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Biblical and Theological Rationale for Cultural Diversity

I. Introduction

The College of Biblical Studies maintains an unwavering commitment to see God glorified, the Gospel proclaimed, the Bible affirmed, and the church unified in an environment that welcomes ethnic and cultural diversity. Our dedication to teaching and practicing truth in love, discipling multiethnic Christian servant leaders, and providing transformative instruction for God's glory is undergirded and fueled by our obedience to both the Great Commandments and the Great Commission ([Matt 22:36-40](#); [28:18-20](#)). As we seek to love God and our neighbors well and to make Christian disciples of all nations, the College prayerfully and actively pursues ethnic unity and reconciliation with humility, gentleness, patience, grace, biblical truth, and love ([Eph 4:1-4](#), [15](#), [32](#); [Col 3:12-15](#); [4:6](#)).

The College's mission to glorify God by educating and equipping multi-ethnic Christian leaders to impact the world for Christ grounds itself on a biblical and theological worldview in which the Triune God glorifies Himself through unity and diversity. The pursuit of Christian unity in the midst of diversity has its roots within the Triune nature of God. The Scripture declares that there is only one God ([Deut 4:35](#); [6:4](#); [1 Kings 8:60](#); [Neh 9:6](#); [Is 45:21-22](#)), and He exists from eternity in three Persons: Father ([Gen 1:1](#); [Gen 17:1](#); [Ex 3:14](#); [Jer 32:17](#); [Eph 1:3](#); [Phil 1:2](#)), Son ([John 1:1](#), [14](#); [8:58](#); [20:28](#); [Rom 9:5](#); [Col 2:9](#); [Heb 1:1-4](#)), and Holy Spirit ([Gen 1:2](#); [John 6:63](#); [Acts 5:1-10](#); [2 Cor 3:17](#); [Ps 139:7-10](#)). Each person of the Trinity is fully God and therefore equal in power, glory, and honor ([Is 42:8](#); [Matt 3:13-17](#); [28:18-20](#); [John 17:1-5](#); [2 Cor 13:14](#); [Eph 1:20-22](#); [2 Thess 2:13-14](#); [Rev 1:8](#)). Thus, the Father is God; the Son is God; the Holy Spirit is God, yet there are not three gods, but one God.ⁱⁱⁱ Likewise, the distinction of persons is always maintained within the Godhead. The Father is, from eternity, the Father, never the Son or the Spirit ([Is 63:16](#); [Ps](#)

[2:7](#); [Matt 3:13-17](#); [John 3:16](#); [12:28](#); [Eph 1:17](#); [2 Thess 1:2](#)); likewise, the Son is, from eternity, the Son, never the Father or the Spirit ([John 1:18](#); [5:19-23](#); [20:17](#); [Eph 1:7](#); [2:18](#)); finally, the Spirit is, from eternity, the Spirit, never the Father or Son ([John 16:13-15](#); [Rom 8:9](#); [Gal 4:6](#); [1 Cor 2:10-11](#); [Eph 1:13-14](#)). This unity of divine essence coupled with the diversity of divine personhood is foundational within the Trinitarian life. Thus, when God chose to create man in His image ([Gen 1:26-27](#)) and for His glory ([Is 43:6-7](#); [1 Cor 10:31](#); [Ps 24:1](#); [100:2-3](#)), the Lord ensured that His creation reflected both the unity and diversity that characterizes His own divine nature.

The Scripture declares that the Lord is a God of peace, not disorder ([Rom 15:33](#); [1 Cor 14:33](#); [Phil 4:9](#)). Therefore, unity and diversity can coexist in harmony because it is exemplified within the Triune God ([Matt 3:16-17](#); [John 14:26-27](#); [16:5-15](#); [17:10](#), [21-22](#)). For example, when the Lord created those who would bear His image (the *imago dei*), He created *one* human race comprised of *two* genders: male and female ([Gen 1:26-27](#)), and this the Lord deemed very good ([Gen 1:31](#)). An “image” should reflect the character and qualities of that which it represents. Thus, the oneness of humanity and the distinction of the two genders ensured that human beings properly “imaged” the unity and diversity within God.^[iii]

