

Does the Bible Say anything about RACE besides ‘Get Along?’

Anthropology for a Multi-Ethnic Church

WHY? Our neighborhood changed!

In 2001, a 92-year old white Nazarene congregation in Grand Rapids, Michigan found itself surrounded by global neighbors.

The world had arrived from Asia, Africa, Hispanic countries, Europe and the Middle East.

*Should a church entrusted with
the Gospel of salvation for all
reflect its surrounding community?*

God stirred.

Anthropology 101

Dr. Jerry Appleby strongly advocates **MISSIONARY TRAINING** for today's pastors in USA/Canada.

Having never enrolled in a basic anthropology course, I was a case in point.

As ESL students began visiting our church, that deficiency surfaced, leading me to tap into insights of Christian anthropologists as we began looking into biblical foundations for the MEC.

LEGITAMACY Q | Should a white church embark on this journey?

1. Theological -- Is the Multiethnic Church (MEC) an ecclesiastical monument to a secular value? NT norm or novelty?

Are we advancing God's reign or jumping on the latest bandwagon of multiculturalism?

2. Missional - In fulfilling the Great Commission, does an MEC have advantages over congregations of ethnic similarity?

ANTHROPOLOGY | What saith Scripture?

Does a biblical view of HUMAN BEINGS support or discourage the MEC?

Is ethnic diversity *a problem to be solved or a gift to be cherished?*

Assumption: If the Bible presents ethnicity as inherently flawed, two probable consequences:

Within the church - Use of Scripture to justify abuse of groups (e.g. racial hierarchies will threaten multicultural community)

Larger society - Suffer from an absence of inter-ethnic healing and corrections through members of Christ's Body living as salt and light in society.

In short, the Christian faith would have little to offer in reconciling ethnic enemies.

**AGREE OR
DISAGREE?**

“Mission needs a
continual recovery
of the biblical view
of people.”

- Samuel Escobar

**AGREE OR
DISAGREE?**

“Thinking
reconciliation
precedes
doing reconciliation.”

Civil rights leader,
early 20th century

As Pastor, I came with these questions

Similarity Q - *How alike are we?*

Given the vast spectrum of cultures and continents, is there a floor of commonality? Do all people in all parts of the world grapple with the same fundamental issues?

Assumption: Meaningful community requires a shared set of human universals experienced by everyone. Focus on what's common, not exotic.

Equality Q -- *One Master race within the human family?*

Do the Scriptures establish racial equality or do they uphold one group as the norm for all the others to emulate?

Assumption: Healthy community possible only if equivalence view prevails

Insight - *Do Scriptures provide insights into ethnicity that are not found elsewhere?*

What salient understandings of ethnicity can reverse a culture of under-appreciation of the Other, keeping us locked out of each others' lives?

Assumption: Doors into inter-ethnic fellowship remain shut until we live out the unique contributions of a biblical worldview.

Peace Q - *Remove the chronic cycle of violence - memory, revenge and retaliation?*

What medicine has potency to overcome deeply rooted ethnic hostility, especially where a pattern of atrocity is established? Christians are not immune to painful interethnic misunderstanding or controversy. When that happens, is there a theologically-shaped vocabulary of race that truly enlightens, promotes honest dialogue, adjusts faulty thinking, increases mutual empathy, fosters goodwill and hastens resolution?

Assumption: Peace-makers draw resources from the Prince of Peace.

Grouping Q -- *Ethnic clustering versus trans-ethnic belonging?*

In the church, when is separate sub-grouping with one's "own kind" valid and healthy and when does it limit the greater good of Christ's Body or reinforce group-think? Some people seem culture-locked, both white and non-white, forming parallel societies without any genuine interaction with those outside of their own tight-knit communities. Is that a problem?

Assumption: Mine changed.

