

1 **OVERTURE 80** from the Calvary Presbytery (to OC, AC)
2 “Erect Ad Interim Committee on Critical Theory and Critical Race Theory”
3

4 **Whereas**, the Apostle Paul tells the Colossians, “See to it that no one takes you captive by
5 philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental
6 spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him the whole fullness of deity
7 dwells bodily, and you have been filled in Him, who is the head of all rule and
8 authority.” (Colossians 2:8-10); and
9

10 **Whereas**, the Apostle Paul also tells the Corinthians, “For since, in the wisdom of God, the
11 world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we
12 preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom,
13 but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to
14 those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom
15 of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is
16 stronger than men” (1 Corinthians 1:21-25); and
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18 **Whereas**, the 52nd General Assembly appointed a committee to study Christian Nationalism,
19 a contemporary ideological approach that is apparently a) suffused with *right-wing*,
20 authoritarian, identity-driven views, b) opposed to the racial unity of the people of God
21 (Galatians 3:28) under the headship of Jesus Christ, the only King and Head of the
22 Church (Preface to the *BCO*), and c) promoted within the interconnected spheres of
23 culture, education, politics, and religion; and
24

25 **Whereas**, Critical Theory (CT) and Critical Race Theory (CRT) are contemporary ideological
26 approaches that are apparently a) suffused with *left-wing*, authoritarian, identity-driven
27 views, b) opposed to the racial unity of the people of God (Galatians 3:28) under the
28 headship of Jesus Christ, the only King and Head of the Church (Preface to the *BCO*),
29 and c) promoted within the interconnected spheres of culture, education, politics, and
30 religion;¹ and
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32 **Whereas**, a study committee requires the investment of time and money, obligating the church
33 to dedicate resources to topics that are especially:
34 **a. Timely**, thus a study would address current issues known to affect congregations
35 today and expected to persist in the near-term,
36 **b. Pervasive**, thus a study would equip across a spectrum of regions and ministries
37 that are affected directly and indirectly by the topic,
38 **c. Controversial**, thus a study would increase awareness, identify insights, and
39 expose opportunities to seek greater unity regarding differing perspectives within
40 the church,
41 **d. Treacherous**, thus a study would expose potential misunderstandings, risk
42 mitigations, and biblical nuances,

¹ Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism: The Founders, the Golden Age, the Breakdown*, trans. Paul
Stephen Falla (W. W. Norton, 2008), 1060–123; Stephen Eric Bronner, *Critical Theory: A Very Short
Introduction*, 2nd edition., Very Short Introductions (Oxford University Press, 2017).

- 1 e. **Perilous**, thus a study would highlight the undesirable impacts and augment
2 spiritual growth through the application of wisdom and discernment;
- 3 f. **Complex**, thus a study would relieve officers and laypeople of having to conduct
4 their own primary research and compile their own thorough assessments,
- 5 g. **Tangible**, thus a study would enable the church to identify specific actions, engage
6 practical resources, and implement effective approaches,
- 7 h. **Relevant**, thus, in summary, a study would inform those whose ministry is affected
8 by disruptive cultural issues and emerging theological questions, and
9

10 **Whereas**, CT and CRT can be traced broadly to the philosophical influences of 20th-century
11 Neo-Marxism, and more narrowly to the Frankfurt School, a family of movements that
12 appear to stand in antithesis to the Biblical worldview regarding reality, knowledge,
13 and ethics², which have now been enculturated into 21st-century American education,
14 creating a *timely* opportunity for the church to speak to the biblical aspects of reality,
15 knowledge, and ethics; and
16

17 **Whereas**, CRT grew out of Critical Legal Studies, a movement in the 1970's offering a social-
18 critical analysis of legal theory, a movement with widespread influence on the current
19 practice of law³ as revealed in significant judicial and legislative actions aimed at
20 incorporating CRT into society, thereby creating a *timely* opportunity for the church
21 to address active and passive oppression against Christianity that has persisted for
22 decades and seems likely to continue; and
23

24 **Whereas**, the forthcoming report on Christian Nationalism creates a *timely* opportunity to
25 compare and contrast right-wing and left-wing identity-driven views that affect the
26 church; and
27

28 **Whereas**, the current 250th anniversary celebration of America's declaration of independence
29 in 1776 generates popular interest in the history of the country's economic, social, and
30 religious pursuits, rendering *timely* engagement on discussions of CRT's views on
31 ethnicity, slavery, and the imperial and racial excesses of the American colonies,
32 which are then traced back to 1619 as the establishment of an alleged racist influence
33 in this country that persists today; and

² "Frankfurt School critical theory is best characterized by a set of methodological aspirations that set it apart from many other forms of social and political theorizing (both in philosophy and the social sciences): It aspires to be (1) *self-reflexive*, accounting for its own embeddedness in specific social and historical conditions, (2) *interdisciplinary*, integrating philosophical analysis with social theory and empirical social research, (3) *materialist*, grounding critical theorizing in social reality, and (4) *emancipatory*, orienting itself toward the goal of social emancipation. These commitments situate the Frankfurt School firmly in the Marxist tradition, and that tradition's aim of overcoming the division between theory and practice without uncritically subsuming one under the other." See Celikates, Robin and Jeffrey Flynn, "Critical Theory (Frankfurt School)", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2023 Edition), Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (eds.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2023/entries/critical-theory/>>.