II. Recognizing Human Dignity in light of the *Imago Dei*

God created human beings with material bodies and immaterial spirits, thereby giving them the ability to relate both to God and man ([Gen 2:7](#), [16](#), [22](#)). As God reigns over creation, He gave man authority to serve as His vice-regents over the earth, and He commands them to “be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, subdue it, and rule over His creation” ([Gen 1:1-2:25](#), [Isaiah 45:18](#)). Having this kind of authority aligns with the likeness of our creator, God. Moreover, the Scripture states that God breathed the breath of life into Adam, thereby establishing a unique connection between God and His image bearer ([Gen 2:7](#)). Thus, “to be human is to image God.”^[iiii] As our Creator, the Lord also remains intimately involved in the formation of every subsequent human life ([Ps 139:1-3](#), [13-16](#)). God gives human beings unique worth and sets them apart from all other creatures ([Ps 8:4-8](#)).

III. Distinguishing Race & Ethnicity

Given the fact that Adam and Eve are the parents of all humans ([Gen 1:26-28](#); [2:7](#), [21-25](#); [3:20](#); [Rom 5:12-17](#), [1 Cor 15:45](#)), it makes sense that all human beings are also a part of the same species, *Homo Sapiens*, and today, even scientists agree that there is only one biological “race” of humans.^[v] While the term “race” is often used as a social construct to denote a person’s cultural background coupled with other physiological characteristics (such as skin color), the Bible consistently employs the term *ethnos* (Gr. ἔθνος; cf. “ethnic” and “ethnicity”) to describe such distinctives.^[vi] This understanding is often reflected by missionaries who use the term “people groups” to define “a cluster of human beings that are set apart from others because of their language, culture, geography, or religion.”^[vii] Genesis states that from creation to the time of the Flood, humanity “stood in unbroken genetic relation with the first [human]

pair, so that the human race constitutes not only a specific unity, a unity in the sense that all men share the same human nature, but also a genetic or genealogical unity.”^[vii] Thus, Adam and Eve, along with Noah and his descendants (who repopulated the post-diluvian earth, per [Gen 9:1-7, 19; 10:32](#)) possessed the same genetic coding for all subsequent human *ethnē* or “ethnicities.” Just as God displayed His unity and diversity by creating one human race with two genders, He also reveals the same unity and diversity by creating one human race with various ethnicities. Paul also affirms this in [Acts 17:26](#), when he notes that “God made of *one* [italics mine] every nation [*ethnos*] of man to dwell on all the face of the earth.”^[viii] Despite the fact that “contemporary notion of ‘races’ is foreign to Scripture, ‘ethnicity’ more accurately describes the real, observable distinctions of nationality, language, culture, and sometimes religion.”^[ix] Given its alignment with the biblically-used “*ethnos*” rather than the culturally-defined term “race,” the word “ethnicity” will be used throughout this statement.

IV. Recounting Sin & Disunity in History

Despite the aforementioned, God-ordained, human unity in the midst of ethnic diversity, the intrusion of sin fractured the God-human ([Gen 3:8-11, 22-24; 6:5-6; Is 59:2](#)), man-woman ([Gen 3:12, 16](#)), human-world ([Gen 3:17-19](#)), human-human relationship ([Gen 4:1-16](#)). Sin manifests itself with both a nature ([Eph 2:1-3](#)) and behavior that is hostile toward God and others ([Rom 1:18-32](#)). With our rebellion, humans traded our once upright, holy nature for a nature that is characterized by death, disorder, and destruction ([Gen 6:5-6; Rom 5:12-21](#)). While the *imago dei* is still present within all human beings, it is gravely marred, perverted, and tarnished by sin ([Rom 3:23; James 3:9-10](#)). Sin is defined as any word, action, and/or desire that violates the word of God and/or conscience and alienates us from the Lord. We sin by actively breaking God’s Word or by not performing what is commanded of us in God’s Word. Rather than reflecting divine beauty and peace, our God-given distinctions in personhood, gender, and ethnicity have been sinfully twisted to serve as instruments of division and hostility. This human failure to reflect God’s glory rightly and to represent His image accurately assaults the very character of God. Because of His goodness, God simply cannot let false imagers abide ([Ps 100:5; 107:1; Hab 1:13; Nahum 1:2; Rom 1:18; 1 Pet 1:14-16](#)).