Belonging Q - *Getting beyond tolerating our differences to celebrating them for the unique contribution of each cultural piece to the whole?*

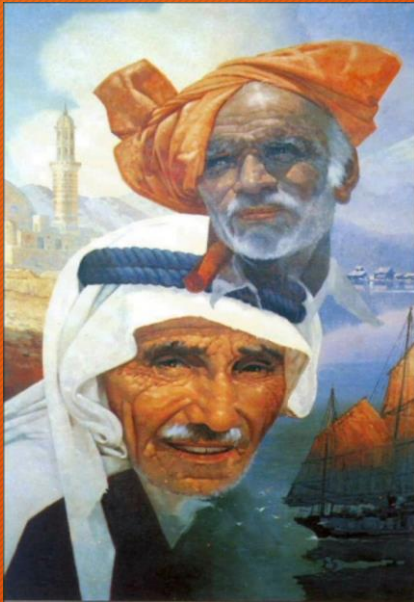
What can a church do to integrate people from multiple cultures into a community in which personal belonging is experienced in an intentional process of acceptance, sincerity, frankness, laughter, trust, sharing Jesus, prayer and in which the initial recipients become active contributors to the larger mosaic?

As the body of Christ, how can we experience that dynamic synergy and active belonging by tapping into the rich reservoir of diversity? What can a church do to create an environment in which no minority feels like a second-class citizen but is integrated with others into the community? What will it take to move a church from mere coexistence of groups into a community where "there is no Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female..." and in which each person experiences a place of belonging, of loving and being loved and of generously giving and humbly receiving? What biblical principles can assist the members of the dominant group to help

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Answers emerge repeatedly throughout the biblical story



1. Human Creation
2. Fall
3. Redemption
 - Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3)
 - Moses
 - David
 - Prophets
 - Jesus
4. The Spirit
5. Heaven

Anthropological Building Blocks for the MEC

Does racial identity arise from divine creation or providence? If so, how does

SIN distort it?

GRACE rectify it?

THE CHURCH embody it?

NOTE: This presentation is a partial study addressing only the anthropological aspect.

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BUILDING BLOCK #1: EQUAL DIGNITY through human creation

All people everywhere are equal because...

**“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 NASB

RACE | Biblical definition

RACE

One humanity as a whole without differentiation

The Greek word translated *race* (*genos*) in the NT denotes:

“person’s descendants (Acts. 4:6), a person’s family (Acts 7:13), and peoples or nationalities (Mark 7:26). Therefore, the word race in the Bible may refer to the origin, lineage, or unity of humanity in that all people are members of the human race (Acts 17:28-29).”

“This common membership means that all people find their origin and source of life in God, they all come from the same original parents (Adam and Eve—Acts 17:26), and they are all contaminated by the same disease (sin—Rom 3:23 that ultimately results in death, Rom 5:12), and they all have the same need (a relationships with Jesus Christ that can remove the penalties of sin—Rom 6:23).”

Norman Anthony Peart, *Separate No More: Understanding and Developing Racial Reconciliation in Your Church*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 96.

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Other biblical terms : (Hebrew) *goy, am, mishphat*; (Gk) *ethne, kosmou, demas*

MASTER RACE | the human race

“God blessed them; and God said to them,
“Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and
subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over
the birds of the sky and over every living thing that
moves on the earth.”

Genesis 1:28 NASB

The “master race” is the human race in its totality,
assigned to rule over the sub-human world.

JUST ONE FAMILY TREE | Muhammad, we're cousins!



“The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth ...

From **ONE MAN** He made **ALL THE NATIONS**, that they should inhabit the whole earth;

and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands.

