A Biblical Theology of Multi-Ethnicity and Multi-Culturality
Diversity in Unity and God's Ultimate Purpose for Humanity

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1. INTRODUCTION

This paper is meant to be complementary to the other paper – "An OT Theology of Multiculturalism" (Wan & Konieczny 2004). To this end, we wish to clarify three points regarding terminology that will be discussed with some of the details within the section on definition of terms and in the various parts of this paper.

First, the writers do not attempt to provide a theological framework for the validation of multiculturalism but for the validation of multi-culturality that is expressed in God's people as a constituent of society. Second, the writers assume that there is an inseparable relationship between multi-ethnicity and multi-culturality which must be treated together. Third, and contrary to the understanding of the paper "An OT Theology

of Multiculturalism," the writers assume that God's people are not only eschatological but also historic in nature.

The theme of this paper is assumed to be relevant for three broad reasons that impinge on our theological reflection. First, "ethnicity affects the structure and the spread of congregations and denominations in every land" (McGavran 1979, 12). Second, the concept of ethnicity can be abused and used for justifying church growth and the homogeneous unity principle (McGavran 1979, 13). Third, the understanding of ethnicity and multi-culturality is relevant because all cultures share deep-rooted beliefs that attempt to solve the questions that determine human existence and its purpose (Wright 1992, 123). This implies that every ethnic group and every culture has a way of understanding the world, a certain way of relating to it based on their worldview. Yet as worldviews have to do with questions of ultimate realities they are profoundly theological (Wright 1992, 122) even though particular cultures may not be aware of it.

Since conversion requires a radical shift of worldview (Wright 1992, 125), it is important to provide a theological framework of the New Testament theology about multi-ethnicity and multi-culturality by employing a-multi-disciplinary approach. The purpose of this paper is report our reflections on "multi-ethnicity" and "multi-culturality" in an attempt to provide a theological framework for "multi-ethnicity and multi-culturality" using a multidisciplinary approach.

Our guiding research question is: what is the ultimate purpose of man as created by God and of history under God's control? The New Testament, having the OT as a background, does have an answer for this basic question of mankind.[i][1] We proceed with the conviction that a theology of multi-ethnicity and multi-culturality may be outlined from the perspective of three broad biblical concepts: God's being, man's being, and God's Kingdom.

1.1 Definition of Terms

Multiculturalism and Multi-culturality
Is there a difference between these two terms? Yes, there is. Multiculturalism points to an ideological agenda within the postmodern philosophical epistemology in its various forms described by Wan & Konieczny (2004, 2-4). Multi-culturality describes a social reality that, as Schreiter has expressed, marks our current global world (Schreiter1997, ix). In simple terms it means that within the boundaries of one nation and common social order and language, its citizens proceed from a variety of cultural backgrounds marked by the nations from which they originated. In this sense multi-culturality and multi-ethnicity must be held together as complementary to better understand and cope with cultural diversity in a given society. At the end of this paper it is shown that God's people are a multicultural and multiethnic society whose diversity becomes a perfect harmonious unity in Christ.

Multi-ethnicity
As used in this paper, multi-ethnicity describes the ethnic plurality of a nation, or a given society. A nation may be multi-ethnic in that it is "home to citizens drawn from a wide

variety of geographical locales and ethnic origins" (Hull 1998, 65) such as the country of USA. In some ways the same idea is found in the nation of Israel. It would be much better, then, to talk about a multi-ethnic Israel rather than "ethnic Israel." In fact as shown in the different parts of this paper, the Bible shows that since its inception as God's people, Israel was a unified *ethnos* (nation) made up of a plurality of ethnic backgrounds. This point needs some detailed elaboration as it is a key term from a biblical and theological perspective. For lack of space we will discuss the meaning of nation in God's promise to Abraham as a test case for the meaning of "nation."