³ See Cassandra Sharp and Maret Leiboff, *Cultural Legal Studies: Law's Popular Cultures and the Metamorphosis of Law* (Routledge, 2016); Matthew Stone et al., eds., *New Critical Legal Thinking: Law and the Political* (Birkbeck Law Press, 2012).

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Whereas, CRT has been broadly influential in American culture over the last decade,⁴ bringing a *pervasive* influence across business, education, media, and society, affecting regulatory frameworks, school curriculum, “fact-checking”, and social norms, granting the church the opportunity to contrast atheistic deception with biblical truth; and

Whereas, CRT offers a reconstruction of law, power, race, and ethics, in ways that are contrary to the principles of law and justice found in the Scripture⁵ and manifest a *pervasive* distrust of historical Christianity that deeply affects congregations, church members, and families; and

Whereas, CRT has been a hotly debated topic with American Evangelicalism,⁶ generating varied responses within the church to this *controversial* topic⁷; and

Whereas, the language and terminology that appears to be drawn from CRT (or influenced by CRT) appear in some Reformed and even PCA circles, to wit, “intersectionality,” “micro-aggressions,” “white supremacy,” “white and male-dominant culture,” “minority voices are centered,” “white normativity,” “privilege” & “white privilege,” “systemic racism,” and “whiteness,” exposing an opportunity to recommend theologically-sound definitions and effective usages for what have already proven to be *controversial* and divisive terms within society and the church; and

Whereas, the moderator of the 45th General Assembly is a scholar who has reportedly expressed commitment to the application of CRT in higher education⁸, creating an opportunity to delineate which aspects of this movement might provide helpful historical perspectives that are consistent with the PCA’s confessional standards, and which aspects might distort facts through atheistic, Neo-Marxist presuppositions making them *treacherous* to adopt; and

Whereas, in recent years, the nation has seen what appears to be an increase in social activism, such that, as faithful citizens and residents of American society, church members encounter opportunities to participate in social and political expressions, such as posting content on social media or attending a public demonstration, and these

⁴ See Jonathan Butcher and Mike Gonzalez, “Critical Race Theory, the New Intolerance, and Its Grip on America,” *Backgrounder* (Washington, DC), no. 3567 (December 2020).
⁵ Richard Delgado, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, Third Edition (New York University Press, 2017), 1–42.
⁶ See Neil Shenvi and Pat Sawyer, *Critical Dilemma: The Rise of Critical Theories and Social Justice Ideology - Implications for the Church and Society* (Harvest House Publishers, 2023); Edward Thomas Uszynski, *Untangling Critical Race Theory: What Christians Need to Know and Why It Matters* (IVP, 2024).
⁷ Cf. a March 21, 2026 email circulated by *Jude 3 & the PCA* that quoted a CrossPolitic video on You Tube: “It won’t shock you that the people who wanted this whole nightmare were the people pushing critical race theory, were the people pushing what they called soft complimentarianism, which is just women in the pulpit.”
⁸ <https://vanguardpresbyterianchurch.com/2020/07/06/cultural-marxism-in-the-pca/>

1 interactions and events often feature elements of CRT and associated ideologies,
2 making it *treacherous* for even well-informed church members to discern how and
3 when to engage, especially given the possibility that expressing Christian compassion
4 might inadvertently promote unbiblical perspectives; and
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6 **Whereas**, in response to CRT, there has been significant social and political backlash
7 including critique of programs centered around Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)
8 and “reverse discrimination”, meanwhile, the church calls its officers, crafts its
9 outreach programs, and makes other ecclesiastical decisions that can involve
10 discussions of bridging historical gaps in demographics, creating a *treacherous*
11 environment for dialogue when there is inconsistency in definitions and assessments⁹;
12 and
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14 **Whereas**, recent attention to the historic issues of slavery has brought criticism of early
15 American Christians with some evidence of *ad hominem* rejection of those theologians
16 who might have owned slaves, such as Jonathan Edwards¹⁰, perhaps resulting in the
17 *treacherous* rejection of sound biblical Reformed teaching because of the sources of
18 that teaching; and
19

20 **Whereas**, within discussions of race, religion, and related issues, some commentators have
21 argued that pastors who are part of the majority and/or a “privileged” class do not have
22 the right to speak out¹¹, paving a *treacherous* path for dialogue and consensus; and
23

24 **Whereas**, “twenty (20) states have enacted legislation opposing or prohibiting CRT-related
25 curriculum or curriculum topics frequently associated with the concepts of CRT, as of
26 July 2025, and 20 states have vetoed, overturned, or stalled such legislation,”¹²
27 reflecting both *perilous* division across the country, as well as active judicial and
28 legislative efforts that are still in a state of flux, creating an opportunity for biblical
29 considerations to benefit those who remain uncertain about what to conclude from the
30 divided social discourse; and
31

⁹ The 52nd General Assembly considered an overture to request that the Stated Clerk not collect statistical information pertaining to ethnicity. The Overtures Committee recommended that this overture be answered in the affirmative (76-28-3), which it subsequently was by the assembly (1184-361). This three-quarters to one-quarter split suggests that, in the pursuit of greater unity, the church could benefit from further clarification of the issues.

