

Sufficiency of Scripture Series

Volume 1 • Issue 3 of 4

August 18, 2020

Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary (MABTS) leadership was frequently approached during 2019 by concerned students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends regarding current trends. Their questions were about debates, decisions, terms, and biblical interpretations currently ongoing within American churches and the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). The following document (3 of 4) is part of the MABTS Sufficiency of Scripture Series. The series is written and released by MABTS to provide clarity and a broader perspective to the Mid-America family regarding many of the key debates. These Issues are intended as a starting point for research not as an exhaustive resource.

The goal of the series is threefold: Challenge Christians to utilize the Scriptures as their guide in any debate, encourage trust in God's Word for all areas of faith and practice, and strengthen the faith of the Mid-America family.

The four focus areas in the MABTS Sufficiency of Scripture Series are:

- (1) Understanding the key debates
- (2) Deepening knowledge of alternate views
- (3) Forming a biblically based opinion
- (4) Equipping believers with a proper understanding, respect, and appreciation of Baptist distinctives (September 2020)

For more information visit mabts.edu/sufficiency

Since its founding in 1972, Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary (MABTS) has been funded through the generous donations of like-minded believers. The seminary provides master and doctoral level theological training for effective service in church-related and missions vocations. Founded in 2018, The College at Mid-America is the undergraduate school of MABTS and provides associate and baccalaureate degree programs to prepare students to take their place as effective Christian and secular leaders. Both academic institutions guide students into a thorough understanding of the Bible and its relevance to everyday living. Mid-America students volunteer to evangelize and serve the community through the Witness One:Seven and GO! programs. Mid-America is located on an award-winning, 35-acre campus in Memphis, TN. For more information visit www.mabts.edu.

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Forming a Biblically Based Opinion: Utilizing Scriptural Sufficiency as a Practical Guide to a Biblical Lifestyle

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Abstract: This issue of the Sufficiency of Scripture series furthers the discussion regarding Resolution 9 (On Critical Race Theory and Intersectionality) passed at the 2019 Annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention. While the first two issues in the series took a more explanatory and diagnostic approach to the terms and technicalities supporting the alternate views of Resolution 9, this issue will provide a pastoral focus on the sufficiency of Scripture, the role of supplemental tools in a believer's decision making, and how one should form a biblically based opinion when new ideologies are presented. The goal of this issue is for Mid-America's students, faculty, staff, and friends to be confident in their answer to the following question: "Should SBC churches and believers use CRT/I as supplemental tools to the Bible for meeting the social and spiritual needs of society and bringing it into a right relationship with God?"

Introduction

In Issues 1 and 2 of the Mid-America Sufficiency of Scripture series, the concepts of Critical Race Theory and Intersectionality (CRT/I) were introduced and discussed including key summaries along with origin information. The conclusions of the previous issues in the Sufficiency of Scripture series express the clear and present danger of humanistic philosophies and ideas infiltrating biblical Christianity. This particular edition of the Sufficiency of Scripture Series will seek to reinforce the key points of Issues 1 and 2 although with less focus on the ideologies and frameworks of CRT/I as these topics were well discussed in this series' earlier issues. The author recommends a thorough reading of the previous two issues before continuing.

This issue will develop a template for dealing with the current debate and any future debates which may seek to influence the believer's understanding of the Scripture. This includes a focus on explaining practical steps Christians may follow to form a biblical opinion, and then the application of these steps to a practical example and the debate around Resolution 9. A paper of this length prohibits an in-depth explanation of every aspect within this debate. This issue will deal broadly with these topics and prioritize a pastoral analysis of the debates discussed.

CRT/I have evolved from ideas in the halls of academia to a major discussion among church members. While CRT/I are currently in vogue, other ideologies will appear eclipsing them as the next concerning ideologies to embrace. Dealing with the current threats of CRT/I is important, but learning how to assess each new philosophy biblically is essential.

Resolution 9 reflects a debate that detracts from directly studying the Bible and relying on its sufficiency. The SBC, known for years as a denomination that maintains a high view of Scripture, faced a similar struggle in the previous generation with the “Battle for the Bible” debate. This debate included arguments over terms such as infallibility, inerrancy, and whether certain descriptions of the Bible were an adequate and truthful reflection of Scripture. About biblical inerrancy, L. Russ Bush wrote:

Some critics claim that belief in inerrancy will destroy scholarly activity. Rather than destroy, however, it has been the touchstone of some of the best in recent scholarship. Whenever someone turns away from the givenness of the objective truthfulness of the biblical text and substitutes the supposed truthfulness of even the most reasonable speculation, the epistemological structure of orthodox Christianity is at that point lost.¹

Having already fought and won the battle for the Bible’s inerrancy, the current debate is how best to answer the question, “Is the Bible sufficient to lead believers to salvation, guide them to Christian living, and answer all aspects of faith and life?”

To avoid drifting doctrinally, every believer and church must maintain a strong biblical foundation which is built on an in-depth knowledge of the Bible. Hebrews 2:1 says, “For this reason we must pay closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it” (NASB). This does not presuppose that one must have a degree from a Christian institution of higher learning or a seminary. Every born-again believer must become intimately acquainted with the Scripture for his or her spiritual growth and personal benefit.

The Sufficiency of Scripture

The Lord provided the Scripture as a guide for living and knowing Him. As Psalm 119:105 says, “Your word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path” (ESV). The Lord inspired the Bible in order that humanity might know absolute truth and not be swayed by the vanity of depraved human thinking. One should consider Paul’s words to the Ephesians, “As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming” (Eph. 4:14 NASB). The unfailing, inerrant Word of God grounds the believer and protects him or her from many dangers.

