

## Critical Theory and Intersectionality: The Abolition of Man

Peter J. Scaer

### Introduction: The Abolition of Man and the End of Times

Our Lord compares the last days to those of Noah and the flood, when people were marrying and being given in marriage (Matt 24:38). His disciples surely assumed that those nuptials would include a bride and groom. Right up until the moment that sulfur met Sodom, people were buying and selling. So also will it be at the end of time (Luke 17:28–29), at least for those who bear the mark of the beast (Rev 13:17). The Thessalonians over-anticipated the eschaton. But when men win beauty pageants and break records in women’s sports, we can hardly doubt that we are living under what Paul called a “wicked deception” and a “strong delusion” (2 Thess 2:10–11).<sup>1</sup> More than just bumpy, the road to Mount Zion leads downhill to what C. S. Lewis called the Abolition of Man.<sup>2</sup>

### Setting the Table for Chaos

The lawlessness of the sexual revolution paved the way for our present delusions. Divorce, cohabitation, and a hook-up culture has taken its toll. Hedonism leads to cruelty and chaos, as we see in what Bernard Nathanson labeled the “silent screams of abortion,”<sup>3</sup> and what Mary Eberstadt calls the primal screams of a generation that has grown up without fathers or extended family.<sup>4</sup> Many have no sense of belonging and are ruled by what Allan Bloom called “a psychology of

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<sup>1</sup> All Scripture quotations are from the ESV Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

<sup>2</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man; or, Reflections on Education with Special Reference to the Teaching of English in the Upper Forms of Schools* (London: Oxford University Press, H. Milford, 1944).

<sup>3</sup> *The Silent Scream*, narrated by Bernard Nathanson, directed by Jack Duane Dabner (American Portrait Films, 1984), 28 min. This short movie highlights the narration of an abortion as it is observed in real-time by ultrasound.

<sup>4</sup> Mary Eberstadt, *Primal Screams: How the Sexual Revolution Created Identity Politics* (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press, 2019).

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separateness.”<sup>5</sup> Natural bonds have been severed. Where might a child go if he has no father, if his grandparents are at war, or, if because of divorce, his uncle is no longer his uncle? As Eberstadt notes, “The plain fact is that the relative stability of yesterday’s familial identity could not help but answer the question at the heart of identity politics—*Who Am I?*—in ways that many men, women, and children cannot answer it anymore.”<sup>6</sup>

### Living in an Unreal World

We are residents of what Anthony Esolen calls the Unreal City. We not only believe in things that are false, but, as Esolen puts it, “We believe in *falsehood*.”<sup>7</sup> Two men get married; no eye blinks. Drag Queen Story Hour is offered to the tykes; parents smile. A young woman not only appropriates a whole new set of personal pronouns, she creates her own, which they (or Ne or Ve or Ey or Ze or Xe) will insist upon. Do not chuckle. Listen to what Ze says and offer your *homologō*, or you will be fired, fined, or canceled.<sup>8</sup>

Log on to the internet to find a list of seventy-two genders, but the true number is legion. This ideology is taught to children of tender age via the Genderbread Person and the Gender Unicorn.<sup>9</sup> No longer fringe, this is the dogma of our secular religion, the doctrine of demons (1 Tim 4:1).

Gender dysphoria has always been a thing, most often among a very small percentage of boys who, if allowed to grow up, would grow out of it.<sup>10</sup> But now it spreads like a contagion, which physician and gender dysphoria researcher Lisa Littman has labeled “rapid-onset gender dysphoria” (ROGD).<sup>11</sup> In 2007, there was only one pediatric gender clinic; now there are hundreds. Our best hospitals treat

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<sup>5</sup> Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today’s Students* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 118.

<sup>6</sup> Eberstadt, *Primal Screams*, 61.

<sup>7</sup> Anthony Esolen, *Sex and the Unreal City: The Demolition of the Western Mind* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2020), 9.

<sup>8</sup> To understand the present-day threats on our religious liberty, including the dangers to our schools, adoption agencies, and Christian businessmen, see Ryan T. Anderson, *Truth Overruled: The Future of Marriage and Religious Freedom* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> The Genderbread Person is an illustrated version of the Gingerbread Man which is neither male nor female, and teaches that one’s gender may differ from the sex that has been supposedly assigned at birth. It was developed by Trans Student Educational Resources (TSER). See The Genderbread Person, accessed February 23, 2022, <https://www.genderbread.org/>. See also The Gender Unicorn, accessed February 23, 2022, <https://transstudent.org/gender/>. The Gender Unicorn, commonly taught in schools, serves the same purpose.

<sup>10</sup> For this story, see Ryan T. Anderson, *When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Moment*, 1st American ed. (New York: Encounter Books, 2018).

<sup>11</sup> For the full story, see Abigail Shrier, *Irreversible Damage: The Transgender Craze Seducing Our Daughters* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2020).

confused children with puberty blockers and hormones, leading to mutilating surgery and a lifetime of regret. Parents who seek to save their children from the madness may well lose custody or be jailed. All of this is done with the approval of those who operate the levers of our culture. Some bury their heads; others seek the path of least resistance, while many smile and nod. Two plus two equals five.

To the fallen first couple, our Lord asked, “Where are you?” (Gen 3:9). Upon return, our Lord may ask, “Who are you?” Or maybe, to those of us who knew better, he may query, “Why were you silent?”