¹⁰ Jason Meyer, “Jonathan Edwards and His Support of Slavery: A Lament”, February 27, 2019, the Gospel Coalition, “Jonathan Edwards enjoyed a lot of study time, in large part, because of his slave or slaves (Venus and/or Leah). Suddenly, all that study time seemed sickening to the degree that it depended on slavery. I had idolized something I should have lamented.”

¹¹ The New York Times, Lisa Sharon Harper (religion columnist), (November 6, 2018), “Tim Keller has NO AUTHORITY to teach on justice – NONE.” “How INCREDULOUSLY PRIVILEGED for Keller—a RICH WHITE MAN WHOSE MINISTRY TARGETS RICH PEOPLE—to fashion himself as the judge of whether or not injustice rises to the level of OPPRESSION!!! No!!!! The only ones with divine authority to define the bounds of oppression are the oppressed themselves!”

¹² [ballotpedia.org/Critical_race_theory_\(CRT\)](https://ballotpedia.org/Critical_race_theory_(CRT))

1 **Whereas**, CRT traditionally focused on racial constructs, the perilous nature of such teaching
2 has been extended through its arguments of the relevance of “intersectionality” in
3 which race and ethnicity are combined with other topics such as gender, sexuality,
4 immigration, and disabilities¹³, thus expanding the *perilous* threat to the church across
5 an ever-widening claim of oppression by the church; and
6

7 **Whereas**, recent law cases stemming from CRT and/or from backlash against it have
8 demonstrated a *tangible* threat of legal challenges for churches and church-owned
9 schools, nationwide, that could limit religious freedoms, affect property ownership,
10 and impose material costs in terms of time and money; and
11

12 **Whereas**, CRT might underpin current legislative and political efforts to estimate the
13 economic impacts of slavery and seek to restore through financial remuneration
14 (“reparations”), delivering a *tangible* impact on the church and its members going
15 forward, while also providing an opportunity to explore the theological implications
16 of such efforts at societal reconciliation; and
17

18 **Whereas**, Jesus Christ Himself engaged with cultural norms, exposing common sins and
19 bringing *relevant* clarity to unite the church, and He then commissioned the church to
20 disciple the nations in all that He commanded (Matthew 28:19-20); and
21

22 **Whereas**, the influences of CT and CRT, in particular, and Neo-Marxism, in general, have
23 already affected culture and education at multiple levels (primary & secondary,
24 colleges, universities, and seminaries), which have rendered the topic *timely*,
25 *pervasive*, *controversial*, *treacherous*, *perilous*, *complex*, *tangible*, and *relevant* for
26 the church to address; and
27

28 **Whereas**, no NAPARC denomination to date has produced a study report addressing CRT,
29 yet the issues persist in affecting the church and its members, making the issue *relevant*
30 to be studied and reported on by the PCA at this time; and
31

32 **Therefore, be it resolved that:** that the 53rd PCA General Assembly erect and convene a new
33 Ad Interim Study Committee to study Critical Race Theory (*RAO* 9-1), to analyze
34 CRT from a Reformed exegetical, Confessional, and theological perspective on
35 whether the use of CRT is in conformity with the Scripture and the System of doctrine
36 taught in the *Westminster Standards*. Furthermore, the committee shall provide
37 pastoral guidance to the Assembly on how to address CRT from a Reformed
38 theological perspective; and
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¹³ David Ryden, *Christianity and Critical Race Theory: A Faithful and Constructive Conversation*, Reformed Journal, September 25, 2024, “That principle [Intersectionality], “embraced by most proponents of CRT, creates something of a scale of marginalization, with axes of oppression that extend beyond race to include gender, disability, sexual orientation, and the like. Importing LGBTQ concerns under the banner of CRT clearly raises significant concerns for Christians with a more traditional sexual ethic, and merits attention if we are to take CRT seriously.”

1 **Be it further resolved**, that the committee shall be appointed by the moderator; and

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3 **Be it further resolved**, that the budget for the study committee be set at \$10,000/year and
4 that funds be derived from gifts to the AC designated for that purpose. Presbyteries,
5 churches, and individuals are highly encouraged to contribute funds to the AC,
6 designated for this work.

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9 *Adopted by Calvary Presbytery at its stated meeting, April 23, 2026.*

10 *Attested by /s/ RE Melton L. Duncan, Sr., Stated Clerk*