

MICAH 6:8 in a Critical Race Theory World

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INTRODUCTION

Our most recent elections demonstrate the significance of Critical Race Theory (CRT) as an issue in our country. How schools address race was a decisive and divisive issue in Virginia. CRT emerged as a key reason many residents voted in the commonwealth's gubernatorial race between Democrat Terry McAuliffe and Republican Glenn Youngkin.¹ McAuliffe vowed to increase the diversity among Virginia teachers, while Youngkin promised to ban CRT curriculum in all schools. Youngkin reversed previous Democratic gains and flipped the governor's office to Republican. In exit polls, 25% of voters said CRT was the most important issue; 72% said it was an important issue. Of the quarter of voters who placed CRT as the top issue, 70% voted for Youngkin, the ant-CRT candidate.²

Race education was also a focal point in 76 school district elections in 22 states where candidates took a stance on Critical Race Theory. The results were mixed across the country. The only clear winner was division. Further, the issue of CRT has not quarantined in secular circles. Christian ministries struggle with it as well.

In September, apologist Josh McDowell stepped back from ministry after a firestorm erupted over his statement to the American Association of Christian Counselors. In a speech entitled "The Five Greatest Global Epidemics," McDowell addressed CRT as the first epidemic. He said it "negates all biblical teaching about racism." On equality, he said:

I do not believe Blacks, African Americans, and many other minorities have equal opportunity. Why? Most of them grew up in families where there is not a big emphasis on education, security—you can do anything you want. You can change the world. If you work hard, you will make it. So many African Americans don't have those privileges like I was brought up with.³

Later McDowell responded on social media to the criticism by saying:

I made a generalized statement that does not reflect reality. I apologize and reiterate my love for all races, nationalities and people groups. My desire is that we as Christians would deal with both racism and inequality as the sins that they are in order to restore the unity and equality that God desires for all.⁴

In November 2020, a 174 page document entitled "Seeking Clarity and Unity"⁵ was submitted to Cru president Steve Sellers. The document claimed the support of more than one thousand Cru staff. The document focuses on two related conclusions: 1) Cru has embraced a secular system of ideas that divides humanity into victims and oppressors. 2) This victim-oppressor worldview is embedded throughout Cru. In support of the second conclusion, the statement documents secular elements of CRT being taught at multiple

¹ "Education emerged as a flash point in Virginia governor's race. Here's what voters had to say about critical race theory, teachers" *USA Today* November 3, 2021.

² "Critical race theory top factor for 25% of Virginia voters, while 72% called it important" Fox News, November 3, 2021.

³ "Josh McDowell Steps Back from Ministry After Race Remarks" *Christianity Today*. September 23, 2021.

⁴ @josh_mcdowell. Twitter. September 19, 2021.

⁵ "Seeking Clarity and Unity" www.seeking-clarity-and-unity.pdf (wordpress.com)

Cru staff conferences, in Cru's *Our Cultural Journey* curriculum, CORE training for new leaders, and the Lenses Institute, Cru's cultural competency training. The report unveiled deep divides among Cru staff on what is the biblical approach to racism and what role social justice plays in the Great Commission.⁶

In the summer of 2019, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) passed Resolution 9, an official statement regarding CRT and related perspectives. Controversy followed concerning how much the Resolutions Committee edited the resolution before bringing it to the floor for a vote. While the Resolutions Committee commonly edits proposals before presentation, many accused the committee of changing the substance of Resolution 9.⁷ Stephen Feinstein, author of the proposal, said in his blog that the committee "severely altered" the proposal.⁸ The debate was fierce but short. The resolution passed. Feinstein proposed a new resolution for the 2021 convention. The messengers received and approved a broad statement calling for race issues to be addressed from a biblical perspective, but that did not reject by name CRT, as proposed by Feinstein and supported by the Conservative Baptist Network within the SBC. The issue again divided a ministry.

In November 2020, the presidents of the six SBC seminaries published a statement concerning CRT: "In light of current conversations in the Southern Baptist Convention, we stand together on historic Southern Baptist condemnations of racism in any form and we also declare that affirmation of Critical Race Theory, Intersectionality, and any version of Critical Theory is incompatible with the Baptist Faith & Message."⁹ While rejecting racism in any form, the statement's blanket condemnation of CRT angered many black SBC leaders.