After sin entered the world ([Gen 3:1-24](#)), human beings now have the tendency to affirm either unity or diversity to the exclusion of the other and to use their own preferences for sinful means. For example, at the Tower of Babel, human beings stood united in the common purpose of making a tower that reached to heaven, thereby attempting to make themselves god-like ([Gen 11:1-4](#)). For this rebellion, the Lord scattered humanity across the earth and also divided the earth into different languages ([Gen 11:5-9](#)). Thus, humans exploited “unity” for idolatrous means. Likewise, Scripture also notes that man will not hesitate to renounce diversity in an attempt to elevate self. For instance, when Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses’s Cushite wife ([Numb 12:1](#)), the Lord viewed their ethnic hostility as a rejection of His authority and Moses’s leadership, and He judged their rebellion by giving Miriam a skin disease ([Numb 12:4-](#)

13). Thus, Miriam’s attempt to draw “separation” between a man and his Cushite wife directly led to her “separation” from her own people (**Numb 12:14-15**).^[xi] In both cases, God judged the exploitation of unity and diversity. Both must be maintained, and both must be used to glorify the Creator, not the created.

Unfortunately, within the modern history of the church, the Bible has been used as a basis for ethnic prejudice. For example, Dutch Reformed Christians used the Bible to sanction apartheid in South Africa during the modern era.^[xii] Throughout World War II, Hitler and the Third Reich wielded the scriptures in the philosophy and practice of Nazism.^[xiii] Finally, as one of the most blatant historical instances when the Bible has been used in this way, some have used the “curse of Ham” as a biblical justification for slavery and mistreatment of blacks in the American South. However, the text declares that it was Canaan, Ham’s son, who was cursed, not Ham himself (**Gen 9:24-27**). Later, the text states that Ham fathered “Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan” (**Gen 10:6**). While Cush, Mizraim, and Put likely correspond to modern Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Egypt, and Libya, which are in Africa, Canaan became the father of nations that were in the vicinity of the current Middle East (**Gen 10:15-20**).^[xiiii] While the “curse of Ham” has often been leveled against blacks, nothing in the text of Scripture states that the Canaanites were dark-skinned. True to Noah’s prophecy, God drove the Canaanites out of the land due to their wickedness (**Deut 9:4-5**). Therefore, the “curse of Canaan” has nothing to do with those of African descent, and its use to justify the African slave trade not only serves as a prime example of poor exegesis, but it also functions as a blatant misuse of Scripture.

V. Envisioning Gospel-Centered Unity

In an attempt to press for unity, many within society and the church have tried to function as if they are “color blind” when it comes to engaging those of different ethnicities. While their efforts may be well-intentioned, they are also misguided. Unity and diversity should not be viewed as an “either-or” but as a “both-and.” The Lord created people of different colors, complexions, and ethnicities. We should see and honor His creative work and give glory to the Creator for what He has done. We should see the distinctions and honor them as reflections of divine glory: He creates one human race (thereby establishing the unity of His image bearers) with different ethnicities (thereby cementing the diversity of His creative order). The Lord commanded that His people be one as the Triune God is one (**John 17:11, 20**). As each member of Godhead retains His individual personhood while sharing full deity, different groups maintain their ethnic distinctiveness while sharing full humanity. Therefore, unity does not equal uniformity. In fact, the Scripture does not shy away from ethnic diversity but recognizes it openly (**Jer 13:23; John 4:9; Mark 7:24-29; Acts 8:26-40; Acts 16:1**). If the Scripture, the very Word of God, recognizes such ethnic distinctions, then the people of God should follow suit. At the same time, solidarity of purpose does not mandate unanimity of action. Brothers and sisters who fully agree on the need for ethnic unity can, and often will, disagree on how to accomplish that unity. Believers must rely upon wisdom, prayer, and love in order to achieve diversity in a way that honors God and promotes peace (**Eph 4:1-7; James 1:5; Rom 12:9-12; 1 John 4:11**). Since God

creates all people in His image, He therefore gives all “ethnic groups the same status and unique value that comes from being His image bearer.”^[xiv]

