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STRENGTHENING MULTIETHNIC FELLOWSHIP AT
CHRIST BAPTIST CHURCH IN POLOKWANE,
SOUTH AFRICA

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STRENGTHENING MULTIETHNIC FELLOWSHIP AT
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I dedicate this dissertation to my favorite old man (as I tenderly called him), Don Neal, who went to be with the Lord before he could call me doctor. His confidence in me was an inspiration. I dedicate this work to him for coming to Africa where he made multiethnic friends in my family. He now enjoys perfect multiethnic fellowship in heaven.

I also dedicate this work to Christ Baptist Church, and more particularly to the participants, who willingly participated in this research project and openly responded to questions raised throughout the pilgrimage of seeking answers to strengthen multiethnic fellowship. May you continue to be the light to other believers and the nations as you epitomize Christ-centered and multiethnic fellowship.

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PREFACE

The love of Christ's church compelled me to complete this project. I want to acknowledge those who helped me express it. To the elders and members of Christ Baptist Church, thank you for the opportunity to contribute in the strengthening of multiethnic fellowship. May our multiethnic fellowship survive all socio-political pressures. To my small congregation—my wife, Welheminah; our son, Tikfah; and our little girl, Phoebe—thank you for freeing me, again, to work on another degree. May you love and fellowship with all believers indiscriminately.

To my supervisor, Dr. Kevin Jones, when the stress that came with the nature of this project's topic mounted, you took me out for lunch and coffee to counsel, encourage, and pray with me. Thank you, brother! To Dr. John Klaassen, thank you for pushing me toward clarity. To Christ Baptist Church, Shelbyville Mills Baptist Church, Second Baptist Church, and Owasso Bible Church; and to friends, the Wilkinsons, the Crawfords, and the Neals, thank you for financing my studies. Betsy Fredrick, thank you for editing my project. Pastors Matt Morgan and Dave Beakley, thank you for encouragement and editorial skills. This project would not have seen any light without these players' sacrifices. "Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen" (Eph 3:20-21).

Joseph Mahlaola

Polokwane, South Africa

December 2019

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

When God called Abram and sent him to the unknown land, he promised him, among other things, to bless him and that in him all the families of the earth would be blessed (Gen 12:1-3). God reiterated this promise in Genesis 22:18. God made it clear: “In your [Abraham’s] offspring [singular] shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” According to Galatians 3:16, the singular seed of Genesis 22:18 is Christ. How did God plan to bless all the families of the earth in Christ? The answer is: by establishing a New Covenant through the blood of Jesus Christ. This New Covenant opens the door widely for everyone who believes in Jesus Christ (Gal 3:22). To be specific, Paul says, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28).

If the gospel is fully capable of breaking down ethnic barriers, among other barriers, why is fellowship in South African local churches still fragmented over ethnic, cultural and linguistic lines? These fragmentations are more vivid where the church has a mix of people of different skin color. In South Africa, the divide is mainly between black and white people, which also constitute the membership of Christ Baptist Church. Therefore, this research project sought to answer the question: how can CBC strengthen multiethnic fellowship, specifically among white and black people?¹

¹ Unless explicitly differentiated, the term *multiethnic* includes the meaning of *multiracial* and *multicultural*.

Context

Two specific contexts lead to the research question: how can CBC strengthen fellowship among white and black people?

Historical Context

Christ Baptist Church (CBC) constituted as a fellowship under the Baptist Union of Southern Africa (BUSA) in 1961. CBC's history records that when the ministry started, its main focus was to reach out to the English speaking community.² The history further qualifies that "while the church was continuously joined by people of different languages and cultures, the ethos has been that of an English Speaking Baptist Church."³ In 1989, CBC adopted this purpose statement: "Christ Baptist Church exists as a biblical community to glorify God, by exalting His supremacy in all things, [by] equipping one another for all works of service and, [by] evangelizing *all nations*, so that we may present all people complete in Christ."⁴

Both the history and the purpose statement of CBC seem to articulate the vision of CBC to become a multiethnic ministry. However, as the statement clearly states, CBC's ethos was that of an English-speaking Baptist church. What is meant by this statement is not clear although one could speculate that it refers to English as a medium of preaching within a multi-linguistic context. Though, living in a racially, culturally, and linguistically sensitive context, this statement might be read to mean enculturation into a western English culture. As it will be shown, one of the goals of this project is to suggest the revision of CBC's legal documents, such as membership curriculum, purpose, and/or mission statement, to intentionally eliminate any language that hinders multiethnic fellowship and to intentionally add language that will strengthen fellowship. These

² This history is taken from the "CBC Membership Class Document," unpublished, updated 2015, 1.

³ "CBC Membership Class Document," 1.

⁴ Emphasis added.

revisions are necessary because of the many changes that have taken place since CBC's inception and since the crafting of these documents. One such change is the influx of diverse ethnic groups into the city of Polokwane. What once used to be a homogenous community has become a multiethnic city. According to South Africa statistics, the population of Polokwane was estimated to be 628,999 in 2011; in 2016 the population had grown to 702,190. The population grew by 73,191 in four years. Population groups in 2011 were estimated as follows:

1. Black African: 584,153 (92.9%)
2. White: 32,862 (5.2%)
3. Colored: 5,820 (0.9%)
4. Asian: 4,633 (0.7%)
5. Other groups: 1,530 (0.2%)⁵

In its membership, CBC has representatives from each of these ethnic groups. At the time of writing, white people constituted 58.5 percent and other ethnic groups constituted 41.5 percent. It took CBC over three decades to have this kind of representation, both in its membership and leadership. Partly, this change came as a result of CBC relocating to Flora Park, which has become a fast-developing multiethnic suburb.

Why is it important to note this change at CBC? Between 1948 and the democratic elections in 1994, South Africa experienced apartheid.⁶ The history of the church in South Africa teaches that when the country is racially divided, the church often succumbs.⁷ The split between the Baptist Union of Southern Africa (BUSA) and the

⁵ City Population, "Polokwane Local Municipality Population," July 29, 2016, <https://www.citypopulation.de/php/southafrica-admin.php?adm2id=LIM354>.

⁶ *Apartheid* is a policy or system of segregation or discrimination on the basis of race. Among other things, this system prohibited black and white people to fellowship in the same church.

⁷ This thesis forms part of chap. 3 of this project. This succumbing is true not only of South Africa. It is true of countries like the United States of America. This succumbing disappointed Martin

Baptist Convention of South Africa (BCSA) in 1987 attests to this fact. Numerous reasons have been proffered for the split, but four are primary: (1) the formation of the Bantu⁸ Baptist Church in 1927⁹ by the South African Baptist Missionary Society due to the desire for self-government among the black churches¹⁰; (2) a delay in receiving any Baptist church from any non-white culture into the union of churches¹¹; (3) the employment of apartheid ideology within the denominational structures; and (4) a notion of immaturity and inferiority, which necessitated dependence.¹² Regrettably, even after many attempts to merge the two groups, the merger never occurred. Racism and apartheid are cited as the main factors that hampered the unity.¹³

Luther King, Jr., as expressed in his “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” dated August 1963. King said, I had the strange feeling when I was suddenly catapulted into the leadership of the bus protest in Montgomery several years ago that we would have the support of the white church. I felt that the white ministers, priests, and rabbis of the South would be some of our strongest allies. Instead, some few have been outright opponents, refusing to understand the freedom movement and misrepresenting its leaders; all too many others have been more cautious than courageous and have remained silent behind the anesthetizing security of stained-glass windows. (Martin Luther King, Jr., “The Negro Is Your Brother,” accessed August 6, 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2018/02/letter-from-birmingham-jail/552461/>)

⁸ *Bantu* is a term used for African black people from diverse ethnic groups.

⁹ In the disclaimer titled, “Baptist Union and Baptist Fellowship. Testimony before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission,” the formation of the Baptist Convention is described:

The Baptist Convention of South Africa was formed in 1927 as then known, the Bantu Baptist Church. This church was started as a missionary expression of the then South African Baptist Missionary Society, an extension of the Baptist Union of Southern Africa. In 1987, the Baptist Convention declared it’s (sic) independence from the Baptist Union for what it perceived to be institutional racism in the life of that community at that time. (“Baptist Union and Baptist Fellowship. Testimony before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission,” East London, November 19, 1999, accessed May 22, 2017, www.religion.uct.ac.za/sites/default/.../Baptist_Union_and_Baptist_Fellowship.pdf)

¹⁰ Kevin Roy and Sydney Hudson-Reed, *No Turning Back: A History of Baptist Missionary Endeavour in Southern Africa from 1820-2000* (Pinelands, South Africa: South African Historical Society, 2001), 32.

¹¹ Roy and Hudson-Reed, *No Turning Back*, 114.

¹² Roy and Hudson-Reed, *No Turning Back*, 115.

¹³ Roy and Hudson-Reed, *No Turning Back*, 120.

With CBC belonging to the BUSA and planted in a segregated community where only white people were allowed to live, opening doors to people of color was not naturally embraced nor pursued. According to several members of CBC who joined the church in the 1980s, some people rejected mixing with black people and eventually left the church. CBC's struggle to transition into a multiethnic fellowship is not unprecedented—the early church struggled with the same problem. By Acts 6, the number of disciples was estimated to be around twenty thousand. The church's membership was cross-cultural. In Acts 6, the church had to deal with its first multiethnic challenge: “Now at this time while the disciples were increasing *in number*, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food” (Acts 6:1).¹⁴ This verse highlights the difficulty brought about by transitioning into a multicultural church. Chapter 2 will exegete this passage in detail to bring a warning of two deadly sins that the church today needs to address in order to strengthen multiethnic fellowship. First is the Hellenistic's complaint (Gk. *gongusmos*) against the Hebraic Jews, which is defined as a displeasure expressed in murmuring.¹⁵ The second is the Hebraic's discrimination of the Hellenistic widows, which was expressed through neglect in the daily serving of food. Discrimination led to a resentful complaint. Discrimination and resentment summarize the state of a multiethnic church in South Africa and consequently weaken its fellowship.

¹⁴ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible.

¹⁵ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd rev. ed., ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 205, Logos Research Systems. In the NT, the word grumbling (*gongusmos*) has an unethical sense. It has a bad sense of selfishness (Matt 20:11); criticism (Luke 5:30); impatience (John 6:41); animosity (Acts 6:1); and unwilling to be hospitable (1 Pet 4:9).

Current Context

In addition to population changes, CBC also experienced ministry changes. It began as a congregation of seven people in 1969, and by 2017 it had grown to 162 members. Between this period, CBC has had ten pastors. As CBC continued to grow both numerically and spiritually, the need to reach out also grew. In 1989, the church incorporated Samaria Mission, its mission arm, for evangelism in South Africa and outside South Africa. In 1997, CBC started Christ Seminary to train rural pastors who would lead churches that Samaria Mission planted. The seminary has seven lecturers, who also serve on the pastoral staff and eldership of CBC. Of these seven lecturers, four are black and three are white. This diversity is rare and serves as a model of broken barriers and of strengthening multiethnic fellowship. Samaria Mission also has its own staff consisting of five families who serve full time at the Mission. Of these five families, four are white, and one is black. With Samaria Mission working mainly among black communities, there is a need for biblically-qualified black missionaries. As part of this project, I research ways to address this need.

The staff of two institutions, Christ Seminary and Samaria Mission, account to CBC elders.¹⁶ At the inception of this project, CBC had nine elders—six were white and three were black.

Rationale

Looking at the history of the church in South Africa and of CBC in particular, it is inevitable that CBC has and will experience common problems associated with a multiethnic congregation. Some ethnic/cultural challenges are minor and can be overlooked¹⁷; others, however, are so serious that if not addressed can divide the church.

¹⁶ When I embarked on this project, CBC had nine elders. Since then, the demographics have changed. Two resigned from the eldership.

¹⁷ Examples include cultural preferences, such as clothing, dating process, food, conducting wedding and funeral services, etc.

One such example is a weak fellowship among diverse ethnic groups.¹⁸ This challenge is not new; the early church experienced the same. Two biblical records suffice as examples. First, in Acts 6:1, one cultural group neglects the other, thus threatening the unity of the church. Second, in Galatians 2:11-14, the Apostle Peter's hypocritical separation from the Gentiles is an action that undermined the unity of the church. Paul rightly confronted and condemned Peter's behavior.

When people have a history of separation, it is impossible to knit their souls together without intentionally breaking their sinful prejudices and habits. CBC must pursue and preach personal sanctification to strengthen multiethnic fellowship.¹⁹ CBC must also look at using its legal documents to clarify its position on multiethnic fellowship. From time to time, churches review their doctrinal statements to clarify their positions on marriage and gender to mitigate cultural redefinition. Yet it seems that few consider it as equally important to clarify their position on multiethnic fellowship. Yet the early church treated this topic as significant and church leaders put pen to paper to clarify the church's standpoint on multiethnic fellowship (Acts 15:19-29). By deciding to remove a ritual barrier that led to the Jerusalem council, the church was left united and encouraged (Acts 15:30). This model suggests a need for the church to assess, clarify, and remove any barrier that can hinder fellowship among different ethnic groups. At CBC, this means perusing official documents to see if they encourage or discourage assimilation into the body. This endeavor might also clear the perceptions that CBC is a white church.²⁰

¹⁸ Bauer gives the following four nuances of the word "fellowship" (Gk. *koinonia*): (1) "close association involving mutual interests and sharing, *association, communion, fellowship, close relationship* (cf. Ac 2:42); (2) attitude of good will that manifests an interest in a close relationship, *generosity, fellow-feeling, altruism* (cf. Phil 2:1); (3) *sign of fellowship, proof of brotherly unity, even gift, contribution* (cf. 1 Cor 10:16ab); (4) *participation, sharing* (cf. 2 Cor 8:4)" (Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 552-53)

¹⁹ At least three members of the CBC elder board, who have been with the church before people of color joined, have confirmed that the transition was not intentionally planned. Starting the seminary and the arrival of American missionaries to teach, in 1997, became instrumental in reaching non-whites.

²⁰ I listened to conversations and have spoken to some black members and adherents who seem to have this perception. However, CBC made strides to change this perception. For example, six years ago,

However, this perception is not unexpected since CBC was historically in a white only community and had only white members. Addressing barriers of multiethnic fellowship requires addressing these perceptions as well. It was hoped that CBC would come to realize that the use of the nomenclature *black* or *white* church is unhealthy and creates fellowship barriers.

The black and white labels did not come in a vacuum; they come from a history of people who were segregated along racial lines. The church experiences the effects of this history both externally and internally. Both experiences threaten the harmonious fellowship between black and white people at CBC and further justified the need for strengthening multiethnic fellowship.

External Threats

South Africa is facing tumultuous racial strife. The strife is largely political and it fuels the already existing factions between black and white people. What South Africans thought was history, post-1994, has emerged stronger, and it now tears the country apart, teetering on the brink of civil war. Black people accuse white people of stealing their land and of the white monopoly capital.²¹ Radical transformation and land expropriation without compensation is a slogan chanted by the government, political parties, and parliamentarians. The apartheid wounds that everyone thought were healing are being freshly opened. There is fear that history might repeat itself; only this time, black people are perceived to be the oppressors. The recent flare up in the national assembly, when the land was debated, was a cause for concern and a call to strengthen multiethnic fellowship at CBC. The debate took place on June 13, 2017, where the leader

CBC's pulpit began to see more ethnically diverse preachers. I have also asked some white members what they think would happen if CBC were to have a non-white senior pastor. Answers ranged from "you will have more black people" to "the church will be divided."

²¹ This is a term used in South Africa to refer specifically to (white) capitalists who control the resources or the wealth of the country through their businesses.

of the Freedom Front Plus political party, Groenewald, stated that if anyone wanted to start civil war in South Africa, he would do so by taking the land without compensation.²²

There is no question that these are grave political threats happening outside the church. However, national racial disunity can affect the unity of the multiethnic church. In light of such turmoil, one should consider again the conflict in Acts 6:1, the withdrawal in Galatians 2:11-14, and the split between the BUSA and BCSEA due to the country's apartheid system.

Believers need to be educated on how to respond biblically to external national strife. Angelo Scheepers, the General Secretary of the BUSA, of which CBC is a part, who experienced the split between the BUSA and BCSEA, testifies, "The very fact that BUSA, in spite of its . . . cultural diversity, is still a united rainbow denomination today is nothing short of a miracle and the grace of God."²³ This testimony is also a plea to preserve this unity. The reality is that culture divides (Gen 11), and believers from diverse ethnic groups struggle to find ways of relating with each other, without misgiving. Larry Mercer was aware of this struggle when he wrote "A Biblical and Cultural Study of the Problem of Racism," that "much remains to be done to address the current state of race relations." In an Isaiah-like commission, he asked, "Whose responsibility is it? Is it the government's role to correct these ills? Or should schools do so? Or are churches responsible?" He answers, "The responsibility must be shared by all who know the Lord." Mercer then asks a question that every church should answer. "What can Christians do about the problem specifically?"²⁴ For my church's context, the answer lies with strengthening multiethnic

²² SABC Digital News, "FF Plus Threatens Civil War during Land Debate," June 13, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WyPivvW4DJY>.

²³ Angelo Scheepers, "A Critical Analysis of the Structural Dynamics Operative within the Baptist Union of Southern Africa (BUSA) from 1960-2005 and an Evaluation of These Dynamics in the Light of BUSA Ecclesiology" (MA thesis, University of Pretoria, 2008), 130.

²⁴ Larry A. Mercer, "A Biblical and Cultural Study of the Problem of Racism," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 153, no. 609 (January 1996): 100.

fellowship by breaking sinful barriers that reside in unsanctified hearts that are influenced by a sinful culture.

Internal Threats

Ethnic and linguistic grouping come naturally. This grouping happens because one does not have to deal with ethnic and language barriers. At CBC, these trends are normal at the various mid-week Bible studies. Although these groupings may be harmless and more beneficial to strengthening fellowship, they also have the potential to divide the church (1 Cor 1-4; Gal 2:11-14). Examining ethnic and linguistic groupings might encourage a broader multiethnic fellowship at CBC. Concerning these groupings, Lillian Breckenridge observes,

Churches in the twenty-first century should assume that cultural differences of individual members will be a normal part of congregational life. People representing different cultural backgrounds bring different assumptions, values, and behaviors with them in the congregation. Furthermore, those assumptions, values, and behaviors shape how others perceive and respond to them, how they respond to specific situations in the life of the church, and how they interact with other people.²⁵

Inevitably, with the history of racism in South Africa, it is also easy to falsely label any alienation or lack of interaction among diverse ethnic groups at CBC as racism. Although racism is in some cases a contributing factor to the divide between diverse ethnic groups, as noted from the history of BUSA and BCSA, one must be careful not to label every lack of communion as such.

In the endeavor to strengthen multiethnic fellowship at CBC, this research tested if there is any political influence in the thinking and attitudes of CBC members toward multiethnic fellowship. At the beginning of this project it was hypothesized that there is no political influence on the thinking and the attitudes of CBC members toward multiethnic fellowship. This hypothesis was tested by administering a survey that asked CBC members to respond to racially-motivated issues that divided the church and people

²⁵ Lillian Breckenridge, "Multiethnic Perspectives on Christian Education," in *The Portable Seminary*, ed. David Horton and Ryan Horton (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2006), 661.

in South Africa. Among other issues, the questions focused on multiethnic fellowship, multiethnic leadership, multiethnic worship teams, multiethnic disciples, and interracial marriages. It was envisaged that a change of thinking and attitude in these areas would strengthen multiethnic fellowship. Now, why these select areas?

Leadership. In laying down principles related to the local church, Challies surmises, “The ideal for a church’s leadership is that it reflect the congregation. . . . If a church is made up equally of X, Y, and Z, we’d expect the leadership would also be made up of X, Y, and Z.” His reasons are “because God gifts and equips all kinds of people. He gifts and equips young and old, black and white, native and immigrant, rich and poor, and so.” Challies rightly concludes, “There’s no indication that he [God] dispenses the gift of leadership or the qualifications of eldership to one type or category more than any other.”²⁶ Where the church is multiethnic and has multiethnic men who are spiritually qualified according to 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, Challies argues for balanced leadership representation.

Outreach. The statistics of population groups tabulated previously define Polokwane as a multiethnic city. To evangelize the city of Polokwane, a church with multiethnic conviction and experience will have a greater impact in its outreach. The conviction must be based on Christ’s commission to witness and make disciples of all nations (Matt 28:19-20; Luke 24:47-48; Acts 1:8). Crossing cultural boundaries remains a great challenge for homogenous churches who try to reach their multiethnic neighborhood. However, where a band of multiethnic disciples exists and serve together in the same local church, challenges that come with reaching a multiethnic community with the gospel can be minimized. It is often said that charity begins at home, and so is the breaking of

²⁶ Tim Challies, “Should We Make a Priority of Diversity in Church Leadership?” December 5, 2018, https://www.challies.com/articles/should-we-make-a-priority-of-diversity-in-church-leadership/?utm_source=feedblitz&utm_medium=FEEDBLITZ.

multiethnic barriers. Breaking multiethnic barriers must begin in the church before it can be realized outside.

Worship. In Revelation 7:9-10, John saw “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,” worshipping God for his salvation. Here one finds a group with representatives from every nation, tribe, and tongue who are gathered to ascribe proper worth to the Lamb. To this end, Challies comments,

The Bible makes it clear that God is building a diverse church. It is God’s plan that a church begun in one place with one people would soon spread across the earth to become a church in every place and of every people. We see the ultimate result beautifully and vividly described in passages like Revelation 5 and 7. God is drawing to himself representatives of all tribes, languages, peoples, and nations, (and, of course, all classes and castes and ages and demographics and . . .). There will certainly be an ultimate and heavenly fulfillment of this vision when Christ returns, but we naturally long to see a temporal and earthly fulfillment. And we do, through the local church. The local church is the place we are meant to see unity in diversity.²⁷

One of the ways CBC and other local churches can have a foretaste of Revelation 5 and 7 is by inviting gifted and spiritually mature believers from diverse ethnic groups to form part of their worship teams. Some churches, like that of John Piper, have set a model for multiethnic worship teams as they have observed that multiethnic worship teams in a multiethnic church help the church to grow. In *Bloodlines*, Piper mentions that his church formed the “Every Tribe and Tongue Choir” that specializes in diverse songs.²⁸ Initiatives like this choir promise to be a helpful model to strengthen multiethnic fellowship in the church.

In summary, the foregoing rationale is embedded in the Great Commission to “make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:19). When the church reaches out to people of different ethnic groups, it needs to be clear on how to assimilate them into its body because it can be uncomfortable to rub shoulders with people of different cultures, skin

²⁷ Challies, “Should We Make a Priority of Diversity?”

²⁸ John Piper, *Bloodlines: Race, Cross, and the Christian* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 260, 261.

color, nationality, and language due to past socio-political history that may have skewed one's view of man, church and fellowship.

BUSA secretary Scheepers, in his Master of Arts in Theology thesis, honestly pointed out that, during the apartheid era,

many local churches hid behind a false perception of autonomy, majoring on independence rather than interdependence in the Body of Christ and a real care for one's brother in Christ. This weakness was further exacerbated by the strong focus on only planting homogeneous churches during the apartheid era thus excluding multiethnic fellowship.²⁹

At CBC, with the current demographic membership that represents 58 percent white and 42 percent people of color, the gospel is demolishing the homogeneous wall. However, statistics should not be misjudged as a reflection of individual's hearts; statistics set a context where believers can search their heart's attitudes toward fellow believers of a different ethnicity. These almost even percentages between white and black people give CBC an opportunity to answer a question: how can CBC strengthen fellowship among black and white people?

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to strengthen multiethnic fellowship at Christ Baptist Church in Polokwane, South Africa.

Goals

To strengthen multiethnic fellowship at CBC, the following four goals were pursued.

1. The first goal was to assess the current multiethnic relationships at CBC.
2. The second goal was to develop an eight-week teaching series to change the thinking and attitudes about multiethnic fellowship through adopting a biblical worldview.³⁰

²⁹ Scheepers, "A Critical Analysis," 127.

³⁰ Due to the sensitivity of the topic and the prospect of taking people from their mid-week Bible studies for a long time, the eight weeks were reduced to four weeks.

3. The third goal was to implement the teaching series and strengthen multiethnic fellowship.
4. The fourth goal was to revise CBC's documents to exclude potential threats of multiethnic fellowship and include language that will strengthen multiethnic fellowship.

Research Methodology

For a goal to be considered successfully met, both its means of measurement and benchmark of success needed to be clearly stated. This section specifies the means of measurement and benchmark of success for each of the goals. These means of measurements and benchmarks of success charted the course for the research for the purpose of strengthening multiethnic fellowship at CBC.

The first goal assessed the current multiethnic relationships at CBC. The assessment focused on well-known barriers that divided the church in the past. The purpose of this assessment was to understand what influence, if any, the past political worldviews had on the church's thinking and attitudes toward multiethnic fellowship. This goal was measured by administering a pre-survey to the members of the seven CBC mid-week Bible studies.³¹ Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the pre-test survey responses, followed by a *t*-test that was used to analyze the pre- and post-survey data. This goal was considered successfully met when at least five members of each Bible study group completed the questionnaire, and the questionnaire was analyzed to ascertain the state of and the barriers toward multiethnic fellowship at CBC.

The second goal was to develop an eight-week teaching series to change the thinking and attitudes about multiethnic fellowship through adopting a biblical worldview. The eight weeks were later reduced to four weeks. The lessons covered what the Bible teaches about fellowship in general, and multiethnic fellowship in particular. The lessons were designed in a biblical and systematic theology fashion and allowed room for interaction and self-examination. The doctrine of fellowship, of man, of sin, of salvation,

³¹ See appendix 1.

and of the church were given priority. This goal was measured by the expert panel made up of the CBC senior pastor and two Christ Seminary lecturers. These three men are also CBC elders. The panel used a rubric to evaluate the biblical and theological faithfulness, clarity and coherence of content, and relevance and impartiality of the teaching series. This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the sufficient level.³² If the 90 percent benchmark was not initially met, then the material was revised until it met the standard.

The third goal was to implement the teaching series and strengthen multiethnic fellowship. This goal was measured by the four-week teaching series geared toward strengthening multiethnic fellowship by exposing the church to a biblical view of fellowship, man, and the church. Seven mid-week Bible studies met at the church for four weeks where the four-week teaching series was implemented. Attendance and participation of both black and white people was measured by an expert panel made up of CBC elders and a pastoral staff member, who used a rubric to evaluate the teacher's presentation, the teaching methodology; the members' participation, and the reception of the teaching.³³ This goal was successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level. Additionally, this goal was considered successfully met when a post *t*-test for dependent samples was administered to at least thirty people—fifteen from a black ethnic group, and fifteen from a white ethnic group—who attended and participated in the discussion for four weeks.³⁴ Success was demonstrated by a positive statistical significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores.

The fourth goal was to revise CBC's documents to exclude potential threats of multiethnic fellowship and include language that will strengthen multiethnic fellowship.

³² See appendix 2.

³³ See appendix 3.

³⁴ See appendix 1.

I requested access to CBC’s written documents, which three CBC elders (i.e., CBC senior pastor, Christ Seminary lecturer, and Samaria Mission missionary) assessed. This goal was measured by a SWOT analysis rubric.³⁵ The three CBC elders evaluated official and significant documents and statements to determine their impact on a multiethnic congregation. Questions regarding CBC’s identity, vision, and mission were used to determine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the language used. In their evaluation, the three elders made suggestions for the revision of the documents. This goal was considered successfully met when the existing documents were examined, the weaknesses and threats were identified, the plan was charted to review the documents, and the need to be clear in the documents was acknowledged by the elders.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

Certain terms are specific to this project and require definition.

Strengthening. The concept of *strengthening* is taken from two Greek words, ἐπιστηρίζω (*episterizo*) and οἰκοδομή (*oikodome*) with its verb οἰκοδομέω (*oikodomeo*). *Episterizo* is used in Acts 14:22; 15:41; and 16:5, and is defined by Johannes Louw and Eugene Nida: “To cause someone to become stronger in the sense of more firm and unchanging in attitude or belief.”³⁶ Walter Bauer explains that *episterizo* is used “of believers in connection with their commitment and resolve to remain true, especially in the face of troubles.”³⁷ *Oikodome* and *oikodomeo* are used in the New Testament for spiritual building of the church (Matt 16:18 and 1 Pet 2:5) and “to help improve ability to function in living responsibly and effectively” (Acts 9:31; Rom 15:2; 1 Cor 8:1; 14:12;

³⁵ See appendix 4.

³⁶ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, 2nd ed. (New York: UBS, 1996), 1:677, Logos Research System.

³⁷ Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 381.

and 2 Cor 12:19).³⁸ This research assumes that multiethnic fellowship already exists at CBC, it just needs to be strengthened.

Multiethnic. In a study like this, one struggles with what term(s) to use. Yancey prefers multiracial over multicultural and multiethnic. He understands ethnicity to refer to “groups that have cultural distinctions, while race is used to denote two groups that are perceived to be physically different from each other.”³⁹ This project uses the terms *multiethnic* and *multicultural* interchangeably. *Multiethnic* is used to refer to the fellowship of different people groups, specifically black and white people.

Fellowship. Bauer captures the biblical usage of fellowship (*koinonia*) in four nuances:

(1) [It is a] close association involving mutual interests and sharing, association, communion, fellowship, close relationship (cf. Ac 2:42); (2) [It is an] attitude of good will that manifests an interest in a close relationship, generosity, fellow-feeling, altruism (cf. Phil 2:1); (3) [It is a] sign of fellowship, proof of brotherly unity, even gift, contribution (cf. 1 Cor 10:16ab); and (4) [It is] a participation, sharing (cf. 2 Cor 8:4).⁴⁰

First John 1:3, 6, 7 uses fellowship in reference to a Christian’s salvation. Therefore, in summary, biblical fellowship is a mutual partnership contingent upon and created by the triune God among the people called into fellowship with Christ, to partake in the preaching of the gospel and to meet one another’s spiritual and physical needs.

Assimilation. Assimilation in this project means, as Johnson explains, “one’s incorporation into a local church in a way that allows one to truly feel a part of that body of believers, finding meaningful relationships as well as areas of service.”⁴¹

Colored. In South Africa the term *colored* refers to a person of a mixed race.

³⁸ Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 696.

³⁹ George A. Yancey, *One Body One Spirit: Principles of Multiracial Churches* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2003), 14-18.

⁴⁰ Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 552-53.

⁴¹ Carl Victor Johnson, “Identifying Factors That Lead Minorities to Attend and Assimilate into a Multicultural Church” (DMin project, The King’s Seminary, 2008), 31.

This project envisaged two limitations. First, it was envisaged that the accuracy of the pre- and post-series surveys depended on the willingness of respondents to be honest about their knowledge and understanding of multiethnic fellowship at CBC. To mitigate this limitation, respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality of the information they provided. Second, the effectiveness of the training was limited by the constancy of attendance. If participants did not attend all the training sessions, then it would have been difficult to measure the effectiveness of the teaching. To mitigate this limitation, meetings were scheduled to take place on Wednesdays, a time that participants are used to attending mid-week Bible studies.

Four delimitations served as parameters for this project. First, the scope of the project was primarily delimited to CBC, and secondarily its two incorporated ministries, Christ Seminary and Samaria Mission. Second, respondents were solicited from the mid-week Bible studies. This delimitation helped to gauge the level of relationships happening in a more convenient small group level and ensured that people who responded participated faithfully in the life of the church, at least twice a week.

Third, though there are more ethnic groups represented at CBC, the project was delimited to two, namely, black and white people. Historically, other ethnic groups are grouped with black people under the label, people of color. Fourth, the project was confined to a sixteen-week timeframe. The first eight weeks were spent preparing the teaching series and getting the panel to evaluate it. The remaining eight weeks were spent teaching and implementing the series. Eight weeks of teaching ensured adequate time for the teaching and ensured that people were not taken from their Bible studies for a prolonged period.

Conclusion

I initiated this project because of the conviction that Christ died for his bride, the church, and that through the church, God has purposed to reveal his manifold wisdom to the angelic beings (Eph 3:10). For this wisdom to be displayed, the church must embrace

its predetermined multiethnic nature and strengthen its multiethnic fellowship (Eph 3:6). Therefore, this project intended to strengthen multiethnic fellowship at CBC. This multiethnic fellowship was underpinned by a detailed theological basis in chapter 2 and a detailed historical and practical basis in chapter 3.

CHAPTER 2

THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR STRENGTHENING MULTIETHNIC FELLOWSHIP

A cursory reading of theology books reveals that theologians rarely pay attention to the multiethnic nature of the world.¹ The topic seems to be left for sociologists and civil rights movements to address. By abdicating this responsibility, the church is missing out on the opportunity to create an environment where it can display God’s manifold wisdom through a multiethnic church with a strong multiethnic fellowship. Evangelical scholars, who care about the church that exists in a racially divided world, cannot afford to overlook this significant theological topic. They are to join the apostle Paul who said,

To me, the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things, so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly *places*. (Eph 3:8-10)

Paul goes on to state, “This [mystery] was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph 3:11). It is clear from these

¹ The rarity of multiethnic discussion in theological books does not mean these theologians do not believe in multiethnicity. It might mean that such a topic is implied in their discussion of human race without separately focusing on the multiethnic topic. In reading their sections on the doctrine of man, Paul Enns does not have a section on the multiethnic nature of humankind. Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago: Moody, 1989). Nor does Wayne Grudem, Charles C. Ryrie, or Michael Horton. Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Nottingham: Britain, IVP, 1994); Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth* (Chicago: Moody, 1999); Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith :A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011). Bruce Milne dedicates a paragraph under a section of sin “in relation to one’s neighbor,” focusing on sin’s cause of racial prejudice. Bruce Milne, *Know the Truth: A Handbook of Christian Belief* (Leicester: England, IVP, 1998), 135. Robert Duncan Culver has a two-page section titled “Races within the Unity of Race.” Robert Duncan Culver, *Systematic Theology: Biblical and Historical* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2005), 245-47. John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue have a “Ethnicity and Nations” discussion in four pages. John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 439-43.

verses that God planned that a multiethnic church would be the vehicle through which his manifold wisdom would be displayed.² To ignore this fact is to rob God of his glory.

The main purpose of this project was strengthening multiethnic fellowship at Christ Baptist Church, but this goal could not be reached unless a biblical foundation for a multiethnic fellowship was laid. Therefore, this chapter lays a biblical theological foundation for multiethnic fellowship that will help the church think and respond biblically to issues of race and ethnicity. The foundation begins with a missiological thesis, followed by ecclesiological, soteriological, and doxological theses.

Missiological Thesis: Matthew 28:19-20

Matthew 28:18-20, the Great Commission, remains a relevant command for Christians in many ways. First, it serves as a bedrock for many theological disciplines, including missiology, ecclesiology, theology, Christology, and pneumatology. Second, it supports various other Christian beliefs and practices: the Trinity, baptism by immersion, discipleship of believers, and cross-cultural missions. Third, it aids biblical counselors with comforting of Jesus's ongoing presence. In these ways, this passage guides Christian faith and practice.

Nevertheless, some local churches overlook the multiethnic nature of the command to "make disciples of all nations." Others perceive it to be more a call to go to a distant land among a completely different group. This chapter first argues that, missiologically, Christ's Great Commission—to make disciples of all nations—envisaged that a church in a multiethnic community should represent its multiethnic population. An

² Hendriksen confirms this conclusion: "Since in chapter 2 and 3 of Ephesians . . . the matter of the reconciliation of Jew and Gentile to God and to each through the cross—which to the Jew was a stumbling block and to the Gentiles foolishness—is never absent from Paul's mind, it would seem that this is one of the manifestations of the divine "wisdom" which he mentions. God's wisdom reconciles seeming irreconcilables." William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 159.

exegesis of Matthew 28:19-20, with special focus on the terms, *going, make disciples, all nations, baptizing* and *teaching*, prove this vital aspect of Jesus' teaching.

Central Focus of Matthew 28

Matthew 28 focuses on the resurrection of Jesus. The angels, unbelieving guards, believing women, corrupt priesthood, and eleven worshipping and doubting disciples witnessed, either by sight or by hearing, the resurrection of Jesus Christ (vv. 1-16). Jesus announced that all authority in heaven and on earth is given to him (v. 18). On the basis of his absolute authority and as a result of being proven as the rightful King of Israel (Matt 1; Rom 1:3-4), Jesus gives the eleven disciples the Great Commission: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt 28:19-20). The Great Commission is still binding to the modern church. The basis for this binding comes from the text itself. The undergirding promise of verse 20 says, "And behold I am with *you* always to the close of the age." With emphasis placed on *you*, John Piper argues, "The 'you' cannot be limited to the apostles, since they died within one generation. The promise extends to "the close of the age," that is to the Day of Judgment at Christ's second coming (cf. Matthew 13:39-40, 49). . . . Jesus is speaking to the apostles as representatives of the church that would endure to the end of the age."³

Jesus' commission abounds with key words that implicitly envisage the unity of a new community of disciples. Semantically, "make disciples (μαθητεύσατε, *matheteusate*)" serves as the main thought of the passage. The phrase "of all nations (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, *panta ta ethne*)" functions as its direct object. The three participles, "going (πορευθέντες), baptizing (βαπτίζοντες) and teaching (διδάσκοντες)," modify the verb

³ John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 173.

“make disciples.” The study of each of these key words will prove that implicit in the Great Commission is the fellowship of multiethnic disciples who are united in Christ.

Make Disciples of All Nations

Bauer defines μαθητεύσατε (make disciples) as “to cause one to be a pupil.”⁴ Louw and Nida caution against taking “make disciples” to imply duress or force. They suggest, “In order to avoid a wrong implication of a causative, it may be important to use such expression as ‘convince them to become my disciples’ or ‘urge them to be my disciples.’”⁵ Its cognate noun, μαθητής (*mathetes*), refers to “a person who is a disciple or follower of someone.”⁶

Although the term *disciple* in its verbal form occurs in two other places in Matthew’s gospel (13:52; 27:57), its use in Matthew 28:19 finds its first fulfilment in the book of Acts. Luke’s emphasis on the community of disciples suggests that disciples were not to live in isolation. They were to be together and learn together (see Acts 2:42). For example, the book of Acts employs the term *disciples* for the first time in Acts 6:1. Here Luke calls the believers “the community of disciples” (τὸ πλῆθος τῶν μαθητῶν). Community (πλῆθος) speaks of quantity. The number of disciples kept increasing (Acts 6:1, 7). Throughout the book of Acts, Luke speaks of the disciples in the plural. For example:

1. Acts 9:1: Saul was against the disciples of the Lord.
2. Acts 9:19: Saul was with the disciples at Damascus.
3. Acts 11:26: Disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

⁴ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd rev. ed., ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 609, Logos Research Systems.

⁵ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, 2nd ed. (New York, UBS: 1996), 1:470, Logos Research Systems.

⁶ Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 470.

4. Acts 11:29: The disciples determined to send relief to the brothers in Judea.
5. Acts 13:52: The disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.
6. Acts 14:22 (cf. 18:23): The disciple's souls were strengthened and were encouraged to continue in the faith.
7. Acts 18:27: Disciples in Achaia welcomed another disciple (Apollos).
8. Acts 20:1: Paul encouraged the disciples.
9. Acts 21:4: Paul and his companions looked for disciples when they were in Tyre.
10. Acts 21:15: Disciples accompanied and accommodated each other.

These verses lead to a conclusion that no disciple should be a loner and that Jesus intended his disciples to be a united community. For this community of disciples to exist, the church must *go* and bring them.

Going to All Nations

The participle *going* can be construed either as a temporal participle or as an attendant circumstance. Those who conceive it to be temporal translate it thus: “while going” or “after going” make disciples. The argument would be that a temporal force moves attention from the participle to the finite verb: make disciples. Proponents of this choice would also argue that going is not a command; a command would be to make disciples while you go. As plausible as this interpretation can be, the attendant circumstance is to be preferred.⁷ The action of the participle, *going*, is coordinate with the finite verb “make disciples.” The participle piggybacks on the mood of the finite verb. The urgency of the commission is emphasized. Anything less than the imperatival force is, in the words of Wallace, “to turn the Great Commission into the Great Suggestion!”⁸ The attendant circumstance implies that Jesus not only commanded the eleven to make

⁷ For the discussion of the attendant circumstance, see Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 640-44. Wallace adds ten references from Matthew (2:8, 13, 20; 9:6; 11:4; 17:7, 27; 27:2; 22:13; 28:7) to illustrate the use of the attendant circumstance.

