

LUTHERAN ANTIRACISM: A SCRIPTURAL RESPONSE TO THE WRITINGS OF IBRAM

X. KENDI

BY

NATHAN T. KLUSMEYER

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF DIVINITY

PROF. E. ALLEN SORUM, ADVISOR
WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY
MEQUON, WI
FEBRUARY 19, 2023

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iv
INTRODUCTION	1
Challenges of Addressing Racism	2
HISTORICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL CONTEXT OF KENDI’S WRITINGS	6
Historical Overview	6
Postmodernism and the Social Justice Turn	9
LITERATURE REVIEW	13
Defining Terms	14
Disagreement is Racist	19
Lack of Hope	21
PART ONE: WHERE A CHRISTIAN CAN FIND AGREEMENT WITH KENDI	25
Biological Differences Between the Races do not Exist	25
The Issue of Race Cannot be Ignored	28
Racism is Sin	31
The Church’s Historical Failure to Condemn Racism	34
PART TWO: WHERE A CHRISTIAN MUST DISAGREE WITH KENDI.....	36
The Dividing Wall of Racial Tension	36

The Problem of Antiracist Intersectionality	49
Antiracism and Liberation Theology	51
PART THREE: LUTHERAN ANTIRACISM.....	55
Compassion Ministry	56
The Power of Lutheran Schools	59
Verbum Domini Manet in Aeternum	61
CONCLUSION.....	63
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	65

ABSTRACT

There is a desire in our society to find solutions for the divisive issues of race and racism. Popular culture is filled with calls for inclusivity, equity, diversity, and antiracism. One of the leading philosophical voices of the antiracist movement is Ibram X. Kendi. His books, lectures, and research are foundational to modern thought as it relates to issues of race, sexuality, religion, and politics. This thesis analyzes the writings of Kendi and compares them with the words of Scripture. This analysis shows some issues and proposals in Kendi's writings where a Christian can agree with Kendi; however, many issues must be rejected because they are incompatible with the truths of Scripture. The church should be cautious in adopting any antiracist ideology that does not agree with God's Word. Instead, the church should look at the principles of God's Word regarding race and racism and develop its own form of antiracism.

INTRODUCTION

In the process of researching this paper, I had the opportunity to take a hard look at many of my personal beliefs and assumptions. As I read about the terrible struggle of Black Americans¹, I learned about the profound and lasting impact racism has had on their lives. I realized that I have often failed to be compassionate and empathetic. I continue to struggle with racist and bigoted thoughts. I am guilty of making biased judgments and have attributed the actions and behaviors of individuals to an entire group of people. This paper has allowed me to confront these sinful thoughts and confess where I have been wrong. A helpful tool for me was the reflective journal that Ibram X. Kendi wrote to accompany *How to be an Antiracist*. In the introduction, he offers this encouragement to people of all races as we daily struggle with racist thoughts and attitudes.

The heartbeat of antiracism is confession. It is self-reflection. It is realizing that there is no such thing as *not racist*, no such thing as race neutrality. It is realizing that all ideas and policies are either racist or antiracist; all people are *being* racist or antiracist. No one *becomes* a racist or an antiracist. These are not fixed categories. We can be racist one moment and antiracist the next. What we say about the races, what we do about inequity determines what—not who—we are in each moment.²

As you read this paper, I encourage you to take time for personal contemplation, reflection, and confession. Kendi himself admits how racist thoughts clouded his thinking and judgment. “I realized there is nothing wrong with any of the racial groups and everything wrong

1. Throughout this paper I will use the terms Black and White to distinguish between different racial categories. I will consistently capitalize these terms whether they are being used as nouns or adjectives. This follows the example of Kendi in his usage of these terms. When quoting other authors, I will respect their choice to capitalize or not capitalize these terms.

2. Ibram X. Kendi, *Be Antiracist: A Journal for Awareness, Reflection, and Action* (New York: One World, 2020), 2. Emphasis is the author’s own.

with individuals like me who think there is something wrong with any of the racial groups. It felt so good to cleanse my mind.”³ Be willing to admit that there are times when misconceptions and stereotypes of race color your view of others. Consider how these attitudes shape your opinion of others and create roadblocks to sharing the love of Christ to a world lost in the darkness of sin. Racism continues to be a blight on society. “Our world is suffering from metastatic cancer. Stage 4. Racism has spread to nearly every part of the body politic, intersecting with bigotry of all kinds, justifying all kinds of inequities.”⁴ It is the cause of immense suffering, hatred, and division; it is a sin of hate and pride. Christians must boldly speak out against the lies of racism and confess the truth that all people are created equal in the eyes of God. We are all equally sinful and deserve eternal condemnation for our sins. More importantly, we have all been redeemed through the greatest act of inequality and injustice when God punished his holy, innocent Son for the sins of all people.

Challenges of Addressing Racism

The issues of race, inter-race relations, and racism are complicated. Significant progress has been made, but many people, especially many Black people in this country, continue to suffer under the evil of racism. This paper does not presume to offer a solution to racism but seeks to address some of the popular proposals for solutions that have been offered in the past several years by authors like Ibram X. Kendi, Robin DiAngelo, Ta-Nehisi Coates, and others. Their works are

3. Ibram X. Kendi, *How to be an Antiracist* (New York: One World, 2019), 227.

4. Kendi, *How to be an Antiracist*, 234. In his book Kendi talks about his fight with advanced cancer. He describes racism as a form of societal cancer that must be fought just as aggressively as physical cancer.

incredibly popular and influential. They are viewed by many as providing the necessary framework for real and lasting societal change on the issue of racism.⁵ As stated previously, the church must boldly condemn racism and eagerly seek to work with those who share this same goal. However, we must exercise caution if we choose to adopt terminology and ideology from the secular world. Terms like *antiracism*, *diversity*, *inclusion*, and *equity* sound good and laudable, but there are often additional meanings associated with these terms that are incompatible with a biblical worldview.

As is often the case amid great social unrest, there are myriad and complex layers that need to be sorted out along the way. There is confusion and disagreement about how the social justice movement is to be understood or embraced, particularly among Christians. To be sure, the Holy Christian Church in America must be ready to combat the sin of racism and injustice. Yet, it must also guard against the dangerous ideologies that would displace or even replace the love and light of Christ and his eternal word of truth as the means for our life together.⁶

This paper will address the usage and meaning of the term *antiracism* as defined by Ibram X. Kendi⁷ in his influential book *How to be an Antiracist*. Kendi has authored numerous

5. Books by all three authors dealing with the issues of race and racism have been on the New York Times best sellers list. Kendi's *How to be an Antiracist* and Coates's *Between the World and Me* were both ranked number one. These books have been used to develop educational materials for elementary schools, college courses, and workplace training materials. Our people will encounter the philosophies of these authors and it is vital that we familiarize ourselves with their work.

6. Dr. Lucas V. Woodford, "What does this mean? Responding to Social Justice and Critical Race Theory," *Seelsoger* 7 (2021): 5. https://www.doxology.us/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/dox_2021_woodford_crt_final2.pdf.

7. Ibram X. Kendi is regarded as one of the leading philosophers and historians of the current antiracism movement in the United States. He has authored numerous books on the issues of race and racism, including several books on how to raise antiracist children. He is a contributing writer for the *Atlantic* and CBS News, and he has contributed articles and op-eds for numerous other publications. In 2020 he was named one of the one hundred most influential people in the world by *Time Magazine*. Ibram X. Kendi currently serves as the Andrew W. Mellon Professor in the Humanities and the Founding Director of the Boston University Center for Antiracist Research. Additional biographical details about his life and contributions can be found at <https://www.ibramxkendi.com/bio>. Because he is such an influential writer on this issue, I chose his books to be the focus of this paper. Other writers on the issue of antiracism like Ta-Nehisi Coates and Robin DiAngelo have proposed ideas similar to Kendi's. Their writings will be used in this paper to provide additional background and insight into Kendi's writings.

books about the plight of Black Americans and the injustices of systemic racism. Numerous groups, organizations, companies, and religious denominations have used Kendi's proposals to formulate solutions and policies about race and racism. In his book, Kendi calls on all people to adopt an attitude of antiracism. On its surface, this sounds like a laudable goal that Christians should and must support. However, Kendi's philosophy of antiracism is rooted in Postmodern thought, and the way he uses the terms *racism* and *antiracism* have different meanings and connotations that are different from the implied meaning of these terms. It is these differences of meaning that should cause the church to pause and evaluate whether it can use these terms as defined by Kendi.

For example, when Kendi says, "Now let's know how to be antiracist,"⁸ he is including radical activism that seeks to tear down existing power structures in society, an acceptance of all aspects of the LGBTQ+⁹ movement, a worldview that promotes the advancement of marginalized groups at the expense of other populations, and a definition of racism that sees it as a structural issue and not a matter of individual sin. This paper will seek to answer the question, "Can a Christian be an antiracist, as Kendi defines the term?" I will answer this question by analyzing the philosophical basis for his worldview and expanding on his own definitions of what race, racism, and antiracism mean. I will demonstrate the areas of his philosophy Christians can agree with and what we must reject as incompatible with our faith. I will also offer some

8. Kendi, *How to be Antiracist*, 11.

9. This acronym stands for Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transsexual Queer Plus. There is not a standardized acronym for this movement and the definition of these terms seems to change on a regular basis as new classes of gender and sexuality are added or changed. For the sake of simplicity, I will use LGBTQ+ throughout this paper.

Lutheran solutions that address but do not presume to solve, the problem of racism that we continue to face in our congregations and society.

Kendi proposes a number of solutions that contradict the clear teachings of Scripture. However, this does not mean that we can dismiss his valid critiques of American culture out of hand. Much of what he says is true, and Christians have an obligation to speak boldly against the terrible sin of racism. Rod Dreher summarizes this tension well, “Kendi and his followers in the churches are preaching a rival gospel, a false gospel. We have to get that straight. This does not mean that the obligation to refuse racism goes away. It means, though, that we cannot fight it with a lie.”¹⁰

This approach will not make us popular in the world. Anyone who questions the proposals that Kendi and others have offered is frequently labeled as either uninformed or racist. This should not surprise us. The world hates those who shine the light of God’s truth on the lies of sin. We should not worry about being labeled as racist or hateful if we are proclaiming the truth of God’s Word. We can echo the words of C. F. W. Walther and confidently say, “‘I have proclaimed the pure truth.’ But in our day and age, many people have become so skeptical that they regard anyone as something of a lunatic who makes that claim.”¹¹

10. Rod Dreher, “Antiracist, Anti-Christian,” *The American Conservative* March 2021, <https://www.theamericanconservative.com/kendi-antiracist-antichristian-critical-race-theory/>.

11. C.F. W. Walther, *Law and Gospel: How to Read and Apply the Bible* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2010), 36.

HISTORICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL CONTEXT OF KENDI'S WRITINGS

Kendi does not write in a vacuum. He has been influenced by numerous historical events that have shaped race relations in America. Our current social situation cannot be divorced from the institution of slavery and the genuine structural racism built into American society and culture for many years. In order to understand Kendi's perspective on race and how he seeks to solve the issue of racial division, we need to first have a firm understanding of the historical context that led to our current national state. This paper does not intend to provide a detailed overview of the history of slavery and racism, but it is beneficial to provide a brief review of some of the significant events that shaped the history of race in this country.

Historical Overview

Many scholars, including Kendi, trace the beginning of current racial distinctions based on skin color to the African slave trade in the 15th Century.¹² Black-skinned people were viewed as inferior and more animal-like than lighter-skinned peoples. European monarchs, like Prince Henry the Navigator of Portugal (1394–1460 AD), used this false and bigoted idea to rationalize their inhuman treatment of Africans as they sold them into slavery. The legacy of Prince Henry

12. Kendi, *How to be an Antiracist*, 40.

is so bitter that when Kendi learned this history, he changed his middle name from Henry to Xolani.

Prince Henry lived in me. The name Henry had traveled down through the centuries and over the Atlantic Ocean and eventually into my father's family. He chose the name of his enslaved great-great-grandfather, Henry. Dad did not know that this ancestor shared the name of the Navigator, but when I learned the history, I knew it had to go. My middle name is now Xolani, meaning peace, the very thing Henry's slave traders snatched from Africa (and the Americas and Europe), the thing they snatched from my ancestor Henry.¹³

The African slave trade grew and expanded as the demand for cheap labor increased in the American colonies. The formalized institution of race-based slavery exacerbated the distinction and division between Black-skinned people and lighter, White-skinned people. There can be no minimizing or justifying the horror and atrocity of American slavery. Black people were treated as sub-human and forced to endure violence, hatred, and degradation. Racism was perpetuated through “the pillaging of life, liberty, labor, and land; through the flaying of backs; the chaining of limbs; the strangling of dissidents; the destruction of families; the rape of mothers; the sale of children; and various other acts meant, first and foremost, to deny you and me the right to secure and govern our own bodies.”¹⁴

The early history of the United States was dominated by the conflicting desire of some to embrace the founding principle that “all men are created equal” and the desire of others to perpetuate the ongoing plague of slavery. These issues would eventually erupt in the bloody conflict of the American Civil War. Eventually, the Confederate States were defeated, and the institution of slavery was abolished, but the issue of racial division and discord continued to

13. Kendi, *How to be an Antiracist*, 39.

14. Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me*, 1st ed. (New York: One World, 2015), 8.

plague the country. In his review of *How to be an Antiracist*, Brad Breems summarizes some of the ongoing racial tensions that persisted despite the abolition of American slaves.