Christ, the Great reconciler, is the light of the world ([John 1:9](#); [8:12](#)), and He has called a people unto Himself, the church, who reflect His image by serving as lights in the world ([Matt 5:14-16](#)).^[xv] Now, every person can be reconciled to God through the lifesaving blood of Jesus Christ ([Gal 3:26-29](#); [Col 1:19-20](#); [1 John 2:1-2](#)). As the Lamb of God, Jesus takes away the sins of the world and gave Himself as a ransom for *all* men and women, regardless of ethnicity ([John 1:29](#); [1 Pet 1:19](#); [1 Tim 2:5-6](#)). The Lord lauded the faith and righteous acts of Gentiles ([Luke 4:24-30](#); [Luke 10:25-37](#)), and he calls His people to proclaim His Gospel message to all nations for His glory ([Matt 28:18-20](#)). Just as He began the proclamation of the Gospel to Gentiles, Samaritans, and people from various nationalities ([Matt 4:14-17](#); [John 4:1-42](#)), He calls His church to take the Gospel to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth ([Acts 1:8](#)). At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit fell on people of many different ethnicities so that all could hear the Gospel in their own distinctive languages and take that good news to their countries of origin ([Acts 2:1-13](#)). The same Holy Spirit who was present at creation ([Gen 1:2](#)), the same Holy Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead ([Rom 8:11](#)), is the same Holy Spirit who indwells believers, regardless of ethnicity ([1 Cor 3:16](#); [6:19](#); [Acts 10:1-48](#)). Empowered by the Holy Spirit whom the Father has sent through Jesus ([John 14:26](#)), true disciples commit themselves to obeying the Lord and fulfilling His Great Commission. Therefore, it comes as no surprise to see Peter and the apostles proclaiming the good news in Jerusalem (Acts 1-7), Philip preaching the word in Samaria (Acts 8), other leaders announcing the message to Judea (Acts 9-12), and Paul taking the Gospel to the ends of the earth (Acts 13-28).

A central aspect of the aforementioned Gospel message lies in the fact that salvation is of the Jews ([John 4:22](#)).^[xvi] While the Lord first took the Gospel to the nation of Israel ([Matt 10:6](#); [15:24](#)), it has always been the sovereign plan of God to extend salvation to the Gentiles ([Is 49:6](#); [Rom 11:1-36](#)). Because of Jesus Christ’s perfect salvific work, anyone who receives His message and ministry through faith is no longer an estranged enemy of God ([Rom 10:9-13](#); [Col 1:21-23](#)). Even though Gentiles have been engrafted into the people of God, this does not allow anyone to overlook the importance of the Jewish nation throughout creative and redemptive history ([Gen 12:1-3](#); [Rom 9:1-5](#); [11:17-24](#)). In His own flesh, Jesus tore down the barrier of the dividing wall between Jew and Gentile and created a new body, from the two, in Himself, thereby establishing peace ([Eph 2:11-21](#)). Therefore, the church of God denounces and decries any attempt to rebuild that wall through inclinations towards and acts of anti-Semitism. The head of the Church, Jesus Christ, was born a Jew, lived as a Jew, died as a Jew, and was raised from the dead as a Jew.^[xvii] He intercedes for His people, and He will come again, as a Jew, to reign over the millennial kingdom and ultimately, the new heavens and the new earth. Since anti-Semitism, at its core, blasphemes God the Son, it remains wholly rejected by the Son’s church.