⁸ Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 645.

disciples, but he also commanded them to go. The ingressive aspect of the participle further supports its imperatival force.⁹ This is the beginning of an inclusive multiethnic and cross-cultural commission. The first commission Jesus gave to these disciples was limited to the nation of Israel (Matt 10:5-6). Therefore, there is a clear contrast between the first commission in Matthew 10:5-6 and the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19.

Comparing and Contrasting Matthew 28:19-20 with Matthew 10:5-6

1. In both texts Jesus is the commander.
2. In both texts the apostles are recipients.
3. In Matthew 10, the disciples are “*not to go* to the Gentiles and Samaritans,” whereas in Matthew 28 they are commissioned *to go* to all nations.
4. In Matthew 10 Jesus has not died and risen. In Matthew 28 he has died and risen.
5. In Matthew 10 the doors are not wide open for non-Jews. In Matthew 28 the doors are wide open for all nations.

God’s mission has always been to reach all nations with the gospel. Several times in Matthew’s gospel Jesus clearly states that non-Jews will be saved. In Matthew 8:11, Jesus said, “I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness.” Again, Matthew 21:43 reads, “Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people (ἔθνη), producing the fruit for it.” The parable of the wedding feast in Matthew 22:8-10 makes the same point: “The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find there, invite to the wedding feast.” The nations have always been part of God’s plan of salvation. However, the Jews received priority in God’s plan. This explains passages such as Matthew 10:5-6 and

⁹ Wallace state, “The aorist tense may be used to stress the beginning of an action or the entrance into a state. . . . It occurs with verbs that denote activities where the action is introduced as a new item in discourse.” Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 558.

Matthew 15:24, where the focus is on the Jewish nation. However, the doors would not be fully opened to the Gentiles until the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Now that Jesus is risen, whoever (Jew or Greek) will call on his name will be saved (Rom 10:12-13).

There is therefore a shift from ethnocentric to multiethnic discipleship in Jesus' Great Commission. For this shift to be realized, these localized Jews were to "go and make disciples of all nations."

All the Nations

The imperatival force of the participle *go* not only implies urgency in disciple making but also a shift from ethnocentric discipleship to multiethnic discipleship. In addition, this participle implies that by going the Jews will begin mixing with other nations. However, as the book of Acts shows, the Jews did not readily embrace this mix (see Acts 10; 11; 15; Gal 2:11-14). Charles Price succinctly comments, "The salvation of Gentiles and their reception into the church of Jesus was not a pain-free experience for them in the early years of the church."¹⁰ Nevertheless, the commission was clear: "Go and make disciples of all nations."

Meaning of All the Nations

Scholars are divided over the scope of "all the nations" (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη). Does the term *ethne* include the Jews, or should it be limited to the Gentiles? Arguing for the "non-Jewish people" and against the "people groups" interpretation of πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, Jarvis Williams determines that "the plural term 'Gentiles' (*ethnikoi* [Matt 6:7], *ethne* [Matt 28:19]) always refers to non-Jewish people and/or non-Jewish territories in the New Testament."¹¹ He categorically states that *ethne* in the plural does not refer to people groups. However, Williams acknowledges that his view is not a popular one.

¹⁰ Charles Price, *Matthew: The King in His Glory* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2012), 381.

¹¹ Jarvis J. Williams, "Biblical Steps toward Removing the Stain of Racism from the Southern Baptist Convention," in *Removing the Stain of Racism from the Southern Baptist Convention*, ed. Jarvis J.

Popular view: Includes the Jews. Other commentators reject the exclusion of the Jews from the meaning of “all the nations.” John Nolland conceives, “Matthew uses ἔθνη alone when referring to the Gentiles, but when he speaks of ‘all the ἔθνη,’ he no longer uses ἔθνη to distinguish Gentiles from Jews but rather refers to the whole of humanity.”¹² Michael Wilkins agrees with Nolland and he observes, “Matthew uses the full expression ‘all nations’ in settings that most naturally include all peoples, including Jews (cf. 24:9, 14; 25:32).”¹³ On the other hand, David Turner concedes that the priority in Matthew 28:19 is the Gentiles, but he intuitively doubts that the phrase “of all nations” excludes the Jews. He sees the mission to the Gentiles as a supplement to the mission to the Jews, not as a substitute for it.¹⁴

Both Wilkins and Turner point to the book of Acts for the meaning of Matthew 28:19. There they find that the apostolic church made disciples of both Jews and Gentiles.¹⁵ R. T. France, Leon Morris and Douglas O’Donnell also support the universal scope of “all the nations.”¹⁶ O’Donnell goes further to define “all nations” in light of Revelation 5:9 and Acts 1:8, thus understanding it to mean “every tribe and language and people”; and as “moving out of Jerusalem . . . to the end of the earth.”¹⁷ Osborne concurs that

Williams and Kevin M. Jones (Nashville: B & H, 2017), 27-28.

¹² John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 1266.

¹³ Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 953.

¹⁴ David L. Turner, *Matthew*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 689.

¹⁵ Wilkins, *Matthew*, 953; Turner, *Matthew*, 689.

¹⁶ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 1114; Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 746; Douglas Sean O’Donnell, *Matthew: All Authority in Heaven and on Earth*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 914.

¹⁷ O’Donnell, *Matthew*, 914.

Jesus' mission is universal¹⁸: "Both Jews and Gentiles are the object of evangelization and acceptance by Jesus."¹⁹

Piper gave an extensive exegesis and statistical deduction to ascertain the meaning of πάντα τὰ ἔθνη in Matthew 28:19.²⁰ After his extensive study, Piper concluded that "the singular use of *ethnos* in the New Testament always refers to a people group. The plural use of *ethnos* sometimes must be a people group and sometimes must refer to Gentile individuals, but can go either way."²¹ Piper then analyzed eighteen texts from which he concluded that the phrase πάντα τὰ ἔθνη (*panta ta ethne*) "must refer to Gentile individuals only once, but must refer to people groups nine times."²² He then combined his findings and concluded that the meaning of *panta ta ethne* in Matthew 28:19 leans heavily toward people groups.²³

Unpopular view: Excludes the Jews. Matthew's gospel uses the noun *ethne* consistently in both singular and plural forms. In some places, one can discern a clear non-Jewish reference. For example, in Matthew 21, Jesus addressed the chief priests and the elders of the people who questioned his authority (Matt 21:23). Jesus used two parables in verses 28-48 to reveal that the Jews lose entrance into the kingdom because of their unbelief (v. 32). Jesus told the parable of the tenants to point out that "the kingdom

¹⁸ Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 1080.

¹⁹ Osborne, *Matthew*, 1080n26.

²⁰ Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, 174-80.

²¹ Piper draws his conclusion from Matt 24:7; Acts 2:5; 8:9; 1 Pet 2:9; Rev 5:9. Piper went on to give the following passages as an example of individual Gentile: Acts 13:48; 1 Cor 12:2; Eph 3:6. As an example of people groups, he quoted Acts 13:19; Rom 4:17-18; Rev 11:9. Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, 175, 176, 177,

²² Piper analyzed Matt 24:9, 14; 25:32; 28:19; Mark 11:17; Luke 12:29-30; 21:24; 24:47; Acts 2:5; 10:35; 14:16; 15:16-17; 17:26; Rom 1:5; Gal 3:8; 2 Tim 4:17; Rev 12:5; 15:4. Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, 178-80.

²³ Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, 180.

of God will be taken from you [Jews] and given to a people producing its fruits” (v. 43). Since the antecedent of the pronoun “you” are Jews, then it follows that “the people (*ethnei*) producing fruit” refers to the Gentiles who heed the call. Jesus gave a similar kingdom parable in chapter 22—the parable of the wedding feast. The Jews rejected the invitation and ill-treated and killed the messengers (v. 5). Their rejection opened an invitation to the Gentiles (vv. 9-10; cf. Rom 11).

Other Matthean passages that contain the term *ethne* are Matthew 24:9, 14; 25:32, and Matthew 28:19. All three passages have a plural form of *ethne*. Williams observes that all plural forms of *ethne* in Matthew refer to non-Jews. Since the discussion passage, Matthew 28:19, falls within these passages, Williams’ hypothesis must be tested.

The genre of Matthew 24 and 25 is apocalyptic, the theme is judgment, the context is the tribulation period, and the audience are Jewish disciples (24:1, 3). Exegetically, the “you” in Matthew 24:9 can be interpreted as a reference to a Jewish nation (it could be the nation as a whole, or it could be those who believe). Or, if one holds a covenantal theological view, the “you” will be interpreted as the church. A valid critique of the covenantal view is demonstrated by the fact that the church was nonexistent when Jesus spoke these words. Furthermore, the occasion and the context of the discussion excludes the presence of the church in this text (see Matt 24:1-3). It is therefore plausible to take “you” to point to the Jews.²⁴ Here in Matthew 24:9, Jesus recalls the prophetic words of Zechariah 12:3 that Israel will be hated by all the nations. If the “you” refers to the Jews, then “the nations” in Matthew 24:9 refers to the Gentiles. In the same vein, the nations in verse 14 should be taken to mean the Gentiles.

²⁴ Further discussion can be pursued to determine whether Jesus limited the “you” to the believing Jews, or whether it includes the whole Jewish nation. The persecution seems to be “for sake of Jesus’ name,” which could be arguing for believing Jews.

On the other hand, Matthew 25:32 is ambiguous. From a cursory reading, one might include Israel in the meaning of the nations. However, L. A. Barbieri thinks that here also “the nations (*ta ethnē*) should be translated ‘the Gentiles.’”²⁵ He sees the expression “these brothers” as a reference to the Jews who are physical brothers of the Lord.²⁶ This argument is plausible especially given the fact that God promised to save “all Israel” in Romans 11:26. The prophetic word of Joel 3:3, 12 also excludes Israel from God’s judgement.²⁷

Should Matthew 24:9, 14 and 25:32 interpret *ta ethnē* in Matthew 28:19? As previously noted, those who hold to a popular view will argue against such an interpretation. The argument is mainly based on the fulfilment of Jesus’ commission in the book of Acts, where disciple making included the Jews. The scope of Acts 1:8 also includes Jewish territories—Jerusalem and Judea. How does one deal with this interpretive conundrum?

To solve the interpretive conundrum in Matthew 28:19, one must notice an apparent disagreement between the popular and unpopular views. This apparent disagreement can be resolved by bringing Matthew 10 into the picture. It was earlier noted that Jesus prohibited his disciples to go in the way of the Gentiles, and to enter any Samaritan city (Matt 10:5). If that is the case, then the eleven, who were the direct recipients of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19, were already involved in reaching out to the Jewish nation (Matt 10:5). They did not need to be instructed to go to the Jews again because nowhere does one read that Jesus repealed this initial commission. One

²⁵ L. A. Barbieri, Jr., “Matthew,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 2:80, Logos Research Systems.

²⁶ Barbieri, “Matthew,” 81.

²⁷ Surely this cannot mean all Israelites since Paul in Romans says only believing Israelites will be saved (Rom 9-11). However, all Israelites alive when Christ returns will be saved because of God’s mercy (Rom 11:26-32).

surmises, therefore, that in Matthew 28:19, Jesus cancels the prohibition of Matthew 10 and permits them to broaden their scope to include the non-Jewish nations. Thus, exegetically, the phrase “all nations” means non-Jews, without nullifying the act of making Jewish disciples. Jesus is adding to and not subtracting from the scope of the Great Commission. Both Jews and Gentiles need to hear and receive the same gospel message without partiality (Acts 10:34; 15:9). They are made disciples through the same message. Therefore, the commission given in Matthew 28:19 adds to the charge of Matthew 10 and demonstrates that the Great Commission is inclusive of all people groups, including both Jews and non-Jews.

Jesus further modified the Great Commission: “Make disciples of all nations” with two participles of means, thus giving guidance on how the disciples of all nations are to be made. These two participles have strong implications for the strengthening of multiethnic fellowship. Thus, each require proper attention.

Baptizing All Nations

One may ask how baptism can serve to strengthen multiethnic fellowship. A biblical response would be: “There is one baptism” (Eph 4:5). The context of Ephesians 4:5 is unity especially between Jews and Gentiles. Gentiles are fellow heirs with the Jews (3:6). These fellow heirs share an identical baptism. According to Matthew 28:19, they are all baptized “in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” The Trinitarian baptism surely says something about the oneness and the unity of the triune God. If all Christ’s disciples go through one and the same baptism, then they have common reason to strengthen their fellowship without prejudice.

Baptism appears again in 1 Corinthians 1:13 in the context of disunity in the Corinthian church. The church was divided over God’s servants. Surprisingly, in addressing this problem, Paul mentions baptism. He does not relegate baptism, but his point is not to focus on who baptized you, but focus on the undivided Christ through whom and for whom you were baptized. If the Corinthians had this right view of baptism,

then they would pursue unity. Intuitively, it seems that baptism not only serves as a symbol of one's death to sin and resurrection to life, but it also serves as an entrance into the church's fellowship (Acts 2:38, 41). In the New Testament, it was the next immediate step after believing (Acts 8:12, 13, 36-38; 9:18; 10:47-48; 16:15, 33; 18:8; 19:5). Another relationship between baptism and unity is found in Romans 6:3-5. Believers are said to have become united with Christ in the likeness of his death through baptism. The baptism motif is employed again in 1 Corinthians 12:13, albeit in a spiritual sense, to explain the unity of the body of Christ. Paul writes, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free." If believers go through one baptism, without any racial or ethnic distinction, administered in the name of the united triune God, and are baptized into the same fellowship, then they should intentionally find ways to strengthen fellowship despite ethnic diversity.

Teaching All Nations

Teaching follows baptizing in Matthew 28:19. Like baptizing, teaching serves as a means of making disciples. The disciples of Jesus make disciples by teaching. The anticipated setting for this teaching would be the church. Simon Kistemaker agrees with this deduction as he writes, "We assume that this teaching was done especially at the public worship services."²⁸ Luke's report in Acts 2:42 supports this deduction. In this text, Luke deliberately pairs teaching with fellowship and the breaking of bread with prayer. Learning together creates an atmosphere of fellowship. Breaking of bread and prayer solidify fellowship (Acts 2:44). The apostles continually carried the mandate of Christ. They went and made disciples of all the nations. They baptized them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. They taught them to observe all that Jesus commanded them, and Jesus kept his promise. He was with them wherever they went. By

²⁸ Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 110.

Acts 6, a community of multicultural disciples converged together. By Acts 13, the church was multiethnic. The church was now multiethnic. What would the church do to strengthen its multiethnic fellowship? The following section answers this question.

Ecclesiological Thesis: Acts 6:1-7 and 13:1

The Holy Spirit guided the early church to intentionally choose a multiethnic leadership to serve a multiethnic church (Acts 6:1-7; 13:1). An exegesis of Acts 6:1-7 and Acts 13:1 serve as a model for CBC and the contemporary church.

Acts 6: Multicultural Leadership

Acts 6 presents an internal conflict in the early church. The conflict came with the numerical growth of the church (Acts 6:1). Acts had already recorded an exact number of 8,000 souls added to the church. In addition, many of those who heard the Word (Acts 2:41; 4:4), along with believers who were added to the Lord, more than ever brought about multitudes of both men and women (5:14). The church continued to grow (6:1). By Acts 6, the number of disciples has at least reached 20,000.²⁹ The growth testifies to the disciples' obedience to the Great Commission—to make disciples of all nations.

The church was multicultural and multiethnic (Acts 2:5-11; 6:1). Luke speaks of the Jews who came from “every nation under heaven” in Acts 2:5, and of Hellenists and Hebrews in Acts 6:1. Consensus exists among scholars that both Hellenists and Hebrews in this context were Jews. Language and culture were what differentiated them.³⁰ According to *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, the term *Hellenist* was “employed of a person who spoke Gk. but was not racially of the Greek nation. The expression is

²⁹ John MacArthur, *Acts 1-12, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 177.

³⁰ Darrell L. Bock, *Acts, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 258; MacArthur, *Acts 1-12*, 178; Kistemaker, *Acts*, 220; F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts, New International Commentary of the New Testament*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 120.

especially used of the Jews who adopted the Gk. language and, to some extent, Greek customs and culture (Acts 6:1; 9:29).³¹ Hellenistic Jews would have adopted the Greek language and culture at the expense of their own language and culture. The native Hebrews retained the Jewish culture and Semitic language, most probably Aramaic.³² Historically, Hebraic Jews and Hellenistic Jews were intolerant of each other.³³ Both groups brought some of their tension into the church when they became disciples.³⁴

Now both rival groups continued to join the church with greater numbers, which resulted in a competition for the limited resources the church provided. The competition boiled over into open conflict between the two groups in Acts 6, over the daily service of food to the widows. The problem had a great potential to divide the church and it needed an urgent solution. However, before looking at the solution, one needs to first look at the nature of the conflict. The problem is twofold.

Problem 1: The Hebrews' neglect. Luke reports, “There arose a complaint from the Hellenists against the Hebrews” (Acts 6:1). The Hellenists complained “because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food” (Acts 6:1). This statement alone is revealing as to the nature of fellowship that existed at this time in the early church. The use of “their” pronoun already highlights the division in this church. They do not seem to see each other as one community of disciples as introduced in verse 1. Their ethnic identity is still prominent. Next, one observes Luke’s employment of the progressive imperfect verb, *παρεθεωροῦντο* (*paretheorounto*: they were being neglected).

³¹ Merrill F. Unger, *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, rev. ed., ed. R. K. Harrison (Chicago: Moody, 1988), 551.

³² I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 5 (Leicester: IVP, 1980), 125.

³³ Richard N. Longenecker, *Acts*, in vol. 10 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 805.

³⁴ Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 120.

The verb is modified by the emphatic adverbial phrase, “in the daily serving *of food*.” The habitual aspect of the imperfect verb and its adverbial modifier (in the daily serving) indicate that the neglect was repeated.³⁵ It was not a once off mistake. Contrary to what Eckhard Schnabel suggests, the neglect strongly appears to be intentional.³⁶ And contrary to R. Kent Hughes, the offense seems actual and not imaginary.³⁷ Luke saw the complaint as legitimate, and so should the church today. John MacArthur correctly weighs the matter: “Certainly the fact that the Hellenists Jews spoke of their widows collectively indicates they felt the neglect was deliberate.”³⁸

Richard Longenecker perceives that the dispute over food was just a symptom of the tension between the two groups: “Earlier prejudices and resentments may have been reasserting themselves in the Jerusalem church.”³⁹ MacArthur perceives the same: “Some of the racial and cultural hostility carried over into the church.”⁴⁰ One can sense discrimination, segregation, prejudice, and resentment in the repeated neglect. Drawing an application from the Hebrews’ neglect of the Hellenists, David Peterson cautions, “Christians in every age and social context need to be aware of the threat that cultural and racial differences can pose to their unity.”⁴¹ The Hebrews’ neglect of the Hellenists’ Jews caused another problem: the complaint.

³⁵ Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 330. Wallace enters this verb under the progressive imperfect. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 544. However, based on the adverbial modifier, in the daily serving, I take the aspect of the verb ‘to neglect’ as customary.

³⁶ Schnabel, *Acts*, 330.

³⁷ R. Kent Hughes, *Acts: The Church Afire*, Preaching the Word, ed. R. Kent Hughes (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1996), 94.

³⁸ MacArthur, *Acts 1-12*, 178-79.

³⁹ Longenecker, *Acts*, 805.

⁴⁰ MacArthur, *Acts 1-12*, 178.

⁴¹ David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand

Problem 2: The Hellenists' complaint. The Hellenistic Jews' complaint against the Hebraic Jews reveals animosity by the Hellenists. Luke captures this animosity with two words; namely, the noun γογγυσμὸς (*gongusmos*, complaint) and the preposition πρὸς (*pros*, against). Bauer defines *gongusmos* as an “utterance made in a low tone of voice. [It is] behind-the-scenes talk. The context indicates whether the utterance is one of discontent or satisfaction. [Its] negative aspects [are]: *complaint, displeasure*, expressed in murmuring.”⁴² The Hellenists were not only discontented, but they also displayed a hostile attitude. Hostility is implicit in the phrase πρὸς τοὺς Ἑβραίους (*pros tous Hebraious*, against the Hebrews). According to Bauer, when the preposition πρὸς (*pros*) follows verbs of disputing it carries a hostile force, so it is translated as “against.”⁴³

Summary. The foregoing exegesis revealed two destructive and divisive problems: discrimination embedded in the Hebrews' neglect of the Hellenists widows; and the hostility embedded in the Hellenists' complaint against the Hebrews. How did the early church prevent disunity and strengthen multicultural fellowship among disciples? The answer lies with the following model solution.

Structural Adjustment

Warren Wiersbe gives the following counsel: “When a church faces a serious problem, this presents the leaders and the members with a number of opportunities. For one thing, problems give us the opportunity to examine our ministry and discover what changes must be made.”⁴⁴

Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 231.

⁴² Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 204.

⁴³ Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 875.

⁴⁴ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary: New Testament* (Colorado Springs: Victor, 2001), 1:429.

The complaint reached the twelve apostles' ears (Acts 6:2). The twelve were still the only leaders of the rapidly growing church. They summoned the congregation of disciples. Luke does not say that the twelve summoned two groups of disciples. He also does not say that they summoned one group and left the other out. He says that the twelve summoned the entire congregation of disciples. The apostles not only addressed the problem because of the division it would have caused, but also because of the hindrance it presented to the preaching of the Word of God (v. 2). The twelve categorically stated, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables." Acts 6:7 seems to suggest that the conflict did affect the spread of the Word of God, because once it was resolved the Word began to spread again. Conflicts impact the ministry of the word. MacArthur writes, "A church racked by internal conflict finds its message lost in conflict, its energy dissipated."⁴⁵

The apostles' response leads to the conclusion that they had relinquished their responsibility for the food ministry when the Hellenists complained (see Acts 4:35-5:3). Other people were in charge, presumably from the Hebraic Jews' group since the complaint was levelled against them. When the matter was brought before the twelve, the twelve quickly assessed the problem and prescribed the right solution (Acts 6:3). The solution given would restore and strengthen the fellowship among the multicultural disciples.

Multiethnic Leadership

The twelve commanded the church to select seven men. The characteristics of these men are worth noting.

The men were qualified. One immediately discerns a trust relationship between the whole congregation and the leading apostles. The congregation accepted the instruction to select seven men without any objection and selected the seven men immediately. The

⁴⁵ MacArthur, *Acts 1-12*, 178.

word “select” (ἐπισκέψασθε, *episkepsasthe*) needs attention lest one think this was a democratic election. The word means “to make a careful inspection, *look at, examine, inspect.*”⁴⁶ Thorough spiritual vetting was mandatory. The qualifications of these men were that they must be men of good reputation, and full of the Spirit and of wisdom. Only Spirit-filled and discerning men proven by their good reputation, who know how to apply knowledge were to take charge of this sensitive service in the church. In contrast to the seven men, the apostles devoted themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word. The solution ensured priority was given to both ministries. So far, the proposed solution “found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose” (Acts 6:5). From this approval one already discerns unity in the church. Everyone is pleased. Unanimously, they selected seven men in accordance with the apostles’ instruction. They chose qualified men. Second, and surprisingly, they chose Hellenistic men.

The men were Hellenists. Acts 6:5b reads, “And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch.” All seven men chosen have Hellenistic names, suggesting that they were Hellenists.⁴⁷ Nicolas is described as a proselyte from Antioch. He was not born as a Jew but was proselytized. He was a Gentile, and he was from Antioch. A wonderful multiethnic leadership was developing in this passage.

Someone reading this text may question the wisdom of the church in choosing Hellenistic leaders only. Will this choice not lead to the same problem, with the Jews becoming the plaintiffs?⁴⁸ There are three possible answers to this question: (1) perhaps the church overlooked cultural or linguistic diversity and looked for quality men who

⁴⁶ Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 378.

⁴⁷ MacArthur, *Acts 1-12*; Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 121; Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 127; Bock, *Acts*, 261.

⁴⁸ This question is pertinent to the South African context where, after the democratic elections, the black government was voted into power and the whites began to experience oppression.

were only found among the Hellenistic group; (2) the seven men were added to the already existing Hebrew administrators who served the tables when the complaint arose; or (3) Both of the above are possible. Option 2 is likely, although the church should mature to where option 1 can be accommodated without misgivings.

Wisdom would require that the chosen seven Hellenistic administrators be added to the previous Hebraic administrators. Contrary to Darrell Bock's view—"since the problem involves Hellenists, Hellenists are given responsibility to solve it"⁴⁹—it is plausible to think that both Hellenic and Hebraic Jews were given responsibility to solve the problem. However, Bock rightly surmises, "The disciples do not fragment along ethnic lines or suggest that separate communities be formed along ethnic lines. Rather they are committed to working together."⁵⁰ This unity of leadership would serve as a great testimony to the unity of the church. Furthermore, this multiethnic leadership would advance the gospel cross-culturally. Luke intentionally highlights the dispute between Stephen and some who belonged to Hellenistic synagogues (Acts 6:8-10). The dispute came as a result of Stephen's outreach to his fellow Hellenists. This outreach highlights one of the positive things that come with multiethnic leadership in a multiethnic church. Multiethnic leadership creates a platform for cross-cultural evangelism.

The outreach led to Stephen's death, but this was not a loss since his death planted a seed for further multiethnic outreach that Jesus assigned to the disciples (Acts 1:8). Besides Stephen, Philip also reached out to the Samaritans (Acts 8:4-25) and the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-38). Peter reached out to the Gentiles (Acts 10). In Acts 11:19, Luke returns to the outreach brought about by Stephen's death. He notes that the Jerusalem multiethnic church outreach went as far as Antioch. With this move, the center

⁴⁹ Bock, *Acts*, 261.

⁵⁰ Bock, *Acts*, 261.

of Christianity shifted from Jerusalem to Antioch and the multiethnic leadership modelled by the Jerusalem church was continued in a multiethnic church at Antioch.

Multiethnic Leadership at Antioch

Luke introduced the leaders of the church at Antioch in Acts 13:1: “Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was *there*, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.”

Two specific leadership offices are mentioned, prophets and teachers. Kistemaker writes, “From the Greek we are unable to discern whether the words *prophets* and *teachers* signify two separate offices or if a person can be both prophet and teacher.”⁵¹ Prophets and teachers led and ministered to the church (Acts 13:2; cf. 1 Cor 12:28-29; Eph 4:11), but Luke also wants the reader to know, as Hughes suggests, that “this church [and its leadership] was amazingly heterogeneous.”⁵²

Barnabas, Manaen and Saul are Jews. Schnabel describes Barnabas as a Greek-speaking Jew from Cyprus, and Saul as a diaspora Jew from Tarsus. Concerning Manaen, whose name is a Greek form of Hebrew *manahem* (meaning comforter) and was brought up with Herod the tetrarch, Schnabel states, “Manaen evidently belonged to a noble Jewish family with connections to Herod’s court.”⁵³

Simeon, who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, were Gentiles. Kistemaker undoubtedly defines Niger as a reference to Simeon’s complexion and

⁵¹ Kistemaker, *Acts*, 454.

⁵² Hughes, *Acts*, 174.

⁵³ Schnabel, *Acts*, 554.

descent.⁵⁴ Hughes describes him as “a black man named Simeon.”⁵⁵ Bruce says, “He was presumably of dark complexion.” Bruce found it tempting to identify him with Simon of Cyrene.⁵⁶ J. Daniel Hays reasons, “While it is difficult to draw conclusions about the name *Niger* with absolute certainty, it is probable that this man was called *Niger* because he was Black and came from Africa.”⁵⁷ Hays’ reasoning is based on Luke’s theological discussion on African converts (see Acts 8, Ethiopian eunuch). Hays explains, “The mention of a Black African as a leader in the church in Antioch certainly has theological significance for Luke.”⁵⁸ Luke not only takes interest in the conversion of black Africans, but also in their integration into the church and its leadership. Thus, with this mixed ethnic leadership represented in Acts 13:1, Luke shows, as Hays concludes, that “the multiethnic aspect of the early Church extended to leadership and not just to membership.”⁵⁹

The multiethnic church leadership models of the Jerusalem and Antioch churches promise to strengthen fellowship and have an impactful testimony to their racially divided world if contemporary churches were to adopt these models. John Piper and his church, Bethlehem Baptist Church, share this conviction. Because of their conviction, they put steps in place to intentionally pursue multiethnic leadership. Piper tells that Bethlehem Baptist Church takes ethnicity into account when making choices about who it will call to pastoral staff and eldership. Since one of the church’s aims is to

⁵⁴ Kistemaker, *Acts*, 454.

⁵⁵ Hughes, *Acts*, 174.

⁵⁶ Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 244.

⁵⁷ J. Daniel Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, ed. D. A. Carson (Downers Grove, IL: Apollos, 2003), 177.

⁵⁸ Hays, *From Every People and Nation*, 178.

⁵⁹ Hays, *From Every People and Nation*, 178.

experience and display racial diversity, Piper says, “To that degree the intentional consideration of race in hiring is warranted.” Piper and his church deem it “reasonable and warranted to consider race as part of the qualifications in hiring.”⁶⁰ This intentional shift to multiethnic leadership does not come without cost, but the church must be encouraged by the fact that the price is already paid in full. The next section addresses this payment.

Soteriological Thesis: Ephesians 2:11-3:10 and Colossians 3:10-11

Missiologically, Jesus’ Great Commission envisaged multiethnic disciples (Matt 28:19-20), and ecclesiologically, multiethnic churches should have multiethnic leadership (Acts 6:1-7; 13:1). However, the foregoing arguments are unattainable without biblical soteriology—the doctrine of salvation. Soteriologically, God’s mystery, revealed through the gospel of Christ, not only reconciles sinners to himself, but it also reconciles hostile ethnic groups. An exegesis of Ephesians 2:11-3:10 and Colossians 3:10-11 argues for the horizontal gospel-centered reconciliation.

The Mystery: Gentiles and Jews Are Made One

In Acts 6:1-7, multiethnic fellowship was not pain-free. The relationship between Hellenistic and Hebraic Jews resulted in segregation and hostility. Although the apostles found a solution in qualified multiethnic leaders, the problem was in no way near the end. The problem heightened when Peter reached a Gentile household with the gospel (Acts 10). The Jews in Jerusalem took issue with Peter for going to the uncircumcised and for eating with them (Acts 11:1-3).

This confrontation reveals that the command of Jesus—to make disciples of all nations—was still foreign to the Jewish church. Further, the long Jerusalem council

⁶⁰ John Piper, *Bloodlines: Race, Cross, and the Christian* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 258.

meeting came as a result of soteriological debate between some men from Judea and Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:1-2). Twice in his report to his fellow-Jews concerning God's commission to Cornelius' house, Peter mentions the word *diakrino* (to make a distinction) (Acts 11:12; Acts 15:9). Peter came to understand that God's salvation is impartial. Both Jews and Gentiles are saved in the same way (Gal 3:28).

After the council listened to Peter's doctrine of salvation, they embraced it (Acts 15:19-30). Judas and Silas used the council's soteriology to strengthen the church at Antioch (Acts 15:32). Paul communicated it to other churches and as a result strengthened churches in the faith (Acts 16:4-5). This historical account teaches the importance of biblical soteriology. The unity of the church rests upon a gospel that is effective for all men and thus builds Christ's body with diverse members (Rom 1:16; 1 Cor 12). The soteriological piece is the foundation of the house without which the whole building collapses. Thus, to strengthen multiethnic fellowship, biblical soteriology must have a center stage.

It is no surprise, then, that the New Testament epistles expound on the role of biblical soteriology in the reconciliation of different ethnic groups. Most of Paul's epistles clearly state that both Jews and Gentiles are sinners, and that they are both saved in the same way—by the gospel (Rom 1:16; 2:9-11; 3:9, 22b-23; 14-15; 16⁶¹; 1 Cor 12:13; 2 Cor 5:17-21; Gal 3:26-28; Eph 2:11-3:10; Phil 3:2-11; Col 3:9-11). In Ephesians 2:11-3:10 and Colossians 3:9-11, Paul takes the soteriological argument further and argues that if the gospel of Jesus Christ reconciles Jews and Gentiles to God, then the same gospel reconciles Jews and Gentiles to each other and places them in the same body.

⁶¹ Rom 16 gives a beautiful model of a multiethnic church in Rome. The people mentioned represent Latin, Greek and Hebrew speaking believers. Paul uses the terms "kinsman" to refer to the Jews and "Gentiles" to refer to non-Jews. This is another evidence of a multiethnic fellowship in the first century churches.

Vertical Reconciliation

Ephesians opens with a detailed doctrine of salvation in chapter 1. Paul recounts salvific blessings planned and effected by the Triune God. God the Father chose, predestined, and adopted believers to the praise of His glorious grace (Eph 1:3-6). The Son secured the believers' redemption and forgiveness. In him, the believers have obtained their inheritance (Eph 1:7-12). The Holy Spirit put a seal of eternal security on the believers (Eph 1:13-14). Paul calls this Triune salvation a mystery (Eph 1:9). God saves dead sinners, both Jews and Gentiles, from his wrath by grace (Eph 2:1-10).⁶²

In Colossians, which is a twin epistle to Ephesians, Paul follows a similar theological and practical structure. The first two chapters discuss the sufficiency of Christ for salvation. The Colossians' faith was in Jesus Christ (1:4). All who believe in Jesus are rescued from the domain of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of Christ (1:13). From 1:14-20, Paul presents Christ to the church at Colossae as the redeemer, forgiver of sins, the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, the creator of all things, the sustainer of all things, the head of the church, and the firstborn from the dead. He reconciles all things to God through the blood of his cross. All people were formerly alienated and hostile to God (v. 21). By his death, Christ reconciled believing sinners to God (vv. 22-23). In chapter 2, Paul wants the Colossians to understand that Christ is sufficient to satisfy their every salvation need. No man-made wisdom—be it in a form of legalism, syncretism, mysticism or ascetism—is necessary for salvation. Man's reconciliation with God is complete in Christ (2:10-15).

Horizontal Reconciliation

The mystery of the gospel goes beyond vertical reconciliation to make peace between human rivals.⁶³ Paul explicates Christ's horizontal reconciliation in Ephesians

⁶² Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 151.

⁶³ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, The New

2:11-3:10 and Colossians 3:10-11. In Ephesians 2:11, Paul uses terms such as “Gentiles in the flesh” (τὰ ἔθνη ἐν σαρκί), “uncircumcision” (ἀκροβυστία), and “circumcision” (περιτομῆς) to indicate the separation between Gentiles and Jews.

Furthermore, Gentiles were separated, excluded, and were strangers to the covenants of promise (Eph 2:13). Ethnic hostility separated Jews and Gentiles. The two groups had no physical grounds of reconciliation. They needed divine ground. Paul reveals that Christ’s death became that ground. Ephesians 2:13 says, “But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” Paul goes on in verse 14 to explain why Christ alone can reconcile the two groups.

Christ is the believer’s peace (ἡ εἰρήνη). The word *peace* can either refer to a state of concord, peace, harmony, or a state of well-being.⁶⁴ Of the two states, the former is probably what Paul had in mind. Jarvis Williams lists Paul’s different uses of the term *peace* and regards its use in Ephesians 2:14-15 “to express how Jews and Gentiles ought to live in relation to one another in the world.”⁶⁵ In line with understanding *peace* as a reference to reconciliation between two rival groups, Frank Thielman rightly notes, “Christ is not divided into competing groups, and so those who are identified with Christ are also at peace with one another.”⁶⁶ Paul’s use of enmity as an antithesis of *peace* further substantiates interpreting *peace* as between Jews and Gentiles. Where the *peace* is experienced, the barrier of the dividing wall is broken (Eph 2:14). The *peace* is also mentioned in contrast to enmity that the death of Christ abolished (v. 15a). *Peace* is also

International Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 295; Jarvis J. Williams, “Biblical Steps toward Removing the Stain of Racism from the Southern Baptist Convention,” in *Removing the Stain of Racism from the Southern Baptist Convention*, ed. Jarvis J. Williams and Kevin M. Jones (Nashville: B & H, 2017), 42-43.

⁶⁴ Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 288. Bauer places Eph 2:14 under “state of well-being.”

⁶⁵ Jarvis J. Williams, *One New Man: The Cross and Racial Reconciliation in Pauline Theology* (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 103.

⁶⁶ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 164.

equated to the two made into one new man (v. 15b). It is associated with reconciliation in verse 16. The cross stands between reconciliation and enmity and reconciles Jews and Gentiles in one body (i.e., the church) to God after it has first put to death the enmity (v. 16).

Therefore, according to Paul, the breaking of the barrier of the dividing wall, and abolishing and putting to death the enmity precede horizontal peace and reconciliation. The cross of Jesus Christ acts as an instrument of both reconciliation and demolition of enmity. Christ came and preached peace to the Gentiles who were far away, and peace to the Jews who were near (Eph 2:17). The evidence of Christ's peace is the access enjoyed by both groups in one Spirit to the Father (v. 18). Same access, same Spirit, same Father! This is peace! Paul goes further to describe Christ the peace of believers with two adjectival participles in Ephesians 2:14.

Christ, the one who made both groups one (ὁ ποιήσας τὰ ἀμφοτέρα ἓν).

Paul repeatedly used the adjective “one” in Ephesians to underscore the unity of the church (Eph 2:14, 15, 16, 18; 4:2, 4, 5, 6).⁶⁷ Therefore, as Peter O'Brien suggests, the participial phrase “who *made* both one, refers to the resulting unity of Jewish and Gentile believers.”⁶⁸

Christ, the one who broke down the wall of partition (τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ λύσας). Thielman explains, “Paul is using μεσότοιχον here metaphorically of something that keeps the two people groups, Jews and Gentiles, separate from each other.”⁶⁹ However, Christ broke down this barrier of the dividing wall. He accomplished this “by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained

⁶⁷ There is also one another language (Eph 4:32; 5:19, 21).

⁶⁸ Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 194.

⁶⁹ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 165.

in ordinances” (Eph 2:15). Bruce views the barrier as largely being psychological. The antipathy aroused by the separateness of the Jews, accompanied by a sense of superiority. Christ abolished this antipathy.⁷⁰

Again, one sees that Christ occupies a center stage in ethnic reconciliation. The Law could not reconcile people groups. Instead, it continued to widen the divide. Only in Christ and by his blood alone are enemies brought together and made into “one new man.” With the three words metaphor, “one new man” (ἓνα καινὸν ἄνθρωπον), Paul presents a powerful testimony of salvation by Christ. Paul intentionally placed the three words together to emphasize what God is doing between the two groups. The adjective “one” identifies a particular “new man.”⁷¹ There no longer exists two hostile groups in the church of Christ, but one humanity (ἄνθρωπον) united in Christ. Therefore, the adjective “one” emphasizes the unity and reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles in Christ.

Following the adjective “one” is the adjective “new” (καινὸν), which also describes “man.” This word speaks of the uniqueness of the humanity created in Christ. Καινὸν “pertains to something not previously present, [that is something] unknown, strange, [and] remarkable.”⁷² Καινὸν also refers to something that did not exist before.⁷³ Conceptually, “new” is synonymous to “the mystery” (τὸ μυστήριον) in Ephesians 3:3. Similar to καινὸν, “the mystery” presents a revelation unknown to other generations. Paul defines the mystery: “That the Gentiles are fellow heirs (συγκληρονόμα), and fellow members of the body (σύσσωμα), and fellow partakers (συμμέτοχα) of the promise” (Eph 3:6). Clinton Arnold explains, “It involves an understanding of Jesus’ role in God’s

⁷⁰ Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 298.

⁷¹ David B. Woods, “Jew-Gentile Distinction in the *One New Man* of Ephesians 2:15,” *Conspectus* 18 (2014): 105.

⁷² Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 497.

⁷³ Woods, “Jew-Gentile Distinction,” 113.

redemptive plan and a recognition that this plan extends to Gentiles.”⁷⁴ Paul intentionally chose nouns prefixed with the preposition σύν (*sun*, fellow) to underscore the fellowship that now exists between ethnic groups. They share the same inheritance, belong to the same body, and partake in the same promises. This kind of fellowship is only realized “in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (Eph 3:6).

