

**An Old Testament Theology of Multiculturalism**  
*Diversity: God's Eschatological Plan for the Nations*

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**1. INTRODUCTION**

Simply stated, the occasion of this paper is the celebration of human diversity which is based upon an inherent order reflected within creation. God has, from the beginning,

willed, advanced and celebrated the diversity that exists among the natural created order as well as the diversity inherent within the pleura of human ethnicity. This diversity is expressed clearly within the Scriptures, which are the word of God unto mankind i.e. the interpretive foundation for understanding all facets of reality. Therefore, the underlying assumption of this paper, beyond the fact that the Bible is the Word of God, is that there exists an *OT theology of multiculturalism*. An exploration of the foundations that contribute to that theological framework is the primary focus at hand. Further, it will be seen that an OT theology of multiculturalism is to be understood within the unfolding progress of redemption as an eschatological concept (Dumbrell 1994; Gowan 1986; Ladd 1974; VanGemeren 1988).

This paper begins with an examination of the relevant terms and the implications of those terms as they bear upon an unfolding OT theology of multiculturalism. Then, two relevant issues will be discussed that are crucial for an understanding of the multicultural debate (monoculturalism versus multiculturalism and the significance of a valid epistemological framework in the multiculturalism dialogue). Thirdly, the Scriptures will be examined to reveal the foundations of an OT theology of multiculturalism. This theological framework will be unfolded to divulge that God willed, advanced and celebrated diversity which culminates in rich strains of diverse human culture, ethnicity and multiculturalism. Finally, a number of points will be highlighted that bear on the contemporary debate surrounding the multicultural discourse.

## 1.1 DEFINITION OF TERMS

In order to facilitate understanding and provide a foundational framework for an OT theology of multiculturalism it is necessary to define relevant terms and their ensuing ramifications that relate directly to the unfolding argument.

### A. Culture

Anthropologists use the term culture in a technical sense that is descriptive in nature (Lee and Rice 1991:66). Grunlan and Mayers, succinct in their definition, define culture as “learned and shared attitudes, values and ways of behaving” (1988:39). Classically stated, culture can be defined as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (Tyler 1871<sup>[1]</sup>). Hiebert echoes that definition and expands upon it by stating that culture is “the more or less integrated system of ideas, feelings and values and their associated patterns of behavior and products shared by a group of people who organize and regulate what they think, feel and do” (Hiebert 1985:30). E. Wan encapsulates that dimension but pushes forward to recognize that the cultural interaction that takes place does so in a multi-faceted manner between a variety of different beings. He defines culture as “the context/consequence of patterned interaction between personal beings (Beings)” (Wan 2004:1). The later definition is applicable to the purpose in this paper as it recognizes that cultural dimensions of the relationship/interaction between a diversity of beings: human, angelic and Divine (Triune God) at macro-level showing the convergence of various realms of terrestrial and anthropological levels and the Trinitarian paradigm of “both-and” characteristic (Wan 1999). The impact of this later dimension of culture will become clear as the paper unfolds (cf. Devine 1996:165). In contrast to the

descriptive definition unfolded above, held largely by anthropologists, we find that multiculturalists have taken the concept of culture a step further.

At the other extreme is a multiculturalist perspective of culture wherein culture is viewed not as “an end in itself but as a means to an end” (Turner 1994:408). This intimated criticism by Turner, an anthropologist, points out that in the field of multicultural studies the concept of culture has become blurred. For multiculturalists “culture becomes merged with that of ethnic identity” and in that sense culture has become merely a form of identity politics (Turner 1994:407). Culture thus “refers primarily to collective social identities engaged in struggles for social equality” (Turner 1994:407). This aspect of the multiculturalist position will loom large and be developed in the ensuing discussion of multiculturalism.

### B. Ethnicity

The term ethnicity is more difficult to define (Lee and Rice 1991:68). Ethnicity refers to an “inevitable social phenomena” that defines “an aggregate of people who identify themselves or [are] being identified by others as belonging to a collectivity of people who have similar physical or cultural traits, shared beliefs, and a sense of peoplehood” (Wan 1978:iii and 9). Hence, ethnicity, which is etymologically derived from the Greek *ethnos*, is primarily a social phenomena, is sociological and anthropological in nature and is based upon cultural characteristics (cf. Feagie and Feagin 1993:7ff.; Tracy 1977:91; Wan 1975:9-10).

### C. Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism can be viewed from three different perspectives; descriptively, ideologically (as social engineering and as the politics of power) and as an interdisciplinary discipline.

#### a. Multiculturalism: A Descriptive Definition

Descriptively, multiculturalism connotes “referencing the undeniable varieties of cultures both inter- and intranational.”<sup>ii[2]</sup> In its most basic sense then, multiculturalism is the recognition that a variety of cultures co-exist in a given context. This definition quickly pushes forward into a second definition with numerous nuances built around the “relationship” between these co-existing cultures.

#### b. Multiculturalism: An Ideological Definition for Ordering Society

Secondly, multiculturalism can be defined ideologically “as the stipulation of the procedural and substantive principles ordering a multi-cultural society” (Goldberg 1994:7; cf. Lee and Rice 1991:73ff.). In this second sense multiculturalism involves critical thinking (analysis and formulation) and resulting practice regarding the structuring of a social order. It is more than that envisioned in the first definition outlined above. It foresees social engineering.

#### c. Multiculturalism: An Ideological Definition Based on Power

Thirdly, and related to the second definition, multiculturalism is, Turner states, “primarily a movement for change” that involves theoretical analysis and the development of a

conceptual framework to challenge the “cultural hegemony of the dominant ethnic group” (Turner 1994:407).<sup>iii[3]</sup> In this sense it is related to power (Baum 1977:101). Turner goes on to develop a framework of multicultural ideologies which can be grouped into two categories; critical multiculturalism and difference multiculturalism (Turner 1994:408).

Critical multiculturalism, according to Turner, uses “cultural diversity as a basis for challenging, revising and relativizing basic notions and principles common to dominant and minority cultures alike, so as to construct a more vital open, and democratic common culture” (Turner 1994:408). The later, “difference multiculturalism,” is championed by “cultural nationalists and fetishists of *difference* for whom *culture* reduces to a tag for ethnic identity and a license for political and intellectual separatism” (Turner 1994:409). It is perhaps better known by the term “political correctness.”<sup>iv[4]</sup> There is a great deal of diversity regarding terms used by multiculturalists and their critics. For instance, Philip E. Devine, a critic of multicultural ideology, labels critical multiculturalism as “weak multiculturalism” and difference multiculturalism as “strong multiculturalism” (Devine 1996).

#### d. Multiculturalism: An Emerging Discipline

Finally, multiculturalism can be defined as an emerging discipline with a method and a body of knowledge to study (interdisciplinary). The science of multiculturalism can be succinctly stated as anything that relates to or the implementation of critical multiculturalism (academic formulation, systematization of principles and practices, and practical implementation).<sup>v[5]</sup> In defending the emergence of the movement of “critical multiculturalism,” Goldberg states, “Multiculturalism, then, delineates the prevailing concerns and considerations, principles and practices, concepts and categories that now fall under the rubric of ‘multiculturalism’” (1994:2). As an emerging discipline then, multiculturalism is tied to the ideology of critical multiculturalism and is primarily concerned with the transformative nature of the relationship between dominant and minority cultural entities.

#### D. Theology

Theology can be studied from a narrow perspective, which reflects most precisely the etymology of the term and properly means “the study of God.” This narrow sense is often referred to as theology proper. However, with a much broader focus in mind, theology also refers to a system of dogma, i.e. the correlation of a unified system of thought and doctrine pertaining to matters of God, creation, and human existence of which the Scriptures are the foundational deposit of truth. As a system of doctrine, the science of theology relates to philosophical categories, distinct methodological considerations and apologetic concerns related to a given context<sup>vi[6]</sup> (cf. Muller 1991:123ff.; Bosch 1991:269-71; Vos 1985 [1948]:3ff).