Marshal Ausberry, president of National African American Fellowship said the Baptist Faith and Message should be a "part of our being Southern Baptists," but we must also recognize that "ideologies from a sociological and anthropological perspective when used appropriately, help us to better understand the inner workings of a fallen and sinful world."¹⁰ Other leaders called for stronger action. Charlie Dates, pastor of Progressive Baptist Church, Chicago, said: In the words of Harriet Tubman: "We out." He called for a new denomination: "I propose to you that we need a new organism, not led in full by white men; a Christian collective that makes room for the essentials of the faith and the diversity of the Church; a robust engine that finances the impoverished sides of the Church, speaks justice courageously to the government and cares gently for the oppressed, marginalized and women."¹¹

Critical Race Theory has become a major issue in both secular and Christian circles. Many groups have divided in the struggle to rightly respond to CRT.

CRITICAL RACE THEORY ROOTS

⁶ "Cru Divided Over Emphasis on Race" *Christianity Today*. June 3, 2021.

⁷ See attached appendix for original and final resolutions.

⁸ Sola Dei Gloria. June 13, 2019. <https://sovereignway.blogspot.com/2019/06/sbc19-resolution-9-on-critical-race.html?m=1>

⁹ For the full statement, see the end of this article. "Seminary presidents reaffirm BFM, declare CRT incompatible." November 30, 2020. <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/seminary-presidents-reaffirm-bfm-declare-crt-incompatible/>

¹⁰ "NAAF, Ausberry respond to seminary presidents' statement." *Baptist Press*. December 11, 2020. <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/naaf-ausberry-respond-to-seminary-presidents-statement/>

¹¹ Opinion. Religion News Service. December 18, 2020. <https://religionnews.com/2020/12/18/we-out-charlie-dates-on-why-his-church-is-leaving-the-sbc-over-rejection-of-critical-race-theory/>

CRT has roots in the Frankfurt School of the late 1920's. Critical theorists utilized the same social analysis lens as Marxism, focusing on identifying and transforming social elements that led to injustice. Later CRT thinkers broadened their analysis beyond the economic emphasis of Marxism.

Though its current expressions make it somewhat amorphous,¹² CRT perspectives share two themes relevant to our Micah 6:8 study. First, racism is a permanent structural aspect of society. Second, colorblind equality is impossible.

Derrick Bell, first tenured African-American professor at Harvard Law School, stands as one of the foundational CRT figures in America. He voiced the first theme when he argued that racism is a permanent part of American life, “masked in unofficial practices.”

Indeed, the very absence of visible signs of discrimination creates an atmosphere of racial neutrality and encourages whites to believe that racism is a thing of the past. On the other hand, the general use of so-called neutral standards to continue exclusionary practices reduces the effectiveness of traditional civil rights laws, while rendering discriminatory actions more oppressive than ever.

Whites, ready and willing to applaud, even idolize black athletes and entertainers, refuse to hire, or balk at working with blacks. Employers, not wanting ‘too many of them,’ are willing to hire one or two black people, but will reject those who apply later. Most hotels and restaurants who offer black patrons courteous treatment, uniformly reject black applicants, except for the most menial jobs. When did you last see a black waiter in a really good restaurant?¹⁴

Mari Matsuda, law professor at the University of Hawaii and early developer of CRT, agrees with Bell and posits the blame in our societal structures.

For me, critical race theory is a method that takes the lived experience of racism seriously, using history and social reality to explain how racism operates in American law and culture, toward the end of eliminating the harmful effects of racism and bringing about a just and healthy world for all. The problem is not bad people. The problem is a system that reproduces bad outcomes. It is both humane and inclusive to say, ‘We have done things that have hurt all of us, and we need to find a way out.’¹⁵

So then the focus in CRT is changing governmental structures until they lead to equal outcomes for all races.

The second claim (impossibility of colorblind equality) is alluded to by Bell above. CRT opponents argue that it reverses the colorblind equality called for by Martin Luther King, Jr. CRT advocates see their work as building upon and advancing King's calls for equality.¹⁶ Their claims raise the question of equality versus equity. Some say that calls for equity are really calls for manipulated equalized outcomes versus equal opportunities.

Equality means each individual or group of people is given the same resources or opportunities. Equity...allocates the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome. In short, equality refers to sameness in opportunities; equity refers to sameness in outcomes enforced by an outside entity – in this case the government – regardless of individual choices.¹⁷

¹² For a collection of formative CRT writings, see *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement* edited by Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller and Thomas (New York: new Press) 1995.

¹⁴ *Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism*. Derrick Bell. 1992.

¹⁵ Jacey Fortin “Critical Race Theory: A Brief History” New York Times (July 27, 2021).

¹⁶ “Critical Race Theory and the Misappropriating of Martin Luther King, Jr.” by Tyler Perry *Black Perspectives* (September 2021).

¹⁷ Milken Institute of Public Health at George Washington University quoted by America First Policy Institute. September 2021.