God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any **one of us.**

-- PAUL, Acts 17:26-27

ADAM | Our common ancestor

- ADAM, the first man, represents a new classification within creation. He was “a single human being ... humankind, mankind, a class of being created by God without regard to sex, with a focus as a class of creature, distinct from animals, plants, or even spiritual beings (Gen 1:26).”
- REPRESENTATIVE MAN--Starting a class all his own, his personal fate would directly affect all others.
- NATURE -- Adam derived his name from the ground from which he came (Gen 2:7). The breath (Spirit) of God distinguishes humanity from all creation. Man is not simple, neither dirt nor divinity, but related to both.
- UNIQUE --The imago Dei survived Adam’s fall (Gen 5:1-3; 9:6-7) so that each member of the human family reflects the image of God. We share in a transcendent relationship that is unique among creatures and enduring.
- SON OF GOD - Adam arrived outside of ethnicity as the only person co-designated with Christ as “the son of God.” (Luke 3:38; Gen 2:7). He is a type of the Last Adam, Jesus Christ (Rom 5:14); 1 Cor 15).
- DIVINE FAVOR - God’s first action for his image bearers was to “BLESS” them and their progeny that they might fulfill his command to “have dominion,” and “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth...” (Gen 1:28 NASB).

Religious basis for human rights

Human creation in God's image is “the religious basis for human rights. It is difficult to see how any other basis can possibly support or give meaning to the rights claimed on behalf of humanity.”

“The Hebrew Scriptures provide the first and most fundamental truth to undergird the concept of human rights: that human beings, male and female, are created in the image and likeness of God and therefore have an inalienable dignity and uniqueness (Gen 1:26-30; Ps 8:4-8).”

Kathleen MacArthur cited by Charles R. Taber,
“In the Image of God: The Gospel and Human Rights,”
International Bulletin of Missionary Research (July 2002): 98.

How similar are we? Anthropologists speak out

“Beneath the vast array of differences
between the peoples of the world
lies an equally impressive substratum of
basic human similarity.”

Anthropologist Charles Kraft
Christianity in Culture

4 Human Universals

Characteristics marking all human beings

BIOLOGICAL -- So similar biologically that the attempt to classify human populations on the basis of race widely abandoned by knowledgeable scholars.

“The concept of race is unscientific and unsound and racial categories are arbitrary”
(Columbia)

PSYCHOLOGICAL -- Basic needs -- “meaning in life,” freedom from the “threat of psychological crippling...safety...love and belonging...and esteem.”

SPIRITUAL -- Common spiritual characteristics -- the universality of religion and the universality of sin

“The essence of the gospel and its appeal to human beings of every society are rooted in the spiritual commonality of humanity.”

SOCIOLOGICAL STRUCTURES -- Serve biological, social and spiritual needs

Biology, continued

“Many physical anthropologists now believe that, because there is as much genetic variation among the members of any given race as there is between the groups identified as different races, the concept of race is unscientific and unsound and racial categories are arbitrary.”

The Columbia Encyclopedia, 6 ed. (Columbia University Press, 2008), accessed March 17, 2010 at <http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/race.aspx>.

COMMUNICATE? | Yes, we can

“If such human commonality were not a fact, cross-cultural communication and harmonious cross-cultural interaction - and mission itself - would be impossible.

The Bible would not be the universal book that it is; nor would the Good News be good news for all societies...”

Louis Luzbetak

Church and Cultures, 158.

UNIVERSAL LINGUISTIC PATTERNS - Basis for cross-cultural comprehension

“Universal mental mechanisms can underlie superficial variation across cultures...Humans speak some six thousand mutually unintelligible languages. Nonetheless, the grammatical programs in their minds differ far less than the actual speech coming out of their mouths.”

Steven Pinker,
MIT professor of psychology,
The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature
(NY: Viking, 2002), 37.

“Human beings have a built-in capacity to acquire language...[and] have an inborn competence to abstract the basic grammar rules from the infinitude of speech sounds heard in early childhood.”

Noam Chomsky (b. 1928),
cited by Luzbetak, *Church and Cultures*, 30.

Anthropological basis for cross-cultural comprehension

“Great similarity among human beings that provides the basis on which the potential for cross-cultural human understanding and intercultural communication rest...

Even though specific behavior within any one area of life may differ, the range of common human experience is sufficiently similar to provide a basis for mutual understanding.”

Eugene A. Nida

Toward a Science of Translating (Leiden: Brill, 1964), 55

BEWARE | exagerrating differences

Missiologists must...