So then, it follows that those saved by the gospel are to strive for the strengthening of multiethnic fellowship because they are all in Christ. They can no longer see each other as strangers and aliens. They are to see each other as fellow citizens (Eph 2:19).

Christ is all, and in all ([τὰ] πάντα καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν Χριστός). In a parallel letter to the Colossians, Paul applies the gospel of Jesus Christ to a multiethnic church. The entire epistle argues for the sufficiency of Christ for salvation (chaps. 1-2) and practical living (chaps. 3-4). Saved people, who have died and have been raised with Christ and whose life is hidden with Christ and will appear with Christ in glory (Col 3:1-4), are commanded to mortify sin (vv. 5-10). Paul gives his motivation for mortifying sin: “Seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator” (Col 3:9b-10 ESV).

In verse 11, Paul specifically applies the concept of the new self to social-cultural-racial diversity: “Here [i.e., in the new self] there is not Greek and Jew; circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all” (ESV).⁷⁵ The contrastive statement, “but Christ is all, and in all,” nullifies the

⁷⁴ Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 187.

⁷⁵ James D. G. Dunn says, “The fact that ‘Greeks’ is used rather than ‘Gentiles’=the (other) nations, which would have been the more comprehensive term . . . is simply a reminder of the pervasiveness of Hellenistic culture in the Mediterranean basin.” James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 224.

superiority/inferiority mentality stemming from ethnic diversity. Christ is in all. The substantive adjective “all” refers to Greek and Jew; circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian and Scythian, slave and free. Bruce writes, “The barriers that divided human beings from one another are done away with in the new creation.”⁷⁶ Racial barriers between Jew and Gentile; religious barriers between circumcised and uncircumcised; cultural barriers between Greeks and barbarians and Scythians; and social barriers between slaves and free are abolished in Christ.⁷⁷ Dunn asks why in Colossians 3:11 Paul would repeat the same distinction he made in Colossians 2:11. He concluded that this was to emphasize the significance of removing ethnic boundaries.⁷⁸ He sees latent in the list ethnic superiority whether cultural or religious. In the term *Barbarian* Dunn sees contempt based on someone’s language. The contempt is further confirmed by the addition of Scythians, a “name synonymous to crudity, excess, and ferocity.”⁷⁹ The list, according to Dunn’s conclusion, makes Paul’s point clear: “In Christ there is no place for any such racial, ethnic, or cultural contempt among peoples and individuals; even the wild, repulsive Scythians are not ruled out of court.”⁸⁰ Thus Bruce is right: “The gospel overrides cultural frontiers; they have no place in the Christian church.”⁸¹

Paul solidifies the abolishing of social-cultural-ethnic boundaries with a powerful Christological statement: “But Christ is all, and in all” (Col 3:11b). He gave a similar reason in Galatians 3:28, where he argued soteriologically that “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male or female, for you are all

⁷⁶ Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 148.

⁷⁷ Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 148-49.

⁷⁸ Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 225.

⁷⁹ Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 225.

⁸⁰ Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 226.

⁸¹ Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 150.

one in Christ Jesus.” All have Christ, and Christ is everything to all who are saved. If the church believes this theology, then nothing, as Dunn suggests, should “diminish or disparage the standing of any one human in relation to another or to God.”⁸² Ethnic segregation must be put to death and it must be replaced with a non-discriminative Christ-centered fellowship.

Paul then (οὖν, *oun*) infers in Colossians 3:12 that once the old self together with its ethnic hostility is put off, God’s chosen people (chosen from different ethnic groups, cultures, and social background) are to “put on compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another, forgiving each other if one has a complaint” (v. 13).⁸³ Paul drawing an inference in relation to multiethnic relationships is evidenced by the use of the unity words such as σύνδεσμος (*sundesmos*, bond)⁸⁴ (v. 14), and ἐκλήθητε ἐν ἐνὶ σώματι (*eklethete en heni somati*, called into one body) (v. 15). The spiritual clothes listed in verse 12 reflect God’s character and are to characterize Christian relationships. Dunn rightly says, “Without such an attitude toward others no group of individuals can become and grow as a community, with a proper care for others and willingness to submerge one’s own personal interests.”⁸⁵ Therefore, in an endeavor to foster strong multiethnic fellowship, these qualities must be put on. Paul extends the unity theme by employing the “one another” language in verses 13 and 16, which would strengthen multiethnic fellowship highlighted in verse 11. Both in Colossians (3:13) and Ephesians (4:2, 32), Paul urges the multiethnic church to tolerate one another

⁸² Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 227.

⁸³ Dunn comments, “The idea of a people ‘chosen by God’ was wholly and exclusively Jewish, a fundamental feature of Israel’s self-perception.” Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 227-28. So too with saints (holy ones) and beloved. Here again one sees the beauty and the power of Christ’s death—it destroyed the barriers of exclusion and sees all people as chosen people, saints and beloved.

⁸⁴ Bauer defines this word as “that which brings various entities into a unified relationship, *uniting bond*.” Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 966.

⁸⁵ Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 230.

and forgive one another. The model of forgiveness Paul wants the church to imitate is Christ and God. “Above all these [i.e., what is listed in vv. 12-13],” Paul adds in verse 14, “put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.” Paul appeals to the second great commandment (Matt 22:39) to glue in perfect harmony the relationships in a multiethnic church. Love is a supreme virtue (1 Cor 13:1-13) to be desired to preserve the perfect harmony of the church. Once again, the implication as in the previous verse is that Christ’s sacrifice provides a model for such love.⁸⁶

Based on the previous discussion, believers at Ephesus and Colossae were no longer to be defined by their ethnic boundaries, religious rituals, intellectual accolades, or social status (Eph 2:11; Col 3:11a). They have a new identity in Christ. They are one new man (Eph 2:15), called to one body (Col 3:15; see also 1 Cor 12:13). Christ is their peace (Eph 2:14) and his peace rules in their hearts (Col 3:15). According to Bruce, the peace of God serves to garrison the believer’s heart when hostile forces have to be kept at bay.⁸⁷ Christ is all, and in all (Col 3:11).

Why does Paul discuss multiethnic unity in such detail? The purpose is given in Ephesians 3:10: “So that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly *places*.” Hoehner explains,

the “manifold wisdom of God” does not refer to redemption as such but rather to the new relationship between believing Jews and Gentiles in one body. The medium by which this wisdom is communicated is the church; the recipients are the angelic hosts “in the heavenly realms” (cf. Eph. 1:3). These “rulers and authorities” refer to both good and evil angels as seen in 6:12 (cf. 1:21). As the angelic hosts witness the church, they must admit that having Jews and Gentiles in one body is evidence of God’s wisdom.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 232.

⁸⁷ Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 156.

⁸⁸ H. W. Hoehner, “Ephesians,” in Walvoord and Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 630. For Hoehner’s detailed exegesis, see Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 458-64.

In summary, the multiethnic church is a mystery that baffled humans and showcases God’s manifold wisdom to angelic beings. These holy angels will join the multiethnic fellowship of believers in heavenly worship one day. The next thesis explores this heavenly worship and its implications toward multiethnic fellowship at CBC.

Doxological Thesis: Revelation 5:9 and 7:9-10

The foregoing soteriological thesis argues that Christ’s death reconciled humanity with God and people of different ethnic groups with each other. Reconciliation is therefore vertical and horizontal. It was also clear from both Ephesians and Colossians that horizontal relationships between multiethnic people depend on a vertical relationship with God. This section takes the soteriological argument further by arguing that, doxologically, God expects multiethnic worshippers in a multiethnic environment.⁸⁹ An exegesis of Revelation 5:9 and 7:9-10 will support this.

Soteriology Fuels Doxology

In *Bloodlines: Race, Cross, and the Christian*, Piper asserts, “Perhaps the text in all of Scripture that displays the connection most clearly between the particular redemption of God’s people and the ethnic diversity and harmony of that people is Revelation 5:9.”⁹⁰ Revelation 5:9 and 7:9-10 give us a glimpse of multiethnic people gathered before God’s throne. They gather to worship God and the Lamb because of salvation (Rev 7:10).

The worship is made up of both angelic beings and human beings. The angels initiate the worship (Rev 5:8-9). Their worship was through a new song. Beale notes, “In the OT a ‘new song’ is always an expression of praise for God’s victory over the enemy.”⁹¹

⁸⁹ By worshippers, I mean people who partake in the church’s worship team—those who lead worship and those who play instruments and sing on the stage and in the choir.

⁹⁰ Piper, *Bloodlines*, 139.

⁹¹ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary

The angels' new song has the same object—they worshipped the Lamb who alone was found worthy to take the book and break its seals. No one in heaven or on earth was able to do this (Rev 5:3). Why was the Lamb qualified to open the book and break its seals? The basis (*hoti*) of the worthiness of Jesus is his sacrificial death: “For You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood *men* from every tribe and tongue and people and nation” (Rev 5:9).⁹² James Hamilton explains, “The gospel levels all notions of racial superiority because it declares that all peoples stand in the same need of the Savior.”⁹³

John saw a similar vision in Revelation 7:9. He saw “a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and *all* tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.” Different from Revelation 5:9, the multitude in 7:9 are the worshippers. In Revelation 5:9, the multitude’s redemption by the Lamb produced angelic worship. In Revelation 7:9, the multitude themselves are worshippers. Similar to the angelic worship, the multitude worshipped God for his salvation. Verse 10 records, “And they cry out with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.” In verses 11-12 the angels joined the worship.

From Every Tribe and Language and People and Nation

The human worshippers that John saw in heaven were from every tribe and language and people and nation. According to Simon Kistemaker, the word *tribe* conveys the meaning of physical ties and descent, *language* points to linguistic communication, *people* relates to an ethnic group of common descent, and *nation* refers to a political entity

(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 358.

⁹² Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 260.

⁹³ James R. Hamilton, *Revelation: The Scriptures Speaks to the Churches*, Preaching the Word, ed. Kent Hughes (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 158.

with distinct geographical boundaries.⁹⁴ Contrary to Kistemaker, Robert Mounce believes it is fruitless to attempt a distinction between these terms as ethnic, linguistic, political, and so on. He conceives, “The Seer is stressing the universal nature of the church and for this purpose piles up phrases for their rhetorical impact.”⁹⁵ He explains his objection by indicating the contrast between the exclusivism of Judaism and the ecumenicalism of the church where national, political, cultural, or racial boundaries are not recognized.⁹⁶ Although Mounce’s universal argument is plausible, Bible exegetes should not be ignorant of the emphasis the book of Revelation places on the distinct ethnic groups. The book of Revelation repeats the phrase “from every tribe and language and people and nation” with variations in word order seven times (5:9; 7:9; 10:11; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6; 17:15). The repetition of this phrase makes it clear that the distinctions are to be recognized to appreciate the reconciling power of Christ’s death and the judgment of those who reject it. God’s salvation reaches to all, and redeems worshippers for God from all tribes, people, languages, and nations. Heavenly worshippers are multiethnic. What needs clarity, however, is that, as Beale writes, “This is not a redemption of all peoples without exception but of all without distinction (people *from* all races).”⁹⁷

The Psalmists and Jesus Anticipated Multiethnic Worshippers

Selected psalms. The book of Revelation was not the first to anticipate multiethnic worshippers. God anticipated multiethnic worshippers in the Old Testament,

⁹⁴ Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Book of Revelation*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 211.

⁹⁵ Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, rev. ed., The New International Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 136.

⁹⁶ Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 136.

⁹⁷ Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 359.

long before Revelation was written. The Old Testament abounds with passages that anticipate multiethnic worship, but selected Psalms should suffice to illustrate the point.

Psalm 47:1 reads, “O clap your hands, all peoples; Shout to God with the voice of joy.” Psalm 86:9 promises, “All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord, and they shall glorify your name.” In Psalm 96:1, the psalmist invites all the earth to sing a new song to the LORD. He commands families of the peoples to ascribe to the LORD glory and strength (Ps 96:7). He wants his glory to be declared among the nations (Ps 96:3). Psalm 102:22 asserts, “Peoples gather together, and kingdoms, to worship the Lord.”

Jesus and the Samaritan woman. During his earthly ministry, on route to Galilee via Samaria, Jesus explained to the Samaritan woman that soon the divisive places of worship will be rendered obsolete.⁹⁸ The Samaritans saw Mount Gerizim as *the* place of worship, and the Jews revered Jerusalem as *the* place of worship (John 4:20). Jesus knew of the hostility and division between these two groups. The two places of worship perpetuated the animosity.

Jesus knew that these places need to be abrogated for Jews and Samaritans to fellowship together as one. The abrogation was part of God’s redemptive plan. He said to the woman, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:21, 24).

By the hour, Jesus was referring to his redemptive death and resurrection, which was followed by his ascension (cf. John 7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1). The death of Jesus Christ abolished the wall of separation in a form of places of worship for Jews and Samaritans. They both claimed to worship the Father (John 4:20-21); yet they were

⁹⁸ John MacArthur, *John 1-11, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 2006), 148.

divided. These two groups needed what all multiethnic churches need today to worship together as one—the mediating Savior who can reconcile them, first with the Father, and then with each other, thus bringing them to the same place of worship.⁹⁹

Precedent for the church. The few psalms quoted, and Jesus’ prediction of true worshippers in John 4, anticipate the multiethnic worship in Revelation 5:9 and 7:9-10. All three sets of passages—the psalms, John 4 and Revelation 5:9; 7:9-10—establish a precedent for the church. Piper is on point:

It is not a coincidence or by chance that the people Christ bought come from every tribe. This was the design of his death. . . . If the purchase of a people—a bride, a church, a kingdom, a priesthood—“*from every tribe*” is intentional, designed, and purposeful, and not coincidence, not by human chance, then the implications for racial and ethnic diversity and harmony among Christ’s people are huge.¹⁰⁰

Implications for Racial and Ethnic Diversity and Harmony in the Church

What implications do Revelation 5:9 and 7:9-10 have for the contemporary multiethnic church? Piper offers the following:

1. God intends to have a people . . . from all ethnic groups as underlined by the phrase from every people, tribe, language and nation (*ethnos*).¹⁰¹
2. God intends for these people to be in profound God-centered harmony. This is underscored by Revelation 5:10: “You have made them a kingdom of priests and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.” All of them equally will serve as priests, and all will equally reign. This calls for a unified service and leadership. “If all those who are purchased from every tribe are priests to God and fellow rulers with God, who worship God and reign with God, then they must have a deep unity in the truth and in love.”¹⁰²

⁹⁹ William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1953), 166.

¹⁰⁰ Piper, *Bloodlines*, 140.

¹⁰¹ Piper, *Bloodlines*, 140.

¹⁰² Piper, *Bloodlines*, 141.

3. God pursued his intention of ethnic diversity and harmony at infinite cost. Jesus was slain to redeem for God people from every ethnic group (Rev 5:9).¹⁰³
4. Redemption of diverse ethnic people by Christ was “*for God*” (Rev 5:9). The redeemed praised God (Rev 5:13-14).¹⁰⁴

These implications necessitate the question Lane asked in her master’s thesis “Multiethnic Worship Representative of Heaven: A Mixed Method Study”: “If the heavenly vision of worship is predictive of the future,—a great multitude . . . from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb cry out in an overwhelming worship celebration to God (Rev. 7:9–12 NIV), why is inclusive worship not more visible on earth?”¹⁰⁵ Lane’s asks a legitimate research question that she sought to answer throughout her thesis. However, more than being a mere academic question, it is a practical question with which (multiethnic) churches struggle. One of the reasons inclusive worship is not more visible in the church is that inclusive worship is costly.¹⁰⁶ Just as it cost God the blood of his Son to redeem diverse ethnic people, so it will cost the church to adjust its worship structures. This move might cost the church comfort, convenience, membership, and revenue. Though, the church should be ready to pay the price for God’s glory. If worship in heaven will incorporate all ethnic groups, and believers will stand before the throne of God worshipping with fellow believers one day,¹⁰⁷ then this heavenly worship incorporating diverse ethnic groups should serve as “an ideal for the present.”¹⁰⁸ Multiethnic worship is eschatological; it

¹⁰³ Piper, *Bloodlines*, 141.

¹⁰⁴ Piper, *Bloodlines*, 141, 142.

¹⁰⁵ Sherree Vernet Lane, “Multiethnic Worship Representative of Heaven: A Mixed Methods Study” (MA thesis, Bethel University, 2009), 2.

¹⁰⁶ Piper, *Bloodlines*, 142.

¹⁰⁷ Hamilton, *Revelation*, 192.

¹⁰⁸ Craig S. Keener, *Revelation*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 250.

reflects heaven on earth.¹⁰⁹ Therefore, it is worth the cost.

Incorporation of all ethnic groups should not only end with congregational corporate worship, but it should extend to inclusive worship leadership. The church can be purposeful in identifying people who are spiritually mature and have music ability to take part in and to lead worship. For, argues Lane, “By adding diverse leadership to a church staff, inclusive worship could be planned more easily.”¹¹⁰ Intentional incorporation of diverse ethnic worship leaders will ensure the inclusion of diverse ethnic participants in worship teams. Keener sees a move toward incorporation as a move toward strengthening the body: “The body of Christ is strongest when it incorporates the perspectives of all its members.”¹¹¹

Furthermore, if one can infer that what heaven decides sets a precedent for the church on earth (Matt 18:18), then the church will do well to take the eschatological multiethnic heavenly doxology (Rev 5:9-14; 7:9-10) as its model of worship ministry.

For the church to do less than what the Psalmists, Jesus (John 4), and God (Rev 7:9-10) envisioned is to undermine God’s plan of redemption and worship of the church. The redeemed must be given an opportunity to participate in all aspects of church worship without prejudice. If believers have a problem with ethnic integration, then they must ask themselves if the angelic beings are going to worship God because of the redemption of God’s multiethnic people, brought about through the atonement of Jesus Christ (Rev 5:9).¹¹² Are the multiethnic multitude going to worship before the throne because of God’s salvation (Rev 7:9)? Do believers have a hope of joining the heavenly worship one day? Since the answer is yes, then what additional reasons does the church need to

¹⁰⁹ Lane, “Multiethnic Worship Representative of Heaven,” 26.

¹¹⁰ Lane, “Multiethnic Worship Representative of Heaven,” 26.

¹¹¹ Keener, *Revelation*, 250.

¹¹² Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Book of Revelation*, 210.

intentionally incorporate all the redeemed from diverse ethnic groups in worship leadership and teams?

Conclusion

This chapter sought to establish a biblical foundation for strengthening multiethnic fellowship at Christ Baptist Church in Polokwane, South Africa. The chapter focused on four theological theses—missiological, ecclesiological, soteriological and doxological.

The *missiological thesis* argued that when Jesus gave the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20, he envisaged a multiethnic church. The study focused on the verb “make disciples,” its object “of all nations,” and its three participial modifiers “going,” “baptizing,” and “teaching.” Each of these words makes a case for a strong multiethnic fellowship. The disciples Jesus had in mind were of all people groups without excluding the Jews. First, the disciples, and later the church, were to make a concerted effort to reach out to all ethnic groups indiscriminately. Once reached, the disciples of all nations were to be baptized and taught. Since all nations partake of the same baptism and teaching, this oneness should serve as a reason for the church to foster strong fellowship (Acts 2:41-42).

The *ecclesiological thesis* argued that the church in Jerusalem and Antioch set a precedent for the contemporary multiethnic church to intentionally pursue multiethnic leadership. This thesis was supported with Acts 6:1-7 and Acts 13:1. From Acts 6:1-7, I argued that ethnic tension was implicit in the neglect of the Hellenistic widows by the Hebraic Jews, and also active in the behind-the-scenes kind of complaint from the Hellenists against the Hebraic Jews. The assessment of the problem led to the adjustment of leadership structure. The church chose multiethnic leadership. It was observed that the seven men chosen by the church had Hellenistic names. One of them, Nicolas, is called a proselyte from Antioch, implying that he was a Gentile. These men were spiritually qualified to lead the church in a service capacity. The church was not only intentional in

the spiritual qualifications of the men, but they were also intentional in choosing multiethnic leadership. The decision strengthened the church's unity and paved a way for more Hellenists and other nations, like Samaria, to be reached. The spread of the gospel went as far as Antioch.

The church at Antioch later became a center of the gospel ministry. The church was also multiethnic with a multiethnic leadership. This was evidenced from Acts 13:1. Barnabas, Manaen, and Saul are Jews; Barnabas was a Greek-speaking Jew from Cyprus; Saul was a diaspora Jew from Tarsus; Manaen was a Jew with a Greek name; Simeon, who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene were Gentiles. Here are five men representing at least three ethnic groups and five cultural backgrounds. From an investigation of the early church, multiethnic leadership was normative and prescriptive for the birth of new churches.

The *soteriological thesis* argued if both Jews and Gentiles are reconciled to God through the same means, the death of Jesus on the cross, then disunity among different ethnic groups in the church is absurd. This thesis further argued that Jesus' death not only reconciled Jews and Gentiles with God, but it also reconciled Jews with Gentiles. Thus, reconciliation is both vertical and horizontal. Ephesians 2:11-3:10 and Colossians 3:11 supported this thesis. The language of unity used by Paul in both texts cemented the need for strong multiethnic fellowship. The phrase *one new man*, the word *peace*, and the noun prefixed with the Greek preposition *sun* (fellow), such as "fellow citizen" (Eph 2:19), "fellow heirs, fellow members of the body and fellow partakers of the promise" (Eph 3:6), all shout for an abolishing of "enmity" (Eph 2:15) between diverse ethnic groups and call for a strong multiethnic fellowship. Christ's death is presented as a means of reconciliation and of abolishing this enmity.

In Colossians 3:11, the apostle Paul argued that personal prejudice based on ethnic, religious, and social status is incongruent with the new man. Such partiality needs to be put off, for it belongs with the old self with its practices. Again, Paul brought in the

doctrine of Christ—Christ is all, and in all—as the reason for breaking ethnic barriers. Thus, a true embrace of Christ’s sacrifice on the church’s behalf demands a transformed view of identity and ethnicity. The church cannot come to the cross in faith and walk away without viewing ethnic distinctions differently.

The *doxological thesis* argued that if, according to Revelation 5:9 and 7:9-10, multiethnic worshippers will stand before the throne to worship God for their salvation, then the vision serves as an ideal for the present church. The main argument of this thesis was that multiethnic worship should not end at the congregational level, but it should be extended to worship leaders and teams. The multiethnic church needs to incorporate multiethnic worship leaders and multiethnic participants in its worship teams. The Psalmists, Jesus (John 4), and God, in the vision of Revelation 5:9 and 7:9-10, set a precedent for multiethnic worshippers. He expects worshippers from every tribe, language, people and nation in his church. These four theological theses, if observed by the church, have a potential to strengthen a multiethnic fellowship in Christ’s church. These theses also reveal that multiethnic fellowship in the early church did not happen accidentally. God intentioned it and the Bible writers intentionally emphasized it.

CHAPTER 3
PRACTICAL AND HISTORICAL ISSUES
RELATED TO STRENGTHENING
MULTIETHNIC FELLOWSHIP

No church exists without a particular socio-economic and political context. Unavoidably, these contexts impact people's perceptions and relationships and shape worldviews. When people are saved, their worldview does not immediately change. For this reason, sanctification is important. Paul's appeal in Romans 12:2 is as relevant today as it was when he wrote it: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed in the renewal of your mind." Concerning this appeal, Hendriksen comments that Paul "is warning the membership then and now against yielding to the various manifestations of worldliness by which they are being surrounded."¹ The common worldly system surrounding both believers and unbelievers is local politics. Wittingly or unwittingly, people subscribe to particular ideologies that favor their social security. Furthermore, minds that have espoused a certain ideology for a while do not instantly become wiped off at conversion. They need progressive transformation.

Members of Christ Baptist Church (CBC) come from diverse socio-economic and political backgrounds. These diverse backgrounds come with radically different historical experiences. Most of the South African past socio-political history carries painful experiences. It is painted with hatred and oppression, inequality and frustration, and paternalism and infuriation. This history concerns the apartheid system where white ethnic groups oppressed non-whites. As a result, hatred and separation was reciprocated between the two groups. The hatred and separation continue even after the new democratic

¹ William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 404.

government enacted in 1994. Undeniably, how people view one another depends on their worldviews.

This chapter chronicles the divisive nature of the mind set on the socio-political worldview and its impact on multiethnic fellowship. It is hoped that the history and practical issues highlighted in this chapter will serve as a warning for the church not to set its mind on unbiblical ideologies and that it will cause believers to introspect and, where present, break the mental and attitudinal barriers that cause them to view believers of a different ethnicity, skin color, culture, or language with contempt. It is hoped that believers will go to the cross where sins were atoned, enmity was abolished, and rival groups were reconciled. Hall recommends that to demolish the dividing wall of race, believers need to tell the truth about their past. Reconciliation requires acknowledgment of wrongdoing, confession, and forgiveness.²

Taking Hall's advice, I will narrate the history of the church in South Africa within the socio-political context and worldviews. I will limit the history to the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) and the Baptist Union of Southern Africa (BUSA). The history will highlight how these denominations intentionally decided to side with the apartheid system and, as a result, their decision harmed the fellowship and the testimony of the church badly. Many other denominations in South Africa were also segregated along ethnic lines, but this research is limited to these two denominations because (1) most CBC people come from the DRC and (2), CBC is a member church of the BUSA.

The second section of this chapter will look at some key past legislations that the apartheid government previously enacted to segregate blacks and whites. This section argues that, if the apartheid legislations influenced the thinking of the church in the past, it is possible that the same worldview still influences how black and white members treat

² Matthew J. Hall, "Historical Causes of the Stain of Racism in the Southern Baptist Convention," in *Removing the Stain of Racism from the Southern Baptist Convention*, ed. Jarvis J. Williams and Kevin M. Jones (Nashville: B & H, 2017), 7.

each other in the church today. Again, the goal of bringing forth these legislations is to help church members examine their worldview to see to what extent these pieces of legislation affect their fellowship with people from other ethnic groups. This section limits its scope to legislations that once encouraged inequality, prohibited inter-racial marriages and disdained multiethnic leadership. By promoting biblical equality guided by the *imago Dei*, embracing biblical understanding of inter-racial marriages, and promoting multiethnic leadership in a multiethnic church, the church will strengthen its multiethnic fellowship and stand out as a powerful witness of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world and to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places (Eph 3:10).

History of the Church in South Africa

South African churches have functioned and may even continue to function with prejudicial ideology—the ideology that impeded multiethnic fellowship among local churches. The history of the two denominations—the DRC and the BUSA, which succumbed to the political pressure of the past apartheid system—exists to warn the contemporary church not to repeat the same mistakes by succumbing to the political pressure of the new political system and thus separate along racial lines.

In presenting the following history of the two denominations, I acknowledge with Trueman that (1) “All histories are provisional in the sense that no one can offer an exhaustive account of any past action, given the limited state of evidence and the histories inevitably limited grasp of context as well as distance from the past;”³ and (2) “varied interpretations of historical evidence are yet susceptible to generally agreed upon procedures of verification that allows us to challenge each other’s readings of the evidence.”⁴

³ Carl R. Trueman, *Histories and Fallacies: Problems Faced in the Writing of History* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 21.

⁴ Trueman, *Histories and Fallacies*, 21.

The Dutch Reformed Church

The church in South Africa began with the coming of the Dutch in 1652, the French Huguenots in 1668, and the early German settlers a little later.⁵ The DRC (aka Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK)) became *the* established church in South Africa and later assimilated the French Huguenots.⁶ It grew exponentially with its membership generally confined to white settlers.⁷

People of color were not intentionally evangelized until the nineteenth century. Prior to the nineteenth century, between 1737 and 1738, a Moravian missionary by the name of George Schmidt arrived in South Africa and attempted to evangelize the so called “heathens.”⁸ However, according to de Gruchy and de Gruchy, the Moravian’s “evangelistic piety and gospel of universal grace that was proclaimed to the indigenous peoples collided with the theology of the DRC.”⁹ Nevertheless, in 1742, Schmidt went against the DRC’s theology by not only preaching that all people, white and black, must be assured “in their heart of the forgiveness of sins through Jesus’s blood” if they wished to escape damnation, but he also baptized the Khoisan and called them brothers and sisters in defiance to colonial custom.¹⁰ The DRC deemed the open baptism of non-whites irregular since only the head of a household was the one to decide whether he wanted his slave baptized or not.¹¹ It seems that the DRC understood that baptism

⁵ John de Gruchy and Steve de Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa*, 25th anniversary ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 1.

⁶ de Gruchy and de Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa*, 1.

⁷ de Gruchy and de Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa*, 2.

⁸ The term *heathens* was used by the whites to refer to black and colored people.

⁹ de Gruchy and de Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa*, 2.

¹⁰ Hermann Giliomee and Bernard Mbenga, *New History of South Africa* (Cape Town, South Africa: Tafelberg, 2007), 98-99. The Khoi were the first native people who came into contact with the Dutch settlers when they arrived in South Africa.

¹¹ Giliomee and Mbenga, *New History of South Africa*, 57. With regard to the earlier history, Kevin Roy records, “While relations between the Dutch and the Khoikhoi were characterized largely by

identifies people not only with Christ but also with the church community.¹² Schmidt's actions threatened the authority of the DRC and the social life of the settlers' community. His actions also sparked controversy between him and the DRC—a controversy that forced him to exit South Africa. His exit halted missionary work among indigenous people of South Africa for at least fifty years.¹³

Fifty years after Schmidt left South Africa, the British arrived in South Africa and brought with them more Protestant missionaries from different denominations. These denominations included the Baptists, who arrived in 1820. The protestant missionaries followed Schmidt's example in reaching out to the "heathens" with the goal of Christianizing the "heathens."¹⁴ Again, the DRC took issue with their outreach and called the protestant missionaries to account for their actions.

Now, lest believers today think that an attempt to prevent missionaries from reaching out to other ethnic groups is unique, they must be reminded that a similar attempt occurred in the early first century, where the apostle Peter faced a similar charge in Acts 11:1-3. The history of the early church and the early history of the DRC and BUSA have one common thing—they refused equality with people unlike them. Peter reveals this attitude when he says to the Gentiles at Cornelius' house, "You yourselves

prejudice, hostility and suspicion, there were also instances of more positive interaction. Some of the early sick-comforters labored to impart Christian faith to certain Khoikhoi people." Kevin Roy, *Zion City RSA: The Story of the Church in South Africa* (Cape Town, South Africa: The South African Baptist Historical Society, 2000), 9-10. Roy mentions that Eva's baptism was accepted and that she was later married to the assistant surgeon of the settlement. Roy goes on to note, "All baptized believers, whether slaves, Khoikhoi or Dutch, initially worshipped together in the same church." Roy, *Zion City RSA*, 9-10. However, Roy acknowledges that this became a topic of discussion of the Synod of Dort, debating whether children born to slaves should be baptized. Baptism in DRC meant freedom and equal rights. Many slave owners did not allow baptism for their slaves to prevent this freedom and rights. Schmidt contradicted this doctrine. Giliomee and Mbenga, *New History of South Africa*, 98-99; Roy, *Zion City RSA*, 9-10.

¹² This theology was highlighted under the missiology thesis in chap. 2, where baptism whether literal or figurative, is used as a symbol of belonging to the body of Christ.

¹³ Roy, *Zion City RSA*, 19.

¹⁴ de Gruchy and de Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa*, 2.

know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation” (Acts 10:28a). Though, the impartial God changed Peter’s attitude and he went on to relate this experience: “But God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean” (Acts 10:28b). Peter came to understand that “God shows no partiality” (Acts 10:34). Peter repeats the same conviction in Acts 11:2-3, when the Jews criticized him for going to the Gentiles and for eating with them. He explained to them, “The Spirit told me to go with them, making no distinction” (Acts 11:12a). This new revelation set a precedent for the unity of the Jews and Gentiles in the early church. It helped to resolve a fierce debate in the Jerusalem council, where Peter reiterated, “God made no distinction between us and them” (Acts 15:9).

This biblical history has serious implications for the subsequent local churches. No church, after reading this history, should succumb to cultural and political pressures. For whenever people ignore God’s design of multiethnic fellowship in a multiethnic environment, and whenever people misinterpret Scripture, the outcomes are often segregation, discrimination, and racism. These consequences are difficult to reverse. The DRC in South Africa continues to be a white Afrikaner church even today. Some people of the DRC denomination who have made strides to join gospel preaching multiethnic churches find it difficult to assimilate in these fellowships. They end up choosing to either return to the DRC or look for an alternative Afrikaans church. Non-integrationists often point out that they struggle with the English language since they spent their whole lives in an Afrikaans community, speaking an Afrikaans language.¹⁵

With eleven official languages in South Africa, the language barrier is often unavoidable. However, whereas believers acknowledge the legitimacy of the language barrier, they should not dismiss the fact that this barrier is often used to cover up

¹⁵ Afrikaans and English are the official University languages. Therefore, there is no obligation for an Afrikaner to learn English to go through University.

discrimination and segregation. W. J. Schoeman observes this cover up: “The church is the only space in which the Afrikaners can be left alone to be white and Afrikaans without interference.”¹⁶ Schoeman recalls a survey that the DRC conducted in 1989 and 1996, where leaders and ministers were asked to respond to the question: “In connection with members of the DRC family that are not from your own racial group, please indicate your reaction on each of the following statements.”¹⁷ The statements were “I am prepared to...” (1) support a ministry for them, (2) attend a conference with them, (3) attend a funeral or marriage sermon with them, (3) attend a worship service with them, (4) celebrate Holy Communion together, (5) accept them as members of my congregation.¹⁸ The survey showed that church leaders did not have a problem with taking the first three actions, but they found it difficult to accept people of other ethnic groups as members of their congregations by participating in the Lord’s Supper and membership together.¹⁹

Recently, in January 2018, Wikus Buys of the Reformed Churches of South Africa, a secession of the DRC, wrote an article in Afrikaans entitled “Is Engels die taal van die broederliefde?” (trans. “Is English Now the Language of Brotherly Love?”). A look into this article proves that the DRC’s unacceptance of other ethnic groups in their congregations continues. Buys argues why it is wrong for the Synod to hold their meeting in English and “why it can mean nothing good for the future of Afrikaans churches and for the Afrikaner in general.”²⁰

¹⁶ W. J. Schoeman, “The Racial Discourse and the Dutch Reformed Church: Looking through a Descriptive-Empirical Lens . . . towards a Normative Task,” accessed May 1, 2018, http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1015-87582010000200010.

¹⁷ Schoeman, “The Racial Discourse.”

¹⁸ Schoeman, “The Racial Discourse.”

¹⁹ Schoeman, “The Racial Discourse.”

²⁰ Wikus Buys, “Is Engels die Taal van die Broederliefde?” January 2018, <https://maroelamedia.co.za/debat/meningsvormers/is-engels-nou-die-taal-van-die-broederliefde/>. The original article is in Afrikaans. A dear Afrikaans brother helped to translate it into English.

First, Buys sees the decision to be hypocritical love. He quips that the argument to use English as a language of brotherly love at the Synod's meeting comes from the "Empire" textbook and not the Bible. Based on Acts 2, he contends that unity in love is attained by giving languages their rightful place. Second, Buys views the Synod's decision as colonial. He reasons that in all post-colonial countries, the elite take the language of the oppressor and through the language of the oppressor they perpetuate their own despotism.²¹ Buys goes on to warn that the theological voices that are calling to the Afrikaans community to give up their language during church gatherings are preparing the way for ultimate suicide of a monolithic culture. He maintains that the culture, as well as the language of a community, should be sanctified.²²

The reasons given by Buys reveal that the Afrikaans separatist worldview was more theological than sociological. de Gruchy and de Gruchy confirm, "In the very early days of the Cape colony, discrimination practiced between white and black, slave and free person, was ostensibly based more on religion than race."²³ Coetzee and Conradie also insist, "Apartheid in South Africa was far more than a political policy."²⁴ In their argument that apartheid was multi-layered, Coetzee and Conradie identify the DRC as one of the contributors to another set of apartheid roots, through its ecclesial divisions on the basis of race.²⁵ They point out that the term apartheid was first used "within the

²¹ The language of the oppressor refers to the British language, English. But Buys should realize that the Afrikaners perpetuated apartheid in the exact same way. This is the reason South African students protested against the Afrikaans language as a medium of instruction in 1976.

²² Based on their covenant-theology, the Afrikaners have always seen themselves as God's covenant people. They refused to integrate with other ethnic groups in the past, including English-speaking whites, because they needed to preserve their identity.

²³ de Gruchy and de Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa*, 7.

²⁴ Murray Coetzee and Ernst Conradie, "Apartheid as Quasi-Soteriology: The Remaining Lure and Threat," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 138 (November 2010): 113.

²⁵ Coetzee and Conradie, "Apartheid as Quasi-Soteriology," 113.

context of debates on an appropriate mission policy for the Dutch Reformed Church.” They further maintain that it was actually the DRC that pressurized the government to structure society on the basis of apartheid.²⁶ According to Linda Naicker, the fact that apartheid in South Africa was led by churches and not the state was confirmed by DF Malan, the leader of the National Party in 1947.²⁷ Naicker informs that the deliberations to legislate apartheid began in 1941 where the Federale Raad van Kerke (FRK) wanted a report that can justify apartheid. The FRK eventually produced the report in 1943, where the books of Acts and Genesis were used to formulate the theology of separation. They used the tower of Babel in Genesis 11 as *the* text to validate segregation along cultural, linguistic, and racial lines. Four years later, in 1947, academic professors weighed in on the matter. Naicker reports that Professor Groenewald of the University of Pretoria produced a comprehensive document, using biblical Scriptures to justify apartheid. Groenewald’s arguments were based on Israel’s separation from other nations, the tower of Babel, and on the Pentecost event recorded in Acts 2.²⁸ Naicker summarizes Groenewald’s argument: “God wished to maintain the separateness of people in every aspect of life, be it national, social, political or religious. Apartheid enjoyed the full blessings of God.”²⁹

Groenewald’s document was not accepted by all. His colleague, Professor Marais, questioned his use of Scripture to validate apartheid. Although Marais endorsed apartheid, he rejected Groenewald’s unconvincing scriptural arguments. At first the Synod of the FRK agreed with Marais, but when Groenewald stated that Marais’s objection

²⁶ Coetzee and Conradie, “Apartheid as Quasi-Soteriology,” 113.

²⁷ Linda Naicker, “The Role of Eugenics and Religion in the Construction of Race in South Africa,” *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 38, no. 2 (2012): 5.

²⁸ Naicker, “The Role of Eugenics and Religion,” 4.

²⁹ Naicker, “The Role of Eugenics and Religion,” 4.

undermines his scholarship, the Synod turned around and supported Groenewald.³⁰ Apartheid was finally institutionalized in 1948 by the National Party, with the full backing of the Afrikaans churches. Thus, as Naicker explains, “Church and politics were intertwined and decisions made by the Dutch Reformed Church had an impact on the entire country.”³¹ Other religious bodies, such as the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, condemned apartheid-theology as heresy, but the DRC moved on with this ideology because it benefited white people. Coetzee and Conradie infer, “The term “apartheid” captured an integral political, economic, social and ecclesial system—indeed an entire worldview.”³²

Consequently, because of the religious prejudice born from apartheid theology, black and white people do not know how to fellowship with each other, and some black people still perceive the church as a white man’s oppressive institution, with the Bible as his guide. The church today must find a way of correcting these perceptions and clearing fellowship hindrances.

The Baptist Union of Southern Africa

The DRC is not alone in succumbing to ethno-centric ecclesiology. CBC’s denomination, the BUSA, is guilty of the same. A general observation from history is that when the country is racially divided, the church often capitulates.³³ The split between the

³⁰ Naicker, “The Role of Eugenics and Religion,” 5.

³¹ Naicker, “The Role of Eugenics and Religion,” 6.

³² Coetzee and Conradie, “Apartheid as Quasi-Soteriology,” 114.

