

## **A Dispensational Perspective on Race and Ethnicity**

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The recent deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor brought the topic of race and ethnicity to the forefront of American conversations and hence to the church. While some might be tempted to get their perspective from the media or history, a biblical perspective is critical at this time. This paper will apply a dispensational methodology to the question of race and ethnicity in order to promote a biblical understanding of the topic.

### Method as Applied to Critical Race Theory (CRT)

This paper utilizes Chafer's definition of systematic theology for analyzing this topic. Chafer writes, "Systematic Theology may be defined as the collecting, scientifically arranging, comparing, exhibiting, and defending of all facts from any and every source concerning God and His works. It is *thetic* in that it follows a humanly devised thesis form and presents and verifies truth as *truth*."<sup>1</sup> This definition is critical for determining a dispensational perspective on race and ethnicity. From the outset, I will say I believe Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Cultural Marxism are unbiblical worldviews. The question is whether there is any tangential theological value that can be incorporated into a biblical worldview instead of dismissing everything related to the systems out of hand. In the social media driven environment of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, sources have become very controversial. Some rely

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<sup>1</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1993), 6. Emphasis his.

on Fox News while others rely on MSNBC. As people question what is true or fake news from topics ranging from COVID-19 to the 2020 Presidential election, everyone seems to have a favorite authority to quote. The result of this cultural tendency is to focus more on the perceived bias of the source as opposed to the evaluating the positions the source advocates. This is not to say that the philosophical and theological assumptions of the source should not be evaluated. Not all sources are created equal and therefore all must be examined in light of the inspired, authoritative source: The Bible. People with a dispensational theology should be willing to acknowledge and incorporate valid, biblical truth claims from all sources.

This distinction is especially critical on the topic of race. A scholar or pastor who refers to Kendi, Tisby, and/or Emerson might be identified as an advocate of Critical Race Theory or a Cultural Marxist. On the other hand, an individual who quotes Edwards and Whitefield could be identified by some as a racist who is quoting slaveowners. In fact, some might be tempted to reject Dispensationalism as a whole because of Dallas Theological Seminary's former policy of not admitting African Americans and misunderstandings of Scofield's note on the so-called curse of Ham in the *Scofield Reference Bible*.<sup>2</sup> Such

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<sup>2</sup> In his article "Towards a Definition of Dispensationalism," Stallard states regarding the note in the *Scofield Reference Bible*, "To Scofield's credit, the Bible editor does not explicitly mention black people in his rather terse note about subjugation: 'A prophetic declaration is made that from Ham will descend an inferior race.' Any allusion to a predicted inferior nature of blacks can only be seen as implicit or perhaps read into the words of Scofield rather than clearly taught. It could be that Scofield believed that the black race was in view, but it is hard to know that from the note itself or in the other writings of Scofield, which this writer has seen. Most scholars see the fulfillment of the subjugation mentioned in the verse in Joshua's conquest of the Canaanites when Israel entered the land after the wilderness wanderings." Mike Stallard, "Toward a Definition of Dispensationalism," Available at [https://dispensationalcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/10\\_Toward\\_a\\_Definition\\_of\\_Dispensationalism\\_Stallard.pdf](https://dispensationalcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/10_Toward_a_Definition_of_Dispensationalism_Stallard.pdf) (Accessed on August, 24, 2021) 3.

conclusions represent the worst label a person of a particular persuasion can give to another. For liberals, the worst thing to call someone is a racist/bigot and for conservatives the worst thing to call someone is a communist. Hence, people try to diminish the views of the opposing side by connecting those views to what they themselves repudiate.

Mislabeled an individual could be a form of slander. When the concept of loving one's neighbor is introduced in Leviticus 19:18, slander is to be avoided (Lev. 19:16).

Recently, I watched a debate on Facebook in which individuals were discussing the best references to learn about Critical Race Theory. One of our professors jumped into the conversation and asked if anyone who was discussing Critical Race Theory had actually read primary sources of those who advocate Critical Race Theory. Not a single person in the conversation could cite a primary source they had read on the topic. They instead continued to refer him to various YouTube videos and resources by Neil Shenvi.

A truly dispensational perspective will evaluate any and every type of source in order to determine what truth claims can be incorporated into one's system. And not only that, but a dispensationalist will interpret the views of others literally, according to the author's original intent. The International Conference on Biblical Inerrancy defines literal as, "We affirm the necessity of interpreting the Bible according to its literal, or normal, sense. The literal sense is the grammatical-historical sense, that is, the meaning which the writer expressed. Interpretation according to the literal sense will take account of all figures of speech and literary forms found in the text. We deny the legitimacy of any approach to Scripture that attributes to it meaning which the literal sense does not support."<sup>3</sup> Literal

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<sup>3</sup> Norman L. Geisler, ed., *Inerrancy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 497.

interpretation is a sine qua non of the dispensationalism. However, dispensationalists should not only advocate a literal interpretation of the Bible but of all texts. Most traditional dispensationalists would advocate Hirsch's definition of meaning as "that which is represented by a text; it is what the author meant by his use of a particular sign sequence; it is what the signs represent."<sup>4</sup>

*The Role of Authorial Intent in Dispensational Discussions on Race*

The goal of every dispensationalist should be to portray all sources as the author would intend for them to be portrayed. When I was in my master's program at Dallas Theological Seminary, I stumbled on a dissertation topic that I hoped to pursue in my Ph.D. program that will later be a book published by Exegetica Press (if the Lord wills). In researching Jonah 3:4, I had noted how Chisholm used the text to make a distinction between decrees one which God will not change His mind and intentions about which God may change His mind.<sup>5</sup> Instantly I feared that a professor of Dallas Theological Seminary was slipping into Open Theism and I wrote a paper for a class against his view. My professor Tracy Howard read the paper and gave me a good grade but he asked me to meet him after class. He asked me if I had considered sending my paper to Dr. Chisholm to ensure I had rightly represented his view. I agreed to do so in hopes that Dr. Chisholm would read my paper and repent of his slippery descent to Open Theism. Much to my surprise, Dr. Chisholm not only read my paper but he seemed pretty offended by it. He assured me that he did not espouse Open Theism and he simply was trying to wrestle with what the Hebrew

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<sup>4</sup> E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 4.

<sup>5</sup> Robert B. Chisholm Jr., "Does God 'Change His Mind'?", *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152, no. 608 (1995): 387–400.

says. Seven years later, I finalized my dissertation and acknowledged Dr. Chisholm's role in helping me write it. Although I still disagreed with his view, I found him to be a wealth of information about sources that viewed Jonah's prophecy differently than I did. He would respond to my questions and in the end, I hope I represented his view more fairly.

What role does an author's intended meaning play into these questions of race? In our divided culture, it is very easy to divide evangelical Christianity into us vs. them. An individual can easily portray the opposing view as racist defenders of white supremacy. Alternatively, others portray the side they are opposing as Cultural Marxists. Pastors and scholars are regularly slandered by labels they would never apply to themselves. For me, this is somewhat personal because people I know are sometimes mislabeled. For instance, Dr. Eric Mason, author of *Woke Church*, is a former professor of our college. I attended his Conscious Christianity conference and heard him personally say that he rejects Cultural Marxism. Yet I shook my head when I read a recent dispensationalist who argued that Mason's views were heavily influenced by Marxism. The evidence for the assertion was his views of reparations, his use of the phrase whiteness, and alleged support of Black Lives Matter.<sup>6</sup> Mason himself denies any association with Cultural Marxism. He tweeted, "You can't call someone a Marxist if you haven't read and interacted with his primary sources. When engaging Marxism, you cannot connect social justice to communism and socialism

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<sup>6</sup> After contacting the author (whom I will keep anonymous because my goal in contacting him was to model what I am espousing here), he agreed that he might have misrepresented Mason after he watched a clip of a sermon by Eric Mason entitled "What I Mean When I Say Black Lives Matter," Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jPdfBJV1Ys8>, (Accessed on August, 24, 2021) in which at the 30:30 mark he explicitly says, "There are things within it [the organization] that I have to part with. When I say 'Black Lives Matter' I'm not supporting the Black Lives Matter organization. I'm supporting Black life."

and relativism. It's totally embarrassing!"<sup>7</sup> In a February 15, 2019 tweet Mason also favorably cites "'Race' and Racism Pre-Date Karl Marx" by Thabiti Anyabwile which says, "It's not that Marxist thought isn't anywhere to be found in racial discourse. I think it is. Of course, some people are self-consciously Marxist. But most people writing blogs and engaging the subject either are unaware of Marxist influence or are quite aware of having very different influences on their thought. Tossing about the label does nothing for understanding the person you're engaging or improving the discourse. And, in a good many instances, tossing about the labels is simply anachronistic."<sup>8</sup>

As Anyabwile points out, this tendency of guilt by association is not helpful to advancing the discussion on any theological topic. A few years ago I got an angry call from a professor who was upset that I would not hire him to teach at our school based on his amillennial eschatology. He berated me for allowing something as narrow as eschatology to be a qualifying factor to teach at our school. He was outraged that our institution would reject professors who believed like Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield whom he mentioned by name. He probably was not too happy when I reminded him that as a school in which a majority of our students are African Americans that there might be other reasons why I would not want to hire Edwards and Whitefield that were referred to earlier in this paper. I noted that his resume indicated he taught at a reformed graduate school and I asked him if he thinks that institution would hire a dispensationalist like me as an adjunct.

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<sup>7</sup> Eric Mason, Twitter post, September 7, 2018, 11:20AM, <https://twitter.com/pastoremase/status/1038099769829347329?lang=en>

<sup>8</sup> Thabiti Anyabwile, "'Race' and Racism Pre-Date Karl Marx," The Gospel Coalition, April 09, 2018, accessed September 03, 2021, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/thabiti-anyabwile/race-racism-pre-date-karl-marx/>.

He said that I should not expect to be hired at his reformed institution because they hold to eschatological views that the church has believed for centuries and I hold to eschatological views that are characteristic of some cults (never mind that the earliest church fathers were premillennial). This professor hoped to disparage my dispensational eschatology by associating it with something worse. His implied comparison went something like this:

1. Dispensationalists are premillennial.
2. Cults like Jehovah's Witness are premillennial.
3. Therefore, your decision to not hire me based on eschatology is what the cults would do.

The late Ravi Zacharias shows the logical errors of this type of thinking when he states this syllogism:

1. Elephants have ears.
2. I have ears.
3. Therefore, I am an elephant.

One can see a similar logic here:

1. Black Lives Matter is a Marxist Organization
2. Eric Mason praised Black Lives Matter
3. Therefore, Eric Mason is a Cultural Marxist.

Or, this logic which I have seen among more liberal groups when talking to conservatives:

1. Trump was endorsed by racists like *The Crusader* a KKK newspaper that calls itself "the premier voice of the white resistance."
2. You voted for Trump.
3. Therefore, you are a racist.

These gross oversimplifications illustrate that dispensationalists should be very hesitant to label someone in a way that he or she would not describe himself or herself. This is not the case of the co-founder of the Black Lives Matter movement Patrisse Cullors who admitted she is a trained Marxist. However, saying someone who applauds the phrase "black lives matter" is inherently a cultural Marxist is no different than insinuating that any individual

who repeats the phrase “Make America Great Again” adopts every belief that Donald Trump espouses (which is especially concerning for Christians considering his views of sexual purity and his past admission that he does not have anything to ask forgiveness for). Theological positions are often far more nuanced than general labels like Cultural Marxist or racist will allow.