The best practice is to let the Bible speak about the Bible. Psalm 19 affirms the Bible as true and emphasizes all human thought and action must conform to Scripture. It is a love song to God’s Word describing it as perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, true, and as “more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them [the Scriptures] Your servant is warned; In keeping them there is great reward” (Ps. 19:7-14). Once sinners

¹ L. Russ Bush, “Understanding Biblical Inerrancy,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology*, Volume 50, Number 1, Fall 2007: 39-40. Online Edition: https://swbts.edu/sites/default/files/images/content/docs/journal/50_1/50.1_Bush.pdf.

are born-again, their thoughts and outward actions must be conformed to the will of God. Jesus Christ changes the believer from the inside out through His living Word collected and preserved for us in the Scripture.

The Apostle Paul states in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.” This passage contains two universal truths and their applications. The first universal truth appears in the phrase “all Scripture.” Thomas D. Lea wrote of this phrase: “It is clear from the context that Paul was not merely referring to a single passage of Scripture. He was making a collective reference to all of Scripture or a partitive reference to each passage of Scripture.”² All of the Bible is fully inspired by the Holy Spirit. The readers are not given liberty, under any circumstance, to alter the text or the meaning of the text.

Another universal truth comes at the end of the passage. The phrase “equipped for every good work” shows that all of human life, attitude, and conduct should be informed and guided by the Scriptures. Lea explains, “If Timothy would nurture his spiritual life in the Scriptures that he would use in his ministry, he would be fully qualified and prepared to undertake whatever tasks God put before him.”³ This truth leads to the practical application as verse sixteen gives a detailed list of the various ways in which the truth of the Bible can be applied to bring out God’s desired results in and through believers. “Teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness” comprehensively outline that the Scripture can, and indeed must, have dominion over every aspect of human life and conduct.

Not only is the Bible applicable, it is also adequate for every situation. The Bible is absolute truth and above human thought. It stands above human knowledge and experience and was never intended to serve as a supplement to human knowledge and experience. W. A. Criswell wrote, “The Bible has been the mightiest factor in shaping the moral progress of the entire race.”⁴ Morality needs an unchanging foundation which God provides to humanity by a revelation of Himself through His Word. Removing the foundation of God’s absolute truth makes all human attempts to create a successful and lasting moral-ethical code anemic and unsuccessful.

In contrast, the doctrine of sin shows human beings are innately wicked. “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; Who can understand it?” (Jer. 17:9). In his second epistle, Peter says, “But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation” (2 Pet. 1:20). Again, the Scriptures emphasize that human thinking and experience must always submit to the Word of God. What may seem sensible from a human point of view may be completely contradictory to the revealed truth of God. Thus, whenever believers attempt to use human-created analytical tools or lenses to interpret the Bible they open themselves and the process of understanding God’s Word up to fallacy. Humanity is mistaken to think either a believer or unbeliever could improve upon the holy Scripture. Paul explains his own ministry was geared “so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God” (1 Cor. 2:45). Christians would do well to follow Paul’s advice and practice trust in God rather than man.

² Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, Jr., *1, 2 Timothy Titus*. In *The New American Commentary*, vol. 34, ed. David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), p. 235.

³ Lea and Griffin, p. 238.

⁴ W. A. Criswell, *Why I Preach That the Bible Is Literally True*, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1969), p. 17.

Given the nature of the Scriptures and the nature of humankind, the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture is not only important but also essential to orthodox Christian belief. When filtered, biblical doctrines can be diluted and, therefore, not as God has given them. As Henry Thiessen wrote, “The Bible is superior to all other religious books in content. It sets up the highest ethical standards, enjoins the most absolute obedience, denounces every form of sin, and yet informs the sinner how he can become right with God.”⁵ The proof of the Bible’s purity, profitability, and perfection should lead the believer to the following summary statements regarding the sufficiency of Scripture.

The Bible is completely true. The Bible addresses the fact that divinely revealed truth is absolute and not open to individual opinions. Second Peter 1:21 says, “For no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” God spoke, and it was written. Even though the characteristics, style, and vocabulary of the human writers is present, the end product is the revealed Word of God. Thiessen states, “The Bible claims to be not only a revelation from God, but an infallible record of that revelation.”⁶ As such, the Bible is exactly what God intended.

All Scripture came by inspiration of God the Holy Spirit. The truth of Scripture is determined by the quality of the author who is the immutable, almighty, holy, and perfect God. Since God is perfect, His Word is perfect. The truth of Scripture is not determined by the opinions or interpretations of the community of faith or by any earthly entity. God’s divine inspiration through Scripture has been, is, and always will be true because it is His word.

The Bible can be understood. The Bible is a living book which simultaneously reflects deep concepts and inspires lifelong study though written in simple terms. A small child can grasp eternal truths from a certain passage of Scripture while an experienced theologian can grapple with the deep meaning of the same text. Since the same Holy Spirit who wrote the texts resides in every believer, Christians have the Author of the Bible as their guide. The Bible is not merely the plan for godly living but the conduit whereby “His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence” (2 Pet. 1:3).

The importance of the biblical languages is reflected in a seminary’s degree requirements. Even with voluminous resources available to the pastor, church staff leader, or missionary, these seminaries understand the benefit and emphasize the need for a minister to be able to read the Scripture in the original languages. This is due to the strong Baptist emphasis on the authority of Scripture and how important discerning its true meaning in the original context is for proper understanding and handling of God’s Word. Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary describes the core requirements for every Master of Divinity degrees as, “All provide a solid foundation with core courses such as personal evangelism, missions, theology, Greek and Hebrew, the history of Christianity and other world religions, and thorough biblical studies in the New and Old Testament.”⁷ Mid-America believes ministry leaders should be prepared to study the Bible for themselves and not just take the word of a scholar or author as they are preparing to teach, preach, train, and disciple others. The Word of God is the foundation of the Christian faith and must be treated as such.

⁵ Henry C. Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, rev. by Vernon D. Doerksen, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), p. 67.

⁶ Thiessen, p. 48.

⁷ Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, “Master of Divinity – Frequently Asked Questions” accessed July 15, 2020, <https://www.mabts.edu/master-divinity.html>.

