Macropost (Parts 1-4)

By Owen Strachan

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(Author's note: I have taken the opportunity to collect my four posts about CRT into one in order to make the whole series readable.)

Part One | Critical Race Theory: Is it Christian? First Principles (Part 1)

In recent years, a serious discussion has taken place around the subject of race. Various events in American public life have prompted and informed dimensions of this discussion, including some events that have shocked and saddened many. Thankfully, within Christian circles, many believers seem to have a common desire to work for unity along ethnic lines. But there is considerable discussion, and even disagreement, about how best to do so.

The worldview called critical race theory (CRT) has gained some traction in this discussion. It is argued by some that CRT is a system of thought that Christians can support in some measure, using it as a prism by which to see the world and (therefore) gain vital insights about it. There is a good deal of debate about CRT among believers, and not a little disagreement about what it means to engage it. Some seem to mean that we can interface with CRT the same way we can any philosophical system, analyzing it in service of a thoroughgoing critique, while others seem to mean something more. They advocate for viewing CRT as a philosophy that helps explain our current situation in societal and even ecclesial terms.

In the middle of these views, I suspect, are many unsettled people, not a little confused by the terms, the issues, and the broader significance of the respective positions. They want unity in Christ, they have a genuine desire for the demonstration of that unity, but they are unsure about different elements of the conversation in question. Friends who agree about much end up disagreeing over CRT, suffice it to say, with not a little cloudiness in the conversation. This four-part interaction is an attempt to bring some clarity to these matters. This series is not an exhaustive account of CRT, nor does it attempt to be; it is a primer, essentially, a blog-level interaction with CRT as a system. (For a deeper Christian interaction, see [this](#), for one evangelical engagement of “wokeness,” see [this](#), and for a sympathetic secular overview, see [this](#) and [this](#).)

Before we analyze CRT as a system and offer a seven-point critique, let's think about our first principles.

First Principles: We Are Unyieldingly Anti-Racism and Pro-Christ

CRT engages, at base, the problems of racism and ethnocentrism in the West. We should all engage such matters, and should think carefully and biblically about them. At the outset of this discussion, we should be abundantly clear: racism and ethnocentrism are real and historical sins. They have not caused a little bit of division; across the entire world, in all eras of history, these iniquities have caused great pain and suffering.

This recognition hits uncomfortably close to home for the church. Even believers, including some whose teaching in numerous areas we rightly esteem, have gotten matters wrong here. There are historical figures we rightly admire in different areas that supported slavery, segregation, and policies that deny the fullness of the reality of the *imago dei* in people of color. We make no effort to whitewash or ignore these historical failings, nor to downplay the necessity of fighting ethnocentrism and racism wherever such sins rear their head. We note this even as we give thanks for major societal and cultural progress in the West over the last two centuries, and as we reject the view that we should offhandedly "cancel" engagement of gospel-loving theologians who show evidence of sinful thinking and acting. (This same evidence, after all, will be found in our work long after we shed this mortal coil.)

We have much to say as the church about these issues. The person and work of Jesus Christ is the Bible's answer to division of every kind. We should be careful not to read the Pauline distinction between Jew and Gentile in ethnic terms, primarily, but we do also note that these groups were alienated from one another. In his atoning death, Jesus made "one new man" of the two groups (Eph. 2:15). If the cross of Christ has overcome the propulsive hostility between Jew and Gentile, it has overcome all other such dividing walls, shattering them, bringing them down by cruciform power made effectual following the resurrection (see the powerful testimonies of several Christian pastors [in this very helpful book](#)).

Justifying faith grounded in Christ's cross leaves us with no ultimate separation between once-balkanized people. In Christ, there is neither Jew nor Gentile, man nor woman, slave nor free (Gal. 3:28). Paul does not mean we collapse into anthropological ooze in our moment of justification; he does mean we are now united by the most powerful force there is in the cosmos, the love of God activated by the grace of God.