To catch Kendi's urgently monumental project of which this book is only a calculated part, one must contemplate the groping racism successively endured over the arc of racism's course so far: captivity; the Middle Passage; slave life in the plantation economy; the Civil War; false hope of Reconstruction; Jim Crow, lynching, and post-Plessy v Ferguson ignominies; the civil rights movement and aftermath; and current discrimination and manipulations in real estate, banking, the criminal justice system, and other inequities.¹⁵

Despite progress after the Civil War, Black Americans continued to face hatred and bigotry. Racism continued to be a stain on the soul of America. The horrors of the past could not be quickly forgotten or forgiven. Significant progress was made during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s under the leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr. and other activists, and it seemed like race relations were improving in the United States through the following decades. The election of Barak Obama to the Presidency in 2008 seemed to mark the beginning of a new era in American society. Obama's tone was hopeful that the country could move past the sins of her past and embrace a brighter future. This hope was soon dashed by a number of high-profile police shootings of Black men, which led to a rise in racial tensions. Against this backdrop, Kendi wrote his first book, *Stamped from the Beginning*.

Every historian writes in—and is impacted by—a precise historical moment. My moment, this book's moment, coincides with the televised and untelevised killings of unarmed human beings at the hands of law enforcement officials, and with the televised and untelevised life of the shooting star of #Black Lives Matter during America's stormiest nights. I somehow managed to write this book between the heartbreaks of Trayvon Martin and Rekia Boyd and Michael Brown and Freddie Gray and the

15. Brad Breems, review of *How to be an Antiracist*, by Ibram X. Kendi, *Journal of Sociology and Christianity*, 11, no. 1 (Spring 2021): 76–77.

Charleston 9 and Sandra Bland, heartbreaks that are a product of America's history of racist ideas as much as this history book of racist ideas is a product of these heartbreaks.¹⁶

Kendi wrote *Stamped* in 2017. Since then, there have been additional high-profile police shootings of Black individuals. The death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police officers in May 2020 sparked large-scale protests in the United States demanding equal justice for Black Americans and an end to police violence. Kendi's research for *Stamped* sparked his desire to write a book that would provide solutions to the ongoing racial tensions in America. *How to be an Antiracist* is Kendi's blueprint for a world free of social injustice and bigotry.

Postmodernism and the Social Justice Turn

In order to understand Kendi's blueprint for an antiracist society, we need to understand the philosophical foundations of his work. *How to be an Antiracist* draws heavily from Postmodernism, Social Justice Theory, and Critical Theory. The following section of this paper will briefly trace how Postmodernism morphed from an abstract philosophical system to a practical system used to implement social and political change. We need to understand some of the basic tenets of Postmodernism, especially its use of language and how it views truth and societal power structures, to understand some of the conclusions Kendi makes in his books.

Postmodernism began in the 1960s as a reaction and critique of Modernism. Thinkers like Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault questioned the detached rationality of Modernist thinking.

16. Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*, repr. (New York: Bold Type Books, 2017), 1.

They developed a “radical skepticism”¹⁷ which questioned whether any form of objective truth is attainable. This skepticism included a belief that the fundamental meaning of words and language could be questioned.

Certainty could never be achieved. Truth claims are not discoveries but *constructions*. The same is true of moral principles, political ideologies, and religious convictions. The French critic Jacques Derrida deconstructed not only the defining texts of modern and Western culture, but also language itself. Because, as he said, “There is no transcendent logos,” there can be no such thing as objective meaning, whether in a work of literature, a collection of laws, or speech itself. Michael Foucault showed that not only texts, but also great ideas and time-honored institutions are “masks” designed both to express but also to hide the power relationships in a culture, thereby keeping the oppressor in control.¹⁸

The beliefs that “certainty can never be achieved” and truth is a “construction” led to a Postmodern conclusion that there is no such thing as objective truth. Reality and truth are constructed and based on the interplay of power dynamics. A person living in this kind of world should be highly skeptical and question all cultural patterns and norms. Since there was no such thing as objective truth, Postmodernism needed to find a different framework to establish value and meaning. Thinkers like Derrida and Foucault determined that society must be composed of hierarchical systems in which people lived out their lives according to their status and placement within these structures. Within these systems, people have access to different levels of power based on their role and status in society. It was the interplay of these various forces that gave definition to language and established cultural norms. Postmodernism was an attempt to deconstruct these norms and patterns so that new pathways to truth and power could be

17. Helen Pluckrose and James Lindsay, *Cynical Theories: How Activist Scholarship Made Everything about Race, Gender, and Identity—and Why This Harms Everybody* (Durham: Pitchstone Publishing, 2020), 31.

18. Gene Veith Jr and A. Trevor Sutton, *Authentic Christianity: How Lutheran Theology Speaks to a Postmodern World* (Saint Louis: Concordia, 2017), 18. Emphasis is the author’s own.

established. The authors of *Cynical Theories* describe these hierarchical power dynamics as an electric power grid.

Visualize a power grid. This is the conception of human society that constitutes the postmodernist worldview. It posits that we are born and positioned by elements of our identity, such that we have different levels of access to power—privileges, like being plugged into the network—and we learn to perform our position and thus “conduct” the power through ourselves as part of the system, often without ever knowing that the grid is there.¹⁹

A deepening understanding of these hierarchal systems of power morphed Postmodernism from an abstract “deconstructionist theory” to a more practical application designed to force societal change. Owen Strachan describes this as a change from “soft to hard Postmodernism.”²⁰ This is the change we are seeing in our society right now. The principles of Postmodernism have been practically applied to issues like race, gender, and sexual identity. This movement from theoretical to applied Postmodernism can broadly be called Social Justice Theory²¹, with sub-categories of Critical Race Theory²², Queer Theory, Feminist Theory, and others. At its core, it attempts to deconstruct the oppressive historical hierarchies of Western

19. Lindsay and Pluckrose, *Cynical Theories*, 174–75.

20. Owen Strachan and John MacArthur, *Christianity and Wokeness: How the Social Justice Movement Is Hijacking the Gospel - and the Way to Stop It* (Washington: Salem Books, 2021), 90.

21. The various authors I reference in this paper have different ways of describing Social Justice. Owen Strachan calls it “wokeness,” Voddie Baucham “critical social justice,” Rod Dreher “social totalitarianism,” and Thaddeus Williams “social justice b.” Williams distinguishes between “social justice a” which he equates with biblical justice and “social justice b” which is the modern movement toward an equitable society. For the sake of clarity and simplicity in the remainder of this paper I will use the terms Social Justice to describe the larger movement and antiracism to describe the more specific applications advocated by Kendi. The exception will be when I am quoting specific authors.

22. Critical Race Theory is an application of Critical Theory that was previously mentioned. Both Critical Theory and Critical Race Theory need a thorough analysis that is beyond the scope of this paper. Kendi’s definition of antiracism fits under the broad umbrella of Social Justice and Critical Race Theory. CRT is a complex ideology that needs a thorough analysis. The brief interaction I had with CRT while researching this paper leads me to believe that there are many aspects of CRT, and the disciplines based on it, that are incompatible with the Lutheran worldview.

culture, Whiteness, maleness, and heteronormativity. Social Justice seeks to rebalance these relationships and transfer power to the oppressed classes. A complex system of intersectional victim categories determines one's status as a member of either an oppressor or oppressed group.²³ Authors like Kendi and DiAngelo want to tear down all systems they perceive to be built on the foundation of racism, oppression, and white power (including the church) and rebuild society in a more equitable fashion where oppressed classes are given preferential status.

The means to enact this is being mitigated through the present cultural identity politics (people groups' collectivized identity) and current corresponding calls for equality, along with the new morals of affirming and endorsing this antiracist ideology. What is deemed acceptable to this ideology is nothing short of dismantling every system, structure, or policy that is allegedly racist. This includes the entire American experiment, specifically the capitalistic market, as well as the judicial and political systems. Likewise, any church that reflects anything similar to the morals or values of the identified racist system is also subject to discrediting and dismantling.²⁴

This is what makes Social Justice and Kendi's application of it in *How to be an Antiracist* such a dangerous ideology. The very foundations of Western society and culture, including the church, are viewed as part of the system of White supremacy, which must be torn down and rebuilt into a more equitable society based on the values of Social Justice Theory.²⁵

23. A more detailed explanation of intersectionality will be discussed later in this paper.

24. Woodford, "What does this mean? Responding to Social Justice and Critical Race Theory," 26.

25. Many of the values of Social Justice Theory are not compatible with biblical Christianity. Social Justice embraces radical feminism, LGBTQ+ acceptance and advocacy, racial discrimination, and radical Marxism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The books and articles I reviewed for this paper fall into two main groups: those who support the ideology of Social Justice Theory and those who believe that Social Justice Theory is incompatible with the teachings of Scripture. Authors like Kendi, DiAngelo, Coates, and Tisby advocate for the ideas of Social Justice Theory. They generally come from a more politically liberal bias, are primarily secular, and are highly critical of anyone who challenges their conclusions. They advocate for drastic social changes to alleviate the problems of structural and systemic racism.

Other authors like Baucham, Williams, Strachan, Lindsay, and Pluckrose are critical of the basic ideological tenants of Social Justice Theory. Lindsay and Pluckrose argue against Social Justice from a secular and philosophical viewpoint, while the other authors argue against Social Justice from a biblical standpoint. One of the central challenges in dealing with these various authors is that they do not define terms in the same way. This section of my paper will seek to provide clear definitions of terms and demonstrate some of the differing viewpoints of these authors. It will also demonstrate how the additional meaning that some authors have added to terms like diversity, equity, and antiracism make them incompatible with a Christian worldview.

Defining terms

In order to gain a better understanding of Kendi’s worldview, we need to understand the terms and definitions he uses. An understanding of definitions is essential to have any meaningful dialogue. If we cannot agree on the definition of terms, we end up talking past each other. “When important words are redefined without any rational or biblical case offered, we have a recipe for endless confusion and strife.”²⁶ How one defines terms like *racism*, *antiracism*, *equity*, and *equality* is fundamental to one’s worldview. Kendi and other authors like him base their definitions on the Postmodern concept of power hierarchies and intersectionality.

Intersectionality was first described by Kimberle Crenshaw in a 1986 article. Crenshaw proposed a theory based on a hierarchal understanding of society, that different oppressed classes could face multiple forms of oppression. For example, a Black woman faces more discrimination than a Black man because she experiences racism and sexism in her daily life.²⁷

This understanding of power dynamics, oppression, and intersectionality cannot be divorced from their definition of terms. “DiAngelo admits what many Christians either refuse to admit or simply don’t know: that these terms carry the assumption of a worldview—particularly the worldview that lies at the foundation of CRT.”²⁸ Taken by themselves, words like antiracism

26. Thaddeus J. Williams and John M. Perkins, *Confronting Injustice without Compromising Truth: 12 Questions Christians Should Ask About Social Justice* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 101.

27. Kimberle Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics,” *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1 (1989): 149. Crenshaw says that the intersection of racism and sexism in a Black woman’s life is like traffic flowing through and intersection. “Consider an analogy to traffic in an intersection, coming and going in all four directions. Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them.”

28. Voddie T. Baucham Jr, *Fault Lines: The Social Justice Movement and Evangelicalism’s Looming Catastrophe* (Washington: Salem Books, 2021), 70.

and equity sound like good and noble causes to achieve. However, once we perceive the deeper meaning behind these words, we will understand that these are not concepts we can embrace.

Racism

The first term that needs to be defined is *racism*. The basic definition of racism that most people learned is summarized by Owen Strachan: “any unfavorable or hostile attitude harbored by an individual based on a person’s skin color.”²⁹ In this definition, racism is an individual attitude. It is determined by the thoughts, attitudes, and actions of a person or group toward someone of a different racial identity. While Kendi would agree with this definition in its broad sense, this is not the specific definition of racism he uses. Kendi’s definition of racism is based on the hierarchical power systems discussed previously. “Racism itself is institutional, structural, and systemic.”³⁰ Kendi and DiAngelo both argue that racism is built into the very “fabric”³¹ and “bedrock”³² of society. “I could see how we are taught to think about racism only as discrete acts committed by individual people, rather than as a complex, interconnected system.”³³

This means that every aspect of society has been tainted by racism. Everyone who lives and benefits from these structures is guilty of racism, whether they deliberately engage in racist

29. Strachan and MacArthur, *Christianity and Wokeness*, 212.

30. Kendi, *How to be an Antiracist*, 18.

31. Dr. Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, repr. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018), 22.