Believers submit to the teachings of the Bible. For Christians, the lordship of Christ should be a settled issue. In an article published by the R. G. Lee Society of Union University, Dr. Roger Willmore wrote, “I must say again that the most important truth in relation to the Christian experience is the lordship of Jesus Christ.”⁸ As our Lord, we defer to the revealed truth of God through the Bible. Obedience to God’s Word even when it speaks against our feelings, inclinations, and comfort is a hallmark of a true Christian.

Even in orthodox Christianity, it seems easy for one to head down the slippery slope of conforming the Scriptures to the individual rather than conforming the individual to the Word of God. Peter warned the early church that “there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves” (2 Pet. 2:1). This warning should increase our fear of and respect for the Lord. Denying the Master and His Word with our behaviors, beliefs, and teachings will be destructive for the individual and for corporate groups of believers.

Believers apply the teachings of the Bible to their daily living. Believers show their faith in the God of the Bible through submitting to His perfect Word and applying it to daily living in obedience. Wrongful behavior by people claiming to be Christians is not because the Scripture is lacking in power or truth but because the believer is lacking in applying the Scripture. The whole counsel of God must be preached and taught, believed, and applied to the individual and to the local church. Disciplined and knowledgeable application of the Bible to the sinful self by individuals would rid churches of many of their offenses today. Biblical Christians will lead to biblical churches which will lead to biblical denominations. Therefore, the application of the Bible and its sufficiency for daily life is truly the key and culmination of all the other statements of facts listed above.

Forming a Biblically Based Opinion

The Christian life is a matter of knowing and doing the will of God in accordance with the Word of God. Proverbs 25:2 states, “It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings to search out a matter.” May the following practical steps from a pastoral heart be of assistance to those who are “searching out a matter” and seeking to form a biblically based opinion on an issue. The following is a general guideline for forming an opinion based on Scripture not an exhaustive explanation or only solution for the topic at hand. It is a simplistic template for practice which, while based on unchanging principles and truths, can be adapted for the spiritual maturity of the believer and complexity of the situation.

One option for forming a biblically based opinion is to practice the following five commonsense steps: *pray* to the Lord for wisdom; *read* the Bible to learn the mind and will of the Lord; *consult* with trusted resources and godly believers; *read* the Bible again to make sure that the counsel you have sought aligns with Scripture; and finally, *pray* that the Lord will give the courage to obey.

Pray. Ask for wisdom from the Lord. Request wisdom from Him who “gives to all generously and without reproach” (James 1:5). He will guide with His Word. The believer needs to ensure ample time is spent truly seeking God’s face and God’s truth regarding the situation at hand. All biases need to be acknowledged before the Lord as the believer is seeking whatever is God’s will in a matter and is

⁸ Roger D. Willmore, “The Lordship of Jesus Christ” accessed August 1, 2020, <https://www.uu.edu/centers/rglee/fellows/spring03/willmore.htm>.

not seeking to validate previously formed opinions. In Matthew 7:7 the Lord Jesus says: “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you.” Take this promise on faith and thank the Lord at the end of each prayer for how He will answer.

Read. Read the Bible. This should be a regular part of the Christian life. Believers should saturate their lives with the Scriptures. They should read entire books of the Bible at a time and systematically read through the whole Bible not just certain texts which speak to a topic of interest. Such a pattern of reading will show how the Lord has worked through all of human history to bring about His will and His plan. Spending time in the Bible results in the Word of God residing in one’s heart and mind.

God the Holy Spirit will use the Scripture to lead and guide one in His perfect will. The Psalmist says: “Seven times a day I praise You, because of Your righteous ordinances. Those who love Your law have great peace, and nothing causes them to stumble. . .I opened my mouth wide and panted, for I longed for your commandments” (Ps. 119:164-165, 131). God the Holy Spirit will use the Scripture to lead and guide one in His perfect will. Christ’s followers should always remember they come to the Scriptures to receive God’s truth whatever it may be and however it collides with their own ideas or biases. It is a weakness when one starts with an assumption and then goes to the Bible for verification or validation. One should always start with the Scriptures and stay with the Scriptures.

Consult. It is biblical and appropriate to ask advice from wise counselors and to seek assistance from appropriate Bible-believing, biblically derived resources, but one should not rely too heavily on resources outside of the Scriptures. Proverbs 19:20-21 states, “Listen to counsel and accept discipline, that you may be wise the rest of your days. Many plans are in a man’s heart, but the counsel of the Lord will stand.” Proverbs 15:22 states, “Without consultation, plans are frustrated, but with many counselors they succeed.” Asking advice from those with trusted and observed Christian lives is a wise idea. Pastors and Sunday School teachers as well as believing parents and friends are all excellent resources for wise counsel. Devotional guides, study Bible notes, Bible concordances, Bible dictionaries, and many other resources may be helpful in expounding, cross-referencing, and providing background and historical information for the Scripture.

As one chooses individuals or resources to serve as counsel, one must choose wisely. Note what the Psalmist says: “How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night” (Ps. 1:1-2). The Scriptures warn believers about the harm of bad counsel. Any counsel which says one must look through a filter before seeing the Bible clearly is unwise. Any counsel which goes against the Scripture is ungodly.

As for readings, while devotionals are helpful, believers should focus on reading and learning the Bible first and foremost because it is the sword of the Spirit and essential for Christian living. Believers should be careful to not spend more time reading about the Bible than reading the Bible. In the introduction to her devotional book, *A Lamp Unto My Feet*, Elisabeth Elliot explained this concept eloquently: “I do not mean the book...to be read in place of reading the Bible and meditating. It is only meant to be a help. If you have only five minutes, don’t read my book, read God’s. It will be a lamp unto your feet.”⁹

⁹ Elliot, Elisabeth. *A Lamp Unto My Feet: The Bible’s Light for your Daily Walk*. Revell Edition for Kindle published 2014. Grand Rapids, MI.

Read. After consulting trusted counselors and trustworthy, biblically based resources, one should always return to the Scripture to see if the advice attained agrees with Scripture. This is a critical behavior. The people of Berea heard the Apostle Paul gladly, but they also searched the Scriptures to verify what he was saying was of God (Acts 17:10-13). There is no counsel from God which goes against the Bible. Even though a trusted advisor may seem wise or be well-meaning, it is essential the believer always tests the counsel by the truths of Scripture. Many believers are led astray by others they trust whose counsel has been flawed by personal desires, biases, or ignorance. Seeking an abundance of counselors is wise as is the biblical vetting and verification of the perspectives those counselors provide.