VI. Practicing Gospel-Centered Unity

In the clearest terms, the College of Biblical Studies emphatically and unequivocally denounces all forms of ethnic supremacy, racism/racialization, ethnic division, and ethnic prejudice (i.e. what [James 2:1-13](#) describes as personal favoritism, making distinctions, and partiality) because it portrays a false image of God's Tri-unity, violates the two Great Commandments ([Matt 22:36-40](#)), and denigrates His good work of creation. The Christian^[xviii] cannot and must not be silent in the face of ethnic prejudice. As she proclaims the Gospel to all nations ([Mark 13:10](#); [Rev 14:6](#)), the church must perform her duty and call sin for what it is: sin. While the Lord has given us ethnic distinctions by His own sovereign choice, He also affirms that our heavenly citizenship dwarfs any other allegiance to country, tribe, or nationality ([Phil 1:27](#); [3:20](#); [Mark 11:17](#)). Ethnic supremacy is a moral evil that runs counter to and remains incompatible with biblical Christianity. The Gospel serves as the antidote for this evil. Excusing, ignoring, dismissing, or engaging in ethnic prejudice constitutes a break in our adherence to Christ ([Gal 3:26-29](#)). Therefore, the sin of ethnic bias and/or economic exploitation/discrimination must be actively addressed, not passively engaged ([Acts 6:1-7](#); [Gal 2:11-21](#)). Whether we battle ethnic superiority within our own hearts (the flesh), with the larger culture and societal structures (the world), or against our old foe (the devil) who brings disunity and hatred toward others ([Eph 2:1-3](#)), we wage war against sin in a way that brings honor to Christ ([Rom 6:6](#); [11-14](#); [7:23](#); [8:12-13](#); [James 4:4-10](#)). Like any earthly institution, CBS has missed the mark in its past and continues to grow in its present regarding ethnic reconciliation; nevertheless, we strive toward and labor for a future that is marked by Christian love, peace, unity, and diversity across all ethnicities.

VII. Pursuing Reconciliation, Justice, and Unity

As ambassadors for Christ, we must represent Him faithfully as ministers of reconciliation and press toward godly unity and fellowship with brothers and sisters from all backgrounds ([1 Cor 1:10](#); [2 Cor 5:18-21](#); [Eph 4:1-6](#); [Gal 3:28](#); [Col 3:11](#)). The pursuit of reconciliation is not easy; it requires sacrifice, suffering, prayer, and toil ([Luke 9:23-26](#); [Col 1:24-29](#); [Eph 6:18](#)). It consists in viewing others as more important than ourselves ([Phil 2:3](#)), serving as a slave to all because we are slaves to Jesus Christ ([Rom 6:15-23](#); [1 Cor 9:19-23](#)), forgiving one another as Christ has forgiven us ([Mark 11:25](#); [Col 3:13](#)), and embracing fellow brothers and sisters of different ethnic or social standings ([Phm 1:10-20](#)). Standing united against ethnic animus means submitting to God, recognizing and resisting the devil's scheme to sow disunity by dividing people along ethnic lines ([Gal 3:28](#); [Col 3:11](#); [James 4:7](#)), confessing individual and corporate sins ([James 5:16](#); [1 John 1:9](#)), purifying our hearts ([James 4:8](#)), bearing one another's burdens ([Gal 6:2](#)), humbling ourselves ([James 4:10](#)), outdoing one another in honor ([Rom 12:10](#)), and showing affection to each other with brotherly love ([Matt 5:23-24](#); [Rom 12:10](#); [1 John 2:9](#); [1 John 4:7-8, 20](#)). Though we have unity in Christ, this does not necessarily mean that members of God's household will have the same opinions or arrive at the same conclusions. Nevertheless, as brothers and sisters in the Lord, we must be "quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry" ([James 1:19](#)), particularly as we engage each other on issues regarding ethnic harmony and

diversity. Believers are aliens and sojourners in this world, and our witness should proclaim us as such (**1 Peter 2:11**). Consequently, the unbelieving world should see Christians incarnating the Gospel message by loving one another without holding grudges or seeking its own at the expense of others (**1 Cor 13:5**). Despite the fact that reconciliation and unity across ethnic lines may be met with hostility (**Gal 2:11-14**), Christian disciples follow the mandate of the Lord to love one another sacrificially (**John 15:12-17; 1 John 4:7-21**).