³³ Capitulation to ethno-centric ecclesiology is not only true of South Africa. It is true of countries like the United States of America. This capitulation is what disappointed Martin Luther King, Jr., as expressed in his “Letter from Birmingham Jail”:

I had the strange feeling when I was suddenly catapulted into the leadership of the bus protest in Montgomery several years ago that we would have the support of the white church. I felt that the white ministers, priests, and rabbis of the South would be some of our strongest allies. Instead, some few have been outright opponents, refusing to understand the freedom movement and misrepresenting its leaders; all too many others have been more cautious than courageous and have remained silent behind the anesthetizing security of stained-glass windows. (Martin Luther King, Jr.,

Baptist Union of Southern Africa (BUSA) and the Baptist Convention of South Africa (BCSA) in 1987, attests to this general fact. Scheepers records that the “BUSA was born within the context of Whites fighting against Blacks.”³⁴ The name of the war was Gaika-Gcaleka. Scheepers bemoans the fact that the first General Secretary of the BUSA joined the troops and fought against blacks. That action led Scheepers to ask, “Did the attitude of Whites towards Blacks as a result of this and later wars in British Colonial South Africa have an influence on White/Black relations during the formation of BUSA?”³⁵ As noted in chapter 1, Baptist historians blame the split between the BUSA and BCSA on five primary wrong actions, with the fifth action serving as the heart of the first four.

First, the split is attributed to the formation of the Bantu³⁶ Baptist Church in 1927 by missionaries.³⁷ The reason given for this formation was that black churches desired self-governance.³⁸ This similar argument was held by the DRC, who viewed racial separation as “necessary for the sake of the indigenous people.”³⁹ Second, the Baptist

“The Negro Is Your Brother,” accessed August 6, 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2018/02/letter-from-birmingham-jail/552461/>.

³⁴ Angelo Scheepers, “A Critical Analysis of the Structural Dynamics Operative within the Baptist Union of Southern Africa (BUSA) from 1960-2005 and an Evaluation of These Dynamics in the Light of BUSA Ecclesiology” (MA thesis, University of Pretoria, 2008), 19.

³⁵ Scheepers, “A Critical Analysis,” 19.

³⁶ *Bantu* is a term used for African black people from diverse ethnic groups.

³⁷ In the disclaimer titled “Baptist Union and Baptist Fellowship. Testimony before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, East London, 19 November 1999,” the formation of the Baptist Convention is described as follows:

The Baptist Convention of South Africa was formed in 1927 as then known, the Bantu Baptist Church. This church was started as a missionary expression of the then South African Baptist Missionary Society, an extension of the Baptist Union of Southern Africa. In 1987, the Baptist Convention declared it’s [sic] independence from the Baptist Union for what it perceived to be institutional racism in the life of that community at that time.

³⁸ Kevin Roy and Sydney Hudson-Reed, *No Turning Back: A History of Baptist Missionary Endeavour in Southern Africa from 1820-2000* (Cape Town, South Africa: South African Historical Society, 2001), 32.

³⁹ de Gruchy and de Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa*, 14.

Union delayed reception of churches from any non-white culture into the union of churches.⁴⁰ Scheepers says, “It was only in the mid 1970’s that the first two Black churches were accepted as fully-fledged members of BUSA in their own right.”⁴¹ The delay contributed to the split.

The third reason is attributed to the stronghold of apartheid ideology within the denominational structures. The National Party was launched in 1914, supported by the DRC since it wanted to remain ethno-centric. The desire of the Afrikaner society was to launch a separate nation—separate from the English and the Africans—where a distinct language, traditions, religions, and institutions can be stressed. They thus chanted the slogan: “Isolation is strength.”⁴² The BUSA adopted the apartheid ideology which ushered in the split between the white Baptist Union and the black Baptist Convention.

Fourth, the split is blamed on the treatment of black churches as immature and inferior by white churches, which meant that black churches had to depend on white churches.⁴³ This worldview is often referred to as the superiority/inferiority mindset, which I expound later when looking at inequality in the church. This superiority/inferiority mindset became one of the main reasons a merger failed when the two denominations sought to reconcile. The fifth and foundational reason for the split is racism. BUSA succumbed to racism against non-whites. In reflecting on the segregation he experienced when he studied at Baptist Theological College (BTC), the flagship college of the BUSA, which only allowed two colored students after every four years, Scheepers writes, “It is sad that the BTC College Council and BU Executive at the time towed the line with

⁴⁰ Roy and Hudson-Reed, *No Turning Back*, 114.

⁴¹ Scheepers, “A Critical Analysis,” 24.

⁴² de Gruchy and de Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa*, 28.

⁴³ Roy and Hudson-Reed, *No Turning Back*, 115.

regard to the Government's status quo and that at the expense of human dignity as mandated and recorded in the Word of God!"⁴⁴

With these predominantly white churches, Africans were left with at least three alternatives: (1) become members of mission churches with wholly black membership but still under the control of white missionaries, (2) become members of a multiracial denominations but still under white leadership, where discrimination and enculturation ensued, or (3) initiate their own churches.⁴⁵ Africans embraced the last alternative and, as a result, many godless African Independent Churches (AIC) were born, which erected a huge barrier of syncretistic religion.⁴⁶ It is sad to see that the church, like Israel, can spoil a fertile mission field by choosing selfishness and convenience over souls. The result of the failure is still felt because the church is still treated with suspicion.

However, at their 2003 assembly, the BUSA churches adopted a new mission statement that demonstrated a change of attitudes and intention to be described as a multi-cultural denomination. The mission statement reads, "Under the Lordship of Christ we exist as a multi-cultural fellowship of inter-dependent churches, functioning in territorial associations, to impact this generation with the Gospel."⁴⁷ Although statements may not mean much, for the BUSA to be willing to clarify who they are in their official documents and statement sets a precedent for local churches who are affiliated with the BUSA.

⁴⁴ Scheepers, "A Critical Analysis," 32.

⁴⁵ de Gruchy and de Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa*, 40.

⁴⁶ The adjective godless is used because most AIC churches seek to adapt the gospel to the African context to accommodate, among other traditional beliefs, ancestral worship.

⁴⁷ Baptist Union of Southern Africa, *The South African Baptist Handbook* (Johannesburg, South Africa: BUSA, 2006-2007), 3.

Inequality in the Church

Merriam-Webster's dictionary defines inequality as "an unfair situation in which some people have more rights or better opportunities than other people."⁴⁸ This section looks at how some of these unfair situations affect multiethnic fellowship and how the church can correct them to strengthen fellowship.

Superiority and Inferiority Mindset

The former BUSA General Secretary, Terry Rae, is among those who proffered reasons for the division between the BUSA and BCSA. He presented a paper to the Baptist World Alliance in 2004, titled "Reconciliation between Baptists in South Africa." Two of the reasons he gave had to do with inequality. First, he noted that the Westerners and Easterners treated the people of Africa as inferior. Second, he noted, "In Apartheid South Africa it was considered "normal" for whites to make decisions for blacks, often with little or no consultation."⁴⁹

Luvuyo Ntombana notes similar patterns as he draws attention to the minutes of the national meeting held in March 1995, between the BUSA and BCSA, in Johannesburg. The minutes recorded that the BCSA felt that based on their experiences of treatment by white moderators and BUSA members, the proposed merger was just another way of trying to control them.⁵⁰ Ntombana goes further to cite Makhanya who reported that the BCSA interpreted the BUSA's proposed merger as a method to graft the

⁴⁸ Merriam Webster, "Inequality," accessed May 03, 2018, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/inequality>.

⁴⁹ Terry Rae, "Reconciliation between Baptists in South Africa" (paper presented to the Baptist World Alliance, Seoul, Korea, July 2004), 2.

⁵⁰ Luvuyo Ntombana, "Exploring the Critical Moments when the Baptist Denomination Divided: Does Revisiting These Moments Give Hope to Reconciliation Between the 'Union' and 'Convention?'" *HTS Theological Studies* 68, no. 1 (2012): 4.

BCSA into its existing structures.⁵¹ Such assimilation meant that the BCSA must submit to the BUSA, which would in turn create inequality between black and white churches.

Missiologists call this approach paternalism. Mbewe and Rinqest surmise that “paternalism has some legitimacy in the earlier stages of any missions work, but somewhere along the way, missionaries need to exchange the old wineskins for new ones.”⁵² However, as Mbewe and Rinqest also note, paternalism is often applied negatively where leadership is monopolized and authority and control are not shared with indigenous leaders.⁵³ Applying this into the local church, one sees that where one ethnic group assumes paternity, there can be no equality; and where one ethnic group propagates superiority, the equality taught in Galatians 3:28 is impossible since others must submit. One could suppose that embedded in paternalism and superiority is the master/slave mindset. Paternalism or a superiority mindset is evident where decision making is one sided. This mindset ought to be a measurement used to test the identity of the church—whether it is white, black, asian, colored or multiethnic.

Often believers turn a blind eye to the existence of superiority by arguing that their church is not a white, or a black or a multiethnic church. They are a church of Christ. However, if superiority, either by whites or blacks, still exists in the church, one must ask if the church is a white, black or multiethnic church—of Christ? Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. bemoaned the response of white churches when black people struggled against racial and economic injustice. He said, “I have heard so many ministers say, “Those are social

⁵¹ Ntombana, “Exploring the Critical Moments,” 4

⁵² Conrad Mbewe and Linzay Rinqest, “From Paternalism to Partnership: The Sensitive Handover of Missions Work to Indigenous Leaders,” *The South African Baptist Journal of Theology* 21 (2012): 245.

⁵³ Mbewe and Rinqest, “From Paternalism to Partnership,” 246.

issues which the gospel has nothing to do with.”⁵⁴ While I fully agree with H. B. Charles that black churches should make sure they do not transform the church into some civil rights organization where the gospel is lost,⁵⁵ I would add that the church ought not turn a blind eye on the sin of ethnic superiority in the church. This is what King meant when he wrote, “You deplore the demonstrations that are presently taking place in Birmingham. But I am sorry that your statement did not express a similar concern for the conditions that brought the demonstrations into being.”⁵⁶

The gospel. Harking back to the beauty of the gospel discussed in chapter 2, God’s Word reveals that if both Jews and Gentiles, or blacks and whites, are reconciled to God through the same means—the death of Jesus on the cross—then disunity among different ethnic groups in the church is unfounded. Jesus’ death on the cross not only reconciled Jews and Gentiles with God, but it also reconciled Jews with Gentiles. Thus, reconciliation is both vertical and horizontal (Eph 2:11-3:28; Col 3:11). Before God, there is neither BUSA or BCSA nor DRC. All who are justified by faith are equal before God (Gal 3:28). The language of unity used by Paul in Ephesians 2:11-3:28 and Colossians 3:11 cements the need for strong multiethnic fellowship. The phrase “one new man,” the word “peace,” and the nouns prefixed with the Greek preposition “*sun*” (fellow), such as “fellow citizen” (Eph 2:19), “fellow heirs, fellow members of the body and fellow partakers of the promise” (Eph 3:6), all call for an abolishing of “enmity” (Eph 2:15) between diverse ethnic groups.

Therefore, it must be emphasized that personal prejudice based on ethnic, religious, or social status is incongruent with the new man (see Col 3:11). Such partiality

⁵⁴ Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” April 1963, accessed April 27, 2018, <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/letter-birmingham-jail>.

⁵⁵ H. B. Charles, Jr., “The Biblical Strategy for Racial Unity,” in *A Biblical Answer for Racial Unity* (The Woodlands, TX: Kress Biblical Resources, 2017), 24.

⁵⁶ King, “Letter from Birmingham Jail.”

needs to be put off, for it belongs with the old self and its practices. The new self proclaims that Christ is all, and in all. Thus, a true embrace of Christ's sacrifice on the believers' behalf demands a transformed view of identity and ethnicity. Believers cannot come to the cross in faith and walk away without viewing ethnic distinctions differently.

**Critiquing the Superiority Mindset:
*The Kairos Document and
the Belhar Confession***

Comparing the Kairos Document and the Belhar Confession. The *Kairos* document was written in 1985 by a group of theologians who opposed the supremacy of white churches.⁵⁷ The Belhar confession was written in 1982 and adopted in 1986 by the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC) confronting racism in the Dutch Reformed Church.⁵⁸ Both documents were written within the context of the apartheid system. The *Kairos* document was written in the black township of Soweto, Johannesburg, and the Belhar confession was written in the colored suburb of Belhar, Cape Town. As the dates above show, the two documents were written around the same time. The *Kairos* document was written from the oppressed viewpoint; the Belhar confession was written from the repentant oppressors' viewpoint. Both were written by professing Christians. The purpose of the *Kairos* document was to critique the apartheid theology; the Belhar's purpose was to confess the sin of racism and segregation. Both documents are concerned about the reputation of the church and the gospel. They both viewed the division of the church—where there is a black church and white church—as a crisis. Both documents argue that if the church has the same baptism and Lord's Supper, then there should not be a division.

⁵⁷ Gary S. D. Leonard, ed., *Kairos: The Moment of Truth* (Durban, South Africa: University of Kwazulu Natal, 2010), accessed March 20, 2018, http://ujamaa.ukzn.ac.za/Libraries/manuals/The_Kairos_Documents.sflb.ashx.

⁵⁸ "Belhar Confession," accessed March 20, 2018, https://kerkargief.co.za/doks/bely/CF_Belhar.pdf.

The *Kairos* document summarizes its concerns around three theologies: (1) the state theology, (2) the church theology, and (3) the prophetic theology. The analyses of these theologies follow. The Belhar confession also addressed three concerns: (1) unity of the church and people, (2) reconciliation within the church and society, and (3) God's justice. There appears to be a parallel between the first sets of concerns and the latter. It is not clear whether the *Kairos* writers were aware of the draft of the Belhar confession written in 1982, nor is it clear whether the Belhar confession writers were aware of the *Kairos* document written in 1985 before adopting the Belhar confession in 1986. What is clear is that both documents were written for reformed Christians and both specifically call on the DRC to reject the apartheid ideology. The *Kairos* decries discrimination, exploitation, and oppression.⁵⁹ The Belhar confession denounces segregation and racism. Both viewed the apartheid theology as evil and heretical. The *Kairos* writers rejected the idea of reconciliation without repentance and admission and removal of injustice. The Belhar confession writers admitted their wrongs, confessing that racial separation, enmity, and hatred are sins. They admitted their guilt and responsibility in misrepresenting the gospel.

Having noted these comparisons, one wonders why the *Kairos* document did not acknowledge the Belhar confession. It would be regrettable if the writers of the *Kairos* document knew about this confession and chose to ignore it, because the confession appears to be written by believers who genuinely sought biblical reconciliation. Nevertheless, the *Kairos* document still needed to be written to critique the apartheid theology. The apartheid theology exposes the superiority mindset that every church concerned about demolishing multiethnic fellowship barriers must confront with the gospel of Jesus Christ. This theology was propounded in Groenewald's report to the FRK. Naicker notes that Groenewald's view, which Naicker believes was influenced by

⁵⁹ Leonard, *Kairos*, 11.

eugenics, “was that the church opposed any form of equality between blacks and whites as blacks were inferior to whites.”⁶⁰

In the *Kairos* document preface, the writers declare that the document is a Christian, biblical, and theological comment on the political crisis in South Africa. The social injustices of the apartheid regime led to the penning of this document. In the first place, under the topic “The Moment,” the document states, “At this moment in South Africa the church is about to be shown up for what it really is and no cover-up will be possible.”⁶¹ There is a crisis in the South African church, and according to the *Kairos* writers, the crisis is that the church is divided into two churches, a white church and a black church.⁶²

The *Kairos* goes on to critique what the writers call “State Theology.” The writers observed, “The South African Apartheid State has a theology of its own.” They defined a State theology as “the theological justification of the status quo with its racism, capitalism, and totalitarianism.”⁶³ The definition was born from the deeds of the State after observing that “it [the State] blesses injustice, canonizes the will of the powerful and reduces the poor to passivity, obedience and apathy.”⁶⁴ It is concerning that the oppressors carried out their oppression in the name of God. For example, the preamble to the apartheid constitution read, “In humble submission to Almighty God, who controls the destinies of nation: and the history of peoples; who gathered our forefathers together

⁶⁰ Naicker, “The Role of Eugenics and Religion,” 4.

⁶¹ Leonard, *Kairos*, 7.

⁶² Leonard, *Kairos*, 7.

⁶³ Leonard, *Kairos*, 9.

⁶⁴ Leonard, *Kairos*, 9.

from many lands and gave them this their own; who has guided them from generation to generation; who has wondrously delivered them from the dangers that beset them.”⁶⁵

The words of this preamble led the *Kairos* documenters to conclude, “Here we have a god who is historically on the side of the white settlers, who dispossess black people of their land and who gives the major part of the land to his ‘chosen people.’”⁶⁶ Inequality in the church brings disrepute to the power of the gospel and blasphemes God’s name.

The document goes further to critique the “Church Theology.” The critique focuses on the terminology the State church used. One such term is “reconciliation.” The “Church Theology” wrongly called for reconciliation where, according to the authors of the *Kairos*, reconciliation was not a solution. The *Kairos* theologians argue that one cannot apply reconciliation in all cases of conflicts or dissension. I concur with them that “there are other conflicts in which one side is right and the other is wrong. For example, you cannot call for reconciliation where a struggle is between justice and injustice and between good and evil. Thus, reconciliation should be sought, after injustices have been removed.”⁶⁷

The critique of “Church Theology” was followed by what the *Kairos* theologians termed “Prophetic Theology.” Prophetic Theology focuses on what is perceived to be *the* social problem in South Africa. The authors ruled out racial war as the main conflict since they were not dealing with two equal races, each with their own selfish group interests. However, they concluded that the situation in South Africa was one of oppression.⁶⁸ Perhaps Carson’s observation on how black and whites understand

⁶⁵ Quoted in Leonard, *Kairos*, 12.

⁶⁶ Leonard, *Kairos*, 13.

⁶⁷ Leonard, *Kairos*, 15, 16.

⁶⁸ Leonard, *Kairos*, 23.

racism distills the *Kairos*' understanding of racism. When interviewed on racial matters, Carson answered, "African Americans have a different definition of racism from that of European-American. The latter assume that negative bias toward another race, whether in thought or deed, is racism; the former assume that negative bias toward another race, whether in thought or deed, *plus power*, is racism."⁶⁹

The apartheid oppression came in different forms. Laws were adjusted to benefit the oppressor and to disadvantage the oppressed. Black people were treated as mere labor units and were paid starvation wages. They were separated from their families and moved and dumped in homelands to starve. When laws were adjusted, black people had no say in the system. They were supposed to be grateful for the concessions, which were offered to them like crumbs.⁷⁰ Rae said this was "normal" in apartheid South Africa.⁷¹ Whites made decisions for blacks. In the words of the *Kairos* document, reforms were made by one side without considering the other. Did these professing believers consider a passage like Galatians 3:27-28 when they encouraged inequality between black and white people? This passage clearly shows that the gospel equalizes people before God when it says, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." If the gospel treats people in Christ as equals, then the church should not have segregated believers over skin color. The next section highlights some practical actions that the church and the apartheid state propounded to make sure that white people are superior to people of color in both the church and the state institutions.

⁶⁹ D. A. Carson et al., "The SBJT Forum: Racism, Scripture, and History," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 8, no. 2 (2004): 75, emphasis added.

⁷⁰ Leonard, *Kairos*, 23.

⁷¹ Terry Rae, "Reconciliation between Baptists in South Africa" (paper presented to the Baptist World Alliance, Seoul, Korea, July 2004), 2.

Unequal Education and Unequal Remuneration

South Africans hardly speak of inequality without mentioning education. The recent announcement of the fee-free education by the government, in December 2017, was met with diverse emotions. The advocates of fee-free education argue that a black person is not free without education. Those in opposition argued that the fiscus will be strained as a result of fee-free education. There is context to these variables.

The Bantu Education Act. In 1953, the apartheid government enacted the Bantu Education Act. According to Nadine L. Moore, many academics understood this legislation to be a watershed moment for ensuring a cheap labor force.⁷² However, Moore understands the notion of educating black pupils in the mere basics of their master's language to predate the 1953 Bantu Education Act. Basic language education was meant to promote a greater understanding of the master's orders, thus improving the quality of the labor.⁷³ She points back to "1879 where the first syllabi for elementary black schools would ensure that one fifth of school time was spent doing manual work."⁷⁴

Perhaps of all the reasons, unequal education ensured that black laborers earned significantly lower wages than their white counterparts.⁷⁵ To make sure that black pupils do not compete with white pupils in education, the former government developed a curriculum for black pupils that was less "bookish" and more practical and vocational. Moore names one of the influential curriculum developers of African education as Charles Templeman Loram. Loram believed that black South Africans would serve a role in society, though white people were to determine such a role and the life that they should

⁷² Nadine Lauren Moore, "In Class of Their Own: The Bantu Education Act (1953) Revisited" (MA thesis, University of Pretoria, 2015), i.

⁷³ Moore, "In Class of Their Own," 19, 22.

⁷⁴ Moore, "In Class of Their Own," 23.

⁷⁵ Moore, "In Class of Their Own," 25-25.

lead.⁷⁶ Loram proposed that there “should be a reasonable outlet for the educated native to earn an honest living, to dwell under decent conditions and to have some voice in the management affairs.”⁷⁷ Adjectives such as “honest,” “decent,” and “some” in the preceding statement reveal a paternalistic mindset that white people had over black people. What should not be missed in the preceding statements, however, is the repeated low wage mentality. One of the questions asked in the survey seeking to understand the thinking and attitudes of CBC members on multiethnic fellowship is whether CBC employees should be remunerated based on their skin color. The question issues from this history. Recently, Stats South Africa released a survey that showed that whites in South Africa earn five times more than blacks.⁷⁸ One wonders if the same pay disparity exists in the church. South African history shows that pay disparity formed part of the superiority and inferiority mindset. No church can truly claim a strong multiethnic fellowship if the salary of its staff who have the same qualifications, roles, and experiences is determined based on skin color. The Bantu education aimed at this disparity as seen in Loram’s proposal.

Loram’s view of developing low standard education for black pupils was not uncommon. Moore notes that, in 1936, the Interdepartmental Committee stated, “The education of the white child prepares him for life in a *dominant* society and the education of the black child for a *subordinate* society.”⁷⁹ When the apartheid government saw that the missionaries’ education developed black students into intellectual politicians, they became worried and as a result legislated the Bantu Education Act of 1953. This legislation

⁷⁶ Moore, “In Class of Their Own,” 32.

⁷⁷ Moore, “In Class of Their Own,” 31.

⁷⁸ “Whites Earn 5 Times More than Blacks in South Africa: Stats SA,” BusinessTech, January 30, 2017, <https://businesstech.co.za/news/wealth/153485/whites-earn-5-times-more-than-blacks-in-south-africa-stats-sa/>.

⁷⁹ Moore, “In Class of Their Own,” 32, emphasis added.

forced missionaries to handover their schools to the government.⁸⁰ It is in the public domain that Hendrik Verwoerd, the then National Party's minister of Native affairs / Bantu affairs, said before the bill was enacted, "I will reform it [black education] so that the Natives will be taught from childhood to realize that equality with the Europeans is not for them."⁸¹

Impact of lower education on pastoral training. The low education standard saw black pastors receive an inferior theological training. Ntombana quotes Mhlophe, a BCSA pastor, who said, "The education of the Convention pastors was kept at a minimum and subjected to standards imposed by White Baptist Union."⁸² Pastor Mogashoa, of the same denomination, was also quoted by Mkonwana as saying, "The kind of theological education the Black Baptist ministers received resulted in 'dependency syndrome.'"⁸³ Because of this syndrome, black pastors were made to think that their ability and giftedness was inferior to those of their white counterparts. These two stories hark back to the disturbing decision the BUSA took in 1961, when they organized theological training according to racial groupings. The Baptist Theological College trained white students,⁸⁴ its Cape Town satellite, now called Cape Town Baptist Theological Seminary,

⁸⁰ Moore, "In Class of Their Own," 34-35.

⁸¹ "South African History Online: Towards a People's History," March 20, 2011, <https://www.sahistory.org.za/topic/youth-and-national-liberation-struggle-1894-1994>.

⁸² Ntombana, "Exploring the Critical Moments," 2.

⁸³ Vuyo Patrick Mkonwana, "The Experiences of a Black Baptist Township Pastor in the Apartheid SA: The Case Study of Reverend Simon Lukwe from the Eastern Cape" (MA thesis, University of Fort Hare, 2015), 27.

⁸⁴ Scheepers studied at this institution. He says that only two colored students were allowed per four years of studies. These students, however, were not allowed to live in the college's hostel since the college was in a white neighborhood. He and his fellow colored student were the first pair to attend this college. They had to travel in and out of Parktown day and night, for 30 Km each day. Scheepers, "A Critical Analysis," 31-32.

trained colored students, and the Bible Baptist Institute trained black students.⁸⁵ One can easily see that these groupings followed the Group Areas Act of 1950 that classified people by their race.

The rationale behind these theological groupings, as Mkonwana learns from Kretzschmar, was that black students cannot keep up with their white counterparts because of their different secondary education backgrounds. Perhaps Mbewe refutes this contemptuous perception when he says, “We should encourage visiting preachers [who come to Africa] from other cultures to expound the Scriptures as they do back home.”⁸⁶

***Imago Dei* as a Biblical Solution for (In)Equality**

To curb inequality and segregation, the church must go back to the doctrine of man—as far back as Genesis 1:26a, 27, which reads, “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness.’ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” These verses introduce God’s view of the human race. God created all human beings. At least three times, this passage repeats that the human race was created in God’s image. Theologians call it the *imago Dei*. J. M. Vorster sees the concept of human dignity entailed in *imago Dei*.⁸⁷ He remarks, “The creation of humankind in the image of God entails that God created people to live in a relationship of mutual love and care.”⁸⁸ He maintains that the Reformers taught this concept of dignity, which “should be respected by fellow human beings and social institutions.”⁸⁹ This concept is not far-fetched. God confirmed the concept of

⁸⁵ Mkonwana, “The Experiences of a Black Baptist Township Pastor,” 28.

⁸⁶ Conrad Mbewe, “Why There’s No Such a Thing as African Christianity,” *9Marks Journal, Church Life: Our True Political Witness* (Spring 2018): 74.

⁸⁷ J. M. Vorster, “An Ethics of Hope for Moral Renewal in South Africa,” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 140 (July 2011): 8.

⁸⁸ Vorster, “An Ethics of Hope,” 8.

⁸⁹ Vorster, “An Ethics of Hope,” 8.

dignity when he said to Noah: “And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image” (Gen 9:5-6).

What are the implications of *imago Dei*? *Imago Dei* implies that God expects equal treatment and mutual respect among human beings. It implies that no ethnic group is superior to the other. Therefore, as Albert Mohler conceives, “The separation of humans into ranks of superiority and inferiority differentiated by skin color is a direct assault on the doctrine of creation and an insult to the *imago Dei*.”⁹⁰ The Christian church has a responsibility to promote human dignity. The church needs to correct the unbiblical past, where, according to Vorster’s observation, “many church communities in South Africa resembled the image of the divided society.”⁹¹ Furthermore, the church’s biblical understanding of man should affect its view of inter-racial marriages.

Inter-Racial Marriages

The Christian church cannot talk about strengthening multiethnic fellowship without addressing the worldview of inter-racial marriage. For decades, if not centuries, inter-racial marriages were frowned upon and prohibited by various governments. It was not until 1967 for the United State of America, and until 1985 for South Africa to permit inter-racial marriages.⁹² However, the legalization of inter-racial marriages does not mean people’s worldviews have changed. For example, a segregationist group like the Ku Klux Klan, which claims to stand for a Christian faith, has the following petitions for those

⁹⁰ R. Albert Mohler, Jr, “Conceived in Sin, Called by the Gospel: The Root Cause of the Stain of Racism in the Southern Baptist Convention,” in Williams and Jones, *Removing the Stain of Racism*, 4.

⁹¹ Vorster, “An Ethics of Hope,” 13.

⁹² Some states in America legalized interracial marriages before 1967, but it became fully legalized in all US states in 1967. after the Supreme Court’s decision.

seeking to join them: (1) “You must be a free white male or female of European descent.” (2) “You must be a Protestant able to profess faith in Jesus Christ as personal Savior.” (3) “You must not be married to or date people of other races, nor have mixed race dependents, this includes adopted children.”⁹³ One can tell from reading these petitions that this is a racist organization. This organization repeatedly claims to be a Christian organization, but what they do in the name of Christ and the church is disturbing, including their view on inter-racial marriage. Organizations, churches, and individuals who condemn inter-racial marriages often struggle with discrimination on a broader scale. Piper covers this broader scale of discrimination when he writes, “Opposition to interracial marriage is one of the deepest roots of racial distance, disrespect, and hostility. . . . The supposed specter of interracial marriage demands that barrier after barrier must be put up to keep young people from knowing each other and falling in love.”⁹⁴ Piper’s hypothesis is true of South Africa as the following marriage laws point out.

Past Legal Barriers of Inter-Racial Marriages in South Africa

In 1949, the National Party legislated “the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act no. 55 of 1949.” Prior to this act, in the early history of South Africa, white people intermarried with non-whites.⁹⁵ To prevent this from continuing, the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages was enacted, especially to prevent marriages between “Europeans” and “non-Europeans.” The following year, in 1950, the apartheid government passed another law called the Group Areas Act of 1950. The Group Areas Act categorized people according

⁹³ Ku Klux Klan, “How to Join Us,” accessed April 26, 2018, www.kukluxklan.bz/historic.html.

⁹⁴ John Piper, “Racial Harmony and Interracial Marriage,” sermon manuscript, accessed April 26, 2018, <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/racial-harmony-and-interracial-marriage>.

⁹⁵ Cardell K. Jacobson, Acheampong Yaw Amoateng, and Tim B. Heaton, “Inter-Racial Marriages in South Africa,” *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 35, no. 3 (2004): 443.

to their ethnic groupings—white, black, colored and Indians—and placed them in allocated zones. Thus, a key part of the Group Areas Act was to eliminate mixed marriages.

The impact of Marriage and Group Areas Acts. The prohibition of mixed Marriages and Group Areas Act impacted race relations profoundly. In South Africa they created boundaries between ethnic groups and more painfully they separated families.⁹⁶ Children were separated from their parents because of skin color difference. The main blow was dealt on the church of Jesus Christ because it supported the status quo. For the church to support laws that divide people is greatly disappointing. Martin Luther King, Jr. acutely expressed this disappointment in his “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” He wrote, “The contemporary church is so often a weak, ineffectual voice with an uncertain sound. It is so often the arch supporter of the status quo. Far from being disturbed by the presence of the church, the power structure of the average community is consoled by the church’s often vocal sanction of things as they are.”⁹⁷

Jacobson, Amoateng, and Heaton conducted analytical research that sampled 10 percent of the 1996 South African census, capturing the patterns of intergroup marriages. After using a multinomial logistic method to interpret their data, they concluded, “Though laws against interracial marriage in South Africa have changed, homogamous marriages clearly remain the rule, and interracial marriages are truly exceptional.”⁹⁸ Among other factors, they attribute this norm to the past legal social constraints and segregation, and to the artificial groupings the apartheid government created.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Jacobson, Amoateng, and Heaton, “Inter-Racial Marriages in South Africa,” 444.

⁹⁷ King, “The Negro Is Your Brother.”

⁹⁸ Jacobson, Amoateng, and Heaton, “Inter-Racial Marriages in South Africa,” 455.

⁹⁹ Jacobson, Amoateng, and Heaton, “Inter-Racial Marriages in South Africa,” 455-456.

Ten years later, in 2014, Amoateng together with Kalule-Sabiti conducted another study that sought to examine students' attitudes toward interracial relationships on a South African University campus.¹⁰⁰ The authors limited their study to educational and religious contexts. They contend, "These two contexts either hinder or encourage acceptance of other groups and thus affect the positions people adopt on interracial dating."¹⁰¹ The study has as its hypothesis that "contact with members of different racial groups can promote positive and tolerant attitudes toward other groups."¹⁰² The writers interviewed 1,214 students, asking questions concerning students' attitudes toward interracial dating, attitudes toward interactions with members of different racial groups, and multiracial friendships.¹⁰³ After analyzing data, the writers concluded, "The overall attitude of students towards interracial relationship is positive as more than three-quarters (76.3%) of the respondents approved of interracial dating as compared to less than a quarter (23.5%) who disapproved of interracial dating."¹⁰⁴

Nevertheless, Amoateng and Kalule-Sabiti acknowledge that the educational context had more advantage over a religious context given the fact that the respondents were students. So, what is the attitude of the church toward inter-racial marriage?

Unbiblical Opposition of Inter-Racial Marriage

Recently, Peter Hammond, a prominent South African pastor, missionary, and Christian author, who is renowned for his mission impact and the defense of the Christian

¹⁰⁰ Acheampong Yaw Amoateng and Ishmael Kalule-Sabiti, "Social Context Factors and Attitudes toward Interracial Relationships on a South African University Campus," *Supplement on Population Issues in South Africa* 28, no. 1 (May 2014): 624.

¹⁰¹ Amoateng and Kalule-Sabiti, "Social Context Factors," 624.

¹⁰² Amoateng and Kalule-Sabiti, "Social Context Factors," 624.

¹⁰³ Amoateng and Kalule-Sabiti, "Social Context Factors," 627.

¹⁰⁴ Amoateng and Kalule-Sabiti, "Social Context Factors," 630.

faith, wrote an article that asked a question, “What about Cross-Cultural and Inter-Racial Marriages?” Hammond opens the article with self-description: “As one born in Africa and raised in Africa, I have dedicated most of my life to serving Africans and I have travelled throughout this continent ministering in 30 countries. I was brought up amongst the Matabele in Zimbabwe and have many Zulu, Chichewa, Moru, Nuba and Nigerian friends.”¹⁰⁵ The author seems to use this detailed self-description to clear himself of any racist attitude. However, what follows in the body of his article is greatly disturbing and questions the extent of his friendship with the African people he claims are his friends. Hammond opposes inter-racial marriages forthrightly; however, the ground of his argument is shallow, for it is based on pragmatism, human historicity and human authority, and personal preferences as the following critique indicates. For a man of his scholarship to argue as sensitive an issue as inter-racial marriage on the basis of pragmatism, human historicity and human authority, and personal preferences with no biblical basis is dangerous, especially given his many followers.

Pragmatic argument. Hammond ventures into his argument with a pragmatic approach: “I have seen numerous cross-cultural marriages, and generally speaking, all parties involved come to regret it.”¹⁰⁶ This foregoing statement is pragmatic in nature. Hammond seems to believe that right and wrong depends on whether something works or does not work. Instead of approaching the inter-racial marriage biblically, allowing the Bible to be the final authority, Hammond makes experience his final authority. If Hammond were to be objective about this matter, he would concede that a failed inter-racial marriage did not necessarily fail because the couple was ethnically or culturally diverse; as much as one cannot fallaciously surmise that homogenous marriages fail

¹⁰⁵ Peter Hammond, “What about Cross-Cultural and Inter-Racial Marriages?” accessed April 26, 2018, https://frontline.org.za/index.php?option=com_content&id=674%3Awhat-about-cross.

¹⁰⁶ Hammond, “What about Cross-Cultural and Inter-Racial Marriages?”

because the couple is mono-racial. Both inter-racial and mono-racial marriages have challenges because two sinners are joined together as one (Gen 3:16).

Historical argument. Hammond goes on to condemn inter-racial marriages based on pragmatic historical argument. He writes, “For centuries, actually millenniums, interracial marriage was either illegal, strongly discouraged or frowned upon.”¹⁰⁷ He blames Hollywood and the news media for promoting inter-racial marriages—which were previously unacceptable. If what Hammond says about Hollywood is true, then the church must be ashamed that Hollywood and media seem to have a better theology of marriage than the church and its leaders. However, again, the church should honestly ask Hammond if millenniums of illegalizing, discouraging, and frowning upon inter-racial marriages make it wrong. If the church was to be biblically honest, it would find that for millenniums God’s Word has not changed its endorsement of Moses’ marriage to a Cushite woman (Num 12:1), Salmon’s marriage to Rahab from Jericho (Matt 1:5), Boaz’s marriage to Ruth, a Moabite (Ruth 4:13, Matt 1:5), and Jesus’ marriage to a multiethnic church (Gal 3:28; Eph 5:25-27, 32). If anything, those who criminalize, discourage, and frown upon inter-racial marriage go against Scripture. However, the church needs to be cautioned that the last time Miriam frowned upon inter-racial marriage, she was severely judged by God (Num 12:9-10).

Human authority. From using pragmatic and historical authority to argue against inter-racial marriages, Hammond moves on to human authority: “I have discussed this matter with numerous pastors, theologians and authors throughout South Africa, in Europe and in America. Almost every one of them has agreed that the social and domestic consequences of interracial and inter-cultural marriages are disastrous.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Hammond, “What about Cross- Cultural and Inter-Racial Marriages?”

¹⁰⁸ Hammond, “What about Cross- Cultural and Inter-Racial Marriages?”

If Hammond really wanted to find the truth, and the same applies to every Christian who might oppose inter-racial/inter-cultural marriages, then he should conduct a scientific empirical research substantiated with facts. For example, my wife and I have been in an inter-cultural marriage for twelve years at the time of writing this work. Despite the cultural and language differences, as well as mockeries that my children cannot speak my language, our marriage continues to be strong. Why? Our marriage is firmly built on Christ and his Word and not on our cultures. The pastors, theologians, and authors that Hammond consulted cannot be held as the authority in the matter of inter-racial marriage. Perhaps leaders need to be cautioned against acting like Job's friends, who based their counsel on the assumption of their own experience (Eliphaz), their own traditions (Bildad) and their unfounded religious convictions (Zophar). Just as their counsel aggravated Job's suffering, unbiblical views of inter-racial marriage will aggravate the racial gap in a multiethnic church and society. Piper warns, "Oppose interracial marriage, and you will help create a situation of racial disrespect."¹⁰⁹

Unwarranted concerns. Before leaving Hammond's article, it is worth finding out what his real fears are, that he should choose to write so boldly, yet without biblical basis, on this sensitive matter. A careful reading of Hammond's article leads to the following conclusions: (1) he shares the same fears with the Numerous New World Order Advocates that mixed marriages will eradicate the whites in future generations.¹¹⁰ (2) He fears a number of what he calls "catastrophic consequences," namely, divorce, domestic violence, and conflicts with in-laws. (3) He explains,

Marriage does not just involve two people but two families. It affects generations to come. Generally speaking, two people from different races, or cultures, getting married are not honoring their parents and seldom are they considering consequences for their children. The children will belong to neither the race of the mother, nor of the father.

¹⁰⁹ Piper, "Racial Harmony and Interracial Marriage."

¹¹⁰ Hammond, "What about Cross- Cultural and Inter-Racial Marriages?"

Hammond's arguments are nothing but a generalized, exaggerated, and unbiblical worldview of inter-racial marriage and race.

Personal preference. Hammond repeats his self-centered argument again: "I have many friends of all races. However, to marry across the color line would be to me to betray my parents and all of our ancestors, and my children and future generations."¹¹¹ In this instance, Hammond bases his opposition of inter-racial marriage on his preferences and convenience. Contra Hammond, Piper counsels, "Christians are people who move toward need and truth and justice, not toward comfort and security. Life is hard. But God is good. And Christ is strong to help."¹¹² As noted, the marriage of two sinners is generally not easy. And marriages of sinners who are different in many ways is even more difficult. Given these difficulties, should believers follow Hammond's decision and prohibit inter-racial marriages? No! On the contrary, believers should listen to voices of reason, such as Ken Ham, who gives the following comprehensive advice:

Because many people groups have been separated since the Tower of Babel, they have developed many cultural differences. If two people from very different cultures marry, they can have a number of communication problems, even if both are Christians. Expectations regarding relationships with members of the extended family, for example, can also differ. Even people from different English-speaking countries can have communication problems because words may have different meanings. Counselors should go through this in detail, anticipating the problems and giving specific examples, as some marriages have failed because of such cultural differences. However, such problems have nothing to do with genetics or "race."¹¹³

Misinterpreting race. A second concern Hammond's argument raises has to do with his skewed understanding of the term *race*. This skewed understanding of race is even more serious since it alludes to Scripture. Hammond continues his reason why he cannot marry across the color line: "Most importantly I believe it would be a betrayal to

¹¹¹ Hammond, "What about Cross- Cultural and Inter-Racial Marriages?"

