

Critical Theory: Origins, Influences, and Implications

Where We Begin

The foundations of Reformational thinking and Hegelian Thinking can be contrasted.

- Reformational thinking begins with the personal God, the creator and definer of everything.
Whereas
- Hegelian thinking begins with a rational man in contention with a natural man in a power struggle to define *truth*.
- The result is my truth against your truth, manifested in the oppressed becoming the oppressor in an ongoing cycle.

Defining the Five Central Terms

Social binary-- According to Contemporary Critical Theory, society is divided into oppressed groups and oppressor groups along the lines of race, class, gender, sexuality, physical ability, age, and a growing list of other identity markers.

Hegemonic power—refers to the dominance of one group over all others. A Hegeman holds unrivaled power and can use their power to exert influence over others.

Lived experience-- Lived experience yields experiential knowledge (that has the value of authority) and insights relative to social analysis that overrides objective evidence regarding social justice matters. EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE vs FACTUAL ANALYSIS.

Social justice—Social justice transforms society by emancipating and empowering the marginalized (oppressed) by dismantling existing systems, structures, and hegemonic norms that have created and perpetuated current social conditions.

Critical Race Theory, for Example (Since it is best known in common parlance)

Here is the methodology or application of Critical Theory about race.

- Develop or assume a conclusion.
- Search for “lived experience that validates the conclusion.
- Conclude the conclusion.
- Publish your conclusion in a scholarly academic journal.

An Interesting Comparison by Dr. Kevin DeYoung¹—based on Rev 13:1-8

- Great power –note the evocative language.
- Loyal following—messianic intensity.
- Blasphemous attribution—calls evil good and good evil.
- Christian hatred—dismantle the family and sexual morality.
- Apparent invincibility—gender surgeries, tenure firings, etc.

Critical Theories theory of the origins of Social Issues

- Sexism
- Racism
- Classism
- Heterosexism
- Whiteism (White privilege, that is, dominate white power)

As executed in social instructions, such as government, education, religion, etc.

Critical Theory is Not Unanticipated by Jesus

In His Olivet Discourse (Prophecy) found in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21, Jesus described what would happen on earth before His second coming. The signs of the end of this age include lawlessness abounding, the gospel of the Kingdom being preached, and Jerusalem being surrounded by armies (Matthew 24:12-14; Luke 21:20).

We should not be surprised or dismayed that CT is abounding, but we should take our cue from the early church. We should take a page from the early church in Acts 11.

Why Understanding of CT is Important to Counseling and the Christian Enterprise

- Education—Universities are permeated and peddling CT.
- Media—Distributes peer-to-peer, and it becomes operational “truth.”
- Untaught church—
 - Accepts the gaslighting and becomes confused.
 - Too often, the church is “a mile wide and .05 deep.” Hence, the church believes what culture says.
 - Political control—The Constitution is reinterpreted and corrupted, producing laws that enhance the acceptance of CT.

¹ Pastor Kevin DeYoung, Sermon, Christ Covenant Church 01-21-24

CRU and Critical Thinking Embracing CT Thought and Language

Cru insists it wants to meet those challenges while remaining faithful to the Bible. The Compassionate and Faithful guidelines state: “As followers of Christ, we want to navigate LGBT+ questions in a way that is compassionate toward people (our posture) and faithful to Scripture (our position).” The guidelines, which I reviewed, say the training addresses questions such as, “What does it mean to follow Christ faithfully if I experience same-sex attraction or gender dysphoria?” and, “Is it possible to warmly invite people in the LGBT+ community to consider Christ, while remaining faithful to the teaching of Scripture on sexuality?”

The training’s seven modules lean heavily on stories. In one, an anonymous Cru intern described breaking off a same-sex relationship as she took her obedience to God more seriously. The intern emphasized the need to create “a space of vulnerability and humility.”

“Equating same-sex attraction to sin and speaking judgmentally against those in the LGBT+ community doesn’t prove conducive to sharing the gospel with non-believers, especially those who are in same-sex relationships,” she said.

Correction in language, but does it mean correction in heart commitment:

For example, an internal document previously stated, “Deciding to use someone’s preferred name and pronouns is an issue of conscience ... [it] can be a profound way to demonstrate that you recognize them and desire to show them respect.” Now, the document lists four positions on preferred pronouns. It warns that using someone’s preferred pronouns “may unintentionally communicate a position that Cru does not hold (and Scripture does not teach).”

Cru’s new “Sexuality and Gender” document states, “We embrace the goodness of the sexual difference God created by living distinctly as male and female, which includes using pronouns that align with our biological sex.” It says same-sex attraction “is contrary to God’s design for human sexuality. It represents a disordering of sexual desire in our fallen condition, which is neither morally neutral nor good.”

Butterfield remains skeptical. “It boils down to whether you believe a cleaned-up Side B curriculum is better than a more transparent one,” she said