Others say equity remains the only means to true equality. Castelli illustrates the difference with a track analogy:

For example, most of the wealthy runners were able to drive to the race while lower-income runners had to get up extra early to walk or ride public transportation to the race so they are already feeling tired by the start of the race. Additionally, half of the black runners attending the race were stopped by police on the way to the race due to racial profiling. All of the non-white runners are feeling anxious because the race is being held in a predominantly white school track and most of them feel alienated. Meanwhile, white runners feel at home in the space and supported by their peers. Even if all runners begin the race in the exact same positions and starting points, there are already events and circumstances that mentally, physically, and emotionally weigh down runners who don't have the same privilege as their white wealthy counterparts. The principle of equality does not account for these circumstances because it focuses on giving people the same exact opportunities without consideration of events that have already occurred that restrain minoritized groups. On the other hand, equity takes these circumstances into account. Using the equity principle, runners with less privilege would be given the appropriate resources they need to actually be on an equal footing to runners with more privilege when the race starts. This may include accessible transportation, hosting the race in a safe setting that isn't racially alienating, or literally giving minoritized runners a head start. In this way, the principle of equity accounts for the inequalities that an individual carries due to racism, sexism, classism, xenophobia, and other forms of oppression. Equality is not possible without equity.¹⁸

Though CRT is far more complex, these two themes will be considered as they relate to the themes of justice, mercy and humility in Micah 6:8. True justice and fair treatment for all meets the need of both America today and Israel of old.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF MICAH

God's people experienced great prosperity during the 60-year reign of Jeroboam II in Israel and the 48-year rule of Uzziah in Judah. Jeroboam had reclaimed northern boundaries not known since the days of David and Solomon (2 Kings 14:25; cf. 1 Kings 8:65; 2 Chron 7:8). However, this long period of economic prosperity unfortunately fueled an era of political, moral, and religious corruption.

Society was deeply broken. Everywhere the rich oppressed the poor. They schemed ways to cheat the vulnerable (2:1–5). The wealthy sought to evict the needy from their homes (2:2). Industry was marked by dishonesty and deceit (6:9–12).

The nation's leaders, looked to by the people for justice, brought the opposite, swapping evil for good (3:1–3). Many of Micah's accusations focused on the source of leadership, the nation's capital (3:10; 4:10).

Even the religious leaders of the day were consumed by self-centered success (2:11; 3:5). Micah cried out against the religious outrages of the nation. He predicted the destruction of his nation as an act of God's judgment (3:3–4). Others, though, led the people to believe that this could never happen because God was certainly with their nation. They declared a message of making Israel great again.¹⁹

And so the nation reeled from an unrighteous conspiracy among its leaders:

Her leaders judge for a bribe,
her priests teach for a price,

¹⁸ "Equity versus Equality" by Mateo Castelli. The Noise Project.

¹⁹ Langston, S. (2003). Micah. In C. Brand, C. Draper, A. England, S. Bond, E. R. Clendenen, & T. C. Butler (Eds.), *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (p. 1118). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

her prophets tell fortunes for money.
Yet they lean upon the LORD and say,
“Is not the LORD among us?” (3:11)

Micah the prophet spoke truth into these twisted times. Surging financial success for a few, rampant injustice for many, and pervasive wickedness in every sector. For these, the Lord used Micah to bring Israel to court.

LITERARY CONTEXT OF MICAH 6:8

Book Context. The book features three cycles of judgment-salvation messages:²⁰

Cycle	Judgment	Salvation
One	1:2-2:11	2:12-13
Two	3:1-12	4:1-5:15
Three	6:1-7:7	7:8-20

Each of the three judgment messages takes the form of a legal hearing. Each judgement cycle includes testimony, witnesses, charges and a sentence.

Immediate Context of 6:8

Micah 6:1-8 forms a single unit within judgment cycle three. It may be outlined:

Israel called to court by the Lord 6:1
God calls on creation as a witness 6:2
Central question – How have I (Yahweh) burdened you (Israel)? 6:3
God calls on history as a witness 6:4-5
 Redemption out of Egypt
 Provision of leadership
 Unstoppable plan of God
Israel responds to Yahweh 6:6-7
Yahweh’s Final Ruling 6:8

The opening reinforces the book’s courtroom imagery by three times employing the Hebrew term most associated with a legal case, רִיב (“case” 6:1-2). The Lord’s central question (“How have I wearied you? 6:3) is sandwiched by God’s jury and witness. His jury includes all creation (using a merism of mountains for height and earth’s foundations for depth 6:2). Israel’s redemption story stands as a witness to God’s case (6:4-5). The Lord reminds His people that He redeemed them out of slavery and provided faithful leaders (6:4). The leadership of Moses, Aaron and Miriam though not perfect still stood in stark contrast to the leaders of Micah’s day. He also reminded them of the inability of enemy forces (Balak/Balaam) and natural forces (Jordan River at flood stage) to stop God from keeping His commitment to His people (6:5).