The crux of the two definitions, narrow and broad, combined are labeled as “analogous public forms [of theology]” by David Tracy and historically defined as “fundamental theology, systematic theology and practical theology (1977:92).<sup>vii[7]</sup> Muller, on the other hand, breaks down the study of the two aspects of theological reflection into a wider

range of sub-disciplines such as “exegesis; hermeneutics; systematic, philosophical and apologetic theology; ethics; church history; history of doctrine; homiletics; liturgics; counseling; marriage and family ministry; and Christian formation.” (1991:22ff; cf. Vos 1985 [1948]:3ff). Both, though varied in their organization of the sub-disciplines involved in the study of theology (i.e. theological encyclopedia), agree that theology must relate to a contemporary context, i.e. contextualization. Therein lies a significant point regarding the formation of a theology of multiculturalism. However, while there is a great deal of similarity between their approaches to theology there remains a significant difference as well.

The most startling point of departure relates to the starting point of theology. Tracy advocates a “public” theology that will, first of all, “investigate and correlate....the meanings of our common human existence,” secondly, a public theology that will “articulate the disclosive and transformative possibilities of a particular religious tradition to a wider public,” and thirdly, a public theology that will “articulate the disclosive and transformative possibilities of a particular cultural heritage or a particular social, cultural, or political movement to a wider pluralistic society” (Tracy 1977:92). A couple of points call for clarification.

First of all, by “public” theology Tracy means the proffering of cultivated ethnic theological speculation into the public arena. His is a method of theology that begins with human experience. And the starting point for doing theology is one’s ethnic or cultural experience/ framework in dialogue with culturally transcendent Christian principles.<sup>viii[8]</sup> Therefore, the public character of theology is conveyed in two manners; common human experience that highlights common themes that arise in every ethnic expression and the theological formulation being thrown into the arena of “ethnic theologies” for cross ethnic dialogue. Secondly, Tracy’s method of theology, with its starting point in human experience, finds itself undergirding the framework of the critical multiculturalists” (outlined above) for whom the concept of “transformative possibilities” is a primary component of their ideological position (1977:96ff).<sup>ix[9]</sup>

Muller, on the other hand, though clearly recognizing that all theological reflection is contextual, holds to the objective nature of theological formulation - that the starting point for theology is a deposit of truth i.e. the objective revelation of God in the Scriptures. It is the Scriptures that contain truth and this body of truth interprets our experience (1991:19ff.; 214ff.cf. VanGemeren 1988:17; Vos 1985 [1948]:3ff). The objective goal of theology is the transformation of all things, including mankind and culture (cf. Dumbrell 1984,1994; Lingenfelter 1992; VanGemeren 1988, 1990; Wan 1994).

#### E. Summary Reflections

In a survey of the definition of pertinent terms relating to an OT theology of multiculturalism a number of important points come to the forefront. There is a great deal of confusion regarding the usage of the terms *culture*, *ethnicity* and *multiculturalism*. This confusion is evident from a historical perspective as well as from a disciplinary perspective (sociologists, multiculturalists and anthropologists [cf. Turner 1994]). However, each of the terms, when sorted out, reveals distinct assumptions. Secondly, the

search for an epistemological framework that loomed large in differing views of theological methodology (Tracy/Muller), will also play an important role in the formation of a theology of multiculturalism (Goldberg/Devine). Thirdly, that a foundational discussion must ensue regarding the debate between monoculturalism and multiculturalism.

## 2. THE IMPASSE: TWO RELEVANT ISSUES

In this section the second and third points mentioned above are expanded upon. The debate about multiculturalism versus monoculturalism and the search for a valid epistemological framework are highlighted.

### 2.1 Monoculturalism or Multiculturalism?

Monoculturalism or multiculturalism? The debate is varied and ferocious (cf. Devine 1996; Goldberg 1994). It rages among adherents in the disciplines of sociology, anthropology and theology (cf. Anderson 1977). The war is waged both historically (Eurocentrist attitudes) and in a contemporary setting (multicultural ideologies). Each side is deeply entrenched within its fortified frameworks (Devine 1996:xiiiiff.). And, interestingly enough it is a debate that rages most prominently in the context of North America (cf. Goldberg 1994:1ff.; Lee and Rice 1991:65ff.; Wan 1995). Further, it is a debate that will certainly not abate - multiculturalism as an ideology is a force to be reckoned with (cf. Chideya 1999).

#### A. The Arena of the Debate: The Changing Cultural Context in North America (NA)

When one begins to reflect upon the changing cultural context that Western society finds itself encountering, one begins to gain a sense of the challenges before it. The task is two-fold; to provide a viable theoretical framework to undergird a multicultural context and secondly, to implement it in a given context. Ethnic diversity is quickly becoming the norm and is gaining ground with increasing regularity. The push toward the creation of a multicultural context cannot be ignored. Frameworks are being offered and implementation is being accomplished. However, the challenge has been great and has encountered significant opposition (cf. Banks 1979:3ff.; Chideya 1999; Feagie and Feagin 1993:4ff.).

These changing dynamics in the cultural makeup of society have also affected the church, especially in North America (NA). The NA church finds itself encountering new and unique challenges that are raising a gamut of theological issues that the NA Church has hitherto been insulated from, and reluctant to address (Baum 1977; Mullins 1989; World Vision 1998; Wan 1995). The time has come to address those issues squarely and with Scriptural consistency.

#### B. The Background of the Debate: The Sojourn of North American Society

The sojourn of NA society has been varied and polarized. Two cultural ideologies that have pointed in very different directions. On the one hand, there has existed the strong monocultural drive of the United States (US), which has been offset by the multicultural drive of Canada.

Early immigration policies in the US tended to target, culturally affinitive peoples from Western and Eastern Europe based upon a “ethnoracial Eurovision” (Goldberg 1994:4). In the US there existed a dominant drive toward conformity to a White Anglo Saxon Protestant/Catholic (WASP/C) cultural pattern, ie. the melting pot model. This fostered monocultural attitude became, over time, institutionalized into an intellectual ideology which in turn was validated through a “history of monoculturalism” that undergirded and maintained the institutional drive toward monoculturalism (cf. Banks 1979:3-9; Goldberg 1994:3-6). This drive to monoculturalism was unwaveringly maintained despite the fact that there existed in the US a significant African American population and a wide diversity of visible cultures (Banks 1979:3-9). Multicultural questions and issues were not raised regarding the African-American presence primarily because of two issues; 1. prior to the 1940's the “*Negroes*’ were considered inherently inassimilable” and, 2. the “Negroe” population was forced to conform into WASP/C cultural patterns (Goldberg 1994:5). However, the influx of significant numbers of non-WASP/C peoples such as Hispanics, Asians, etc., and the resurgence of a distinct African-American culture based upon more of an African cultural pattern than an American one (cf. Roberts 1996), as well as criticism of the Eurovision ideology has brought the debate about multiculturalism in the US to the forefront (Banks 1979:3ff.; Goldberg 1994:8ff.).

Canada, on the other hand, has long pondered the ramifications of a “multi-cultural”<sup>x[10]</sup> framework though cultural pluralism appears to be a more appropriate term (primarily bi-cultural - Anglophones and Francophones). The experiment was fostered from the onset and furthered with the pluralistic visions of Canadian Prime Ministers Wilfrid Laurier, at the turn of the century, and with Pierre Trudeau who institutionalized multi-culturalism as Canadian policy in 1971 (Lee and Rice 1991:73-74). The Canadian policy for multiculturalism, as D. John Lee and Rodger Rice explain, is based upon “at least three prerequisites for constructive inter-ethnic relationships: 1) people perceive themselves as members of an ethnic group *as well as* Canadians, 2) people’s ethnic identity is secure enough not to be threatened by each other’s ethnicity, and 3) people are willing to enter into dialogues about their differences and similarities (Lee and Rice 1991:108). However, in recent years the issues involving the maintenance of a multi-cultural society have raised a host of issues as the majority WASP/C as well as Francophone Canadian population appear reluctant to engage in serious power sharing with minority ethnic groups. Canada has found that it is one thing to propound an ideology of multiculturalism it is yet another thing to make it workable (Lee and Rice 1991:114-15).