At the final consummation, God will display the beauty and grandeur of His creative and redemptive work. According to **Rev. 7:9**, the Apostle John sees “a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.” In addition, that multitude cries out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’” This multitude stands together as one, and the different members openly praise the Lord with “a” loud voice. “When [different ethnic groups] unite in worship to God, the beauty of their praise will echo the depth and greatness of God’s beauty far more than if the redeemed were from only a few different people groups.”^[xix] God has therefore sovereignly ordained that unity and diversity typifies heavenly worship. Moreover, the fact that all nations will worship God underscores the fact that He is universally praiseworthy.^[xx] “The fame, greatness, and worth of an object of beauty increases in proportion to the diversity of those who recognize its beauty. ... Thus the diversity of the source of human admiration will testify to [God’s] incomparable glory.”^[xxi] Finally, the new Jerusalem boasts the tree of life, the leaves of which serve for the healing of the nations (**Rev 22:2**). Since Christians serve the Triune Lord and pray for His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven (**Matt 6:9-13**), both the local and the universal church must strive to value and embrace the unity and diversity of the One whose image we bear (**Col 3:10-11**).

As Christ adherents, the members of the CBS community strive to live out our heavenly citizenship (**Phil 1:27; 3:20**) by remaining rooted in God’s word, focused on God the Son, led by God the Spirit, and committed to God the Father. We seek to value all that Christ values (**Matt 6:19-21, 33**). God’s glory is demonstrated through the proclamation of the Gospel among the nations; therefore, CBS remains resolute in its commitment to the pursuit of God’s glory by being disciplined and making disciples (including faculty, staff, students, and board members) who recognize the value of and work toward ethnic reconciliation and unity.

VIII. A Prayer to God

O Triune God, You are the sovereign author and giver of life, and Your very nature reflects perfect unity and diversity. Thank You for creating human beings of different ethnicities, backgrounds, and cultures in Your image, according to Your likeness, and for Your glory.

Father, help us to be honest with You, ourselves, and one another about areas in which we need to grow in our love for You and our neighbors. For the sake of Christian

fellowship (*koinonia*), may our commitment to the pursuit of ethnic reconciliation and unity far outweigh any misplaced allegiance to our own comfort and convenience. When we fail to love You and others rightly, convict Your people, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to recognize our error and to call it for what it is: sin. Forgive us, Lord, when we disparage, belittle, or dismiss others on the basis of their ethnicity or race. We repent of this, and we ask for Your forgiveness. Help Your Church to be one, as You are one. Give Your sons and daughters sacrificial, other-centered, Spirit-driven agape love for people of every tribe, language, people, and nation. May the world know that we are Yours by a love that is demonstrated as we listen humbly to one another, intercede faithfully for one another, and engage intentionally with one another, across all ethnic lines, for the advancement of the Gospel.

Lord, we present this document to You, and we thank You for allowing us to participate in the work of Your ministry. May this work glorify You and strengthen Your church. As ministers of reconciliation and ambassadors for Your Son, use us, in any way that You see fit, as instruments of Your love, justice, truth, righteousness, and peace. Father, bring us shalom and be our shalom through the Prince of Shalom, Jesus Christ. In His name and by Your Spirit we pray. Amen.

[i] “The Athanasian Creed” from John H. Louth, ed., *Creeds of the Churches: A Reader in Christian Doctrine from the Bible to the Present, 3rd Edition* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1982), 705. See also “The Definition of Chalcedon” from Louth, *Creeds of the Churches*, 34-36.

[ii] While men and women are image bearers, the Lord intentionally created both men and women with God-given, complementary distinctions that not only highlight His unity and diversity but also bring Him great glory.