Pray. Ask the Lord to make His perfect will clear and request the strength to follow and obey His will. Pray that in all things the Lord Jesus will receive all credit and glory. This prayer delights the heart of God and always fits into His will. Sometimes what has been revealed will be personally costly and require courage. We remember Jesus says, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow Me” (Luke 9:23). Jesus exemplified both the courage to obey against feeling and the desire to glorify the Father when He spoke the following words foretelling of His death: “Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose, I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name” (John 12:27-28). The words immediately following Jesus’ are a supernatural declaration from the Father, “I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again” (John 12:29). God will reward obedience.

If one is still unsure about the will of God in a matter, then he or she should keep seeking, praying, reading, and consulting until God has made His will apparent. Many times, the Lord does not give a simple answer but gives enough light to take one step at a time. Learning, knowing, and following the will of God is a journey. It is important to have spent enough time in prayer on a subject in order to gain a perspective that holds no selfish ambition, and can say, “not my will, but Yours be done” while trusting God no matter the outcome. God has promised to answer and guide. One needs only to continue seeking with patience, and to remember the Lord’s promise, “‘I will be found by you,’ declares the Lord” (Jer. 29:14).

Pastoral Examples

Copying Someone Else’s Work on an Academic Test

Up to this point, the steps to forming a biblically based opinion have been theoretically discussed. Now, each step will be applied to a real-world example. A frequently occurring debate, especially among students, is the question of cheating on a test. Is cheating on a test wrong? If the goal is to place the correct information on the test, then copying from someone who studied would be a valid method for accomplishing the goal. Does the Bible specifically condemn cheating on a test in school? If the goal is to produce correct answers, there are multiple ways of attaining the goal. One way is to study and learn the material. Another way is to sit beside someone who has studied and copy his or her work. Both methods achieve the goal of placing the correct answers on the test, yet only one way is right.

The first step in forming a biblically based opinion is to pray and ask God to reveal His truth. Then, one goes to search God’s word for instruction. In the instance of cheating on a test, the matter is truly about stealing answers, so verses concerning stealing should be consulted. A very familiar verse from the Ten Commandments is, “You shall not steal” (Exod. 20:15). Paul reiterates this to the

Ephesians when he says, “He who steals must steal no longer, but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need” (Eph. 4:28). The first verse provides the clear instruction that stealing is against God’s moral code and, therefore, wrong. The second verse provides the additional insight that the opposite of stealing is laboring with one’s own hands. If one takes answers from another who has studied, one profits off of another’s labor rather than laboring for one’s self which is the opposite of the Bible’s instruction here; therefore, it is also wrong.

In this example, the Bible speaks clearly, and seeking additional counsel may seem like one step too many. However, discussing the Scripture with others is always beneficial. Questioning trusted counselors or utilizing biblically derived resources may lead one to additional verses and insights. It cannot be said enough that God never contradicts His written word, so any counsel should be referenced again through the reading of the Scripture. In the present example, God’s will on the matter can be clearly seen. One should now seek God’s face again in prayer asking for the strength and courage not to steal answers and the help to study while trusting God will bless the obedient person’s desire to honor Him.

Resolution 9

Before starting an analysis on forming a biblically based opinion of Resolution 9, a discussion of the nature of SBC resolutions and the resolution committee will likely prove helpful. Due to the requirements in form and style, resolutions of the SBC are difficult to write. A committee is forced to use a certain pattern and language. The very concise nature means broader definitions and background information must be excluded. Further, this particular committee should be commended for attempting to address the rather complex issues of CRT/I. Resolutions presented to an SBC annual meeting are the result of the following process: a resolution is submitted, the committee decides whether to bring the resolution before the messengers for debate and possible adoption, and then the committee may edit the resolution as they deem necessary before bringing it before the messengers.

In fairness of the messengers who attended the 2019 convention, a trust in the leadership of the denomination is the default standard. When the convention leadership expresses a positive view of an issue, the messengers generally approve the request of the leadership. This is especially true of resolutions, which are nonbinding expressions of opinion. Most typically, the resolutions adopted at the end of the annual meeting give thanks to local dignitaries and reaffirm the moral stances for which the denomination has long been known.

Though some objected to Resolution 9 at the moment of its presentation before the convention messengers, it was not until the following days, weeks, and months that the full impact of what had been done became apparent. What has complicated the discussion is the newness of many of the terms and concepts. Further, many of the words and phrases seem to have multiple definitions depending on the context and course of usage.¹⁰ Ambiguous terminology and unclear intent have led to speculation. Questions in various arenas emerged such as: was this a grave misunderstanding on the part of the messengers? Did they realize exactly what they were approving? Did this signify a larger doctrinal drift on the part of the denomination and its institutions?

¹⁰ For a discussion of the various uses of key terms in this field see the excellent works by Matthew R Akers and Lee Brand Jr. in the Sufficiency Series Issues 1 and 2, <https://www.mabts.edu/sufficiency>.

This author is not aware of all of the committee's deliberations that went into the production of Resolution 9, so conclusions made here about motives would be incomplete. Because of previously mentioned restrictions, one can seldom know all of the deliberations of a committee. However, only looking at the finished resolution, the following pastoral insights are provided according to the previously mentioned five steps for forming a biblically based opinion.

To fully reason through the process of forming a biblically based opinion on the need or benefit of Resolution 9, one must first be familiar with the text of the resolution, and this author recommends a thorough reading of the resolution in its entirety before continuing here. For the reader's convenience, the complete text of Resolution 9, along with this author's commentary, is attached to this paper as Appendix 1.