Though change is an integral part of NA society there is a great deal of confusion being bantered about. The foundational question continues to revolve around the debate regarding monoculturalism and multiculturalism.

### C. The Ensuing Debate: Monoculturalism or Multiculturalism?

Monoculturalism is an ideological framework based upon an axiological universalism, ie. it is assumed that it is the natural outcome of rational determination (Goldberg 1994:3, 19). Further, it propounds to be undergirded by a historical argument based upon homogenizing values and a naturalist argument. These homogenizing values are reflected in the fact that there is a consensus “that differences between people are

shrinking and will eventually disappear altogether” (Lee and Rice 1991:66), or that homogeneity is “a necessary condition for community, for civility, and perhaps even for civilization....” (Goldberg 1994:20). The naturalist argument follows with a number of further points; first, that the adage, “birds of a feather flock together” is the natural inclination of mankind, secondly, and based upon the Humean argument, that traditions and customs are necessarily worth preserving (Goldberg 1994:21).

In the midst of American society (US) the principle of homogeneity pushes forward into an ideological monoculturalism in order to protect the status quo and the quality of Eurocentric life, i.e. in order to protect the power base of WASP cultural dominance (Goldberg 1994:4-5). Interestingly enough, Lee and Rice make the same accusation of the multicultural ideology in existence within Canadian society. Their point is that it is a multiculturalism in concept only and that there is little power sharing outside of the dominant Anglophone and Francophone cultures (1991:73-77).

Inherent within monoculturalism the resulting drive of society is toward the assimilation or melting pot model. Diversity is discouraged and there results a “managed” or “corporate” multiculturalism that allows pluralist strains surface in a controlled manner only to avoid criticism of ethnocentrism (Goldberg 1994:16-17).

Multiculturalism, on the other hand (discussed above), also propounds to be an ideology based upon the natural order of things (Devine 1996:64ff.). It is undergirded by a moral imperative (Goldberg 1994:16-18); it is undergirded by a historical argument (that migration is the prevalent drive of humanity); it has a political purpose based upon power (liberation from domination); it is analogous (cultural plurality or the fruit salad model); and, it too, claims to reflect a superior quality of life argument. However, as monoculturalism can be criticized as an ideology, so can multiculturalism (Devine 1996:3ff).

As a matter of fact, a debate emerges wherein ad hominem arguments quickly come to the forefront (cf. Devine 1996; Goldberg 1994).<sup>xi[11]</sup> To be certain, both unity and plurality exist within the created order. To found an ideology upon either position unfolded in an extreme manner is to do an injustice to the balance between the universal and the particular inherent within reality (cf. Devine 1996:xiiiiff.; Vawter 1977). The overarching question in the defense or criticism of an ideology, whether it be monoculturalism or multiculturalism, becomes a foundational one relating to the issue of epistemological frameworks.

## 2.2 The Search for a Valid Epistemological Framework

Henry Louis Gates Jr., once an ardent supporter of strong multiculturalism, stated, “If relativism is right, then multiculturalism is impossible.”<sup>xii[12]</sup> This follows on the criticism that multiculturalism, founded upon a moral relativism, would entertain chaos. Devine states,

let us further examine the prospect of a world in which multiculturalism has given birth to acculturalism--a world in which there is no such thing as culture in the



normative sense, only each individual and group's idiosyncratic and temporary adaptations to circumstance. We may call such a world a "postmodern" world, or with important reservations, "radically relativist." (1996:67).

This attribute coupled with the liberationist tendency closely tied to critical or strong multiculturalism and one clearly begins to recognize the potential for chaos. Devine goes on to explore the potential conflict by carrying the argument of Stanley Fish to its logical end, "From the fact that all ideologies are of equal value, that all ideologies are fictions, the modern relativist infers that everybody has the right to create for himself his own ideology and attempt to enforce it with all the energy of which he is capable" (1996:68). Devine wants us to consider Mussolini as a "lucid expression" of this outcome (1996:68). It would seem that the position of the critical multiculturalist lacks an epistemological framework that can weather the storm of criticism.<sup>xiii[13]</sup>

The strong multiculturalist, on the other hand is quick to defend the position of relativism as tenable (Goldberg 1994:16ff.). However, the claims of a universality (over and against universalism) based upon a fixed "We" in the extension of local values into universal ones seems unable to escape the underlying criticism of relativity. Wherein exists the right to make any one dominant position the "We" that should be universally normative? Is this not the criticism of multiculturalists against monoculturalism?

Monoculturalists also however, fail to take into consideration the balance of diversity within reality. Unfortunately, those that have traditionally lined up on the side of monoculturalism have historically used the epistemological framework of Christianity to validate their monoculturalist perspective and use it in an oppressive manner (cf. Anderson 1977:63-64; Mudimbe 1988:47ff.).<sup>xiv[14]</sup> They overlook the diversity inherent within the created order and within humanity (Devine 1996:153ff.).

Before we press on with the formation of a theology of multiculturalism it is appropriate to pause and reflect upon certain matters. Contemporary ideological expressions of multiculturalism lack an epistemological framework that validates the diversity that multiculturalists observe. A diversity, it is argued, that is evident within reality. This lack leads to an aberrant view of the dynamics of multiculturalism. Transformation prerogatives, revealed as liberationist policies cannot achieve a multicultural society. Rather, they will merely propagate power politics that will result in negative cultural tensions and chaos.

Monoculturalism, the ideology that is most prominent among WASP/C cultures in NA, has failed for the most part to deal with the burgeoning multicultural issues. This has led to an impasse whereby monocultural ideology has entrenched oppressive cultural structures in both the US and Canada in order to protect the status quo.<sup>xv[15]</sup> Further, monoculturalists have failed for the most part, to recognize and validate the plurality and diversity which is inherent within the created order.

The choices between a eurocentric monoculturalism or a ethnocentric multiculturalism (radical relativism) are not viable ones. Theologizing in order to support either position

is to build upon an either/or dichotomy which is unnecessary. It is not a polarized position of unity or diversity, but rather a defensible position of both unity and diversity.

