



CANCELLING CULTURE: ESTABLISHING FILTERS FOR TODAY'S WORLD

Session 6: God Doesn't See Color, Does He?

RACIAL DISTINCTIONS: A KEY CURRENT FACTOR IN DETERMINING CULTURE

- Race/Representation of Race- showing up all over the place
 - Entertainment- push for increased racial representation to take place and for stereotypes to be eliminated
 - Academia- the push to see greater representation in educators and to see aspects of academic subjects adjusted to reflect the mis/non-representation of the past.
 - Business- businesses are pressed to consider minority candidates more than ever before right now
 - Politics- more race issues and more racially diverse candidates than ever before.
 - Churches- American churches have been described as some of the most racially divided places in the country.
- Race, while relatively new as a category of identification, is something that is now a part of our cultural landscape and must be considered (cannot overlook it)
- The question is: “How do we properly approach this as a Christian?”

THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM: CRITICAL RACE THEORY

- CRT is the having quite a spotlight shone on it right now; but what do we know about it?
- **CRT has its roots in two places- the general critical theory of the “Frankfort School” and the legal processes of the First Civil Rights Movement**
- “Frankfort School”
- Established by the adherents of Marx in pre-WWII Germany near the University of Frankfurt
- Dismantled by the Nazi regime; relocated to the States just before the war and found its home on both of the coasts in the persons of Max Horkheimer, Theodore Adorno, Herbert Marcuse (in CA), and Friedrich Pollock and Eric Fromm (in NY)
- They returned to Frankfurt after the war and remained leading voices for Marxist systems until the end of their lives

THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM: CRITICAL RACE THEORY

- Critical theory aims to point out the flaws of traditional Western capitalistic democratic-republican ideas/values/practices and replace it with something better
- **Horkheimer- Critical theory must meet three criteria for it to have any value:**
 1. **It must be explanatory- what's wrong with society currently**
 2. **Practical- identify the actors that need to change it**
 3. **Normative- provide clear norms for criticism and achievable goals for societal transformation. (Note the impact of pragmatism here)**
- Has been through additional waves since then but has kept these tenets as foundational.
- **Critical race theory is a subset of general critical theory**

THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM: CRITICAL RACE THEORY

- The legal process of First Civil Rights Movement
- **Fact: everything that was shown in Birmingham and Selma by police to break up civil rights protests in the mid-sixties was legal and “by the book” police procedure at the time.**
- The legal framework of the Brown decision in 1954 led to subsequent decisions that required a **proof of intent** behind racism cases.
- What happens to culture/society when laws/procedures are on the books that reflect and reinforce racial divisions/mistreatments? (Ex: Jim Crow and apartheid)
- What are the long-term and even subconscious cultural effects of these laws and how can we change them? (Laws effect culture)

THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM: CRITICAL RACE THEORY

- These types of questions CRT pioneers Derrick Bell, Charles Lawrence III, and Kimberle Crenshaw sought to answer (“retrenchment”).
- Expanded to include examinations of historical, social, religious, political, and economic traditions/understandings along these lines. They are asking, “Where have we cut out minorities from the process of contributing to culture?”
- **Notice again: the same pattern as general critical theory:**
 1. **Explanatory-** racism, as expressed in incomplete legal decisions, is the problem with society (embedded culturally and a part of legal decision making)
 2. **Practical-** racism is felt by minorities because that is whom it is aimed at and the majority must understand that and work to understand/change it
 3. **Normative-** racism can be seen in the normative structure of our culture (“indirect/systemic” racism) and by taking steps that range from adjusting education to making laws regarding voting to reforming policing, we can see this change (Note again: pragmatic!)

THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM: CRITICAL RACE THEORY

- CRT might be rooted in Marxism but owes its staying power to American pragmatism and post-modernism
- Pragmatism- truth is defined by the results that I have
- Post-modernism- truth is a purely a matter of what “story” is dominating culture/situation at the moment
- **Results in a malleable, vague, “feelings-based” worldview**

CRITICISMS OF CRT

- CRT has a “foundationalism” problem- if there are no absolutes, then what prevents it from being too absurd to believe/live by?
- CRT has a “scope” problem- what is the definition of discrimination and who can say with any accuracy that they have experienced it?
- CRT has a “normativity” problem- is it ethical to “burn the system down” to change it, when the total destruction of that system would result in more overall harm than good?
- CRT has a “goals” problem- what specific actions can be done to remedy racial discrimination? (When has the majority “paid the price” to clear the debt?)
- CRT has a “structural” problem- a perspective might be useful (and therefore “true”) to an individual but not end up reflecting reality at all (“The Depressed Teenager”)

CRITICISMS OF CRT

- CRT has a “theological” problem- while God certainly does value diversity and is not “color-blind” (Rev. 7:9-10), He is clear that diversity requires a commitment to interdependence, not independence (Eph. 2:11-21).
 - Division is based in sin that comes from a language problem (Gen. 11)
 - **Fear/suspicion along racial lines is always about a deepening of “the other” that comes from valuing our identity in non-Kingdom things over Kingdom ones (basis for tribalism)**
 - **All of this is only solved in the Church who is acted upon by Holy Spirit; solves the language problem and the tribalism problem (Acts 2)**
 - He made us a body on purpose! We should value the perspectives/heritage of those that He joins us to and work to eliminate the weaknesses that are inherent in those perspectives/weaknesses! (Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12)

PRACTICING THE CRAFT

- Take some time to discuss the Kendi video at your table in light of what we now know about CRT. Do your best to find the points of issue that Kendi is correct about in light of the Kingdom and where he is in error. How can we help to challenge this in light of our call to be peacemakers (Matt. 5)