### How Did We Get Here?

In *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, Carl Trueman asks a simple question. How did we get to a place where it seems meaningful to say, “I am a woman trapped in a man’s body?”<sup>12</sup> Our grandfathers and their grandfathers’ great-grandfathers would have laughed at the notion. History knows no such precedent. St. Paul called homosexual behavior an affront to natural law (Rom 1:18–32), but he never met a pagan unable to tell the difference between a man and a woman.

How did we get here? It’s been a long time coming. Trueman offers a timeline that begins with Rousseau, who posited that ethical discourse is based not on truth but on personal sentiment, and that authenticity depends on living out our inner desires and feelings.<sup>13</sup> He speaks of the Romantics, including Shelley, who asserted that happiness is the object of morality.<sup>14</sup> Trueman further describes how Darwin’s doctrine of natural selection robs humanity of any inherent dignity or destiny. He explains how Marx strips away the institutions of humanity, including family and church, turning all of life into a political struggle.<sup>15</sup>

Trueman then takes us to Freud, who sexualized all of life, even childhood. Freud argues that when we condemn sexual perversion, we are merely “giving way to an unmistakable view of disgust.” But, Freud adds, “The limits of such disgust are, however, often purely conventional: a man who will kiss a pretty girl’s lips passionately, may perhaps be disgusted at the idea of using her tooth-brush, though there are no grounds for supposing that his own oral cavity, for which he feels no disgust, is any cleaner than the girl’s.”<sup>16</sup> The implications are clear. Any cavity will

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<sup>12</sup> Carl R. Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 19.

<sup>13</sup> Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 125.

<sup>14</sup> Shelley says of marriage that, if a marital union brought more evils than benefits, then, “There is nothing immoral in this separation.” As found in Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Poetical Works*, ed. Edward Dowden (London: Macmillan and Co., 1926), 42–43.

<sup>15</sup> Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 191.

<sup>16</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 17–18.

do. And the idea that some sexual behavior goes against nature, following the logic of Freud, becomes proof of homophobia, transphobia, or some other irrational fear.

Trueman contends that our society is a fusion of Marx and Freud, the intersection of equity and the sexual revolution. For centuries, the wise of this world have acted like wrecking balls; their philosophy is the new theology of deconstruction. In an eerily messianic autobiography, *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche summed up his life's work as "the most profound collision of conscience, a decision that was conjured up against everything that had been believed, demanded, hallowed so far. I am no man. I am dynamite."<sup>17</sup> In such a world, there can be neither piety nor gratitude, for there is neither God nor holiness.

### **The Abolition of Man: The Seat of Scoffers**

C. S. Lewis saw all this coming. In *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis lectures about a textbook then circulating in the English schools, which he pseudonymously calls *The Green Book*, and bearing the subtitle, *The Control of Language: A Critical Approach to Reading and Writing*. The term "critical" is key, for it reflects a Marxist worldview that denies natural law and the dignity of man. This seductive critical movement questioned reality itself. Are there such things as beauty and truth, or is something simply what I say or think?

If someone says a waterfall is sublime, is he really speaking about the waterfall or only offering "a remark about his own feeling"?<sup>18</sup> Lewis argues that if there are no criteria for beauty, neither is there truth. Indeed, in the church's liturgy and doctrine, we have seen an assault on both. If reality is a personal construct, there is no objective right or wrong—only instinct. And if there is only instinct, then "there is no ground for placing the preservation of the species above self-preservation or sexual appetite."<sup>19</sup> In this, Lewis could have foreseen the justification for abortion, no-fault divorce, gay marriage, and all the rest.

The critic or nihilist does not see a thing, but sees through it. Once truth and tradition have been unmasked by the skeptics, all that is left is the will of the powerful, or as Lewis writes, "When all that says 'it is good' has been debunked, what says 'I want' remains."<sup>20</sup> As Lewis described the situation, "Traditional values are to be debunked and mankind to be cut into some fresh shape at the will (which must, by hypothesis, be an arbitrary will) of some few lucky people in one lucky generation

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<sup>17</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Arnold Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 326.

<sup>18</sup> Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, 2.

<sup>19</sup> Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, 77.

<sup>20</sup> Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, 77.

which has learned how to do it.”<sup>21</sup> Lewis’s prophecy has come to an all-too-literal fulfillment in sex reassignment surgery.<sup>22</sup> Without the natural law, we are easy prey for the powerful, who may dice and splice us as they please.

Lewis warned us of a world in which thankfulness is replaced by a cynicism towards all who came before us. Appreciation leads to gratitude; however, the relativists teach us to see through things, which is the essence of the scoffer. To combat skeptical cynicism, Lewis urges us to embrace reality. He argues that the natural law, which he called the Tao, is evident throughout all history and all cultures. We need not think that something like marriage is simply a religious matter, particular to Christianity. Children do better with fathers. Marital law must reflect reality if it is to be just.<sup>23</sup> So our Lord asks, “What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion” (Luke 11:11–12)? Surely Christ knows that there are bad fathers, but his question is predicated on the idea that fatherhood, built into creation, is a good thing.

### **The Origins and Nature of Critical Theory: Gramsci and the Frankfurt School**

Trueman has demonstrated that our present cultural crisis has deep roots. C. S. Lewis reveals that this form of deconstruction is a deeply spiritual matter. But how did this nihilistic philosophy take over our schools and infiltrate our institutions? To answer this question, we turn to Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937). Gramsci, an Italian communist, was incarcerated by Mussolini, during which time he wrote his influential *Prison Notebooks*.

Karl Marx pictured the world in dialectical terms, a struggle between the oppressed and the oppressors, the workers and the bourgeoisie. His goal was not equality but equity—from each according to his means, to each according to his needs—a dark and coercive imitation of early Christianity (Acts 2:44). Yet Marxism, while triumphing in agrarian Russia, was less successful among the industrial nations for which it was tailored.