¹¹² Piper, "Racial Harmony and Interracial Marriage."

¹¹³ Ken Ham, "Interracial Marriage: Is It Biblical?" accessed April 26, 2018, <https://creation.com/interracial-marriage-is-it-biblical#r7>.

Almighty God, who has set the boundaries between nations.” Hammond alludes here to Acts 17:26, which says, “He [God] made from one man the whole human race to dwell on the entire face of the earth, he fixed the ordered seasons and the boundaries of their regions” (NAB). This verse, if anything, states that there are not many races but one—the human race. Hammond’s view is similar to Kinistic view. According to Matt Slick, the Kinesthetic view “teaches that God, in the Bible, has ordained a specific means of cultural behavior that is based on same-race families, or ‘kin.’ It maintains that people are to be involved with, worship with, and marry people of their same kind, that is, their same race.”¹¹⁴ Hence, Hammond’s interpretation of race is misleading and unfortunately would mislead many who follow his argument blindly.

Hammond’s argument is not new. Going back to the University of Pretoria’s professor Groenewald’s report discussed earlier, Naicker alerts that the drive behind the apartheid was ethnic survival.¹¹⁵ She argues that such drive was fueled by Darwin’s theory of eugenics (or natural selection), which viewed Europeans as representatives of “highest racial type within the human species” and black people as inferior and a danger to the “pure” white race.¹¹⁶ Hammond argues similar to Darwinism when he says: “For hundreds of generations our ancestors married within their race, or none of us would exist. But now Europe is in danger of being swamped by multitudes of non-Europeans, especially Muslims.”¹¹⁷ He goes on to say, “Perhaps the situation does not seem quite as serious to people living in Europe right now. However, for those of us who are a small minority, a severely persecuted minority, in Africa, the consequences of being swamped

¹¹⁴ Matt Slick, “What Is Kinism? Is It Biblical?” accessed May 1, 2018, <https://carm.org/what-is-kinism>.

¹¹⁵ Naicker, “The Role of Eugenics and Religion,” 4.

¹¹⁶ Naicker, “The Role of Eugenics and Religion,” 3.

¹¹⁷ Hammond, “What about Cross- Cultural and Inter-Racial Marriages?”

by other cultures is all too acute.”¹¹⁸ Hammond opposes inter-racial marriages because he wants to preserve the European “race” by misinterpreting race. Contra Hammond, Ham captures the meaning and the implications of Acts 17:26 rightly, saying,

The Bible does not even use the word race in reference to people, but it does describe all human beings as being of “one blood” (Acts 17:26). This of course emphasizes that we are all related, as all humans are descendants of the first man, Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45), who was created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27). The last Adam, Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:45) also became a descendant of Adam [Luke 3:23-38]. Any descendant of Adam can be saved because our mutual relative by blood (Jesus Christ) died and rose again. This is why the gospel can (and should) be preached to all tribes and nations.¹¹⁹

Two major implications come from understanding human race in Acts 17:26. First, all are created in God’s image. Second, all are saved in Christ Jesus. Two people who are created in the image of God and are born by the blood of Jesus can marry despite their skin color or ethnic differences. Moses married a Cushite woman (Num 12:1); Salmon married Rahab, a Canaanite woman (Matt 1:5); and Boaz married Ruth, a Moabite woman (Ruth 4:13). Both Rahab and Ruth are found in the genealogy of Jesus as proof that God accepts these inter-racial marriages (Matt 1:5).

So, what about texts like Exodus 34:16, Deuteronomy 7:3, and Ezra 9 that seem to prohibit inter-racial marriages? Two observations should suffice. First, this prohibition was given to Israel as a nation and not to Gentile nations. Second, the reason for the prohibition was not racial, but religious. God warned that foreign women will entice them to worship their gods. Solomon is a classic example of why these marriages were prohibited (1 Kgs 11:1-10). The application of these verses to the church today is that believers are not to marry unbelievers (cf. 1 Cor 7:39; 2 Cor 6:14-7:1). Though, a believer can marry another believer of a different ethnic group or skin color.

¹¹⁸ Hammond, “What about Cross-Cultural and Inter-Racial Marriages?”

¹¹⁹ Ken Ham, *The Answers Book: 25 Top Questions on Creation/Evolution and the Bible* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2006), 223.

“Sadly,” says Ham, “there are some Christian homes where the parents are more concerned about their children not marrying someone from another ‘race’ than whether or not they are marrying a Christian.”¹²⁰ Williams adds to Ham’s sadness by lamenting, “When Southern Baptist parents refuse to let their kids date or marry Christians of other races, they do so because of an inherited—maybe even subconscious—white supremacist worldview.”¹²¹ On the other hand, churches like that of John Piper have committed that, despite inter-racial marriage challenges, “at Bethlehem we will not underestimate the challenges of interracial marriage. . . . We will celebrate the beauty, and we will embrace the burden. Both will be good for us and good for the world and good for the glory of God.”¹²²

Multiethnic Leadership

Chapter 2 of this project established a biblical and theological foundation of multiethnic leadership. I argued that multiethnic unity is unattainable without the intentional inclusion of people from diverse ethnic groups into leadership positions. The key word is *intentional*. I noted in the foregoing history that worldviews influence the way people think and make decisions. Local churches like CBC and denominations like BUSA, which used to be predominantly homogenous and unaccustomed to multiethnic leadership, require concerted effort to include diverse ethnic groups in their key leadership positions. The BUSA leadership patterns in table 1 confirm this hypothesis.

¹²⁰ Ham, *The Answers Book*, 233.

¹²¹ Jarvis J. Williams, “Biblical Steps toward Removing the Stain of Racism from the Southern Baptist Convention,” in Williams and Jones, *Removing the Stain of Racism*, 25.

¹²² Piper, “Racial Harmony and Interracial Marriage.”

Multiethnic Leadership Trends in the BUSA

Table 1 shows a trend of leadership inclusivity in the BUSA executive committee by their ethnic groups between the years 1993 and 2017. The leadership trend is shown in its descending order. The pattern of leadership is limited between 1993 and 2017 because of the change in attitude that mostly was influenced by the 1994 South Africa's democratic elections.¹²³

This trend of leadership is clearly illustrated by figure 1. The flow chart shows that whites have been represented in executive positions between 1993 and 2017, 50 percent of the time. They are followed by the coloreds with 33 percent of the time, and then blacks with 14 percent of the time, and lastly with Indians represented only 3 percent of the time.

¹²³ The information contained in table 1 comes from Baptist Union of Southern Africa, *The South African Baptist Handbook* (Johannesburg, South Africa: BUSA), Issues 1993-1994; 1994-1995; 1995-1996; 1996-1997; 1997-1998; 1998-1999; 1999-2000; 2000-2001; 2001-2002; 2002-2003; 2003-2004; 2004-2005; 2005-2006; 2006-2007; 2007-2008; 2008-2009; 2009-2010; 2010-2011; 2011-2012; 2012-2013; 2013-2014; 2014-2015; 2015-2016; 2016-2017; 2017-2018.

Table 1. BUSA executive ethnic diversity: 1993-2017

Year	President	Vice-President	Ex-President	General Secretary
2017-2018	Colored	Black	Black	Colored
2016-2017	Black	Colored	Colored	Colored
2015-2016	Colored	Black	Indian	Colored
2014-2015	Indian	Colored	Colored	Colored
2013-2014	Colored	Indian	White	Colored
2012-2013	White	Colored	White	Colored
2011-2012	White	White	Black	Colored
2010-2011	Black	White	Colored	Colored
2009-2010	Colored	Black	White	Colored
2008-2009	White	Colored	White	Colored
2007-2008	White	White	Black	Colored
2006-2007	Black	White	White	Colored
2005-2006	White	Black	White	Colored
2004-2005	White	White	White	Colored
2003-2004	White	White	White	Colored
2002-2003	White	White	White	Colored
2001-2002	White	White	White	Colored
2000-2001	White	White	Black	White & Colored
1999-2000	Black	Colored	White	White
1998-1999	White	Black	White	White
1997-1998	White	White	White	White
1996-1997	White	White	Colored	White
1995-1996	Colored	White	White	White
1994-1995	White	Colored	White	White
1993-1994	White	White	Black	White

The BUSA leadership trend reveals that whites account for 50 percent of executive positions and non-whites for 50 percent. At an individual ethnic group level, if the BUSA consider multiethnicity one of their core values as indicated in the new mission statement, then they need to find a way of balancing ethnic representation in their executives. However, the democratic voting system employed to choose leadership might make this representation impossible.

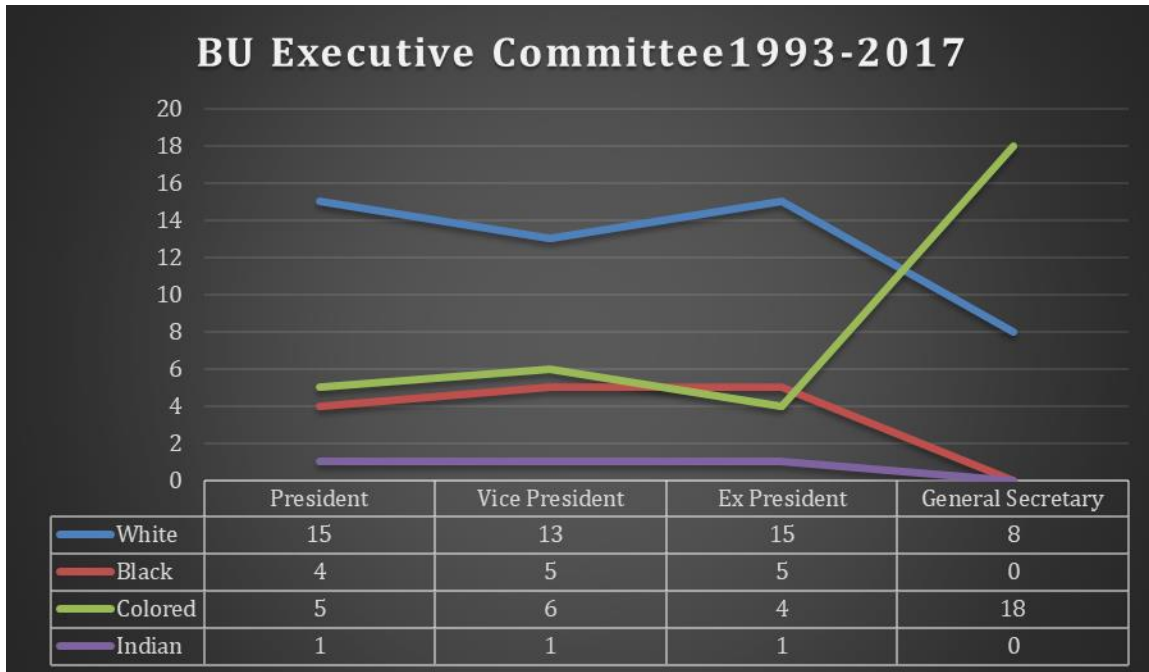


Figure 1. BUSA executive ethnic diversity trend: 1993-2017

Overall assessment of the BUSA. Before giving an overall assessment of the BUSA I must note that BUSA has had only two individuals in the General Secretary’s position, the first one was white and the second colored. As seen in table 1, in the 2000-2001 term, BUSA had two General Secretaries. This was to help with the transition of power from one to the other. Therefore, it is noticeable that the seemingly high percentage (33 percent) of coloreds who occupied the executive position can be attributed to the secretary position. The high percentage does not give a fair assessment of coloreds being brought into the executive in numbers. Excluding the General Secretary and Ex-President position gives a better assessment of ethnic representation in the BUSA executive positions. With the exclusion of these two executive positions, whites are represented 28 times (56%), blacks 9 times (18%), coloreds 11 times (22%), and Indians 2 times (4%). Altogether, non-whites occupied the Presidential and Vice-Presidential positions from 1993-2017, 44 percent of the time with the whites occupying them 56 percent of the time.

What does this statistical information communicate? These statistics communicates that BUSA is making progress in including diverse ethnic groups in its

key leadership positions, which is done intentionally. BUSA's intention of being a multiethnic denomination was made clear when they adopted a mission statement in 2003 that identified it as a multi-cultural denomination. This intentionality contributed to the tripling of the number of non-whites who occupied the executive positions. In the period between 1993 and 2003, non-whites occupied the positions of a President and a Vice-President six times. After 2003, between 2003 and 2017, they occupied it thirteen times. This again proves that unless a denomination or a church intentionally pursue multiethnic leadership, challenge the status quo, and review important guiding documents such as the mission statement, strengthening multiethnic fellowship will remain an unachievable endeavor.

Another example of multiethnic leadership inclusivity is found in the racial reconciliation resolutions the Southern Baptist Convention voted on in 2015, in Columbus, Ohio. I want to note two of these resolutions because they illustrate what it means to be intentional about diverse ethnic leadership and they are worth emulating.

RESOLVED, That we urge churches to demonstrate their heart for racial reconciliation by seeking to increase racial and ethnic diversity in church staff roles, leadership positions, and church membership; and be it further.

RESOLVED, That we urge Southern Baptist entities and Convention committees to make leadership appointments that reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of the body of Christ and of the Southern Baptist Convention. These resolutions, if considered, promise to strengthen multiethnic unity and fellowship in a church that is multiethnic. The next section looks at CBC's journey toward multiethnic fellowship and how it can strengthen this fellowship.

Christ Baptist Church: A Journey toward Multiethnic Fellowship

Christ Baptist Church is situated in the city of Polokwane, formerly called Pietersburg. Like other towns in the apartheid era, Pietersburg applied the Group Areas

Act of 1950, which separated people according to their ethnic groups. Between 1965 and 1966, black people were moved to areas outside the city, namely Moletsi, Seshego, and Mankweng. Indians were moved to Nirvana and coloreds to Westernburg. According to SA history, black people were supposed to be out of town between 9pm to 4am.¹²⁴

According to its history, the church started in 1961, and it was then called Pietersburg Baptist Church before the name was changed to Christ Baptist Church in the 1990s. CBC's history states that the main focus of the church was to reach the English-speaking community. This focus is further delineated thus: "While the church was continuously joined by people of different languages and cultures the ethos has been that of an English-speaking Baptist Church."¹²⁵ There is context to this focus. First, by choosing English as its language of preaching, CBC became distinct from churches that had Afrikaans as preaching language and thus excluding those who could not understand Afrikaans. By choosing an English language, CBC was positioned to accommodate almost everyone who would attend their services. Second, by allowing people of different cultures in their service, CBC was breaking the status quo of homogenous congregations.

Given the socio-political context of the 1960s, the church was 100 percent white. The above-mentioned separation of ethnic groups and prohibition of non-whites in town would make sure that Pietersburg Baptist Church remained a white church. The Group Areas Act of 1950 would not be repealed until April 19, 1990, when the then President FW de Klerk announced in parliament that this Act would be replaced by non-discriminatory laws. Members of CBC who were in the church in the 1980s report that a black university professor from Ghana attended CBC before 1990.

In the meantime, the Lord was increasing the number of members at CBC. When CBC became a fellowship under the BUSA, it had seven members led by pastor du

¹²⁴ South African History Online, "Polokwane the Segregated City," June 2016, <https://sahistory.org.za/article/polokwane-segregated-city>.

¹²⁵ "CBC Membership Class Document," unpublished, updated 2015, 1.

Pisania in 1962. By 1983, according to the members who joined the church, CBC had forty members under pastor Mark Taylor. These members report that the membership was still 100 percent white. By 1983, CBC already had had eight pastors. In 1989, the church had its ninth pastor. Given the demographics of the town and the church, it is expected that these pastors would be white.

The church continued to grow. It is reported that in the early 1990s the membership of the church reached one hundred. This growth led to the move from one building to another until the church purchased its current property in the suburb of Flora Park. I always thought that the move to Flora Park was motivated by reaching out to multiethnic people who live there now, but members who were there during this move say that was not the case. Initially, the church earmarked a property downtown but ended up not acquiring it because of spatial reasons. By that time Flora Park was not populated; it had only few houses. The Lord provided a place of worship in this suburb and CBC began its meeting there in 1997.

Several things happened after the church moved to Flora Park. According to the history of CBC, in 1989, the church decided that if they were going to take the Great Commission seriously, they needed to act on it. They called a missions pastor who would be sent by the church to reach out to non-white communities of South Africa and other countries. This action marked the beginning of Samaria Mission, CBC's mission's arm. Samaria Mission planted churches both in South Africa and outside South Africa among black communities. However, these churches had no trained pastors to lead them. This dilemma led to the establishment of Christ Seminary in 1997.

The move to Flora Park, the lack of trained pastors in the black communities, and the establishment of Christ Seminary led to the nations coming to CBC. Although CBC stated that when the church started it was continuously joined by people from different languages and cultures, the color was still predominantly white. After moving to Flora Park, CBC had the nations coming to them. It is reported that the church did not

intentionally go out to reach people of color. Some members concede that it took Christ Seminary professors who came from America to reach out to black people. In 1998, the first black family joined the church. I asked this family about their experience when they came to a church that was only white. Their testimony is that they were warmly welcomed. From henceforth, people of color began to attend services at CBC, and many became members. By the time of writing, the church is almost 50 percent white and 50 percent black. Although some white people left the church when they saw the influx of black people joining the church, many stayed, and the Lord established a multiethnic church in the community previously known for segregation. Given this journey, how can CBC strengthen its multiethnic fellowship so that current political influence would not separate its members?

Learning from History

In Romans 15, instructing the multiethnic church in Rome to please and build up each other, the apostle Paul reminds them: “For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (v. 4). Paul then prayed for them: “May the God of endurance grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus” (v. 5). His prayer concluded with an instruction toward harmony: “Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God” (v. 7).

Paul says history was written for the believers’ instruction. Elsewhere, Paul also wrote, “Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did” (1 Cor 10:6). The foregoing history of the church in South Africa has shown the evil of segregation in the church. It showed how difficult it is to restore unity where the church was torn apart by the evil sin of racism. History revealed that racism came as a result of the church distorting the Scriptures to develop a theology of apartheid that sought to protect ethnic identity.

The past happened in order to teach the church to deal with the present. The church has no power to reverse the past, but it has a choice to biblically respond to the current political wave. In 1994, the government of South Africa changed when the newly elected black government replaced the old white government. Both governments have certain things in common—the fight for identity, power, and wealth. However, the Scriptures have directives for believers so that they do not succumb to political influence to protect ethnic identity.

During this time where the world fights for identity, power, and resources, the church of Jesus will have to make the manifold wisdom of God known (Eph 3:10) by eagerly maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph 4:3). During this time CBC must stand out and proclaim: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28). During this time believers from a black ethnic group must look at their white brothers and sisters and see them as Christ sees them, and not as racist. Where believers see racism in their fellow believers they must address it with a desire to help those who struggle with this sin (Matt 18:15-20; Gal 6:1-3). At times, this help calls for believers whose minds were shaped by the apartheid ideology to change their worldview by renewing their minds with proper biblical understanding. Believers from white ethnic groups must also arm their minds with a biblical response to the threats posed by the current government. The government’s new policy of land expropriation without compensation will surely affect believers from the white ethnic group. These believers will need to learn from the Hebrew believers about whom the writer of Hebrews 10:34 writes, “You joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one.”

Strengthening What CBC Has

When the church considers strengthening multiethnic fellowship or any spiritual relationship, Paul’s words to the Thessalonian church concerning brotherly love

serve as a good pattern. Paul celebrates that he does not need to write these believers about love. For they are already loving the brothers throughout Macedonia. However, he still thinks it is necessary to urge them to love more and more (1 Thess 4:9-10). This is the attitude with which this project was undertaken—to urge CBC members to strengthen what already exists: multiethnic fellowship. Paul called the church at Thessalonica a model church (1 Thess 1:7). However, being a model church does not suggest perfection; this model church still needed to excel in its love for the brothers.

CBC can also be deemed a model of a multiethnic church, as its journey points out. It is rare to find churches with a membership that is almost 50 percent white and 50 percent black. Though, as it is with every church in this fallen world, there is always a need for improvement, or better, sanctification. This sanctification is even more needed when the church continues to increase in number. The Bible, in Acts 6:1, cautions that with multiethnic or multicultural numerical growth comes no little challenges. A local church like CBC must constantly ask what it must do to practically strengthen its multiethnic fellowship. After learning from the history of the church in South Africa, I recommend the following actions for CBC to strengthen its multiethnic fellowship.

First, CBC can strengthen multiethnic fellowship by being intentional to include diverse ethnic groups in ministry leadership roles and decision-making positions. From an insider's point of view, I have often observed that when there are open ministries needing a lay leader, unconsciously white CBC members are the first to be considered. This blind spot can be corrected by intentionally formulating policies and vision statements to remind the church that its membership is multiethnic and thus it must consider all biblically-qualified members from diverse ethnic groups to serve, including in decision-making roles.

Second, with the precedent already set at CBC of selecting a senior pastor internally, and with five black pastors already serving on CBC's pastoral staff, the church elders may have to prepare the church for the possibility of calling a non-white senior

pastor after the current one could no longer continue in his role. This preparation is necessary because it is not precedented. One can argue that CBC has five black pastors serving on the pastoral staff already, so why is this non-white senior pastor discussion an issue? The issue is that it is precedented to have non-white pastors or elders serve under the leadership of a white senior pastor. However, it would be a huge change for the church to have a non-white senior pastor setting the vision for and leading the church. Hence, being intentional in preparing the church for such possibilities will help the elders ascertain the readiness of the church.

Third, throughout its journey toward multiethnic fellowship, CBC has mixed its eldership team. In 2004, CBC included a black elder in its eldership, and shortly after, two more were added. By this inclusion, CBC defied the often-purported mindset that black people cannot assume the position of leadership and become equals with their white counterparts. These are changes worth celebrating at CBC. Another change worth celebrating happened in 2011 when, for the first time, a black pastor preached at CBC's Sunday morning service. This is no small matter. It was the breaking of a strong barrier and changing of mindset about non-white preachers being able to handle Scripture and preach expository preaching. These two celebratory points fostered trust and a strong relationship between black and white leaders at CBC. Furthermore, the ethnically mixed leadership has a potential to change the perception that CBC is a white church since, as Kevin Dougherty and Kimberly Huyser perceive, "leadership is intimately tied to congregational identity."¹²⁶ They go on to testify, "Stories of congregational transformation from monoracial to multiracial commonly include the hiring of culturally diverse leaders as key turning points."¹²⁷ Multiethnic fellowship can be strengthened by taking time to

¹²⁶ Kevin D. Dougherty and Kimberly R. Huyser, "Racially Diverse Congregations: Organizational Identity and the Accommodation of Differences," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 47, no. 1 (2008): 27.

¹²⁷ Dougherty and Huyser, "Racially Diverse Congregations," 27.

celebrate changes the head of the body has wrought in his church. The next section looks at two ministry arms of CBC, Christ Seminary and Samaria Mission, and continues to recommend ways by which to strengthen multiethnic fellowship in these ministries.

Christ Seminary and Samaria Mission: The State of Multiethnic Representation

Christ Seminary. Christ Seminary started with a predominantly white faculty, coming mostly from America. With time, some of the men trained at Christ Seminary were called to join the faculty. The leadership of Christ Seminary became even more intentional about nationalizing the faculty. Christ Seminary now has seven faculty members, of which three are white and four are black. In 2012, Christ Seminary also appointed a non-white principal to lead the institution. These demographics serve as a testimony of hearts changed and united by the gospel since to have an ethnically balanced faculty and a black principal in an institution established by a former white church is unprecedented in South Africa. Christian institutions cannot speak of strengthening multiethnic fellowship in South Africa without having testimonies like these, where white people willingly submit to the leadership of a black person and vice versa.

To solidify the decision to include diverse ethnic groups, Christ Seminary included this intention in its policies. The 2017 Equity Policy statement states,

The seminary firmly holds that no discrimination of any kind, on one or more groups (whether along racial, gender, disability, economic lines, and more), shall be practiced and/or tolerated within the institution in all matters and practice, as dictated by the Bible (Galatians 3:28) and the Constitution of South Africa.

On race—the seminary accommodates all cultures as is continually reflected within the staff and student body. Race shall not be a factor of discrimination in either employing staff or admitting students, given the seminary’s biblical conviction that mankind has a common descent comprising only one human race (Acts 17:26), though cultures and nationalities may differ.¹²⁸

¹²⁸ Christ Seminary Policies, “Equity Policy” (2017): 1.

One of the procedures stated in Christ Seminary’s Equity Policy explains, “All staff recruitment shall be done with consideration of the seminary’s current staff demographic as it relates to age, race, disability, and gender, in order to maintain an ideal balance.”¹²⁹

By including non-discriminatory clauses, non-racial clauses, and the intention to maintain an ideal demographic balance in its policies, Christ Seminary shows how intentional it wants to be in breaking past discriminatory attitudes. Since diverse ethnic inclusion does not happen naturally, Christ Seminary became intentional about this inclusion and this intention has the potential to strengthen multiethnic fellowship in this ministry.

Samaria Mission. The staff of Samaria Mission is not constant, and its demographics keep changing. At the time of writing, Samaria Mission has five white missionary families and one black missionary family serving as full-time staff. Since Samaria Mission ministers in black communities, it would benefit from having a strong ethnic balance. Samaria Mission defines its philosophy as follows:

Our philosophy has always been to be faithful to the command of Christ and to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth. More specifically we are committed to effectively plant churches through evangelism, discipleship and development of strong local churches with godly leaders who in turn can train others and also reproduce their ministries in other places. Training nationals to reach nationals is top priority. With these needs on our heart Christ Baptist Church started Christ Seminary in 1997 to further our biblical mandate to make disciples and train leaders. Africa will best be reached through Africa, and the church in Africa will only have solid foundations laid when its own pastors are bringing truly biblical messages and setting godly examples for the flock.¹³⁰

Samaria Mission is about the Great Commission and church planting. Working in black communities, its top priority is to train nationals as expressed in its philosophy. The aim was to partner with Christ Seminary to train leaders for Samaria Mission church

¹²⁹ “Equity Policy” (2017): 2.

¹³⁰ Samaria Mission, “About Us,” accessed April 15, 2019, <http://samariamission.co.za/node/1>.

plants. This arrangement is ideal and would work better if Samaria Mission were to absorb more Christ Seminary graduates who could serve as full-time trainers of the leaders targeted by Samaria Mission for church leadership. Samaria Mission has tried this method, but a barrier hinders the ideal of a multiethnic team at Samaria Mission: finances.

A Barrier of a Multiethnic Team at Samaria Mission

Having served with Samaria Mission for four years—from 2008 to 2011, I came to realize that finance is a hindrance to a multiethnic mission team. Part of the Samaria Mission’s mission statement states they are “a faith mission working from the platform of a local church.” What it is meant by a “faith mission” is that missionaries who join Samaria Mission must raise their own support. During my missionary tenure, I observed that white missionaries, from both South Africa and America, are able to raise sufficient support to continue in ministry, but their black counterparts are unable to raise support. Because of insufficient funds, black missionaries end up leaving the mission.

My observations were verified by a current black missionary who serves with Samaria Mission. We asked each other what the difference could be between the way white and black missionaries raise support, because they all send out newsletters to overseas partners to report on the work they do and to request financial support. It is understandable that American missionaries will have enough support because they are sent by local churches that have long-term relationships with them. To get an answer to our question, we need to compare white South African missionaries with black South African missionaries. Like American missionaries, white South African missionaries are often supported by their sending local churches. However, most of their support comes from overseas through contacts they form on the mission field. These are the same contacts they share with black missionaries. Hence the question, why is it that black

missionaries do not get the same response as their white counterparts from supporters when they both request financial support?

Although long-term relationships could be one of the reasons, it appears that when it comes to black missionaries, no matter how long the relationship has been, there is still little trust relationship. Overseas supporters tend to trust white missionaries with money than their black counterparts. This is confirmed by the fact that when a white missionary requests financial support on behalf of a black missionary, the response is positive. It is also confirmed by the fact that when overseas missionaries want to support a black missionary, they often first ask white missionaries if it is a good idea.

Another contributing factor comes from fellow white missionaries who often think that black missionaries can survive with minimal support. For example, when a potential supporter wants to support a black missionary, they would often ask his white colleague how much support a prospective black missionary will need. Fellow white missionaries often suggest a minimum amount they would not normally suggest for a white missionary. This disparity comes with a mindset that the lifestyle of a black person is cheaper than that of the white person. Unless CBC clears this misconception, Samaria Mission will find it difficult to sustain a qualified ethnically-diverse team.

Samaria Mission has at least two options to break the financial barrier that drives missionaries away. One option is for CBC to directly support its missionaries—both black and white—who are not able to raise enough funds so that they can continue with their service. The second option is for CBC to consider implementing the same model used at Christ Seminary—where the money is pooled into one account and all employees get paid from the same pool. This model will encourage equality, staff retention, and build stronger multiethnic mission team. The only difficulty with the second option is that foreign missionaries cannot earn a salary in South Africa unless they are on a visa that allows them to. Hence, the first option might be the quickest and easiest to implement, with the church taking the responsibility of raising funds instead of struggling missionaries.

As I bring CBC's journey toward multiethnic fellowship to a conclusion, having recommended several ways by which CBC can strengthen its multiethnic fellowship at the church leadership, congregational, and ministry levels, I want to recommend two more actions, or better, two attitudes that can cement multiethnic fellowship at CBC.

The Need for Mutual Respect and Admiration

Mutual respect. Mbewe and Rinqest discuss the need of mutual respect and admiration between missionaries and indigenous leaders. Their discussion is worth paraphrasing and applying to the local church's leadership. They conceive, "Where there is lack of mutual respect there will soon be an atmosphere of suspicion and lack of trust."¹³¹ And, I paraphrase, if one ethnic group is reluctant to share leadership authority with people of other ethnic groups in the church, then other groups may force the sharing of authority. Reluctance in sharing leadership is a mark of a supremacist worldview. Williams argues, "A white supremacist worldview may be present when white . . . leaders do not share, or only grudgingly share, leadership and influence with vetted, qualified, and competent black and brown leaders."¹³² Consequently, if the predominant ethnic group resists to share leadership, a split occurs. To paraphrase Mbewe and Rinqest again, where there is an atmosphere of mutual respect between diverse ethnic leaders in the church, even when other people seek to undermine one leader because of his ethnicity, leaders hearing this will stand up and defend their fellow leader because of their leadership unity.¹³³

Mutual admiration. Respect and admiration are inseparable since, as Mbewe and Rinqest write, "We admire someone when we see qualities in him or her that even

¹³¹ Mbewe and Rinqest, "From Paternalism to Partnership," 248.

¹³² Williams, "Biblical Steps toward Removing the Stain of Racism," 25.

¹³³ Mbewe and Rinqest, "From Paternalism to Partnership," 248-49.

we do not have.”¹³⁴ Mbewe and Rinqest raise several warnings regarding admiration. They warn that it is easier for a leader who comes from an “inferior” ethnic group to admire a leader from a “superior” ethnic group; however, “it demands a lot more spirituality and humility” for a leader from a predominant ethnic group to admire a leader from a less predominant ethnic group.¹³⁵ Admiration should hang on the leaders’ spiritual progress and not on social status. Both white and black leaders should admire each other for going against their cultural norms that conflict with biblical teaching. They should also admire each other for a gentle, humble and open confrontation over wrongdoing (cf. Gal 2:11-14).¹³⁶

Cultivating the attitude of respect and admiration in a multiethnic church, at the leadership and congregational level, promises to strengthen fellowship among diverse ethnic groups. This mutual respect and admiration finds its ground on the proposition that all ethnic groups in Christ are saved by grace through faith and not by works so that no one should boast (Eph 2:8-9).

Conclusion

Believers from diverse ethnic groups have mutual respect and mutual admiration for one another because they are equal before God. They are all saved by grace. Similarly, when the church addresses inequality, supremacy, and segregation it does so based on the gospel of Christ. The gospel of Christ necessitates addressing social ills such as racism and superiority because Christ broke down the barrier of the dividing wall that was built on the foundation of hatred. Thus, in preaching the gospel, the church in South Africa

¹³⁴ Mbewe and Rinqest, “From Paternalism to Partnership,” 249.

¹³⁵ Depending on the church context, any ethnic group can be predominant or less predominant. At CBC, whites are predominant whereas non-whites are less predominant.

¹³⁶ Mbewe and Rinqest, “From Paternalism to Partnership,” 249.

cannot ignore the sin of segregation among ethnic groups. They need to address it with the power of the gospel.

In summary, a transformed Christian can no longer see his or her ethnicity as superior to others. A transformed Christian can no longer endorse oppressive legislations enacted by the enemies of Christ. A transformed Christian can no longer segregate. A transformed Christian can no longer frown upon inter-racial marriages of people and fellow believers joined in a holy matrimony before God. These are some of the barriers the church in South Africa must address. Churches address them because Christ addressed them when he made peace and brought enemies together, and because believers are called to tolerate one another in love and to be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph 4:2-3). The next chapter analyzes the responses of CBC members and adherents to the survey to understand their thinking and attitudes toward issues discussed in these foregoing chapters.

CHAPTER 4
DETAILS AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

Goal 1: Assessing Current Multiethnic Relationships at CBC

The first goal was to assess the current multiethnic relationships at CBC. The purpose of this assessment was to understand what influence, if any, the past political worldviews have on the church's thinking and attitudes toward multiethnic fellowship. This goal was measured by administering a pre-survey to the members of the seven mid-week Bible studies and descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data.

Procedure

On November 13, 2018, at the eldership meeting, I presented the CBC elders with this project's questionnaire and rubrics and asked for the permission to send the questionnaire to CBC members. Upon assessing the sensitivity of the topic, the elders asked me not to send the questionnaire until they studied it. On November 14, 2018, one elder gave permission for the questionnaire to be administered, followed by the other two elders giving their permission on November 18 and 19. A follow-up email was sent to the remaining elders on November 23, 2018, and none of the elders objected to administering the questionnaire.

After the elders granted permission to administer the questionnaire, I utilized CBC's membership database to find out how many members attend mid-week Bible studies so that I would know how many questionnaires to send to the Bible studies. I prepared envelopes with enough questionnaires for each Bible study and gave them to CBC's secretary on November 26, 2018, to distribute to the Bible study leaders. All Bible study leaders received the questionnaires and distributed them to members who volunteered

to participate. I included a letter to the Bible study leaders explaining in some detail the purpose of the project in case the members had questions about the study.¹ In total, 141 questionnaires were sent out.

Out of the 141 questionnaires, 62 questionnaires were returned. Five respondents made it clear that they did not want to participate in the study. In their choice not to participate, they raised concerns for the study. Some of their concerns are documented in the section about reflections later described in goal 1. Of the 57 questionnaires left to be analyzed, one was not suitable for use because the last section containing ten questions was not answered. Ultimately, 56 questionnaires were suitable for use.

Goal 1 would be considered successfully met when at least five members of each Bible study group completed the questionnaire, and the questionnaire analyzed to ascertain the state of and the barriers toward multiethnic fellowship at CBC. Although the number of returned questionnaires exceeded the benchmark set for this goal, one Bible study group chose not to participate. So, the goal was not completely met. However, to have 56 pre-test surveys returned was a great encouragement.

Analyses Per Question

This section uses descriptive statistics to analyze each question in the survey to assess the state of mind, attitudes toward, and barriers of multiethnic fellowship among CBC members. The questionnaire consisted of five parts. Part 1, questions 1-6, gathered personal information. Part 2, questions 7-16, assessed personal level of multiethnic fellowship. Part 3, questions 17-26, assessed personal perceptions about CBC. Part 4, questions 27-31, assessed biblical knowledge of multiethnic fellowship. Part 5, questions 32-36, probed the need to revise and update official documents.

¹ See appendix 5.

Personal Information

Question 1: Are you a born-again Christian who has repented of his/her sin and trusted Jesus Christ? Out of the 56 participants, only one answered “no” to this question. So, 98 percent of the participants were Christians.

Question 2: “Are you a member of CBC?” 84 percent of the participants were CBC members, and 16 percent were not members.

Question 3: “How long in years have you been a member?” Twenty-three percent of participants have been members between 1-5 years, 20 percent have been members between 6-10 years, 14 percent have been members between 11-15 years, 13 percent have been members between 16-20 years, 5 percent have been members between 21-25 years, and 9 percent have been members for 26 plus years. Only 16 percent of the participants were not CBC members. These data show the average median of years of membership at CBC as 15 years. It should be noted that only 3 non-white participants have been members at CBC for over 15 years. This observation gives the approximation of how long CBC has had a multiethnic membership.

Question 4: “What is your age in years?” Only 2 percent of the participants were between 18-24 years old, 20 percent were between 25-34 years old, 25 percent between 35-44 years old, 29 percent were between 45-54 years old, 14 percent were between 55-64 years old, and 11 percent were over 65 plus years. The median age of participants was 44 years.

Question 5: “What is your gender?” Of the 56 participants, 52 percent were males and 48 percent were females. Therefore, the data present balanced opinions from both genders.

Question 6: “What is your ethnicity?” The participants represented three ethnic groups: 41 percent were black, 57 percent were white, and 2 percent were colored. To maintain anonymity and protection, a colored participant will henceforth be classified with black participants. It is also worth noting that these ethnic demographics represent the percentage of CBC census. Therefore, the sampling should yield balanced opinions.

Personal Level of Multiethnic Fellowship

Question 7: “I enjoy fellowship with other believers at CBC.” Using a six-point Likert scale to measure responses, the answers were shared between two choices—“agree” and “strongly agree.” Twenty-three percent of participants agreed, and 77 percent strongly agreed that they enjoy fellowship with other believers at CBC. The analyses per black and white participants are shown in table 2, where SD=strongly disagree, D=disagree, DS=disagree somewhat, AS=agree somewhat, A=agree, and SA=strongly agree. N=number of respondents per ethnic group. Of the 24 black participants, 25 percent agreed and 75 percent strongly agreed that they enjoy fellowship with other believers at CBC. Of the 32 white participants, 22 percent agreed and 78 percent strongly agreed with the question. Overall, both black and white people at CBC enjoy fellowship with other believers at CBC.

Table 2. General fellowship: responses per ethnic group

Ethnicity	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Black (n=24)	0%	0%	0%	0%	25%	75%
White (n=32)	0%	0%	0%	0%	22%	78%

Question 8: “I reach out to people of different skin color at CBC.” None of the 56 participants strongly disagreed nor disagreed: 4 percent disagreed somewhat, 18 percent agreed somewhat, 39 percent agreed, and another 39 percent strongly agreed. Table 3 shows that 6 percent of the 32 white participants do not reach out to people of different skin color at CBC. The rest of the answers from both ethnic groups fall within the agree side of the scale.

Table 3. Reach out different skin color people: responses per ethnic group

Ethnicity	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Black (n=24)	0%	0%	0%	29%	38%	33%
White (n=32)	0%	0%	6%	9%	41%	44%

Question 9: “I have strong fellowship with people of different skin color at CBC.” None of the participants strongly disagreed, but 2 percent disagreed, and 5 percent disagreed somewhat. On the other side, 21 percent of the participants agreed somewhat to having a strong fellowship with people of different skin color at CBC, 30 percent agreed, and 41 percent strongly agreed. Table 4 shows that 8 percent of the 24 black members and 6 percent of the 32 white members do not have a strong fellowship with people of different skin color at CBC. Twenty-one percent of the black respondents and 22 percent of the white respondents agreed somewhat with the question. These statistics indicate that fellowship is somewhat weak and needs to be strengthened.

Table 4. Multiethnic fellowship: responses per ethnic group

Ethnicity	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Black (n=24)	0%	0%	8%	21%	25%	46%
White (n=32)	0%	3%	3%	22%	34%	38%

Question 10: “I invite people of different skin color into my home.” Zero percent of the survey’s participants strongly disagreed, 7 percent disagreed, and 4 percent disagreed somewhat. In total, only 11 percent of participants do not invite people of different skin color in their homes. In the positive side, 13 percent agreed somewhat that they invite them, 34 percent agreed, and 43 percent strongly agreed that they practice multiethnic hospitality. Table 5 shows that 21 percent of the 24 black participants do not practice hospitality to people of different skin color, juxtaposed with the 3 percent of the white participants who struggle with this area of their fellowship.