Having said that, does this mean we should never label someone in a way that he or she would not portray himself or herself? I don’t think Scripture goes that far. My guess is that the Pharisees would not consider it fair or accurate that Jesus portrayed their theology as Satanic (cf. John 8:44) or Peter might feel that Jesus’s portrayal of his rebuke as being influenced by Satan in Mark 8:33 and Matthew 16:23 was harsh (even though the Pharisees and Peter were in fact being influenced by Satan at those times). On the other hand, an aspect of love is giving a fellow Christ-follower the benefit of the doubt thereby believing all things best about them as well as hoping all things good for them (cf. 1 Corinthians 13:7). This should be applied in cases similar to when individuals like John Piper, Tim Keller, and Al Mohler have been accused of being closet cultural Marxists even when they have written strong theological statements against Critical Race Theory and Cultural Marxism.<sup>9</sup> Avoiding inaccurate labels also applies to comments toward many African-Americans who up until recently had little knowledge of Critical Race Theory or Cultural Marxism. Yet, they were

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<sup>9</sup> In my opinion, the best and most balanced critique of Critical Race Theory comes from Tim Keller, “A Biblical Critique of Secular Justice and Critical Theory,” Available at <https://quarterly.gospelinlife.com/a-biblical-critique-of-secular-justice-and-critical-theory/> (Accessed on August, 25, 2021). See also John Piper, “Critical Race Theory, Part 2: The Problem,” Available at <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/critical-race-theory-part-2> (Accessed on August, 25, 2021). See also Al Mohler, “Karl Marx Meets the Devil: A Conversation with Historian Paul Kengor “ Available at <https://albertmohler.com/2021/02/10/paul-kengor> (Accessed on August, 24, 2021).

accused of espousing them. Eric Mason himself stated that he had to research the phrase that he is so frequently accused of advancing. John Piper quotes Pastor Rasool Berry who mentions a common reaction African Americans have when being accused of espousing Cultural Marxism or Critical Race Theory:

The brothers and I had not even heard of Critical Race Theory until we were told that, when we said something needs to change when George Floyd is kneeled on, we were being held captive by Critical Race Theory. ‘What are you talking about? I’m just trying to respond to the injustices all around me...I’m being given a label that I don’t really want to be talking about. I want to be talking about the death that is in the street, and the disparities like COVID having a disproportionate impact on people of color. We see these disparities across education, health care, economics. I would rather talk about that, but any time you talk about that in Christian circles, you are given this title...More energy is being devoted to the tethering of Critical Race Theory to what we are saying than is being devoted to the problem of racism itself.<sup>10</sup>

I sometimes wonder if the arguments of the widespread influence of Critical Race Theory in society is not significantly different than attributing a pre-trib view of the rapture to a fifteen year old girl named Margaret MacDonald<sup>11</sup> or arguing that everyone from Ted Cruz to Mike Pence are all influenced by dominion theology. While there may be similarities in these views, we have to be careful not to paint too broad of a brush (just because someone has ears like an elephant does not make them an elephant).

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<sup>10</sup>John Piper, “Critical Race Theory, Part 1: The Relationships,” Available at <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/critical-race-theory-part-1> (Accessed on August, 24, 2021).

<sup>11</sup> This is a view that was debunked in Thomas Ice, “Is the Pre-Trib Rapture a Satanic Deception?” Available at [https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1051&context=pretrib\\_arch](https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1051&context=pretrib_arch) (Accessed on August, 24, 2021).

*Kimberlé Crenshaw: A Primary Source on Critical Race Theory*

So what should be said about Critical Race Theory? Perhaps it would be good to consult with one of the more recent adherents (time and space only allow for one) and see how that view relates to Scripture as we develop our systematic theology from any and every source known to the mind of man. As a background, Critical Race Theory was developed in the 1980s by legal scholars who were trying to explain how so much inequality could still exist after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and other laws that were intended to promote equality. Kimberlé Crenshaw is credited by some as having coined the phrase “Critical Race Theory” while others argue that its origin came from Derrick Bell and Richard Delgado. In her article “Twenty Years of Critical Race Theory: Looking back to Move Forward Commentary: Critical Race Theory: A Commemoration: Lead Article,” Crenshaw gives a different historical perspective than what one might find in Voddie T. Baucham Jr.’s *Fault Lines: The Social Justice Movement and Evangelicalism’s Looming Catastrophe* or similar resources. Crenshaw does not suggest that Critical Race Theory was invented to topple capitalism but instead it was employed in response to fellow liberals who espoused a color-blind philosophy and made hiring decisions based on standards that in her mind advanced the cause of white males at the expense of other minorities.

According to Crenshaw, it started as a legal discussion with Harvard Law School in which African American legal students were protesting the paucity of African American professors and especially those with tenure (after Derrick Bell left in the Spring of 1980, the law school officially had zero tenured minority faculty at the time). In confronting the Dean about this disparity, the Dean mentioned that he was interested in hiring more African

American professors but very few met their hiring standards. The students protested that the standards were arbitrary and difficult for females and people of color to achieve based on past inequalities (e.g. law degree from an Ivy league school and significant experience in courts where people of color were rarely hired). The Dean responded to their concerns with this question, “[W]ouldn't you prefer an excellent white professor over a mediocre Black one?”<sup>12</sup> The students responded by presenting a list of thirty black professors that they thought were qualified and a petition of over 500 signatures. In response to the student concerns and protests, the Dean chose to offer a three-week mini-course on civil rights litigation in the January intersession.

For Crenshaw, this situation illustrated how a liberal school that had made great inroads in admitting African American students still supported power structures that prevented African Americans from thriving into positions of power. As a result, the students boycotted the intersession course and hosted an alternative course taught by Derrick Bell that utilized materials from Bell's book *Race, Racism and American Law*. This brief overview shows how Critical Race Theory questioned the popular notion that the law tends to be impartial and objective by emphasizing how the history of how laws were developed in the United States and other countries were designed to disproportionately adversely affect people of color and maintain majority power. The situation with the Dean who tried to give a three week course while ignoring the larger issues illustrated that tendency. This history lesson may provide an alternative explanation to the origins of the Critical Race Theory. As

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<sup>12</sup> Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Twenty Years of Critical Race Theory: Looking back to Move Forward Commentary: Critical Race Theory: A Commemoration: Lead Article,” *Connecticut Law Review* 43, (2011): 1267.

opposed to being motivated by a desire to overthrow capitalism in America, the motive may have been to rebuke liberals who claimed to support equality in word but failed to do so in deed.<sup>13</sup> Whether this truly is the motive only God knows, but I point this out to encourage scholars to portray the view fairly (even when we disagree with it which I do disagree with it). It is kind of like people who argue that those who believe in a pretribulational rapture do so because they want to avoid suffering. While that may be a motive of some (in the same way that some who espouse Critical Race Theory really do want to overthrow all the capitalistic structures in our country), I hope that those who portray our motives would take us at our word that staying true to what the Bible says about the end times and specifically the need to remove the church to focus on Israel is the true motive. This is not to say that many proponents of Critical Race Theory are not Marxists, as many of them believe that capitalism has caused significant discrimination and inequality. It is just to say that I would prefer to speculate about the development of the concept from those who adhere to it and even contributed to its spreading.

### *Intersectionality*

A similar issue is true of the history of the term “intersectionality” which was coined by Crenshaw in her article “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics.” The title of this article clearly indicates that there are loaded liberal and unbiblical philosophies undergirding the term. Crenshaw coined the term after a legal case of

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<sup>13</sup>For an alternative explanation that racial issues were used to spread Marxism in America see Manning Johnson, *Color, Communism, and Common Sense: A True Story* (Eureka, MT: Lighthouse Trails Publishing, 2021).

DeGraffenreid v. General Motors. In this case, DeGraffenreid sued General Motors by arguing that African American females were discriminated at the company. General Motors responded by showing how African Americans and females were treated fairly within the organization. Crenshaw's main bone of contention with their evidence was that the African Americans that benefitted most from General Motors were males and the females that benefitted were white. In her opinion, the discriminatory practices were a subset or intersection of both populations: African American females.

In a *Time* interview, Kimberlé Crenshaw defines "intersectionality" as "how certain aspects of who you are will increase your access to the good things or your exposure to the bad things in life."<sup>14</sup> Crenshaw, as the author who coined the term, is careful to distinguish her definition from how it is perceived, "These days, I start with what it's not, because there has been distortion. It's not identity politics on steroids. It is not a mechanism to turn white men into the new pariahs. It's basically a lens, a prism, for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other. We tend to talk about race inequality as separate from inequality based on gender, class, sexuality or immigrant status. What's often missing is how some people are subject to all of these, and the experience is not just the sum of its parts."<sup>15</sup> For Crenshaw, intersectionality is not a contest to find who is more oppressed than others. It is a perception that the more minority groups one is a part of, the more likely that person will be discriminated against. Her proposed solution for the problem of inequality in America is,

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<sup>14</sup> Katy Steinmetz, "Kimberlé Crenshaw on What Intersectionality Means Today," *Time*, February 20, 2020, [PAGE], accessed August 25, 2021, <https://time.com/5786710/kimberle-crenshaw-intersectionality/>).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

“If you see inequality as a ‘them’ problem or ‘unfortunate other’ problem, that is a problem. Being able to attend to not just unfair exclusion but also, frankly, unearned inclusion is part of the equality gambit. We’ve got to be open to looking at all of the ways our systems reproduce these inequalities, and that includes the privileges as well as the harms.”<sup>16</sup>

### *Privilege*

This brings me to another controversial term that Crenshaw and many CRT advocates use...the term “privilege.” In the previously cited article, she discusses her concept of privilege as follows:

With the collapse of segregation came the confidence in some quarters that formal equality alone constituted the ultimate realization of racial justice. Yet, this faith in formal equality's triumph over white supremacy was unwarranted; formal equality did little to disrupt ongoing patterns of institutional power and the reproduction of differential privileges and burdens across race. Post-reform struggles such as the battle over integration at Harvard involved efforts to impose an institutional settlement in the name of formal equality that left many dimensions of power and exclusion firmly entrenched.<sup>17</sup>

There is no doubt that some advocates of CRT have a more extreme version of privilege than what is described here. I once saw a video at a Black Lives Matter protest where white people were asked not to walk on a particular street due to privilege. Such approaches are unbiblical and focused on revenge and white guilt rather than conciliatory.

This concept of privilege seems to be connected with a focus on whiteness which in the CRT world is how Jewish, Polish and Irish individuals were once outcasts but once race was decided by color as opposed to ethnicity these once discriminated groups were

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Twenty Years of Critical Race Theory: Looking back to Move Forward Commentary: Critical Race Theory: A Commemoration: Lead Article,” 1312.

elevated as African Americans were considered inferior. CRT advocates tend to argue that while there is formal equality in name, the way the law is applied is often unequal, whether in mass incarceration of African Americans as described in the Netflix documentary *13<sup>th</sup>* or inequality in access to real estate (along with the fact that once a neighborhood becomes majority African American that it becomes less desirable and property values go down or the opposite effect of gentrification in which urban properties become more valuable due to location and minority populations cannot afford the property taxes and other costs to stay in homes they have lived in for a long period of time).<sup>18</sup> CRT advocates use privilege to argue that modern racism is less pronounced and more subtle. Privilege does not mean white people have success only because they are white and did not have it hard. It means that the color of skin wasn't an obstacle to success. In her article, Crenshaw even argues how the reality of an African American president (President Obama) did more to advance a colorblind thinking than produce real change that addressed systemic structures that hurt African Americans.