32. DiAngelo, *White Fragility*, 129.

33. DiAngelo, *White Fragility*, 3.

actions or not. Accusing someone of being a racist is a serious accusation, but Kendi and DiAngelo accuse everyone in society who is not part of an oppressed class of being guilty of racism. Merely living in and benefiting from a society built on a racist foundation is enough to be guilty of racism. “Hence, America has sinned, and *certain* Americans have inherited that sin whether they know it or not.”³⁴

Are Kendi and DiAngelo correct in their assessment that structural racism is real?

Absolutely, we see clear examples where the American system has been stacked against certain racial groups. People have not been treated fairly, and grave injustices have occurred.

Is there anything true or helpful about this new definition? Yes. Racism is not just something that individuals express. It can’t be reduced to using the n-word, harboring personal animus or fear toward people who are different, or believing that skin tone makes some people superior over others. As Nazism, apartheid, American slavery, and segregation have taught us, the sin of racism can be supersized to monstrous proportions through powerful systems of oppression. Systems can take racial prejudice to diabolical depths, and the redefinition is correct to draw our attention to that fact so the church can take a more broad-shouldered stand against racial sin.³⁵

However, this does not mean that the entire American system is broken and needs to be torn down, and it certainly does not mean that the entire institution of the church needs to be destroyed. Are there problems and issues in the system? Yes. However, limiting the issue of racism to purely structural problems neglects the deeper issue of sin and completely ignores the only solution to sin. “As followers of Christ, we reject the idea that the sin of racism is entirely structural. We believe it is a problem of the human heart—and therefore, its only solution is the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”³⁶

34. Baucham, *Fault Lines*, 84. Emphasis is the author’s own.

35. Williams and Perkins, *Confronting Injustice*, 181.

36. Baucham, *Fault Lines*, 210.

Equity and Equality

The Social Justice movement seeks to solve structural racism by establishing racial equity, often through political activism. “For the antiracist, the goal is equitable outcomes. A goal that, as we will see, is neither biblical, reasonable, nor achievable. In fact, at no time in the history of the world has the kind of equity Kendi seeks existed.”³⁷ Equity is different from equality. Equality is the idea that everyone is given an equal chance to succeed. On the other hand, equity assumes that equal outcomes are not possible unless certain advantages are given to different groups to level the playing field. Equity is often referred to as equality of outcome, whereas equality is referred to as equality of opportunity.

Equality of opportunity is the notion that all are provided an equal opportunity to achieve success, but that success is dependent on individual effort within that opportunity. Equality of outcome, however, is the demand that regardless of individual efforts, the outcome must be the same for all. Therefore, equality of opportunity is considered undesirable because it accommodates meritocracy and is seen as prohibitive and antithetical to equity. Equal opportunity, in this view, usually favors those who have an inherent social advantage.³⁸

Kendi illustrates the difference between equity and equality in a practical discussion about housing markets.

Here’s an example of racial inequity: 71% of White families lived in owner-occupied homes in 2014, compared to 45% of Latinx families and 41% of Black families. Racial equity is when two or more racial groups are standing on a relatively equal footing. An example of racial equity would be if there were relatively equitable percentages of all three racial groups living in owner-occupied homes in the forties, seventies, or better, nineties. A racist policy is any measure that produces or sustains racial inequity between

37. Baucham, *Fault Lines*, 86.

38. Woodford, “What does this mean? Responding to Social Justice and Critical Race Theory,” 13–14.

racial groups. An antiracist policy is any measure that produces or sustains racial equity between racial groups.³⁹

Kendi's solution to this problem is to enact policies promoting racial discrimination to give equitable outcomes to disadvantaged races. "If discrimination is creating equity, then it is antiracist.... The only remedy to racist discrimination is antiracist discrimination. The only remedy to past discrimination is present discrimination. The only remedy to present discrimination is future discrimination."⁴⁰ Kendi advocates and endorses race-based discrimination as long as it benefits an underprivileged group. This makes perfect sense when we remember that Kendi defines racism as structural. If practicing this form of discrimination helps dismantle the foundations of structural racism, then it is considered a moral good. This is a core definition of what it means to be an antiracist. We will explore additional ramifications of Kendi's definition of antiracism later in this paper and show how they are incompatible with a Christian understanding of justice and equality.

Kendi's proposed solutions can only lead to further racial division and strife. It rationalizes racial discrimination in the name of oppressed groups gaining an advantage over oppressors and pits racial groups against one another. Hurting others for personal advantage is viewed as a moral good if it rebalances the scales of justice in favor of historically oppressed people. "This is a curious, if not unsettling, assertion. Given humankind's fallen condition,

39. Kendi, *How to be an Antiracist*, 18. Kendi assumes that the difference in housing percentages is because of racist housing policies. It is true that there has been racial discrimination in housing markets, however he provides no evidence to support his claim. There could be numerous other factors at work to explain this discrepancy. Additionally, Kendi's solution would be either to give government provided housing to Latinx and Black families or limit White people's ability to purchase housing in order to create an equitable housing market.

40. Kendi, *How to be an Antiracist*, 19. I do not know if Kendi was deliberately alluding to George Wallace's 1963 speech, but I was stuck by the similarity to Wallace's, "I say segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever."

advocating for such blatant discrimination is only bound to create further unrest.”⁴¹ Consider all the evil that could be justified if it is done in the name of racial equity. This is one of the reasons that Kendi’s ideology is so dangerous. It reduces people to an identity group and strips them of their value as human beings.

Disagreement is Racist

Because structural racism is foundational to the Social Justice movement, any criticism of this view must be harshly condemned. A regular feature of authors in the Social Justice movement is to condemn as racist anyone who disagrees with their narrative. Any disagreement, especially disagreement from a group that is considered to be an oppressor, cannot be tolerated.

“Disagreement would allow dominant discourses to be reasserted, voiced, and heard, which Theory sees as not safe.”⁴² DiAngelo goes as far as to say that White people cannot have an informed opinion on racial matters. “How can I say that if you are white, your opinions on racism are most likely ignorant when I don’t even know you? I can say so because nothing in mainstream US culture gives us the information we need to have the nuanced understanding of arguably the most complex and enduring social dynamic of the last several hundred years.”⁴³

41. Woodford, “What does this mean? Responding to Social Justice and Critical Race Theory,” 14.

42. Lindsay and Pluckrose, *Cynical Theories*, 201.

43. DiAngelo, *White Fragility*, 8.

Tisby devotes an entire section of his introduction to justify why his book is correct and why any objections to his conclusions must be racist.⁴⁴ Several authors I reference in this paper, like Owen Strachan and Voddie Baucham, have been labeled as “alarmist and conspiratorial”⁴⁵ for their critiques of Social Justice and antiracism. This harsh rhetoric stifles debate and does not allow for the free flow of ideas necessary for a free and open society. “This is the marketplace of ideas, in which better ideas eventually win out, allowing society to advance.”⁴⁶ In a 2019 interview with English intellectual Sir Roger Scruton, Rod Dreher describes that danger to a society that refuses to allow for robust and public debate.

He (Scruton) explained that in the emerging soft totalitarianism, any thought or behavior that can be identified as excluding members of groups favored by the Left is subject to harsh condemnation. This “official doctrine” is not imposed from above by the regime but rather arises by the left-wing consensus from below, along with severe enforcement in the form of witch-hunting and scapegoating. “If you step out of line, especially if you’re in the area of opinion-forming as a journalist or an academic, then the aim is to prevent your voice from being heard,” said Scruton. “So, you’ll be thrown out of whatever teaching position you have or, like me recently, made the topic of a completely mendacious fabricated interview used to accuse you of all the thoughtcrimes.”⁴⁷

44. Jemar Tisby, *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church’s Complicity in Racism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 21–24.

45. Dennis Hiebert, “The Recurring Christian Debate about Social Justice: A Critical Theoretical Overview,” *Journal of Sociology and Christianity* 12 (Spring 2022): 62–63.

46. Lindsay and Pluckrose, *Cynical Theories*, 245.

47. Rod Dreher, *Live Not by Lies: A Manual for Christian Dissidents* (New York City: Sentinel, 2020), 56–57.

Lack of Hope

One of the reoccurring themes that struck me as I read Kendi and some other authors was the tone of hopelessness in their writing. “Hope, they argue, is a middle-class privilege and merely encourages complacency. Other scholars like Ta-Nehisi Coates, have likewise invited the death of hope, but nevertheless embrace ‘the beautiful struggle’ for its own sake, with no expectation of positive social change.”⁴⁸ Social Justice proponents view racism as endemic and structural; they see no hope of ever ending racism and bringing true equity to marginalized groups. “They proceed upon an assumption that racism is normal and permanent, and the problem is primarily that people—particularly white people—are failing to see, acknowledge, and address it.”⁴⁹ Kendi embraces this negative outlook. He sees only limited progress in the struggle toward antiracism and believes that the cancer of racism is quickly spreading.

“Racism is one of the fastest-spreading and most fatal cancers humanity has ever known. It is hard to find a place where its cancer cells are not dividing and multiplying. There is nothing I see in our world today, in our history, giving me hope that one day antiracists will win the fight, that one day the flag of antiracism will fly over a world of equity.”⁵⁰ Ta-Nehisi Coates writes his book as a letter to his son. In the last chapter, he describes how White people have continued to oppress Black Americans through systems of racism, “I do not believe we can stop them, Samori...the stage where they have painted themselves white is the deathbed of us all. The

48. Hiebert, “The Recurring Christian Debate about Social Justice,” 69.

49. Lindsay and Pluckrose, *Cynical Theories*, 132.

50. Kendi, *How to be an Antiracist*, 238.

Dream is the same habit that endangers the planet, the same habit that sees our bodies stowed away in prisons and ghettos.”⁵¹

This lack of hope can be toxic for the soul and lead to a warped view of spirituality. Miguel De La Torre is a strong proponent of Liberation Theology, which will be discussed later in this paper. He argues that racism is a constant and ongoing reality, and the only way to address it is to become radically hopeless. “*The first step toward liberation requires the crucifixion of hope*—for as long as hope exists, the world’s wretched have something to lose, and thus will not risk all to change the social structures.”⁵² Hopelessness becomes a virtue to be embraced because it motivates oppressed groups to pursue extreme measures to eradicate the pervasive cancer of racism. Racism achieves an “omnipresent, eternal, and mythological status, like sin or depravity.”⁵³

A Christian Response to Hopelessness

Christianity offers a real and permanent solution to this lack of hope. God’s Word offers people the hope of the gospel and the glory of eternal life in the presence of our God. Offering this kind of hope does not seek to downplay or ignore the horrible things done for racist reasons. Nor does Christianity claim to have a “magic bullet” that will cure the world of racism.

We understand that racism is a terrible sin, but like all sin, it will not go away until this world ends. Racism has not vanished. It is not possible to end racism in human terms; only Christ will end the reign of sin in the age to come. A society that opposes racism is

51. Coates, *Between the World and Me*, 151.

52. Miguel De La Torre, *Embracing Hopelessness* (Fortress Press, 2017), 5, Kindle. Emphasis is the author’s own.

53. Lindsay and Pluckrose, *Cynical Theories*, 133.

achievable; a society that ends all racism is utopian fiction. Racism is one form of human partiality, a sinful condition of a fallen heart. Until Christ makes the earth right, people of every background will suffer from partiality, and some will experience real prejudice for the color of their skin and the heritage of their family.⁵⁴

Christians offer real hope through the forgiveness of all sins, including the sin of racism, which was won for us by the death of Jesus Christ. “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death” (Rom 8:1–2 NIV84). Our faith and trust in Christ unite us in a way that is unique in this world. As Christians, we are free from the divisions of race, class, and ethnicity and are joined together in the unity of faith found in Christ alone. “Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all (Col 3:11).

Our identity in Christ and our unity in the fellowship of believers gives us strength and encouragement to bear up under suffering in this life. We understand that God has a plan for everything that happens in our lives, even if we do not understand what that plan is. God promises to never leave or forsake us during our times of trouble (Isa 41:10, 2 Cor 12:9–10). These sufferings include being the object of racial oppression or facing unjust accusations of being a racist. The Apostle Paul encourages us not to be troubled and discouraged by the suffering and hardship of this life because it pales in comparison to the glory that is ours in Christ. “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us” (Rom 8:18).

54. Strachan and MacArthur, *Christianity and Wokeness*, 187.

Finally, we know with absolute certainty that all racial divisions and hatreds are part of this fallen world. Like all the terrible consequences of sin, these divisions will be destroyed when Christ comes again on the last day. God gives us a beautiful description of the joy of heaven, where we will no longer judge one another based on the color of our skin but will rejoice in unity as we stand in the awesome presence of our God and sing his glorious praises as one united human race majestic in all our diversity.

After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb" (Rev 7:9–10).

PART ONE: WHERE CHRISTIANS CAN FIND AGREEMENT WITH KENDI

Most secular philosophical systems and ideologies have ideas and present solutions to problems that the Christian church can use. However, we must be extremely cautious in using anything that is not based on the truths of Scripture. We must be judicious in our use of these systems to ensure that we are not introducing concepts and ideas that could undermine our faith or the faith of other believers. We also need to be careful that we are not presenting ourselves as agreeing with a philosophy that is inherently opposed to God's Word. The next section of this thesis will address several areas of Kendi's antiracist philosophy that Christians can agree with.