What to do? While Marx concentrated his efforts on economics and politics, Gramsci recognized that culture comes first, beginning with educational systems that would no longer perpetuate the assumptions of Western civilization. To cut our

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<sup>21</sup> Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, 77–78.

<sup>22</sup> Of course, sex reassignment is impossible. Plastic surgery cannot create real and functioning sex organs. As Robert George notes, “Changing sexes is a metaphysical impossibility, because it is a biological impossibility.” See Robert P. George, “Gnostic Liberalism,” *First Things* 268 (December 2016): 35.

<sup>23</sup> For a book-length argument, see Sherif Girgis, Ryan T. Anderson, and Robert P. George, *What Is Marriage? Man and Woman: A Defense* (New York: Encounter Books, 2012).

ties to the past, Gramsci concludes, “It will be necessary to replace Latin and Greek as the fulcrum of the formative school.”<sup>24</sup> And replaced they were.

To attain hegemony, the cultural Marxists would infiltrate mass media, sports, and the entertainment industry. Rather than simply overthrow the church, why not work from the inside? Big business could be co-opted. Gramsci’s cultural Marxism inaugurated what would later be referred to as the long march through the institutions.<sup>25</sup> This new form of Marxism would manifest itself in critical theory.

The Frankfurt School, led by Max Horkheimer, brought critical theory to America. Critical theory posited that there is no such thing as universal truth, paving the way for your truth and my truth. Critical theory set about destroying pieties and deconstructing institutions—first and foremost the family. A good example of this can be found in the long form essay *Authority and Family*, in which Horkheimer deconstructs the patriarchal bourgeoisie family, claiming that a father’s leadership is purely functional, and boils down simply to his strength and earning capacity, and not much else.<sup>26</sup> In similar fashion, Wilhelm Reich claimed that the family “is the authoritarian state in miniature.”<sup>27</sup> The family is itself a source and teacher of oppression.

From critical theory arose all sorts of offshoots, including ethnic and gender studies, queer studies, postcolonial studies, and all those college programs that fall under the umbrella of so-called grievance studies. Those who have attended the Society of Biblical Literature are well aware of how this works. When you wear the glasses of queer theory, queer is all you see. So much for David’s friendship with Jonathan, the centurion who cared for his servant, or the beloved disciple who rested his head in our Lord’s bosom. A hammer sees only nails. Critical philosophy not only blinds us to truth, but also tunes the heart towards cynicism and resentment. While Christianity is based on a life of forgiveness and gratitude, critical theory is ever hungry for grievances. As Carl Trueman notes, “Today, political discussion is dominated by talk of hate speech, microaggressions, and so on, all of which rise out of a culture in which psychological categories give the fundamental shape to what is understood to be oppressive.”<sup>28</sup> Or to put it in sports terms, if you want to play

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<sup>24</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (London: ElecBook, 1999), 185.

<sup>25</sup> The phrase seems to have been coined in 1967 by German political activist Rudi Dutschke, who said, “Revolution is a long complicated process in which people have to change, and such change is effected only by a long march through the institutions.”

<sup>26</sup> Max Horkheimer, “Authority and the Family,” in *Critical Theory: Selected Essays*, by Max Horkheimer, trans. Matthew J. O’Connell et al. (New York: Continuum, 2002), <http://freudians.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Horkheimer-Authority-and-the-Family.compressed.pdf>.

<sup>27</sup> Wilhelm Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, ed. and trans. Mary Higgins and Chester M. Raphael (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1970), 30.

<sup>28</sup> Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 239.

offense, claim that you are offended, which is the death of both charity and, for that matter, humor.

### **Intersectionality: The Marriage of Critical Race Theory and Gender Ideology**

Gramsci's version of cultural Marxism now enters culture via two of its children: gender ideology and critical race theory. Abigail Shrier calls critical race theory and gender ideology siblings, noting, "While critical race activists are teaching kids that they are largely defined by their skin color, gender activists are teaching kids that there are a great many genders, and that only they know their true gender."<sup>29</sup> We may well consider critical race theory and gender ideology to be two pews in the one church of the woke, whose dogma cannot be questioned. As Shrier notes, "Just as families who object to racial indoctrination in schools are told that their denials are proof of racism, young women who object to biological males participating in girls' sports are told that their objections are proof of transphobic bigotry."<sup>30</sup> No Christian church is so dogmatic, so swift to excommunicate.

According to the concept of intersectionality, we are defined by our sex, sexual preferences, and race, and we are accordingly categorized as either oppressors or oppressed. A gay white woman is doubly oppressed for being gay and a woman, but is an oppressor inasmuch as she is white. Transgenderism becomes an avenue for social status. A gay man may be very wealthy indeed, but he is considered oppressed in comparison to an unemployed white man from rural West Virginia. Asians are more difficult to categorize, sometimes labeled among the oppressed, but at other times said to be "white adjacent." The oppressor above all oppressors is the cisgender white man. Being a Christian only makes it worse, since Christians—by virtue of being Christians—benefit from societal hegemony, as is argued by Khyati Y. Joshi in *White Christian Privilege: The Illusion of Religious Equality in America*.<sup>31</sup> But perhaps a caveat is in order. The voice of the black person matters, but only if he supports the ideology of the secular left. Thus, Amazon deleted a best-selling documentary on Clarence Thomas, and did so at the start of Black History Month. Diversity may include skin color and sexual orientation, but never allows for actual diversity of thought.