Israel responded to the Lord’s opening argument with a series of rhetorical questions (6:6-7). “With what shall I come before the Lord?” To “come before” (בָּרָךְ piel) can refer to a general meeting. However, in contexts of formal meetings, it often implies antagonistic confrontation.²¹ Perhaps then in irony, it is paired with “bow down” (נָפַל nifal) in an act of worship. Israel had become fascinated with fanciful expressions of devotion. Their hyperbolic offerings began with the best quality (“calves a year old”), then massive quantities (“thousands of rams” and “thousands of rivers of oil”), then absurdity (“offer my firstborn”). It is as if Israel exclaims “What else does God want? Will He never be satisfied?”

²⁰ For a full discussion of the literary structure of Micah, see Kenneth L. Barker, “A Literary Analysis of the Book of Micah” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 155:620 (Oct 1998), pp. 437-448.

²¹ See 2 Sam 22:6, 19; Job 30:27; 41:3; Psa 17:13; 18:6, 19. The term may also communicate to be bowed down with worry or anxiety (Psa 57:6). This could link to Israel’s weariness in verse 3.

EXPOSITION OF 6:8

Verse eight captures the simple desire of the Lord for His people. He had no pleasure in multiplied sacrifices and hyperbolic ritual. Instead, He demanded simple heart obedience. This demand echoed the ancient Law:

And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD , which I am commanding you today for your good? (Deut 10:12–13)

In the immediate context of that original demand, the LORD described Himself as impartial and taking no bribes. A God who “executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner.” He then commanded Israel to follow His example to love the sojourner (10:17-19). Rendered “sojourner” (ESV), “alien” (NIV) or “foreigner” (NLT), this term (גֵּר) refers to one “one who is of a different geographical or cultural group, often with less rights than the reference group.”²² And so the LORD reminded Israel of His ancient but abiding expectation of obedience and fairness for all people. For Micah’s day it was captured by justice, mercy and humility.

Justice. מִשְׁפָּט is found 421 times in Scripture.²³ Most often it is associated with righteousness (173 times). Frequently the two are paired in poetic form:

He will bring forth your righteousness as the light,
and your justice as the noonday. (Ps 37:6)²⁴

The common phrases “righteousness and justice” and “just and right” describe foundational virtues of God as well as necessary traits in His people.²⁵ The promotion of justice cannot be separated from God’s whole righteous standard.

Justice also necessitates impartial treatment of all. The Law required honest commercial scales.²⁶ And in the courts, no class was to receive favor or scorn. The Law, Sages and Prophets agree:

You shall not be partial in judgment. You shall hear the small and great alike. You shall not be intimidated by anyone, for the justice is God’s. (Deut 1:17)

It is not good to be partial to the wicked,
or to deprive the righteous of justice. (Prov 18:5)

As for the scoundrel, his devices are evil:
he plans wicked schemes to ruin the poor with lying words,
even when the plea of the needy is just. (Isa 32:7)

Every person deserved fair treatment. Social class, moral standing and economic status could have no bearing in legal proceedings. Further, the Law specified equal protection for the Gentiles living among the Jews. Even though God chose Israel as His “treasured possession” (Exo 19:5), He commanded them to treat all nationalities among them equally:

There shall be one law for the native and for the stranger who sojourns among you. (Exo 12:49)

²² Swanson, J. *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)* (electronic ed.) 1997.

²³ Word usage statistics derived from Logos Bible Software.

²⁴ See also Ps 37:30; 106:3; Prov 19:28; Ecc 3:16; Isa 5:16; Amos 5:7.

²⁵ For example, Ps 97:2 describes righteousness and justice as the foundations of the Lord’s throne. Ps 33:5 declares that He loves righteousness and justice. See also Ge 18:19; Ps 33:5; 89:14; 97:2; 103:6; 119:121; Pr 2:9; 21:3; Eze 18:5, 19, 21, 27; 33:14, 16, 19.

²⁶ See Lev 19:35 and similar passages.