Biological Differences Between the Races do not Exist

One of the most enduring and pernicious lies of racism is the belief that there are fundamental biological differences between the various races. These are more than superficial traits like skin color, hair type, or eye shape. Biological racists try to explain behavioral characteristics and intelligence on the basis of race. Kendi defines a biological racist as "one who is expressing the idea that the races are meaningfully different in their biology and that these differences create a hierarchy of value."⁵⁵ The concept of biological racism has its origins in Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. Biological racists believe that various people groups evolved different biological

55. Kendi, *How to be an Antiracist*, 44.

traits to survive in different geographic areas. Regardless of evolution's unbiblical nature, genetic data simply does not back up this assumption.⁵⁶ As Kendi states, these superficial “racial” differences were used to create a system of racial hierarchy.

Biological racial difference is one of those widely held racist beliefs that few people realize they hold—nor do they realize that those beliefs are rooted in racist ideas. I grew up hearing about how Black people had “more natural physical ability,” as half of respondents replied in a 1991 survey. How “Black blood” differed from “White blood.” How “one drop of Negro blood makes a Negro” and “puts out the light of intellect,” as wrote Thomas Dixon in *The Leopard's Spots* (1902).⁵⁷

Racial hierarchy was then used as moral justification for the horrible atrocities committed against Africans, Asians, Native Americans, and other “racial” groups. Black people, in particular, were viewed as racially inferior to white Europeans. As described earlier in this paper, Henry the Navigator, and others, used this supposed inferiority to justify the enslavement of Africans. This racism was used as an excuse to defend indignity and atrocity against people with darker skin tones. “The beneficiaries of slavery, segregation, and mass incarceration have produced racist ideas of Black people being best suited for or deserving of the confines of slavery, segregation, or the jail cell. Consumers of these racist ideas have been led to believe there is something wrong with Black people, and not the policies that have enslaved, oppressed, and confined so many Black people.”⁵⁸ This racist view is not confined to the horrors of the past; it has continued into our modern society with the mistaken and prejudiced belief that Black

56. Ken Ham and A. Charles Ware, *One Race One Blood: The Biblical Answer to Racism*, rev. ed. (Green Forest: Master Books, 2019), 100. Ken Ham cites a study that shows that in general there is only a 0.2 percent genetic difference between any two people. So called “racial” difference account for only 6 percent of the 0.2 percent leading to a conclusion that “racial” difference only account for a 0.012 percent difference between any two people. These statistics show that there are not different racial groups of people, but only one human race.

57. Kendi, *How to be an Antiracist*, 49. Kendi cites a doctor in a 1903 issue of *Medicine* who is far more graphic in his description of supposed biological differences between the races and how they influence behavior.

58. Kendi, *Stamped*, 10.

people are inherently more dangerous or prone to committing violent crimes.⁵⁹ This has led to an unwarranted fear of Black people and has been used to justify violence, often at the hands of White police officers.⁶⁰ Ta-Nehisi Coates graphically describes the terrible violence caused by racism. “Racism is a visceral experience, that it dislodges brains, blocks airways, rips muscle, extracts organs, cracks bones, breaks teeth.”⁶¹

Biological Antiracism

Kendi defines a biological antiracist as “one who is expressing the idea that the races are meaningfully the same in their biology and there are no real genetic racial differences.”⁶² Christians can wholeheartedly agree with this statement because it is what Scripture clearly teaches. There is only one human race; “we are of one blood.”⁶³ All people are descended from Adam and Eve, whom God created in his image. “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’ So, God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Gen 1:26–27). Paul also testifies that all nations of men are descended from one man.

59. Kendi, *How to be an Antiracist*, 79–80.

60. It is beyond the scope of this paper to argue the veracity of claims that White police officers use greater force against Black individuals. There is conflicting statistical data on this issue. The truth remains that many Black people are concerned about the use of force by police officers against them. This is a legitimate fear that cannot simply be dismissed.

61. Coates, *Between the World and Me*, 10.

62. Kendi, *How to be an Antiracist*, 44.

63. Ham and Ware, *One Race One Blood*, 103.

“From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live” (Acts 17:26).

This also means that all races of men are equally capable of sin. “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way, death came to all men, because all sinned” (Rom 5:12). There is no one group that is more prone to violence and depravity than another group. Sin is not a racial issue but a problem that affects all of humanity. We agree with Kendi and reject the racist notion that biology influences sinful behavior.

That is what it truly means to think as an antiracist: to think there is nothing wrong with Black people, to think that racial groups are equal. There are lazy and unwise and harmful individuals of African ancestry. There are lazy and unwise and harmful individuals of European ancestry. There are industrious and wise and harmless individuals of European ancestry. There are industrious and wise and harmless individuals of African ancestry. But no racial group has ever had a monopoly on any type of human trait or gene—not now, not ever. Under our different-looking hair and skin, doctors cannot tell the difference between our bodies, our brains, or the blood that runs in our veins. All cultures, in all their behavioral differences, are on the same level.⁶⁴

The Issue of Race Cannot be Ignored

There is no biological basis for the concept of different races. However, there are distinct ethnic groups worldwide with different cultural beliefs and norms. We also must admit that the concept of differences based on the idea of “race” cannot be ignored. The tension that exists between White people and Black people is very real and very divisive. “What a powerful construction race is—powerful enough to consume, and it comes for us early. But for all of that life-shaping power, race is a mirage, which doesn’t lessen its force.... What people see in themselves and

64. Kendi, *Stamped*, 11.

others has meaning and manifests itself in ideas and actions, and policies, even if what they are seeing is an illusion.”⁶⁵

The concept of racial differences has had a profound impact on American culture. It has shaped policy and profoundly affected the lives of Black Americans. We agree with Kendi that racial differences are a mirage, but they are a mirage that cannot be ignored or wished away. We cannot blind ourselves to the fact that many people make snap judgments based solely on another person’s skin color. This racist attitude has led to racist policies in our country. We cannot simply dismiss that out of hand. Many Black people live with the conscious awareness that they are being judged because of the color of their skin. After the death of George Floyd in 2020, Jacob Frye, the mayor of Minneapolis, said at the time, “Being black in America should not be a death sentence.”⁶⁶

An argument could be made over the truth of this statement. That is not the point; the point is that many Black people live in genuine fear that they will be judged more harshly or even killed simply because they are Black. Voddie Baucham describes how this fear impacted the life of a Black woman who was pulled over during a routine traffic stop in a small rural town in Virginia in 2018.

The fear, as in the case of this woman who was being pulled over for speeding on a rural highway, is real. When the officer responded firmly to Hilton-William’s refusal to sign her ticket, I believe she really was afraid. She really did think about police shootings that had taken place over the previous years. She also thought about countless stories she had heard about police racism and brutality. But what she *thought* wasn’t based on reality.⁶⁷

65. Kendi, *How to be an Antiracist*, 37.

66. Baucham, *Fault Lines*, 53.

67. Baucham, *Fault Lines*, 110. Emphasis is the author’s own.

We must avoid the temptation to dismiss such fears as irrational or absurd. This fear comes from a very real place. Many Black Americans have lived under decades of oppression.⁶⁸ They have faced hatred, scorn, and ridicule. They have been unjustly judged, convicted, and murdered because of racial animosity. America has a history of structural racism, and Black people have not been given an equal chance for success. These are deep and lingering wounds on the Black psyche that will take generations to heal. Christians will show empathy and support to our brothers and sisters who have been treated so cruelly by others. We need to understand the mindset of fear that births thoughts like, “How are we going to survive in a world which deems black humanity an illegitimate form of human existence?”⁶⁹

As Christians, we strive to eliminate division and embrace our unity in Christ. We want to be able to look past issues of race, but we cannot simply ignore them. In his thesis on “Race and the Lutheran Pastor,” Scott Henrich illustrates some challenges of serving in a multi-racial congregation. He advises pastors and other leaders not to ignore the issues of race but acknowledge and deal with them.

The desire for color-blindness is undoubtedly a pious wish—Christian pastors and members know that God does not judge based on color, and they strive to emulate him in their interactions with each other—but a pious wish is still a wish if it does not correspond to reality. Even in the relationship between church members and their pastor, race matters. For instance, race serves as an amplifier of already difficult situations. Even

68. This is an important distinction to make. CRT advocates claim that all Black people are victims of racial oppression, but there are many Black people who have not faced oppression in their daily lives. They may face instances of racism, but they do not view themselves as victims of a system that is structured against them. There can be no denying the history of racial oppression in American society, however there is room to debate what the daily ramifications are for individual Black Americans. CRT argues that there is a monolithic structure of oppression that affects the lives of all minorities, but there are many who do not see this oppression in their lives.

69. James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, 2nd ed. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1986), 11.

the possibility of racial overtones is enough to complicate instruction or criticism in the church.⁷⁰

There are going to be racial tensions in any multi-racial congregation. This is an unavoidable reality of sin. Pastors cannot let this racial animosity fester or simply sweep it under the rug. Instead, the sin of racism must be confronted directly and called out wherever it rears its ugly head.

Racism is Sin

It should be obvious that racism is a sin. However, as this paper has shown, racism has not been viewed as a sin and has been defended by both secular society and the church. Kendi is right in his assessment that racism is a cancer⁷¹ in our society. Racism is a sin against our fellow man because it denies that a person of another race has been created by our Almighty God. Racism is an attempt to dehumanize another person and view them as inferior. A racist can ignore the command of God to love their neighbor because they do not believe that a person of another race is really a person in the same way they are. “Racism, therefore, is not merely horizontally unjust, depriving other creatures what they are due; it is also vertically unjust, failing to give the Creator his due by making race an ultimate object of devotion. Why is racism evil? If we leave God out of our answer to that question, we will fail to grasp the true diabolical depths of racism and find ourselves boxing ghosts of the real problem.”⁷²

70. Scott Henrich, “Race and the Lutheran Pastor,” (MDiv thesis, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 2018), *WLS Essay File*, <http://essays.wisluthsem.org:8080/handle/123456789/4366>, 21.

71. Kendi, *How to be an Antiracist*, 234.

72. Williams and Perkins, *Confronting Injustice*, 18.

Racism is a slanderous sin because it ascribes sinful motives and behaviors to someone based entirely on an external characteristic, skin tone. From a purely rational perspective, think about how absurd this notion is. We have determined that there are no significant biological differences between races; therefore, there cannot be behavioral differences. People are people regardless of skin tone. When we judge someone solely by the color of their skin, we are slandering them. We are judging them entirely self-righteously and violating Christ’s command against judging others. “Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way, you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you” (Matt 7:1–2).

So, I say again: *slavery, racism, and sexism are inexcusable, and anyone who has participated in such sins should repent and run as fast as possible to the cross of Jesus.* Yet we must say with equal clarity that telling lopsided stories to paint a damnable picture of entire people groups—whether that group happens to be black, brown, white, male, female, or whatever—is also a sin we must take to the cross. In biblical terms, it is a form of bearing false witness, a form of slander, a form of not loving our neighbors. And it devalues the God whose image our neighbors bear.⁷³

In 1 Samuel 16, God tells us, “The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.” While we cannot judge another person’s heart, we should still use this principle as a guide. We should not base our judgments of others based solely on their appearance. This is especially true when it comes to matters of race. Christians dare not base their judgment of an entire group of people based on their appearance or other external factors. Instead, we should seek to understand them through their words and actions. This was the vision that Martin Luther King Jr. had in his famous “I

73. Williams and Perkins, *Confronting Injustice*, 56. Emphasis is the authors’ own. Williams uses a broader definition of “being created in God’s image” than Lutherans do. He makes the point that all people regardless of race have been created by God. Racism is a denial of this fundamental truth.

have a dream” speech in 1963. “I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.”⁷⁴ Our country has made some progress toward King’s dream, but a great deal of work still needs to be done. Some of the work begins with our own confessions of racism.

If we are honest with ourselves, we must admit that there have been times we have allowed racist thoughts to dominate our thinking. We have made snap judgments about others based only on the color of their skin and have failed to “take their words and actions in the kindest possible way.”⁷⁵ Like all sins, we need to drown our sins of racism through daily confession and absolution. “A pastor who refuses to speak about race and racism robs his members of the opportunity to repent of race-related sin.”⁷⁶ Pastors should be encouraged to address the sin of racism boldly and confidently from the pulpit and call on their people to repent. “We can unleash the Sword and let the Spirit cut away. That enables us to say the most challenging things from our pulpits without apology. The same authority lets us speak tenderly without compromising strength.”⁷⁷

74. Martin Luther King Jr., “I have a dream,” in *A Documentary History of Religion in America Since 1865*, 2nd ed., ed. Edwin S. Gaustad (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 497.

75. Dr. Martin Luther, *Luther’s Catechism: New International Version Martin*, ed. Stephen Geiger (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 2017), 3.

76. Henrich, “Race and the Lutheran Pastor,” 32.

77. Phillip Sievert, “A Paradigm for 21st Century Lutheran Preachers” (paper, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, WI, September 22–23, 2014), 7.