This distinction between formal equality and systemic equality are an important distinction for advocates of Critical Race Theory. Imagine that in a country where Christianity was prohibited and Christians were regularly jailed for their faith (e.g. North Korea, current Afghanistan, etc.). The results of these laws were many Christian families were separated from their families due to mass incarceration of Christians. They also lost their property. Over time, Christianity is permitted but the results of incarceration and

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<sup>18</sup> An interesting analysis of how systemic racism still exists in the real estate agency can be found at Elizabeth Korver-Glenn, *Race Brokers Housing Markets and Racial Segregation in 21st Century Urban America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2022).

property loss have long term effects on the poverty rates of Christians in this country. Christianity may now have formal equality in this system but the systemic results of an extended period of time of discrimination have long term effects. And before we as evangelical Christians argue too hard against the possibility of systemic inequalities, it appears that the United States is setting itself up to discriminate against Christians in the present and future. Whether that is removing financial aid for colleges that do not admit homosexuals or forcing bakers that will not make a wedding cake for a homosexual wedding, these are just the beginnings of the persecution that awaits the Christian church. Now someone could say that systemic discrimination of Christians does not exist because there are plenty of rich Christians in the United States and even a Christian could become president but that does not mean that the system could be wired to suppress Christianity (one could equally question whether Antisemitism exists by citing the number of rich Jews and Jews in power –maybe the Egyptians could have pointed to Moses being in Pharaoh’s house as evidence that it did not exist during the time of the Exodus -- but we know it exists). It would be most unfortunate if the group that denied that systemic discrimination exists will one day feel the effects of it and have no one to speak for them.

#### *Evaluation of Critical Race Theory*

So now that we have discussed what Critical Race Theory is, let us follow the counsel of 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22 (NASB), “Examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil.” Regarding this passage, Constable says, “In view of this danger Christians need to **test** what they hear and read, by comparing it with the Word of God, to determine if it is divine in its origin. This is difficult, but it is possible for

a spiritual believer (1 Cor. 2:14). Each Christian has the responsibility and ability to do this, though some have more discernment than others (cf. Acts 17:11; 1 John 4:1). What is discovered to be **good** (i.e., in harmony with what has been given by the Holy Spirit in the Word) should be retained.”<sup>19</sup> It should be noted that some of the people who reject all the conclusions of Critical Race Theory due to the non-Christian beliefs of the sources have no trouble quoting Ayn Rand, Thomas Sowell, Ben Shapiro, or Candace Owens who do not share conservative evangelical views of the Bible or Jesus Christ.

To begin with, in order to avoid misunderstanding (remember the importance of authorial intent), I will clearly and unequivocally say here that I reject most of the arguments and conclusions of Critical Race Theory and Cultural Marxism. First, as will be mentioned later, I reject Critical Race Theory because it is based on unbiblical distinctions based on the color of skin as opposed to the more biblical concept of ethnicity (i.e. tongue, tribe, and nation). It is important to note that although these distinctions are unbiblical, the color of one’s skin has had and still has social consequences in American society today and those consequences should not be ignored. In fact, these distinctions may lump some individuals as offenders when they or their ancestors were not even in this country when the majority of wrongs are committed (another form of guilt by association). Second, regarding Cultural Marxism, I do not support government control of either the distribution of private property or the attempt for the oppressed to topple all societal structures that could lead to poverty. Thirdly, the system of thought seems more retributive than a grace-

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<sup>19</sup> Thomas L. Constable, “1 Thessalonians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 709. Emphasis his.

oriented approach based on reconciliation after wrongs committed. The solution is not gospel-oriented forgiveness of others as Christ has forgiven us (Eph. 4:32) and walking in the Spirit according to that gospel (Gal. 2:14-20). Instead, followed to the logical extreme, it can reorient the focus of the Christian from sharing and modeling the gospel to correcting every damaged social structure. Fourth, many advocates of Critical Race Theory reject the Bible as being a homophobic, anti-female book that white males have used to oppress minorities for centuries. This errant view of God's Word should be avoided at all costs. CRT further perpetuates what Yancey calls a "white responsibility model"<sup>20</sup> which places the majority of the responsibility for addressing racism at the hand of the majority culture which often alienates rather than motivates attempts at social change. This prevents a mutual responsibility model that Yancey endorses or what Dr. Charles Ware calls "us and us" conversations as opposed to "us and them" conversations.

One piece of advice I frequently give to my students (who often disagree with me) is to "eat the meat and spit out the bones." With so many bones already pointed out on Critical Race Theory, the question is whether there is any meat in Critical Race Theory that could be incorporated into a dispensational theology of race and ethnicity? I personally think there could be some concepts that have potential benefit even though I reject the overall system.

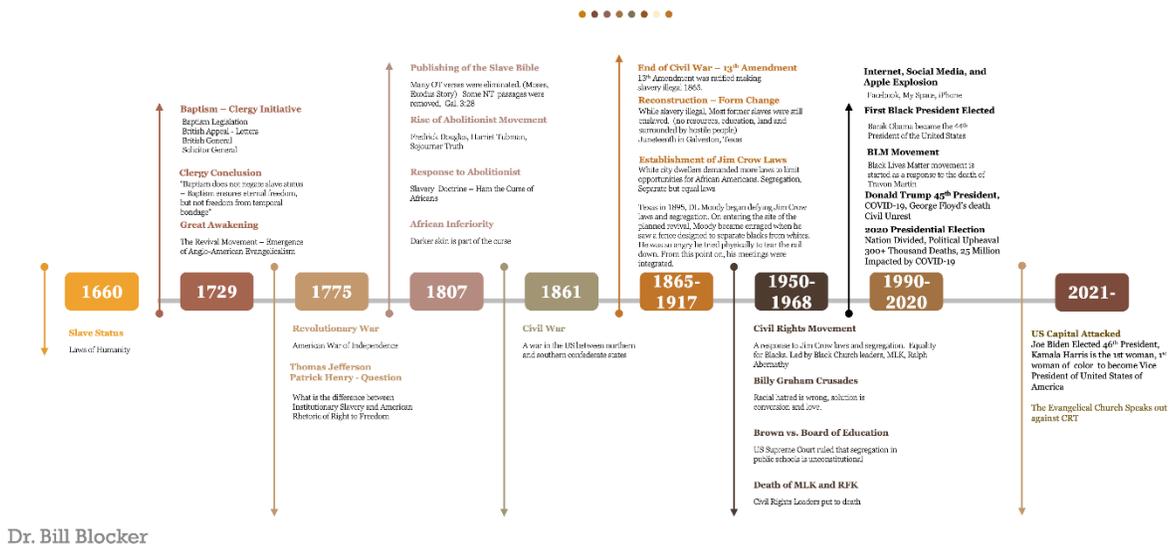
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<sup>20</sup>George A. Yancey, *Beyond Racial Gridlock: Embracing Mutual Responsibility* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 64-74.

### Evaluation of Systemic Racism

To begin with, evangelical Christians should be the most suspicious of broken government systems, even in the United States. Blocker has noted that the Bible itself warns Christians about the worldly system, “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world” (1 Jn. 2:16 NASB). What motivates racism, pride of one’s group over another, fleshly desires for self-preservation, and a desire to have what others have. In fact, Dr. Bill Blocker has argued that slavery itself was built on a desire of the early colonists to meet their responsibilities to Britain as well as to ensure their survival in a new land which required cheap, slave labor. In fact, in this chart Dr. Blocker chronicles the history of racism in the United States and how the church responded to it:

### Historical Summary Timeline of Racism and the Church’s Role



Dr. Bill Blocker

The fact that until less than sixty years ago African Americans were not given equal rights in this country should show us that racism was built into many of the laws and structures we

have in this society. The principle of the harvest would indicate that when systems in the United States were sown with racist seeds that one would reap racist structures (Gal. 6:9). A basic understanding of depravity and the world should give us pause in assuming that systemic racism does not exist in the midst of much research that shows that we still live in a racialized society.

Furthermore, a proper view of depravity and the world should also indicate this is not uniquely a white problem as critical race theorists often assert. The genocides in Rwanda or Cambodia by non-white leaders show that prioritizing one ethnicity over another can often have disastrous consequences. In fact, one of the first instances of systemic racism in the Bible can be found in the forced slavery of the Jews and governmentally endorsed attempts to kill male Jewish babies by the Egyptians in Exodus.

One other modern day example of systemic racism is Planned Parenthood which was founded by Margaret Sanger who started the Negro Project, spoke to KKK groups, and believed in eugenics. She advocated “the gradual suppression, elimination and eventual extinction, of defective stocks — those human weeds which threaten the blooming of the finest flowers of American civilization.”<sup>21</sup> She said regarding her work, “We do not want word to go out that we want to exterminate the Negro population, and the minister is the man who can straighten out that idea if it ever occurs to any of their more rebellious members.”<sup>22</sup> These racist seeds she planted have reaped deathly results. Planned

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<sup>21</sup> Kristan Hawkins, “Remove Statues of Margaret Sanger, Planned Parenthood Founder Tied to Eugenics and Racism,” Available at <https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2020/07/23/racism-eugenics-margaret-sanger-deserves-no-honors-column/5480192002/> (Accessed on 9/1/2021).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

Parenthood could argue that despite the views of their founder, they are not racist at all and they give equal access to all women to abortions. However, the fact that so many Planned Parenthood centers are put in minority neighborhoods and that while African Americans only constitute 13% of the female population but constitute 38% of abortions (with the help and financing of our government and major donors)<sup>23</sup> should at least cause anyone to admit that as far as this goes systemic racism is alive and well in the United States and it has deadly consequences. It also shows that while someone might not be individually racist, he or she can support a system that has racist consequences. There are African Americans who financially support Planned Parenthood who either ignore or do not know the organization's racist origins. Planned Parenthood is an example of how someone can love African American people yet contribute to something that was created for their demise.

An illustration I would suggest for systemic racism is from the movie *The Hunger Games*. In *The Hunger Games*, the people who set up the game had the ability to add obstacles to the game to make it more difficult to survive. In one scene, Katniss Everdeen is too far away from the other players (she is not breaking any of the rules) and the makers of the game are concerned that it will be too easy for her to win if she continues with this strategy. So they add an obstacle for her that they did not give to the other players. They put a forest fire around her so that she has to escape and ends up in the path of the other players who try to kill her. Now with her ingenuity she is able to climb up a tree to save herself by releasing a group of Tracker Jackers but the result was significant injury that

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

hampered her ability to win the game. In the end she won but it would have been best for her and everyone else if the makers of the game had just let the game play out.