For the assembly, there shall be one statute for you and for the stranger who sojourns with you, a statute forever throughout your generations. You and the sojourner shall be alike before the LORD. One law and one rule shall be for you and for the stranger who sojourns with you. (Nu 15:15–16)

When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God. (Lev 19:33–34)

This economic/legal usage fits well with Micah 6:8. The LORD earlier condemned the wicked business leaders who defrauded homeowners and farmers (2:2, 8-9). Immediately following 6:8, He declares the guilt of the dishonest rich (6:10-12). He also denounced judges for twisting justice for bribes (3:11; 7:3).

Through Micah, God called Israel to true justice in the sense of equal legal and economic treatment practiced among all peoples without regard to race, class or standing.

Critical Race Theorists have renewed America's awareness of systemic racial injustice. A 2020 ABC News poll found that 55% of Americans surveyed think that black people experience discrimination in their community. That was up from just 37% in the same poll in 2012.²⁷ And systemic injustice is more than just a perception. A study of 1900 exonerations in 15 states revealed that race was often a factor in wrongful convictions.²⁸ Even though black people comprise only 13% of the American population, they represented nearly 50% of wrongful convictions for murder. Official police misconduct led to 55% of the wrongful convictions of black defendants, but only 33% for white defendants. Witness tampering occurred 39% of the time with black defendants, but only 21% for whites. In sexual assault cases, the leading cause of wrongful conviction was eyewitness misidentification when the accused is a stranger. Of those, 79% of black defendants were misidentified, while only 51% of whites were. According to national crime statistics only 13% of white sexual assault victims were attacked by black defendants. Yet 57% of wrongfully convicted defendants were black. The study concluded that convicted black defendants were eight times more likely to be innocent than convicted white defendants.

Systemic racial bias exists beyond our court system. More than 70% of NFL players are black, yet for managers only 9%, and CEO's 0%. In its now infamous race norming case, the NFL used testing practices that presumed a player had lower cognitive function if he was black. This led to rejecting CTE settlement payments for many former black players. If they had been white, they would have received the full concussion settlement.²⁹

Much like in Micah's day, injustice thrives in America today. Far too many times equality escapes our commercial and legal systems. Just as Israel needed true justice, America needs to pursue it as well. As justice is pursued, it cannot be completely blind.

Mercy/Kindness. The LORD's call for justice was tied to showing mercy. The Hebrew term utilized here (רַחֲמִים) normally is rendered "love" or "loyal love," most often describing the covenantal love of Yahweh. However, in a number of passages the term refers to kind acts of humans toward one another. These include

²⁷ Poll conducted for ABC by Langer Research Associates, July 2020.

²⁸ "Race and Wrongful Convictions." National Registry of Exonerations. University of California Irvine. 2017.

²⁹ "'Race-norming' kept former NFL players from dementia diagnoses. Their families want answers." *Washington Post* (September 29, 2021).

Joseph's request to Pharaoh's cupbearer to remember him (Gen 40:14), Rahab's request of protection by the spies (Josh 2:12-14), Ruth's marriage proposal to Boaz (Ruth 3:10), Job's expected sympathy from friends (Job 6:14) and Zechariah's call to Israel for compassionate reform (Zech 7:9). Micah communicates this sense as God calls Israel to love kind acts as an integral part of justice. Micah does not stand alone embracing merciful justice. Isaiah declared:

Therefore the LORD waits to be gracious to you,
and He exalts Himself to show mercy to you.
For the LORD is a God of justice;
blessed are all those who wait for Him. (30:18).

Similarly, the Lord Jesus confronted the hypocritical religious leaders of His day:

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. (Mt 23:23)

So biblical justice is not simplified equal treatment mechanically dispensed. While justice cannot be perverted by racial, cultural, social or economic class, it must be nourished by compassionate consideration of individual circumstances. This raises complex questions for us today. Is legal equality enough? Does merciful justice demand the adopting of equity principles? Does justice require reparations?

UCLA Law professor, Cheryl Harris, proposed a radical system of equity:

The solution is to replace the system of property rights and equal protection—which she calls “mere nondiscrimination”—with a system of positive discrimination tasked with “redistributing power and resources in order to rectify inequities and to achieve real equality.” Harris envisions a suspension of existing property rights followed by a governmental campaign to “address directly the distribution of property and power” through wealth confiscation and race-based redistribution. In Harris's formulation, if rights are a mechanism of white supremacy, they must be curtailed; the imperative of addressing race-based disparities must be given priority over the constitutional guarantees of equality, property, and neutrality.³⁰

Others say that the solution to equality is relatively simple and unrelated to race:

Let politicians, schoolteachers and administrators, community leaders, ministers and parents drill into children the message that in a free society, they enter adulthood with three major responsibilities: at least finish high school, get a full-time job and wait until age 21 to get married and have children.³¹

Haskins notes that more than 40 percent of American children, including more than 70 percent of black children and 50 percent of Hispanic children, are born outside marriage. He suggests these children are four times more likely than children from married-couple families to live in poverty. In turn, poverty is associated with a wide range of negative outcomes in children, including school dropout and out-of-wedlock births.³²

Is it really as simple as these three steps? Will only radical solutions such as Harris's work? Neither? If status quo is too Jim Crow, what answers will bring true justice and mercy for all? The Lord spoke one more necessity for merciful justice.