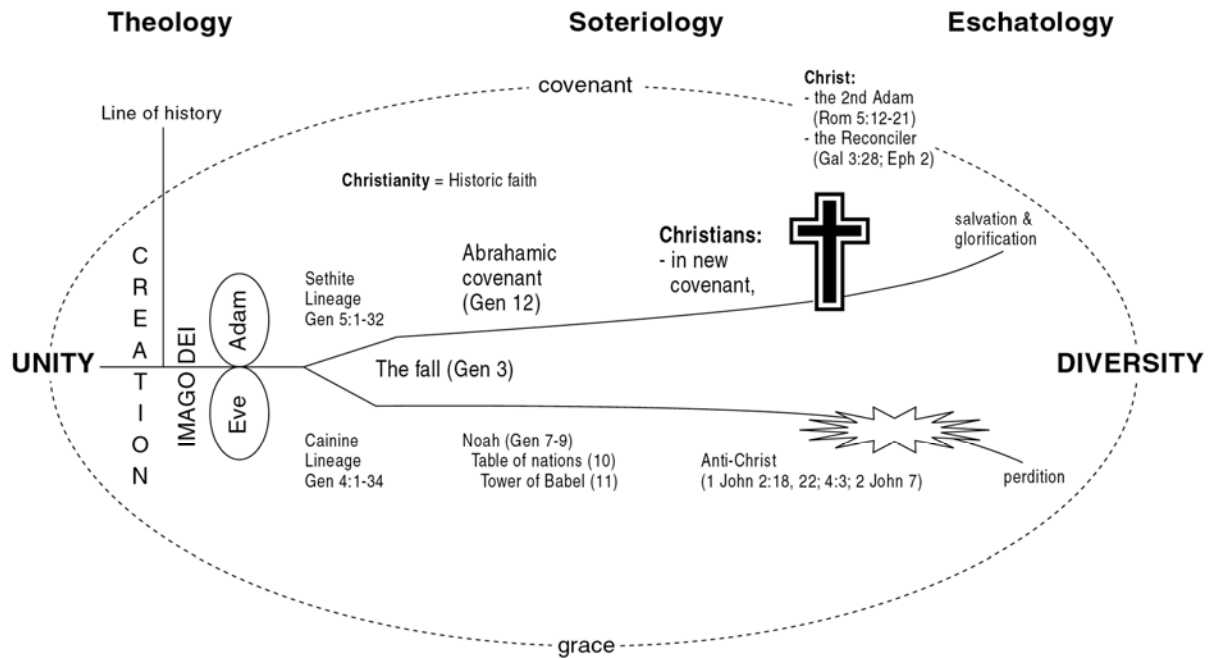
This leads us to the necessity to formulate a theology of multiculturalism that will validate and celebrate the richness of unity in diversity. A Biblical theology of multiculturalism is a both/and proposition.

### 3. IN SEARCH OF AN OT THEOLOGY OF MULTICULTURALISM

In light of the necessity for a theology of multiculturalism a number of assumptions need to be clarified that will provide a framework for the ensuing discussion. First of all, as stated above, the search is for a theology of multiculturalism that will validate and celebrate the richness of unity in diversity. Secondly, a tenable theology of multiculturalism will be Theocentric in nature (God's perspective), Trinitarian in its scope (encompassing the work of the three Persons of the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit and their involvement in redemptive history), and scriptural in its focus (the Bible is the word of God and the word of man ie. God spoke in culturally appropriate means [VanGemeran 1988:37]). Though much of what has been stated above relates directly to a *theology of multiculturalism* in the broadest sense this paper is limited to the arena of the Old Testament. It is impossible to sever the Old Testament from the New Testament especially when one considers the eschatological nature of the development of a theology of multiculturalism, however the primary focus in this research paper is limited to a study of the Old Testament.

This section will begin with the assertion that an OT theology of multiculturalism is eschatological in nature. Secondly, the discussion will push forward to be framed by the fact that God willed, advanced and celebrated diversity with an exploration of theological themes related to each of those dimensions as they unfold in redemptive history. Figure 1 below is a diagrammatic presentation of the diachronic perspective of human history with themes of "historical" and "historic," "grace" and "covenant," "unity" and "diversity."

**Figure 1 – Diachronic Perspective of Human History**



### 3.1 The Eschatological Nature of an OT Theology of Multiculturalism

The end of human history portrayed within the last chapters of the book of Revelation captivates the reader with a portrait of the people of God streaming into the city of God (Rev. 21-22). This remarkable passage presents the “people of God”<sup>xvi[16]</sup> as consisting of the “nations” (*ethnos*). This people of God thus reigns/serves for ever and ever “prepared as a bride, beautifully dressed for her husband” (Rev. 21:2; cf. Rev. 7:9-17). The nations are arrayed in royal majesty; ie. clothed in unity as redeemed humanity replete in the splendor of their ethnic diversities.<sup>xvii[17]</sup> This portrait of human experience conveys the goal of human history and not necessarily the end. Rather it marks a new beginning. It basks in a time of celebration regarding human diversity and provides the foundation for a strong affirmation of multiculturalism. There was also a beginning, and that beginning is in accord with the final goal. Diversity is inherent within the created order. Human culture was established and with it multiculturalism was affirmed, even celebrated, at the dawn of the created order.

Diversity is repeatedly embodied and affirmed in the first chapters of the book of Genesis (1-2) which convey the beginning of human history. Redemptive history begins with the creation of all things by Elohim/Yahweh. In between lies the narrative of the fall of mankind and God’s work to redeem all things. In the period between the beginning and the “new beginning” God advanced human culture and multiculturalism always affirming diversity. Diversity, culture and multiculturalism are part of the beginning, part of the goal to which history is moving and part of the celebrated new beginning. In this sense, culture and multiculturalism are eschatological in nature.

The term, eschatology, has had a rich and varied usage since it was first coined in the nineteenth century. Narrowly, the term has been most frequently used to connote the end of the time and the beginning of a new era - a study of the last things, ie. “of the end of

time” (Dumbrell 1994:9). In its broader sense it is used to convey “the goal of history toward which the Bible moves and of Biblical factors and events bearing on that goal” (Dumbrell 1994:9; cf. Childs 1986:48; VanGemeren 1988:31-34). It could be stated that Biblical eschatology, has a definite end in view, as intimated in the narrower usage of the term, however not merely what it literally implies (the end of time), but rather the end of the radical wrongness of the created order of things. Donald E. Gowan points out that,

the OT does not speak of the end of the world, of time, or of history. It promises the end of sin (Jer. 33:8), of war (Mic. 4:3), of human infirmity (Is. 33:5-6a), of hunger (Ezek.36:30), of killing or harming of any living thing (Is. 11:9a)...These texts promise transformation as the radical victory over evil. To the challenge that has been raised concerning the appropriateness of calling the OT hope "eschatology," asking "end of what?".... The answer is: "the end of evil." (1986:2)

The formulation of a theology of multiculturalism will entail maintaining a balance of both the narrow and broader usages of the term. Eschatology is indeed a study of the end, the end of evil, and it is the study of the unfolding goal of both human and creation history which the Bible narrates and to which it moves.

Attention must now be turned to the development of an OT theology of multiculturalism. It must be stated that the following framework is by no means exhaustive. It is merely an attempt to identify and briefly examine the major themes that provide the substantive foundation of the beginnings of an OT theology of multiculturalism. This paper will address these themes under three major headings which will in turn be subdivided further for the sake of clarity. The theological themes can be expressed as the work of God in creation, in the calling forth of a people of God, in God’s plan for the nations, and in the anticipated establishment of a new creation. Each of which is eschatological in focus as shown in Figure 2 below:

**Figure 2 – Unity with Diversity in Eschatology**

<b>UNITY</b>	<b>DIVERSITY</b>
-”For from Him and through Him and to Him... -“He appeared in a body...	-Are all things. To Him be the glory forever” (Ro 11:36) -Was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory” (1Ti 3:16)
Tree/river of life	For all who partake (Re 22:1,2,19)
Feast of the Lamb	For all who take part (Re 19)
Book of life	For all who believe (Re 20:15; 11:27)
King of kings, Lord of lords	Many subjects (Re 19:16)
New heaven	Many kindred, tongues, nations (Re 21)
Perfect communion	Perfect union of the saints of all ages (Re 21)
Glorious worship	many worshipers: angels and believers (Re 21-22)

3.2 Diversity, Ethnicity and Multiculturalism: Willed By God in the Beginning  
God is a God of diversity. This diversity is exhibited clearly within the created order and is communicated to humanity through both the content and form<sup>xviii[18]</sup> of the literary portrayal conveyed in Genesis chapters 1 and 2. The overall emphasis communicated in the midst of the Biblical account of creation is harmony and a resounding message of order in the midst of rich diversity. (Dumbrell 1994; VanGemeran 1988). And both of these aspects are enthusiastically celebrated (cf. Job 38:7; Psalms 8 and 136).