The Beauty of the Local Church

This beautiful vision takes real shape in one key institution: the local church, which is called as much as it can to represent the diversity of the universal church. God does not want us to be united spiritually without any clear demonstration of this unity. God wants us to come together in local churches united around biblical doctrine and anchored salvifically in the gospel of grace. Once we join the local church, we seek to do all we can to make good on the unity Christ has already secured. We build friendships with people we have nothing in common with outside of our common Savior, a crucified Middle-Eastern Jew by background who began a truly global movement of the gospel.

This point matters greatly, and is often under-discussed. Millennia before America became an evangelical hub, the gospel spread like wildfire in the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and beyond. Those who see Christian influence and theology as “Western” need to do their historical homework; that is far from the truth. We have been a global movement from day one (for more on this, see my chapter on “Race & Ethnicity” [in this book](#)). For this reason, we are not forced into a false choice between loving diversity and disavowing secular theories; instead, we should celebrate diversity and work in common-sense, non-alarmist ways to honor our unity in Christ in institutional terms while, in obedience to Colossians 2:8, steadfastly refusing to allow any worldly philosophy to take us captive (more on this to come).

Real divisions remain in our world, and many of us long for the day when our global body is one. Until that day, we cannot ourselves refigure our communities into ideally diverse settings, but we can demonstrate to the world through our vibrant fellowship that nothing unites like the blood of Christ. We have much more to say here, and this hard work to be sure, but the local church is intended by God to thwart the wisdom of the world. It should show—as much as it can per its surroundings, an important nuance—that worldly unity is not true unity. Strong as it may feel, it is ultimately no more than temporary affinity. The love of God is what truly connects, truly links, truly overcomes real sin and real division. As much as Christ loves his blood-bought people, so Satan hates the body, hates its unity in Christ’s cross, and works tirelessly to undermine it. We must remember that the “one new man” is ever in danger of attack, for Satan hates nothing more on this earth than our unity in—and union with—the Son of God.

The preceding is not *pro forma* material; it is nothing less than God’s plan for overcoming natural divisions, animosity, and hatred in fleshly, ecclesial form. But we can say more than this: the local church, the foretaste of the gathered church in all eternity, is positively how God displays that his gospel is a gospel of love, the strongest force in the cosmos, stronger than Satan, stronger than generational hatred, stronger than sin, stronger than hell.

Part Two | Critical Race Theory: What Does It Teach? (Part 2)

In part one, we charted our first principles on this general subject. In this section, we seek to sketch—in a brief manner—the core commitments and ideas of CRT. This is not an exhaustive accounting and is not intended to be, please note; in addition, when I cite sources to give a quick tracking of the conversation over CRT, I am in no way necessarily commending the argument or worldview represented in the source. In most cases, as will be clear, the opposite is true.

At its core, CRT is a system of thought that advocates for the reorientation of both worldview and world. Our current order is based, to a significant degree, on unjust foundations grounded in white privilege and systemic racism (see this [article](#) and this [book](#)). We live in a racist world, therefore, where major policy decisions inhibit people of color in a societal way and “microaggressions” do the same at the personal level (here’s one pro-CRT [source](#) on the latter).

Power Politics and Power Principles

CRT leans heavily on power dynamics, viewing society as the allotment of power and culture as the argument funding that allotment. In this sense CRT has resonance with a Marxist framework, for each sees the world in terms of power dynamics and unjust institutional structures (see Roger Scruton's powerful critique of cultural Marxism in this [book](#)). The Marxist critique is primarily economic (though it has profound theological and philosophical import), while the CRT critique is primarily racial (though it too is impactful across the board). The systems are not precisely the same, but do surely overlap in many troubling ways (as Noah Rothmann has shown in his book [Unjust](#)).

The person who leans into CRT will see the world in a newly sensitive way, it is said. In many cases, the embrace of CRT works together with an embrace of intersectionality, the argument that diverse minority groups of "race," class, sexuality, physical disability, and gender have intersecting interests given their shared powerlessness (see this [book](#) and this [article](#)). This recognition leads into "identity politics," the practice of advancing a given group's cause based on the lack of public support for that which they represent.