God promised to Israel's first father "I will make you into a great nation" in Genesis 12:2. The term גּוֹי is here used for "nation." It has usually been discussed in contrast to עַם, and the fact that both terms occur together in Exodus 33:13 and Deuteronomy 4:6 has led some to think that they are synonymous.[ii][2] However, it is also accepted that the Hebrew Bible intends a distinction between these two terms. Thus גּוֹי describes "a people in terms of its political and territorial affiliation" (TDOT, Clements, 2: 427). In fact, in Genesis 10: 5,20,31,32 the term "nations" is closely associated with the aspects of language, ethnic identity and territory, and applied to all the nations prior to the existence of Israel.[iii][3] This usage in the context of Genesis 10 implies that Abraham's descendants are to become a "nation" among the "nations." That is, they will have their own language, ethnic identity and territory (Cody 1964, 2). This understanding is clearly implied by the fact that, in Genesis, Abraham is offered the land of Canaan as the inheritance for his descendants (Genesis 12:1; 15:18; 17:8).[iv][4] In its broader Old Testament context, however, "nation" "is linked inseparably with territory and government and what we would today call foreign relations" (Cody 1964, 5).

Therefore, the term "nation" here is used in its broader concept of a community with three major aspects: race, government, and territory (TDOT, Clements 2: 428).[v][5] In this sense "nation" applies to any existing nation regardless of their relationship with the true God.[vi][6]

The term עַם on the other hand, is a kinship term "which expresses effectively the closeness of the relationship between God and Israel which Israel's election has established" (Dumbrell 1982, 43). The kinship element implied in the term עַם has been noticed by Speiser in passages like Genesis 25:8, 17; 34:16 and Exodus 30:33,38. From these passages Speiser concluded that עַם essentially denoted close family connections, and hence secondarily the extended family, that is, people in the sense of a larger, but fundamentally consanguineous body" (Speiser 1960, 159). In this sense it may be also affirmed that Israel was established or founded by God as a גּוֹי and was also adopted as God's עַם so as to make her a unique "nation" among the "nations."[vii][7]

In the light of this distinction between גּוֹי and עַם therefore, the term "great nation" is used in Genesis 12:2 to indicate that in God's purpose Abraham was commanded to depart from Mesopotamia in order to become a nation large in numbers (Genesis 15:5; 17:6; 46:3) as well as in might (Genesis 18:18; Deuteronomy 26:5). In this sense the Rabbinic interpretations that this expression pointed to greatness in might, progeny and blessing were essentially correct (see above pp. 16-17). But it must be also added that this nation

was to be God's covenantal possession (Genesis 17:7), which points to the theocratic origin of Israel.[viii][8]

1.2 The Theological Nature of God's People

The people of God in the Bible (OT and NT) are presented to us as both an historic and soteriological reality. It is historic because Yahweh called it into existence from this world. But at the same time God's people are eschatological because they were called into existence in order that through them God unfolds and works out His redemptive plan for man and for creation. There is an overlap between the historic and eschatological nature even in the OT, although its eschatological nature is more clearly revealed in the NT and particularly in the Pauline epistles and the Book of Revelation.

2.   GOD'S BEING: THE STARTING POINT FOR BIBLICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

The Triune God has disclosed himself in the Bible as "three in persons" (YHWH e.g אֶחָד יְהוָה cf Avery Dulles: *Introduction to Metaphysics.* NY: Sheed and Ward, 1955 pp. 168-170; 192-196). Christianity has correctly understood God's plurality and from this fact formulated the doctrine of the Trinity. The doctrine of the trinity emphasizes both God's unity and God's plurality as shown in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1 – The Trinitarian Paradigm

UNITY (1 GOD)	DIVERSITY (3 PERSONS)
Unity in essence	Compliment without conflict
Unity in will	Cooperation without competition
Unity in self-sufficiency	Complementing one and other
Unity in power & authority	Dominion without domination
Perfect union	Interdependent