³⁰ Summarized in “Critical Race Theory Would Not Solve Racial Inequality: It Would Deepen It.” *Backgrounder: Domestic Policy Studies* (No. 3597, March 23, 2021). For the full article, see Cheryl I. Harris, “Whiteness as Property,” *Harvard Law Review* (Vol. 106, No. 8, June 1993).

³¹ Ron Haskins, “Three Simple Rules Poor Teens Should Follow to Join the Middle Class” Brookings Institute. March 2013.

³² *Ibid.*

Humility. The third element of desired obedience was humility. The root used here (עָנָה) is found in only one other place, Proverbs 11:2. There it is contrasted with personal pride. The idea is living carefully with respect to another's direction. This respect considers others' needs as well as the LORD's commanded direction. This prudent approach, fully aware of God's watchful eye, reinforces and enables the merciful justice demanded.

CONCLUSION

Critical Race Theory has been assailed by many Christian leaders for its extreme solutions. While we cannot accept the radical and unbiblical remedies often embedded in CRT, we should not dismiss the deeply complex issues and uncomfortable questions. Perhaps instead of fighting for or against CRT as an issue, believers could create a new acronym for the Church to champion. Humble Compassionate Justice (HCJ). HCJ might include:

Humility includes the optics. The term translated “humbly” in Micah 6:8 carries as aspect of wise awareness. Humility must start with the heart, but it must also acknowledge perceptions. Church leaders are to have a respected reputation with outsiders (1 Tim 3:7). Paul gave up his rights to earn a living from the Gospel for the sake of the Gospel's witness (1 Cor 9:1-23; 1 Thess 3:2-10). Heart motive matters. So do optics. What angered many black SBC leaders about the seminary presidents' CRT statement was that it came from six white males. Nothing kept the presidents from broadening the group before making the declaration. Thankfully, that dialogue has since begun.

Cannot separate structure from people. CRT advocates like Matsuda argue that the issue resides with structures, not people. CRT opponents like McDowell claim that CRT is flawed because it focuses on structure rather than personal responsibility.³³ This is a false bifurcation. People create structure; structure requires people. Without good people, no structural change matters. One wonders what society would look like if our current laws remained but racism was banished from hearts. It is noteworthy that Derrick Bell's examples of racism above were essentially personal, not structural. On the other hand, one also wonders what kind of social structures we would build if we used blocks free of racism.

No easy answers. Obeying mercy in this arena presents challenges. Radical solutions like Harris' land redistribution are swiped away at once. But if current state is failing, can we just maintain? The concept of reparations forces us to wrestle with the individual responsibility declared in Jeremiah 31:29-30. Do the children have to pay for the sins of their fathers? Yet we also must confront the corporate identity found when leaders like Nehemiah and Daniel take the responsibility to confess the sins of previous generations (Neh 1:6-7; Dan 9:4-11). Can we draw a line to start equal treatment as if the past never happened? The nuanced biblical principles and the complexity of current issues should warn anyone against simple solutions.

Discuss and discern not dismiss. Too many have embraced or dismissed CRT without significant thought or discussion. In a video posted on Twitter and viewed by more than 7 million people in 6 days, a Virginia voter said that CRT was the main reason he voted in the election. However, he could not define CRT or give a specific reason he stood against it.³⁴ McDowell claimed CRT opposed all biblical teaching on race and racism, yet CRT and Scripture both point out that the sin of favoritism, even in forms of racism and classism, exist in our sinful world. Would not a more granular and discerning approach be superior to a global and dismissive position?

³³ “Josh McDowell Steps Back from Ministry After Race Remarks” *Christianity Today*. September 23, 2021.

³⁴ @The GoodLiars. Twitter. November 1, 2021.

Charity starts at home. Churches cannot expect governments to solve problems that churches and ministries themselves ignore. On December 18, 1963, Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “We must face the fact that in America, the church is still the most segregated major institution. At 11:00 on Sunday morning when we stand and sing that Christ has no east or west, we stand at the most segregated hour in this nation. This is tragic.” Still today, 86% of churches are made up of predominantly one race. Yet 67% of churchgoers say the church is doing enough to be ethnically diverse.³⁵ How often do pastors broach the subject from the pulpit? From the budget? From the prayer closet?