After reading Resolution 9 in its entirety, one is aware it recommends certain tools (CRT/I) derived from Marxist ideas to be used along with the Bible for believers to best meet the challenges which racism and discrimination can bring among the church. The debate about the contents, problematic language, and meaning of Resolution 9 is covered in the first two issues of the Sufficiency of Scripture Series. This is an important and nuanced topic which requires a respectful amount of prayer and Bible study in order to form a proper biblically based opinion. Due to the space constraints of this paper, appropriate steps will be modeled but not expanded to include the full extent of the work, thought, effort, research, and prayer which went into each step summarized below.

The current debate appears to ask one question: "Should SBC churches and believers use CRT/I as supplemental tools to the Bible for meeting the social and spiritual needs of society and bringing it into a right relationship with God?" The first step to forming a biblically based opinion and answering this question is prayer. Due to the nature and complexity of this question, the prayer should be proportionate to the challenge the situation presents. One should pray asking the Lord to open one's eyes and ears to His truth. Seeking to know God's perspective rather than settle for a human understanding exemplifies in a small way the Christian's desire to "seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matt. 6:33 ESV). Believers should ask God to illuminate their minds with understanding and wisdom as they search the Scripture.

Second, one must read the Bible. The process of searching the Scripture has been abbreviated for the purposes of keeping this paper brief. The reader is urged to remember reading and memorizing God's Word should be a life-long habit for the Christian. As mentioned previously, the Bible should be taken as a whole unit, and in instances where the Bible seems unclear, one must always first rely on one area of the Scripture to interpret another area of the Scripture. In general, topical searches or the habit of reading verses out of context is not the most beneficial way for one to handle the Scripture. Due to the need for brevity in this section, only a fraction of the verses available will be utilized here.

First, the trustworthiness of God's Word will be examined. Many verses related to this topic were used previously when discussing the sufficiency of Scripture. First Corinthians 2:13-14 clearly states:

Which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. (NASB)

This passage not only emphasizes the need to be biblical, but also it evaluates why some will have a different view from Scripture. The Bible informs believers not to trust human ideas. Proverbs 3:5-6 states: “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.”

The accessibility of the Scripture without the need for tools can be seen in 2 Timothy 3:15: “That from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” One can know and understand the Bible for both eternal life and daily practice. Understanding God’s word does not require outside frameworks or advanced education. Isaiah 55:11 says, “So will my Word be which goes forth from my mouth; it will not return to Me empty without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.” God’s word is not only sufficient on its own but also guaranteed to succeed in the task of refining and sanctifying the people of God.

Truth is defined by the Word of God because the Bible is consistent and true. The Lord Jesus says in John 16:13: “But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come” (John 16:13). Notice the key phrase here “all the truth.” This verse shows that the Spirit of God will use the Word of God to guide the believer into all truth. One can rest also in the fact that neither God, nor His Word, nor the truth it contains will ever change. Malachi 3:6 says, “the Lord is unchangeable,” and Hebrews 13:8 attests to the same: “Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever.” Because God is consistent, His Word is perfect and consistent. James 1:17 says, “all good gifts come from above with no variation,” and the Bible is one such good and perfect gift. Psalm 19:7 states, “The law of the LORD is perfect.” The Bible is true and consistent.

The next step in the process is to consult advice from wise counselors and trusted resources. As a theological educator with almost thirty years of experience, the author will provide his own opinions as if the reader were seeking counsel concerning current debates. The feedback in the following paragraphs is the author’s response from reading through Resolution 9. The next few paragraphs reflect the opinions he would offer if approached by a member of the Mid-America family for counsel concerning the topics at hand.

There are many additional biblically based resources regarding the current debates. An excellent place to begin would be the first two issues of the Mid-America Sufficiency of Scripture series. For brevity’s sake, these documents will not be summarized here, so a careful and thorough reading of the first two issues in this series is recommended here to provide proper levels of biblical research, counsel, and understanding.¹¹ Such a reading would show CRT/I are rooted in Marxist ideology. Analytical tools, even subordinate to Scripture, carry with them their human ideological underpinnings. Marxist ideology is not congruent with Scripture. Further, because Marxism has been associated with Atheism, Christians should hesitate to consider any conclusions so rooted from ideas antagonistic to the belief in the existence of God.

A careful reading of Issues 1 and 2 in this sufficiency series will clearly show the philosophical underpinnings of CRT/I remain and affect the viability of using these tools or frameworks in a Christian context. Using “frameworks” can be perceived as a concern for Baptists and other biblically centered churches because these believing communities traditionally emphasize going to the Scriptures directly

¹¹ See the excellent works by Matthew R Akers and Lee Brand Jr. in the Sufficiency Series Issues 1 and 2, <https://www.mabts.edu/sufficiency>. <https://www.mabts.edu/sufficiency>.

for guidance. The use of any framework will control how one reads the Bible, and Christians should never allow any man-made tool to direct their understanding of the Word.

With Resolution 9, an underlying thesis exists: tools are required to understand or live out the true meaning of the Bible. If the Bible “contains categories and principles by which to deal with racism, poverty, sexism, injustice, and abuse that are not rooted in secular ideologies”¹² then Christians have no need to add humanistic tools to the Bible. Even the best human tools are not neutral. They originate from a depraved human heart. Knowing this, we can conclude that the next human philosophy to come along seeking to supplant the believer’s reliance on and commitment to the sufficiency of Scripture should not be used.

Many tools can be used to explain the Bible, and many of those tools are not useful. Evolution is a tool that can be used to explain the Bible, but it results in denying the Bible. Higher criticism is a tool that can be used to explain the Bible, but it results in denying the Bible. E.Y. Mullins, longtime leader in Southern Baptist life stated:

We recognize the greatness and value of the service which modern science is rendering to the cause of truth in uncovering the facts of the natural world. We believe that loyalty to fact is a common ground of genuine science and the Christian religion. We have no interest or desire in covering up any fact in any realm of research. But we do protest against certain unwarranted procedures on the part of so-called scientists.¹³

CRT/I are tools that follow a similar pattern as the above mentioned tools with the same result. Whether very quickly after their utilization or at some stage in the future, a believer who ascribes to the legitimacy and utilization of CRT/I to support the Bible’s influence in his or her life, will ultimately begin to deny the Bible. Just because a scholar uses a tool does not mean that the tool or its insights should now become doctrine. This does not mean the problems CRT/I purport to address are not real problems, but the believer is reminded that the Bible, not tools, has the answers to the human condition. Tools alone cannot solve the problems, so Christians go to Scripture for solutions.