What does this have to do with systemic racism? From the founding of this country, a system was built to make it harder for people of color to succeed. And even when they did succeed painful obstacles were put in place to limit the results of their success (for example, Planned Parenthood, the destruction of black wall street in 1921 or the fact that home values go down when high numbers of people of color occupy white neighborhoods so the white people leave those neighborhoods and the people of color lose value on their investment and have less generational wealth to pass down to heirs as a result of past and present discriminatory practices). And even when they do succeed their success is minimized (e.g., President Obama only got elected because he was black or people of color only get certain jobs because of Affirmative Action). This is not to say each person is not responsible for pursuing their own success. A biblical worldview should advocate a system that reduces the unnecessary obstacles to that success that disproportionately affect people of color.

### *Evaluation of Privilege*

The second item that should be explored is that of privilege. I would like to begin by saying that this concept is often abused. Yancey writes:

Few actions damage race relations more than playing the race card. It is even more destructive than the racial insensitivity of white Christians because it is an intentional attempt to use one's racial status to escape responsibility and deny one's sin. People of color have taken the good intentions of the majority and squandered their goodwill in order to further our own selfish desires. How are European Americans going to believe our claims of racism when they see us use those claims to get away with sin, to escape our responsibilities and to punish those we do not like? .... When accusations of racism are made only to further

the interests of racial minorities, it makes it more difficult for people of color to point out real racism... If we understand the concept of human depravity, we should not be surprised that people play the race card.<sup>24</sup>

When some hear the word privilege they think of it in these terms, as a manipulation tactic to “play the race card” as Yancey (who incidentally is African American) writes. I can say that in fifteen years of serving as Academic Dean/Provost at the College of Biblical Studies, I have often witnessed this myself. In all my years, I have often been asked to meet with an African American student who accused his or her professor of racism (most of the time the professor is Anglo but occasionally the African American student accused an African American professor of racism). In all the situations, without fail, the professor was invited to a meeting where the professor heard the uncomfortable accusation, pulled out the syllabus, showed how the student’s grade was a result of not completing an assignment or cheating/plagiarizing, and I could see no evidence of racism. In my fifteen years, I have yet to have an Anglo student accuse an African American prof of the same thing. I agree with Yancey that for Anglo professors who dedicated their lives to teach at a mostly minority college, this can be a very painful experience.

Having said all that, on the other hand, I do feel a responsibility to listen to the experiences of my brothers and sisters in Christ and mourn with them. In a book club we had several years ago, I was struck by the common experiences many of our African American professors had in being pulled over when they did nothing illegal. In some cases, they were handcuffed or asked to exit the car, and were often threatened by law enforcement. Those conversations brought back memories that were buried in the recesses

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<sup>24</sup> George Yancey, *Beyond Racial Gridlock*, 101-102.

of my mind when I was in high school. My mother is Mexican and my dad is Irish American. In high school my skin was much darker as I spent most of my summers outside with the marching band or playing baseball with my friends. My mother and I would have tanning contests and back then I would usually win. During my junior year in high school in 1991, I was dating a very pretty Polish American girl who lived in a very nice neighborhood. However, I noticed that when I would drive to visit her, I would often be followed by police officers. I mentioned this to my mother and she had to have “the talk” with me that so many African American parents have with their kids. I made sure that I did not exceed any speed limits, made a complete stop every time, and was cautious to obey every law but the following did not stop. This situation especially got scary on multiple times when police officers pulled me over, yelled at me, asked why I was in the neighborhood and threatened to arrest me even though I hadn’t committed a crime. After high school, I exchanged the marching band and baseball activities for studying and my skin ever since has begun to look much more like my Irish American father, so much so that very few people who look at me think I am Hispanic at all. What is interesting is ever since that time, I have never had the same experience of being pulled over despite not having committed a crime, asked to produce identification, and being threatened. If anything, every interaction I have had with police officers has been extremely positive.

One common misunderstanding of Critical Race Theory is what former CBS professor Voddie Baucham calls “ethnic gnosticism” which he defines in his book *Faultlines*

as “idea that people have special knowledge based solely on their ethnicity.”<sup>25</sup> I think the comparison with Gnosticism is unfortunate. Gnosticism emphasized a duality between physical and spiritual that most African Americans are not stating when they say that I as a white man cannot understand their experience. Furthermore, Gnosticism denies that Jesus came in the flesh which Christians do not believe. I think it is a creative philosophical comparison but a major mistake to associate with a historical heresy.

Furthermore, the distinction he makes is not biblically accurate. In my Wisdom Literature class, I teach students the difference between knowledge, understanding and wisdom. Knowledge refers to an intellectual comprehension of the truth. Understanding refers to a subjective experience. Wisdom is the union of knowledge and understanding.

An illustration I share is that I used to do premarital counseling before I got married. I had a seminary degree and felt all I needed to do is teach people what the Bible says about marriage. And while God’s word will not return void and the premarital counseling was probably positive, my view of marriage completely changed when I got married. Teaching people about spiritual leadership is one thing but being a spiritual leader is quite another. Prior to marriage, I had knowledge but I lacked understanding.

My point about knowledge versus understanding is that I may know things about the African American experience but I cannot truly understand what it is like to be in their shoes (and by their I am not saying African Americans are a monolithic group because each individual person has different experiences). In the same way, I do not fully understand what it is like to

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<sup>25</sup> Voddie T. Baucham, *Fault Lines: The Social Justice Movement and Evangelicalisms Looming Catastrophe* (Washington, D.C.: Salem Books, an Imprint of Regnery Publishing, 2021), 92.

be a white female either. I can empathize for what it is like to be pregnant but I cannot truly sympathize since I have never experienced pregnancy. Furthermore, Proverb 14:10 (NASB) says, "The heart knows its own bitterness, And a stranger does not share its joy." Even if someone has experienced something similar, does not mean that they truly feel the same way about that experience as others do. The point I am making is that this is not some gnostic mysterious knowledge but an actual biblical concept that Baucham is misrepresenting.

Prior to trusting in Christ as Savior, I thought Christians had a persecution complex. I saw believers as judgmental jerks that make life miserable. Once I became a Christ-follower and I told unbelievers that Christians are persecuted in America, they laughed and said I was paranoid. I found this statement hurtful since those who mocked me had not experienced the rejection I had experienced. The point is that we can commit the same mistake when we attempt to explain away the genuine experiences of our fellow African American brothers and sisters in Christ and discount or explain away their experiences with discrimination and racism.

This leads me back to the concept of privilege. In Critical Race Theory, privilege is often used by the person who considers himself or herself to be from a victim group to someone who they consider to be of the oppressor group. This terminology is difficult for achieving any form of racial reconciliation. However, turned the other way, privilege can be a valuable way to understand how to serve our brothers and sisters in Christ. As a point of illustration, many people have probably heard of the winter storms Houston had in February of 2021. Over 60% of Texas was without power due to ERCOT shutting it off. Much to my surprise, our home never lost power during the entire event. We had friends, family,

and neighbors that were sleeping in houses that were literally less than 40 degrees, bundled up near the fireplace and they had no way to warm up food. All this while we were comfortable in my house. Others had broken pipes from the freeze. I actually felt a certain degree of survivor's guilt. Why was my pastor's wife who has cancer suffering in the cold while I was in the warmth of a heated home with stable pipes? What I did not know was that when I purchased my home it was connected to a hospital grid. That was why our power stayed on even though I had done nothing to deserve it. There were literally people on our neighborhood Facebook page saying that we who had not lost power should have ours cut off and should lose power for an extended period of time just so we would know what it would feel like. I didn't feel much sympathy for them, but for everyone else, I felt compelled to share the blessing that I had with them. I called and texted as many people as I knew who lost power begging them to come stay with us. We did not care whether they had large dogs or large families. We just wanted to share our blessing with them.

The reality is that I live a very privileged life (if someone dislikes the term privilege perhaps blessed would be more appropriate). I am blessed to live in a great country with tremendous freedom that most Christians throughout history have never known. While I am not rich by the standards of American society, I have food, clothing and shelter that is better than most of the world has ever known. I have rarely experienced the prejudice that many of my African American or Asian brothers and sisters have faced. Privilege does not mean individuals with lighter skin (like myself) achieve success only because of the color of their skin or they did not have it hard. It means that the color of skin was not an obstacle to success. However, the solution to this problem is not to feel guilt for any privilege we have

but to use that privilege for the betterment of others, especially those who are in the body of Christ. For 2 Corinthians 8:3-4 (NIV) illustrates this well when speaking of the Macedonians who were not very wealthy but they used their blessings to benefit others, “For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people.”

### *Evaluation of Intersectionality*

Another item that may be worth exploring is that of intersectionality. As previously mentioned, whereas this term is often represented as a contest to see who is most oppressed, the original intent was to see how different aspects of one's personhood may make them more vulnerable to bad treatment. An interesting biblical example is the Samaritan woman at the well. She had three strikes against her: she was divorced/living with a man, a Samaritan, and a female. Any and all of these reasons were why the disciples were amazed the Jewish, male, pure Jesus would speak with her (John 4:27). To be clear, intersectionality is not essential to understanding this passage. This would have been a foreign concept to the original audience and so it should not be imported into the exegetical process. The Samaritan woman at the well does illustrate the concept however.

What value could the concept of intersectionality bring on the theological level? A few years ago, an African American female faculty member of ours who is married to an African American male faculty of ours mentioned that oftentimes people will acknowledge his doctorate when greeting or introducing him while failing to acknowledge hers. More often than not he is addressed as Dr. Ellen while she is addressed as Venessa even though

they both have Ph.D.'s from evangelical seminaries. This happened in African American churches as well as Anglo churches. This experience is not unusual as studies have shown this to be common for females in the medical field<sup>26</sup> and for minorities in higher education.<sup>27</sup> Hearing this made me conscientious to make it a point that when I was speaking to or about a professor, especially an African American female professor, to make every effort to call that person doctor even though I may have a personal relationship with her and she may report to me as Provost. Now I will say this is far different from my own personal approach. I was mentored by men named Dave Anderson and Mike Stallard. Both hold doctorates but even when I was their student, they insisted I call them by their first name. I adopted that practice for myself as I saw it as a sign of humility and brotherly kindness. Of course, in academic circles, it is rare that when someone sees my title of provost that they do not assume I have a doctorate. My experience with some of our African American female faculty is that often they are either assumed not to have a doctorate or they are treated with such informality that they do not. Does this mean I have become a Cultural Marxist or an advocate of CRT? No, as even Paul recognized individuals by the appropriate title when culturally necessary (cf. Acts 23:3-5). What this familiarity hopefully does is to love my sisters in Christ better and to not act unbecomingly towards them (1 Corinthians 13:5).

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<sup>26</sup> See Julia A. Files, Anita P. Mayer, Marcia G. Ko, Patricia Friedrich, Marjorie Jenkins, Michael J. Bryan, Suneela Vegunta, Christopher M. Wittich, Melissa A. Lyle, Ryan Melikian, Trevor Duston, Yu-Hui H. Chang, and Sharonne N. Hayes, "Speaker Introductions at Internal Medicine Grand Rounds: Forms of Address Reveal Gender Bias," *Journal of Women's Health* 26, no. 5 (May 2017): 413-419.

<sup>27</sup> Sydney Freeman, Jr and Ty-Ron Douglas, "Put Some Respect on My Name: Navigating the Use of Academic Titles and Personas," *Journal of Underrepresented and Minority Progress* 3, no. 2 (2019) 1-28). This peer reviewed article provides sources of studies that show that ethnic minority faculty are less likely to be called Dr. than their Caucasian counterparts. Please note that by citing this article I do not agree with all the recommendations and conclusions of this article.