"Social justice" occurs when such groups are given agency they previously did not have and thus led, effectively, to the head of the societal line (for perspective, see this brief [interaction](#) and this [essay](#)). Those who become "woke" are those who awake to the need for intersectional justice such that these different groups are given the cultural voice and societal power they have been denied. (As a quick aside, it is true that people can be wronged in different ways per the intersectional observation, but noting this truth does not entail the necessity of adopting intersectionality as a prism or solution.)

For those who read the world theologically, CRT thus offers a theological system of sorts. Our major problem is "whiteness," understood mainly as a mentality (and in many cases an embodied one), our intellectual aim is to gain critical awareness of the inequities of our world, our solution is to right the power imbalances in our institutions by advancing the interests of disadvantaged groups, and the ultimate end of such work is a just society in which division is rooted out (see this [resource](#) and this [book](#)). Theology is a key term to use in analyzing CRT, much as CRT may seem distant at first blush from theology. This is a movement of liberation from oppression, oppression that is meted out at the level of law and policy, and at the level of personal interaction in even uncomprehended ways.

As we can see, CRT is a blend of both argument and narrative. On the one hand, it is driven by the stories of oppressed people; on the other, it is an argument about the nature and structure of our world. Those who engage CRT in different ways will find that CRT is presented as personally true (which makes it difficult to refute in polite terms), but also has all the trappings of a system of thought (which means Christians must test it as with any such system). It is not wrong, though, to see CRT as directed at activism; though an argument, it is not so much a full-blown philosophy as it is a collection of ideas aimed at social and cultural transformation, transformation that is driven by activism.

CRT, Postmodernity, and Collective Guilt

CRT has much in consonance, we see, with postmodern thought. Postmodernity—as you may have heard—emphasizes truth, but truth in a personalized and thus relative way: “my truth” and “your truth” (see this [blog](#) and this [essay](#)). Yet late-stage postmodernism is a curious thing, for even as it narrativizes truth (makes it personal and not absolute, that is), it also views some personalized truths as more needful than others. The personalized truth of historically disadvantaged people, in other words, takes precedence over the personalized truth of historically privileged people. Past powerlessness effectively functions as the determinant of whose truth norms the truth of others (per Neil Shenvi, CRT is dependent on standpoint epistemology, which emphasizes our social appropriation of truth, even as it professes belief in objective truth). We note carefully at this point that CRT assumes that disadvantaged groups have an inherent right to power; there is no absolute metaphysical standard by which to measure power claims, then, but rather a social or cultural standard (CRT is effectively functional postmodernism in this sense). This is a noteworthy point for those who hold to the Christian faith, which is a system of absolute, all-systems-norming, truth.

By this line of reasoning we come to understand why CRT lays certain expectations at the feet of certain groups. CRT divides people into different groups, as we have seen, and not only holds privileged peoples responsible for righting *current* wrongs, but also holds those same privileged peoples responsible for righting *past* wrongs. People who have seeming affinity with past oppressors—buying into “whiteness” which usually people (especially men) with “white” skin innately do—are asked or ordered to repent for past wrongs (see this [report](#) and this [talk](#)). Here again we note the strongly theological cast of CRT and its body of language. “White” people, for example, are encouraged to offer collective confession and repentance for the wrongs of “white” people who lived decades or even hundreds of years prior. Such a perspective depends upon the view that shared skin pigment, without respect to ethnicity, social class, education, upbringing, economic ability, family, religion, spirituality, repentance, change, personal experience, or other factors, is the determinant of participation in past oppression.