“guard against overlooking or downplaying common human traits...Individual cultures are but different answers to fundamentally panhuman questions.”

Louis Luzbetak

Roman Catholic anthropologist

Church and Cultures, 158

BUILDING BLOCK #2: EQUAL, BUT NOT THE SAME | DIVERSITY BY DESIGN

ALL EQUAL, BUT NOT ALIKE!
From One Trunk to Multiple Branches



The Family Tree of humanity has countless branches speaking different languages, eating exotic foods and adopting different customs.

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Ethnicity 4 fundamental biblical insights

A. GOD'S INTENTION | Not "Plan B"

The biblical story points to ethnicity as an original intention rather than a departure from a monocultural ideal.

NOAH was the new Adam. God repeated the same command to him and his 3 sons that was given to the first Adam.

Their obedience brought a world-filling ethnic sprawl in every direction. Languages multiplied. Gen 9:1; 1:28

First, nations arise (Gen 10); then the Tower of Folly (Gen 11)

HUMANITY- Connected web of extended families

“The Bible does not speak about “humanity” but about “all the families of the earth” or “all the nations.”

It follows that this mutual relatedness, this dependence of one on another, is not merely part of the journey toward the goal of salvation, but is intrinsic to the goal itself.”

Lesslie Newbigin,
The Gospel in a Pluralist Society (1989), 82;

B. ETHNIC EQUALITY | differentiation without stratification

GENESIS 10

“humanity in all of its subdivisions”

Within the vast ethnic constellation we find equality and differentiation without stratification.

The Table of Nations validates every ethnic family and tribal unit within the whole.

Alan Johnson, “Analyzing the Frontier Mission Movement and Unreached People Group Thinking. Part 1: The Frontier Mission Movement’s Understanding of the Modern Mission Era,” *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 18:2 (Summer, 2001): 84.

The Nations *not* an Afterthought

GENESIS 10

ONE WORLD OF FAMILIES

Roster of 70 nations =
divine attentiveness to
the nations beyond Israel
from the beginning

This unity of the human
family establishes early a
basis for the MEC in the
NT.

GENESIS 12-50

ONE FAMILY TO BLESS THEM

God's call to Abraham =
“fulcrum text” (Genesis
12:1-3)

Moves from curse to
blessing on the heels of
Babel

Rhodes, *Nations*, 39.

C. ETHNICITY | Provision of widespread protection of all by a caring Creator

DISTRIBUTIVE PROVIDENCE Care of a loving Creator on behalf of all individuals

Divine providence values families as units of primary care to ensure that no one - young or old - will need falling through the cracks.

“Father of orphans and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation. God gives the desolate a home to live in” (Ps 68:6).

All societies from the dawn of creation spring from family units (Gen 2:24-25; Heb 13:4). Like an ever-spreading honeycomb, these permit enormous population growth - “filling the earth” - without threatening individual protections.

God’s lovingkindness inspired David:

**“O LORD, You preserve man and beast. How precious is your lovingkindness, O God! And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings”
(Ps 36:6-7 NASB).**

ETHNICITY | Providential Care of all

Family Obligation Caring for One's Own Family a Sacred Duty

Is a disproportionate interest in the wellbeing of one's own kindred a biblical value? YES! The obligation of primary care rests with families and is not to be surrendered to the larger whole. Neither government nor church can replace the family.

“But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God.

... Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”

1 Timothy 5:6-8 NIV

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Example: Paul's burden for his people -- “my unceasing anguish” over the rejection of salvation by “my kinsmen according to the flesh” (Rom 9:2-3 ESV).

Caring first for one's own expresses ...

- Not SUPERIOR VALUE (“Our people are more important or superior than yours.” That’s ethnocentricity.)
- But SACRED DUTY (“My family group my first obligation.”)

D. Sum is greater than its parts

How many nations are mentioned by name in the Table of Nations (Gen 10)? _____

“a numerical symbol of fullness and wholeness.
God’s blessing covers the whole earth.”

Why does MULTICULTURALISM usually FAIL?