Genesis is a book of beginnings.<sup>xix[19]</sup> In the midst of two relatively short narrative accounts, Genesis 1:1 - 2:4a and Genesis 2:4b - 26,<sup>xx[20]</sup> a wealth of information about creation, or the beginnings, is conveyed. The God of the Israelites is revealed as both Elohim and Yahweh. He is both the Creator and the Redeemer of all mankind (cf. below). He is the one who is transcendent and separate from His creation (first narrative) and He is the one whose presence is immanent within creation. He is the King who creates with the power of a spoken word and rules over His creation with fidelity, wisdom and power. He is also the potter, the gardener and the builder who shapes mankind from the dust, plants a garden and builds a woman with His hands in an intimate manner (VanGemeran 1988:42).

All of this is communicated through a literary dynamic (linguistic and schematic) conveying symmetry and dissonance. There exists within creation a rich diversity, a variety of natural forms and creatures, as well as an explosion of color that all coheres with incredible unity and balance (cf. Dumbrell 1994:15-23; VanGemeran 1988:42-51; Wenham 1987:1-90).

The primary focus of the creation narratives are to convey a theocentric perspective; God is at work and He is bringing about His will. However, it could also be defended that the focus of the creation narratives are anthropocentric in nature (VanGemeran 1988:42, 50-51). First, and most obvious, is the fact that God's creative work is revealed to mankind so that mankind may know Elohim/Yahweh and His purposes in creation. Second, the creation narratives reveal an anthropocentric focus in that the locus is upon mankind as the only creation that bears the image of God and as such is a priest/ruler beginning in Eden and pushing forward from there<sup>xxi[21]</sup> (Genesis 1:26-27; Exodus 19:5-6; cf. Dumbrell 1994:19). Thirdly, and of the utmost importance regarding the purpose of this paper, is the fact that the creation narratives in Genesis are a preamble to redemptive history and therefore eschatological; they point toward a goal of history. This last point warrants explanation.

Creation is good, even very good, but not perfect (1:31a). There is a Sabbath rest to be entered into (Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 20:11; Hebrews 4:1-16). What will mankind do in relation to the command of God (2:15-17), how will mankind relate to their environment, etc. There are many open-ended matters and questions to be addressed. There is a heightened sense of drama in the narrative focus that begs to be pushed forward not merely in order to find out what happened (the Genesis revelation is given to the nation of Israel in the midst of the Exodus event [cf. Childs 1979:109ff.]), but rather to provide a

world view to interpret their experience in the midst of a fallen world. Israel would need to know the answers to matters such as who is this God who revealed Himself to them, what are His purposes in their election, in the Exodus, what is the goal to which He is pushing them and, further, related matters such as who are these nations/peoples around us, what is our relationship to them, why are we different, etc. The book of Genesis, especially the first two narratives, would enable the Israelites to put life into perspective; both individual and communal, as well as national and intra-national dimensions of life.

Creation as a preamble to redemptive history contains in seed form issues that relate to a theology of multiculturalism in an unfolding eschatological format. These can be identified as follows:

- The diversity displayed in creation reveals the character of the Creator. This diversity is rich and to be celebrated.
- From the beginning, even before the fall, God envisioned cultural diversity. The mandate given to mankind envisioned the adaptation of mankind to the diverse environmental conditions that mankind found themselves in, even in a pre-fall context. Further, man was uniquely equipped to develop culturally and fulfill that calling to be a ruler/priest. Hence, the rise of culture and cultural diversity; multiculturalism.
- The cultural mandate also envisioned the adaptation of mankind to the diverse tasks (the mandate to work is a pre-fall condition [cf. Eccl. 9:6-9]) embodied within the created order.
- The cultural mandate envisioned the reproduction and movement of mankind forward to subdue all of creation (from Eden to the ends of the earth) and God maintained that constant centrifugal pressure upon mankind (cf. Gen 11:1-9; Anderson 1977).
- It is not the case that ethnicity and ethnic pluralism are the result of human sinfulness.<sup>xxii[22]</sup>

Each of the above points when taken individually lacks direction in the pursuit of a foundation of an OT theology of multiculturalism, but when taken collectively and eschatologically they form a powerful argument. The beginnings of life and history envision a both/and scenario; God is both the author of unity and diversity and all that God creates, including mankind, bears that mark. The foundations of culture, ethnicity and multiculturalism are inherent within the created order. It is the rise of sin that begins to distort and manipulate the delicate balance within the created order and leads to distortions (ex. centripetal tendencies, monoculturalism and ethnocentrism).

Before moving forward to examine the themes advanced within the history of redemption a few comments must be made regarding the influences of sin upon the created order. Mankind is driven from the “sanctuary” of the garden because of his revolution against the Creator God. Paradise is lost, the sanctuary wherein man functioned as a priest/king is prohibited, and the overarching condition is one of alienation. The harmony, balance and order of creation have been placed in jeopardy.<sup>xxiii[23]</sup> Sin and all that surrounds it causes incredible “alienation, sickness, death, meaninglessness, oppression, chaos and

destructive forces” (VanGemeran 1988:68). One could state that man in his quest for liberation from the rule of God caused the negative effects experienced at every turn. Mankind persisted in that drive for liberation from the will of God and continued to experience the ill effects and consequences of that orientation (cf. Anderson 1977). The parallel between the constant desire of mankind for liberation and the strong tendency for liberation within the ideological frameworks of critical multiculturalism and some contemporary theologies cannot be ignored (cf. Childs 1985:49). Mankind and all that surrounds him is tainted by sin. Including the cultural manifestations that he propagates.<sup>xxiv[24]</sup>

In spite of the far reaching effects of sin the eschatological focus is upon a renewed order; a new sanctuary, a new mankind and a new holiness. A new beginning is anticipated. One that far surpasses the first beginning because in the new order the diversity inherent within the creation has come to fruition. Sin, evil and all of its consequences have been eradicated, a diversity of ethnicity and renewed cultures characterizes mankind and a new heaven along with a new earth provide rest for the people of God (Revelation 21 and 22).

### 3.3 Diversity, Ethnicity and Multiculturalism: Advanced By God in the History of Redemption

In this section attention is focused upon the will of God to advance the diversity inherent within creation in the unfolding history of redemption. The unfatigued desire displayed by humankind to liberate itself from the will and purposes of God are counteracted by God’s desire to draw a people to Himself. He creates a people, His *segullah* (treasured possession) to be a “holy nation” and a “royal priesthood” consisting of redeemed humanity from all nations (Exodus 19:2-6).

#### A. The Concept of the People of God

At the apex of humanity’s rebellion against God He calls forth a nation (Genesis 11:1-9/12:1-3). This nation, covenanted to Yahweh, will be the instrument of God to overcome the curse of sin upon humanity. What is initiated with a small beginning in Abraham flourishes to become a mighty nation of priest/kings that will mediate blessing to the nations (through Abraham the nations of the earth will bless themselves [cf. Dumbrell 1994:34]). From the beginning God’s plan included the nations and He validates that plan in Abraham and then Israel.

The discussion begins with an overarching understanding of the rebellion of the nations against their Creator. VanGemeran states,

Genesis 2:4-11:26 perpetually witnesses to human hostility against the Creator and to God's response in judgement and in grace. This period highlights the progression of man's alienation from God and the continuity of God's rule in grace, forbearance and resolve....The fidelity of God in the face of the reality of evil is the ground for hope that this world will be changed into a more glorious world (1988:69).

The nations in rebellion against the Creator incur His hand of judgement upon them. Yet,

this is not the unalterable plight of the nations. They have hope in "the fidelity of God" which moves us forward to Genesis 12:1-3 which speaks of promise and blessing.