This understanding of God's being can be the starting point of a NT theology of mutliculturality[ix][9] and multi-ethnicity. Wan & Koniezcny (2004) correctly affirm that plurality and diversity are inherent within the created order. However, this prompts us to consider two other affirmations which are also inherent in the created order. The first is that Genesis takes for granted the unity of human race inherent within the created order, and this is the flip side of plurality and diversity. This affirmation in turn begs the question: what is the ultimate purpose of plurality and diversity in creation which shall be dealt with later in this paper. The second affirmation that needs to be made clear is that the relationship between unity and plurality is to be sought in God's own being as revealed in Scripture as the Triune God with "both-and" characteristic (see Figures 1 and 2). (The Trinitarian paradigm of "both-and" provides the theoretical framework for the "unity with diversity" of this paper as illustrated in Figures 3, 4 and 5.) This affirmation begs the question as to whether or not the Bible tolerates plurality and diversity of religion, which of course, the Bible answers in the negative in OT and NT. But it also begs the question as to whether or not the Bible tolerates plurality and diversity of human expressions only within the unity the Covenant people of God. That is, God's covenant people, are the inter-ethnic and intercultural manifestation of God's unity in diversity. If

this is so, then the only way to provide a valid epistemological framework for a valid and sustainable multicultural co-existence within a society is to deal with the issue of the Bible historic and eschatological model of the covenant people of God as it is proposed in this paper. This concept has been well stated by Longenecker when he says that for Paul:

> Ordinary social groups cannot contain unlimited diversity without self-destructing. For Paul, there is only one social group that can manage to sustain that delicate balance, and that group is not an ordinary one; it consists of those who are in Christ, whose corporate life is animated exclusively by divine power, thereby making it out from all other social groups (Longenecker 1998, 78).

3. GOD'S COSMIC PURPOSE FOR HUMANITY

3.1 Man's Being

It cannot be denied that the understanding of human diversity in any society requires one "to pay constant attention to human nature, as the source of the standards for life of men and women" (Devine1996, xiii). In the same way, because man was created by God, as revealed in the Bible, human nature or man's being cannot be understood apart from God's revelation, because it provides us with insights into God's ultimate purpose for man's existence.

The distinctiveness of created man in Genesis is that he is the *imago Dei*. That is, man was created in God's image according to His likeness.[x][10] One way in which man was to reflect God's image is that man was made male and female in Genesis (1:27). That is, man was made as a psychosomatic unity (i.e., spirit and body as in Gn 2:8)) as well as a plurality (male and female). Man does not reflect God's image regarding sexual differentiation but that mankind exist in unity and plurality as God also exists in unity and plurality.

There are two biblical facts that evidence this concept. First, the Hebrew Text identifies both Adam and Eve as mankind, and both are created in God's image and both are called Adam (Gn. 5:2). Second, the first man Adam disclosed his pyschosomatic identity and unity with the woman when he says: "this is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of Adam" (Gn 2:23). So it is legitimate to say God created mankind to exist as a plurality in unity so as to reflect His image. This biblical teaching should deter any undue emphasis on the diversity of mankind to the expense of the unity of mankind.[xi][11] Having this in mind, it is proper to affirm that the Bible clearly implies that from Adam and Eve, the first representative beings, all the nations have sprung up (Gn. 10).

A second element in which man reflects God's image is the capacity to produce life. God created man form the dust of the earth in His image according to His likeness. So also man reflect God's image in that he was enabled to pro-create human beings in his image according to his likeness (Gn 5:3). This capacity was bestowed upon mankind by *God's blessing*. His blessing provided for the fertility and multiplication of mankind, and these are God's means by which ethnic diversity ultimately resulted. This blessing also

provided for the replenishing of the earth by mankind, and it is biblically correct to say that even before the flood there was ethnic diversity. This ethnic diversity was manifested in two different modes of culture as it were: The Cainites (Gen 4:1-24) and the Sethites (Gn. 5:1-32). Noah came out of the Sethite line and later in Genesis 9:18-19, we are explicitly told that all the nations of the earth sprang up from the three sons of Noah who were born before the flood.[xii][12] The two lines of humanity that came from Adam founded two broadly diverse cultures,[xiii][13] so also the three sons of Noah gave origin to three broadly diverse races. So, there is no doubt that God's blessing upon humanity resulted in the multiplication of mankind and consequently in ethnic diversity, which Genesis identifies by the terms "families," "tongues," and "nations" within marked territories or "lands" (Gn. 10:5, 20, 32).