Multiculturalism Fails when the PARTS BECOME GREATER THAN THE SUM

Modern American multiculturalism lacks a center, creating a:
“cult of ethnicity ... producing a nation of minorities.”

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., *The Disuniting of America* (NY: W. W. Norton, 1992), 112;

“[Focusing] on the particularization of our cultural lives, emphasizing group, ethnic and tribal identity over any other unifying social or national identity” [divides the country]. “These races are not mere ingredients to be blended in a future unity, but permanently distinct communities.”

Michael Lind, *The Next American Nation* (NY: Free Press, 1995), 12

Who Ethnicity Includes

- Everyone has an ethnicity, including Whites. “Ethnic aisles” and “ethnic departments” are mental constructs without basis in reality.
- The Bible never equates ethnic groups with “minorities.” Hearing “Are we no longer a church for Whites?” revealed the prevailing popular view making “ethnic” synonymous with foreign or non-white.
- Unless you were hatched from an egg or dropped by a stork, you are part of an ethnic group.
- Be thankful. You belong.

“Where ethnicity runs amok it becomes divisive. Cultural differences are to be celebrated within the church and mission, but when they become instruments of power and abuse they become divisive, and divisive ethnicity becomes a serious problem...

The distinction between ethnicity in itself and divisive ethnicity is important to make, despite the fact that the literature on ethnicity does not make this distinction...

In the sense that ethnicity is a celebration of cultural diversity it is a gift of God's grace to humanity and should not be considered evil.”

Darrell L. Whiteman, *The Role of Ethnicity and Culture in Shaping Western Mission Agency Identity*,” *Missiology* 34, No 1 (Ja, 2006): 59-70.

ETHNIC BELONGING | Significance for MEC

What do these racial universals mean for the MEC?

1. They correct the tendencies of Western culture and especially modern America which exaggerates cultural differences by focusing on visible physical features (skin color, hair type, etc), or mental and emotional traits.

When familiar racial identifiers are used in the Bible, it is simply to differentiate between people and people groups without ascribing value. This avoids racial identifiers indicating the possession or lack of possession of innate abilities or physical features.

2. Language was among our most difficult challenges. The commonalities gave us an optimism in reaching meaningful interpersonal relationships across cultures in community.

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BUILDING BLOCK #3: The Fall - How sin distorts ethnicity

“Why can’t we all just get along?”

Rodney King, 1990’s

“the question of the nineties”

or

“the question of the ages”?

ETHNICITY | Racism

Our Universal Disorder

“Racism is a spiritual disease contaminating the mind.”

Pocock. *Cultural Change*, 36.

“sinful propensity with its roots in ETHNOCENTRISM, NATIONALISM and TRADITIONALISM -tendencies to be mitigated in the ongoing life of ethnic diversity.

These roots contaminate relationships and create conflict and send a message to outsiders that says ‘Keep Out.’”

“When laced with sin, these three elements can really cloud our judgment when it comes to dealing with those who are different than us.”

Ortiz, *One New People*, 55.

Racism

“Use of race as the central criterion by which an individual or a group judges other people.”

“Denial that all people have been created in the image of God.”

“[The racist is] anyone who is blinded to the positive attributes of a people group, an inability to detect such qualities based upon a selective focus on their perceived deficiencies.

Its evil surfaces in what it denies, full personhood, a diminishment that justifies another’s destruction either in part or in whole.”

J. Daniel Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 50; quoted by Paul Borthwick, “Combatting Ethnocentrism,” 12.

Racists consider a group flawed not by the crimes it has committed but in its essence, and incapable of

redemption.
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Why we must get it right about anthropology

Racial healing begins with sound anthropology.

Reversing racial injustice must first correct deficient views of humanity which play into them.

How does deep societal change come about through the church?

“Thinking reconciliation precedes doing reconciliation.”

Peart, *Separate No More*, 49.

POSSIBLE? Can people change racial attitudes that are deeply ingrained?