The Church's Historical Failure to Condemn Racism

Another area we can find agreement with Kendi is an acknowledgment that the church has participated in structural racism. In the years leading up to the Civil War, some Christian churches supported the abolitionist movement and tried to eradicate the blight of slavery. Unfortunately, other churches supported slavery and perverted God's Word to continue this evil. The abolitionist leader Frederick Douglas lamented the role many churches had in supporting and condoning the institution of slavery. "What have we in America? Why we have slavery made part of the religion of the land. Yes, the pulpit stands up as the great defender of this cursed institution, as it is called. Ministers of religion come forward and torture the hallowed pages of inspired wisdom to sanction the bloody deed."⁷⁸

The church continued the lie of biological differences in race by pointing to the "Curse of Ham" in Genesis 9 as a justification for the continuation of slavery. "There was one enslavement theory focused on Black people already circulating, a theory somehow derived from Genesis 9:18–29, which said 'that Negroes were the children of Ham, the son of Noah, and they were singled out to be black as the result of Noah's curse, which produced Ham's color and the slavery God inflicted upon his descendants.'"⁷⁹ There are many things wrong with this view. The church cannot hide from its racist past and needs to acknowledge how it failed to adequately address the sin of racism. "The evils of the American past and the Church's complicity in racism should not only sadden us but anger us. This is true when we read about sin of any kind and

78. Frederick Douglas, "The Frederick Douglas Papers," in *A Documentary History of Religion in America to the Civil War*, ed. Edwin S. Gaustad (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 474.

79. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning*, 21. Kendi is referencing the work *The Muqaddimah* written by the Islamic historian Ibn Khaldun in 1377. Kendi also states that the Persian scholar Tabari (838–923) also referenced the "Curse of Ham."

genuine injustices done to any people. It is right, and our conscience is only functioning when we feel real passion and grit our teeth in pain over evil-doing. This is how a Christian conscience, rightly working, operates.”⁸⁰ Confession and repentance do not mean Christians should be held perpetually guilty for the sins of the past. That is not how forgiveness works. Many Christians have acknowledged the church’s role in perpetuating racism and repented. They have helped achieve significant societal gains for Black Americans.

This cannot be discounted; however, the reality of our past needs to be acknowledged. We need to understand and show empathy towards those who view the church with suspicion. The church has contributed to racial injustice in this country. Many churches either supported the institution of slavery or failed to condemn it. This stigma lingers in the minds of some Black Americans who view the institution of the church as a bastion of White oppression. By confessing the sins of the church, we can begin to restore trust, but only the power of the Gospel will heal their wounds.

80. Strachan and MacArthur, *Christianity and Wokeness*, 48.

PART TWO: WHERE A CHRISTIAN MUST DISAGREE WITH KENDI

This paper has demonstrated several areas in which Christians can find agreement with Kendi's philosophy. The next section of this paper will illustrate how some of Kendi's beliefs are not compatible with the clear teaching of Scripture. After carefully considering the writings of Kendi, DiAngelo, and others, I do not believe that the church can use terms that are directly linked to their ideology. Terms like *antiracism*, *inclusivity*, and *equity* carry a great deal of baggage that must be clearly refuted and rejected before they are adopted by the church. Even then, these terms would need to be adequately explained so that we do not give the impression that we agree with the unscriptural teachings associated with them. For example, the way Kendi defines antiracism fosters division and hatred, despite sounding good and noble. These things have no place in any Christian church and go against the unity of faith we have in Christ. Inclusivity cannot be separated from its demand that all lifestyles, especially homosexual and transexual, be encouraged and celebrated by the church in contradiction to God's established order for human sexuality.

The Dividing Wall of Racial Tension

Is racial discrimination acceptable in any situation? I would argue that it is sinful to discriminate against anyone on the basis of their race for reasons stated earlier in this paper. Kendi argues that

it is perfectly acceptable, in fact, it is antiracist, to discriminate against someone based on their race if that discrimination is creating equity.

If racial discrimination is defined as treating, considering, or making a distinction in favor or against an individual based on that person's race, then racial discrimination is not inherently racist. The defining question is whether the discrimination is creating equity or inequity. If discrimination is creating equity, then it is antiracist. If discrimination is creating inequity, then it is racist.... The only remedy to racist discrimination is antiracist discrimination. The only remedy to past discrimination is present discrimination. The only remedy to present discrimination is future discrimination.⁸¹

This view of equitable discrimination is the foundation of Social Justice and Kendi's vision of an antiracist society. Because racism is structural and based on systems of power, this discrimination is designed to give power to groups who have not historically had power in society. Practically speaking, this means taking power and status away from White people and giving it to Black people and other minorities.

Just as Christians cannot and do not conceive of anything in their worldview apart from the reality that there is a God who created the world, the cult of antiracism roots every aspect of its worldview in the assertion that everything begins with the creation of whiteness. More specifically, the creation of whiteness with the express purpose of establishing white people as the dominant, hegemonic oppressors of all non-white people as the objects of that oppression. This is the *sine qua non* of the antiracist metanarrative.⁸²

The Problem of Whiteness

The problem of whiteness is a central theme of many writers in the Social Justice sphere. White people are viewed as having a historical advantage of power and position over minority groups.

This view is based on the concept of structural racism that was discussed earlier in this paper.

81. Kendi, *How to be an Antiracist*, 19.

82. Baucham, *Fault Lines*, 70.

Peggy McIntosh first described and defined “white privilege” in her groundbreaking essay, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack.”⁸³ “I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was ‘meant’ to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions.”⁸⁴

Robin DiAngelo bases her entire book *White Fragility* on the concept that White people have unfair advantages over all other racial groups and need to repent and atone for this status. White people are guilty of being racist and utilizing racist power structures simply by being White. The utilization of White privilege by all White people “has given them a big leg up in life while crushing others’ dreams.”⁸⁵ Miguel De La Torre goes even further and accuses all White people of deliberately committing the evil act of racial discrimination. “To occupy white bodies is to be complicit with the oppressive, racist social structures; regardless of how that white body feels about people of color.”⁸⁶ These accusations of racist attitudes trigger strong emotions in White people who see themselves as racially tolerant and may even see themselves as antiracist

83. McIntosh wrote this essay in 1988 and is considered to have coined the term “white privilege.” Many subsequent works by other authors are based off the concepts she developed in this essay. It is considered one of the founding documents of the Social Justice and antiracist movements.

84. Peggy McIntosh, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack,” in *White Privilege: essential readings on the other side of racism*, 2nd ed., ed. Paula S. Rothenberg (New York: Worth Publishers, 2005), 109.

85. DiAngelo, *White Fragility*, xii. The entire premise of DiAngelo’s book is that White people are guilty of being racist simply by being White. As a White person she views it as her mission to help White people see their implicit and explicit racism. Much of her book is devoted to White people overcoming their shock at being labeled a racist. DiAngelo is one who argues for the structural definition of racism. She believes that White people should give up their privilege to help facilitate cultural healing and achieve equity for Black people.

86. De La Torre, *Embracing Hopelessness*, 105.

advocates. Robin DiAngelo believes this is not enough to make up for a lifetime of White privilege, and any opposition to being labeled racist is a byproduct of that privilege.

We consider a challenge to our racial worldviews as a challenge to our very identities as good, moral people. Thus, we perceive any attempt to connect us to the system of racism as an unsettling and unfair moral offense. The smallest amount of racial stress is intolerable—the mere suggestion that being white has meaning often triggers a range of defensive responses. These include emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and withdrawal from the stress-inducing situation.⁸⁷

Being White: The Unforgivable Sin

There can be no argument that racism is a sin. The proponents of Social Justice argue that simply being a member of the “White race” is, by definition, a racist act. Therefore, we must logically conclude from the argument of Kendi and DiAngelo that it is a sin to be White. This means that a person can be guilty of committing the sin of racism based on the purely physical characteristic of skin tone. This view contradicts what Scripture teaches about sin. Sin is not based on skin color or tone but is a condition endemic to all people. While it may be true that many White people benefit from societal decisions of the past, it is a gross overstatement to claim that all White people are deliberately guilty of racism. It is wrong, and I would argue racist, to say that individuals are guilty of sin based on the sole criterion of their skin tone.

The sins of “white supremacy,” ethnocentrism, and “racism” should be repented of. There are indeed people who commit these sins; all of us stumble in many ways. But to convict all “white” people of such wrongdoing is wrong and unbiblical. Doing so is nothing less than the sin of bearing false witness or false accusation against another image-bearer (Exod 20:16; Matt 15:19). The CRT diagnosis is a radical reframing of man’s chief problem. It changes our fundamental condition from one of individually

87. DiAngelo, *White Fragility*, 2.

willed sin to one of inherently racist “whiteness,” which makes horizontal transgression against men of greater import than vertical transgression against God.⁸⁸

The Individual Nature of Guilt

The Bible teaches that we are guilty and accountable for the sins we commit; we are not accountable for the sins of others.⁸⁹ In Ezekiel, God teaches us that sons are not guilty for the sins of their fathers. Each person is guilty and will be held accountable for their own sin.

Yet you ask, “Why does the son not share the guilt of his father?” Since the son has done what is just and right and has been careful to keep all my decrees, he will surely live. The soul who sins is the one who will die. The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him (Ezek 18:19–20).

The antiracist belief that all White people are accountable for the sins of our ancestors because we are White violates the biblical concept of individual sin. It also implies that one racial group is guilty of more sin than another racial group. This undermines what Scripture teaches about the universal nature of human sinfulness. All people, regardless of race, sex, gender, or any other descriptor, are equally guilty before God. “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). “What if we soaked into our bones the unflattering truth of our tragic group identity in Adam’s fall? We would see that gut-wrenching malevolence can’t be reduced to a color, a

88. Strachan and MacArthur, *Christianity and Wokeness*, 62.

89. I am not saying this in the sense that we cannot tempt others or lead others into sin by our actions. I am saying that the Bible does not teach that we are held guilty in the eyes of God for the sins of others. There is a concept of collective guilt in the Bible, but we see it more in the context of Israel’s violation of God’s covenant with his people, or with gross societal sins like open idolatry or sexual immorality. Again, these instances are different than being held personally guilty for a deliberate act of evil, like racism, committed by another individual or by our ancestors.

gender, or an economic problem. It is a *human* problem.”⁹⁰ Sin is not a matter of collective guilt but of individual guilt. As Christians, we cannot agree with the antiracist viewpoint of collective sin based on the immutable characteristic of melanin content.

WE DENY that other than the previously stated connection to Adam, any person is morally culpable for another person’s sin. Although families, groups, and nations can sin collectively, and cultures can be predisposed to particular sins, subsequent generations share the collective guilt of their ancestors only if they approve and embrace (or attempt to justify) those sins. Before God each person must repent and confess his or her own sins in order to receive forgiveness. We further deny that one’s ethnicity establishes any necessary connection to any particular sin.⁹¹

Whiteness Cannot be Forgiven, Only Atoned For

According to the tenets of antiracism, a person who participates in and benefits from White privilege is guilty of racism. A person participates in White privilege simply by existing as a White person. This means that a White Christian lives in perpetual sin that can never be fully repented, forgiven, or atoned for. A White Christian must live in perpetual contrition and repentance for their very existence as a White person. “The consequences of this view, especially when Christianized, could not be more momentous. In wokeness, we can be saved, be justified by faith in Christ, and yet still be guilty of our ‘white complicity’ in ‘white supremacy.’”⁹²

90. Williams and Perkins, *Confronting Injustice*, 45. Emphasis is the authors’ own.

91. Baucham, *Fault Lines*, 238. This comes from “The Dallas Statement on Social Justice and the Gospel” which Baucham adds in an appendix at the end of his book. The “Dallas Statement” was written by Voddie Baucham, John MacArthur, and a number of other Southern Baptist Convention leaders who were concerned by the impact of the Social Justice Movement on their church body. The “Dallas Statement” is a collection of statements affirming the teaching of the church and condemning the beliefs of Social Justice. The full document can be found at <https://statementonsocialjustice.com>. As of November 2022, there are 17,346 signers.

92. Strachan and MacArthur, *Christianity and Wokeness*, 80.

Antiracism undermines the message of the Gospel and gives the impression that there are some sins that Christ did not fully atone for through his death on the cross. “The gospel of Jesus will always be subordinated to the gospel of CRT. Can Jesus forgive you of your white privilege? No, because there is no grace and no forgiveness for it.”⁹³ This makes antiracism a religion that demands work righteousness to pay for the sin of racism and the sin of “Whiteness.”⁹⁴

As we saw earlier, the term “antiracist” is loaded. It has a very specific meaning—part of which includes the idea of works-based righteousness. White people are not called to look to God for forgiveness. They are not told that Christ’s blood is sufficient. No, they are told that they must do the unending work of antiracism. And this work must be done regardless of their own actions since the issue at hand is a matter of communal, generational guilt based on ethnicity.⁹⁵

Because Whiteness is literally skin-deep, it can never be removed or fully atoned for. It remains a perpetual sin and blemish. “Because of our skin color or failure to dismantle ‘whiteness,’ we have a condition to address (for we cannot repent and decisively put it behind us in woke ideology) that we did not know we had. Beyond this, we have a whole set of ‘antiracist’ actions to perform, even as they will never take away the stain on our soul.”⁹⁶ The unforgivable nature of Whiteness in the antiracist worldview contradicts the universality of Christ’s atonement. Jesus made full and complete payment for the sins of the entire world, including the “sin” of Whiteness. “For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to

93. Dreyer, “Antiracist, Anti-Christian.”

94. A number of the authors I read made comparisons between the ideology of Social Justice and religion. This is a concept that needs further study.