This world of intersectionality is fundamentally at odds with Christian moral teaching. The world is in desperate need of good fathers, and yet intersectionality teaches that patriarchy is the problem. Same-sex marriage robs a child of either a

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<sup>29</sup> Abigail Shrier, "Gender Ideology Run Amok," *Imprimis* 50, nos. 6/7 (June/July 2021), <https://imprimis.hillsdale.edu/gender-ideology-run-amok/>.

<sup>30</sup> Shrier, "Gender Ideology Run Amok."

<sup>31</sup> Khyati Y. Joshi, *White Christian Privilege: The Illusion of Religious Equality in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2020).

mom or dad, and yet intersectionality extols the LGBTQ+ ideology. According to biblical teaching, we are all sinners in need of grace, but according to intersectionality, some bear more or less guilt by simple virtue of skin color. Thus, some are told to repent of sins they have not committed, while others are vindicated, because their violence is perpetrated in the name of social justice and equity.

### **The Church and the Great Awakening**

How has this new secular religion affected our churches? Mainline denominations are all-in, flying the rainbow flag alongside that of BLM, celebrating the LGBTQ+ revolution, even up to the point of transgender bishops and drag queens teaching Sunday school. Instead of teaching justice, people are called to be social justice warriors. Inequality must be addressed by further inequality, and natural law is abandoned, along with the God of creation.

But what of our conservative, Bible-believing churches? Are we, by virtue of our belief in natural marriage and biblical sexuality, immune to the contagion of wokeness? By no means. Conservative churches are becoming noticeably quieter on the issues of rainbow pride. At Summit Church, Southern Baptist President J. D. Greear sent shockwaves through his church body, saying, “We ought to whisper about what the Bible whispers about, and we ought to shout about what it shouts about. And the Bible appears more to whisper when it comes to sexual sin compared to its shouts about materialism and religious pride.”<sup>32</sup> And this was a sermon on Romans 1:24–27!

Indeed, woke culture has infiltrated many conservative Christian colleges. For example, at Wheaton, Professor Larycia Hawkins was fired for refusing to uphold the school’s teaching on Christ as the only Savior. In response, Sheila Caldwell, head of Wheaton’s office of diversity, complained that Hawkins had been “pressured to stay in her place in the American caste system.”<sup>33</sup> Why are Bible-believing schools susceptible to woke theology? As Gerald McDermott notes, the implementation of woke ideology is the path of least resistance, especially for risk-averse college administrators. But at what price? McDermott asks, “But what if their anti-racist solution to racism is racism itself? And what if, to avoid criticism, evangelical colleges embrace a secular gospel that has nothing to do with true kingdom

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<sup>32</sup> Quoted from a sermon on Romans 1:24–32, delivered January 27, 2019, at The Summit Church in Durham, North Carolina. It can be found at <https://summitchurch.com/message/how-the-fall-affects-us-all/>.

<sup>33</sup> Gerald McDermott, “Woke Theory at Evangelical Colleges,” *First Things*, October 19, 2021, accessed February 23, 2022, <https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2021/10/woke-theory-at-evangelical-colleges>.



diversity?”<sup>34</sup> To McDermott’s questions, we add another. What good is salt if it loses its saltiness? As we have seen, institutions that have forsaken their heritage simply do not bounce back. How will you make them salty again (Mark 9:50)?

Our Lord calls us to be as wise as serpents. For Bible-believing Christian institutions, critical race theory is often the Trojan horse that brings in all of critical theory. As Carl Trueman notes, “The moral preoccupations of secular progressive America now focus on two basic issues: race and LGBTQ+ rights.”<sup>35</sup> For those who take our Lord’s words on marriage seriously, it is not an option to promote gay marriage. Race, on the other hand, “provides a perfect opportunity for Christian leaders to place themselves (for once) on the ‘good’ side of a moral debate that is generating turmoil in the wider society,” and, as he puts it, to stand in solidarity with the church’s “cultured despisers.”<sup>36</sup>

Public displays of self-flagellation and self-loathing offer a means to raise our social credit score and to separate ourselves from those who cling to their Bibles. And so, churches often take up critical race theory to avoid taking the less-popular side on issues within the culture. Trueman writes, “Let me put it bluntly: Talking in an outraged voice about racism within the boundaries set by the woke culture is an excellent way of not talking about the pressing moral issues on which Christianity and the culture are opposed to each other: LGBTQ+ rights and abortion.”<sup>37</sup> St. Paul’s words ring in the ears: “For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ” (Gal 1:10).

Practically speaking, one good way to assess Christian groups addressing racism is to ask whether they ever speak about the racial component at play with abortion, whether they are willing to speak about school choice, or whether they talk about how the rainbow pride robs children of fathers. That is to say, if only the voice of wokeness is allowed, then it really is not about race at all. If a Christian group is unable or unwilling to speak about black-against-black crime or the number of police officers who have been killed in the line of duty, then something is amiss. Often, when judging such trees, it is the fruit that you *do not* find—the dog that *does not* bark. This is not to claim some sort of special wisdom or knowledge, but simply to note that when legitimate dissent is not allowed, the truth is not present.

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<sup>34</sup> McDermott, “Woke Theory at Evangelical Colleges.”

<sup>35</sup> Carl R. Trueman, “The Failure of Evangelical Elites,” *First Things*, November 2021, accessed February 24, 2022, <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2021/11/the-failure-of-evangelical-elites>.

<sup>36</sup> Trueman, “The Failure of Evangelical Elites.”

<sup>37</sup> Trueman, “The Failure of Evangelical Elites.”