To put this more simply: if white people did it 100 years, white people today are guilty for it. They have associational guilt by virtue of their skin pigmentation (or their mindset). Not only do they have guilt (in what seems to be a “legal” sense, an unmoveable and objective verdict), they should repent of the actions of past peoples. Not only should they repent, but they should take active steps to reorder their individual life and their community and country to atone for past wrongs. Not only should they take such steps, but they should strongly consider (per some CRT advocates) the issuing of reparations to the descendants of unprivileged peoples (see this famous [essay](#)). Not only should reparations be issued, but the law should be recast, such that legal matters are not fundamentally about righting wrongs and encoding morality, but about the restructuring of society to make it equitable and fair, with privilege and power redistributed (here’s one [UN resource](#) that makes this argument). Justice per CRT is not retributive; it is distributive, and it is oriented per its leading theorists to a secular and quite possibly utopian end.

Hard Questions for CRT

Moving from the analytical to the personal, what does all this mean, say, for the average person? Let's take an average "white" person in the Midwest. Here again, CRT makes no major effort to distinguish one "white" person from another; it thus is in grave danger of falling prey to the same view that wronged so many people of color in past days in the West, that is, to racial essentialism. The "white" person from the Midwest—let's say this person is a man—is the inheritor of great privilege. This person should, per CRT, repent of whiteness, repent of toxic masculinity (by virtue of being a man in solidarity with all men), repent of microaggressions committed unknowingly against unprivileged peoples, repent of the past wrongs of white people, and so on.

CRT, we see, makes little effort to understand the person as an individual, a unique and complex individual both made in God's image yet fallen in Adam. This particular person in question may not have a richly developed understanding of the American past, or the experiences of different groups in history, and definitely does have real sin and prejudice to deal with in spiritual terms. However, it is potentially problematic to view this person in monolithic terms. Are all white people the same? Are all men toxic? Does the Bible allow for such views?

For example, playing this out a bit, is the experience of a "white" abolitionist the same as that of a "white" plantation owner? Are those two figures equally guilty if both have "white" skin? In terms of one's lineage, if a descendant of a Holocaust survivor meets the descendant of a Nazi commandant, are the fates and identities and spiritual destinies of these two people fixed by their differing genes and families? Does the poor "white" person in rural Maine born into abject poverty, lost in opioid addiction (of whom there are many), benefit from privilege the same way as a "white" Mainer born into wealth? Is the one born into wealth in some form guilty for that accident of birth—is it wrong, inherently, to enjoy some form of what is called "privilege"? Again, taking into biblical warnings about the danger of the love of riches, does the Bible teach that wealthy people are worse—are more wicked by nature—than non-wealthy people? What about wealthy people who are minorities and inherited tens of millions of dollars—how should we understand "privilege" in their case?

These questions are not "gotcha" questions. They are real, and they must be asked. Yet this bevy of queries only begins to scratch the surface of the difficulties inherent in classing people by their skin color. Yet CRT offers just such a worldview. It is in fundamental terms a worldview that thus comprehends real human conditions, differences of experience at the most basic level, and that offers a system of thought and activism by which to address them. Many can understand why CRT would catch traction in historical terms, for America as one example did harbor real racial sin in past ages, whether the antebellum or postbellum eras, all the way up the Civil Rights Era.

Further, racism and ethnocentrism are sins that have no place in the Christian worldview. Like every major sinful temptation, these problems have not "gone away"; you cannot legislate sin out of existence in this fallen world. We must fight racism and ethnocentrism until the end of the age, even as we must avoid replacing the sinful prejudice of previous eras with a new one that threatens to compromise union with Christ—and unity with one another.

Part Three | Critical Race Theory: Four Problems with CRT (Part 3)

In part one we reviewed “first principles” from a Christian vision of ethnicity; in part two we took a look at CRT. A question remains: is CRT a system that Christians should embrace? CRT advocates, after all, see real failings in American society and culture. Is the system of thought and activism they have generated the biblical answer to sin of various kinds? In what follows, we see that CRT is not Christian, and should not be embraced by Christians. I will give seven reasons for this conclusion, four of which are found in this post, three of which are in this series’s final post.