Table 5. Multiethnic hospitality: responses per ethnic group

Ethnicity	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Black (n=24)	0%	13%	8%	21%	25%	33%
White (n=32)	0%	3%	0%	6%	41%	50%

Question 11: “I naturally socialize with people of different skin color outside church.” Of the 56 participants, 7 percent strongly disagreed with this question, 5 percent disagreed, 4 percent disagreed somewhat, 13 percent agreed somewhat, 41 percent agreed, and 30 percent strongly agreed. In total, 84 percent of the participants interact with people of different skin color outside church. Given the racial divide in South Africa, this natural socialization may shine the light, resulting in the heavenly Father glorified (Matt 5:16). The data in table 6 reveal that the majority in both black and white participants naturally socialize with people of different skin color outside church, except for the 16 percent of the 24 black people and 15 percent of the 32 white people.

Table 6. Multiethnic socialization: responses per ethnic group

Ethnicity	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Black (n=24)	8%	8%	0%	4%	29%	50%
White (n=32)	6%	3%	6%	19%	50%	16%

Question 12: “I pray for believers of different skin color.” No one strongly disagreed with this question, but 2 percent of the participants disagreed, and another 2 percent disagreed somewhat. On the agree side of the scale, 11 percent agreed somewhat, 36 percent agreed, and 50 percent strongly agreed. Looking at the attitude of intercession among black and white people in this study, table 7 indicates that these believers pray for one another regardless of skin color.

Table 7. Multiethnic prayer focus: responses per ethnic group

Ethnicity	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Black (n=24)	0%	4%	0%	13%	29%	54%
White (n=32)	0%	0%	3%	9%	41%	47%

Question 13: “I do not condemn interracial Christian marriages.” Two percent of the respondents strongly disagreed, 4 percent disagreed, and 2 percent disagreed with interracial marriages. Thus, in total, 8 percent of the participants condemn interracial

marriages. However, the majority do not condemn interracial marriages, as 5 percent agreed somewhat, 25 percent agreed, and 63 percent strongly agreed with the question. According to the data in table 8, none of the black people disagree with interracial marriages, but 12 percent of the white disagree.

Table 8. Interracial Christian marriages: responses per ethnic group

Ethnicity	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Black (n=24)	0%	0%	0%	0%	13%	88%
White (n=32)	3%	6%	3%	9%	34%	44%

Question 14: “I chose my Bible study based on my skin color.” In this question, the Likert scale is reversed. “Strongly disagree” is a positive answer and “strongly agree” is a negative answer. Sixty-four percent of the 56 participants strongly disagreed to having chosen their Bible study based on skin color, 18 percent disagreed, and 7 percent disagreed somewhat. In contrast, 5 percent agreed somewhat, 0 percent agreed, and 5 percent strongly agreed that they chose their Bible studies based on skin color. Of the 24 black participants, 21 percent admitted that they chose their Bible studies based on skin color, with 3 percent of the 32 white people also admitting it.

Table 9. Multiethnic Bible study: responses per ethnic group

Ethnicity	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Black (n=24)	54%	17%	8%	13%	0%	8%
White (n=32)	72%	19%	6%	0%	0%	3%

Question 15: “I struggle to reach out to people of a different skin color.” Forty-one percent strongly disagreed, followed by 25 percent who disagreed, and 5 percent who disagreed somewhat. On the other hand, 20 percent of respondents agreed somewhat, 7 percent agreed, and 2 percent strongly agreed. Thus, a total of 29 percent of the participants struggle to reach out to people of a different skin color. The results in table 10 suggest that barriers still need to be broken for the two ethnic groups to reach out to

each other. Black people struggle the most with 42 percent of the 24 participants acknowledging the struggle, followed by 19 percent of the 32 whites.

Table 10. Multiethnic outreach: responses per ethnic group

Ethnicity	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Black (n=24)	38%	17%	4%	21%	17%	4%
White (n=32)	44%	31%	6%	19%	0%	0%

Question 16: “I prefer to fellowship with a believer of a different skin color rather than with an unbeliever of the same skin color.” In terms of this fellowship preference, 11 percent strongly disagreed, 16 percent disagreed, 2 percent disagreed somewhat. This means that 29 percent of the participants prefer fellowship with unbelievers of the same skin color than with believers of a different skin color.

Before casting aspersions on these participants, it is possible that they might not have understood the question because it may appear confusing. One must pay close attention to the wording to understand what he or she is being asked. If the responses reflect their true opinions, then they need to be reminded of Paul’s prohibition in 2 Corinthians 6:14: “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers.” Of the 56 participants who agreed, 9 percent agreed somewhat, 30 percent agreed, and 32 percent strongly agreed. That is, 71 percent of the participants prefer fellowship with believers of different skin color than with unbelievers of the same skin color. Of the 24 black people who participated in this survey, 38 percent of them prefer fellowship with unbelievers of the same skin color than with believers of a different skin color, the same is true of the 22 percent of the 32 white people who participated (see table 11).

Table 11. Fellowship preference: responses per ethnic group

Ethnicity	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Black (n=24)	17%	21%	0%	13%	38%	13%
White (n=32)	6%	13%	3%	6%	25%	47%

Personal Perceptions about CBC

Question 17: “Which of the following do you think best describes CBC?”

Participants were asked to choose between “white church,” “black church,” “black and white church,” “multiethnic church,” “I do not know,” and “never thought about it.” Two respondents, or 4 percent, left the question unanswered and 1 person, or 2 percent, never thought about it. Most of the respondents, that is 79 percent, described CBC as a multiethnic church, and 16 percent described it as a black and white church. No one described CBC as a white or black church, nor did anyone chose “I do not know.” Of those who described CBC as black and white, 6 of the 56 were black, and 3 were white. Of the two who did not answer the question, one participant is black, and one is white. Furthermore, a person who answered “never thought about it” is from a black ethnic group. The rest of the participants view CBC as a multiethnic church.

Question 18: “CBC intentionally promotes racial equality in its fellowship.”

Overall, there seems to be agreement that CBC promotes racial equality in its fellowship. Only 2 percent of the participants strongly disagreed, 9 percent disagreed, and 4 percent disagreed somewhat. The rest think CBC is doing well in this area as 14 percent agreed somewhat, 30 percent agreed, and 41 percent strongly agreed. Grouping the responses by ethnicity, one finds that 21 percent of the 24 black people and 9 percent of the white people disagreed with the question (see table 12).

Table 12. Racial equality in fellowship: responses per ethnic group

Ethnicity	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Black (n=24)	4%	13%	4%	17%	17%	46%
White (n=32)	0%	6%	3%	13%	41%	38%

Question 19: “CBC ministries intentionally include different ethnic groups.”

This question had one blank answer, but the rest responded, where 2 percent of the respondents strongly disagreed with the question, 2 percent disagreed, and another 2 percent disagreed somewhat. As opposed to the 6 percent responses within the disagree

side of the scale, 13 percent agreed somewhat, 36 percent agreed, and 45 percent strongly agreed that CBC ministries intentionally include different ethnic groups. Furthermore, the data in table 13 show that among 24 black participants, 8 percent disagreed and 3 percent of the 32 white participants disagreed that CBC intentionally includes different ethnic groups in its ministries. One black person did not answer this question.

Table 13. Multiethnic ministries: responses per ethnic group

Ethnicity	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Black (n=24)	4%	0%	4%	13%	33%	42%
White (n=32)	0%	3%	0%	13%	38%	47%

Question 20: “CBC intentionally selects multiethnic leadership.” One participant left this question unanswered, 2 percent of the participants strongly disagreed, 4 percent disagreed, 13 percent disagreed somewhat, 14 percent agreed somewhat, 36 percent agreed, and 30 percent strongly agreed. More specifically, as per the data in table 14, 21 percent of 24 black participants and 16 percent of the white participants disagreed that CBC intentionally selects multiethnic leadership. One white participant did not answer the question.

Table 14. Multiethnic leadership: responses per ethnic group

Ethnicity	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Black (n=24)	4%	4%	13%	13%	38%	29%
White (n=32)	0%	3%	13%	16%	34%	31%

Question 21: “CBC’s worship teams sufficiently represent multiethnic worshippers.” There seems to be mixed opinions on this question with most answers found in the middle of the scale. Five percent of the respondents strongly disagreed, 11 percent disagreed, 18 percent disagreed somewhat, 32 percent agreed somewhat, 18 percent agreed, and 14 percent strongly agreed. One person left the question unanswered. These responses indicate that CBC needs to pay attention to this ministry. There is

consensus among the two ethnic groups, with 30 percent of black participants and 37 percent of white participants disagreeing that CBC’s worship teams sufficiently represent multiethnic worshippers (see table 15). One black person did not answer this question.

Table 15. Multiethnic worship teams: responses per ethnic group

Ethnicity	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Black (n=24)	4%	13%	13%	21%	21%	25%
White (n=32)	6%	9%	22%	41%	16%	6%

Question 22: “CBC should be intentional in encouraging multiethnic Bible studies.” None of the 56 participants strongly disagreed with the question, but 9 percent disagreed, and 16 percent disagreed somewhat. Contra to the 25 percent who disagreed, 7 percent agreed somewhat, 21 percent agreed, and 46 percent strongly agreed. Responses per ethnic group in table 16 show 8 percent of the 24 black people and 37 percent of the 32 white people do not think CBC should be intentional in encouraging multiethnic Bible studies. Table 16 further reveals that 92 percent of the black people and 63 percent of the white people think that CBC should intentionally encourage multiethnic Bible studies.

Table 16. Need for multiethnic Bible studies: responses per ethnic group

Ethnicity	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Black (n=24)	0%	8%	0%	0%	29%	63%
White (n=32)	0%	9%	28%	13%	16%	34%

Question 23: “CBC openly speaks and teaches about racial problems in the country.” Two people did not answer the question, but 14 percent answered with strongly disagree, 18 percent with disagree, and 11 percent with disagree somewhat. On the other side, 29 percent agree somewhat, 18 percent agree, and 7 percent strongly agree. Both ethnic groups agree that CBC does not speak and teach about racial problems in the country. Table 17 shows that 42 percent of black participants and 42 percent of white participants disagree with the question. Two black people left the question unanswered.

Table 17. Address racial problems: responses per ethnic group

Ethnicity	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Black (n=24)	17%	25%	4%	17%	21%	8%
White (n=32)	13%	13%	16%	38%	16%	6%

Question 24: “CBC’s fellowship can survive the racial divide going on in the country.” None of the 56 participants strongly disagreed that CBC’s fellowship can survive the racial divide in the country. Only 2 percent disagreed, and 5 percent disagreed somewhat. The majority are confident that CBC’s fellowship can survive the racial divide in the country. This confidence is attested by 20 percent of the participants who agreed somewhat, 38 percent who agreed, and 36 percent who strongly agreed. According to table 18, white people are more confident than black people that CBC’s fellowship can survive the racial divide in the country.

Table 18. Surviving racial divide: responses per ethnic group

Ethnicity	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Black (n=24)	0%	4%	13%	38%	25%	21%
White (n=32)	0%	0%	0%	6%	47%	47%

Question 25: “CBC comes across as a racist church.” The participants strongly deny this question, where 64 percent strongly disagreed, 30 percent disagreed, and 2 percent disagreed somewhat. The small percentage think CBC comes across as a racist church, with 2 percent saying they agreed somewhat and another 2 percent saying they agreed. None strongly agreed with the question. Table 19 can be perused for the thoughts of both black and white participants. But overall, both groups think CBC is non-racist.

Table 19. Racist church: responses per ethnic group

Ethnicity	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Black (n=24)	38%	50%	4%	4%	4%	0%
White (n=32)	84%	16%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Question 26: “There is a need to strengthen multiethnic fellowship at CBC.”

Of the 56 participants, 2 percent strongly disagreed with the need to strengthen multiethnic fellowship at CBC, 5 percent disagreed, and 7 percent disagreed somewhat. However, that most of the participants see this need is evidenced by 32 percent of participants who agreed somewhat, 34 percent who agreed, and 20 percent who strongly agreed. Of the participants who disagreed with this need, 4 percent are from the 24 black respondents and 22 percent are from the 32 white respondents. The majority in each group see the need to strengthen multiethnic fellowship at CBC.

Table 20. Strengthen multiethnic fellowship: responses per ethnic group

Ethnicity	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Black (n=24)	0%	4%	0%	21%	38%	38%
White (n=32)	3%	6%	13%	41%	31%	6%

Biblical Knowledge of Multiethnic Fellowship

Question 27: “I know what the Bible teaches about race.” No participant strongly disagreed with this question. However, 7 percent disagreed, and 9 percent disagreed somewhat that they know what the Bible teaches about race. Those who know what the Bible teaches about race responded as follows: 9 percent agreed somewhat, 48 percent agreed, and 27 percent strongly agreed. By observing the data in table 21, one learns that 23 percent of the 24 black people do not know what the Bible teaches about race and 9 percent of the 32 white people do not know as well. The rest of the participants from both groups say they know.

Table 21. Bible knowledge on race: responses per ethnic group

Ethnicity	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Black (n=24)	0%	13%	13%	4%	42%	29%
White (n=32)	0%	3%	6%	13%	53%	25%

Question 28: “I have been taught on multiethnic fellowship before.” In contrast to no one strongly disagreeing with question 27, 7 percent of the participants strongly disagreed with question 28, admitting that they have not been taught on multiethnic fellowship before, followed by 14 percent who disagreed, and 16 percent who somewhat disagreed. On the contrary, 21 percent agreed somewhat and 29 percent agreed. The 13 percent “strongly agree” responses indicate the need of education on this subject. The data in table 22 further substantiates this need, with 37 percent of the 24 blacks and 38 percent of the 32 whites having not been taught on multiethnic fellowship before.

Table 22. Multiethnic fellowship knowledge: responses per ethnic group

Ethnicity	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Black (n=24)	8%	8%	21%	17%	33%	13%
White (n=32)	6%	19%	13%	25%	25%	13%

Question 29: “The Bible promotes multiethnic fellowship.” No one strongly disagreed nor disagreed somewhat that the Bible promotes multiethnic fellowship. However, 2 percent of the 56 participants disagreed. On the other hand, no one agreed somewhat, 32 percent agreed, and 66 percent strongly agreed that the Bible promotes multiethnic fellowship. Also, there is a consensus among black and white people that the Bible promotes multiethnic fellowship. Only 4 percent of the black participants disagreed as seen in table 23.

Table 23. Multiethnic fellowship in the Bible: responses per ethnic group

Ethnicity	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Black (n=24)	0%	4%	0%	0%	21%	75%
White (n=32)	0%	0%	0%	0%	41%	59%

Question 30: “The Bible teaches that all men are equal.” None strongly disagreed, disagreed nor disagreed somewhat with this question. A small 4 percent agreed somewhat, followed by 14 percent who agreed. The majority, that is 82 percent, strongly

agreed. Therefore, there is no doubt in the minds of all the participants that the Bible teaches that all men are equal. However, there are still those who cannot answer this question with a strongly agreed, as table 24 shows.

Table 24. Equality in the Bible: responses per ethnic group

Ethnicity	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Black (n=24)	0%	0%	0%	4%	21%	75%
White (n=32)	0%	0%	0%	3%	9%	88%

Question 31: “The Bible condemns interracial marriages.” The Likert scale is reversed in this question, where a “strongly disagree” response is positive and “strongly agree” is negative. Of the 56 respondents, 61 percent of the participants chose to strongly disagree, 29 percent chose to disagree, 5 percent chose to disagree somewhat, 2 percent chose to agree somewhat, 2 percent chose to agree, and another 2 percent chose to strongly agree.

Looking at answers per ethnic group, one sees in table 25 that 16 percent of the 24 black people think the Bible condemns interracial marriages, and none among the white participants thinks so. It is envisaged after educating the church on this subject that there will be a shift in the minds of those who think the Bible condemns interracial marriages.

Table 25. Interracial marriages in the Bible: responses per ethnic group

Ethnicity	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Black (n=24)	58%	21%	8%	4%	4%	4%
White (n=32)	63%	34%	3%	0%	0%	0%

Revising and Updating Official Documents

Question 32: “The language used in CBC’s official documents and statements can either strengthen or weaken the mission of the church.” Of the 56 participants, 11 percent strongly disagreed, 13 percent disagreed, and 5 percent disagreed somewhat. On

the other hand, 16 percent of the respondents agreed somewhat, 39 percent agreed, and 14 percent strongly agreed. Thus, 69 percent of the 56 respondents agreed that the language used in CBC’s official documents and statements can either strengthen or weaken the mission of the church. One person from the white ethnic group did not answer the question. Table 26 further shows that the majority of both black and white participants agreed with the question. These responses will supplement the evaluations by the panel of experts in the fourth goal to get balanced opinions of the congregants and the eldership.

Table 26. Written documents’ impact: responses per ethnic group

Ethnicity	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Black (n=24)	17%	8%	8%	8%	29%	29%
White (n=32)	6%	16%	3%	22%	47%	3%

Question 33: “It is important for CBC to consider a balanced ethnic representation as part of its criteria to choose leadership.” Of the 56 participants, 9 percent strongly disagreed with this criterion. Another 5 percent disagreed, followed by 9 percent who somewhat disagreed. However, 14 percent agreed somewhat, followed by an increase of 29 percent who agreed and the majority at 32 percent who strongly agreed. So, 75 percent agreed with the criteria as opposed to the 23 percent who disagreed. One participant abstained from answering the question. When looking at the data from black and white people’s perspective, one sees that 88 percent of the 24 black people and 66 percent of the white people agreed that ethnic representation should form part of the criteria of choosing leadership at CBC. However, 12 percent of the black participants and 31 percent of the white participants disagreed. Only one of the white participants did not answer the question.

Table 27. Choosing multiethnic leadership: responses per ethnic group

Ethnicity	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Black (n=24)	4%	0%	8%	13%	33%	42%
White (n=32)	13%	9%	9%	16%	25%	25%

Question 34: “CBC is ready for a non-white pastor.” Since CBC dislikes using the term *senior pastor*, avoiding its use in this question rendered the question vague to some participants, especially since the pastoral staff is multiethnic. Most participants understood the question to mean senior pastor and 4 percent of them strongly disagreed that CBC is ready for a non-white pastor, 2 percent disagreed, and 9 percent disagreed somewhat. On the other hand, 14 percent agreed somewhat, 36 percent agreed, and 29 percent strongly agreed. Looking at the responses in table 28 from the perspectives of the two ethnic groups, one finds that two people from each group did not answer the question; 25 percent of the 24 black people and 6 percent of the 32 white people disagreed with the question, but 66 percent of the black people and 87 percent of the white people agreed that CBC is ready for a non-white (senior) pastor.

Table 28. Ready for non-white pastor: responses per ethnic group

Ethnicity	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Black (n=24)	4%	4%	17%	25%	8%	33%
White (n=32)	3%	0%	3%	6%	56%	25%

Question 35: “CBC employees should be remunerated based on skin color.” I expected a 100 percent strong disagreement with this question, but the results were as follows: 86 percent strongly disagreed, 11 percent disagreed, and 2 percent disagreed somewhat. None agreed somewhat, 2 percent agreed, and none strongly agreed. Table 29 shows the mindset of each ethnic group concerning this question. None of the white participants agreed with the question, but one black person agreed, and with another showing some doubts by disagreeing somewhat.

Table 29. Remuneration by skin color: responses per ethnic group

Ethnicity	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Black (n=24)	83%	8%	4%	0%	4%	0%
White (n=32)	88%	13%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Question 36: “Black pastors should shepherd black members; White pastors should shepherd white members.” When it comes to shepherding, 57 percent of the 56 participants strongly disagreed that people should be shepherded by pastors of the same skin color, 25 percent disagreed, 13 percent disagreed somewhat. A small 4 percent fall within the agree side of the scale, with 2 percent agreeing and another 2 percent strongly agreeing. No one agreed somewhat, and only one person did not answer the question. From each ethnic group’s perspective, 83 percent of black participants and 38 percent of the white participants strongly disagreed, another 8 percent of the black participants disagreed, and 38 percent of the white participants disagreed. On the other end of the scale, 4 percent of the blacks strongly agreed, and 3 percent of the whites agreed. Also, 4 percent of the black people and 19 percent of the white people are not quite sure as they chose to disagree somewhat. All in all, with the disagree side of the scale as shown by table 30, the majority of the responses from both groups disagree with the notion of having black pastors shepherding black members and white pastors shepherding white members.

Table 30. Shepherding by skin color: responses per ethnic group

Ethnicity	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Black (n=24)	83%	8%	4%	0%	0%	4%
White (n=32)	38%	38%	19%	0%	3%	0%

Findings for Goal 1

According to the statistics presented in questions 7-9, although people generally enjoy fellowship with one another, there is a need to encourage some believers to reach out to people of different skin color and to strengthen fellowshiping with people of different skin color among both black and white people. Questions 13 and 31 asked questions about interracial marriages. Although according to the responses in question 31, all white respondents know that the Bible does not condemn interracial marriages, but 12 percent of them disagreed and 9 percent of them agreed somewhat that they do not condemn these marriages. Conversely, none of black people condemn interracial

marriages, but 12 percent of them think the Bible condemns them. Biblical education and biblical practice are needed in this area.

Questions 10 and 15 revealed that black people are not in a habit of inviting people of different skin color in their homes. They even struggle to reach out to them. Since the Bible encourages hospitality even to strangers (Heb 13:2; 1 Pet 4:9; 3 John 5-8), these believers need to be exhorted and helped to overcome these deficiencies. Similarly, according to the data in question 16, believers at CBC need to be shown the need to prefer fellowship with believers of a different skin color than with unbelievers of the same skin color.

In response to questions 17, 18, 19 and 20, the majority of the participants described CBC as a multiethnic church. Though, responding to question 18, 21 percent of black participants and 9 percent of white participants think CBC does not intentionally promote racial equality in its fellowship. Furthermore, 21 percent of black and 16 percent of white respondents disagreed that CBC intentionally selects multiethnic leadership. However, there is a consensus among the participants that CBC ministries intentionally include different ethnic groups. Questions 18 and 20 might need qualitative research to ascertain why the respondents think CBC does not promote racial equality in its fellowship and why they think it does not intentionally select multiethnic leadership.

Responses to questions 21 and 22 reveal the need for a balanced ethnic representation in CBC's worship teams and Bible studies. Thirty percent of black participants and 37 percent of white participants see a need to improve ethnic representation in the worship team; and 92 percent of blacks and 63 percent of white would like to see the intentional encouragement of multiethnic Bible studies. A good ethnic mix at the Bible study level may help resolve the deficiencies of hospitality and reaching out to different skin people identified among black people in questions 10 and 15.

Responding to the questions of race (questions 23-26), there is a consensus among the participants that CBC is not a racist church. Since no church is perfect, the

majority see the need to strengthen multiethnic fellowship at CBC. The understanding among 42 percent of participants in each ethnic group is that CBC does not openly speak and teach about racial problems in the country. CBC leadership may want to consider these responses and apply their minds to how to help believers address racial problems. When it comes to the biblical knowledge of multiethnic fellowship, some believers in question 28 showed the need for education in the area. The good news is that, according to question 29, all participants agree that the Bible promotes multiethnic fellowship. Therefore, teaching on this topic will solidify this knowledge and hopefully translate into practice that will in turn strengthen multiethnic fellowship at CBC.

Question 32 sought participants' opinions on the terminology or wording of the official documents in reference to multiethnic fellowship. Of the respondents, 69 percent believe the language used in such documents can either strengthen or weaken multiethnic fellowship. Combining the responses of the 56 participants with the evaluations of the documents by three elders in goal 4 will give balanced opinions of both the congregants and the leaders. At this moment one cannot read much into these statistics since the participants did not have the opportunity to evaluate the documents. The three elders' evaluations, provided later in this chapter, give educated opinions.

Questions 33-36 focused on people's opinions of multiethnic leadership. Of the participants, 75 percent think ethnic representation should be part of the criteria in choosing leaders at CBC. When asked whether CBC is ready for a non-white pastor, white participants are more confident than their black counterparts that CBC is ready for a non-white pastor. This question would require qualitative research to get to know the reasons behind those who disagree with the question. On the other hand, the overwhelming majority of the participants strongly disagreed with assigning shepherds by skin color. Elders may need to consider these responses and review the practice of assigning members to the shepherds and vice versa. However, for this practice to change, Bible studies will need to have ethnic mix since the elders shepherd people in their Bible studies. Also,

according to the responses in question 22, participants want to see intentional ethnic mix in Bible studies. Question 35, which asks whether CBC staff should be remunerated based on skin color, cannot be objectively engaged since there is no information on whether CBC has this practice or not. However, what is encouraging is that all participants except one disdain this practice. This disdain set CBC apart from the South Africa that, according to statistics mentioned in chapter 2, determine salary by skin color.

Reflections for Goal 1

I already indicated that five people who returned their questionnaires expressed unwillingness to participate in the study. Some of their questionnaires were answered, but I did not think it to be ethically right to include them as part of the analyses. However, together with their answers to the questions, they gave some qualitative information regarding their refusal to participate. I thought it would be helpful to include some of the reasons they furnished as part of the reflections on goal 1.

The word *intentional* is used several times in the questionnaire (in questions 18, 19, 20, and 22). These members did not like the word. However, the same is true with those who still chose to participate. Some opposed the use of the word altogether, others said they did not understand what it means, and yet others expressed that things happen naturally at CBC with no need of being intentional. I take from this concern that it could have been helpful if I defined this and other terms that were key to the questionnaire, to avoid the unnecessary push back.

Besides the terminology used, the main objection from the non-participatory respondents was that the Bible is silent on race and makes no issue on the topic. They considered this project an attempt to be politically correct and a propagation of affirmative action. Although it is true that a study like this can propagate such ideologies and thus widen the divide, as some pointed out, the respondents did not understand the purpose of the questions in the survey. Since these believers wrote their names on their questionnaires, I called and set up meetings with each of them so they could understand the purpose of

the questionnaire and the project. Perhaps if some detailed reasons for the study were given upfront, emotional flares could have been prevented.

Interaction with these members highlighted a number of things worth reflecting. First, it became clear that terms such as *multiethnicity* and *race* were not understood from a biblical point of view but from a sociological and political worldview. So, the need for this study was confirmed and it helped me to know that I need to teach the church how these terms relate and what the Bible says about them. There was also sensitivity around terms such as “all men are equal.” I came to learn that “equal” to some means communism. Again, defining this term might have been helpful; however, the definition alone was not a problem. The problem seemed, as some indicated through interaction, that people are not equal before God. There seemed to be a lack of understanding of the *imago Dei* that needed to be addressed at the implementation phase.

Also, I could have been clearer in question 34. I could have used the nomenclature “senior pastor” instead of just using “pastor.” As shown in the analysis, some people understood what the question meant, but others insisted that there are non-white pastors on staff. One person was honest enough to say he understood the question, but did not like it.

I came to learn that all the weaknesses in the questionnaire could have been avoided if I had first piloted the questionnaire before administering it to the targeted audience. My recommendation for future researchers of a similar topic would be to pilot their questionnaires to clear ambiguities. On the positive side, the questionnaire started some good conversations among believers at CBC on issues they have avoided for long time, and yet, if left unaddressed, could build a barrier between believers of diverse ethnic groups. Therefore, I hope that the results of these descriptive statistics will give some objectivity on how black and white members of CBC think about ethnicity, race, interracial marriages, and other related topics within a multiethnic environment.

Goal 2: Eight-Week Teaching Series Evaluation

The initial goal was to have an eight-week teaching series for this project. However, due to the sensitivity of the topic and the prospects of removing people from their mid-week Bible studies for eight weeks, the elders of CBC asked that the weeks be reduced. After consulting with my supervisor and further engaging with the elders, we decided to limit the implementation time to four weeks.²

Procedure

To measure the success of this goal, the rubric was prepared and given to the expert panel made up of three elders of CBC. The multiethnic fellowship teaching evaluation rubric evaluated the biblical faithfulness, scope, methodology, and practicality of the lessons.³ The goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criteria met or exceeded the sufficient level. The rubric contained nine questions with a four-point Likert scale that had a total possible score of 36 points. To meet the minimum of 90 percent, each lesson needed to score at least 33 out of 36 points.

The three panelists assigned lesson 1 the scores of 92, 94, and 92 percent, with the mean rubric score of 92.6 percent. Thus, lesson 1 successfully met the sufficient level and was ready to be implemented. Lesson 2 also received 94, 92, and 92 percent scores, with the mean rubric score of 92.6 percent, meeting the sufficient level for implementation. The evaluators further assigned lesson 3 the score of 94, 94, and 94, with the mean rubric score of 94 percent, thus exceeding the sufficient level and getting the greenlight for implementation. Lesson 4 received the highest scores of 94, 97, and 92 percent, with the mean rubric score of 94.3 percent. Like lesson 3, lesson 4 exceeded the sufficient level and was ready for implementation. With all four lessons meeting or exceeding the sufficient level, the first goal of the project was successfully met.

² See appendix 6.

³ See appendix 2.

Reflections for Goal 2

Getting to where the teaching series was considered to meet the sufficient level by the panel of experts was a stressful but a shaping journey. When I first sent out the first four lessons to the CBC elders for evaluation on January 15, 2019, none of the lessons met the minimum of 90 percent and thus were not considered to have successfully met the sufficient level for implementation. The lessons were initially planned in such a way that I would begin with an ice breaker, answer sets of the survey questions, and assign practical homework. At one stage I planned to give participants an article on interracial marriages to read for session interaction. The elders felt that the topic and the article were sensitive and asked that I change the approach. A lot of guidance came from the elders, and it was also through these engagements that instead of an eight-week teaching series, the series was reduced to four weeks.

I considered the concerns and recommendations of the elders and revised my lessons. These revisions put me under pressure because I only had three weeks to review and implement the lessons. I ended up submitting each lesson for evaluation a week before I could teach it. The elders were happy with the revision, and the three elders who served as the panel of experts evaluated the lessons and found them to meet the sufficient level, with minor adjustments.

One question on methodology that asked if “the lesson makes use of various learning methods such as lecture, discussion, case studies, role play, homework, etc.,” received low score on the evaluation because of the adjustments that needed to be done. The implementation of each lesson was going to last for an hour, so there was insufficient time to employ different methods of teaching. Also, one question on the practicality of the lesson that asked if “the lesson contains points of practical application such as reflective questions and/or homework” received low score because the homework was cut out from the lessons. I could have spent time thinking about good reflective questions, but due to time constraints and cautiousness I refrained from asking pointed questions and focused on teaching content.

Goal 3: Implementation Evaluation

Goal 3 of this project was to implement the teaching series as an intervention to strengthen multiethnic fellowship. The implementation of the project was completed over the course of four weeks, on February 6, 13, 20, and 27 of 2019. To evaluate whether this goal was successfully met, two types of measurements were utilized. First was the multiethnic fellowship teaching: implementation evaluation rubric. This rubric measured the content, attendance, methodology, and application of the teaching sessions. Second, the *t*-test was used to compare the pre- and post-teaching surveys to measure if the teaching brought any statistical significance difference.

Multiethnic Fellowship Teaching: Implementation Evaluation

The implementation rubric contained eleven questions with a four-point Likert scale with a total possible score of 44 points.⁴ To meet the minimum score of 90 percent, the teaching session needed to score at least 40 out of 44 points. The panel of experts consisted of five CBC elders and one staff pastor. Some of the panelists were unable to attend all meetings due to other commitments. Only two were able to attend and evaluate all four teaching sessions. The other two were able to evaluate the first three sessions, one was only able to evaluate the first session, and the additional staff pastor came in to evaluate the last session because by the fourth session only two members of the panel were available.

Five elders evaluated the first teaching session and gave it the score of 98, 90, 91, 86, and 86 percent, with the mean rubric score of 90.2 percent. Three of the panelists' evaluations found the teaching session to have successfully met the sufficient level of the goal, but the other two panelists scored the first teaching session below 90 percent. Considering the mean rubric, the teaching session successfully met the sufficient level.

⁴ See appendix 3.

The second teaching session was evaluated by four elders and received the scores of 98, 91, 98, and 89 percent, with the mean rubric score of 94.0 percent. Three evaluators found the teaching session to meet the sufficient level and one evaluation was 1 percent less to meet the sufficient level. However, the mean rubric score of 94.0 indicates that the teaching session exceeded the sufficient level of the goal.

The third teaching session was also evaluated by four elders and it received the scores of 98, 86, 95, and 95 percent, with the mean rubric score of 93.5 percent. Three elders found the implementation of the lesson to exceed the sufficient level of the goal and one elder scored it below the sufficient level. Considering the mean rubric score of 93.5, the implementation successfully met the sufficient level.

The fourth teaching session was evaluated by two elders and one staff pastor and it received the score of 93, 100, and 100 percent, with the mean rubric score of 97.6 percent. One of the elders who evaluated the lesson but was not available to evaluate the teaching commented that this lesson was the best of the four. The high score assigned to this teaching session confirms his remarks. The fourth teaching session exceeded the sufficient level. In summary and considering the mean rubric score, all four teaching sessions successfully met the sufficient level of the third goal.

Reflecting on Teaching Sessions for Goal 3

Proverbs 16:9 says, “The mind of man plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps.” I had number of things in mind for this phase of the project’s implementation. I planned for at least thirty people sitting around in a circle in a relaxed setting. I also planned to have three people serve as a panel of experts, but the Lord had a different plan.

Through several engagements with the elders it was decided that the sessions should last for only one hour, which meant using a different setting. The second change had to do with attendance. I anticipated at least thirty people to attend the sessions, but I

was humbled to see session 1 attended by 75 people, session 2 by 85 people, session 3 by 94 people, and session 4 by 75 people.

The adjustments also affected two factors of the implementation rubric questions—the methodology and application. The method of presentation shifted from a Bible study setting to a sermon teaching. The time constraints also meant that there would not be time for interaction. One evaluator commented that the study was “too hot a topic to allow interaction.” I tried to squeeze interaction and application at the end of the presentation by asking people how they can apply the lesson. Interaction and application scored low points on the implementation evaluation, which is why some scores do not meet the sufficient level. The three variables under the application factor were also affected by the adjustment and scored low points on the rubric. The change of the lesson approach mentioned under goal 2 affected the practical application of the lessons. The initial plan was to give participants action-oriented homework, but the Lord had different plans. Also, with the change of the setting, the panel of expert could not immediately tell how the lesson was received. One panelist commented that since the people kept coming back, then it is a sign the lessons were well received.

The last adjustment I should highlight was the change in the number of the panel of experts. The initial plan was to have three panel experts, but when the questionnaire was first presented to the elders and they saw the nature of the topic and its potential impact on the lives of the people, they asked that all elders participate on the panel. Through communicating with my supervisor, this adjustment was made. All the elders who made up the panel of experts have a rich experience of church leadership and ministry. Two were lay elders with an experience of over ten and twenty years of eldership service. The other three are seminary-trained pastors, teaching seminary and with an experience of over ten years of eldership service. A staff pastor who evaluated the last lesson is a seminary-trained pastor who has served as a missionary for over five years.

With a varicolored giftedness of the panelists, the evaluations were broad and balanced. In the final session, one evaluator wrote these encouraging summary comments: “The message was relevant and heart searching. From [the] comments one could say the lesson was well received and members could see the importance of the lesson in building up the body of Christ.”

T-Test Measurement Results

The same questionnaire used for the goal 1 was again used after the four-week teaching series to test if there was statistically significant difference in the scores of the pre- and post-teaching series. The questionnaire had 36 questions, with 29 of them measured by using a six-point Likert scale where participants measured themselves by selecting between “strongly disagree” and “strongly agree.” Questions 14, 15, 25, 31, 35, and 36 used a reversed scale, where “strongly disagree” equaled 6 points and “strongly agree” equaled 1 point. The rest of the questions used the normal scale where “strongly agree” equaled 6 points and “strongly disagree” equaled 1 point.

Since the teaching series was attended by people who participated in the pre-test survey and those who did not, only 26 of the 56 of the returned post-test surveys’ results could be paired. Because 20 of the surveys’ results could not be connected, I performed an unpaired (independent samples) *t*-test. Also, since I did not know in which direction the change might be, I used a 2-tailed test to find a significant change in either direction. With the difference of freedom of 110 and the level of significance set at .05, the *t*-test analysis revealed no statistically significant difference ($t_{(110)} = 0.08, p = .531$) between the scores of the pre- and post-teaching series. I also performed a *t*-test analysis for the 26 participants whose IDs could be matched. The results of the paired (dependent samples) and 2-tailed test revealed no statistically significant difference ($t_{(25)} = 1.24, p = .112$) between the pre- and post-test scores of the 26 participants. According to these results, CBC members reject the hypothesis that there is political influence in their thinking and attitudes.

Post-Test Demographic Considerations

The *t*-test analysis commenced when the 56th survey was received on May 7, 2019, after waiting patiently for this number to be reached. The demographics of the post-test survey participants were compared with those of the pre-test survey participants, and the results were as follows: 100 percent of the post-test participants were born-again Christians compared to the 98 percent in the pre-test survey. Ninety-three percent were CBC members compared to the 84 percent in the pre-test survey. The median membership years of the participants in both the pre- and post-test surveys is 9 years and the median age in both surveys is 44 years. The gender statistics shifted—in the pre-test survey 52 percent of the participants were males and 48 percent females; in the post-test survey females were in the majority, representing 57 percent of the 56 participants compared to 43 percent male participants. The gap is not too wide and the results still represented balanced opinions of both genders. Also, ethnic representation changed slightly, with 45 percent black people participating in the post-test survey, compared to the 41 percent who took part in the pre-test survey. The number of white participants went down to 52 percent in the post-test survey, compared to 57 percent in the pre-test survey. The number of coloreds also moved from 2 percent to 4 percent. If incorporating the colored group into the black ethnic group, the survey is left with the results of 48 percent black and 52 percent white participants. These results indicate balanced opinions from both ethnic groups. Participants were asked to describe CBC in question 17. The pre-test participants gave four different answers: 79 percent thought CBC is multiethnic; 16 percent said it is a black and white church; 2 percent said they never thought about the question; and 4 percent left blanks. In the post-test survey, participants picked only two descriptions, with 95 percent describing CBC as multiethnic and 5 percent describing it as a black and white church. These results indicate a shift in perception. It is possible that this mind shift came as a result of the four-week teaching series on multiethnic fellowship.

T-Tests Results Considerations

The main thing to consider about the *t*-test results is the lack of application time during and after the four-week teaching series. Had there been interaction time and homework that encouraged taking action in response to some of the questions in the questionnaire, like inviting believers of different skin color into one's home and intentionally reaching out to a believer one would not normally fellowship with because of ethnic diversity, the results might have been different.

The second issue to consider is the nature of the questions asked. Since the questions sought to test if there is any political influence in the thinking and attitudes of the participants in their view of multiethnic fellowship, the post-test survey would yield better results if the participants had to face some of these political pressures firsthand, in a multiethnic environment. For example, if the proposed law of expropriating the land without compensation were to be passed anytime soon, such legislation would adversely affect CBC members, and how they respond to such political pressure would reveal their thinking and attitudes toward fellow believers of different ethnicity. Another pressure point that might reveal the thinking and attitudes of the participants toward multiethnic fellowship and that might change the way they answered some of the questions in the survey is if CBC were to call a non-white senior pastor after the current white senior pastor. How CBC members would react to that appointment would reveal their attitudes toward multiethnic fellowship. These two examples are given as an admission that the post-test survey may not represent accurate mindset and attitudes in the absence of pressure points like those the church experienced during the apartheid era. If it were possible and the time was not an issue, the post-test survey might have been delayed until such time that the church faced socio-political pressures. At that juncture, believers would be faced with a choice to succumb to political pressure or to apply what was taught in the four-week series about biblical multiethnic fellowship.

Therefore, the results of the *t*-test do not give a clear and insightful understanding of the thinking and attitudes of the participants toward multiethnic

fellowship. These results must be read concurrently with the descriptive analysis of the first goal of this project.