### Critical Race Theory and Racism

Racism is real, and it is a sin of partiality. Lest anyone be misled, critical race theory has nothing to do with Martin Luther King Jr.'s vision, which was based on natural law and the biblical truth that we have all been created in God's image. King envisioned a world where we would be judged by the content of our character not the color of our skin; critical race theory focuses on nothing but race. King spoke of equality; critical race theory, drawing from its Marxist roots, demands equity. King's vision was that of people joining arms together, while critical race theory offers a raised fist for the struggle against the oppressors. King spoke of reconciliation and forgiveness, but critical race theory knows no forgiveness, only the original sin of racism for which there is no cure—only struggle sessions and cancellation.

Critical race theory is not simply a tool, but a worldview, incompatible with Christianity. John McWhorter, a contributing editor for *The Atlantic*, says that with critical race theory, we are witnessing “the birth of a new religion.”<sup>38</sup> Its well-paid clergy include the likes of Ibram X. Kendi, Robin DiAngelo, and Jemar Tisby. This religion's original sin is racism, for which there is no cure or forgiveness. Orthodoxy is strictly enforced, and confession is mandatory. Consider the observation of Andrew Sullivan, a self-identified homosexual, who was forced out of his position at the *New York Magazine*: “They seem to believe, and this is increasingly the orthodoxy in mainstream media, that any writer not actively committed to critical theory in questions of race, gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity is actively, physically harming co-workers merely by existing in the same virtual space.”<sup>39</sup> The list of the canceled is a long one.

Voddie Baucham has led the charge against critical race theory in the Southern Baptist Convention, warning of “Evangelicalism's Looming Catastrophe.”<sup>40</sup> He, too, sees critical race theory as a new religion, one at odds with Christianity. It is a religion with no forgiveness, and a reckoning of sin that depends on skin color. Baucham has also coined the term “ethnic Gnosticism,” in which oppressed groups are thought to have special knowledge or wisdom. According to Baucham, ethnic Gnosticism assumes three things, the first of which is that there is a so-called black perspective. Second, white people must elevate and heed black voices. And finally, the narrative offered by black voices must be taken as truth. These ideas are well in

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<sup>38</sup> John McWhorter, *Woke Racism: How a New Religion Has Betrayed Black America* (New York: Portfolio/Penguin, 2021), 24.

<sup>39</sup> Andrew Sullivan, “See You Next Friday,” *Intelligencer*, July 17, 2020, accessed February 23, 2022, <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2020/07/andrew-sullivan-see-you-next-friday.html>.

<sup>40</sup> Voddie T. Baucham Jr., *Fault Lines: The Social Justice Movement and Evangelicalism's Looming Catastrophe* (Washington, DC: Salem Books, 2021).

line with the Marxism of critical theory, in which the narrative becomes the truth, even if that narrative goes against the biblical narrative.

In *Awake, Not Woke: A Christian Response to the Cult of Progressive Ideology*, Noelle Mering puts it this way: “According to the woke, it is not the weight of the argument but the skin color, gender, or sexuality of the speaker which determines the rightness or the wrongness of her speech.”<sup>41</sup> Ethnic Gnosticism has a silencing effect, not only in boardroom discussions, but in the church. What does Walther, Luther, or St. Paul have to offer, as they are numbered among the historical oppressors? And what about those of us who are pastors and teachers? Surely we do well to listen, but are we not called to speak what our Lord has spoken to us? Or will the prophetic voice also be canceled? Thus, it is important to see how critical race theory has been popularized among us.

### Ibram X. Kendi

Critical race theory’s leading light, Ibram X. Kendi, teaches that it is not enough not to be racist, you must be anti-racist.<sup>42</sup> For Kendi, the question is not whether racism took place, but *how* it took place. Racism is everywhere assumed. This is how it works. Suppose two men walk into the store: one black, one white. If the store owner serves the white person first, he is clearly racist for privileging the white man. If he serves the black person first, he is clearly racist for not wanting the black person to linger in his store. Do not even begin to say, “I am not racist.” As Kendi puts it, “The claim of ‘not racist’ is a mask for racism.”<sup>43</sup>

According to Kendi, we must work towards *equity*, which calls for redistribution, to be forced if necessary. Kendi’s approach is clearly Marxist. He says, “To love capitalism is to end up loving racism. To love racism is to end up loving capitalism.” He expounds, “Capitalism is essentially racist; racism is essentially capitalist. They were birthed together from the same natural causes, and they shall die together from unnatural causes.”<sup>44</sup> This is ironic coming from a man who has himself become quite wealthy promoting critical race theory.

Many are easy prey, for racism is real and is a matter of sinful partiality. And God shows no partiality (Acts 10:34; Rom 2:11). But Kendi does not deal with specific racist acts, for which we may be called to repentance, but systemic racism.

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<sup>41</sup> Noelle Mering, *Awake, Not Woke: A Christian Response to the Cult of Progressive Ideology* (Gastonia, NC: TAN Books, 2021), 153.

<sup>42</sup> Kendi’s birth name was Ibram Henry Rogers.

<sup>43</sup> Ibram X. Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist* (New York: One World, 2019), 9.

<sup>44</sup> Ibram X. Kendi, appearing on the podcast *Democracy Now*, “How to Be an Antiracist: Ibram X. Kendi on Why We Need to Fight Racism the Way We Fight Cancer,” [https://www.democracynow.org/2019/8/13/ibram\\_x\\_kendi\\_class\\_race\\_capitalism](https://www.democracynow.org/2019/8/13/ibram_x_kendi_class_race_capitalism).