### A Biblical Perspective on Race and Ethnicity

Multiple dispensationalists in the Council on Dispensational Hermeneutics have written on this topic and I commend their work to you.<sup>28</sup> This particular section will focus on the work of dispensationalist Dr. Charles Ware and Ken Ham in the book *One Race One Blood: The Biblical Answer to Racism*<sup>29</sup> as well A Biblical and Theological Rationale for Cultural Diversity Statement that was created by the faculty and board of the College of Biblical Studies where I work.

#### *One Race One Blood*

The title of Ware and Ham’s book comes from Acts 17:26 (KJV) which says that humans are all one blood as descendants of Adam and Noah, “And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.” Furthermore, the Bible speaks of one race: the human race. This is illustrated in James 3:7-8 (NASB), “For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison.” Ham further argues that we have far more in common than what differentiates us:

- ◆ We’re all created by God. *God formed us out of the dust of the ground* (Gen. 2:7).
- ◆ We’re all in God’s image. *God said, “Let us make man in Our image”* (Gen. 1:26).
- ◆ We’re all one family. *He [God] has made from our blood every nation”* (Acts 17:26).

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<sup>28</sup> See Joel T. Williamson, “Racism and the Torah” (Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Council on Dispensational Hermeneutics, Kansas City, MO,18 September 2020). See also Thomas Baurain, “The Myth of Racial Reconciliation” (Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Council on Dispensational Hermeneutics, Kansas City, MO,18 September 2020). Christopher Cone, “Every Tribe, Tongue, People, and Nation: The Future of Race Relations and Social Justice Implications for Today” (Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Council on Dispensational Hermeneutics, Kansas City, MO,19 September 2020).

<sup>29</sup> Ken Ham and Charles Ware, *One Race One Blood: The Biblical Answer to Racism* (Green Forest, AR: 2017).

- ◆ We're all loved by God. *God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son* (John 3:16).<sup>30</sup>

Not only are we one blood in the sense of our common descent from Adam, but Ham also points out that all tribes, tongues, and nations are purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ, "And they sang a new song, saying, 'Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth'" (Rev. 5:9-10 NASB).

God not only made us uniquely different on earth as differing tribe, tongues, and nations but He intends for those distinctions to carry on into heaven. Revelation 7:9-10 (NASB) says, "After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.'" God is most glorified when people of various tribe, tongues, and nations from all over the world worship and serve Him (which should lead us to avoid a colorblind perspective). Ware has aptly stated, "This is our future. This is the destiny of the Church – and the Church today can be an earthly preview of this heavenly reality."<sup>31</sup> This ethnic variation in heaven also has the value of fulfilling biblical covenantal promises (cf. Gen 12:3 and Zech. 14:16).

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<sup>30</sup> Ken Ham and Charles Ware, *One Race One Blood: The Biblical Answer to Racism* (Green Forest, AR: 2017), 23.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

## Ethnicity vs. Race

As Ware and Ham have pointed out, the Bible speaks of one race which is the human race but multiple ethnicities. One can see this when comparing the following Greek words:

- ἔθνος = Nations, Nationalities, Ethnicity
- γένος = Family, Offspring, Descent

Ware and Ham make the argument that we are all related through Adam (γένος) and there is only one race: the human race. While the Bible makes distinctions among ethnicities (ἔθνος), distinctions of race by skin color is an unbiblical social construct.

This distinction is especially interesting when it comes to individuals who might be considered black by society based on appearance but Hispanic by ethnicity. I once had a friend who was Puerto Rican with very dark skin and he became very offended when someone called him black as he was from Puerto Rico and spoke Spanish. I was once lectured about privilege from a white female and I was told I have no understanding of how privilege works as a white male. I asked her why she thought I was white. She asked me if that was a trick question. I told her that it was not a trick question because my mother is from Mexico. She said I should not call myself Hispanic because I look too white. Following her advice would require me to deny the culture and language in which my mother raised me. Which is why when people ask for my background, I call myself a Mexican-American. My mother is Mexican and my father is Irish-American. So, for me the term Mexican-American best represents both sides of my family. Some have questioned why I do not just call myself an American. To do so would acknowledge my nation, but it would ignore my ethnicity and my dual languages that were a part of my home growing up.

Not only is ethnicity more biblically accurate than race but Ham also argues it is scientifically more accurate as well. Ham quotes Dr. Venter (head of the Celera Genomics Corporation in Rockville, MD) who argues that the human genome experiment found that there is only one race – the human race. Furthermore, Ham cites research from Jorde and Wooding that indicates that the genetic variation within each of the various ethnic groups of Homo sapiens is greater than that between the various ethnic groups.<sup>32</sup> Hence, there is very little biblical or biological reason to make distinctions between the color of one's skin. Ham writes, "We sing 'Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world. Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight....' That's a cute song but actually it's really scientifically inaccurate! To be accurate, it should say, 'Jesus loves the little children of the world. Shades of brown from dark to light, all our precious in His sight...' Yes, Jesus loves us all, but believe it or not, all human beings are basically the same color (shades of brown). There are no truly black or white people."<sup>33</sup>

In fact, when skin color was mentioned in the Bible, it often includes a challenging yet redemptive element to it. For instance, the CBS Biblical and Theological Rationale for Cultural Diversity (included later in this paper) states, "When Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses's Cushite wife (Num. 12:1), the Lord viewed their ethnic hostility as a rejection of His authority and Moses's leadership, and He judged their rebellion by giving Miriam a skin disease (Num. 12:4-13). Thus, Miriam's attempt to draw 'separation' between a man and his Cushite wife directly led to her 'separation' from her own people

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 96-97.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 84.

(Num. 12:14-15).” Additionally, the Shulammitte in Song of Solomon 1:6 (NASB) says, “Do not stare at me because I am swarthy, For the sun has burned me. My mother's sons were angry with me; They made me caretaker of the vineyards, But I have not taken care of my own vineyard.” However, the love of Solomon has redeemed that by making her feel black and lovely (1:5). For this reflects the love of God who does not focus on the outward appearance but the heart (1 Sam. 16:7).

So where did this excessive focus on making distinctions based on the color of one’s skin come from? The first and most obvious answer is sin. Sin causes us to focus on our differences than similarities. Beyond that, Ham attributes much of the modern focus on racial distinctions by skin color to evolutionary theory. He quotes the late Stephen J. Gould (not an advocate of Christianity by any means) as saying, “Biological arguments for racism may have been common before 1859 but they increased by orders of magnitude following the acceptance of evolutionary theory.”<sup>34</sup> Ham also points to the original title of Darwin’s book: *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*. When man went from being a human created in the image of God to an evolved ape, it was easier to argue that some races of humans were more or less evolved than others. Ham quotes Darwin who wrote in *The Descent of Man*, “At some future point, not very distant as measured by centuries, the civilized races of man will almost certainly exterminate and replace the savage races of the world...The break between man and his nearest allies will then be wider, for it will intervene between man in

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<sup>34</sup> Stephen Jay Gould, *Ontogeny and Phylogeny* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1977) 127. Cited in Ham and Ware, *One Race One Blood*, 81.

a more civilized state, as we hope even...than the Caucasian, and some ape as low as a baboon. Instead of now between the negro or Australian and the gorilla.”<sup>35</sup>

This Darwinian perspective had destructive effects on the promulgation of racist ideology. Ham says, “In the 1800s before Darwinian Evolution was popularized, most people used the word ‘races’ to refer to such groups as ‘the English race,’ ‘Irish race,’ and so on. However, this all changed in 1859...In *The Descent of Man*, Darwin popularized the idea of different races of people – lower races, higher races, primitive races, advanced races, and so on.”<sup>36</sup> He quotes Hunter’s *A Civic Biology Presented in Problems* (a popular biology textbook published in 1914) which said, “The Races of Man. At the present time there exist upon the earth five races ... the highest of all, the Caucasians, represented by the civilized white inhabitants of Europe and America.”<sup>37</sup> Hence, the focus of a dispensational theology of race and ethnicity should be on ethnicity and not distinctions of race based on the color of one’s skin which are neither biblically or scientifically accurate. The focus on ethnicity shows the values God gives to all ethnicities (counteracting the modern tendency towards color blindness) while reducing the likelihood that people will prioritize the color of their skin over their love for their neighbor or even worse see identification with people of similar skin color as more important than identifying with Christ.

In light of these distinctions, how should one approach this issue? George Yancey in his book *Beyond Racial Gridlock: Embracing Mutual Responsibility* divides approaches to

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<sup>35</sup> Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man* (Chicago, IL: William Benton in Great Books of the Western World, 1952) 336. Cited in Ham and Ware, *One Race One Blood*, 56-57.

<sup>36</sup> Ham and Ware, *One Race One Blood*, 80-81.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

the issue of racism into two categories: individualist and structuralist. He defines the individualist definition of racism “holds that racial strife is the result of individuals choosing to act in a racist manner.”<sup>38</sup> The individualist perspective often conflates the concepts of prejudice and racism. The CBS faculty committee that designed the Biblical and Theological Rationale for Cultural Diversity for prejudice, “A sinful disposition or attitude toward a particular racial or ethnic group, or individuals within a specific racial or ethnic group, rooted in stereotypes and faulty opinions about the assumed superiority of one group over another.” The same committee defined racism as follows, “Intentional or unintentional ideas, individual practices, and established policies rooted in the belief that one group is superior to another. Such ideas, practices, and policies are designed to create, reproduce, and/or maintain a societal hierarchy and therefore power with the express purposes of disadvantaging other ethnicities through social exclusion, political discrimination, economic marginalization, physical and heart level suffering in response to individual and institutionalized sin. Racism can be expressed overtly and institutionally through a policy or a law. Relatedly, individual racism is an act by one person intended to inflict pain on another person through for example verbal or physical violence.” Prejudice typically is an individual perception of groups whereas racism typically has structural elements in which there is an attempt to ensure one ethnicity has superior experiences to another. However, this definition also allows for individual racist tendencies.

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<sup>38</sup> George Yancey, *Beyond Racial Gridlock: Embracing Mutual Responsibility*, 20.

In contrast to the individualist view, the structuralist view argues that “society can perpetuate racism even when individuals in society do not intend to be racist.”<sup>39</sup> He gives an example of how terrible public schools in poor urban areas are often the result of a property tax system that allows wealthier individuals to pay higher taxes for better schools while schools in poor areas have less access to those funds. He then says, “Personal racism is not to blame for the poor education of people of color; we should blame the social structures by which schools are funded.”<sup>40</sup> Yancey rightly attributes the source of racism and solutions for racism to sin. He argues that sin keeps both groups from seeking personal accountability and preferring the system that best protects their interest. He writes, “Defining racism in an individualistic manner can help majority group members maintain their advantages. Thus the individualism of European Americans is at least somewhat connected to their own sin nature and desire to ignore the plight of people of color. ... Likewise, it is in the interest of people of color to focus on historical and contemporary racism to explain the current state of our society... Concentrating on historical and modern forms of institutional racism can insure that responsibility for all racial problems will ultimately lead to the feet of European Americans. Of course this approach absolves people of color of accountability for their own shortcomings.”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 21-22.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 25.