95. Baucham, *Fault Lines*, 129.

96. Strachan and MacArthur, *Christianity and Wokeness*, 86.

bring you to God” (1 Pet 3:18a), and “He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2).

Antiracism demands that White people must perform acts of penance to atone for their Whiteness while at the same time claiming that there can be no redemption for White people. This understanding of sin and forgiveness is biblically unsound. Scripture clearly teaches that our works do not earn us forgiveness or salvation. Good works do not pay for or make up for sins but are acts of service done out of love for our God. “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast” (Eph 2:8–9). “The Gospel announces forgiveness and resulting innocence; wokeness announces guilt and unending condemnation.”⁹⁷ This sets Kendi’s definition of antiracism at odds with the clear teaching of Scripture and can only lead to division and hostility in society and the church.

Division and Hostility

The structural view of racism that Kendi’s antiracist ideology uses as its foundation creates an antagonistic relationship between members of different racial groups. White people are viewed as oppressors who benefit from a system of unearned advantages, while Black people are viewed as victims of a system built on the foundations of slavery that is designed to keep them from succeeding. White people are offended and become defensive when accused of racism, and

97. Strachan and MacArthur, *Christianity and Wokeness*, 84.

Black people are dissatisfied by the lack of accountability and remorse that White people show.

This leads to a society where racial tensions and divisions are exacerbated.

The critical approach to Social Justice encourages tribalism and hostility by its aggressively divisive approach. Whereas the Civil Rights Movements worked so well because they used a universalist approach—everybody should have equal rights—that appealed to human institutions of fairness and empathy, Social Justice uses a simplistic identity politics approach which ascribes collective blame to dominant groups—white people are racist, men are sexist, and straight people are homophobic. This explicitly goes against the established liberal value of not judging people by their race, gender, or sexuality, and is incredibly naïve to expect it not to produce a counter-revival of old right-wing identity politics. Arguments that it is acceptable to be prejudiced against white people, men, straight, or cisgender people because of historical power imbalances do not work well with human institutions of reciprocity.⁹⁸

A racially divided society is not healthy, and an ideology that seeks to further racial division, valorize victimhood, and encourage antagonism between different racial groups is certainly not Christian. Antiracism, while sounding noble, actually seeks to enflame racial tensions. Antiracism promotes racially discriminatory policies against the dominant culture (White culture) to justify giving historically oppressed groups access to societal power structures in order to create a more equitable society.⁹⁹

This will, of course, create division and hostility. White people may feel targeted and attacked, while Black people may feel anger and frustration that racial justice is not occurring quickly enough. Antiracism encourages oppressed classes to feel anger, rage, and hatred toward the dominant group in an effort to enact change. In an essay called “Killing Rage,” Black feminist author bell hooks¹⁰⁰ expresses her rage at a white man sitting next to her on an airplane.

98. Lindsay and Pluckrose, *Cynical Theories*, 261.

99. Kendi, *How to be an Antiracist*, 19.

100. bell hooks is the pen name for Gloria Watkins. She deliberately uses all lower-case letters in her name to signify her unwillingness to conform to traditional standards including rules of grammar.

“It was these sequences of racialized incidents involving Black women that intensified my rage against the white man sitting next to me. I felt a ‘killing rage.’ I wanted to stab him softly, to shoot him with the gun I wished I had in my purse. And as I watched his pain, I would say to him tenderly, ‘racism hurts.’”¹⁰¹ This is the kind of rage and division that antiracism encourages by its insistence that all social interactions be viewed through the lens of racial hierarchies.

Any philosophy that promotes hatred and division has no place in the church. Thaddeus Williams discusses the need for the church to embrace the fruits of the Spirit instead of racial divisions and hatred. “Without the Spirit’s fruit, we fall into tribal default mode. That is why any approach to social justice that encourages suspicion and rage instead of the fruit of the Spirit has no place in Jesus’s church.”¹⁰² Paul warns the church in Ephesus about the danger of embracing rage and bitterness and giving it a home in the church. “Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you” (Eph 4:31–32). In his first letter to the Corinthian congregation, Paul reminds us that Christians are not to embrace division, but instead are to be “perfectly united in mind and thought” (1 Cor 1:10). Antiracism and Social Justice do not produce unity; they produce division, bitterness, hatred, and rage. The church must be cautious in its willingness to use anything that comes from such a philosophy. Hatred and

101. bell hooks, “Killing Rage: Militant Resistance,” *SJU Women and Gender Studies E-library* (September 2013), <https://sjugenderstudies.files.wordpress.com/2013/09/killingrage-bell-hooks.pdf>. In this essay hooks relates an incident when she and a colleague were traveling on an airline and her friend was forced to sit in coach due to a boarding pass error. A white man was given her friend’s first-class seat and hooks describes her towering rage and desire to kill this man for taking her friend’s seat. She expresses how she wished she could kill this man because he refused to stand up and defend the injustice done to her friend even though the man had nothing to do with the airline’s error.

102. Williams and Perkins, *Confronting Injustice*, 63.

division will not heal racial wounds. Only the purifying message of the Gospel and the love of our Savior can heal the wounds of sin and hatred.

The Unity of the Church

The church has a unique response to the ideology of antiracism. Instead of underlining the differences between racial groups, the Bible speaks of one human race united in condemnation under the law and united in salvation found through Christ alone. There is no difference between Black, White, Asian, Hispanic, or any other racial category that men can devise. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28).

Christian brothers and sisters—black, white, brown, rich, and poor— we are family. We are one blood. We are adopted by the same Father, saved by the same Son, filled with the same Spirit. In John 17, Jesus prays for everyone who would believe in him, that people from every tongue, tribe, and nation would be one. That oneness is how the world will know who Jesus is. If we give a foothold to any kind of tribalism that could tear down that unity, then we aren’t bringing God’s justice.¹⁰³

We are all united in sin and our need for our Savior. This is the unique message of hope that the church can offer in opposition to a message of hate and division. The church offers a message of equal unity in one body under the headship of Christ Jesus. This will be illustrated by a brief look at two chapters of Paul’s letters, where he shows that Christ has eliminated the dividing wall of racial difference and united all believers as one people in his church.

103. John M. Perkins, introduction to *Confronting Injustice without Compromising Truth*, by Thaddeus J. Williams, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2020), xv.

Romans 3: United in our need for a Savior

Paul elaborates on the concept of our unity in Christ in Romans. Paul reminds us that both Jew and Gentile are alike and under the curse of the law (Rom 3:9–12, 20). The perceived racial, ethnic, and cultural divide between Jews and Gentiles made no difference in the eyes of God. All people stand condemned by their sinful actions. God provided a solution to all races by sending Christ to suffer for the sins of the entire world. “For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law. Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too” (Rom 3:28–29). If this principle was true of Jews and Gentiles, how much more true is this for Black and White people? The difference between these two groups is far less than the differences between Jews and Gentiles. We can stand with our brothers and sisters of all races, united in the saving grace of our Savior.

Ephesians 2: United as one people in Christ

After expressing the beautiful truth that we are saved by grace alone and not by our works, Paul explains the unity we have in Christ. Paul acknowledges the very real division that existed between the Jews and the Gentiles in the early church. The Jews were God’s chosen people who lived in a covenant relationship with God under the requirements of the law. The Gentiles were excluded from that covenant relationship with God. “Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world” (Eph 2:12). By his sacrificial death, Christ fulfilled all the requirements of the law and brought the benefits of God’s covenant to all people. Christ nullified the division that existed between Jews and Gentiles. In the eyes of God, there

was no longer any distinction between the two groups. They were now one, united by the death of Christ. “His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility” (Eph 2:15b–16).

Paul addresses the lingering hostility that existed between the two very different groups and says that the barrier that once divided them has been completely abolished and destroyed by Christ. “For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace” (Eph 2:14–15). There can be no hostility and division between those Christ has united in his flesh. More than that, God no longer saw division but instead saw one united people who were fellow citizens and members of his household (Eph 2:19).

This is a powerful statement of the unity that Christians enjoy in Christ. Our identity should not be found in the color of our skin, the way we vote, our culture, or anything else that the world would use to divide us. We are united in Christ. This message is antithetical to the foundational beliefs of antiracism and Social Justice. Christians seek to build relationships of love and unity within the church and the world. “In the blood of Christ, hostility and division die.”¹⁰⁴ Christians find their identity in Christ alone. Every aspect of our lives (emotions,

104. Strachan and MacArthur, *Christianity and Wokeness*, 96.

behaviors, thinking, vocations, desire, and even *racial identity*) is subsumed by the ultimate reality that our identity is found in Christ and what he has done for us.¹⁰⁵

The Problem of Antiracist Intersectionality

This paper has demonstrated that Kendi’s antiracist philosophy must be rejected because it undermines the church's unity and encourages racial tensions and divisions. Antiracism is also incompatible with Christianity because it advocates for and demands acceptance of all aspects of the LGBTQ+ movement. Kendi argues that accepting the LGBTQ+ movement is critical to his antiracist solution. “Queer antiracism is equating all the race-sexualities, striving to eliminate the inequities between the race-sexualities. We cannot be antiracist if we are homophobic or transphobic.”¹⁰⁶

Kendi advocates for more than just an acceptance of these alternative lifestyles; an antiracist must be “an ally of transgender people”¹⁰⁷ and fight against “religious freedom laws”¹⁰⁸ that seek to preserve the rights of churches not to employ or marry transexual or homosexual couples. LGBTQ+ issues are vital to an antiracist worldview because they are part

105. John Schuetze, *Doctor of Souls: The Art of Pastoral Theology* (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 2017), 286–87. This statement is paraphrased from the section and diagram that Schuetze has discussing our identity in Christ.

106. Kendi, *How to be an Antiracist*, 197.

107. Kendi, *How to be an Antiracist*, 197.

108. Kendi, *How to be an Antiracist*, 197.

of intersectionality.¹⁰⁹ All of these discriminations must be alleviated in an antiracist society. This means getting rid of racism and sexism. A Christian will agree with this position; however, antiracism also demands acceptance and active advocacy for all LGBTQ+ lifestyles. Christians cannot agree with advocating for LGBTQ+ lifestyles because they violate the natural order of God’s creation. “The intersectional worldview denies that there is such a thing as a created order. Claiming what Scripture teaches—that God has made every person either a man or woman for His glory and our joy—is seen as oppressive cisgender heteronormativity that does violence to sexual minorities and the genderqueer.”¹¹⁰

This is an area of antiracism that Christianity must reject, but it is also an area that is a core belief of the antiracist movement. People who embrace the Social Justice worldview will demand that individual Christians and the church, in general, must embrace the LGBTQ+ movement. River Cook Needham describes how this view fits into the context of biblical theology. “Embodied theology that takes seriously God’s preferential option for the oppressed must engage with transgender liberation and size liberation to engage the fullness of embodied realities in the world. The intersectional analysis looks at both of these theological lenses and notices that they are lacking.”¹¹¹

109. Intersectionality is the belief that a member of an oppressed class can be subject to numerous forms of oppression. A Black lesbian woman faces oppression for being Black, female, and a lesbian where a Black man would only face oppression because of his race. Intersectionality was first defined by Kimberle Crenshaw in her essay “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics,” *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1 (1989).

110. Strachan and MacArthur, *Christianity and Wokeness*, 73.

111. River Cook Needham, “Toward a More Embodied Liberation: Theologically Integrating Racial Justice, Size Liberation, and Transgender Liberation,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 48:3 (2021): 30, <https://currentsjournal.org/index.php/currents/article/view/316>. This article is a good illustration of an attempt to harmonize God’s Word with Social Justice ideology. It argues that the goal of Christianity is to liberate all oppressed classes.

Anyone who rejects the LGBTQ+ movement or points out the sinfulness of such lifestyles is automatically labeled as a hateful and bigoted person. It is tempting for churches to sacrifice the truth of God's Word in order to be socially accepted. This is precisely why the church must oppose the tenets of antiracism that violate the clear teaching of God's Word. "What if God's Word clearly said something that was so culturally unpopular, something considered so backward that you would be called unsavory names, lose your job, and be shunned by your neighbors? Be honest with yourself. Would you side with the masses or the Maker of heaven and earth? Don't underestimate the seductive power of the idol of social acceptance."¹¹²

Antiracism and Liberation Theology

According to Kendi, antiracism demands activism. Someone cannot be considered an antiracist if they are not actively seeking to dismantle the power structures that support a racist society. An antiracist must be a political activist that seeks to effect real change. "Changing minds is not a movement. Critiquing racism is not activism. Changing minds is not activism. An activist produces power and policy change, not mental change. If a person has no record of power or policy change, then that person is not an activist."¹¹³ Can a demand for political and societal activism mesh with the mission of the church? Or should the church stay out of politics?¹¹⁴

112. Williams and Perkins, *Confronting Injustice*, 34–35.

113. Kendi, *How to be an Antiracist*, 209.

114. This is a complex and thorny issue filled with pitfalls. It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss what the church's role in political activism should be. However, Kendi is a strong believer that the main mission of the church is to effect societal change. He is more concerned about freeing the oppressed in this life, than spreading the Gospel to prepare people for the joy of the next life.