Be guilty of micromercies. In 2017, Merriam-Webster added “microaggression” to its online dictionary. It has now become a common label for subtle sometimes unintentional racist comments or actions. The prevalence of microaggressions is pointed to as evidence of systemic racism. What if the church could begin to displace microaggression with regular gracious acts and kind comments, micromercies? James Clear, author of bestseller *Atomic Habits*, demonstrates the incredible difference made when replacing one bad habit with one good habit. “It seems to make little difference on any given day and yet the impact it delivers over the months and years can be enormous. . . Habits are the compound interest of improvement.”³⁶ What difference could be made through the regular practice of micromercies? It’s like asking what difference could it make to intersect with one Samaritan woman at a well?

³⁵ “Sunday Morning in America Still Segregated – and That’s OK With Worshipers” Lifeway Research. January 2015.

³⁶ James Clear, *Atomic Habits* (New York: Random House, 2018) p. 16.

Resolution Author: Stephen Feinstein

On Critical Race Theory and Intersectionality

WHEREAS, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy and reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried; and

WHEREAS, critical race theory and intersectionality are founded upon unbiblical presuppositions descended from Marxist theories and categories, and therefore are inherently opposed to the Scriptures as the true center of Christian union; and

WHEREAS, both critical race theory and intersectionality as ideologies have infiltrated some Southern Baptist churches and institutions—institutions funded by the Cooperative Program; and

WHEREAS, critical race theory upholds postmodern relativistic understandings of truth; and

WHEREAS, critical race theory divides humanity into groups of oppressors and oppressed, and is used to encourage biblical, transcendental truth claims to be considered suspect when communicated from groups labeled as oppressors; and

WHEREAS, intersectionality defines human identity by race, social background, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and a host of other distinctions, and it does so at the expense of other identities; and

WHEREAS, intersectionality reduces human beings to distinguishable identities of unequal value and thus reduces human identity down to differences rather than commonality; and

WHEREAS, intersectionality encourages rage as its driving energy and conclusion; and

WHEREAS, intersectionality magnifies differences while deeming as more favorable the individuals who combine the highest number of oppressed identities; and

WHEREAS, both critical race theory and intersectionality breed division and deny humanity's essential commonality; and

WHEREAS, the Scripture provides God's narrative on such matters; and

WHEREAS, the book of Genesis grounds humanity in that which unites us, namely our common identity as the Imago Dei, which itself is the foundation of every biblical, ethical command to love one's neighbor and to seek justice for all; and

WHEREAS, the Bible acknowledges differences—male and female, slave and free, Jew and Gentile—it does not begin with human differences, but instead begins with what unites humanity, namely the Imago Dei; and

WHEREAS, the sameness of humanity built upon the Imago Dei, justifies the value of all individuals in something that transcends race, gender, and other identity intersections; and

WHEREAS, the New Covenant further unites by creating a new humanity that will one day inhabit the new heavens and the new earth, and that the people of this new humanity, though descended from every nation, tribe, tongue, and people, are all one in Christ; and

WHEREAS, this new humanity is comprised of people from every ethnicity and race, of every socio-economic background and culture, and yet these people enter this new humanity through belief in the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and

WHEREAS, Christian citizenship is not based on our differences but instead on our common salvation in Christ; and

WHEREAS, we find our true identity in Christ; and

WHEREAS, the Scriptures have categories and principles by which to deal with racism, sexism, injustice, abuse—principles found in prior Southern Baptist resolutions such as *On The Anti-Gospel of Alt-Right White Supremacy*, for example, that are not rooted in Marxist anti-gospel presuppositions; and

WHEREAS, the rhetoric of critical race theory and intersectionality found in some Southern Baptist institutions and leaders is causing unnecessary and unbiblical division among the body of Christ and is tarnishing the reputation of the Southern Baptist Convention as a whole, inviting charges of theological liberalism, egalitarianism, and Marxism; and

WHEREAS, the Southern Baptist Convention is committed to racial reconciliation built upon biblical presuppositions, and is committed to seeking biblical justice through biblical means; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention, meeting in Birmingham, Alabama, June 11-12, 2019, decry every philosophy or theology, including critical race theory and intersectionality, as antithetical to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, since they divide the people of Christ by defining fundamental identity as something other than our identity in Jesus Christ; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we deny any philosophy or theology that defines individuals primarily by non-transcendental social constructs rather than by the transcendental reality of all humans existing as the Imago Dei; and be it further