A third way in which man was to reflect God's image was the fact that God endowed mankind with the capacity to exercise rule and authority upon the earth. Man was created to be God's vice regent on earth, thus reflecting God's rule in earth. This cultural mandate provided for the origin and development of culture by which ethnic diversity would be sustained upon the earth (Gn 2:15).
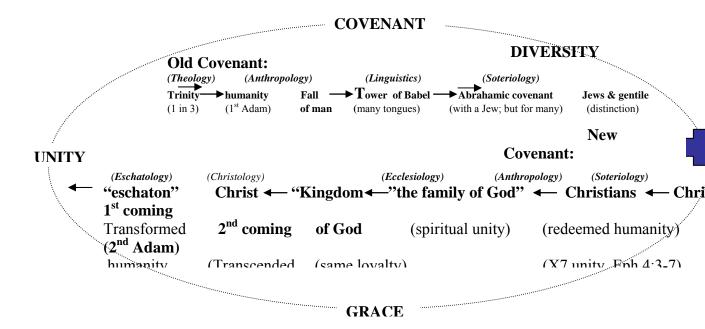
3.2 Man's Destiny

A fourth way in which man was to reflect God's image was his relational and moral capacity.[xiv][14] This aspect is expressed in Genesis in two implied concepts: Fellowship and worship. Man enjoyed fellowship with himself and with God. Mankind was to live in dependence, obedience and in fellowship with God. For this purpose God placed mankind in the sanctuary-garden of Eden. The act of fellowship with God expressed in worshiping Him was the ultimate purpose for which man was created and all else were means by which mankind would worship the God of heaven and earth in thankfulness and joy. This capacity gave mankind a sense of unity and purpose for his existence. Figure 2 below shows the two dimensions of human existence and experience:

Figure 2– The Two Dimensions of Human Existence/Experience

Dimensions	DIVINE (BOTH)	HMAN (AND)
Destiny	God's grace - divine predestination	Man's acceptance - human free will
Existence	Born from above - HS dynamism	Still live below - spiritual discipline
Experience	Covenantal –solidarity/group	Existential – particularity/individuality/personal
Operation	Spiritual	Physical & holistic
Spiritual Warfare	Victory in Christ	On-going spiritual warfare against the flesh within, the "worldly order" without, evil spirits and the devil above

So mankind was created as a moral being to exist in unity and plurality. Man was created and endowed with the potential for ethnic diversity and development of culture. Man was created to enjoy God's blessing and to worship Him alone. In worshiping God, mankind was to find the purpose of his existence. Human diversity was made to cohere around the worship of God. It is God as man's center that human diversity becomes a coherent unity. Human diversity will not cohere together apart from having God as its

center.   This truth explains the rationale of the Babel story (Gn 11:1-9). God intended that man's destiny was not to be an existence in a diversity separated from God but rather and existence in unity, not around their own fame, but around God's elected mediator. This fact explains God's election of Abraham as the mediator of blessing for all the families of the earth (Gn 12:1-3). Figure 3 below shows the unity and diversity of humanity:

Figure 3 - Unity & Diversity of Humanity

Of course God's ultimate purpose in creating mankind is fully revealed in the NT. There we clearly see that in regenerated man the true image of God is restored (Eph. 4:24) until the new man becomes like the new Adam, namely, Christ-like. The new man is called "a new creature" (II Cor 5:17; Gal. 6:15) and he is promised a new body (I Cor 15:43-34) which is possible through the last Adam (Christ) who is a life-giving spirit (I Cor 15:45). [15]