Paul, the “staunch religious separatist” who later championed a theology of human equality. See 2 Corinthians 5

DeYoung, et al., *United by Faith*, 156.

Devastating secular anthropologies

America's Historical Eras: Slavery (1619) - post-Civil Rights

White attitudes toward blacks -- from erroneous beliefs about people of color. Cruel treatment followed. A few examples:

- In era of slavery, Galatians 3:28 was seen as a threat in how it endowed converted slaves with equality with their masters. “It challenged the belief that was key to the institution of slavery - Negro inferiority.”
- Racial intermarriage illegal on grounds that whites are superior to any person of color.
- Blacks deemed dispensable “living tools, property” to benefit whites.
- The *U.S. Constitution* made the slave 3/5 human so that five slaves equaled three white men

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Peart, *Separate No More*, 29, 32-33.

Racism & Ethnicity

God loves diversity; The defiant impose uniformity

GENERATION DEGENERATION REGENERATION

Genesis 10

TABLE OF NATIONS

70 Nations

Diverse languages

The only such roster in the Ancient Near East. Other national histories start with themselves. This calls them out by name.

The nations not an afterthought with God.

Genesis 11

TOWER OF BABEL

Arrogant disobedience to ensure safety

Making a name for themselves

“One language in all the earth”
Imposition of *lingua franca*

Michael Pasquale & Nathan Bierma, *Every Tribe and Tongue: A Biblical Vision for Language in Society*, Pickwick, 2011

Genesis 12:1-3

COVENANT OF BLESSING

God’s covenant - “I will” seven times. Climaxes on I will bless you so that “all the families of the earth will be blessed”

Contains an “immediate election” & ultimate election (“all the families”)

One tongue

Compare Genesis 9:7,18-19; 10:5, 20, 31 with Genesis 11:1.

Is this a

(a) contradiction between the multiple languages of Genesis 10 and the “one tongue” of chapter 11, resolved simply by assuming the Tower debacle to have occurred first?

(b) Spirit-inspired globally inclusive message intended to be interpreted in its canonical order? I am shocked by the emotions that have been unleashed on me for taking the latter view.

Eerie words: “Now the whole world had one language and a common speech.” Genesis 11:1.

How do you explain the *lingua franca*? What’s going on here?

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TOWER OF BABEL | what went wrong?

Sin of the Tower Builders

“[They rejected] the pluriform nature of creation that God has willed as the people impose a self-styled unity.”

Beneath the surface of their need for power and “making a name for themselves” was

“the fear of being scattered across the earth.”

Their consolidation became a “supreme act of defiance.”

Rhodes, *Nations*, 25.

Sin of Babel, cont.

“True diversity is a divine gift that distinguishes itself from pluralism as a vain facsimile wrought by human engineering.”

The modern counterpart, the HUP, results with the same “re-segregation” because the focus is on “particular cultures without a unifying identity.”

Rhodes, *Nations*, 30.

“Failure in the U.S.A. takes the form of racialized society wherein race matters profoundly for differences in life experiences, life opportunities, and social relationships.”

Not only has the white evangelical church failed to heal; it contributes to the disease.”

Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 7

Racial reconciliation central, not marginal

RACIAL HEALING A PRIORITY

What Christian would deny that the church should play a role in fostering racial reconciliation? Tragically absent is the CENTRALITY of that work.

“Racial reconciliation does not digress from the great commission but lies on its main path as pivotal rather than peripheral.”

“By assigning social and racial injustice to secondary priority or to the State, the church has incurred devastating consequences both on the welfare of people of color and on the credibility of its own witness.”

Peart, *Separate No More*, 33

The chief hurdle to resolving racial alienation is “lax motivation,” failing to get a large response among whites due to “race fatigue.” George Yancey, *One Body One Spirit*, 100.

“Self-preoccupation can keep Christians from experiencing the multicultural, multiracial and multid denominational unity God desires for us.”