In light of these distinctions, Yancey proposes four secular models of racial reconciliation, two individual and two structural:

**Individual:**

1. Colorblindness – achieves racial reconciliation by ignoring race and forgetting the discriminating of the past while arguing that the best world is one in which no one sees racial or ethnic differences.
2. Anglo-conformity – Racial minorities are encouraged to adopt European American values so that minorities can imitate how whites moved up the economic/social ladder

**Structural:**

3. Multiculturalism – Reconciliation occurs by emphasizing the value and worth of minority cultures
4. White responsibility – Places the blame for racism at the feet of majority culture and argues that minority cultures cannot be racist because they lack the economic and social power of whites.<sup>42</sup>

Each of these models are inadequate because they do not embrace a mutual responsibility approach in which both majority and minority cultures are encouraged to own and repent of their part in racism. They also tend to focus on what the other group needs to do instead of having what Ware calls “us and us” conversations.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 27-28.

<sup>43</sup> Ham and Ware, *One Race One Blood*, 139.

### Towards a Biblical Theology on Race and Ethnicity

As part of the 2014-2019 strategic plan, the College of Biblical Studies was tasked with Developing a Biblical and Theological Rationale for Cultural Diversity. Our President, Dr. Bill Blocker, met with a committee of faculty and gave them a fresh new challenge of not focusing on external items like social justice or Critical Race Theory but focusing on what the Bible actually says on the topic. The Dallas Statement on Social Justice and the Gospel had already come out and the committee felt that it did not define terms like Critical Race Theory and intersectionality well and primarily addressed a straw man view of the issues.<sup>44</sup> Instead, he asked the faculty to summarize what the Bible says about ethnicity and unity. We appreciated Dr. Blocker's counsel and elected to simply start with the Bible and develop our theological framework from there instead of trying to respond to contemporary trends. Dr. Blocker himself was the one who had given me the idea of framing the conversation of systemic racism in terms of the theological concepts of depravity and the world system. He also helped me understand the concept of privilege could possibly be better understood as blessing. With this in mind, the committee worked for several months to develop the statement that is included at the end of this paper. It does not summarize everything the Bible says about the topic but it provides a starting point for discussion and understanding. The appendix of this paper provides the statement that not only the faculty approved but the Board of Directors as well. It includes some of the concepts of ethnicity versus race and provides practical biblical solutions on how to combat racism.

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<sup>44</sup> For a good evaluation of this statement see Gary Gromacki, "Review on the Statement of Social Justice and the Gospel," (Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Council on Dispensational Hermeneutics, Kansas City, MO, 18 September 2020).

## Conclusion

This paper attempted to provide a dispensational approach to understanding race and ethnicity. It utilized Chafer's methodology of reviewing any and every source known to the mind of man as part of the development of a biblical and theological perspective on the matter. Furthermore, I focused on the dispensational concept of literal interpretation as the intent of the original author to the original audience. In order to understand what CRT advocates believe, I reviewed the work of Kimberlé Crenshaw who is known as one of the original advocates of Critical Race Theory and intersectionality. While the Critical Race Theory system was rejected as being contrary to the Bible some nuggets of truth could be incorporated into a theology of race and ethnicity. Once that process was completed, I reviewed the work of dispensationalist Charles Ware in the book he wrote with Ken Ham called *One Race One Blood: The Biblical Answer to Racism*. This research defended a biblical and biological argument that there is only one race: the human race and distinctions made by the color of one's skin are an unbiblical human construct that is intended to divide rather than unite. In contrast to a model that is largely based on race, an argument was made in support of the mutual responsibility model proposed by Yancey in *Beyond Racial Gridlock: Embracing Mutual Responsibility* as well as to emphasize the more biblical concept of ethnicity (i.e., tribe, tongue, and nation). What follows next is a statement that the board and faculty of the College of Biblical Studies developed in order to help the Body of Christ determine what the Bible says about these matters.

## Appendix: A Biblical and Theological Rationale for Cultural Diversity

### I. Introduction

The College of Biblical Studies maintains an unwavering commitment to see God glorified, the Gospel proclaimed, the Bible affirmed, and the church unified in an environment that welcomes ethnic and cultural diversity. Our dedication to teaching and practicing truth in love, discipling multiethnic Christian servant leaders, and providing transformative instruction for God's glory is undergirded and fueled by our obedience to both the Great Commandments and the Great Commission (Matt 22:36-40; 28:18-20). As we seek to love God and our neighbors well and to make Christian disciples of all nations, the College prayerfully and actively pursues ethnic unity and reconciliation with humility, gentleness, patience, grace, biblical truth, and love (Eph 4:1-4, 15, 32; Col 3:12-15; 4:6).

The College's mission to glorify God by educating and equipping multi-ethnic Christian leaders to impact the world for Christ grounds itself on a biblical and theological worldview in which the Triune God glorifies Himself through unity and diversity. The pursuit of Christian unity in the midst of diversity has its roots within the Triune nature of God. The Scripture declares that there is only one God (Deut 4:35; 6:4; 1 Kings 8:60; Neh 9:6; Is 45:21-22), and He exists from eternity in three Persons: Father (Gen 1:1; Gen 17:1; Ex 3:14; Jer 32:17; Eph 1:3; Phil 1:2), Son (John 1:1, 14; 8:58; 20:28; Rom 9:5; Col 2:9; Heb 1:1-4), and Holy Spirit (Gen 1:2; John 6:63; Acts 5:1-10; 2 Cor 3:17; Ps 139:7-10). Each person of the Trinity is fully God and therefore equal in power, glory, and honor (Is 42:8; Matt 3:13-17; 28:18-20; John 17:1-5; 2 Cor 13:14; Eph 1:20-22; 2 Thess 2:13-14; Rev 1:8). Thus, the Father is God; the Son is God; the Holy Spirit is God, yet there are not three gods, but one God.<sup>45</sup> Likewise, the distinction of persons is always maintained within the Godhead. The Father is, from eternity, the Father, never the Son or the Spirit (Is 63:16; Ps 2:7; Matt 3:13-17; John 3:16; 12:28; Eph 1:17; 2 Thess 1:2); likewise, the Son is, from eternity, the Son, never the Father or the Spirit (John 1:18; 5:19-23; 20:17; Eph 1:7; 2:18); finally, the Spirit is, from eternity, the Spirit, never the Father or Son (John 16:13-15; Rom 8:9; Gal 4:6; 1 Cor 2:10-11; Eph 1:13-14). This unity of divine essence coupled with the diversity of divine personhood is foundational within the Trinitarian life. Thus, when God chose to create man in His image (Gen 1:26-27) and for His glory (Is 43:6-7; 1 Cor 10:31; Ps 24:1; 100:2-3), the Lord ensured that His creation reflected both the unity and diversity that characterizes His own divine nature.

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<sup>45</sup> "The Athanasian Creed" from John H. Louth, ed., *Creeeds of the Churches: A Reader in Christian Doctrine from the Bible to the Present, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1982), 705. See also "The Definition of Chalcedon" from Louth, *Creeeds of the Churches*, 34-36.

The Scripture declares that the Lord is a God of peace, not disorder (Rom 15:33; 1 Cor 14:33; Phil 4:9). Therefore, unity and diversity can coexist in harmony because it is exemplified within the Triune God (Matt 3:16-17; John 14:26-27; 16:5-15; 17:10, 21-22). For example, when the Lord created those who would bear His image (the *imago dei*), He created *one* human race comprised of *two* genders: male and female (Gen 1:26-27), and this the Lord deemed very good (Gen 1:31). An “image” should reflect the character and qualities of that which it represents. Thus, the oneness of humanity and the distinction of the two genders ensured that human beings properly “imaged” the unity and diversity within God.<sup>46</sup>

## II. Recognizing Human Dignity in light of the *Imago Dei*

God created human beings with material bodies and immaterial spirits, thereby giving them the ability to relate both to God and man (Gen 2:7, 16, 22). As God reigns over creation, He gave man authority to serve as His vice-regents over the earth, and He commands them to “be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, subdue it, and rule over His creation” (Gen 1:1-2:25, Isaiah 45:18). Having this kind of authority aligns with the likeness of our creator, God. Moreover, the Scripture states that God breathed the breath of life into Adam, thereby establishing a unique connection between God and His image bearer (Gen 2:7). Thus, “to be human is to image God.”<sup>47</sup> As our Creator, the Lord also remains intimately involved in the formation of every subsequent human life (Ps 139:1-3, 13-16). God gives human beings unique worth and sets them apart from all other creatures (Ps 8:4-8).

## III. Distinguishing Race & Ethnicity

Given the fact that Adam and Eve are the parents of all humans (Gen 1:26-28; 2:7, 21-25; 3:20; Rom 5:12-17, 1 Cor 15:45), it makes sense that all human beings are also a part of the same species, *Homo Sapiens*, and today, even scientists agree that there is only one biological “race” of humans.<sup>48</sup> While the term “race” is often used as a social construct to

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<sup>46</sup> While men and women are image bearers, the Lord intentionally created both men and women with God-given, complementary distinctions that not only highlight His unity and diversity but also bring Him great glory. For additional information on the College’s position on biblical gender roles, see <http://www.cbshouston.edu/gender-roles>.

<sup>47</sup> Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible*, First Edition. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 42–43. Even though God made human beings in His image, an image is never greater than that which it represents. Therefore, image bearers must worship God, and God alone, as their sovereign Lord and Creator (Ex 20:3-6; Deut 6:13-15; Luke 4:8; Rom 1:18-23).

<sup>48</sup> Ken Ham and Charles Ware, *One Race One Blood: A Biblical Answer to Racism* (Green Forest, AZ: Master Books, 2007), 112. Kindle Edition. For additional scholarly statements regarding the opposition to separate “races,” see “AAPA Statement on the Biological Aspects of Race,” from the American Association of Physical Anthropologists, <http://phyanth.org/about/position-statements/biological-aspects-race/>. Accessed on

denote a person's cultural background coupled with other physiological characteristics (such as skin color), the Bible consistently employs the term *ethnos* (Gr. ἔθνος; cf. "ethnic" and "ethnicity") to describe such distinctives.<sup>49</sup> This understanding is often reflected by missionaries who use the term "people groups" to define "a cluster of human beings that are set apart from others because of their language, culture, geography, or religion."<sup>50</sup> Genesis states that from creation to the time of the Flood, humanity "stood in unbroken genetic relation with the first [human] pair, so that the human race constitutes not only a specific unity, a unity in the sense that all men share the same human nature, but also a genetic or genealogical unity."<sup>51</sup> Thus, Adam and Eve, along with Noah and his descendants (who repopulated the post-diluvian earth, per Gen 9:1-7, 19; 10:32) possessed the same genetic coding for all subsequent human *ethnē* or "ethnicities." Just as God displayed His unity and diversity by creating one human race with two genders, He also reveals the same unity and diversity by creating one human race with various ethnicities. Paul also affirms this in Acts 17:26, when he notes that "God made of *one* [italics mine] every nation [*ethnos*]

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November 4, 2018. See also the "AAA Statement on Race" from the American Anthropological Association, <https://www.americananthro.org/ConnectWithAAA/Content.aspx?ItemNumber=2583>. Accessed on November 4, 2018.