Goal 4: Document Evaluation

The purpose of goal 4 was to assess the official documents of CBC to see if the wording strengthens, provides opportunity for, weakens, or threatens multiethnic fellowship at CBC. An evaluation rubric based on the SWOT analysis was developed to measure this goal.⁵ The panel of experts read and assessed each document against the rubric. The evaluation focused on three variables, the mission, assimilation, and evaluation. Each variable consisted of two evaluative questions.

Under the mission variable, I wanted to know if the wording of the document strengthens, provides opportunity for, weakens or threatens *multiethnic fellowship* and *the vision* of reaching diverse ethnic groups with the gospel. Under the assimilation variable, I wanted to know if the information contained in the documents strengthens, provides opportunity for, weakens, or threatens *assimilation* of believers from diverse ethnic groups and *participation* in CBC ministries. Under evaluation, I wanted to know if keeping the document as it is would strengthen, provide opportunity for, weaken, or threaten multiethnic fellowship. I also asked if revising the document to intentionally include terms such as *multiethnic* would strengthen, provide opportunity for, weaken, or threaten multiethnic fellowship.

Three elders who represent the church, the seminary, and the mission took on the task of evaluating the documents. The documents available for evaluation were the church's constitution, membership class document, work place skills policy, and equity policy. The evaluations are detailed in the following sections.

⁵ See appendix 4.

Evaluation of CBC Constitution

Mission. The first item the elders evaluated was if the wording of the document strengthens, provides opportunity for, weakens, or threatens *multiethnic fellowship* and *the vision* of reaching diverse ethnic groups with the gospel.

Constitution and multiethnic fellowship. Regarding multiethnic fellowship, the elders had three different opinions. One thought that terminology used strengthens multiethnic fellowship, the other thought it provides opportunity for multiethnic fellowship, and the other found the terminology to weaken multiethnic fellowship. The elder who thought it strengthens multiethnic fellowship did not give further comments. The one who said it provides opportunity for multiethnic fellowship commented that in the section where the constitution addresses the location, the document could add words that describe the church's intention of being in a multiethnic location and add a section that describes biblical fellowship. The elder who thought the document could weaken multiethnic fellowship thinks the terms used could be simplified for an average person to read without being lost in the details.

Constitution and the vision to reach diverse ethnic groups. One elder saw the constitution to strengthen the vision to reach diverse ethnic groups without further comments. The other one saw it to provide an opportunity for outreach. He suggested that a section could be added to describe Ephesians 2 and Revelation 5 to see God's vision for the nations. He thought, "We should include the desire to be an English church to reach diverse languages." Interestingly, the remaining elder said the constitution has the potential to both weaken multiethnic outreach and to provide opportunity for it. His reason is that if the constitution is not explained in simple terms, it will weaken this vision. However, if it is explained in simple terms, it will provide opportunity to reach different groups.

Assimilation. This section of the rubric evaluates whether the information contained in the constitution affects the assimilation and the participation of diverse ethnic groups in the church. All three elders unanimously indicated that the constitution provides

opportunity for both assimilation and participation. Two gave opinions without further comments, and one elaborated. Concerning assimilation of believers from different ethnic groups, he thought words can be added explaining how the church rejoices in diversity of relationships and that in explaining evangelism, the words can be strengthened by describing the church's location. Concerning participation, he said it could be made clear that the church encourages multiethnic participation in all ministries, as well, words could be added that CBC caters to different home languages.

Evaluation. The evaluation variable focused on if the document needs to be kept as it is, or needed to be revised. One elder said keeping it as it is will weaken multiethnic fellowship and added that the revision is needed for it to provide opportunity for multiethnic fellowship. One elder gave and then cancelled his opinion, so his answer could not be recorded, but he made his opinion clear in the last question that revising the document to intentionally include multiethnic terms would strengthen multiethnic fellowship. He further stated that the church needs to emphasize corporate fellowship that combines all cell groups. The last elder thought that keeping the document as it is would provide opportunity for multiethnic fellowship. He also believed that revising the constitution to intentionally include terms such as *multiethnic* would strengthen multiethnic fellowship. He explained, "Careful insertion [of terms like multiethnic] in relevant sections may help bring attention to the need for *all* members and prospective members to see the value of a well-functioning God-glorifying multiethnic church" (emphasis original). On the additional comments section, this elder highlighted the absence of an article on the "doctrine of man" in the constitution. I agree that the addition of a section on the doctrine of man in the constitution is necessary.

Evaluation of a Membership Class Document

Mission. *Membership class document (MCD) and multiethnic fellowship.* Two elders agree that the MCD provides opportunity for multiethnic fellowship. One elder

found it to strengthen multiethnic fellowship because “it speaks much about the need and desire to [be] locate[d] in a multiethnic area.”

MCD and the vision to reach diverse ethnic groups. One elder indicated that the document strengthens the vision to reach out to diverse ethnic groups. The other two believed it provides opportunity for the multiethnic outreach vision, but one of them thought there could be more discussion on multiethnic worship.

Assimilation. Under assimilation, the answers of all three elders are the same for both questions. They all agreed that the MCD provides opportunity for assimilation of believers from diverse ethnic groups and it also provides opportunity for multiethnic participation in CBC ministries. One elder gave suggestions for each question. He suggested that home cell groups need to assimilate diverse ethnic groups to emphasize the biblical goal of Ephesians 2. To encourage multiethnic participation, he suggested “more descriptive language of the desired inclusion of different ethnic groups in the many areas of ministry.”

Evaluation. There is also consensus about the MCD’s revision. They all agreed that keeping this document as it is would provide opportunity for multiethnic fellowship, but at the same time they believe that its revision would even strengthen multiethnic fellowship. One elder thought that it could provide opportunity and it could also weaken multiethnic fellowship. The reason he says it would weaken multiethnic fellowship is that the history contained in the document is not inclusive. The reason he thought it provides opportunity is that it explains why CBC exists. Another elder commented that since the document was written before 1994 (i.e., before the democratic elections and before black and white people could fellowship together more freely), it needed to be modified. Regarding its revision to include multiethnic terms, he noted, “Expressing the reality of multiethnicity will strengthen the situation.” Yet another elder remarked on the revision of this document that “a thoughtful revision will be to our advantage.” In the additional

comments section, he perceived, “Some historical information in the current document may not be helpful in this context of membership classes and needs revision.” His evaluation led him to this comment, “It sounds like the church never really stood for much in its earlier years.”

Evaluation of Workplace Skills Policy (WSP)

Mission. *WSP and multiethnic fellowship.* Two evaluators believed the wording of the policy provides opportunity for multiethnic fellowship and they gave no further comments. One evaluator did not indicate whether the policy’s wording strengthens, provides opportunity for, weakens, or threatens multiethnic fellowship. He simply commented, “The document does not relate to multiethnic fellowship.”

WSP and vision to reach diverse ethnic groups. Two evaluators believed the policy strengthens the vision to reach diverse ethnic groups, and one believes it provides opportunity to realize this vision. There were no further comments given on this question.

Assimilation. Concerning the information contained in the document and its impact on the assimilation of believers of diverse ethnic groups, and concerning multiethnic participation in CBC ministries, two evaluators saw the policy to provide the opportunity for multiethnic assimilation and participation. One evaluator highly rated this policy. No further comments were provided on these two questions as well.

Evaluation. The last two questions about keeping the document as is or revising received a number different comments. Responding to whether the document should be kept as it is, one evaluator commented that the policy has nothing to do with multiethnic fellowship. The second evaluator thought that keeping the policy as is would provide an opportunity for multiethnic fellowship. The third evaluator thought that keeping the policy as is would weaken multiethnic fellowship. Based on the wording of the policy, he feels

that “the goal should be to develop all (staff members) and spread responsibilities accordingly [to] provide equal opportunity for all.”

The foregoing sentiments are also expressed by another evaluator under the question whether document should be revised to intentionally include multiethnic terms. That evaluator first indicated that revising the policy would provide opportunity for multiethnic fellowship, but then asked several questions which for the sake of confidentiality cannot be reproduced here. However, his conclusion was that the wording of the policy has a skewed picture and tends to exclude some people.

The concerns raised by the two evaluators tell that there is a need to clarify meaning of this policy. On the other hand, one evaluator thought the revision of this policy would weaken multiethnic fellowship and confuse the issue or goal of the policy. Again, this statement tells that there is ambiguity in the policy because evaluators seem to understand its meaning differently. Perhaps the one evaluator who suggested its revision to the misunderstanding and thus strengthen multiethnic fellowship is correct.

Evaluation of Equity Policy

Mission. All three evaluators rated this policy high and believe that its wording or terminology strengthens multiethnic fellowship. Two of the evaluators also have confidence that it strengthens the vision of CBC of reaching diverse ethnic groups, and another believing that it provides opportunity for this vision to be realized.

Assimilation. Again, all three evaluators view that the information contained in the equity policy serve to strengthen assimilation of diverse ethnic groups. Two of them saw it also to strengthen multiethnic participation in CBC ministries. One panelist rated it to be able to provide opportunity for diverse ethnic participation. No further comments were given for the first four questions of the rubric falling under the mission and assimilation variables.

Evaluation. Two valuator believed that keeping the equity policy as is would provide an opportunity for multiethnic fellowship, with the remaining evaluator even believing that it would strengthen it. However, when looking at the responses of the evaluators to the last question, there might be some confusion on the ratings. One would expect the evaluators to oppose the revision of the policy because its revision might threaten multiethnic fellowship. I can only speculate that their recommendation to revise the policy is motivated by wanting to see the policy use clear terms.

This speculation is confirmed by one of the evaluator's belief that revising the document to intentionally include multiethnic terms such as "multiethnic" would provide opportunity for multiethnic fellowship. He concedes when he says, "I am not sure if 'race' and 'multiethnic' are synonymous or which terms would be more 'politically' correct or even if any change of wording would help. Change one's understanding of this document." He goes on to say about this policy, "I think it is [a] well written document and makes our stand clear."

Two other evaluators think the revision of this policy to include multiethnic terms would strengthen multiethnic fellowship. One of them simply commented that its revision would "provide opportunity to be intentional."

Reflections for Goal 4

Observations. The panel of experts made several observations when they evaluated the four documents. They observed missing sections that could be added to the documents to strengthen multiethnic fellowship. They noted that the wording of the documents needed to be simplified for people to read easily. They also suggested that terms could be added to make it known to the readers that CBC is a multiethnic church. I would add to these observations the need to clarify what documents really mean. I mention this because of some different interpretations the evaluators attributed to the workplace skills policy. Another observation I made is that among the ministries of CBC, Christ Seminary has enough guiding policies. The CBC and Samaria Mission do not have enough

guiding policies. The constitution and the membership class document are the only documents I could find to use for this goal. Therefore, in charting a plan to review documents, the elders may consider writing relevant official documents on a number of issues, making it also clear that CBC is a multiethnic church.

Success of the goal. Goal 4 was considered successfully met when the existing documents were examined, the weaknesses and threats were identified and the plan was charted to review them, and the need to be clear in the documents was acknowledged. The first part of this goal was successfully met since the documents were examined and insightful comments and ratings were given about the strengths, opportunities, threats, and weaknesses of the documents in relation to multiethnic fellowship. The second part of the goal was not met since the plan was not charted to review the documents. This may need to be an ongoing discussion among the elders, especially now that some objective insight has been given by the evaluators.

The rubric. I developed the rubric based on the SWOT analysis to avoid organizing a meeting with the elders to evaluate the documents together. The rubric needs to be revised since some evaluators had to ask me to explain what the rubric is asking for. If this SWOT analysis rubric can be revised for coherency and reliability, it promises to be a quick method and measurement for evaluating documents. It saves time and gathers enough qualitative data. If need be, it can also be used to gather quantitative data.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

The fellowship of the church in South Africa was divided along racial lines. Black and white believers could not freely fellowship together as one. The racial divide in the church was due to the apartheid ideology supported by the Dutch Reformed Church and adopted by denominations such as the Baptist Union of Southern Africa. This ideology saw black and white people fellowshiping in separate local churches and forming segregated denominations. Laws were enacted to make sure that black and white people never come together, even for fellowship in the church. When the apartheid system came to an end and laws were changed, black and white believers did not immediately and naturally fellowship together. Worldviews needed to change, and barriers broken. Churches like CBC gradually embarked on a journey of multiethnic fellowship. By God's grace, although without the cost of giving up identity and convenience, CBC gained the status of a multiethnic church, with its membership now consisting of 50 percent black and 50 percent white people. This project sought to strengthen this multiethnic fellowship at CBC.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this project was to strengthen multiethnic fellowship at Christ Baptist Church in Polokwane, South Africa. The rationale for strengthening multiethnic fellowship was the past political history that divided the church and the current racial tensions South Africa is experiencing, which have a potential to divide multiethnic believers if their fellowship is not strong. The project focused on the thinking and attitudes of believers at CBC toward multiethnic fellowship with the aim of arming them with a biblical worldview. To fulfill this purpose, the project focused on New Testament local

churches, using the multiethnic fellowship between Jews and Greeks as a model for CBC and other local churches in South Africa.

The project looked at the history of the two denominations, the Dutch Reformed church and the Baptist Union of Southern Africa, to reflect on the destructive nature of succumbing to unbiblical ideology clothed in misinterpreted biblical passages. The history was also used to caution the church not to repeat the same. The project argued that only a right understanding of what the Bible teaches about fellowship in general, and multiethnic fellowship in particular, transforms thinking and attitude about other people. The implementation phase focused on the doctrine of fellowship, the doctrine of man as created in the image of God, the doctrine of man as a sinner and as new man in Christ, and the doctrine of the church, arguing that the understanding and application of biblical teaching in these areas can help strength multiethnic fellowship greatly.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

The four goals of this project helped to strengthen multiethnic fellowship at CBC. The first goal assessed current multiethnic fellowship at CBC. The second goal was to develop an eight-week teaching series to strengthen multiethnic fellowship. The third goal sought to implement the project by teaching the lessons. The fourth goal ascertained the need to review CBC's official documents. The scope of the goals was broad and encompassed of most of CBC's ministries.

The first goal yielded helpful feedback to ascertain the temperature and thinking of the participants concerning multiethnic fellowship. Through this goal, the responses of the participants established that both black and white people describe CBC as multiethnic and non-racist. At the personal level, this goal revealed that black people struggle the most with multiethnic fellowship. Looking at the number of qualitative comments appended on the questionnaire, it might have been more beneficial to ask open-ended qualitative questions, which could have helped frame quantitative questions.

Goal 2 was initially intended to develop an eight-week teaching series. However, through guidance and agreement, the teaching series was cut to four-weeks. Some lessons were easy to merge with other lessons. For example, interracial marriage lessons merged well with the doctrine of man as created in the image of God. Multiethnic leadership merged well with the doctrine of the church. Reducing the lessons to four weeks also ensured that people would not be burdened by this sensitive topic on multiethnicity.

After reviewing the lessons according to the counsel of the panel of experts, all four lessons were considered to have met the sufficient level. The only negative this goal experienced was that the panelists' feedback often came late and did not afford me enough time to consider their comments before teaching some lessons. The lessons improved through time and the feedback from the panelist also improved. By lesson 4, the scores given by the panel of experts showed a substantial improvement.

Goal 3 had to do with the implementation phase. This goal saw CBC elders taking great interest in being part of the evaluation. The panel of experts were happy with the way the implementation of the lessons was handled, especially since some raised concerns about the motive of the teaching series. Lack of practical application and interaction affected the success of the goal. The *t*-test results revealed no statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-teaching tests.

Two reasons are advanced for these results. First, the nature of questions in the questionnaire were such that change could not be detected or expected within a short space of time. Time must be given for people to experience pressure and thereafter evaluate themselves. Second, when I prepared the questionnaire I had no clear knowledge of what the *t*-test measured. Had I known; the questions might have been asked differently. On the positive side, the well-attended sessions and encouraging comments from attendees indicate the impact the teaching had on people. As one of the panelists said, "We will leave the results to the Holy Spirit."

Goal 4, like goal 1, produced insightful information that must be considered to strengthen multiethnic fellowship. There was a consensus among the panel of experts that what is contained in the official documents can either strengthen or weaken multiethnic fellowship. The main revelation that came through this goal was the lack of sufficient guiding policies for CBC and Samaria Mission. Christ Seminary is consistently writing guiding policies and takes cognizance of its multiethnic staff.

The SWOT analysis rubric developed and used to gather data was helpful in two ways. First, it expedited the gathering of data faster than the traditional way of having all the panelists go through each document together. Limiting the analyses to three variables proved to be manageable for the panelists to give sufficient and quick feedback. The rubric, however, needs to be improved if it were to be used again. Also, how goal 4 fit together with the first three goals was not clear. The first three goals easily complemented each other in the way the project unfolded. The fourth goal appears to be independent. However, this goal was not altogether independent because of the impact the written material had on people's thinking and attitudes and how people often gain insight into the nature of an organization by its policies.

In summary, the goal 1 and goal 4 yielded insightful information to be considered in order to strengthen multiethnic fellowship. Goal 2 and 3 saw the content of the lessons successful and at some points exceeding the sufficient level. But, the practical and interaction part of the lessons lowered the score. All of the goal 2 scores were above the 90 percent minimum requirement for the goal to be considered successful. Goal 3 had some scores that were lower than the minimum percentage. Adjusting the presentation method and lack of homework contributed to the low score.

Strengths of the Project

The primary strength of this project, which can be attributed to my experience in teaching the subject at Christ Seminary and in expository preaching, is the exegesis in chapter 2. Without the solid biblical foundation of chapter 2, the subsequent chapters are

built on sinking sand. The chapter showed that multiethnic fellowship is not far-fetched, but is central to the Great Commission, salvation, church, and future heavenly worship. Showing that, by his death, Christ broke the enmity between rival ethnic groups and established peace, makes strengthening multiethnic fellowship at CBC possible.

Building on the biblical and theological foundation of this project, the next strength of the project is that it can be used as a source of reference by people who struggle to fellowship with people of other ethnic groups. The negative history presented in chapter 3 and the hope of reconciliation presented in chapter 2 show the need for the Savior who reconciles man with God and man with man. They also render powerless any attempt to solve ethnic rivalry outside of the cross of Jesus Christ.

The next strength of the project has to do with establishing a platform for healthy conversations about the history of South Africa, particularly, the role of the church during the apartheid era. The project dealt with relevant issues that would not normally be addressed on the pulpit. It is also hoped that, having highlighted the past failure of the church to maintain the unity of the Spirit (Eph 4:3), the contemporary church can prepare better to defend this unity in the current racial tension the country is experiencing.

Another strength of the project is found in the results of the pre-test survey and the evaluation of CBC's documents by panel of experts, using a SWOT analysis rubric. The pre-test results are invaluable to the church's identity since they present objective responses on how the 56 participants view CBC. Any voice that labels CBC negatively can be refuted by the statistics in chapter 4. The consensus among the panel of experts on the need to review and clarify official documents promise to provide an ongoing strengthening and breaking down barriers of multiethnic fellowship.

The final strengths of the project had to do with people's response to the teaching sessions. To have had between 70 and 80 people attend each of the four sessions was a great strength for the project. Having this number of people attend can also be attributed to having the teaching sessions on Wednesday, during the time when people

would meet at their respective cell groups. So, by not adding another day of meeting to people's schedule yielded positive attendance. Furthermore, the attendance signified the trust that people have in the leadership of the church, who allowed the implementation of this project. The role that the CBC leadership played in guiding the implementation of this project serves as part of this project's strengths. The elders mitigated any possible relationship damage this project might have brought, thus shepherding both me and the flock at the same time. They scrutinized the lessons not primarily to evaluate if they meet the rubric's sufficient level, but to ensure biblical soundness and edification.

Weaknesses of the Project

If chapter 2 served as the primary strength of this project, chapter 3, if read independently from chapter 2, might be perceived or labeled as social justice or affirmative action by critics. However, understanding that chapter 3 gives the rationale for strengthening multiethnic fellowship at CBC in particular, and the church in South Africa at large, presents the need for this chapter. It is against the backdrop of chapter 3 that this project is necessary. Other than this apparent weakness, most of the weaknesses of this project are found in the nature of the topic, the opposition the project encountered, and the ambiguity in the instruments used to gather data.

Given the history of racism and ethnic divide in South Africa, the topic, multiethnic fellowship, has negative connotations. My motive is quickly questioned and there is fear that discussing such a topic might divide the church rather than strengthen its unity, and as a result, as experienced through the implementation phase, some people chose not to participate in this project. The concerns were legitimate and might have been mitigated by communicating in much detail and before handing out the questionnaire the purpose of the survey and the rationale behind its questions. A lack of advancing the purpose of the survey in detail and beforehand proved to be a weakness of this project.

It would have been fruitful also to pilot the questionnaire before administering it to the intended audience. By so doing, ambiguous questions would have been clarified

and perhaps people would not have written too many qualitative comments instead of answering questions on the survey. However, the qualitative comments highlighted another weakness. The project might have yielded better results if the research began by gathering qualitative data and used that data to formulate a questionnaire to gather quantitative data.

At the teaching phase, the approval of the lessons for teaching and the teaching date were so close to each other that they did not allow enough time to sit with the evaluators to ask how I could improve the lessons. Adjustments of the lessons to remove practical homework and minimize application to shorten the teaching sessions to one hour affected the measurement of the lesson's effectiveness and the rubric scores given by the panel of experts. One of the evaluators noted these limitations and attributed them to the sensitivity of the topic.

What I Would Do Differently

If I were to start again or undertake a similar project to this one, I would focus on improving the implementation phase. First, I would communicate earlier with the leadership of the church, informing them of the topic, explaining the rationale and direction of the project, present them with the data gathering instruments, and ask for their permission and direction to implement the project. Early communication might ensure accountability at an early stage and get more people to participate in the survey and teaching sessions. Earlier communication might also ensure a better structure and enough time for the teaching sessions.

Second, I would pilot the questionnaire to ascertain its validity and reliability. The applied empirical research, which I took later in my Doctor of Educational Ministry program, helpfully highlighted the need for this process, and after administering my survey I saw the need for its piloting. I would also try to clarify terms to avoid confusion. Some of the participants commented on this ambiguity. This ambiguity further surfaced when some of those who opposed the questionnaire interpreted the word "equal" to mean communism. As mentioned in the weaknesses section, I would consider an open-ended

qualitative questionnaire and in turn use its data to draft a closed-ended quantitative questionnaire.

Last, I would present the panel of experts with evaluation rubrics ahead of time to ensure that they fully understand what is expected of them, and if need be, practice the evaluation before time.

Theological Reflections

The Bible is God-breathed and is profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness (2 Tim 3:16). This project was written from this theological supposition. Chapter 2 and appendix 6 detail a biblical theology of multiethnic fellowship. Chapter 2 focused on missiological, soteriological, ecclesiological, and doxological theses. Appendix 6 focused on what the Bible teaches about fellowship, man created in God's image, man as a sinner and new creature, and the model of the NT churches. This theological foundation promises the benefits listed in 2 Timothy 3:16 and to replace wrong worldviews with a biblical worldview. By heeding it, believers will begin to think biblically about fellow man regardless of ethnicity, culture, language, or skin color. It is hoped that chapter 2 and appendix 6 will serve the church as a quick theological reference for multiethnic fellowship.

Personal Reflections

When I chose the topic of this project, I anticipated that it would stir emotions because it addresses issues that people would wish were left alone. What I did not anticipate or prepare for was to discover that the church sparked the fires of apartheid and used the Bible to support it. These findings caused a lot of emotions within me. However, the Word of God in chapter 2 became a great source of comfort. It helped me to know how to handle those who opposed this project. If anything, this project turned out to deal with the secrets of my heart, exposing the often-ignored racism within me. The Lord gave me a great love for his church and its fellowship through this research. The emotional strain

caused by unearthing the dark history of apartheid was overcome by the love and care for Christ Baptist Church. When I prepared the four lessons in appendix 6, my attitude was that of a pastor and not so much a scholar. Having a wife and kids that prayed for me, and the elders and fellow believers who encouraged and counseled me, minimized the strain. Ultimately, this Doctor of Educational Ministry delivered what it promised—it developed and honed my leadership, educational, and academic skills.

Conclusion

This project sought to answer the question: how can CBC strengthen its multiethnic fellowship given the past and current racial divide in South Africa, and given the external threats where black and white people are divided over socio-economic matters, and internal threats where believers tend to group themselves according to their language, culture and skin color? The project argued that the answer lies with a biblical and theological foundation. Chapter 2 provided biblical arguments for the strengthening of multiethnic fellowship and for the breaking of ethnic barriers. Believers need a biblical worldview to respond correctly to external political pressures that divide people over color lines. The project established (1) a missiological thesis (Matt 28:18-19), arguing that Christ's Great Commission anticipated multiethnic fellowship in a multiethnic environment or context; (2) an ecclesiological thesis (Acts 6:1-7; 13:1), arguing that the early church set a precedent for a multiethnic leadership in a multiethnic church and fulfilled the Great Commission by having a multiethnic congregation; (3) a soteriological thesis (Eph 2:11-3:10; Col 3:10-11), arguing that Christ's death accomplished a vertical and horizontal reconciliation. Christ views the church as one new man where diverse ethnic groups fellowship together without discrimination; and (4) a doxological thesis (Rev 5:9; 7:9-10), arguing that if worshippers in heaven will be multiethnic, then the church on earth should reflect that by having multiethnic worshippers in their worship teams and leadership.

The project moved on to chapter 3 to show that during the apartheid era, the church in South Africa failed to protect its multiethnic fellowship. The DRC stoked the fires of segregation, and the BUSA succumbed to that political heat. Thus, the church failed to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. This project showed that the only hope for the current church is the cross of Jesus Christ that broke down the wall of partition, destroying enmity between God and man and between diverse ethnic groups, thus reconciling man with God and man with man. Based on what Christ has done and where CBC came from, the project surveyed CBC's thinking and attitude toward multiethnic fellowship and the results rejected the hypothesis that there is a worldly political influence in the thinking and attitude of the participants. Though, the data showed that some people still struggle to break some fellowship barriers and require ongoing help. The project had four goals that focused on strengthening multiethnic fellowship at CBC. The results of the goals are documented in chapter 4 and serve as objective information for those who want to understand CBC's thinking and attitudes toward multiethnic fellowship. The confidence of this project to strengthen multiethnic fellowship lies with the biblical foundation in chapter 2 and the multiethnic fellowship lessons in appendix 6.

APPENDIX 1

MULTIETHNIC FELLOWSHIP SURVEY

The following instrument was used to gather pre- and post-data for the purpose of measuring the goals set for the project. The survey consists of multiple choice and close ended questions with a six-point Likert scale.

MULTIETHNIC FELLOWSHIP SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify the current understanding and practices of multiethnic fellowship of the participant. This research is being conducted by M. Joseph Mahlaola for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions before the project and you will answer the same questions at the conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. *Participation is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time.* By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Personal ID: _____ (Any 4-digit numbers to use in pre and post survey)

Part 1

Directions: Answer the following multiple-choice questions by placing a check next to the appropriate answer.

1. Are you a born-again Christian who has repented of his/her sin and trusted Jesus Christ?
 A. Yes
 B. No
2. Are you a member of CBC?
 A. Yes
 B. No
3. How long in years have you been a member?
 A. 1-5
 B. 6-10
 C. 11-15
 D. 16-20
 E. 21-25
 F. 26 and over
4. What is your age in years?
 A. 18-24
 B. 25-34
 C. 35-44
 D. 45-54
 E. 55-64
 F. 65 and over
5. What is your gender?
 A. Male
 B. Female

6. What is your ethnicity?
 _____ A. Asian
 _____ B. Black
 _____ C. Colored
 _____ D. White
 _____ E. Other ethnicity

Part 2

Directions: Please give your honest answer using the following scale: SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, DS = disagree somewhat, AS = agree somewhat, A = agree, SA = strongly agree; please circle the appropriate answer.

7. I enjoy fellowship with other believers at CBC.
 SD D DS AS A SA
8. I reach out to people of different skin color at CBC.
 SD D DS AS A SA
9. I have strong fellowship with people of different skin color at CBC.
 SD D DS AS A SA
10. I invite people of different skin color into my home.
 SD D DS AS A SA
11. I naturally socialize with people of different skin color outside church.
 SD D DS AS A SA
12. I pray for believers of different skin color.
 SD D DS AS A SA
13. I do not condemn interracial Christian marriages.
 SD D DS AS A SA
14. I chose my Bible study based on my skin color.
 SD D DS AS A SA
15. I struggle to reach out to people of a different skin color.
 SD D DS AS A SA
16. I prefer to fellowship with a believer of a different skin color rather than with an unbeliever of the same skin color.
 SD D DS AS A SA

Part 3

17. Which of the following do you think best describes CBC?
____ A. White church
____ B. Black church
____ C. Black and White church
____ D. Multiethnic church
____ E. I do not know
____ F. Never thought about it
18. CBC intentionally promotes racial equality in its fellowship.
SD D DS AS A SA
19. CBC ministries intentionally include different ethnic groups.
SD D DS AS A SA
20. CBC intentionally selects multiethnic leadership.
SD D DS AS A SA
21. CBC's worship teams sufficiently represent multiethnic worshippers.
SD D DS AS A SA
22. CBC should be intentional in encouraging multiethnic Bible studies.
SD D DS AS A SA
23. CBC openly speaks and teaches about racial problems in the country.
SD D DS AS A SA
24. CBC's fellowship can survive the racial divide going on in the country.
SD D DS AS A SA
25. CBC comes across as a racist church.
SD D DS AS A SA
26. There is a need to strengthen multiethnic fellowship at CBC.
SD D DS AS A SA

Part 4

27. I know what the Bible teaches about race.
SD D DS AS A SA
28. I have been taught on multiethnic fellowship before.
SD D DS AS A SA
29. The Bible promotes multiethnic fellowship.
SD D DS AS A SA
30. The Bible teaches that all men are equal.
SD D DS AS A SA
31. The Bible condemns interracial marriages.
SD D DS AS A SA

Part 5

32. The language used in CBC's official documents and statements can either strengthen or weaken the mission of the church.
SD D DS AS A SA
33. It is important for CBC to consider a balanced ethnic representation as part of its criteria to choose leadership.
SD D DS AS A SA
34. CBC is ready for a non-white pastor.
SD D DS AS A SA
35. CBC employees should be remunerated based on skin color.
SD D DS AS A SA
36. Black pastors should shepherd black members; White pastors should shepherd white members.
SD D DS AS A SA

APPENDIX 2
MULTIETHNIC FELLOWSHIP TEACHING
SERIES RUBRIC

The following rubric was used by the expert panel consisting of CBC senior pastor and two Christ Seminary lecturers. This rubric measured the teaching series before its implementation.

Multiethnic Fellowship Teaching Evaluation					
1 = insufficient; 2 = requires attention; 3 = sufficient; 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical Faithfulness					
The teaching lesson is biblically and theologically sound.					
The content of the lesson and the choice of scripture are relevant to the multiethnic fellowship topic.					
Scope					
The lesson has a clearly stated thesis which is sufficiently covered in the content.					
The content length will allow enough time for teaching and interaction without having to prolong the meeting.					
Methodology					
The lesson structure sufficiently follows the model of biblical theology.					
The lesson makes use of various learning methods such as lecture, discussion, case studies, role play, homework, etc.					
Practicality					
The lesson contains points of practical application such as reflective questions and/or homework.					
The lesson can be easily adapted to use in a different context.					
The language used is appropriate for the targeted audience.					

Please include any additional comments regarding the lesson below:

APPENDIX 3

MULTIETHNIC FELLOWSHIP TEACHING IMPLEMENTATION RUBRIC

The following rubric was used by the expert panel consisting of CBC senior pastor and two Christ Seminary lecturers. This rubric measured the implementation of the teaching series.

Name of evaluator: _____

Date: _____

Multiethnic Fellowship Teaching Implementation Evaluation					
1 = insufficient; 2 = requires attention; 3 = sufficient; 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Content					
The lesson follows a clear outline.					
The lesson accommodates Black and White people.					
The lesson uses proper language.					
Attendance					
Both Black and White CBC members attended the lesson.					
All CBC mid-week Bible studies were represented.					
Methodology					
The method of presentation is suitable for the lesson.					
The environment is conducive for the lesson.					
The presentation allowed room for interaction.					
Application					
The lesson has a relevant theoretical application leading to change.					
The lesson has a specific and achievable practical application encouraging change.					
The lesson was well received.					

Please include any additional comments regarding the lesson implementation below:

APPENDIX 4

MULTIETHNIC FELLOWSHIP DOCUMENTS ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

The following rubric was used by the elders of CBC to assess whether the church's official documents strengthen, provide opportunity for, weaken, or threaten multiethnic fellowship.

Name of evaluator: _____

Date: _____

Multiethnic Fellowship Documents Evaluation					
1 = Threaten; 2 = Weaken; 3 = (Provide) Opportunity; 4 = Strengthen					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Name of Document/Comments
Mission					
The language/terminology of this document: (4) strengthens; (3) provides opportunity for; (2) weakens; or (1) threatens multiethnic fellowship.					
The language/terminology of this document: (4) strengthens; (3) provides opportunity for; (2) weakens; or (1) threatens the vision of reaching diverse ethnic groups with the gospel.					
Assimilation					
The information contained in this document: (4) strengthens; (3) provides opportunity for; (2) weakens; or (1) threatens assimilation of believers from diverse ethnic groups.					
The information contained in this document: (4) strengthens; (3) provides opportunity for; (2) weakens; or (1) threatens multiethnic participation in CBC ministries.					
Evaluation					
Keeping this document as it is will: (4) strengthen; (3) provide opportunity for; (2) weaken; or (1) threaten multiethnic fellowship.					
Revising this document to intentionally include terms such as “multiethnic” will: (4) strengthen; (3) provide opportunity for; (2) weaken; or (1) threaten multiethnic fellowship.					

APPENDIX 5

A LETTER TO BIBLE STUDY LEADERS

A letter to the Bible study leaders explaining the purpose and the motives of the project.

26 November 2018

Dear CBC Bible Study Leader,

I am working on a Doctor of Educational Ministry at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, with CBC as my ministry context. My research topic is “Strengthening Multiethnic Fellowship at Christ Baptist Church.” My doctorate focuses on ministry and for its practical implementation, I need to conduct a pre-test and post-test survey. After presenting my request before CBC elders, they permitted me to administer this survey at the Bible study level.

I request that you help me by distributing these questionnaires among the members of your Bible study and that you ask them to return the survey either to you or to Lydia by January 7, 2019.

The pre-test survey will be followed by an 8-week teaching series that will focus on fellowship in general, and multiethnic fellowship in particular. The teaching is planned for February-March 2019, during the normal Wednesday Bible study time. Thus, instead of meeting at our normal locations, CBC Bible studies will be requested to meet at the church for this specified period.

After the 8 weeks of teaching, I will again send the same questionnaire for a post-test survey. Please ask the participants to record the 4-digit personal ID they use for this pre-test survey, since they will need to use the same ID for the post-test survey.

Thank you very much for your help. This research is motivated by the love of Christ’s church and the strengthening of fellowship among its members.

In Christ,

Joseph Mahlaola

SBTS DEdMin Student

APPENDIX 6

FOUR-WEEK TEACHING SERIES

The following four lessons were prepared and taught at CBC, on February 6, 13, 20 and 27, 2019.

LESSON 1

What the NT Teaches about Fellowship: Implications for Multiethnic Fellowship

Introduction

Purpose: The purpose of my project is to strengthen multiethnic fellowship at CBC. In order to strengthen multiethnic fellowship, believers must arm their minds with a biblical worldview/truth. This is the only way biblical fellowship can be fostered. Because of our country's context, we are inclined to define our relationships through sociological and political lenses. As it was seen in my survey questions, my questionnaire looked at the things that divide people in our country, took those same issues and asked the church to respond to them to see if we think differently from the world.

Session 1: In this session we will look at what the NT teaches about fellowship by paying closer attention to the epistles' emphases on the fellowship between Jews and Gentiles and then draw some implications for our multiethnic fellowship at CBC.

Outline: In order to gain an understanding of biblical fellowship and its meaning, we will explore nine NT passages that use the word *koinonia* (fellowship), together with its synonyms. From these passages we will:

- First, establish a working biblical definition of fellowship,
- Second, establish the basis of Christian fellowship,
- Third, establish the limitations of biblical fellowship, and
- Fourth, draw implications for a multiethnic church fellowship and look for ways to apply this truth.

I. Defining Biblical Fellowship

Acts 2:42, 44-47

⁴² They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to **fellowship**, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴⁴ And all those who had believed **were together** and had **all things in common**; ⁴⁵ and they *began* selling their property and possessions and **were sharing** them with all, as anyone might have need. ⁴⁶ Day by day continuing with **one mind** in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their **meals together** with gladness and sincerity of heart, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

- ✓ These verses summarize the life of a church community (Bock, *Acts*, ECNT, 149).
- ✓ They inform us that from the very beginning, believers “shared life with each other at all levels” (Bock, *Acts*, 150).
- ✓ All activities the church devoted itself to were shared activities. Believers shared in the apostles’ teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread and prayer.
- ✓ “Luke points to fellowship to underscore the personal interactive character of relationships in the early church at all levels” (Bock, *Acts*, 150).

Focus on Fellowship (*koinonia*)

- Habitual fellowship—continual (v. 42), day by day (v. 46)
- Devoted fellowship—devoted themselves to fellowship (v. 42)
- Collective fellowship—believers were together (v. 44), took meals together (v. 46)
- Communal fellowship—all things in common (v. 44)
- Sharing fellowship—met each other’s need (v. 45)
- Harmonious fellowship—one mind in the temple (v. 46)

Practices That Strengthen Fellowship

- Teaching—Doctrine (the apostles’ teaching)
- Breaking of bread—Communion
- Prayer—Communication with God
- Meeting each other’s needs
- Corporate worship—in the temple
- Breaking bread from house to house—hospitality
- Gladly and sincerely eating meals together

Conclusion: “Sharing was clearly a practical expression of everything of the new relationship experienced together through a common faith in Christ” (Peterson, *Acts*, Pillar, 160).

1 Corinthians 1:9

⁹ God is faithful, through whom you were called into **fellowship** with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Context:

- ✓ divided local church
- ✓ damaged fellowship needing restoration
- Fellowship begins with God’s call—salvation.
- The preposition “into” (Gk. *eis*) refers to the goal of God’s calling—fellowship.
- God calls believers into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ—association.
- God’s Son, Jesus Christ is our Lord. Six times in 1 Cor 1:1-9, Paul uses the title Lord (vv. 2, 3, 7, 8, 9). That means this Lord prescribes the terms of fellowship with him.
- Paul invokes the authority of the Lord to exhort the church to unity, in verse 10.

Conclusion: “The Christian life is a calling with the goal of fellowship in which believers become one people under Christ’s lordship” (Garland, *1 Corinthians*, ECNT, 35; Oats, *A Theology of Fellowship*, *MBJT*, p. 6).

1 Corinthians 10:16-17

¹⁶ Is not the cup of blessing which we bless **a sharing** in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break **a sharing** in the body of Christ? ¹⁷ Since there is **one bread**, we who are many are **one body**; for we all partake of the **one bread**.

Context: contrasts sharing in Christ and sharing in idols.

Meaning: *Koinonia* here means sharing or participation.

Argument: Since there is **one bread** (not many), we who are many are **one body**; (why?) for we all partake of the **one bread**.

- The Lord’s Supper unites the church.
- “The Lord’s Supper generates “partnership,” “fellowship,” “communion” with the fellow celebrants” (Garland, *1 Corinthians*, ECNT, 477).

Conclusion: comparing this text with the early church’s practice, we conclude that, “The unity with Christ and with one another in the meal has consequences for participation in any other meals that also create bonds and signal alliances” (Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 478).

2 Corinthians 6:14-15

¹⁴ Do not be **bound together** with unbelievers; for what **partnership** have righteousness and lawlessness, or what **fellowship** has light with darkness? ¹⁵ Or what **harmony** has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in **common** with an unbeliever?

Fellowship Terms:

- Fellowship is being bound together (*heterozugeo*). Believers are prohibited from fellowshiping with unbelievers.
- Fellowship is partnership (*metoche*)
- Fellowship happens where there are shared interests (*sumphonesis*). Illustration—harmony of sounds. There is no harmony between Christ and Belial.
- Fellowship is being part of another, common (*meris*, a city of a particular district). Believers are part of the community of believers.