First, CRT tweaks the doctrine of humanity, losing sight of the *imago dei* as our constituent identity. The image of God is the ground of our positive anthropological unity as a human race. As I argue extensively in [Reenchanted Humanity](#), God made the man in his image and made the woman from the man’s rib (Genesis 1 & 2). As a result, both the man and the woman and all their offspring bear the image of God. Every person is thus *fully human* per the image. It is true that image-bearers oppress one another, but Christianity does not begin with a system of power as that which orders our conception of humanity. Rather, we begin with unity, unity grounded in who God made us to be, and who we are even in our post-fall world.

We are not fundamentally disunited, then, but united by our common theistic formation. Sin scrambles this unity, yes, but it endures nonetheless. Humanity is not fundamentally different, but fundamentally alike. CRT leaves little room for this commitment, and for meaningful promotion of it across people groups, backgrounds, and experiences. The formative note in CRT is not of fundamental anthropological unity, but fundamental anthropological difference. For this reason, unity is very hard to achieve, even when in practical terms many people live together in relative unity and peace.

Second, CRT edits federal headship, making our constitutive identity our skin color as part of a larger group. The Scripture sees humanity in Adam. He is the first image-bearer, and we are all part of the race of which he is the first person. He is the head of the human race, in other words. He is not an isolated being, merely the first human, but is rather our representative in Eden. We all fall in him; we are not victims of his fall, therefore, but are fellow criminals with him. His fall is our fall.

This means that our primary natural identity is in Adam. Christ does not come to solve the various problems of various socioethnic groups, as if his atonement applies uniquely to a Swiss person in a way it does not to a Japanese person. Our fundamental degenerative unity is in Adam as sinners, and our fundamental regenerative identity is in Christ as redeemed. These are the two core groups of the human race. Are we in Adam, and thus lost and damned forever, or are we in Christ, and thus saved and bound for the New Jerusalem? God has made us diverse people in terms of ethnicity; this is not a negative reality, but is to his glory. Our Trinitarian God, living unity in living diversity, fills the earth with diverse peoples. Our diversity becomes a wall in Babylon, this is true, but nonetheless the peoples of earth retain their identity in Adam, and may find true and truly supernatural identity in Christ.

Neither Adamic nor Christic headship obviates or obliterates ethnic distinctiveness. God loves the diversity of his creation. Nonetheless the Scriptures does not present us with many federal heads, but with two. We are either in Adam or in Christ. Coming to faith in Christ in no way entails erasing our background or ethnicity, but it does entail seeing our purpose and meaning and self-conception as found in Christ and Christ alone.

Third, CRT promotes a new system of associational unrighteousness and performative righteousness. CRT does not present us with the biblical problem faced by humanity: our sin, which occasions God's just justice. CRT gives us a new major problem: unfairly distributed power based on societally-founded inequities. Therefore, instead of proclaiming the cross of Christ as the means of our uplift, CRT offers the solution of power rebalancing. This occurs when "privileged" people "check" their unfair advantages bestowed upon them by a fundamentally inequitable body politic.

They must also be silent; as Henry Louis Gates, Jr. said some years back, "speech codes kill critique." Free speech is therefore chilled and then lost in different settings as those without privilege step forward, thus righting the major wrong outlined above. (Much free speech today is called "hate speech," for which in a CRT framework there is little defense, for truth is narrativized and traditional legal documents like the Constitution and Bill of Rights are outmoded, having been formed in unjust eras of history.)

We should observe at this point that we are in dangerous territory. To recast our major problem is to also lose sight of our one biblical solution. We are not unrighteous in Adam per CRT; we are unrighteous, effectively, if we are part of a privileged group, a status we carry by virtue of our background and skin color. We may become righteous not through justifying faith grounded in the person and work of Christ, but through performing acts of cultural repentance, by "checking our privilege." This is a works-based system. It presents humanity with a different problem than that laid out in Scripture, and it summons humanity to a different system of righteousness than that declared in Scripture.