<sup>49</sup> Τό ἔθνος (*ethnos*) is defined as a body of persons united by kinship, culture, and common traditions, *nation*, *people*, (cf. Acts 8:9; Matt 24:14; 28:19; Mark 11:17; 13:10). The term is also used to denote "people groups foreign to a specific people group, specifically, those who do not belong to groups professing faith in the God of Israel, such as the nations, Gentiles, unbelievers" (Acts 11:1, 18; 14:5; 21:21; 26:17; Rom 3:29; 9:24; 15:10). Finally, the word describes non-Israelite Christians, Gentiles of Christian congregations composed of more than one nationality and not limited to people of Israel (Rom 16:4; Eph 3:1)." See William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (BDAG)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 276-277.

In addition, the Scripture also uses the term ἡ φυλή (*phylē*) to describe different subgroups within a distinct nation, such as the 12 tribes of Israel (Luke 2:36; Phil 3:5; Heb 7:13; Rev 7:4). For example, the tribe (*phylē*) of Reuben is a subgroup of the *ethnos* or "nation" of Israel. See William Arndt, *BDAG*, 1069.

The New Testament also uses the word ὁ γένος (*genos*) to describe a "relatively large people group or nation." William Arndt, *BDAG*, 194. It should be noted, however, that the term can have several different connotations in the NT, including "family" (e.g., Acts 7:13), "descent or origin" (e.g., Rev 22:16), "race of people or nation" (e.g., Acts 7:19, 2 Cor 11:26, Phil 3:5), "nationality" (e.g., Mark 7:26; Acts 4:36) or "kind" (e.g., Matt 13:47; Mark 9:29). See Moisés Silva, ed., *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 556–557.

Of the terms used, τό ἔθνος occurs with the most frequency (162 times). See John Kohlenberger III, Edward W. Goodrick, James A. Swanson, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 250-252.

<sup>50</sup> Ham and Ware, *One Race, One Blood*, 115.

<sup>51</sup> Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1938), 188.

of man to dwell on all the face of the earth.”<sup>52</sup> Despite the fact that “contemporary notion of ‘races’ is foreign to Scripture, ‘ethnicity’ more accurately describes the real, observable distinctions of nationality, language, culture, and sometimes religion.”<sup>53</sup> Given its alignment with the biblically-used “*ethnos*” rather than the culturally-defined term “race,” the word “ethnicity” will be used throughout this statement.

#### IV. Recounting Sin & Disunity in History

Despite the aforementioned, God-ordained, human unity in the midst of ethnic diversity, the intrusion of sin fractured the God-human (Gen 3:8-11, 22-24; 6:5-6; Is 59:2), man-woman (Gen 3:12, 16), human-world (Gen 3:17-19), human-human relationship (Gen 4:1-16). Sin manifests itself with both a nature (Eph 2:1-3) and behavior that is hostile toward God and others (Rom 1:18-32). With our rebellion, humans traded our once upright, holy nature for a nature that is characterized by death, disorder, and destruction (Gen 6:5-6; Rom 5:12-21). While the *imago dei* is still present within all human beings, it is gravely marred, perverted, and tarnished by sin (Rom 3:23; James 3:9-10). Sin is defined as any word, action, and/or desire that violates the word of God and/or conscience and alienates us from the Lord. We sin by actively breaking God’s Word or by not performing what is commanded of us in God’s Word. Rather than reflecting divine beauty and peace, our God-given distinctions in personhood, gender, and ethnicity have been sinfully twisted to serve as instruments of division and hostility. This human failure to reflect God’s glory rightly and to represent His image accurately assaults the very character of God. Because of His goodness, God simply cannot let false imagers abide (Ps 100:5; 107:1; Hab 1:13; Nahum 1:2; Rom 1:18; 1 Pet 1:14-16).

After sin entered the world (Gen 3:1-24), human beings now have the tendency to affirm either unity or diversity to the exclusion of the other and to use their own preferences for sinful means. For example, at the Tower of Babel, human beings stood united in the common purpose of making a tower that reached to heaven, thereby attempting to make themselves god-like (Gen 11:1-4). For this rebellion, the Lord scattered humanity across the earth and also divided the earth into different languages (Gen 11:5-9). Thus, humans exploited “unity” for idolatrous means. Likewise, Scripture also notes that man will not hesitate to renounce diversity in an attempt to elevate self. For instance, when Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses’s Cushite wife (Numb 12:1), the Lord viewed their ethnic hostility as a rejection of His authority and Moses’s leadership, and He judged their rebellion by giving Miriam a skin disease (Numb 12:4-13). Thus, Miriam’s attempt to draw

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Thabiti Anyabwile, “Many Ethnicities, One Race,” from the *9Marks Journal*, <https://www.9marks.org/article/many-ethnicities-one-race/>. Accessed on November 4, 2018.

“separation” between a man and his Cushite wife directly led to her “separation” from her own people (Numb 12:14-15).<sup>54</sup> In both cases, God judged the exploitation of unity and diversity. Both must be maintained, and both must be used to glorify the Creator, not the created.

Unfortunately, within the history of the church, the Bible has been used as a basis for ethnic prejudice and discrimination. For example, Dutch Reformed Christians used the Bible to sanction apartheid in South Africa during the modern era.<sup>55</sup> Throughout World War II, Hitler and the Third Reich wielded the scriptures in the philosophy and practice of Nazism.<sup>56</sup> Finally, as one of the most blatant historical instances when the Bible has been used in this way, some have used the “curse of Ham” as a biblical justification for slavery and mistreatment of people of African descent.<sup>57</sup> However, the text declares that it was Canaan, Ham’s son, who was cursed, not Ham himself (Gen 9:24-27). Later, the text states that Ham fathered “Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan” (Gen 10:6). While Cush, Mizraim, and Put likely correspond to modern Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Egypt, and Libya, which are in Africa, Canaan became the father of nations that were in the vicinity of the current Middle East (Gen 10:15-20).<sup>58</sup> While the “curse of Ham” has often been leveled against blacks, nothing

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<sup>54</sup> While some have sought to use Scripture to argue against interracial marriage, the Bible issues no such prohibition. The Lord has consistently commanded His people to marry those who worship Him and Him alone (Ex 34:11-16, Deut 7:1-6; Josh 23:11-13; 1 Kings 11:1-8; Ezra 9:1-3; 1 Cor 7:39; 2 Cor 6:14); therefore, inter-faith marriage, not interracial/interethnic marriage, violates divine law. See also John Piper, Did Moses Marry a Black Woman? <https://www.9marks.org/article/did-moses-marry-black-woman/>. Accessed on November 5, 2018.

<sup>55</sup> Several essay collections feature historical and theological analysis related to South Africa, Christianity, and apartheid. See R. Drew Smith, et. al., *Contesting Post-Racialism: Conflicted Churches in the United States and South Africa* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2015); R. Drew Smith, ed., *Freedom’s Distant Shores: American Protestants and Post-Colonial Alliances with Africa* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2006); William E. Van Vugt and G. Daan Cloete, *Race and Reconciliation in South Africa* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2000).

<sup>56</sup> Important studies of this topic include Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); Richard Steigman-Gall, *The Holy Reich: Nazi Conceptions of Christianity, 1919-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Doris L. Bergen, *Twisted Cross: The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

<sup>57</sup> Colin Kidd, *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600-2000*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>58</sup> John Piper, Racial Reconciliation: Unfolding Bethlehem’s Fresh Initiative #3, Racial Harmony Sunday. Sermon Delivered January 14, 1996. <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/racial-reconciliation>. Accessed on October 30, 2018. See also Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, vol. 1, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word Incorporated, 1998), 221. In addition, see J. Daniel Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race*, ed. D. A. Carson, vol. 14, *New Studies in Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL; England: InterVarsity Press; Apollos, 2003), 34. See also Stephen R. Haynes, *Noah’s Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002. Sylvester A. Johnson, *The Myth of Ham in Nineteenth-Century American Christianity: Race, Heathens, and the People of God*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan Publishers, 2004).

in the text of Scripture states that the Canaanites were dark-skinned. True to Noah's prophecy, God drove the Canaanites out of the land due to their wickedness (Deut 9:4-5). Therefore, the "curse of Canaan" has nothing to do with those of African descent, and its use to justify the African slave trade not only serves as a prime example of poor exegesis, but it also functions as a blatant misuse of Scripture.

### V. Envisioning Gospel-Centered Unity

In an attempt to press for unity, many within society and the church have tried to function as if they are "color blind" when it comes to engaging those of different ethnicities. While their efforts may be well-intentioned, they are also misguided. Unity and diversity should not be viewed as an "either-or" but as a "both-and." The Lord created people of different colors, complexions, and ethnicities. We should see and honor His creative work and give glory to the Creator for what He has done. We should see the distinctions and honor them as reflections of divine glory: He creates one human race (thereby establishing the unity of His image bearers) with different ethnicities (thereby cementing the diversity of His creative order). The Lord commanded that His people be one as the Triune God is one (John 17:11, 20). As each member of Godhead retains His individual personhood while sharing full deity, different groups maintain their ethnic distinctiveness while sharing full humanity. Therefore, unity does not equal uniformity. In fact, the Scripture does not shy away from ethnic diversity but recognizes it openly (Jer 13:23; John 4:9; Mark 7:24-29; Acts 8:26-40; Acts 16:1). If the Scripture, the very Word of God, recognizes such ethnic distinctions, then the people of God should follow suit. At the same time, solidarity of purpose does not mandate unanimity of action. Brothers and sisters who fully agree on the need for ethnic unity can, and often will, disagree on how to accomplish that unity. Believers must rely upon wisdom, prayer, and love in order to achieve diversity in a way that honors God and promotes peace (Eph 4:1-7; James 1:5; Rom 12:9-12; 1 John 4:11). Since God creates all people in His image, He therefore gives all "ethnic groups the same status and unique value that comes from being His image bearer."<sup>59</sup>

Christ, the Great reconciler, is the light of the world (John 1:9; 8:12), and He has called a people unto Himself, the church, who reflect His image by serving as lights in the world (Matt 5:14-16).<sup>60</sup> Now, every person can be reconciled to God through the lifesaving blood of Jesus Christ (Gal 3:26-29; Col 1:19-20; 1 John 2:1-2). As the Lamb of God, Jesus takes

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<sup>59</sup> Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race*, 202.

<sup>60</sup> The one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church of Jesus Christ is also comprised of different members with distinctive Spirit-given gifts (1 Cor 12:1-31). Thus, by divine ordination, the bride of Christ also reflects the unity and diversity of the Triune God. Therefore, in His creative work, the Triune God intentionally displays His unity in the creation of one human race and one church; at the same time, He deliberately shows His diversity in the creation of two different, complementary genders; various people groups and ethnicities; and distinctive, edifying gifts among the saints.

away the sins of the world and gave Himself as a ransom for *all* men and women, regardless of ethnicity (John 1:29; 1 Pet 1:19; 1 Tim 2:5-6). The Lord lauded the faith and righteous acts of Gentiles (Luke 4:24-30; Luke 10:25-37), and he calls His people to proclaim His Gospel message to all nations for His glory (Matt 28:18-20). Just as He began the proclamation of the Gospel to Gentiles, Samaritans, and people from various nationalities (Matt 4:14-17; John 4:1-42), He calls His church to take the Gospel to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit fell on people of many different ethnicities so that all could hear the Gospel in their own distinctive languages and take that good news to their countries of origin (Acts 2:1-13). The same Holy Spirit who was present at creation (Gen 1:2), the same Holy Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead (Rom 8:11), is the same Holy Spirit who indwells believers, regardless of ethnicity (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; Acts 10:1-48). Empowered by the Holy Spirit whom the Father has sent through Jesus (John 14:26), true disciples commit themselves to obeying the Lord and fulfilling His Great Commission. Therefore, it comes as no surprise to see Peter and the apostles proclaiming the good news in Jerusalem (Acts 1-7), Philip preaching the word in Samaria (Acts 8), other leaders announcing the message to Judea (Acts 9-12), and Paul taking the Gospel to the ends of the earth (Acts 13-28).