By “denouncing the misuse”¹⁴ of CRT/I, the resolution implies that CRT/I are good, but some may use them wrongly. Parts of Resolution 9 imply that CRT/I represent something good which has been hijacked by ill-intentioned people. It seems that the opposite is actually the case. The assumption in the phrase, “evangelical scholars who affirm the authority and sufficiency of Scripture have employed selective insights from critical race theory and intersectionality to understand multifaceted social dynamics”¹⁵ is that evangelical scholars have found the Bible alone is insufficient to understand the present culture’s complicated realities. The conclusion of the previous sentence would be the Bible is insufficient, and Christians must assist the Word of God with tools or other human ideas in order for people to have a proper understanding.

¹² Southern Baptist Convention, “On Critical Race Theory and Intersectionality,” accessed April 2, 2020. <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/2308/resolution-9--on-critical-race-theory-and-intersectionality>.

¹³ L. Russ Bush and Tom J. Nettles, *Baptists and the Bible: The Baptist Doctrines of Biblical Inspiration and Religious Authority in Historical Perspective*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), p. 289.

¹⁴ Southern Baptist Convention, “On Critical Race Theory and Intersectionality,” accessed April 2, 2020. <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/2308/resolution-9--on-critical-race-theory-and-intersectionality>.

¹⁵ Ibid.

This assumption that the Bible is a secondary solution to the problems of humanity is not a strong position. The best position is to assert the sole sufficiency of Scripture for all faith and practice, period. Dr. Jay Adams, the founder of the modern biblical counseling movement, recognized that his success in ministry came through a complete reliance on Scripture without integrating secular psychological concepts. When asked in an interview with Ligonier Ministries what his most significant ministry focus had been and why, he responded, “I have wanted to know for myself what God’s Word teaches, not what someone else says about it...This scripturally oriented basis for ministry of all forms is what has made the difference throughout the years.”¹⁶ Adams believed that any Christian with a clear understanding of the Bible was competent to counsel other Christians without secular training. His premise was solely based on the sufficiency of Scripture across all areas of a believer’s life and practice. He spent his life pursuing the truth and standing firm on the sufficiency of Scripture over the opinions or current trends of society, and his stance is one to be emulated.

Returning to the Scripture for step four “read,” one must search out again whether the Bible instructs or forbids the use of human philosophy in addition to the Scriptures as a guide for the Christian life. Proverbs 30:5-6 says, “Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar.” Scripture never encourages or even allows adding to the Word of God.

This debate is not even about evolution, race, or any other outside force, idea, or theory. This debate is about anything that brings the sufficiency of Scripture into question. The initial results of CRT/I may be innocuous, a “clarifying” of what certain doctrines really mean, but the end result will be the same. As 2 Timothy 2:16 says, “Avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness.” Consider also Romans 15:4: “For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.” The human condition does not need any human resources to bring about spiritual and eternal change. The Word of God and the working of the Holy Spirit are the only forces available to provide hope for the human condition.

Resolution 9 struggles to balance where the Bible does identify differences in ethnic groups while still asserting oneness in Christ. Paul says in Colossians 3:11, “A renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.” A fascinating note is the inclusion of the Scythians in this list. Every other descriptive term seems to be a category, but Scythian seems to relate to a group of people. One option is Scythians were so noted for their violence and barbarity that their name became synonymous with evil.¹⁷ When a Scythian is saved, they are no longer a Scythian but a Christian. That is their identity. For every person who comes to Christ, he or she loses his or her former nationality or identity and now is known only as “Christian.”

God divides humans into only two categories: believers and unbelievers. All other categories are human-made and not God-made. Contrary to this, and based on human-created distinctions, is a dictionary definition of racism:

¹⁶ Jay Adams interview by Table Talk Magazine published February 1, 2014. Accessed August 1, 2020, <https://www.onier.org/learn/articles/competent-counsel-interview-jay-adams/>.

¹⁷ Richard R. Melick, Jr., *Philippians Colossians Philemon*. In *The New American Commentary*, vol. 32, ed. David S. Ockery (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1991), p. 298.

A belief or doctrine that inherent differences among the various human racial groups determine cultural or individual achievement, usually involving the idea that one's own race is superior and has the right to dominate others or that a particular racial group is inferior to the others.¹⁸

God speaks so clearly in His Word that He does not play favorites, see any group as better than another group, or make any judgement based on human categories. Could there be clearer guidance or any doubt as to how Christians should behave or think? In fact, it is the clear revelation of God's character as a true and faithful judge Who shows no partiality that reveals the wickedness of partiality in the human heart. If the Scripture speaks so clearly, why would any outside tool or framework be needed?

The Bible is clear on God's character. As Peter speaks in Acts, "I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him" (Acts 10:34-35). James encourages, "My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism...if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors" (James 2:1, 9). A further examination of God's character in judgement is seen in Deuteronomy 1:17, "You shall not show partiality in judgement; you shall hear the small and great alike. You shall not fear man, for the judgement is God's." Nine chapters later, Deuteronomy repeats the idea saying, "For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe" (Deut. 10:17). Second Chronicles 19:7 says, "Now then let the fear of the LORD be upon you; be very careful what you do, for the LORD our God will have no part in unrighteousness or partiality." Job 34:19 describes God as One "Who shows no partiality to princes nor regards the rich above the poor, for they all are the work of His hands." Galatians 2:6 clearly states, "God shows no partiality."