It is of course true that racists and ethnocentrists must repent of such sin, and reject it completely. But this commitment, the outworking of the gospel in a sinner's life, is different than CRT. CRT does not suggest that racism and ethnocentrism are elements of sinfulness; CRT identifies such failings as our essential problem. This is a cultural hamartiology (doctrine of sin) with a cultural and political soteriology (doctrine of salvation). It thus creates real division in the body of Christ, effectively pulling people apart who have been made one new man by the blood of Jesus (Eph. 2:11-22). Instead of seeing ourselves as united to one another in Christ, we see ourselves as alienated. We thus bear antipathy to one another, and to fellow human beings, simply because of their skin color or ethnicity or background.

Fourth, CRT posits cultural change as our telos, not the salvation of sinners through Christ.

As we can see, CRT does not make any positive case for the faith once for all delivered to the saints. CRT is about cultural and political change. It accomplishes its ends through changing minds, but also through changing laws.

The law, and basic institutional structures throughout society, needs to be re-envisioned according to CRT. The law has heretofore supported inequity. The law (and hiring practices and admissions

practices and other such sorting elements) needs reformulating such that it is not a tool of retributive justice—rendering to each what they deserve—but a tool of distributive justice, reapportioning privilege to those without it. Said differently, the fundamental concern of the law is not to apply justice proportionate to human actions, but to enact justice based on cultural considerations. This is a thoroughgoing revision of the law.

We can quickly note that minority groups have been discriminated against in many cases in history, in some cases in terrible numbers. Further, law enforcement must be held accountable, and police officers who err should be disciplined like any other person. Nonetheless, if we relinquish the law and demonize law enforcement, we descend into anarchy. We create an unstable society. We wrong many who will now live without justice, and who will be preyed upon by the weak.

But it is not enough according to CRT to redo the law. We must also call for the awareness of collective guilt, and collective repentance. “White” people, as noted above, are collectively guilty for the wrongs of other “white” people. In response, they should apologize, confess the wrongs of their forebears, and perform private and public works of repentance. We note on this point that the New Testament in no way assigns such responsibilities to any person; we are not called to repent for what our grandfather or grandmother did, but for what we have done. In the early church, Jew and Gentile were not to hold one another responsible for the past wrongs of their descendants; they were called to embrace the power of the gospel, and become a family by the blood of Christ, a family whose bond and allegiance trumps any earthly association, however deep, however historic.

Part Four | Critical Race Theory: Three Final Problems with CRT (Part 4)

My comments in this post build off of parts one, two, and three. We dive back into our interaction with CRT in order to understand three final problems with this system.

Fifth, CRT destabilizes truth, making it narrativ rather than absolute. We see the postmodern dimension of CRT here. While CRT advocates embrace standpoint epistemology and thus honor absolute truth conceptually, CRT emphasizes that our access to social location will shape our handling of truth (I’m citing conversation with Neil Shenvi here). This can lead easily to the promotion of “my truth,” which when possessed by an unprivileged person becomes a weaponized tool of cultural change. CRT, like postmodernity, we recognize, is not “soft” truth, though; it is actually “hard” truth, very hard indeed. Yet there is no deeper ontological grounding for postmodern truth, and for CRT; rather, CRT simply asserts its commitments without foundation beyond the personal.

It is difficult to underplay how significant this point is. If in practice we make truth narrativ and relative rather than theistic and absolute, we lose truth. If we lose truth—true truth, normative and norming truth—then we lose the super-structure of the gospel and the Christian faith. Christianity depends upon truthfulness; truthfulness is grounded in the character and identity of God. To personalize and relativize truth according to social location is to take truth out of God and

ground it in us. Doing so means that truth claims are merely the opinions of one group; CRT oddly makes the claims of a single person representative of their entire ethnic or racial group, eliding the fact that people of different ethnicities differ wildly in their viewpoints.

This general viewpoint means that reading theology, for example, can become little more than a matter of identifying a given author's background and ethnicity. Theology and biblical interpretation thus morphs into sociology. This is deeply damaging to the pursuit and adjudication of truth. Can we bring our biases and background into our work to its detriment? We surely can. Is it healthy to read a wide range of voices? It definitely is. Does this possibility of bias, however, undermine the very nature of our theological work, rendering our sermons and writings and claims merely the words of one representative of an ethnic group? It does not. A statement or claim or proposition or story is not true because of our background and cultural standing and lack of privilege; our teaching is true because it accords with truth, with the Word of God above all.