A central aspect of the aforementioned Gospel message lies in the fact that salvation is of the Jews (John 4:22).<sup>61</sup> While the Lord first took the Gospel to the nation of Israel (Matt 10:6; 15:24), it has always been the sovereign plan of God to extend salvation to the Gentiles (Is 49:6; Rom 11:1-36). Because of Jesus Christ's perfect salvific work, anyone who receives His message and ministry through faith is no longer an estranged enemy of God (Rom 10:9-13; Col 1:21-23). Even though Gentiles have been engrafted into the people of God, this does not allow anyone to overlook the importance of the Jewish nation throughout creative and redemptive history (Gen 12:1-3; Rom 9:1-5; 11:17-24). In His own flesh, Jesus tore down the barrier of the dividing wall between Jew and Gentile and created a new body, from the two, in Himself, thereby establishing peace (Eph 2:11-21). Therefore, the church of God denounces and decries any attempt to rebuild that wall through inclinations towards and acts of anti-Semitism. The head of the Church, Jesus Christ, was born a Jew, lived as a Jew, died as a Jew, and was raised from the dead as a Jew.<sup>62</sup> He intercedes for His people, and He will come again, as a Jew, to reign over the millennial kingdom and ultimately, the new heavens and the new earth. Since anti-Semitism, at its core, blasphemes God the Son, it remains wholly rejected by the Son's church.

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<sup>61</sup> Throughout the Scripture, the Lord describes Israel as His treasured possession out of all the other peoples on the earth (Deut 7:6; 14:2; 26:18; Ps 135:4). However, the text also declares that Israel's special status had nothing to do with her own *inherent* worth; on the contrary, Israel's election depended solely upon the sovereign grace and love of the Lord who wills as He chooses (Deut 7:7-8). The Scripture also declares that all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory, regardless of ethnicity (Rom 2:12-29; 3:10, 23; Eph 2:1-3). In Christ, the Father elects and adopts believers of all ethnicities to the praise of His glorious grace (Eph 1:1-6; 2:4-22).

<sup>62</sup> Russell Moore, *If You Hate Jews, You Hate Jesus*, <https://www.russellmoore.com/2018/10/28/if-you-hate-jews-you-hate-jesus/>. Accessed on November 4, 2018.

## VI. Practicing Gospel-Centered Unity

In the clearest terms, the College of Biblical Studies emphatically and unequivocally denounces all forms of ethnic supremacy, racism/racialization, ethnic division, and ethnic prejudice (i.e. what James 2:1-13 describes as personal favoritism, making distinctions, and partiality) because it portrays a false image of God’s Tri-unity, violates the two Great Commandments (Matt 22:36-40), and denigrates His good work of creation. The Christian<sup>63</sup> cannot and must not be silent in the face of ethnic prejudice. As she proclaims the Gospel to all nations (Mark 13:10; Rev 14:6), the church must perform her duty and call sin for what it is: sin. While the Lord has given us ethnic distinctions by His own sovereign choice, He also affirms that our heavenly citizenship dwarfs any other allegiance to country, tribe, or nationality (Phil 1:27; 3:20; Mark 11:17). Ethnic supremacy is a moral evil that runs counter to and remains incompatible with biblical Christianity. The Gospel serves as the antidote for this evil. Excusing, ignoring, dismissing, or engaging in ethnic prejudice constitutes a break in our adherence to Christ (Gal 3:26-29). Therefore, the sin of ethnic bias and/or economic exploitation/discrimination must be actively addressed, not passively engaged (Acts 6:1-7; Gal 2:11-21). Whether we battle ethnic superiority within our own hearts (the flesh), with the larger culture and societal structures (the world), or against our old foe (the devil) who brings disunity and hatred toward others (Eph 2:1-3), we wage war against sin in a way that brings honor to Christ (Rom 6:6; 11-14; 7:23; 8:12-13; James 4:4-10). Like any earthly institution, CBS has missed the mark in its past and continues to grow in its present regarding ethnic reconciliation; nevertheless, we strive toward and labor for a future that is marked by Christian love, peace, unity, and diversity across all ethnicities.

## VII. Pursuing Reconciliation, Justice, and Unity

As ambassadors for Christ, we must represent Him faithfully as ministers of reconciliation and press toward godly unity and fellowship with brothers and sisters from all backgrounds (1 Cor 1:10; 2 Cor 5:18-21; Eph 4:1-6; Gal 3:28; Col 3:11). The pursuit of reconciliation is not easy; it requires sacrifice, suffering, prayer, and toil (Luke 9:23-26; Col 1:24-29; Eph 6:18). It consists in viewing others as more important than ourselves (Phil 2:3), serving as a slave to all because we are slaves to Jesus Christ (Rom 6:15-23; 1 Cor 9:19-23), forgiving one another as Christ has forgiven us (Mark 11:25; Col 3:13), and embracing fellow brothers and sisters

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<sup>63</sup> The Christian (ὁ Χριστιανός) can best be described as “a Christ partisan, one who associates or identifies with Christ” (See *BDAG*, 1090). Therefore, the Christian’s primary allegiance belongs to Christ. As His ambassadors, we represent Jesus and His interests, not ourselves or our own interests (2 Cor 5:20). Therefore, our adherence to Christ must reign supreme and supersede all other relationships, loyalties, or cultural identifiers, including ethnicity and/or land of origin or residence. Christ’s commitments must be the Christian’s commitments, for we are His (Matt 10:24-25; Luke 6:40; 1 Cor 3:23; Eph 5:1-2). In His flesh and by His blood, Jesus has created one new body, the Church, which is composed of saints from all ethnicities (Eph 2:11-22; Rev 5:9-10; 7:9). The nations are the Messiah’s inheritance (Ps 2:7-8), and since evangelizing and making disciples of those nations remained a clear priority of Jesus Christ (Matt 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; 9:15-16; 22:21; 26:14-18), it should be of the utmost importance to His followers, who only have access to God as a result of Christ’s perfect work and by the power of the eternal Spirit (Rom 5:2; Eph 2:18; 3:12; Heb 9:13-14).

of different ethnic or social standings (Phm 1:10-20). Standing united against ethnic animus means submitting to God, recognizing and resisting the devil's scheme to sow disunity by dividing people along ethnic lines (Gal 3:28; Col 3:11; James 4:7), confessing individual and corporate sins (James 5:16; 1 John 1:9), purifying our hearts (James 4:8), bearing one another's burdens (Gal 6:2), humbling ourselves (James 4:10), outdoing one another in honor (Rom 12:10), and showing affection to each other with brotherly love (Matt 5:23-24; Rom 12:10; 1 John 2:9; 1 John 4:7-8, 20). Though we have unity in Christ, this does not necessarily mean that members of God's household will have the same opinions or arrive at the same conclusions. Nevertheless, as brothers and sisters in the Lord, we must be "quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry" (James 1:19), particularly as we engage each other on issues regarding ethnic harmony and diversity. Believers are aliens and sojourners in this world, and our witness should proclaim us as such (1 Peter 2:11). Consequently, the unbelieving world should see Christians incarnating the Gospel message by loving one another without holding grudges or seeking its own at the expense of others (1 Cor 13:5). Despite the fact that reconciliation and unity across ethnic lines may be met with hostility (Gal 2:11-14), Christian disciples follow the mandate of the Lord to love one another sacrificially (John 15:12-17; 1 John 4:7-21).

At the final consummation, God will display the beauty and grandeur of His creative and redemptive work. According to Rev. 7:9, the Apostle John sees "a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb." In addition, that multitude cries out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" This multitude stands together as one, and the different members openly praise the Lord with "a" loud voice. "When [different ethnic groups] unite in worship to God, the beauty of their praise will echo the depth and greatness of God's beauty far more than if the redeemed were from only a few different people groups."<sup>64</sup> God has therefore sovereignly ordained that unity and diversity typifies heavenly worship. Moreover, the fact that all nations will worship God underscores the fact that He is universally praiseworthy.<sup>65</sup> "The fame, greatness, and worth of an object of beauty increases in proportion to the diversity of those who recognize its beauty. ... Thus the diversity of the source of human admiration will testify to [God's] incomparable glory."<sup>66</sup> Finally, the new Jerusalem boasts the tree of life, the leaves of which serve for the healing of the nations (Rev 22:2). Since Christians serve the Triune Lord and pray for His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matt 6:9-13), both

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<sup>64</sup> John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions, Third Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic Publishers, 2010), 222.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 222-223.

the local and the universal church must strive to value and embrace the unity and diversity of the One whose image we bear (Col 3:10-11).

As Christ adherents, the members of the CBS community strive to live out our heavenly citizenship (Phil 1:27; 3:20) by remaining rooted in God's word, focused on God the Son, led by God the Spirit, and committed to God the Father. We seek to value all that Christ values (Matt 6:19-21, 33). God's glory is demonstrated through the proclamation of the Gospel among the nations; therefore, CBS remains resolute in its commitment to the pursuit of God's glory by being disciplined and making disciples (including faculty, staff, students, and board members) who recognize the value of and work toward ethnic reconciliation and unity.

### **VIII. A Prayer to God**

O Triune God, You are the sovereign author and giver of life, and Your very nature reflects perfect unity and diversity. Thank You for creating human beings of different ethnicities, backgrounds, and cultures in Your image, according to Your likeness, and for Your glory.

Father, help us to be honest with You, ourselves, and one another about areas in which we need to grow in our love for You and our neighbors. For the sake of Christian fellowship (*koinonia*), may our commitment to the pursuit of ethnic reconciliation and unity far outweigh any misplaced allegiance to our own comfort and convenience. When we fail to love You and others rightly, convict Your people, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to recognize our error and to call it for what it is: sin. Forgive us, Lord, when we disparage, belittle, or dismiss others on the basis of their ethnicity or race. We repent of this, and we ask for Your forgiveness. Help Your Church to be one, as You are one. Give Your sons and daughters sacrificial, other-centered, Spirit-driven agape love for people of every tribe, language, people, and nation. May the world know that we are Yours by a love that is demonstrated as we listen humbly to one another, intercede faithfully for one another, and engage intentionally with one another, across all ethnic lines, for the advancement of the Gospel.

Lord, we present this document to You, and we thank You for allowing us to participate in the work of Your ministry. May this work glorify You and strengthen Your church. As ministers of reconciliation and ambassadors for Your Son, use us, in any way that You see fit, as instruments of Your love, justice, truth, righteousness, and peace. Father, bring us shalom and be our shalom through the Prince of Shalom, Jesus Christ. In His name and by Your Spirit we pray. Amen.