“When Christians stop reacting negatively to sociopolitical terminology like *affirmative action*, *special interest* or *equal opportunity*, and instead use Paul’s terms *special honor*, *greater honor* and *equal concern*, it will change our attitudes from a “me and mine” to a “we and ours” mentality.”

5 Obstacles to Forming a MEC

- Tradition
- Syncretism
- Thinking patterns
- Family clans
- Lack of discipling and leadership training

“When I became a Christian, I recognized that the world had infiltrated the church and that the life of the church was in most cases segregated, by design and by desire, on the basis of racism and ethnocentrism...

The church did more than meet together because of similarities; it practiced exclusion toward those who were dissimilar.”

Juan Ortiz, *One New People*, 15.

Why Racists can't see solutions and lovers can

“Anyone who loves their brother and sister lives in the light, and there is nothing in them to make them stumble.

But anyone who hates a brother or sister is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness. They do not know where they are going, because the darkness has blinded them.”

1 John 2:9-11 NIV

Ethnocentricity | Racism lite

INNOCENT

“the default-mode of the untravelled”

“He who does not travel thinks his mother is the world’s best cook.”

Kikuyu proverb

Whiteman, *Missiology*, 70.

FALLEN

“...One’s own group is the center of everything. Each group nourishes its own pride and vanity and boasts itself superior and looks with contempt on others.”

Douglas R. Sharp, *No Partiality: The Idolatry of Race and the New Humanity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 163; quoted in Borthwick, “Combating Ethnocentricity,” 11.

BUILDING BLOCK #4: ETHNICITY | how grace rectifies sin's alienation

INCARNATION - "God Tents among Us" John 1:1, 14

As Israel moved in to the center, Jesus moved out to the margins (scope of Genesis 12:3). Collision was inevitable (Luke 4:24-27).

- Jesus' mobile presence
- Jesus' table fellowship
- Jesus radical inclusion
- Sending The 12 - symbol of the New Israel
- Sending The 70 - symbol of all nations

BUILDING BLOCK #5: RECONCILIATION

culture community

DOUBLE RECONCILIATION

Two Historic Walls Razed



Backstory—Exodus 26:33-34; Hebrews 9:9

Wall 1: Matthew 27;50-51

What was accomplished by the removal of this wall?
Hebrews 10:19-22; Romans 5:1-11

Wall 2: Ephesians 2:13-22

ETHNIC BELONGING | The Gospel

“We cannot escape the universality of the Gospel. Everyone is invited in; no one can be automatically ruled out.

The gospel of Jesus transcends every humanly drawn boundary, be it ethnic, sexual, or sociopolitical. There is no Jew nor Greek, no male nor female, no slave or free. We are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:28).

As a result of the second birth, we inherit a new ethnic identity. We are born into the spiritual family of God and no matter what our physical ethnicity, it is superseded by this new, spiritual ethnicity.”

Frances F. Hiebert, "Doing Mission with a Universal Gospel and Cultural Diversity." *Direction* 17, 1, (1988), 81-86; quoted by Darrell Whiteman, "Role of Ethnicity," *Missiology*, 1.

MEC Benefit

“As we confess Jesus as Lord in a plural society, and as the Church grows through the coming of people from many different cultural and religious traditions to faith in Christ,

we are enabled to learn more of the length and breadth and height and depth of the love of God (Eph 3:14-19) than we can in a monochrome society.”

Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*,
Eerdmans, 1989, 244

CONVERSION | culture

- ...an integrated system of beliefs (about God or reality or ultimate meaning), of values (about what is true, good, beautiful and normative), of customs (how to behave, relate to others, talk, pray, dress, work, play, trade, farm, eat, etc.), and of institutions which express these beliefs, values and customs (government, law courts, temples or churches, family, schools, hospitals, factories, shops, unions, clubs, etc.) which binds a society together and gives it a sense of identity, dignity, security, and continuity.
 - *Lausanne Occasional Papers: No. 2:*
 - *The Willowbank Report - Gospel and Culture, 1978, 7.*

CONVERSION | culture

“Conversion does not unmake;
it remakes, as new believers are still
the same people with the same
heritage and the same family.”