For step five, Christians should pray and seek the Lord about the matter again bringing before Him all things gleaned through reading and consultation. Does God want Christians to use CRT/I as tools to support the Bible or guide Christian living? First Chronicles 16:11-12 says, "Seek the LORD and His strength; Seek His face continually. Remember His wonderful deeds which He has done. His marvels and the judgments from His mouth." The Lord wants believers to seek Him and His word to find the answers to injustice and oppression. God will make His path clear. As they seek God's plan and God's judgements, believers should also request the courage and obedience to live out God's commands.

Implications for Southern Baptist Life

This entire discussion has interesting implications for Baptists as a people. Throughout the history of the Baptist movement, Baptist and baptistic churches have been nonconformist, countercultural, and even persecuted in some cases. These attributes derived from an attempt to be strictly biblical, regardless of the social and political consequences. European anabaptists, who are a part of Baptist history, suffered and died for their attempts to live by the Bible. Early English Separatists and Baptists were considered disloyal to the King for their stance on believer's baptism and the characteristics of a New Testament church which were very different from the state-run denomination of their day. Early Baptists in America championed liberty of conscience and even separation of church and state, so that Baptists could maintain their freedom to worship as they believed the Bible instructed.

¹⁸ Dictionary.com, s.v. "racism," accessed on July 21, 2020, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/racism?s=t>.

Baptists never proclaim themselves perfect but continue the ongoing pursuit to live by the Bible. True Baptists have been and will continue to be congregationally governed people led by Bible-believing pastors committed to the sufficiency of Scripture and seeking to accomplish the biblical goal of the Great Commission. While the criticism of those in the past is apparent, it will be interesting to see what criticisms future generations will have to say about the current state and actions of Southern Baptists. It may be fair to criticize Baptist historical figures for their decisions and failings, but it is uncharitable to criticize the overarching Baptist journey.

Conclusion

When new philosophies become popular, some in the Christian community may become early adopters. It is not until later that a broader analysis and thinking about these philosophies takes place. A condemnation of the proponents of CRT/I will not be productive. Encouragement is needed for them to consider their ways, learn from their experience, and delve deeper into the Word of God to seek His solutions to very real problems and very valid concerns which this author also shares. The Mid-America family must be careful not to place unreasonable expectations on the members of the resolutions committee. One cannot know their hearts and must trust that most, if not all, were well meaning in their attempts to bring forth ideas to help Southern Baptists find solutions to some of the most sinful challenges facing today's church. One must not make this about the people but stay focused on the problem. The debate is not about the presentation of a resolution from the past, but about the harm which may come from steering believers away from depending solely on the Scripture for faith and practice.

Many movements in the history of Christianity were popular at first, but over time devolved into distractions or even doctrinal errors in some cases. Constant immersion in the Word of God is absolutely necessary to maintain the true doctrines and practice of Southern Baptists. Regarding Resolution 9, SBC believers should deepen their commitment to biblical sufficiency, educate others on the problems associated with CRT/I, and wait patiently for the errors of Marxist-derived theories to be clearly seen. When a believer who is a former supporter of CRT/I realizes the errors of these ideas, believers who have not ascribed to those ideas should be ready to receive them with open arms and work diligently alongside of them for the Kingdom. Believers should focus more on the Scripture and its sufficiency for faith and practice than the current Resolution 9 debate, because they need to be prepared for the next distraction which will undoubtedly be coming soon.

A fundamental question for every generation is, "How are we to live out our faith in accordance with the Scriptures?" As the mantle of leadership is passed from one generation to the next, it is time to answer this question again. Corporately, Baptists must wrestle with how to scripturally be a New Testament church. Individually, Baptists must self-assess and decide if they are living with every thought, word, and deed held captive to Christ and His Word. Deciding these previous questions leads to more discipleship and sanctification through wrestling with the questions of how to live biblically with all people.

As for Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, it is firmly rooted in the long traditions of the people called Baptists. The individuals who work and study here live out a journey seeking to saturate themselves with Scripture, to teach the Bible with power and confidence, and to practice Bible precepts with daily discipline. Theories, methodologies, frameworks, tools, and lenses will come and go, but the Mid-America family will base their lives on the unchanging truth of the Bible. As the Prophet Isaiah says, "The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever" (Isa. 40:8).

Baptists will perpetually be challenged by Scripture to take the right, and many times difficult, road when at a theological crossroads. The future must be approached with the same biblical principles as were utilized in the past. Southern Baptists will call upon the Lord with the words of the Psalmist: “Look upon my affliction and rescue me, For I do not forget Your law” (Ps. 119:153). May the Lord bless and guide His people called Baptists and the Mid-America family as they seek to guard their hearts with the inerrant, infallible, and fully sufficient Word of God.



Since its founding in 1972, Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary (MABTS) has been solely funded through the generous donations of like-minded believers. The seminary provides master and doctoral level theological training for effective service in church-related and missions vocations. Founded in 2018, The College at Mid-America is the undergraduate school of MABTS and provides associate and baccalaureate degree programs to prepare students to take their place as effective Christian and secular leaders. Both academic institutions guide students into a thorough understanding of the Bible and its relevance to everyday living. Mid-America students volunteer to evangelize and serve the community through the Witness One:Seven and GO! programs. Mid-America is located on an award-winning, 35-acre campus in Memphis, TN. For more information visit www.mabts.edu.

Appendix 1

Initial Responses to Resolution 9: On Critical Race Theory and Intersectionality of the 2019 Annual Meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Birmingham, AL

To view an unedited version of Resolution 9, visit the SBC website through the following link:
<http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/2308/resolution-9--on-critical-race-theory-and-intersectionality>

The following is the text of Resolution 9 interspersed with Dr. Spradlin's initial thoughts upon his first reading. Many of the thoughts included here are also incorporated into the text of Issue 3 in the Sufficiency of Scripture series (SOSS). The editors of the SOSS hoped including the following information in the present layout would provide a more linear guide through Dr. Spradlin's thought process and, therefore, be beneficial to the reader.

Text of Resolution 9 in **bold**. Dr. Spradlin's responses are inset in *italics*.