RESOLVED, That while we denounce critical race theory and intersectionality, we do not deny that ethnic, gender, cultural, and racial distinctions do in fact exist and are a gift from God that will give Him absolute glory when the entire gamut of human diversity worships Him in perfect unity founded upon our unity in Jesus Christ; and be it further

RESOLVED, That Southern Baptist Churches will seek to paint this eschatological picture in a proleptic manner in our churches in the present by focusing on our unity in Christ and our common humanity as the Imago Dei rather than dividing over the secondary matters that make us different; and be it further

RESOLVED, That Southern Baptists Churches and institutions will take a prophetic stand against all forms of biblically-defined injustice, but we will do so in a manner consistent with the biblical worldview rather than unbiblical worldviews; and be it further

RESOLVED, That Southern Baptist institutions need to make progress in rooting out the intentional promulgation of critical race theory and intersectionality in both our churches and institutions; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we earnestly pray, both for those who advocate ideologies meant to divide believers along intersectional lines and those who are thereby deceived, that they may see their error through the light of the Gospel, repent of these anti-Gospel beliefs, and come to know the peace and love of Christ through redeemed fellowship in the Kingdom of God, which is established from every nation, tribe, people, and language.

Final Version, edited by the Resolutions Committee

RESOLUTION 9 - ON CRITICAL RACE THEORY AND INTERSECTIONALITY

WHEREAS, Concerns have been raised by some evangelicals over the use of frameworks such as critical race theory and intersectionality; and

WHEREAS, Critical race theory is a set of analytical tools that explain how race has and continues to function in society, and intersectionality is the study of how different personal characteristics overlap and inform one's experience; and

WHEREAS, Critical race theory and intersectionality have been appropriated by individuals with worldviews that are contrary to the Christian faith, resulting in ideologies and methods that contradict Scripture; and

WHEREAS, Evangelical scholars who affirm the authority and sufficiency of Scripture have employed selective insights from critical race theory and intersectionality to understand multifaceted social dynamics; and

WHEREAS, The Baptist Faith and Message states, "[A]ll Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried" (Article I); and

WHEREAS, General revelation accounts for truthful insights found in human ideas that do not explicitly emerge from Scripture and reflects what some may term "common grace"; and

WHEREAS, Critical race theory and intersectionality alone are insufficient to diagnose and redress the root causes of the social ills that they identify, which result from sin, yet these analytical tools can aid in evaluating a variety of human experiences; and

WHEREAS, Scripture contains categories and principles by which to deal with racism, poverty, sexism, injustice, and abuse that are not rooted in secular ideologies; and

WHEREAS, Humanity is primarily identified in Scripture as image bearers of God, even as biblical authors address various audiences according to characteristics such as male and female, Jew and Gentile, slave and free; and

WHEREAS, The New Covenant further unites image bearers by creating a new humanity that will one day inhabit the new creation, and that the people of this new humanity, though descended from every nation, tribe, tongue, and people, are all one through the gospel of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:16; Revelation 21:1–4, 9–14); and

WHEREAS, Christian citizenship is not based on our differences but instead on our common salvation in Christ—the source of our truest and ultimate identity; and

WHEREAS, The Southern Baptist Convention is committed to racial reconciliation built upon biblical presuppositions and is committed to seeking biblical justice through biblical means; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Birmingham, Alabama, June 11–12, 2019, affirm Scripture as the first, last, and sufficient authority with regard to how the Church seeks to redress social ills, and we reject any conduct, creeds, and religious opinions which contradict Scripture; and be it further

RESOLVED, That critical race theory and intersectionality should only be employed as analytical tools subordinate to Scripture—not as transcendent ideological frameworks; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the gospel of Jesus Christ alone grants the power to change people and society because “he who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6); and be it further

RESOLVED, That Southern Baptists will carefully analyze how the information gleaned from these tools are employed to address social dynamics; and be it further

RESOLVED, That Southern Baptist churches and institutions repudiate the misuse of insights gained from critical race theory, intersectionality, and any unbiblical ideologies that can emerge from their use when absolutized as a worldview; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we deny any philosophy or theology that fundamentally defines individuals using categories identified as sinful in Scripture rather than the transcendent reality shared by every image bearer and divinely affirmed distinctions; and be it further

RESOLVED, That while we denounce the misuse of critical race theory and intersectionality, we do not deny that ethnic, gender, and cultural distinctions exist and are a gift from God that will give Him absolute glory when all humanity gathers around His throne in worship because of the redemption accomplished by our resurrected Lord; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That Southern Baptist churches seek to exhibit this eschatological promise in our churches in the present by focusing on unity in Christ amid image bearers and rightly celebrate our differences as determined by God in the new creation.