CRT epistemology begins by saying something realistic—that everybody has their own perspective. But it loses sight of the fact that God's truth is true for everyone, regardless of their background or past experience. God's truth is true at all times and in all places. We do not want a system of truth that molds to us; if we are in Christ, we want a system of truth that molds us. In biblical epistemology, praise God, we have such a system, one that makes sense of us and of our world. Indeed, only in Christian epistemology anchored in God himself do the one and the many cohere, and only in this divine system do we have unity in diversity. CRT, however, gives us only diversity, for its dependence upon standpoint epistemology ends up collapsing the world into multi-perspectivalism and the resulting contest for power. Instead of unity in diversity, we are consigned to estrangement, eternal subjects of hostility.

Sixth, CRT is uncritically associated with (or susceptible to) various movements that are not consonant with Christianity. CRT is an intersectional ideology. It makes common cause with "underprivileged" groups, including "sexual minorities" who find their place in the LGBT movement (as one example). This term shows how CRT and related systems recast movements in terms of power dynamics, not categories of truth. Scripture knows nothing of the language of "sexual minorities," and Christians should steer clear of such speech to the full. Scripture knows of godly sexuality which God loves, and ungodly sexuality which God despises and will judge.

CRT effectively makes virtuous most any movement that is in a minority position in society irrespective of its views. This is a key part of how "transgenderism" has become, effectively, a civil right, when in truth it is no such thing; it is sin, not worthy of approbation, and should in no way be classed as a disability or a righteous cause. We are already seeing how pedophilia is traveling the same path; the logic behind its rise is inevitable given the dynamics behind CRT and intersectionality. Nor can we fail to note that our culture's predominantly therapeutic worldview speeds this ascent. Since there is no such thing as sin in the traditional sense, and since everyone needs affirmation as they are, there is no depravity, no perversity, that a godless order will fail to elevate as a noble cause. (See the [recent TEDx talk](#) presenting pedophilia as a neutral orientation worthy of recognition and affirmation.)

Rising support for pedophilia aside, CRT takes complex issues and makes them deceptively simple. Many advocates of CRT approach immigrants as a minority group, positing immigration as a natural, inalienable right. Any who raise concerns about the pragmatics of immigration are

therefore presented as harming minorities. While it is unquestionably wrong to see immigrants as inherently evil, we must be much more careful regarding immigration than CRT urges us to be. Immigration is for many people a matter not of principle but of pragmatics; in other words, it is not *whether* we should welcome immigrants—for this is widely believed—but *how many* people our country can welcome, and into what conditions and situation they come, that draw real and justifiable concern. Where CRT tells us to have a blanket policy here, we do much better to have a thoughtful, balanced, and societally-sound policy. The life of a nation is a complex thing, and we must handle with care in order to preserve the strength of our country, whether in an economic or sociopolitical sense.

At this point we can make a related observation: CRT, like leftism more broadly, is inherently activist. It is not orientationally conservative. In surveying the world, it diagnoses immediate problems and calls for sweeping and unimpeded changes. This is not a conservative approach to our public order; it is a liberal instinct. It looks at very complex situations and reduces them to action items. In CRT, everyone who is not a person of color is effectively a racist, and so needs to repent; society is fundamentally misaligned, and needs massive redress; our solutions cannot be gradual, but must be instantaneous. Some situations do call for immediate action, it is true, but many do not. CRT's activist nature tempts us as a cure-all, but we should urge caution regarding not only its actual principles, but its default activist mode.

To read more along these lines in conservative terms, see [this](#) by Thomas Sowell, [this](#) by Roger Scruton, [this](#) by Noah Rothman, and [this](#) by Shelby Steele, for starters. We need to steer well clear of Marxism and socialism in any form, and young people in particular need help here. (Send them to PragerU as well for some helpful short videos—see [this](#) and [this](#) and [this](#) and [this](#) for starters.)

