Community Bible Church

Adult Bible Fellowship, November 2023

**A Biblical Response to Critical Race Theory and the Woke Movement, pt. 1**

**Introduction:**

* Other than me mentioning it in the announcements or occasionally in a lesson or sermon, how many of us have heard of Critical Race Theory? What about Queer Theory, Anti-Racism, White Fragility, Cultural Marxism, or Intersectionality?
* Anybody want to venture a definition of Critical Race Theory?
* One time I asked in Men’s Bible Study, and one of the men said, “CRT = it’s bad to be white.”
* I’m technically going to start by talking about “Contemporary Critical Theory,” which is the basic soil that all of these other ideas grow out of.

**What is Critical Theory?**

**Contemporary Critical Theory**[[1]](#footnote-1) **is a perspective on reality that sees all social relationships through the lens of power, dividing people into oppressed groups and oppressor groups along various axes like race, class, gender, sexuality orientation, physical ability and age.**

* **Race – the majority oppresses the minority**
* **Class – the upper classes oppress the lower classes**
* **Gender – men oppress women**
* **Sexual orientation – straight people oppress LGBTQ+ people**
* **“Ableism” – the physically able oppress the disabled**

**MARXISM – Contemporary Critical Theory is basically the application of Marxism to every other social tension in human society. It is also a good starting place to understand Contemporary Critical Theory.**

* **Marxism was the division of society into the “capitalists” and “labor.”**
* **The capitalists oppressed the laborers.**
* **The solution was economic revolution: The population would rise up and take control of the means of production and create a “utopian equality” of all people.**

**Various popular “street names” for Contemporary Critical Theory:**

* + Post-Colonial Studies
	+ Queer Theory
	+ Critical Pedagogy
	+ Whiteness Studies
	+ Critical Race Theory
	+ Anti-Racism
	+ Cultural Marxism (there are some problems with this label…)

**4 Characteristics of Contemporary Critical Theory[[2]](#footnote-2):**

* Social Binary – Society is divided into oppressor and oppressed groups.
* Hegemonic Power – All the ways that the values of the oppressor group(s) are imposed on society. - see the redefinition of oppression below
* Lived Experience – oppressed people have insight into social reality that the oppressors can’t have. They have the real insight into reality and it MUST be affirmed.
* Social Justice – dismantle the structures that maintain the social binary.

**The redefinition of oppression[[3]](#footnote-3):**

* Critical Theory is dependent on a new definition of oppression.
* Oppressed groups are subjugated not by physical force or even overt discrimination, but through the exercise of hegemonic power—the ability of dominant groups to impose their norms, values, and expectations on society as a whole, relegating other groups to subordinate positions.

**Intersectionality:** All of the “systems” of oppression and discrimination “intersect.”

* All these systems are overlapping and interdependent and must be torn down together.
* For example, patriarchy, “white privilege,” Christianity, racism, sexism, transphobia, “ableism,” etc. are all interwoven forms of oppression that all must be dismantled.

**Compare and Contrast Critical Race Theory and Civil Rights Movement:**

What is the difference between the Civil Rights Movement and CRT?

* Martin Luther King Jr. appealed to Southern whites (the “oppressor class” from the CRT perspective) with a Biblical anthropology. In other words, he appealed to Southern whites based on the idea that God had created all races equal and we are all made in the image of God. The appeal was for an equality of opportunity and for people to be “judged on their character not the color of their skin.”
* CRT assigns value arbitrarily based on skin color. If you are white (in America) you are by definition an oppressor. If you are brown, you are by definition oppressed. A white person’s intentions or character cannot outweigh their “whiteness” and their being assigned to the oppressor class.
* A MAJOR problem is that advocates of CRT have convinced many people that CRT is just the Civil Rights Movement 2.0. But they are VERY different things.

**Biblical Response to Contemporary Critical Theory:**

* Because of the fall, there are oppressors and the oppressed in human society:
**- Exodus 3.9-10** – oppression of slavery **- Luke 4.18-19** – Jesus came to deliver
**- Psalm 9.9** – God is a stronghold for oppressed **- Malachi 3.5** – God judges rich oppressors
**- Proverbs 14.31** – oppression = sin against God **- James 2.6** – tendency of rich to oppress
* These verses can provide us with a Biblical definition of oppression:
*the use of power to take advantage of the weak instead of the use of power to serve the weak*
* The Bible also teaches that both oppressors and the oppressed are sinners.
* Biblical human identity for ALL people is 2-fold:
	+ Made in the image of God – Genesis 1
	+ Fallen in sin – Genesis 3, Romans 1-3
* Contemporary Critical Theory teaches a human identity that divides humanity into 2 groups:
	+ The oppressors (guilty)
	+ The oppressed (not guilty)
* Contemporary Critical Theory teaches a form of “salvation”:
	+ The oppressor group must divest themselves of their privileges and seek to liberate the oppressed. (This is a secular version of “justification,” but it is justification by works!)
	+ The oppressed must liberate themselves by dismantling the social structures that have been used to oppress them. (Again, justification by works.)
1. Neil Shenvi - <https://shenviapologetics.com/intro-to-critical-theory/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Neil Shenvi, Kevin DeYoung, Pat Sawyer, <https://clearlyreformed.org/podcast/the-rise-of-contemporary-critical-theory-with-neil-shenvi-and-pat-sawyer/> - Time Stamp – 27.00 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. **Neil Shenvi and Pat Sawyer, The Incompatibility of Critical Theory and Christianity**

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/incompatibility-critical-theory-christianity/> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)