[iii] Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible*, First Edition. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 42–43. Even though God made human beings in His image, an image is never greater than that which it represents. Therefore, image bearers must worship God, and God alone, as their sovereign Lord and Creator (**Ex 20:3-6; Deut 6:13-15; Luke 4:8; Rom 1:18-23**).

[iv] Ken Ham and Charles Ware, *One Race One Blood: A Biblical Answer to Racism* (Green Forest, AZ: Master Books, 2007), 112. Kindle Edition. For additional scholarly statements regarding the opposition to separate “races,” see “AAPA Statement on the Biological Aspects of Race,” from the American Association of Physical Anthropologists, <http://physanth.org/about/position-statements/biological-aspects-race/>. Accessed on November 4, 2018. See also the “AAA Statement on Race” from the American Anthropological Association, <https://www.americananthro.org/ConnectWithAAA/Content.aspx?ItemNumber=2583>. Accessed on November 4, 2018.

^[vi] Τό ἔθνος (*ethnos*) is defined as a body of persons united by kinship, culture, and common traditions, *nation, people*, (cf. [Acts 8:9](#); [Matt 24:14](#); [28:19](#); [Mark 11:17](#); [13:10](#)). The term is also used to denote “people groups foreign to a specific people group, specifically, those who do not belong to groups professing faith in the God of Israel, such as the nations, Gentiles, unbelievers” ([Acts 11:1](#), [18](#); [14:5](#); [21:21](#); [26:17](#); [Rom 3:29](#); [9:24](#); [15:10](#)). Finally, the word describes non-Israelite Christians, Gentiles of Christian congregations composed of more than one nationality and not limited to people of Israel ([Rom 16:4](#); [Eph 3:1](#).” See William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (BDAG)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 276-277.

In addition, the Scripture also uses the term ἡ φυλή (*phylē*) to describe different subgroups within a distinct nation, such as the 12 tribes of Israel ([Luke 2:36](#); [Phil 3:5](#); [Heb 7:13](#); [Rev 7:4](#)). For example, the tribe (*phylē*) of Reuben is a subgroup of the *ethnos* or “nation” of Israel. See William Arndt, *BDAG*, 1069.

The New Testament also uses the word ὁ γένος (*genos*) to describe a “relatively large people group or nation.” William Arndt, *BDAG*, 194. It should be noted, however, that the term can have several different connotations in the NT, including “family” (e.g., [Acts 7:13](#)), “descent or origin” (e.g., [Rev 22:16](#)), “race of people or nation” (e.g., [Acts 7:19](#), [2 Cor 11:26](#), [Phil 3:5](#)), “nationality” (e.g., [Mark 7:26](#); [Acts 4:36](#)) or “kind” (e.g., [Matt 13:47](#); [Mark 9:29](#)). See Moisés Silva, ed., *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 556–557.

Of the terms used, τό ἔθνος occurs with the most frequency (162 times). See John Kohlenberger III, Edward W. Goodrick, James A. Swanson, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 250-252.

^[vii] Ham and Ware, *One Race, One Blood*, 115.

^[viii] Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1938), 188.

^[ix] *Ibid.*

^[x] Thabiti Anyabwile, “Many Ethnicities, One Race,” from the *9Marks Journal*, <https://www.9marks.org/article/many-ethnicities-one-race/>. Accessed on November 4, 2018.

^[xi] While some have sought to use Scripture to argue against interracial marriage, the Bible issues no such prohibition. The Lord has consistently commanded His people to marry those who worship Him and Him alone ([Ex 34:11-16](#), [Deut 7:1-6](#); [Josh 23:11-13](#); [1 Kings 11:1-8](#); [Ezra 9:1-3](#); [1 Cor 7:39](#); [2 Cor 6:14](#)); therefore, inter-faith marriage, not interracial/interethnic marriage, violates divine law. See also John Piper, “Did Moses Marry a Black Woman?” <https://www.9marks.org/article/did-moses-marry-black-woman/>. Accessed on November 5, 2018.