Seventh, CRT thus represents a different system of thought than Christianity, one we should carefully study but ultimately reject. As we have seen, CRT is not Christianity; CRT is distinct from Christianity. It overlaps with Christianity in that it expresses concern for those who have been wronged for racial and ethnic reasons. But even the way it construes this problem is decidedly different from the biblical vision, and the solution offered by CRT to the problem it frames is radically different from gospel redemption. CRT is a system we do well to study, think about, analyze, and critique; it is not a system we should endorse, adopt, or embrace.

One additional matter deserves comment. As a different system of thought than Christianity, we should not be surprised to see CRT handle history differently than a Christian approach to the same. In a CRT framework, history is effectively divided up between two groups: those who are evil and should be cast off, and those who are virtuous. This line of assessment should trouble us as believers, for while there is real sin in the Christian past, we are those who know that any of our predecessors can *only* be imperfect and flawed. It is right to identify and decry sin in the Christian past, but it is not right to marginalize and silence born-again believers from the past who erred along racial and ethnic lines. CRT encourages us to take such a stance; it summons us to apply a doctrine of sin to our past leaders that is distinct from the biblical one (see above).

With all the foregoing in mind, CRT is one of many systems of thought in our world that we must not let take us captive (Colossians 2:8). Instead, we should “demolish strongholds” by subjecting unbiblical systems to biblical, theological, and ethical critique, emulating Paul as we do so (2 Corinthians 10:4). We do not embrace part of Marxism, or part of Epicureanism, or part of

existentialism, or part of homosexuality, or part of transgenderism, or part of pedophilia, or part of postmodernity as believers. We learn about these causes and worldviews, we compassionately engage those enmeshed in them and thus headed for eternal destruction, and we refute them. This is what we call cultural deconstruction and gospel reconstruction.

Conclusion

Our discussion of CRT and related matters must end where Christian faith begins: the cross of Christ. The cross, as Luther said, is truly our theology. The cross is stronger than any system, however enticing. For this and the other reasons we have sketched out in this piece, we are left with the following conclusion: we should not marry CRT to Christianity. We should instead pray for the release and liberation of those who have fallen prey to it. About these things we must be clear.

Some people will respond—okay, maybe you're right, but what is in CRT's place? In the place of CRT is biblical Christianity. Biblical Christianity is the great need of our age. Biblical Christianity is local church oriented. It urges us, as noted at the beginning of this series, to en flesh our Christ-secured union in local congregations. Biblical Christianity is resolutely ethical and anti-racist and anti-ethnocentrist. Wherever there are genuine forms of either of these sins, true believers oppose them. But we also oppose a vision of humanity, and especially regenerate humanity, that sees us as implacably and innately divided.

Our major work, therefore, is theological and spiritual. We preach and teach the whole counsel of God. We believe in the "one new man" created by Christ through his atoning death (Eph. 2:15). Our major cultural and social program is this: to preach the gospel, and to live according to the realities of redemption, and to oppose evil anywhere we find it. Such en fleshed Christianity is activist primarily in terms of ecclesiology, but also in terms of the public square. It is not, however, activist in the way that leftism is. Fundamentally, Christians seek to conserve that which is true, good, and beautiful. This does not mean only *preserving* virtue, of course, but *promoting* it. Nonetheless Christians must steer clear of a fundamentally progressive and liberal mindset in which sociology trumps theology and activism replaces ecclesiology.

There is much more we could say about CRT. At this point, however, we must conclude. We close by noting this in sum: a failure to stand up and tell the truth about this philosophy or any other is a failure of theology, and because of this, a failure of love. This is a matter of grave urgency. Let us remember the early church in our particular moment, and let us recall how they simultaneously told the truth about every unbiblical worldview, preaching Christ as the hope of every sinner of every kind.

So must we.