Kendi argues that the mission of the church is political activism and advocates for the church to embrace Liberation Theology.¹¹⁵

Liberation Theology recasts the task of the Church, making it about the uplifting of oppressed peoples. Cone applied this system to the plight of the “black church.” Denying substitutionary atonement—and even decrying it as a form of weakness alien to a truly liberated people.... The Christian faith became a message of communal empowerment, not soul salvation. The Church found not only strength but essential content in the framework of oppressor and oppressed humanity.¹¹⁶

Kendi’s Liberation Theology

Kendi was heavily influenced by Liberation Theology in his youth. Both of his parents were heavily influenced by James Cone and passed this knowledge on to their son.¹¹⁷ Cone argued that God’s primary concern was liberating oppressed people. “The task of theology, then, is to explicate the meaning of God’s liberating activity so that those who labor under enslaving powers will see that the forces of liberation are the very activity of God.”¹¹⁸ Kendi views Liberation Theology as an essential component of antiracism.

In other words, Jesus was a revolutionary, and the job of the Christian is to revolutionize society. That the job of the Christian is to liberate society from the powers on earth that are oppressing humanity.... Savior theology is a different type of theology. The job of the Christian is to go out and save these individuals who are behaviorally deficient. In other words, we're to bring them into the church, these individuals who are doing all of these evil, sinful things, and heal them and save them. And then, once we've saved them, we've

115. A detailed analysis of Liberation Theology is beyond the scope of this paper. I will briefly define this theology and show how it applies to Kendi’s ideology. It is my opinion that a more detailed analysis of Liberation Theology needs to be conducted. It has continued to grow and influences a number of American churches, especially churches that have a strong Black component.

116. Strachan and MacArthur, *Christianity and Wokeness*, 46.

117. Kendi, *How to be an Antiracist*, 17.

118. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, 2. Cone was more nuanced in his approach to Liberation Theology and may not have agree with the direction that Kendi took this theology.

done our jobs. And to me, antiracists fundamentally reject savior theology. That goes right in line with racist ideas and racist theology, in which they say, “You know what, black people, other racial groups, the reason why they're struggling on earth is because of what they're behaviorally doing wrong, and it is my job as the pastor to sort of say these wayward black people or wayward poor people or wayward queer people.” That type of theology breeds bigotry.¹¹⁹

In Kendi's theology, Jesus did not come to earth to save people from their sins but to liberate people from social injustice. This undermines the central message of the gospel and reduces Jesus to a mere political provocateur. Miguel De La Torre goes a step further by saying that the entire point of Jesus's crucifixion was to show solidarity with the oppressed.

The importance of Jesus's crucifixion is the point when Christ chose solidarity with the world's marginalized, even unto death. Christ becomes one with the crucified people of his time, as well as with all who are crucified today on the crosses of classism, colonialism, racism, sexism, heterosexism, and religious discrimination. For Christians to die with Christ so they can also live with him means that they, too, must find solidarity with the world's crucified people.¹²⁰

This means that if Christians want to be antiracists, they must be politically active by helping dismantle systems of power. More than that, the church itself must be an active agent of political and social change. “The church has a responsibility as the bearer of Christian freedom to engage with social ills and to dismantle these social ills so that all may be free.”¹²¹ Jemar Tisby goes further and claims that the church is one of the racist systems of power that needs to be dismantled. “The church needs the Carpenter from Nazareth to deconstruct the house that racism built and remake it into a house for all nations.”¹²²

119. Ibram X. Kendi, “How to Be an Antiracist: Ibram X. Kendi in Conversation with Molly Crabapple,” Judson Memorial Church, filmed on August 15, 2019, YouTube video, 1:01:41, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BhbbmjqcRvY&t=0s>.

120. De La Torre, *Embracing Hopelessness*, 65.

121. Needham, “Toward a More Embodied Liberation,” 33.

122. Tisby, *The Color of Compromise*, 24.

Political activism is not the mission of the church. The church does not exist to correct all of society's ills or usher in a utopia on earth. Our eyes are not fixed on the things of this world but on Christ. The church cares for people's physical well-being and strives to be a force for good in the world, but the church's primary purpose is to spread the message of the gospel. The church can wander away from this purpose when it pursues social and political power outside its calling and purpose. "The church must be extremely careful when its gospel ministry and charitable activities espouse political or social theories or become associated with particular governments and their programs."¹²³ There is nothing wrong with the church seeking justice for the oppressed. "The problem is what happens when that quest is undertaken from a framework that is not compatible with the Bible."¹²⁴ Kendi's ideology of antiracism seeks answers apart from God's Word and offers solutions that are contrary to the truth of Scripture. There is much in Kendi's work that we can agree with, but there is a great deal that the Christian must reject. If we define antiracism as Kendi does, then a Christian cannot, in good faith, be an antiracist. We must create our own definition of antiracism that remains faithful to the Word of God.

123. Dr. Glen Thompson, "Christian Compassion Ministry Through the Centuries," (paper, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, WI, September 19, 2022), 25.

124. Williams and Perkins, *Confronting Injustice*, 7.

PART THREE: LUTHERAN ANTIRACISM

The work of the church is proclaiming the gospel to all nations (Matt 28:19–20). God has not charged the church to solve all matters of social injustice in the world. “Contrary to the opinion of some, the evangelist is not primarily a social reformer, a temperance lecturer, or a moralizer. He is simply a *keryx*, a proclaimer of the good news.”¹²⁵ However, individual Christians who live in this world are called through their individual vocations to provide for the physical welfare of all people. The church is a powerful force for good in this world, but we must always allow the teaching of the gospel to predominate in the work of the church. Because Lutherans understand the distinction between the role of the church and the work of the individual Christian who is a member of the church, we are uniquely positioned to fulfill this role.

The final part of this paper will present some practical ways that Lutherans serving in their various callings can be a force for Lutheran antiracism¹²⁶. Kendi and others who share his ideology want to change the world by forcing a change in hearts and minds through the force of

125. Billy Graham, “What Ten Years Have Taught Me,” *The Christian Century* (February 17, 1960): 187.

126. I will add a note of caution here. While I use the term “antiracism” in this section to describe a Lutheran response to Kendi’s ideology, the term carries too much negative baggage to be used effectively. A simple Google search of the term leads to many sites promoting Kendi’s definition of antiracism. For the sake of contrast in this paper I use the term, but a better term should be found to avoid confusion among our people.

law.¹²⁷ Lutherans understand that this kind of sweeping societal change is impossible. Hearts and minds cannot be changed, and sin cannot be eradicated by the force of law. Only the gospel's life-altering power can effect real change in people's hearts. Lutherans can share this message while helping alleviate the consequences of racism and the divisions caused by the Social Justice Movement. We can do this by showing compassion to those who are suffering, providing a solid Lutheran education to counteract the lies of our culture, and boldly proclaiming the unchanging truth of God's Word to a world that is lost in the lies of sin.

Compassion Ministry

The 2022 Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Symposium offered three excellent papers on the obligation of Christians to do compassion ministry. This is a natural outgrowth of the love of Christ that Christians have in their hearts. We want to show love and compassion to our neighbors. We want to help them in their times of hardship and struggle. "Throughout Scripture, I saw God's heart beating for the orphan, the widow, the fatherless, and the foreigner. What did these people have in common? They were the most vulnerable groups in their society. Scripture is crystal clear—the deeply vulnerable are deeply valuable to God."¹²⁸ While Williams makes a valid point that God loves the vulnerable in society, we must never lose sight of the truth that

127. Ibram X. Kendi, "Pass an Anti-racist Constitutional Amendment," *Politico* (September 20, 2019), <https://www.politico.com/interactives/2019/how-to-fix-politics-in-america/inequality/pass-an-anti-racist-constitutional-amendment/>. In this article Kendi proposes an amendment to the United States Constitution that would create a Department of Anti-racism that would "pre-clear all local, state, and federal policies" and "monitor public officials for expression of racist ideas." If any public officials did not conform to the standards of the Department, it would be "empowered with disciplinary tools."

128. Williams and Perkins, *Confronting Injustice*, 19.

God loves all people without showing favoritism (Rom 2:11). God’s love extends to all people, and as Christians, we have the opportunity to share that love with those who have been hurt and neglected by society.

At the same time, our God is a God of justice (Ps 89:14). He has a deep and abiding concern that the most vulnerable in society are cared for (Deut 10:17–19, 15:7–8, Prov 13:31, Isa 61:8). The Gospels are filled with numerous examples of Christ showing compassion on those who were considered as outcasts. Christians are called to show this same compassion and concern for justice; only they can do this correctly. They show love and care to the downtrodden because they are motivated by the selfless love that Christ showed to them. “Therefore, Christ calls his New Testament Church to preach the gospel. We do not diminish that vital task! *And* Christ calls his New Testament Church to love one another and to love their neighbors. Both these missions are unique to the Church. Only we can preach the gospel *and* love in a way the world cannot.”¹²⁹

One of the ironies of the Social Justice Movement is that it has done relatively little to help impoverished people. “Nowadays, however, economic class is barely mentioned unless combined ‘intersectionally’ with some other form of marginalized identity. It is therefore no surprise that many working-class and poor people often feel alienated from today’s left.”¹³⁰ We can show Christian love and compassion to those who have suffered under the yoke of oppression and racism. We can show real love and care to Black bodies and souls. Kendi discusses some of the problems many Black neighborhoods face, “unemployment and poverty—

129. Ryan Kolander, “Cultivating a Culture of Compassion: The Opportunity is Ours,” (paper, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, WI, September 20, 2022), 3. Emphasis is the author’s own.

130. Lindsay and Pluckrose, *Cynical Theories*, 185.

and their typical byproduct, violent crime.”¹³¹ Christians can help these neighborhoods in a variety of ways. Job training, community outreach, food and clothing banks, after-school programs and tutoring, and free counseling services are just a few ideas that come to mind.

Because of the clear gospel of a compassionate God courses through our WELS congregations, we are uniquely postured to help every single person in our membership and to see that love pulsate into their homes and to their neighbors. Such unique love attracts more and more people to a God worthy of their devotion. We are not about the business of creating a utopian synod. We are not so naïve to think we will break the curse of sin before that Great Day. But we are following Christ’s command to bring truth and love to those around us. Think of the opportunities.¹³²

Love is the only thing that can overcome the hatred and division of racism. “Love dissolved my fears. Love for humanity, love for myself, and love for you. I wanted to overcome my own internalized racism. I want humans everywhere to overcome theirs.”¹³³ The love of Christ that transforms hearts is the only love that will achieve Kendi’s desire. Compassion ministry shared with those who are suffering from injustice opens the door to share the message of the gospel. It builds trust and compassion with marginalized groups and proves that Lutherans want to help and serve those in need.¹³⁴

In the blood of Jesus, we are able to truly see ourselves as one race, one blood. We’ve got to stop playing the race game. Christ alone can break down the barriers of prejudice and hate we all struggle with. There is no power greater than God’s love expressed in Jesus. That’s where we all find real human dignity. If we replace the gospel with this or that man-made political agenda, then we ain’t doing biblical justice.¹³⁵

131. Kendi, *How to be an Antiracist*, 80.

132. Kolander, “Cultivating a Culture of Compassion,” 10. Kolander has a number of practical ways the church can carry out compassion ministry in a way that is not detrimental to the communities we are trying to serve. We want to make sure that our efforts are helping and not hurting the community.

133. Kendi, *Be Antiracist*, 2.

134. Kolander, “Cultivating a Culture of Compassion,” 29.

135. Perkins, introduction to *Confronting Injustice*, xvi.

This is a message of hope and comfort that Lutherans can provide to those who have been hurt by the lies of racism. This is a stark contrast to the message of hopelessness that so many in the Social Justice movement speak about.

The Power of Lutheran Schools

One of the best ways the Lutheran church is uniquely positioned for Lutheran antiracism is through our Lutheran schools. For many years, the Lutheran church shied away from compassion ministry out of fear of falling into the trap of the Social Gospel Movement. Lutheran schools were one of the ways that the church continued to do effective urban outreach. “But to many in our circles, providing elementary and secondary education was the best way to show compassion while staying focused on Gospel ministry.”¹³⁶ We can continue using our schools to provide a real need for quality education in poor urban areas. Our schools will be used to teach an alternative to the tenets of Social Justice Theory which are being taught in many public schools by teaching many of the tenants of classical liberalism.¹³⁷ “Liberalism is not perfect.

136. Thompson, “Christian Compassion Through the Centuries,” 25.

137. Liberalism here does not have a political meaning. Classical liberalism includes many of the philosophical ideas that serve as the foundation of Western Civilization. These include free speech, the free flow of ideas, the inherent dignity of all people regardless of race, critical and logical thinking, the study of art, history, literature, and music, democracy, equality of opportunity, and rewards for hard work. Many of these principles that were once considered foundational to our society have been rejected by the proponents of the Social Justice movement.