[xii] Several essay collections feature historical and theological analysis related to South Africa, Christianity, and apartheid. See R. Drew Smith, et. al., *Contesting Post-Racialism: Conflicted Churches in the United States and South Africa* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2015); R. Drew Smith, ed., *Freedom's Distant Shores: American Protestants and Post-Colonial Alliances with Africa* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2006); William E. Van Vugt and G. Daan Cloete, *Race and Reconciliation in South Africa* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2000).

[xiii] Important studies of this topic include Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); Richard Steigman-Gall, *The Holy Reich: Nazi Conceptions of Christianity, 1919-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Doris L. Bergen, *Twisted Cross: The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

[xiiii] John Piper, Racial Reconciliation: Unfolding Bethlehem's Fresh Initiative #3, Racial Harmony Sunday. Sermon Delivered January 14, 1996. <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/racial-reconciliation>. Accessed on October 30, 2018. See also Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, vol. 1, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word Incorporated, 1998), 221. In addition, see J. Daniel Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race*, ed. D. A. Carson, vol. 14, *New Studies in Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL; England: InterVarsity Press; Apollos, 2003), 34. See also Stephen R. Haynes, *Noah's Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002. Sylvester A. Johnson, *The Myth of Ham in Nineteenth-Century American Christianity: Race, Heathens, and the People of God*. (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan Publishers, 2004).

[xv] Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race*, 202.

[xvi] The one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church of Jesus Christ is also comprised of different members with distinctive Spirit-given gifts (**1 Cor 12:1-31**). Thus, by divine ordination, the bride of Christ also reflects the unity and diversity of the Triune God. Therefore, in His creative work, the Triune God intentionally displays His unity in the creation of one human race and one church; at the same time, He deliberately shows His diversity in the creation of two different, complementary genders; various people groups and ethnicities; and distinctive, edifying gifts among the saints.

[xvii] Throughout the Scripture, the Lord describes Israel as His treasured possession out of all the other peoples on the earth (**Deut 7:6; 14:2; 26:18; Ps 135:4**). However, the text also declares that Israel's special status had nothing to do with her own *inherent* worth; on the contrary, Israel's election depended solely upon the sovereign grace and love of the Lord who wills as He chooses (**Deut 7:7-8**). The Scripture also declares that all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory, regardless of ethnicity (**Rom 2:12-29; 3:10, 23; Eph 2:1-3**). In Christ, the Father elects and adopts believers of all ethnicities to the praise of His glorious grace (**Eph 1:1-6; 2:4-22**).

[xvii] Russell Moore, *If You Hate Jews, You Hate Jesus*, <https://www.russellmoore.com/2018/10/28/if-you-hate-jews-you-hate-jesus/>. Accessed on November 4, 2018.

[xviii] The Christian (ὁ Χριστιανός) can best be described as “a Christ partisan, one who associates or identifies with Christ” (See *BDAG*, 1090). Therefore, the Christian’s primary allegiance belongs to Christ. As His ambassadors, we represent Jesus and His interests, not ourselves or our own interests (**2 Cor 5:20**). Therefore, our adherence to Christ must reign supreme and supersede all other relationships, loyalties, or cultural identifiers, including ethnicity and/or land of origin or residence. Christ’s commitments must be the Christian’s commitments, for we are His (**Matt 10:24-25**; **Luke 6:40**; **1 Cor 3:23**; **Eph 5:1-2**). In His flesh and by His blood, Jesus has created one new body, the Church, which is composed of saints from all ethnicities (**Eph 2:11-22**; **Rev 5:9-10**; **7:9**). The nations are the Messiah’s inheritance (**Ps 2:7-8**), and since evangelizing and making disciples of those nations remained a clear priority of Jesus Christ (**Matt 28:18-20**; **Acts 1:8**; **9:15-16**; **22:21**; **26:14-18**), it should be of the utmost importance to His followers, who only have access to God as a result of Christ’s perfect work and by the power of the eternal Spirit (**Rom 5:2**; **Eph 2:18**; **3:12**; **Heb 9:13-14**).

[xix] John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions, Third Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic Publishers, 2010), 222.

[xx] *Ibid.*

[xxi] *Ibid.*, 222-223.