God's purpose is succinct and clear. The fivefold emphasis on curse in Genesis 3:1-11:26 (3:14,17; 4:11; 5:29; 9:25) is to be overcome through the call of Abraham and his descendants. It is no coincidence that there is a five-fold emphasis on blessing in Genesis 12:1-3. Dumbrell states, "In short, the call of Abraham redresses the curse incurred by the fall. Human alienation, the flight from God, and the bondage of slavery which the curse of chapters 3-11 envisages are all potentially reversed in 12:1-3" (1988:25).

Yahweh is in the process of restoring all things in heaven and on earth and turning them to His creative purposes and Abraham, and then Israel, are the human agents by which this restoration will be accomplished. Dumbrell states,

In Genesis 12:2a God blesses Abram and here the notion of blessing is bound up with nationhood and fame. As a result Abram is thus to be the embodiment of blessing, the example of what blessing should be (2b). God will bless those who rightly recognize the source of Abram's blessing (3a), and then finally in 12:3b Abram becomes the mediator of blessing for mankind (1984:67-68).

This eschatological nation will become a nation of priest/kings and will accomplish the will of God to liberate humanity from themselves and bring them into God's rest/sanctuary. Called forth from the nations, in accord with the love of Yahweh, Abraham becomes a counter-cultural nation to mediate blessing to the nations. In Abraham a nation is envisioned. A nation that will become a nucleus that will impact all the peoples of the earth. That nation comes to fruition through the redemption from slavery in Egypt and the ensuing covenant Yahweh established with them. The eschatological plan of Yahweh moves forward.

The inter-relationship of Genesis 12:1-3 and Exodus 19:3-6 is quite clear. Kaiser writes,

The author of Exodus connected the patriarchs and the Exodus periods directly; for him the Sinaitic covenant was theologically and historically a continuation of the Abrahamic promise. Rather than treating Egypt and Sinai as an interruption to the previous promises, their needs became a new opportunity for another manifestation of God's divine loyalty to His oft-repeated promise (1978:101).

## B. The Judgment of God Against the Nations

Dumbrell (1984:87) discusses at length the linguistic uniqueness of the use of the term "nation" (*gy*) and its intentional usage by the author to draw attention to the Abrahamic promises (cf. Murphy 1977). He states, "we cannot miss the very clear reference to Gen 12:2 offered by the use of *gy*,<sup>xxv[25]</sup> nor the fact that Sinai (not only) in a very obvious sense marks an advance in the Abrahamic promises but now particularizes them to operate throughout Israel." It is clear that the Sinaitic covenant builds upon the promises contained within the Abrahamic covenant as outlined in Genesis 12:1-3. The linguistic affinity is further developed in considering the terms, "kingdom of priests" and a "holy nation." The focus on the two terms, "kingdom of priests" (*mamleket-khanm*) and a "holy



nation" (*gy qas*), relates to that of function. According to Dumbrell, the phrases are best taken as parallels which,

emphasize function rather than institution and signify not Israel's later priesthood, but the typical priestly role in an ancient society. These two parallel phrases elaborate the notion of Israel as God's 'own possession.' Israel's relationship to the world is likened to that of a priest in an ancient society, who was called to serve the society by differentiating himself from it (1988:35).

Oh, the raging of the many nations-  
they rage like the raging sea!  
Oh, the uproar of the peoples-  
they roar like the roaring of great waters!  
Although the peoples roar like the roar of surging waters,  
when He rebukes them they flee far away,  
driven before the wind like chaff on the hills,  
like tumbleweed before a gale.  
In the evening, sudden terror!  
Before the morning, they are gone!  
This is the portion of those who loot us,  
the lot of those who plunder us. (Isaiah 17:12-14)

Yahweh reigns from His Temple on Mount Zion and, because of His presence there, promises Divine protection to the people of God. It is there, in Zion, that the nations assemble to shake their ugly and rebellious fist in the face of the Ruler of the cosmos as they converge in conquest over His people. It is there that a battle ensues against the nations, a battle of cosmic proportions (cf. Anderson 1987).

### C. The Nations Experiencing the Blessings of God

The nations stand under judgment, but they also find blessing through the seed of Abraham. The Scriptures also unfold the numerous situations where the nations have humbled themselves before God and have escaped eschatological judgment. They have "blessed themselves" (Genesis 12:3) in recognizing the revelation of God to Israel. Israel as the people of God provide sanctuary for individuals such as Ruth, the widow at Zarephath (I Kings 17), Ittai the Gittite, Uriah the Hittite, etc (cf. Murphy 1977:75). Murphy highlights that foreigners were welcome in Israel and had rights as resident aliens. They were protected by the law which made concessions for them due to their situation (Murphy 1977:75). Interestingly enough, they were not forced to assimilate, but rather their status as distinct nationalities was maintained creating a limited form of multicultural expression in ancient Israelite society.

Another dimension regarding the blessings of the nations are the texts that reveal how blessing comes to the nations as they respond to God's message of repentance proclaimed through the prophetic movement. For example, in the book of Jonah the judgment of God is deterred when repentance takes place (Jonah 3:1-10). The Word of God reaps a harvest as it impacts the nation of Ninevah and God's redemptive purposes are

highlighted. The history of redemption is explicit in its portrayal of the nations experiencing blessing as they respond to the grace of God extended through His people who mediate blessing to the nations (ex. Egypt as sanctuary [Genesis 46-50]; Jerusalem as a sanctuary for the nations that stream to it [Queen of Sheba, I Kings 10]).

Subsequently, there existed within the ANE a richness of cultural diversity that conveyed mutual blessing in the arena of the nations. Such blessing was conveyed through aspects like extensive trade, where cultural interaction took place, and through the sharing of traditions such as the wisdom traditions. The deposits of the OT wisdom tradition found in Job, Proverbs, Psalms and other areas of the OT reveal extensive and rich interaction and borrowing. Let us briefly examine the varying wisdom traditions and the rich interaction that extended across the grain of the nations.

Gerhard von Rad summarizes this phenomena of Wisdom by stating, "Israel understood 'wisdom' as a practical knowledge of the laws of life and of the world, based upon experience" (1962:418). This practical experience, which Israel shared in common with the nations, allowed mankind to understand events in their surroundings and relate to them properly. However, as von Rad further points out, "many of the most elementary experiences appeared quite differently to her (Israel), especially because she set them in a quite specific spiritual and religious context of understanding" (1972:5). Israel lived in a cultural dynamic whereby she found herself relating culturally to Yahweh, as she built upon the foundations of Yahweh's creatorship, and within the created order as she proceeded to examine and relate to the world of experience where she found herself residing.<sup>xxvi[26]</sup>

Man's function within the world, which he has perceived to be "orderly," allows him the freedom to integrate and function within the realm and sphere of life. "Such knowledge," von Rad concludes, "does not accrue to an individual, nor even to a generation. It acquires its status and its binding claim only where it appears as the common possession of a nation or of a broad stratum within a nation" (1972:3). Thus is borne a tradition, or "phenomenon," of Wisdom that is experienced by every nation. Each nation then devotes itself to the preservation and propagation of these accumulated experiential traditions that allows its members to function in an optimum manner in the realm of life. In remarking on the literary preservation of these experiences in the form of sentence-type proverbs, von Rad comments, "This, then, is one of the most elementary activities of the human mind, with the practical aim of averting harm and impairment of life from man" (1972:4). It is a cultural phenomena that is evident in all cultural expressions.<sup>xxvii[27]</sup>

The wisdom tradition within Israel and among the nations reveals clearly the cultural dynamic inherent within the created order. Mankind is equipped to develop culture, and that culture bears witness to the interchange between mankind and their environment and between mankind and mankind. The wisdom tradition and the culture of Israel was enriched as she interacted with her neighbors who were also able to relate culturally to their surroundings. Significant borrowing is evident with the era that began with David and flourished with Solomon (cf. Scott 1970).