WHEREAS, Concerns have been raised by some evangelicals over the use of frameworks such as critical race theory and intersectionality; and

Using "frameworks" has always been a concern for Baptists and other biblically centered churches. The use of any framework will control how you read the Bible and we should never allow any man-made tool to direct our understanding of the Word, whether that tool is a creed, lens, or framework.

WHEREAS, Critical race theory is a set of analytical tools that explain how race has and continues to function in society, and intersectionality is the study of how different personal characteristics overlap and inform one's experience; and

Many tools can be used to explain the Bible. Evolution is a tool that can be used to explain the Bible, but evolution results in denying the Bible. Higher Criticism is a tool that can be used to explain the Bible, but it results in denying the Bible. CRT/I are tools that will follow a similar pattern of previous attempts and that is that the result will be denying the Bible. The initial results of CRT/I may be innocuous, a "clarifying" of what certain doctrines really mean, but the end result will be the same. 2 Timothy 2:16 says to: "Avoid worldly and empty chatter; for it will lead to further ungodliness."

WHEREAS, Critical race theory and intersectionality have been appropriated by individuals with worldviews that are contrary to the Christian faith, resulting in ideologies and methods that contradict Scripture; and

This statement implies that CRT/I represent something good that has been hijacked by ill-intentioned people. The opposite is actually the case. This is always a weakness when you start with an assumption and then go to the Bible for verification or validation. Just start with the Scriptures and stay with the Scriptures.

WHEREAS, Evangelical scholars who affirm the authority and sufficiency of Scripture have employed selective insights from critical race theory and intersectionality to understand multifaceted social dynamics; and

Just because a scholar uses a tool does not mean that that tool or its insights should now become doctrine. Truth is not defined by the ideas of Evangelical Scholarship (a nebulous concept, at best). Truth is the Word of God.

WHEREAS, The Baptist Faith and Message states, “[A]ll Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried” (Article I); and

The last statement of Article I of the Baptist Faith and Message, omitted in the resolution, states: “All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.”

WHEREAS, General revelation accounts for truthful insights found in human ideas that do not explicitly emerge from Scripture and reflects what some may term “common grace”; and

This conflates two ideas, general revelation and human ideas. Human ideas are not general revelation, if your understanding of general revelation is guided by Romans 1. The Bible goes to lengths to inform us not to trust human ideas. Proverbs 3:5-6 states: “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.”

WHEREAS, Critical race theory and intersectionality alone are insufficient to diagnose and redress the root causes of the social ills that they identify, which result from sin, yet these analytical tools can aid in evaluating a variety of human experiences; and

Here is a key point: the tools in question “are insufficient.” The underlying thesis here is that these tools, alone, cannot solve our problems so we must ALSO go to the Scriptures for solutions. This is adding Scripture to a humanistic philosophy and seems to make the Bible secondary. The Bible can diagnose the problems of humankind and the Bible can solve the problems of humankind. The Bible is never a supplemental solution for the spiritual problems of people.

WHEREAS, Scripture contains categories and principles by which to deal with racism, poverty, sexism, injustice, and abuse that are not rooted in secular ideologies; and

If the Bible “contains categories and principles by which to deal with....” then we have no need to add humanistic tools to the Bible. The Scriptures are sufficient. This “whereas” seems to argue against the very need for Resolution 9.

WHEREAS, Humanity is primarily identified in Scripture as image bearers of God, even as biblical authors address various audiences according to characteristics such as male and female, Jew and Gentile, slave and free; and

WHEREAS, The New Covenant further unites image bearers by creating a new humanity that will one day inhabit the new creation, and that the people of this new humanity, though descended from every nation, tribe, tongue, and people, are all one through the gospel of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:16; Revelation 21:1–4, 9–14); and

WHEREAS, Christian citizenship is not based on our differences but instead on our common salvation in Christ—the source of our truest and ultimate identity; and

WHEREAS, The Southern Baptist Convention is committed to racial reconciliation built upon biblical presuppositions and is committed to seeking biblical justice through biblical means; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Birmingham, Alabama, June 11–12, 2019, affirm Scripture as the first, last, and sufficient authority with regard to how the Church seeks to redress social ills, and we reject any conduct, creeds, and religious opinions which contradict Scripture; and be it further

RESOLVED, That critical race theory and intersectionality should only be employed as analytical tools subordinate to Scripture—not as transcendent ideological frameworks; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the gospel of Jesus Christ alone grants the power to change people and society because “he who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6); and be it further

RESOLVED, That Southern Baptists will carefully analyze how the information gleaned from these tools are employed to address social dynamics; and be it further

This is a nebulous statement. The “denomination” will “analyze” how the information “gleaned” is to be used. So, we are admitting that CRT/I will guide our denominational direction. If the Scriptures are sufficient then why not state that “Southern Baptists will start following the Bible”?

RESOLVED, That Southern Baptist churches and institutions repudiate the misuse of insights gained from critical race theory, intersectionality, and any unbiblical ideologies that can emerge from their use when absolutized as a worldview; and be it further

We have now set up an additional guide to faith and practice: CRT/I and the Bible. We have a provision that if CRT/I disagrees with the Bible, the CRT/I provisions will be repudiated.

RESOLVED, That we deny any philosophy or theology that fundamentally defines individuals using categories identified as sinful in Scripture rather than the transcendent reality shared by every image bearer and divinely affirmed distinctions; and be it further

RESOLVED, That while we denounce the misuse of critical race theory and intersectionality, we do not deny that ethnic, gender, and cultural distinctions exist and are a gift from God that will give Him absolute glory when all humanity gathers around His throne in worship because of the redemption accomplished by our resurrected Lord; and be it finally

By “denouncing the misuse” of CRT/I we imply that CRT/I is good, but some may use it wrongly. Even the best human tools are not neutral. They originate in a depraved human heart.

RESOLVED, That Southern Baptist churches seek to exhibit this eschatological promise in our churches in the present by focusing on unity in Christ amid image bearers and rightly celebrate our differences as determined by God in the new creation.

This paragraph struggles to balance the fact that the Bible does identify differences in ethnic groups while still asserting oneness in Christ. Paul says in Colossians 3:11, “A renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.”