Conclusion: Christian fellowship is limited to faith, moral ethics, and Lordship/master. In other words, fellowship is between people who share the same faith, the same moral ethics, and are under the same master.

2 Corinthians 8:4

⁴ begging us with much urging for the favor of **participation** in the support of the saints, (cf. 9:13; Rom 15:26)

Fellowship is evidenced by:

- Partaking in a common cause with other believers.
- Contributing towards the needs of fellow believers.

Conclusion: Therefore, fellowship involves teaming up with other believers in acts of benevolence.

2 Corinthians 13:14

¹⁴ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the **fellowship** of the Holy Spirit, be with you all (cf. Philippians 2:1).

Fellowship of the Spirit:

- Fellowship of the Spirit means that fellowship that originates from the Spirit, just as grace originates from Christ and love from the Father.
- Believers can only fellowship with the Holy Spirit if the Holy Spirit himself creates that fellowship.

- The phrase “with you all,” applied to the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Spirit, connotes “association” among believers.
- Paul invokes this trinitarian blessings on ALL members of the church. The church shares the same grace, love and fellowship from the same Lord, God and Spirit.

Conclusion: Therefore, the Spirit “creates commonality which believers finds in the church” (Oats, 8).

Galatians 2:9

⁹ and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of **fellowship**, so that we *might go* to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

Ministry fellowship

- Working towards a common goal—bringing gentiles and Jews to the Lord.
- Right hand of fellowship refers to partnership in ministry.
- The basis of ministry partnership was “the recognition of the grace given” (equal or common grace).

Conclusion: Therefore, fellowship carries the idea of gospel ministers partnering together to reach the lost of diverse ethnic groups.

Philippians 1:5

In view of your **participation** in the gospel...

- Gospel partnership

Similar meaning as in Galatians 2:9—gospel ministers partnering together.

1 John 1:3, 6-7

³ what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have **fellowship** with us; and indeed our **fellowship** is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. ⁶ If we say that we have **fellowship** with Him and *yet* walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; ⁷ but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have **fellowship** with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Doctrine and Fellowship

- Fellowship means to have a common doctrine—in this case, Christology— “what we have seen.”

- Fellowship is association with other believers— “with us / with one another.”
- Horizontal fellowship is based on Divine vertical fellowship— “with the Father and with His Son.”
- Fellowship with both God and man is conditioned on common morality— “walking in the Light.”

Conclusion: Therefore, Christian fellowship is associating with other believers based on common doctrine, common Deity and common morality.

From these passages of scripture, we learn that:

Biblical fellowship is a mutual partnership, contingent upon and created by the triune God among the people called into fellowship with Christ, to partake in the preaching of the gospel and to meet one another’s spiritual and physical needs.

II. The Basis of Christian Fellowship: Fellowship with God

- 1 Cor 1:9—Fellowship with the Son
- 2 Cor 13:14—Fellowship of the Holy Spirit
- Philp 2:1—Fellowship of the Spirit
- 1 John 1:3, 6-7—Fellowship with the Father and the Son

III. The Limitations of Christian Fellowship: Fellowship with Believers Only

- Acts 2:42—shared life
- Gal 2:9—Shared ministry
- 1 John 1:3—Shared salvation
- 2 Cor 6:14—Limited to believers

IV. The Implications for Multiethnic Church Fellowship

- Believers, despite their ethnic and cultural background, share the same life, ministry and salvation. They are one in Christ. (The early church in Jerusalem).
- Believers, despite their ethnic and cultural background, are placed into the same body by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:13) and are members one of another. (The Corinthian church).
- In the church of Christ, there is no Jew or Gentile, black or white, these labels don’t define the church, Christ is our identity (Gal 3:27-28). (Galatian churches).

- Believers despite their ethnic and social background are to welcome one another in their lives as God welcomed them (Rom 14:1, 3, 13, 19; 15:2, 5, 7). The word welcome (Gk. *proslambano*) speaks of extending a welcome, receiving into one's home or into one's circle of acquaintances. (Church in Rome).

V. Practical Application

One way that the early church strengthened its fellowship was by going from house to house to share a meal together. In seeking to strengthen our fellowship at CBC, I want to recommend that we consider taking this as a model. May I therefore encourage you to invite someone you wouldn't normally get to fellowship with during the week or during our fellowship meal after Sunday services, and get to know him or her and encourage one another in the Lord!

What further practical actions can we take to apply or practice Christian fellowship?

LESSON 2

The Doctrine of Man (Image of God): Implications for Multiethnic Fellowship, Pt 1

Introduction

Why does the study on fellowship have a lesson on man, two lessons for that matter? The answer is that the doctrine of man has been so perverted by the secular world to an extent that the Bible's definition of man is lost. And where the Bible's teaching about man is lost, people begin to create and believe lies about who human beings are. For example, listen to the following definitions of race and man.

First the sociologist's definition of race: the term **race** refers to groups of people who have differences and similarities in biological traits deemed by society to be **socially significant**, meaning that people treat other people differently because of them. For instance, while differences and similarities in eye color have not been treated as socially significant, differences and similarities in skin color have.

Second the evolutionist's view of man: man is a product of chance.

Third the postmodernist's view of man: "people are products of their social settings and that no transcendent moral realities exist" (*Biblical Doctrine*, 401).

Third the communist's view of man: "man is primarily an economic being driven by material needs" (*Biblical Doctrine*, 400).

Unless we have a biblical view of man, these views will influence our thinking and attitudes towards our view of fellow human beings and fellow brothers and sisters in the Lord. My goal is to help you think biblically, and that as a result of that biblical worldview, we can strengthen fellowship in our church.

So, come with me to the Bible to learn about man from God's perspective: a biblical view of man. The following outline will guide our study.

- First, we will look at the man before the fall,
- Second, we will look at man after the fall,
- Third, we will look at the meaning of the image of God (*imago dei*)
- Fourth, we will look at the implications of this biblical truth to our relationships/fellowship.
- Lastly, we will look for ways of applying this truth.

1. Man before the fall (Gen 1:26-28)

- Contra evolution, man originates from God and is created by God (Gen 1:26-27).
- God created man in his own image, and he created him male and female (vv. 26, 27)
- God gave man authority to rule over all the earth and man is distinct from the animals (vv. 26, 28).
- God blessed man and instructed him to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth (Gen 1:28).
- God had a unique fellowship with man for he is made in his image. He visited with him in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:8).

2. Man after the fall

God still claims man as his own creation and image (Gen 5:1; 9:6).

Both male and female are still seen to be created in God's image (Gen 5:2).

God still gives man authority over the earth (Gen 9:2).

God still blessed man and instructed him to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth (Gen 9:1, 7).

God still has a unique relationship with man, and he protects man against man and against animals (Gen 9:5-6).

All tribes and nations descend from Noah (Gen 9:1, 19; 10:32), who is a descendant of Adam (Gen 5:28). Therefore, all people of different tribes, nations and languages are descendants of Adam (Gen 5:1 cf. 3:20).

Now, the big question is what does it mean that man is made in God's image?

3. The Image of God in Man: What does it mean "God made man in his own image?"

The Bible uses two words "image" and "likeness" to define man in relation to God (Gen 1:26). These terms are used interchangeably and mean the same thing. In other words, the one strengthens the other.

Proof: Genesis 1:27 uses the word "image" alone, and Genesis 5:1 uses the word likeness: "When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God." Genesis 9:6 uses the word image only: "For God made him in his own image." When the two are used together, they are used to emphasize that man is made in the image of God.

But still that doesn't tell us what it means to be made in the image and likeness of God?

Meaning: One thing for sure, to be made in image of God is to be distinct from animals. Listen to what God says about the animals and what he says about man in Genesis 1:24 and 25. About animals, God said: “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds.” Five times in these two verses the phrase “according to their kinds” is used for animals. But when it came to man’s creation, God said: “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (v. 26). Man is unique! He is not like animals. This truth refutes human anthropologists who define man as a human animal. But not only is man distinct from animals, he also rules over all that God created (Gen 1:26b). We are beginning to see something of God’s image in man—he rules just as God rules. The capacity to rule implies that man is able to think and to act morally. These are most definitely God’s characteristics. God is a moral being (Gen 1:31), and so is man who is created in God’s image; God is a volitional/rational being, and so is man. God thought through and decided what he will create in Genesis 1 and 2. He decided that it was not good for Adam to be alone and he decided to make Eve for him (Gen 2:18, 21-22). It was this responsibility of ruling the earth that baffled David and caused him to ask in Psalm 8:4 “what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?” Verse 6: “You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet.” So, what does it mean that man is made in the image of God? It means that man is a representative of God. Theologians conclude: “To be human is to bear the image of God” (Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, NICOT, 137; MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 2017:412; Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1994:442). Furthermore, the word “likeness” means that man is patterned after God. (*Biblical Doctrine*, 410, cf. Gen 5:3). Man is not God, but he represents his image. He represents his moral, spiritual, volitional and relational nature.

4. What are the implications of the foregoing truth for our relationships?

- a. It implies that we need to get our understanding of race right. We need to have a right biblical theology of man.**

We noted that the Bible teaches that:

- All human beings descend from Adam. So, our definition of race should be limited to one ancestor. This tells us that we don't have multiple races, but we have one human race (Gen 2:7; Acts 17:26).
- This human race gave birth to all the nations or ethnic groups of the world through Noah's sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth (Gen 10-11).
- However, all these diverse ethnic groups with diverse skin colors and cultures and languages originate from Adam the son of God (Lk 3:38).
- Why is it important to define race? It is important because the term race, as we understand it today, has erected a barrier between people who are created by God. Today we use political and sociological labels that leads to disfellowship. Sadly, this is happening in the church of Christ as well. It happened in the NT times, and it is happening today.
- We need to develop a biblical worldview of race. And it starts with this simple truth, there is one human race. And from this one human race we get our diversity.

b. This truth further implies that we are to pursue God-like relationships.

- God is a relational being. We see this relationship among the three persons of the Godhead—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The phrase, “let us...” in Gen 1:26, introduces us to this relationship. This relationship is expressed more clearer by Jesus when he prayed in John 17:1b: “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you.” Verse 5: “glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.” In verse 11 Jesus continued to pray: “Holy Father, keep them in your name...that they may be one even as we are one” (see also vv. 21, 22).
- Jesus prayed that his people would resemble the relationship modeled by the persons of the Godhead. God had this relationship with Adam and Eve—he visited them in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:8). He created the need for relationships in man and provided a companion in Eve (Gen 2:18). We are relational beings.
- One theologian summarizes it this way: “To be created in God's image is to be called persons in communion. There was no moment when a human being was

actually a solitary, autonomous, unrelated entity...” (Horton, *The Christian Faith* (Zondervan, 2011: 387).

c. This truth further implies that all people have equal worth before God.

To be created in the image of God implies that:

- All people, despite their ethnic groups, are made in the image of God.
- No people group is superior or inferior to any other. (*Biblical Doctrine*, 442)
- Every ethnic group deserves to be treated with dignity (Grudem, ST, 450).
- This means to segregate people along what we have termed “racial lines” is to violate the dignity of all God’s image bearers (*Biblical Doctrine*, 442).
- Notice that the image of God gives man his peculiar dignity and worth even as a fallen being (Gen 9:6-11; James 3:9). Human life is sacred, and God will avenge for it. Thus, it is not justifiable to violate a life of another human being because he or she is different from you by nationality, ethnicity, skin color, language, culture, education, age, gender and so on.
- “Man must respect fellow man, not on the ground of kinship, but on the ground of the exalted truth that human life belongs to God” (Chafer, quoted by Mercer, “A Biblical and Cultural Study of the Problem of Racism,” *BSac*, 153:609 (Jan 1996): 88).

d. This truth further implies that we need to have a biblical view of mixed marriages (aka interracial marriages).

- Again, we read in Genesis 1:27 that God created man in his own image, male and female he created them. This is a primary limitation of marriage. It is unapologetically between man and female. The second limitation is found in Exodus 34:16 and is repeated in Deuteronomy 7:1-4. In these passages, God forbids Israel to intermarry with other nations. The reason for the prohibition is found in Deuteronomy 7:4: “for they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods.”
- This aspect of human race is worth pointing out because of the misinterpretation of scripture that leads to condemning mixed marriages. For example, one prominent Christian preacher wrote: “to marry across the color line would be...to betray my parents and all of our ancestors, and my children and future generations.” “Most importantly,” he continued, “it would be a betrayal to

Almighty God, who has set the boundaries between nations.” This is not biblical thinking; it is a perversion of scripture.

- We need to know what the Bible teaches about man and marriage to avoid creating barriers of fellowshiping with those who are in or considering mixed marriage.
- Perhaps the inclusion of foreigners like Ruth and Rahab in the genealogy of Jesus was to teach the church that mixed marriages in the Lord are not forbidden. The OT tells us that Moses was married twice, and twice he married foreign women, one a Midianite by the name of Zipporah (Ex 2:21) and the other a Cushite or African woman (Numbers 12:1). God did not condemn it, instead he defended Moses by striking Miriam with leprosy for mocking Moses’ marriage to a Cushite woman.
- The other limitation of marriage is found in the NT, where the apostle Paul made it clear that believers must marry “only in the Lord” (1 Cor 7:39). Believers are not to marry unbelievers, whether they are of the same ethnicity or not. Marry only in the Lord!
- We should not dismiss the fact that interracial marriages come with serious challenges. But the same is true for mono-cultural marriages. But where God’s view of marriage is honored, marriage will be honored regardless of cultural or ethnic differences. My wife and I have come from two different tribes that have a history of hating each other. But the Lord broke those barriers when he saved us. And we have been happily married for thirteen years as I address you.

So far, we have defined human race as descendants of Adam. Unfortunately, Adam’s story does not end in Genesis 1 & 2 in paradise. It extends to Genesis 3, where Adam sinned and fell short of the glory of God. That sin affected relationships between God and man and between man and man. It is because of Adam’s sin, which we inherited, that we struggle to fellowship. And we have no hope of restoring this fellowship between God and man and man and man outside of the second Adam—the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom 5:15-19). He is the only one who can break the sinful barriers preventing multiethnic fellowship and reconcile us first to God and then to one another. We will look at this second Adam next week and begin to build our fellowship on him.

5. How can we apply this biblical truth?

- a. Develop a habit of using biblical language to define man.
- b. Understand that all people are created in God's image and are to be treated with dignity.
- c. Do not allow diversity to drive you away from fellowshiping with people who are not from your own culture.
- d. Remember! Our main barrier is not ethnicity, culture, language and any other social differences. Our main barrier is SIN. We need the Savior!

LESSON 3

The Doctrine of Man (Sin, Salvation and Sanctification): Implications for Multiethnic Fellowship, Pt 2

Last week we looked at man as created in the image of God and what it means to be made in the image and likeness of God. We were reminded that we share some of God's characteristics such as ruling over creation, relating with God and with man, making rational decision because the rational God created us with the capacity to think and make decisions. We are moral beings just as our Creator is a moral being. In terms of relationships, God modelled fellowship for us, as Christ prayed for the believers' oneness in John 17: believers are to be one as Jesus and the Father are one. We were also reminded that all of humanity originates from Adam, the ancestor of all human beings. So, there is only one human race. I understand that we often use the term 'race' to refer to people groups or different skin color. However, we need to train ourselves to use this term in a biblical way in order to bring our thoughts in line with God's view of man. God views man as unique and sacred. For man represents God, both before and after the fall (Gen 1:26-27; 9:6). That's what the Bible means by "God created man in his own image and likeness."

This week we look at man from the lens of Genesis 3—man as a sinner. Once that truth is established, we will look at man as a new creation in Christ. So, the first part looks at man from Adam's perspective and the second part looks at man from Christ's perspective. We will then draw implications and application for the multiethnic church. Our central scripture passages will come from Ephesians 2 and 3 and Colossians 3. But what we are about to learn tonight is summarized in Romans 5:12-19. And I want us to read this passage in a way of an introduction.

Man as a Sinner

Romans 5:12-19 makes it clear that man is a sinner and needs a Savior.

- Sin came into the world through one man and death through sin.
- Death spread to all men because all sinned.
- In contrast, Jesus offers us the free gift of righteousness by grace leading to justification.

- In Adam, all men are condemned. But in Christ all men who believe in Christ are justified and are given life.
- By Adam's disobedience the many were made sinners. By Christ's obedience, the many will be made righteous.

Sin is the problem of all men. It is universal and it knows no ethnic barriers. Sin is a great equalizer. Look back at Roman 3:23; Paul states, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). Going back again few verses (v. 9), Paul asks, "What then? Are Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin." Man is a sinner and is totally depraved. That is, all his faculties are affected by sin.

- He does not understand (Rom 3:10), he does not seek for God (v. 11), he has turned aside and become worthless and does no good (v. 12).
- Man's throat is an open grave, he uses his tongue to deceive, and his lips are venomous (v. 13).
- Man has a mouth full of curses and bitterness (v. 14), and feet swift to shed blood (v. 15).
- Man does not know the way of peace and has no fear of God (vv. 17, 18).
- "Sin permeates every aspect of [man's] existence. It impacts us individually and societally" (MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 451). "From Genesis 3:1 to Revelation 20:15, the Bible abounds with the themes of human sin and the need for salvation" (*Biblical Doctrine*, 452).

So, what is the core element of sin? Scholars propose the following:

Pride—man wants to live life in the power of self.

Selfishness—man loves himself more than God.

Idolatry—man worships creation instead of the Creator.

Autonomy—sin violates the Creator-creature relationship and demand for autonomy (*Biblical Doctrine*, 453). All these proposals are embedded in Satan's words to Eve: "You will be like God" (Gen 3:5).

All of the proposals above boil down to one thing: sin directly defines mankind as a fallen community. And more relevant to our study, sin corrupts man's relationship with God and with fellow man (455).

- In relation to God: man died spiritually (Eph 2:1) and became an enemy of God (Rom 5:10; 8:7).
- In relation to people: sin disrupted and corrupted all human relationships. This corruption cannot be missed as “The history of mankind manifests continual hatred, strife, murders, and war” (*Biblical Doctrine*, 459). We saw these descriptions in Romans 3:10-18. Without God, man is destructive; that is, his throat is an open grave and his lips are venomous. In the words of James 3:9, man uses his tongue to “curse people who are made in the likeness of God.”

These are the results of Genesis 3 and the condition of every person who inherits Adam’s sin. What’s the solution for the fallen man? The fallen man needs new life—he needs to be reconciled with God. It is only through this vertical reconciliation that man can fellowship with fellow man in peace.

Man as a New Creation

Focus: Ephesians 2:11-3:10 and Colossians 3:10-11—vertical and horizontal reconciliation.

The focal point of these two parallel passages is that our salvation affects our relationships with fellow man, and especially with fellow believers.

Reconciliation

Paul’s epistles clearly state that both Jews and Gentiles are sinners, and that they are both saved in the same way—by the gospel (Rom 1:16; 2:9-11; 3:9, 22b-23; 14-15; 16¹; 1 Cor 12:13; 2 Cor 5:17-21; Gal 3:26-28; Eph 2:11-3:10; Phil 3:2-11; Col 3:9-11). Why does Paul repeatedly mention Jews and Gentiles? Because they were enemies who hated each other and had no grounds of fellowship outside of Christ.

In Ephesians 2:11-3:10 and Colossians 3:9-11, Paul takes the salvation argument further and argues that if the gospel of Jesus Christ reconciles Jews and Gentiles to God, the same gospel reconciles Jews and Gentiles to each other, and places them in the same

¹ Romans 16 gives a beautiful model of a multiethnic church in Rome. The people mentioned represent Latin, Greek, and Hebrew speaking believers. Paul uses the terms “kinsman” to refer to the Jews and “Gentiles” to refer to non-Jews. This is another evidence of a multiethnic fellowship in the first century churches.

body. Paul calls this multiethnic fellowship a mystery. It was hidden and now it is made known in the church (Eph 3:1-3). This mystery begins with reconciliation between man and God.

Vertical Reconciliation

The letter to the Ephesians opens with a detailed Trinitarian doctrine of salvation in chapter 1. God the Father chose, predestined, and adopted us to the praise of His glorious grace (vv. 3-6). The Son secured our redemption and forgiveness. In him we have obtained our inheritance (vv. 7-12). The Holy Spirit put a seal of eternal security on us (vv. 13-14). Paul calls this Trinitarian salvation a mystery in v. 9. God saves dead sinners, both Jews and Gentiles, from his wrath, by grace (Eph 2:1-10) (Frank Thielman, *Ephesians, BCNT* (Baker Academic, 2010): 151).

In Colossians, Paul follows a similar theological and practical structure. The first two chapters discuss the sufficiency of Christ for salvation. The Colossians' faith was in Jesus Christ (1:4). All who believe in Jesus are rescued from the domain of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of Christ (1:13). From 1:14-20, Paul presents Christ to the church at Colossae as the redeemer, the forgiver of sins, the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, the creator of all things, the sustainer of all things, the head of the church and the firstborn from the dead. Jesus reconciles all things to God through the blood of his cross. All people, both Jews and Gentiles, were formerly alienated and hostile to God (v. 21). By his death, Christ reconciled believing sinners to God (vv. 22-23). In chapter 2, Paul wants the Colossians to understand that Christ is sufficient to satisfy their "every salvation need." No man-made wisdom—be it in a form of legalism, syncretism, mysticism or asceticism—is necessary for salvation. Man's reconciliation with God is complete in Christ (2:10-15). Now, after the apartheid era, South Africa instituted a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) that sought to bring racially divided people together, including church denominations, our BUSA and BCSA included. But the TRC failed. Do you know why? Because it did not start at the cross! Reconciliation with God is foundational to horizontal reconciliation.

Horizontal Reconciliation

Paul explains Christ's horizontal reconciliation in Ephesians 2:11-3:10 and Colossians 3:10-11. In Ephesians 2:11, Paul uses terms such as "Gentiles in the flesh,"

“uncircumcision,” and “circumcision” to indicate the separation between Gentiles and Jews.

Furthermore, Gentiles were separated, excluded and they were strangers to the covenants of promise (Eph 2:13). We know from reading scripture that ethnic rivalry used to separate Jews and Gentiles. The two groups had no physical grounds for reconciliation. They needed the divine ground. And Paul shows that Christ’s death became their ground of reconciliation, peace and fellowship. He writes in Ephesians 2:13, “But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” He goes on in verse 14 to explain why Christ alone can reconcile the two groups. His explanation is that:

Christ is our peace. The word peace can refer either to a state of concord, peace, harmony, or a state of well-being (Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 288).² Of the two states, the former is what Paul had in mind.

- In Ephesians 2:14-15, peace refers to how Jews and Gentiles ought to live in relation to one another in the world (Jarvis J. Williams, *One New Man: The Cross and Racial Reconciliation in Pauline Theology* (B&H, 2010), 103).
- In line with understanding peace as a reference to reconciliation between two rival groups, Thielman rightly notes that, “Christ is not divided into competing groups, and so those who are identified with Christ are also at peace with one another (Thielman, *Ephesians*, 164).”
- Paul’s use of enmity as an antithesis of peace further substantiates our interpretation of peace as being between Jews and Gentiles. Where this peace is experienced and lived out, the barrier of the dividing wall is broken (Eph 2:14).
- Furthermore, peace is mentioned in contrast to enmity. This enmity is abolished by the death of Christ (v. 15a).
- Peace comes as a result of the two groups made into one new man (v. 15).

² Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd rev. ed., ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 205, Logos Research Systems, places Eph 2:14 under “state of well-being.”

- It is associated with reconciliation in verse 16. Christ “reconciles both [Jews and Gentiles] to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.” So, again we here that the opposite of hostility is peace. The cross of Christ is the only means of reconciliation between rival ethnic groups such as Jews and Gentiles. It is the only means that can take rival groups and place them in one body (i.e. the church) to be one. But I want you to note that this horizontal reconciliation happens only after the cross has first put the sinful enmity to death (v. 16).

In summary, before horizontal reconciliation can take place, there must first be the breaking of the barrier of the dividing wall—enmity must be abolished and put to death. And the cross of Jesus Christ does both the demolition of barriers and the reconciliation of enemies. Christ is our peace! What does it mean Christ is our peace?

First, it means Christ made both groups one. Paul repeatedly used the adjective “one” in Ephesians to underscore the unity of the church (Eph 2:14, 15, 16, 18; 4:2, 4, 5, 6).³ So, the phrase, “who *made* both one (in Eph 2:14), refers to the resulting unity of Jewish and Gentile believers” (Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians, PNTC* (Eerdmans, 1999), 194).

Second, it means Christ broke down the wall of partition. “Paul is using [partition] here (in Eph 2:14) metaphorically of something that keeps the two people groups, Jews and Gentiles, separate from each other” (Thielman, *Ephesians*, 165). Christ broke down this barrier of the dividing wall. He accomplished this “by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is* the Law of commandments *contained* in ordinances” (Eph 2:15). Ceremonial rites and rituals separated Jews from Gentiles. The Law could not reconcile people groups. Instead, it continued to widen the divide. Only in Christ and by his blood alone are enemies brought together and made into “one new man.”

With the three words metaphor, “one new man,” Paul presents a powerful testimony of Christ’s salvation. Intentionally, Paul placed the three words together to emphasize what God is doing between the two groups. The word “one” describes a “new man” (David B. Woods, *Jew-Gentile Distinction in the One New Man of Ephesians 2:15, Conspectus*, vol.

³ There is also one another language (Eph 4:32; 5:19, 21).

18, 95-135 (2014), 105). There no longer exists two hostile groups in the church of Christ, but one humanity united in Christ. Therefore, the adjective “one” emphasizes the unity and the reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles in Christ.

Following the adjective “one” is the adjective, “new,” which also describes “man.” This word speaks of the uniqueness of the humanity created in Christ. “New” here pertains to something not previously present, [that is something] *unknown, strange, [and] remarkable* (Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 497). It refers to something that did not exist before (Woods, *Jew-Gentile Distinction*, 113). Conceptually, “new” is synonymous to “the mystery” in Ephesians 3:3. Similar to new, “the mystery” presents a revelation unknown to other generations. Paul defines the mystery as follows: “that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise...” (Eph 3:6). To make his point even clearer, Paul specifically chose nouns that are prefixed with a Greek preposition *sun*, translated fellow, to underscore the fellowship that now exists between diverse ethnic groups in the church. According to Ephesians (3:6), they share the same inheritance, they belong to the same body, and they partake in the same promises. This fellowship is only found “in Christ Jesus through the gospel.” Note what God seeks to accomplish through a multiethnic church in Ephesians 3:10: “so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.”

It logically follows then, as Paul points out in Ephesians 4:3-6, that if we are going to make the manifold of God’s wisdom known, we must be “eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. [For] there is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” In a parallel letter to the Colossians, Paul gives the practical part of what it means to be a new creation in fellowship with Christ and fellow believers.

The Gospel Breaks Down Social, Cultural and Ethnic Barriers

Christ is all, and in all.

- As you know by now, it all begins with our lives in Christ. Saved people, who have died and have been raised with Christ, and whose lives are hidden with Christ and will appear with Christ in glory (Col 3:1-4), are commanded to mortify sin (vv. 5-10).

- New life serves as a ground for mortifying sin: “seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator” (Col 3:9b-10 ESV). You are now ready for a new life in Christ.
- In verse 11, Paul specifically applies the concept of the new self to social-cultural-ethnic diversity. “Here (i.e. in the new self) there is not Greek and Jew; circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all” (ESV).⁴
- The contrastive statement, “but Christ is all, and in all” equalizes people who are new in Christ, constantly renewing their new self after the image of its creator (Col 3:10).
- Again, we need to note that in its context, the word “all” refers to Greek and Jew; circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian and Scythian, slave and free. By these pairs, Paul was addressing Ethnic barriers, religious or ritual barriers, cultural barriers and social barriers. These barriers have no place in Christ and in his church. Christ is all and in all.
- Paul said it also in Galatians 3:28 that, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Justification is by grace for all people.

Implications for Multiethnic Fellowship

- All have Christ, and Christ is everything to all who are saved.
- We need to have a Christlike attitude to strengthen our fellowship together. Look at Colossians 3:3-15, where Paul contrasts the new self with the old self. If we are going to live together as one and in peace, we need to: “put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put

⁴ James D. G. Dunn explains, “The fact that ‘Greeks’ is used rather than ‘Gentiles’=the (other) nations, which would have been the more comprehensive term . . . is simply a reminder of the pervasiveness of Hellenistic culture in the Mediterranean basin.” James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 224.

on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.”

- “Without such an attitude toward others no group of individuals can become and grow as a community, with a proper care for others and willingness to submerge one’s own personal interests” (Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 230).

Application:

What instructions do we take from the early NT local churches to strengthen multiethnic fellowship at CBC?

What are you thankful for at CBC?

LESSON 4

The Doctrine of the Church: Implications for Multiethnic Fellowship

So far in our series on strengthening multiethnic fellowship, we have studied (1) what the Bible teaches about fellowship, (2) what the Bible teaches about the man made in the image of God, and (3) about man as a sinner and new creation. We have been emphasizing throughout this teaching series that this study is concerned about the church and not much about the world. It is concerned about believers fellowshiping with one another in the church context and not much about socialization outside the church, although that is not wrong to do.

Tonight, we conclude this series by looking at the doctrine of the church. Among many metaphors used for the church, one that captures the church as a fellowship of believers is the body metaphor. The church is uniquely called the body of Christ.

Romans 12:4-5:

For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

1 Corinthians 12:12-14:

For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many.

MacArthur and Mayhue explain the body metaphor thus: “God created the human body as a marvelously complex organism, with intricate and elaborate interrelatedness and harmony. As an interdependent and unified whole, it cannot function if divided into its parts. Likewise, the body of Christ is a unified whole. There are many religious organizations and functions, but only the church is the body of Christ” (*Biblical Doctrine*, 750).

This body constitutes the church Christ promised to build in Matthew 16:18. For this reason, Christ gave his disciples the Great Commission to: “Go therefore and make

disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you” (Matt 28:19). But Christ did not only promise to build the church, he also died for this church and purchased it with his own blood. Paul understood this sacrifice when he commanded the elders at Ephesus in Acts 20:28: “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”

Furthermore, Christ sanctifies the church that he purchased with his own blood. We read in Ephesians 5:25b-27 that, “Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.”

As we look at this church tonight—this body of Christ—and as we gain insight into its mystery and marvel at the display of God’s manifold wisdom through the church, the multiethnic church (Eph 3:10), I pray with Paul “that [the Father] would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man” (Eph 3:16).

Here is what we will learn in this study:

1. That the NT local churches had diverse ethnic and cultural membership,
2. That the NT local churches addressed ethnic and cultural challenges with the gospel,
3. That the NT local churches had multiethnic leadership, and
4. At the end of this lesson, we will ask: where are we as CBC? In other words, what need to be celebrated and what need to be strengthened? By these questions, we will be drawing implications and applications for strengthening multiethnic fellowship at CBC.

1. The NT local churches had diverse ethnic and cultural membership.

The church that Jesus promised to build began in Acts 2 with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Read Acts 2:1-4).

Now look at who witnessed this event and later made up the membership of the church in Jerusalem (Read vv. 5-13). Why were these onlookers bewildered or amazed in vv. 6, 12? Verses 7-8 tell us they were amazed by Galileans speaking their native languages. Luke mentions 15 nations represented by these devout Jews. Luke “begins with the nations in the east (Parthia, Media, Elam, Mesopotamia), then moves via Judea to Asia Minor (Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia), from there to Africa (Egypt, Cyrene), and then to Rome, Crete, and Arabia” (Kistemaker, *Acts*, 82). Peter preached to these Jews and 3000 of them repented and were baptized and that marked the beginning of the church (Acts 2:41).

What was the early church like in its membership composition? It was:

Multi-cultural—Acts 2:5—Jews from different nations representing different cultures.

Multi-lingual: Acts 2:6-8—at least 15 languages represented by 15 nations.

Multi-ethnic: Acts 2:10—Proselytes were Gentiles who converted to Judaism.

Looking at this Pentecost event, Kistemaker rightly perceives that: “Luke seems to group the nations in linguistic categories, for his objective in this Pentecost account is to emphasize that the Good News transcends linguistic barriers” (*Acts*, 82).

These believers, with their diverse cultures, languages and ethnicities, were united by the gospel and, they “continually devoted themselves to the apostles’ teachings and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:42). “Day by day they continued with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart” (v. 46).

2. The NT local churches addressed ethnic and cultural challenges with the gospel.

We must acknowledge that since a multiethnic/multicultural/multilingual fellowship was not a norm, the church had to wrestle with how to handle the mix.

- Acts 6:1—Disciples who came from two cultural groups—Hellenistic Jews and Hebraic Jews—competed over food. We see a clear cultural/linguistic division in these categorizations—Hellenistic and Hebraic Jews. Before these groups came to fellowship together in the church, they used to meet in separate synagogues, using separate OT translations of scriptures. Hellenists used the Greek text of the OT,

Hebraic Jews used a Hebrew translation. But they are now called a “congregation of disciples” and they are learning to live with each other (Acts 6:2).

- The apostles also had to wrestle with the mystery of the church. It had not yet dawned on them that Jesus “broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man thus establishing peace” (Eph 2:14-15). We see this from Peter’s confession in Acts 10:28, as he spoke to the Gentiles at Cornelius’ house. “He said to them, you yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean.” After the Gentiles received the Holy Spirit just as the Jews did in Acts 2, Peter was even more assured that God broke the barrier between Jews and Gentiles: Acts 10:34, “Opening his mouth, Peter said: 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.”
- Peter’s understanding of God’s impartiality became a foundational doctrine for Jewish believers who held to a theology of separation and took issue with those who mixed with the Gentiles. Acts 11:2 tells us that, “When Peter came up to Jerusalem, those who were circumcised took issue with him (Peter), saying, you went to uncircumcised men and ate with them.” But after Peter had explained to them what the Spirit told him (v. 12), those who took issue with him “quieted down and glorified God, saying, well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life” (Acts 11:18). Again, Peter brought up this theological foundation of the impartial God during the debate at the Jerusalem council, over whether Gentiles must be circumcised in order to be saved (Acts 15:1). Peter stood up (v. 7) and reminded them of Cornelius’s household experience by explaining in verse 9 that “God made no distinction between us (Jews) and them (Gentiles), cleansing their hearts by faith.” He went on to say in verse 11, “But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also.” Upon this foundation, the doctrine of salvation was clarified, and the multiethnic church was built. The church understood that there is no partiality with God, and from henceforth, many multiethnic churches were

born. Most, if not all churches that Paul addressed in his letters had both Jews and Gentiles in their membership, and they had to often address their sinful biases.

Listen to Paul as he addresses some of these multiethnic churches:

Church in Rome: Rom14:1-3, 10, 13, 19

¹ Now accept the one who is weak in faith, *but* not for *the purpose of* passing judgment on his opinions. ² One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables *only*. ³ The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him.

¹⁰ But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.

¹³ Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this-- not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.

¹⁹ So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.

Romans 15:5-9

⁵ Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, ⁶ so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁷ Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God. ⁸ For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises *given* to the fathers, ⁹ and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy;

Church in Corinth: 1 Cor 12:12-13

¹² For even as the body is one and *yet* has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. ¹³ For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

In chapter 8, Paul addressed dietary laws which contributed to the divisions at Corinth. He told them that "sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ" (v. 12).

Churches in Galatia: Gal 3:26-28

²⁶ For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Church in Ephesus: Eph 2:14-16

¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into* one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, ¹⁵ by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is* the Law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus* establishing peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.

⁹ Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its *evil* practices, ¹⁰ and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him-- 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.

3. The NT local churches had multiethnic leadership.

The early church did not only have multiethnic membership, they also had spiritually qualified multiethnic leadership, and contemporary churches that have a multiethnic membership will do well to imitate this model.

Two passages specifically record these cases.

Acts 6: Church in Jerusalem

Context—the number of disciples was growing, the church was multicultural, consisting of both the Hellenistic Jews and the Hebraic Jews. The resources were limited, and the Hebraic Jews were accused of neglecting the Hellenistic Jews. The Hellenistic Jews complained, and the apostles responded by instructing the church to choose seven qualified men to serve the tables. The problem called for the adjustment of leadership structures in the early church.

Warren Wiersbe proposes that, “When a church faces a serious problem, this presents the leaders and the members with a number of opportunities. For one thing, problems give us the opportunity to examine our ministry and discover what changes must be made”

(Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary: New Testament*, vol. 1 (Victor, 2001), 429). For the early church, the problem needed additional servants and the congregation of disciples chose them: Acts 6:5: "and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch.”

Observe that:

- All seven men who were chosen had Hellenistic names, suggesting that they were Hellenists (MacArthur, *Acts 1-12*; Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 121; Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 127; Bock, *Acts*, 261).

- Nicolas is described as a proselyte from Antioch. He was not born as a Jew but was proselytized. He was a Gentile from Antioch.
- Did the Hellenists replace the Hebraic servants? No, a plausible deduction would be that these Hellenists servants were added to the Hebraic servants who were already in service.
- So, we must concur with Bock that, “The disciples do not fragment along ethnic lines or suggest that separate communities be formed along ethnic lines. Rather they are committed to working together” (Bock, *Acts*, 261).

Acts 13: Church at Antioch

- Acts 13:1: “Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.”

Observations

- Barnabas, Manaen and Saul were Jews. Schnabel describes Barnabas as a Greek-speaking Jew from Cyprus; Saul as a diaspora Jew from Tarsus; and “Manaen [as one who] evidently belonged to a noble Jewish family with connections to Herod’s court” (Schnabel, *Acts*, 554).
- Simeon who was called Niger and Lucius of Cyrene were Gentiles. Kistemaker undoubtedly defines Niger as a reference to Simeon’s complexion and descent (Kistemaker, *Acts*, 454). Hughes describes him as “a black man named Simeon” (Hughes, *Acts*, 174). Bruce says, “He was presumably of dark complexion.” Hays reasoned that, “While it is difficult to draw conclusions about the name *Niger* with absolute certainty, it is probable that this man was called *Niger* because he was Black and came from Africa” (J. Daniel Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race*, ed. D.A. Carson (Apollos, 2003), 177).
- With this mixed ethnic leadership represented in Acts 13:1, Luke shows that “the multiethnic aspect of the early Church extended to leadership and not just to membership” (Hays, *From Every People and Nation*, 178).

4. Implication and Application Questions:

- Where are we at CBC? What needs to be celebrated and what needs to be strengthened?

Final note as we conclude this four-week series: The events of 1652 (the arrival of white settlers in South Africa), 1948 (the beginning of an apartheid government) and 1994 (democratic elections in South Africa) do not define the church of Jesus Christ. What defines us is the event that took place in AD 30, when Jesus gave his life for the church. The cross of Jesus Christ reconciles and defines us! Amen!

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ABSTRACT

STRENGTHENING MULTIETHNIC FELLOWSHIP AT
CHRIST BAPTIST CHURCH IN POLOKWANE,
SOUTH AFRICA

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This project set out to strengthen multiethnic fellowship at Christ Baptist Church in Polokwane, South Africa. The project was undertaken because of the past and current waves of racial tension in South Africa, which have proven to affect the unity of a multiethnic church. Chapter 1 highlights the historical and current context of the project, the external and internal threats of multiethnic fellowship, and goes further to establish the goals and methodology for the project. Chapter 2 provides the biblical and theological basis for strengthening multiethnic fellowship, specifically underpinned by missiological, ecclesiological, soteriological and doxological theses. Chapter 3 chronicles the history of the church in South Africa with a special focus on two denominations—the Dutch Reformed Church and the Baptist Union of Southern Africa. The history highlights the impact of succumbing to political ideology clothed with misinterpreted Bible passages and the resulting cost of segregation in the church. The chapter goes on to debunk the apartheid worldview the two denominations embraced and the barriers it created. Several areas are highlighted, which, if addressed, will strengthen multiethnic fellowship in the church. The chapter closes with CBC’s journey toward multiethnic fellowship and the need and ways to strength that fellowship. Chapter 4 describes the stages followed to implement the project, each goal at a time. Chapter 5 gives an overall evaluation of the project, acknowledging the need to improve.

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