In summary form the following can be stated as these points relate to the development of an OT theology of multiculturalism:

- Abraham is called out from among the diversity of the nations to bring redemption to the nations as a priest/king (cf. Genesis 12ff) and, in continuity, Israel is called out from
- among the nations to bring redemption to the nations as a nation of priest/kings (cf. Exodus 19:1-6 and I Peter 2:9-10).
- The goal of the Abrahamic and Sinaitic covenants is to create a counter-culture in the midst of Israel. Israel is to bask in their ethnicity and be shaped by revelation from God.
- The curse upon mankind is to be overcome through the blessing extended to Abraham and through him to the nation of Israel. In Abraham and Israel the nations will bless themselves.
- The diversity and ethnicity of human culture does not bring the judgment of God upon it. Rather, the tendency of human culture to oppose God and liberate itself from God's will brings the judgment of God upon itself.
- The fact that the nations are portrayed negatively at times within the Scriptures does not mean that the diversity of the nations and ethnicity is abhorrent to God. Rather the nations, including Israel as a national identity, are portrayed negatively when they commit what is contrary to the will of God and when they exalt themselves and stand opposed to the purposes of God for creation and in redemption.
- The redemptive history unfolded within the Scriptures conveys an attention to the salvation of, and blessing bestowed upon, the nations as the nations find sanctuary in the midst of Israel while maintaining their ethnic identities and as they respond to the grace of God through interaction with Israel.
- The nations blessed one another through the interaction of cultures (most notably through the interaction of wisdom traditions). This mutual dynamic of interaction enriched Israel as the people of God and influenced the nations for righteousness.

Israel existed within the table of the nations with the distinct purpose of mediating blessing to the nations. As a nation of priestly/kings, who were called the people of Yahweh, she existed to both worship the Lord and become His avenue of redemption for the nations. God was calling forth a people unto Himself that would reflect His creation purposes, and that vision included the nations. The cultural diversity that existed within the Ancient Near East was the direct result of the diversity contained within creation as it flourished in the midst of many ethnic entities. This cultural diversity contributed to the richness of life in the ANE and the interchange of cultures furthered that dimension. The cultural diversity inherent within the area bore witness to God's purposes for mankind as they fulfilled the mandate proclaimed to them. In this sense, the foundations of an OT theology of multiculturalism are unfolded.

#### 3.4 Diversity, Ethnicity and Multiculturalism: Celebrated By God in the New Beginning

The scope of this paper is limited to the OT. However, the development of a theology of multiculturalism points to a new order and a new beginning as intimated in earlier discussions. The OT bears witness to an eschatological picture that validates and celebrates the rich diversity as displayed among the nations. This witness is furthered within the NT context. There are two points that need to be highlighted that will support the formulation of an OT theology of multiculturalism. The first is in regard to the fulfillment of Israel's calling to mediate blessing to the nations. The second revolves around the eschatological picture portrayed within the OT that bears witness to an eschatological influx of the nations.

The overarching emphasis within the OT is that Israel did not fulfill her calling as the mediator of blessing to the nations. She failed to be a "kingdom of priests" (*mamleket-khanm*) and a "holy nation" (*gy qas*). Rather, as the Scriptures unfold, she falls under the very eschatological judgment pronounced against the enemies of God. Yahweh's people become alienated from God and incur the hand of God in judgment, "you are not my people, and I am not your God" (Hosea 1:9). However, the OT Scriptures do continue to extend hope and picture an avenue in which Israel will be renewed and will fulfill her calling which will result in the salvation of the nations (cf. Dumbrell 1994:76-78).

Most notably this is communicated through the prophet Isaiah in at least three ways. First of all, Isaiah confirms the calling of Israel to mediate blessing to the nations (Isaiah 2:1-5) and further, that the nations stand under both the tension of eschatological promise (Isaiah 2:3) and judgment (Isaiah 13-21; 24-27). Second of all, that in order to fulfill her calling Israel will be renewed through suffering (Isaiah 40ff.). Finally, that the agent of renewal in Israel will be Yahweh Himself as He is with them (Isaiah 7, 9, 11, 43), as he suffers in their midst and takes their iniquities, and the iniquities of the nations, upon Himself (Songs of the Suffering Servant, cf. Isaiah 42ff.).<sup>xxviii[28]</sup> Yahweh is the redeemer of all the nations and that picture is validated and celebrated in the closing chapters of Isaiah's prophetic proclamation (Isaiah 66). All nations, arrayed in the splendor of their cultural diversity and ethnic clothing, will share in the people of God (Isaiah 66:21) and the enduring salvation that comes from God (Isaiah 66:22). This is the eschatological picture that is resounded within the prophetic corpus, unfolded in the NT and finally encapsulated in Revelation (the *nations* will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it..... The glory and honor of the *nations* will be brought into it. Rev. 21:24, 26).

The following points become clear,

- God remains committed to the development of a *people of God* that consists of the redeemed of Israel and the redeemed of the nations.
- It is the fidelity of God that ensures the fulfillment of the eschatological goal of the history of redemption even in the midst of the continued attempts of mankind (Israel and the nations) to be liberated from His plan and will.
- Israel and the nations live in the tension of eschatological hope and eschatological judgment. It is a remnant from both that will endure and experience salvation.

- The completed picture of the eschatological salvation of the people of God is characterized by an eschatological multiculturalism where the nations are arrayed in the splendor of their diversity. It is a both/and picture. There exists a profound unity of calling and purpose among the people of God, but the people of God are not portrayed as a monocultural entity.

Thus ends the survey of the major themes unfolded within an OT theology of multiculturalism. The ensuing thoughts will attempt to bear light on a number of strains that focus upon the search for a theology of multiculturalism that is relevant both to the Scriptural data as well as to a contemporary setting.

#### 4. THE RELEVANCE OF AN OT THEOLOGY OF MULTICULTURALISM ON THE CONTEMPORARY MULTICULTURAL DISCOURSE

In this section an attempt is made to bring together a number of relevant points that result from the survey regarding the multicultural debate and Scriptural principles that infringe upon the discussion. The comments are brief and submitted in order to stimulate thinking as the Church/Christians grapple with issues related to multiculturalism in a contemporary setting.

First of all, the multicultural debate finds validity within the Scriptures; it is validated and celebrated. The forces within the created order push diversity forward as a key component of reality. Beyond that dimension there are centrifugal forces at work that drive mankind into the cultivation of cultural diversity. Coherence and unity bear on the discussion in that varied nations, in the richness of their ethnicity, are united as the people of God fulfilling God's redemptive goal. It is as the people of God, arrayed in diversity, that multiculturalism finds validity. Resulting from this point, it must be underscored that monoculturalism is an aberrant view of reality and finds no support in the Scriptures. However, critical and difference multiculturalism also distort the nature of reality and find little support within the Scriptures for their respective agendas. Critical multiculturalism propagates that attempt of mankind to seek liberation against God's will and purposes. Difference multiculturalism retreats into a form of distorted monoculturalism that retreats into meaninglessness. Both lack a valid epistemological framework from which to create discourse (cf. Devine 1996).

A number of practical points must be underscored. Christians have inherited a valid epistemological framework (contra those most heavily involved in the multiculturalism discourse and those that espouse theological formulation from an anthropocentric perspective), should be appreciative of the diversity inherent within creation and must be committed to the cultivation of multicultural discourse as an expression of the will of God. Therefore, Christians should find themselves at the forefront of the debate (ex. Wan 1995) and should find themselves cultivating a multicultural expression of Christianity (ex. Escobar 1995). The converse, Christians must reject monocultural expressions of Christianity and the ensuing baggage that results from that aberrant view of the created order.