What is racism? In what may appear to be a tautology, Kendi writes, “Racism is a marriage of racist policies and racist ideas that produces and normalizes racial inequities.”<sup>45</sup> But in this word salad, beware of inequity, which, according to Kendi, occurs “when two or more racial groups are not standing on approximately equal footing.”<sup>46</sup> Thus, if the crime rate is higher among a certain people group, it is a sure sign of racism. Nowhere does Kendi argue for this proposition; rather, he simply assumes it, making further discussion impossible. What might he say to the Tiger Mom phenomenon and the success of Asian Americans?<sup>47</sup> How is it that 61 percent of Nigerians over the age of 25 have graduate degrees compared to 32 percent of all those born in the United States?<sup>48</sup> If students do well on a math test, is it simply a matter of race, or are there other factors, including whether a student studied hard and whether his family is intact?

Various groups succeed in all sorts of disparate ways. While those who populate tiny suburbs find themselves at the top of the social ladder, others who populate the hills of Appalachia are not faring as well, even though they are said to share ethnicity. What cultural factors are at work? How might the Wisdom of Solomon play into one’s success? What role do our individual choices play? Statistically, having a father at home has a much greater impact than anything to do with race. But Kendi dismisses the idea with a red herring, claiming that it is wrong to suggest that “two bad parents would be better than one good one.”<sup>49</sup> Again, this is not to suggest any special personal wisdom in these matters, but only to note that a system that does not allow honest discussion is nothing but an ideology based on power.

How then does Kendi plan to build a more equitable world? “The only remedy to racist discrimination is anti-racist discrimination. The only remedy to past discrimination is present discrimination. The only remedy to present discrimination is future discrimination.”<sup>50</sup> Injustice is met with injustice. But then, we must ask, who defines what is and is not discrimination? First, it is the voice of the marginalized, which must be heard and cannot be questioned. Every claimed microaggression becomes a trip wire that stifles all discussion in the minefield of intersectionality. Since microaggressions are defined by the one who claims grievance, they can never be known in advance, and they can never be gainsaid.

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<sup>45</sup> Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist*, 18.

<sup>46</sup> Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist*, 18.

<sup>47</sup> See Amy Chua, *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* (New York: Penguin Press, 2011). The Tiger Mom phenomenon is largely a Chinese-American phenomenon which involves strict and purposeful parenting that leads to a child’s academic success.

<sup>48</sup> Molly Fosco, “The Most Successful Ethnic Group in the U.S. May Surprise You,” OZY, last modified June 7, 2018, accessed February 24, 2022, <https://www.ozy.com/around-the-world/the-most-successful-ethnic-group-in-the-u-s-may-surprise-you/86885/>.

<sup>49</sup> Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist*, 185.

<sup>50</sup> Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist*, 19.

Second, it is the priesthood consisting of people like Kendi who define the terms, profiting greatly. Though these are called microaggressions, they come at a steep price. Misgender someone, and you may well be fired.

### Intersectionality and Religious Liberty

Kendi, as do nearly all critical race theorists, engages in intersectionality, wrapping together ideas of race and sexual identity. He writes, “To be anti-racist is to reject not only the hierarchy of races, but race-genders. To be feminist is to reject not only the hierarchy of genders, but of race-genders. To be truly anti-racist is to be feminist. To truly be feminist is to be anti-racist.”<sup>51</sup> Indeed, there is no room for the Bible-believing Christian in Kendi’s world. The one who is anti-racist must not consort with the homophobic or transphobic.

No friend to Christians suffering for their faith, Kendi claims that to be a “queer antiracist” is to see religious freedom laws for what they are, namely, “as taking away the rights of queer people.”<sup>52</sup> Jemar Tisby, Kendi’s colleague and the author of *The Color of Compromise*, likewise exhibits no sympathy for Christians who seek to live their lives according to their Christian beliefs.<sup>53</sup> In an interview with Phil Vischer of VeggieTales fame, Tisby said, “Religious freedom . . . is really code for white Christians being able to do what they want to do,” to which he added, “It doesn’t really include Muslims or Jewish people or other religions.”<sup>54</sup> This claim is patently false, but places Tisby on the side of our cultured despisers.

### Robin DiAngelo’s Grift

While Kendi is anti-racism’s intellectual leader, Robin DiAngelo—who herself is white—has been its most successful evangelist. Her work *White Fragility* took America by storm, finding its way into corporate boardrooms and church Bible studies. DiAngelo offered a class at Coca-Cola, telling employees that they would have to learn to “be less white.”<sup>55</sup> DiAngelo is paid a pretty penny for telling people that they are racist. Those who raise a hand in disagreement are told they are not qualified to speak. She writes, “We must be willing to consider that unless we have

<sup>51</sup> Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist*, 189.

<sup>52</sup> Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist*, 197.

<sup>53</sup> Jemar Tisby, *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church’s Complicity in Racism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019).

<sup>54</sup> Phil Vischer, *Holy Post Episode 422: The Church’s Complicity in Racism with Jemar Tisby*, 2020, accessed February 24, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j84RWjr8lM8>.

<sup>55</sup> Mairem Del Río, “Coca-Cola Asks Its Workers to Be ‘Less White’ to Fight Racism,” *Beaumont Enterprise*, May 7, 2021, accessed February 24, 2022, <https://www.beaumontenterprise.com/business/article/Coca-Cola-Asks-Its-Workers-to-Be-Less-White-to-15979661.php>.

devoted intentional and ongoing study, our opinions are uninformed, even ignorant.”<sup>56</sup> This is key to critical race theory’s success. It encourages criticism of everything except itself.