Willowbank, Gospel and Culture, 21.

CONVERSION | culture

“True conversion to Christ is bound, therefore, to strike at the heart of our cultural inheritance. Jesus Christ insists on dislodging from the center of our world whatever idol previously reigned there, and occupying the throne himself. This is the radical change of allegiance which constitutes conversion, or at least its beginning.

Then once Christ has taken his rightful place, everything else starts shifting. The shock waves flow from the centre to the circumference. The convert has to rethink his or her fundamental convictions. This is **metanoia**, “repentance” viewed as a change of mind, the replacement of “the mind of the flesh” by “the mind of Christ.”

Willowbank, Gospel and Culture, 20.

Building BLOCK #6: The Spirit and the Church as New Creation

ADVANCING from “Our People” to “All People”

Church of Acts 1-9 (“our people”)

Church of Acts 10-28 (“all people”)

Catalyst for Change?

A sheet of critters produce lasting shift in attitude to foreigners

“In the Book of Acts, the WORLD didn’t have to change in order to receive the Gospel. The CHURCH had to change in order to give the Gospel.”

Dr. Samuel Wilson, Anglican missiologist

CULTURE | Mission

WATERSHED EVENT IN BOOK OF ACTS

COUNCIL OF JERUSALEM

ACTS 15

Relativized Culture
Absolutized the Gospel

MASTER'S RACE | Nation without borders

But you are a chosen people,
a royal priesthood,
a **HOLY NATION**,
God's special possession,
that you may declare the praises of him who called
you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Once you were not a people,
but **NOW YOU ARE THE PEOPLE OF GOD;**

1 Peter 2:9-10 NIV

THIRD RACE

“He did this to create in himself ONE NEW MAN out of two, thus making peace, and to reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by which the hostility has been killed.

Ephesians 2:16-17 NEB

“ONE NEW PEOPLE” NCV

“Then he started over. Instead of continuing with two groups of people separated by centuries of animosity and suspicion, he created a NEW KIND OF HUMAN BEING, a fresh start for everybody.” TM

Beauty of God's 3rd Race

**“Ethnicity is not the failure of human oneness;
it is an enrichment of it.**

Ethnicity is not in itself an obstacle to the unity of family and nation.
What is the obstacle is the ideology that we should all conform to
one central cultural norm.

Human difference is the hallowed mystery about us as persons;
uniformity is the affront of disobedience to that mystery. It is when
we play God and demand undifferentiated obeisance to a central rule
that we endanger human potential in its rich and
beautiful diversity and difference.

It is difficult to receive the Jesus of place and time through the
vessels and arteries of his own ethnic mother's blood and milk and not
celebrate diversity in all its concreteness and rich variety.”

Lamin Sanneh, “Theology and the Challenge of Ethnicity: The Ethnic Issue in
Translation with Reference to Africa,” unpublished manuscript presented at the
Yale-Edinburgh, Scotland, 1996. Cited by Whiteman, *Missiology*, 64.

BUILDING BLOCK #7: HEAVEN | Eternal Gathering

International Redeemed Community
Revelation 5 & 7

“eschatological family reunion”

Rhodes, Where the Nations Meet

Presence of ETHNICITY!
Absence of ENMITY!

God never settles for bland uniformity.

MEC - Not an end in itself

“It is too small a thing for you to be my servant
to restore the tribes of Jacob
and bring back those of Israel I have kept.

I will also make you a **light for the Gentiles**,
that my salvation may reach to the ends of
the earth.”

Isaiah 49:6 NIV

ESSENTIAL HUMANITY

Fundamental Realities of a Christian View of Humanity

- All made in the image of God
- All belong to extended families
- All fallen and stand in need of a Savior
- All in Christ adopted into God's greater family.
Each member placed in solidarity with the rest. No one stands alone.

The MEC takes anthropology seriously -
No matter how many ethnic groups are present,
leaders strive to provide an environment in which
each member serves God and each other.

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