Nevertheless, it is the antidote to Theory.”¹³⁸ It has been a great force for positive change in our society. The ideals of liberalism led to the end of slavery, women’s suffrage, and the Civil Rights Movement. Society is more open and free because of liberalism’s emphasis on equality and the open debate of ideas. A free and open society is peaceful and allows Christians to boldly proclaim the truth of the gospel without fear of retribution (1 Tim 2:1–4).

Lutheran schools teach critical thinking skills that allow students to weigh and evaluate ideas proposed by thinkers like Kendi and DiAngelo. They can learn to be skeptical in a positive way that allows them to weigh and evaluate ideas logically and in view of God’s Word like the Bereans did with Paul’s teaching (Acts 17:11). Critical evaluation of ideas is necessary for a healthy and vibrant society. As shown earlier in this paper, Critical Theory demands adherence to its interpretation of society. Any deviation is viewed as racist. Our schools can counteract this dangerous and flawed thinking.

Finally, our schools boldly teach all the truths of God’s Word, including the revealed truth that God created the world in six ordinary days through his almighty Word. Most other schools, including many Christian schools, teach the false theory of evolution. Not only is evolution contrary to Scripture, but it also birthed many of the damaging lies of biological racism. Creation teaches that all people are descended from the two original humans whom God

138. Lindsay and Pluckrose, *Cynical Theories*, 237–38. Lindsay and Pluckrose contrast Liberalism with Social Justice Theory. “Liberalism values the individual and the universal human values; Theory rejects both in favor of group identity and identity politics. Although left-leaning liberals tend to favor the underdog, liberalism across the board centers human dignity; Theory focuses on victimhood. Liberalism encourages disagreement and debate as means to getting at the truth; Theory rejects these as ways of reinforcing dominant discourses that suppress certain perspectives and insists that we cannot get to ‘the’ truth, but only to ‘our’ truths, which are rooted in our values.”

created in his image. Therefore, we are part of one human race united in sin and the need for a Savior. Our Lutheran schools can share this powerful antiracist message with the world.

Verbum Domini Manet in Aeternum

One of the lasting legacies of the Lutheran Reformation is the Lutheran church's unwillingness to compromise on the truth of God's Word. The ideology of Social Justice Theory insists that truth is constantly changing. Right and wrong are not moral absolutes but can change based on expediency and racial status. This was demonstrated by Kendi's view that racial discrimination is justified if done to benefit a marginalized group.¹³⁹ The Lutheran church clings to the certain truth that God's Word does not change (1 Pet 1:24–25). "*Verbum Domini Manet in Aeternum* is the motto of the Lutheran Reformation, a confident expression of the enduring power and authority of God's Word."¹⁴⁰

The truth of God's Word has never been popular. The world hates to be reminded of its sin. We have the undying, life-giving message of the gospel. We should boldly proclaim this message in the face of all hatred and persecution. The gospel is the only thing that can cure this world of sin. The love of Christ is the only thing that can heal the hatred of racism and oppression. No social policy or secular ideology can ever achieve the results of the gospel. If we want to be antiracists, we must share this message with the world.

139. Kendi, *How to be an Antiracist*, 19.

140. Paul McCain, *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*, 2nd ed. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 2. This motto (The Word of the Lord endures forever) was so important to the early Reformers that Duke Frederick had it sewn onto the sleeves of his court. Later dukes used it on their flags and banners. We should embrace this motto and refuse to compromise on the enduring truths of God's Word.

The simple truth is that many of Kendi's proposed solutions are incompatible with a biblical worldview. Announcing this truth will not make us popular and may cause us to be labeled as racist and bigots. This will not keep us from boldly proclaiming the truth of God's Word. We should fully expect that we will face hatred and opposition from the world. "All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved" (Matt 10:22). "It is up to us today to take up this challenge, to live not by lies and to speak the truth that defeats evil. How are we to do this in a society based on lies? By accepting a life outside of the mainstream, courageously defending the truth, and being willing to endure the consequences. These challenges are daunting, but we are blessed with the examples from saints who've gone before."¹⁴¹

141. Dreher, *Live Not By Lies*, 100.

CONCLUSION

This paper has provided a brief overview of some of the issues presented in the works of Ibram X. Kendi. He offers a great deal of excellent advice on the issues of race and racism. We can agree with several of his ideas and proposals, but I have shown that many of his ideologies are incompatible with a Christian worldview. When seeking to utilize any worldly ideology, we must be “as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves” (Matt 10:16b). We can never allow worldly philosophy to trump the truths of God’s Word. This can only lead to disaster. “We cannot take on the philosophy of the world as we proclaim the gospel. It will swallow us hook, line, and sinker as it’s done to so many others.”¹⁴²

Kendi’s definition of antiracism insists that a person must support and advocate for LGBTQ+ lifestyles. An antiracist must acknowledge racial divisions and be willing to discriminate on the basis of race to promote the equity of oppressed groups. This inflames hostility between racial groups and causes division and hostility. A Christian cannot be an antiracist, according to Kendi’s definition. “What Ibram X. Kendi is selling no believer should buy. This is an all-too-clear illustration of what wokeness leads to: it corrupts your worldview, causing you to see the world wrongly, with ‘white’ people being effectively evil, their actions being necessarily poisonous, and the lines between ‘races’ being uncrossable, effectively.”¹⁴³

142. Matthew Harrison, “*The Past, Present, and Future of Confessional Lutheranism*,” interviewed by Todd Wilken, *Issues, Etc.*, Lutheran Public Radio, September 9, 2022, audio, 28:59, <https://issuesetc.org/2022/09/06/2491-the-state-of-confessional-lutheranism-pr-matt-harrison-9-6-22>.

143. Strachan and MacArthur, *Christianity and Wokeness*, 101-02.

This does not excuse Christians from confronting racism. We must denounce racism as a terrible and evil sin. There is no place in the heart of a Christian for hateful and racist thoughts. Like all sin, we must confess our racist thoughts and repent. We need to be empathetic and listen to those who have suffered from the injustice of racism. We must hear their cries for justice and strive with them to create a better future. This can only be done through the power of the gospel.

At the end of *How to be an Antiracist*, Kendi sounds a note of hopelessness for the future of race relations. “There is nothing I see in our world today, in our history, giving me hope that one day antiracists will win the fight, that one day the flag of antiracism will fly over a world of equity.”¹⁴⁴ We can offer a message of real hope and comfort in the proclamation of the gospel.

Our secular world is looking for answers but cannot find them. It is not optimistic about its future. “Whatever,” can be a cry of rebellion. “Whatever,” might be apathy. But for many it is a cry for help. We’re not even talking optimism which so many preachers peddle today as the gospel. We are talking about hope, that no matter how bad things get, God’s Word and promises will prevail. That hope comes from the cross and the empty tomb of Christ.¹⁴⁵

The scourge of racial hate and division will not be solved on this side of heaven. However, we look forward in joyful anticipation when people of all nations will stand together in the glory of heaven and sing the praises of our conquering Savior, who freed us from the power of hate and division by the power of his blood. “After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb’” (Rev 7:9–10).

144. Kendi, *How to be an Antiracist*, 238.

145. Sievert, “A Paradigm for 21st Century Preachers,” 15.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Baucham, Voddie T., Jr. *Fault Lines: The Social Justice Movement and Evangelicalism's Looming Catastrophe*. Washington: Salem Books, 2021.
- Breems, Brad. Review of *How to be an Antiracist*, by Ibram X. Kendi. *Journal of Sociology and Christianity* 11 no. 1 (2021): 76–89.
- Coates, Ta-Nehisi. *Between the World and Me*. 1st ed. New York: One World, 2015.
- Crenshaw, Kimberle. “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics.” *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1 (1989): 140–57. <https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8>.
- Cone, James. *A Black Theology of Liberation*. 2nd ed. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1986.
- De La Torre, Miguel. *Embracing Hopelessness*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017. Kindle.
- DiAngelo, Dr. Robin. *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*. Reprint edition. Boston: Beacon Press, 2018.
- Dreher, Rod. “Antiracist, Anti-Christian.” *The American Conservative*, March 24, 2021. <https://www.theamericanconservative.com/kendi-antiracist-antichristian-critical-race-theory/>.
- . *Live Not by Lies: A Manual for Christian Dissidents*. New York City: Sentinel, 2020.
- Douglas, Frederick. “The Frederick Douglas Papers.” Pages 472–73 in *A Documentary History of Religion in America to the Civil War*. Edited by Edwin S. Gaustad. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982.
- Graham, Billy. “What Ten Years Have Taught Me.” *The Christian Century*, February 17, 1960.
- Ham, Ken, and A. Charles Ware. *One Race One Blood: The Biblical Answer to Racism*. Revised, Updated edition. Green Forest: Master Books, 2019.
- Harrison, Matthew. “*The Past, Present, and Future of Confessional Lutheranism*.” Interviewed by Todd Wilken. *Issues, Etc.*, Lutheran Public Radio, September 9, 2022. Audio, 28:59.

<https://issuesetc.org/2022/09/06/2491-the-state-of-confessional-lutheranism-pr-matt-harrison-9-6-22>.

Henrich, Scott. "Race and the Lutheran Pastor." MDiv thesis, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 2018. *WLS Essay File*. <http://essays.wisluthsem.org:8080/handle/123456789/4366>.

Hiebert, Dennis. "The Recurring Christian Debate about Social Justice: A Critical Theoretical Overview." *Journal of Sociology and Christianity* 12:1 (2022): 49–76.

hooks, bell. "Killing Rage: Militant Resistance." *SJU Women and Gender Studies E-Library*, September 2013. <https://sjugenderstudies.files.wordpress.com/2013/09/killingrage-bell-hooks.pdf>.

Kendi, Ibram X. *Be Antiracist: A Journal for Awareness, Reflection, and Action*. New York: One World, 2020.

———. *How to Be an Antiracist*. New York: One World, 2019.

———. "How to Be an Antiracist: Ibram X. Kendi in Conversation with Molly Crabapple." Judson Memorial Church. Filmed on August 15, 2019. YouTube video, 1:01:41. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BhbbmjqcRvY&t=0s>.

———. "Pass an Anti-racist Constitutional Amendment." *Politico*, September 20, 2019. <https://www.politico.com/interactives/2019/how-to-fix-politics-in-america/inequality/pass-an-anti-racist-constitutional-amendment/>.

———. *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*. Reprint edition. New York: Bold Type Books, 2017.

King Jr., Martin Luther. "I have a dream." Pages 496–97 in *A Documentary History of Religion in America Since 1865*. 2nd ed. Edited by Edwin S. Gaustad. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993.

Kolander, Ryan. "Cultivating a Culture of Compassion: The Opportunity is Ours." Paper presented at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Symposium on Compassion Ministry. Mequon, WI, 20 September 2022.

Luther, Dr. Martin. *Luther's Catechism: New International Version*. Edited by Stephen Geiger. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2017.

McCain, Paul. *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*. 2nd ed. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006.

- McIntosh, Peggy. "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack." Pages 109–13 in *White Privilege: essential readings on the other side of racism*. 2nd ed. Edited by Paula S. Rothenberg. New York: Worth Publishers, 2005.
- Needham, River Cook. "Toward a More Embodied Liberation: Theologically Integrating Racial Justice, Size Liberation, and Transgender Liberation." *Currents in Theology and Mission* 48:3 (2021). <https://currentsjournal.org/index.php/currents/article/view/316>.
- Pluckrose, Helen, and James Lindsay. *Cynical Theories: How Activist Scholarship Made Everything about Race, Gender, and Identity—and Why This Harms Everybody*. Durham: Pitchstone Publishing, 2020.
- Schuetze, John. *Doctor of Souls: The Art of Pastoral Theology*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2017.
- Sievert, Phillip. "A Paradigm for 21st Century Lutheran Preachers." Paper presented at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Symposium on Preaching. Mequon, WI, 22–23 September 2014.
- Strachan, Owen, and John MacArthur. *Christianity and Wokeness: How the Social Justice Movement Is Hijacking the Gospel - and the Way to Stop It*. Washington: Salem Books, 2021.
- Thompson, Dr. Glen. "Christian Compassion Ministry Through the Centuries." Paper presented at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Symposium on Compassion Ministry. Mequon, WI, 19 September 2022.
- Tisby, Jemar. *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church's Complicity in Racism*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2020.
- Veith, Gene Edward, Jr. and A. Trevor Sutton. *Authentic Christianity: How Lutheran Theology Speaks to a Postmodern World*. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing, 2017.
- Walther, C. F. W. *Law and Gospel: How to Read and Apply the Bible*. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing, 2010.
- Williams, Thaddeus J., and John M. Perkins. *Confronting Injustice without Compromising Truth: 12 Questions Christians Should Ask About Social Justice*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2020.
- Woodford, Dr. Lucas V. "What does this mean? Responding to Social Justice and Critical Race Theory." *Seelsoger* 6, (2021). https://www.doxology.us/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/dox_2021_woodford_crt_final2.pdf.