In DiAngelo’s world, if you feel ashamed, frightened, or angry at being called a racist, you are exposing your white fragility. If you argue, that means you have yet to deal with your internalized racism. If you are silent, you are hiding your racism. Silence is violence. As John Hudlow explains it, “In fact, *White Fragility* is a barrage of psychological manipulation techniques—an effort to convert sympathetic white progressives into dedicated social justice warriors.”<sup>57</sup> These are not so much conversations as sweat sessions.

John McWhorter in *Woke Racism* points out contradictions that are meant to put would-be opponents in a corner. For instance, you must strive to understand the experiences of black people, but if you claim to understand, that only reveals your racism. You must be multicultural, but you may not culturally appropriate. You are racist for moving out of a black neighborhood, but if you move into one, it is an act of racist gentrification. If you do not date people of other races, you are racist, but if you do, then you are engaging in a racist act of fetishizing. Test scores must be adjusted so that colleges have racial balance, but to say that a group needs to have those test scores adjusted is racist. And so it goes. Flip a coin. Heads or tails, you are a racist. It is a no-win situation—except, of course, for those who are paid well to offer the anti-racist training.<sup>58</sup>

### Cultural Artifacts: Black Lives Matter

Surely, black lives do matter. But we should not be naïve. Black Lives Matter was founded with a definite ideology in mind. Patrisse Cullors, a co-founder of BLM, said, “The first thing, I think, is that we actually do have an ideological frame. Myself and Alicia in particular are trained Marxist organizers.”<sup>59</sup> We should take Cullors at her word.

BLM’s founding document is littered with Marxist phrases.<sup>60</sup> It speaks of our “collective efforts” and fighting for “our collective freedom.” Friends are called

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<sup>56</sup> Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018), 8.

<sup>57</sup> John Hudlow, “Read with Your Eyes Open: A Critical Review of ‘White Fragility,’” *Curious*, August 19, 2020, accessed February 24, 2022, <https://medium.com/curious/read-with-your-eyes-open-a-critical-review-of-white-fragility-11735455ec09>.

<sup>58</sup> McWhorter, *Woke Racism*, 8–9.

<sup>59</sup> Yaron Steinbuch, “Black Lives Matter Co-Founder Describes Herself as ‘Trained Marxist,’” *New York Post*, June 25, 2020, accessed February 24, 2022, <https://nypost.com/2020/06/25/blm-co-founder-describes-herself-as-trained-marxist/>.

<sup>60</sup> This BLM Statement of Beliefs was previously available at the [blacklivesmatter.com](https://blacklivesmatter.com) website at <https://blacklivesmatter.com/what-we-believe/>, but has since been taken down.

“comrades.” Intersectionality comes through loud and clear. Those who adhere to the document vow to “dismantle cisgender privilege” and “uplift Black trans folk, especially Black trans women.” BLM claims to be a “queer-affirming network” that aims to free people from “heteronormative thinking.” Following the path of intersectionality, they aim to “dismantle the patriarchal practice” and “disrupt the Western-prescribed nuclear family structure.” Perhaps they are right when they say that silence is violence. Christian groups that do not condemn this ideology should be called out.

Whatever one might say about BLM, this is not the language of Martin Luther King Jr., or of natural law. Theirs is not the vision of racial harmony, but radical revolution aimed at the heart of the family and of Christian teaching. In this bathwater, it is hard to find a baby.

### **Smithsonian: Aspects & Assumptions of Whiteness**

Consider also the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History & Culture’s exhibition on “Aspects of Whiteness & White Culture in the United States.” According to the online document,<sup>61</sup> elements of whiteness include the nuclear family, the idea that a father should be the family’s breadwinner, and any emphasis on the scientific method, which includes “objective, rational linear thinking” and “cause and effect relationships.” According to the Smithsonian exhibit, it is an aspect of whiteness to believe that “hard work is the key to success.” Whiteness is to include the primacy of Greco-Roman history, and the “Judeo-Christian tradition.” Indeed, white culture is to hold to the idea that “Christianity is the norm,” allowing “no tolerance for deviation from a single god concept.” Tragically, the exhibit takes aim at Christianity and the family, and, by denigrating such virtues as hard work, only hurts the people it claims to help. Some may say that the Smithsonian exhibition is an outlier, but its tenets have found their way into almost every institution.

### **Solomon and Officers of Diversity and Equity**

In 2020, Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb established a cabinet-level position to promote equity and inclusion. Such offices can be found in many corporations and universities and are known by the acronym DARE, that is, Diversity, Anti-Racism, and Equity. The University of Michigan leads the way with 163 diversity officers.

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An archived PDF of the document was accessed February 24, 2022, <https://uca.edu/training/files/2020/09/black-Lives-Matter-Handout.pdf>.

<sup>61</sup> National Museum of African American History & Culture—Smithsonian, “Whiteness,” last modified November 30, 2021, accessed February 24, 2022, <https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/whiteness>.

These are the judges and juries of every injustice, down to the smallest of microaggressions. Teachers and students must walk through a cultural minefield, with trip wires invisible.

This becomes all the more problematic when offices that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion are established in church schools and universities. In such a world, judgments are no longer based on God's law, but on the ever-changing rules of the politically correct. It may be a microaggression to say that America is a melting pot, which is a denial of the importance of race. Likewise, you may be convicted of perpetrating a microaggression by saying that the most qualified person should get the job. Perhaps you wish to use pronouns that align with reality, or say something as simple as a man cannot become a woman. In such an environment, there can be no frank speech. As Anthony Esolen puts it, "Microaggressions warrant microattention."<sup>62</sup> But they can bring down reputations and careers. Many simply silence themselves in hope of self-preservation, but the mob is relentless.