Secondly, the multicultural ideals undergirded by the Scriptures are eschatological in

nature. This should not however, lead to a laxity in the cultivation of that ideal. The emphasis within the Scriptures is one of realized eschatology, the reflection of the eschatological goal in the present context. This point, once again, underscores the practical points just mentioned above. However, it pushes beyond that to a commitment to be agents of restoration in order to mediate blessing to the nations. This undergirds the missionary call to both a ministry of proclamation and of action (cf. Bosch 1991:368ff.). A mission paradigm entails a commitment to be the people of God, a nation of priest/kings, ie. a "kingdom of priests" (*mamleket-khanm*) and a "holy nation" (*gy qas*) (cf. I Peter 2:9-10). The Church/Christians must be concerned with issues of character and issues of mediation. The practical dimensions of this are simple yet profound; it entails ministry at the margins in order to mediate blessing to those casualties of the monocultural/multicultural debate especially in the midst of a North American context (cf. Copeland 1995; Feagie and Feagan 1993; Lee and Rice 1991; Lee 1995; World Vision 1998).

Finally, and a point that has already been underscored numerous times, the cultural diversity and resultant ethnicity is to be celebrated as God celebrates it. The interaction between cultures is willed, advanced and celebrated by God as is the cultural dynamic between God and mankind (Wan 1994). The history of redemption and the goal envisioned is a new order based upon the order, harmony and dynamic of balanced unity/diversity. It is a both/and proposition. The practical applications are numerous and provocative. Most challenging is the multicultural nature of God's people and the visible expressions of fellowship and worship in local communities.<sup>xxix[29]</sup>

The cultivation of a theology of multiculturalism cannot be restricted to an OT context. However, it is clear that there exists a clear strain of continuity between OT and NT that validates, advances and celebrates multiculturalism (ex. the theological motifs of Incarnation, universalism and mission).<sup>xxx[30]</sup>

## 5. CONCLUSION

This paper began with an examination of the relevant terms and the implications of those terms as they necessarily bear upon an unfolding OT theology of multiculturalism. Then, two relevant issues were discussed that were crucial in gaining insight on the contemporary debate surrounding multiculturalism (monoculturalism verses multiculturalism and the significance of a valid epistemological framework in the multiculturalism dialogue). Next, the Scriptures were examined to reveal the foundations of an OT theology of multiculturalism that extend direction in exploring multiculturalism. This theological framework clearly unfolded to divulge that God willed, advanced and celebrated diversity which culminates in rich strains of diverse human culture, ethnicity and multiculturalism. Finally, several points were highlighted that can guide us in the discourse regarding the discourse surrounding the issue of multiculturalism.

*“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”<sup>xxxi[31]</sup>*

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## ENDNOTES

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<sup>i[1]</sup>Quoted in Grunlan and Mayers (1988:39).

<sup>ii[2]</sup>Peter Caws as quoted in Goldberg (1994:7).

<sup>iii[3]</sup>Herein exists a major point of contention between anthropologists and multiculturalists who differ on the nature of culture and the extent of being an agent in the process of cultural transformation (Turner 1994:408).

<sup>iv[4]</sup>Cf. Hollinger (1995) for a solid critique of this dimension of difference multiculturalism that connotes political correctness.

<sup>v[5]</sup>Note the relationship and similar patterns of thought between the interdisciplinary approach of Goldberg (from a sociological perspective) and the theology of multiculturalism espoused by Tracy (cf. below).

<sup>vi[6]</sup>i.e. Contextualization is an essential component of the science of theology.

<sup>vii[7]</sup>Tracy correlates these three aspects with the function of the "academy, the church and the cultural heritage or movement" respectively (1977:93).

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- viii<sup>[8]</sup> Tracy is well aware of the charge that this method would result in reductionism, ie. that “Christian theology....will be reduced to a disparate series of particularist cultural expressions....” (1977:93). He counters this charge, unconvincingly in my opinion, that each ethnic formulation would grapple with human experiences that we have in common, cultivate positive new theologies and propagate culturally transcendent Christian principles (1977:93ff). It is clear that he views the scriptures as a series of theologizing ie. positive “ethnic theologies.”
- ix<sup>[9]</sup> Cf. Dawe and Carman (*Christian faith in a religiously plural world*, 1978) as a compendium of Tracy’s ethnic theologizing matured into concrete thought.
- x<sup>[10]</sup> Cf. World Vision, *Context* (1998) for a breakdown of the presence and locations of visible ethnic groups in Canada.
- xi<sup>[11]</sup> It can clearly be discerned that the section on monoculturalism and multiculturalism above has been unfolded in such a manner that the adversary outlines the characteristics of each ideology.
- xii<sup>[12]</sup> Quoted by Devine (1996:53).
- xiii<sup>[13]</sup> Consider the irony that a multiculturalist could criticize a eurocentric monoculturalism if relativism is the overarching foundation of multiculturalism.
- xiv<sup>[14]</sup> Anderson is, I believe, unduly critical of Jacques Ellul and has missed the point that Ellul is seeking to make (cf. Ellul 1970; 1986).
- xv<sup>[15]</sup> It is interesting to note that both multicultural and monocultural contemporary ideologies are based in *real politik* (power politics).
- xvi<sup>[16]</sup> Cf. Murphy (1977) for the significance of the phrase “people of God.”
- xvii<sup>[17]</sup> This is their “glory and honor” (Rev. 21:26).
- xviii<sup>[18]</sup> Cf. Ryken and Longman (1993:Part I) and Dillard and Longman (1994:26-36) for the ramifications of a literary approach to the Scriptures.
- xix<sup>[19]</sup> Cf. Sailhammer (1993:108-20) and Dumbrell (1988) for a succinct literary analysis of Genesis that balances form and content.
- xx<sup>[20]</sup> For a comprehensive treatment of the dynamic of the two narratives cf. VanGemeren (1988:42ff.) and Wenham (1987:1ff.).
- xxi<sup>[21]</sup> Cf. Anderson (1977:64, 68) for a discussion of the dispersion/centrifugal motif inherent within mankind’s calling and mankind’s struggle against that calling.
- xxii<sup>[22]</sup> Cf. Anderson (1977:63-64).
- xxiii<sup>[23]</sup> Cf. Dumbrell’s intriguing discussion regarding entropy within the created order (1994:21ff.).
- xxiv<sup>[24]</sup> Cf. VanGemeren (1990:19ff.) For a thorough discussion of the effects of sin on human culture in the Ancient Near East.
- xxv<sup>[25]</sup> Cf. the research of Murphy regarding the use of *gy* in the Old testament (1977).
- xxvi<sup>[26]</sup> Cf. the earlier discussion on “Culture” and the varied cultural dynamics that E. Wan highlighted (Wan 1994:1ff.).
- xxvii<sup>[27]</sup> R. B. Y. Scott (1970:29) comments, A wisdom tradition seems to have had at least six sources: (a) the accumulated folk wisdom of a coherent traditional culture, based on the observation and evaluation of human experiences and expressed in brief common sayings; (b) the educational process in the home and later in schools, where admonition is added to observation; © the emergence of specially gifted counselors whose advice was sought by commoners and kings; (d) the intellectual curiosity and moral concern of

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individuals engaged in a search for knowledge of the physical environment, and for understanding of a divine order encompassing human existence; (e) the institutionalizing of wisdom through a scribal profession associated with temples and royal courts; and (f) as a later development, the adaptation of oral and literary wisdom forms such as proverbs, poems, hymns, debates, and tales for the purposes of conventional religious expression and instruction.

<sup>xxviii</sup>[28] The NT clearly defines Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of Israel in her calling to worship God as He commands and to mediate blessing to the nations. He is the priest/king, the New Israel (cf. Dumbrell 1994:178; 275-76).

<sup>xxix</sup>[29] Cf. The numerous provocative essays in Wan 1995, especially chapters 3, 6, 8, 13 and 14. Also, Shawn 1995.

<sup>xxx</sup>[30] Cf. the correlative paper by Felix Chung that explores a theology of multiculturalism from a NT perspective.

<sup>xxxi</sup>[31] Revelation 4:11

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