St. Paul's question to the Corinthians should ring in our ears. When we have difficulties and disputes, "Why do you lay them before those who have no standing in the church? I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to settle a dispute between the brothers?" (1 Cor 6:4–5). When our Christian schools employ diversity officers, are we saying that we are incapable of making moral judgments? Will we bow to the secular world, whose dogma will be our guide, and whose ideologues will be our judges?

### **Intersectionality Hurts Supposed Victims**

Indeed, there is something grim about fostering resentment and teaching some people that their only road to success is through the behavior of others. Instead, we should talk about ideas that actually help people. This is what John McWhorter argues for in his work *Woke Racism: How a New Religion Has Betrayed Black America*. His proposed solutions include ending the war on drugs, an emphasis on better teaching of reading, and getting beyond the idea that everyone must go to college.<sup>63</sup> Such ideas are up for debate, but that is precisely the point. The truth welcomes debate and recognizes that no person is the repository of all wisdom. Of course, as a church, we are blessed with certain resources.

There are tried-and-true ways to load the dice of life in our favor. The wisdom of Solomon applies still today, and to all people. Solomon summarized a life well lived in this way: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise

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<sup>62</sup> Anthony Esolen, "Pronouns, Ordinary People, and the War over Reality," *Public Discourse*, October 13, 2016, accessed February 24, 2022, <https://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2016/10/17811/>.

<sup>63</sup> McWhorter, *Woke Racism*, 140–144.



wisdom and instruction” (Prov 1:7). He urges his son, “Drink water from your own cistern,” and then to “rejoice in the wife of your youth” (Prov 5:15, 18). Do you wish to avoid poverty? Solomon says, “Go to the ant, O sluggard” (Prov 6:6). Spend the day on the couch, and he warns, “Poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man” (Prov 6:11). If we want to help others, and ourselves, we need not rely on a worldly philosophy that is at odds with Christianity. Instead, we do better to turn to scriptural wisdom, which recognizes that we are all sinners in need of forgiveness, that we have all been created in God’s image, that we are all sons and daughters of Adam, and that there are tried-and-true ways to improve one’s lot in life. Instead of diversity training, we do better to talk about Paul’s fruits of the Spirit, about a life that is not marked by the endless dialectical struggle, but by “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal 5:22–23).

There is no doubt that Marx recognized true societal problems, as does the cultural Marxism of today. But their solution is predatory and makes the problem worse. As C. S. Lewis noted, an elite few end up benefiting. Or, as George Orwell put it, when it comes to the world of equity politics, some animals are always more equal than others.<sup>64</sup> And, we might add, those who lord it over you are called benefactors. And this has always been the way of Marxism, to take from God the position of the ultimate Benefactor.

### How Shall the Church React?

Some would urge the church to stay out of politics. Supposedly, when we engage in the culture wars, we do harm to our reputation. We are told to stay in our lane. So, stay away from hot topics such as abortion and gay marriage, we are told. Should such thinking also govern the way Christians speak about murder, rape, and child pornography? If we are to follow in the way of the Good Samaritan, should we not fight those who offer children puberty blockers and hormones leading to mutilating surgery? The law is always a matter of imposing prohibitions on behavior that hurts the innocent. When we abandon the public square, we leave it to those who have no concern for the lives of the innocent.

While we may wish to change people’s minds about abortion, we wish first to save the children whose lives are being taken by it. If we followed the idea of identity politics, men would be silent about abortion, which is precisely what the enemy desires. We may well say that the Christian should be willing to suffer for his faith, but statements carry less weight when that very same Christian stands on the

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<sup>64</sup> George Orwell, *Animal Farm*, 1st American ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1946).

sideline as his fellow Christians are fined, fired, and canceled for speaking simple truth.

### **The Abolition of Man and the Abolition of Christ: Genesis to Revelation**

Before moving forward, we need to move one step beyond Lewis's analysis and ask why it is that the nihilists of critical theory seek the abolition of man. What is the essence of this spiritual warfare? As we know, the end looks like the beginning. The splendor of Eden is upgraded into a new creation of pure flowing water, with trees bearing the fruit of healing. Genesis 1 and 2 propel us to the final chapters of Revelation.

It should therefore not surprise us that Satan, in these last days, seeks to undermine the God of creation. In the assault of abortion, Satan aims to devour the Christ child. In his redefinition of marriage, he wishes to make meaningless the idea that Christ is the groom of his bride, the church. In his assault on patriarchy, he mocks our heavenly Father. The world is seeking now nothing less than the abolition of man, even as Satan seeks the abolition of *the Man*, Christ himself. In everything, Christ seeks communion, which is the goal of all creation. And in everything, Satan seeks to divide us from one another and from God.

### **He Who Endures to the End Will Be Saved (Matt 24:12–13)**

Some would rather not talk about issues such as identity politics, the sexual revolution, rainbow pride, critical race theory, and intersectionality. But wokeness is the theology of our day. The theology of wokeness is especially insidious in that it elevates the lies of the secular world, and it has been largely successful in silencing the church. It is no fun to be called some version of racist, bigot, or homophobe. But we should not be surprised. Christ repeatedly said that we would be hated for bearing his name (Matt 5:11; 10:22; Mark 13:13). While we may be tempted to remain silent, Christ calls upon his disciples to confess (Matt 10:32–33). In an age of rainbow pride, Christ's words must ring in our ears, "Whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels" (Luke 9:26). Or, as James writes, "Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" (Jas 4:4).