So the new man is not just an individual man. The new man is also a corporate man, it is a new mankind, a new Adam, a true human. [16] All the regenerated become one in Christ, and in Him all the ethnic distinctions, or social classes are transcended (Gal 3:28). [17] The new man is made out of two groups, built into one single nation called God's household (Eph 2:11-14, 19). The new mankind's unity is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the corner stone" (Eph 2:20). The new mankind thus becomes God's indwelling temple by His Spirit. In the New Testament we see that, in Christ, mankind's diversity coheres into a unit. This is the essential mark of the new being of mankind: Its plurality coheres in unity.   As Longenecker has stated: "Union with Christ, then, is the mechanism whereby believers

are incorporated into the sphere of the new creation, the process whereby those enslaved to superhuman powers become sons of the sovereign God" (Longeneccker 1998, 66).

Is it man's destiny to surrender his ethnic identity or to beg embraced within the saving purpose of the God who rejoices in the diversity of his creation? (Anderson 1977, 69). Since Anderson and other biblical theologians present a positive answer to this question, we need to test the affirmation which I rendered in the form of a question.[xviii][18]

In Rev. 7:9-12 the phrase "from every tribe, tongue, people and nations" is the key phrase from which ethnic diversity is perceived to subsist even in heaven. This fourfold phrase occurs first in Rev. 5:9-10 where it describes that, by His blood, Christ has purchased and redeemed all people. This does not mean all people without exception, but all people without ethnic distinction, i.e., people from all races (Beale 1999, 359).[xix][19] The exact phrase at the end of Rev. 5:9 is ἐκ πάσης φυλῆς καὶ γλώσσης καὶ λαοῦ καὶ ἔθνους (from every tribe, tongue, people and nations). This phrase, with varying forms, occurs in Daniel 3:4,7; 4:1, 21; 5:19; 6:26; 7:9,14, along with closely related phrases Genesis 10:5,20,31. The same phrase also occurs seven times in varying formulation in Rev. 7:9; 10:11; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6,14; and 17:15 (Bauckham 1998, 236).[xx][20] The emphasis on this formulation denotes the universality of the Royal and priestly Kingdom (Beale 1999, 361-62).[xxi][21] Thus the fulfillment of the promised kingship of the Son of Man in Daniel 7 has been inaugurated with Christ's resurrection, and He is now the Sovereign Lord over every tribe, tongue, people and nation. The saints of all ethnic groups are now united and together worship Christ, the Sovereign Lord. That is, the saints are a multi-ethnic community united in worship to Christ the sole King of the cosmos, and in Him their ethnic diversity coheres together.[xxii][22] Union with Christ does not mean that social or sexual identity is abolished and that uniformity is reached. It rather means, as Longenecker states that:

> The corporate body of those in Christ becomes unified not by a process of "like attracts the like," for the God who is one is the God of the plurality of peoples, and the testimony to God's transforming power is evident in a corporate body where the plurality becomes unified (Longenecker 1998, 67).

The fourfold phrase of Rev 7:9, then, indicates that God's people are international and multiethnic. This fact leads us to analyze its significance in the context of Rev. 7:9-11. This phrase specifically indicates that the text is referring to the redeemed community or God's people. The fourfold phrase indicates the universality of the great multitude is stressed (Mounce 1977, 162), but at the same time it indicates that they proceed from all the ethnic groups that populate the world.   These verses celebrate "the consummate fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise" in Genesis 12:1-3 (Beale 1999, 427-30).[xxiii][23] God's people come toward the center (where the Lamb is, cf. Rev. 7:17) to worship God and the Lamb. They are clothed uniformly with the same white robes and not with their own ethnic costumes.[xxiv][24] They sing with loud voice single voice (Mounce 1977, 162) the same song and not a diversity of songs that celebrate a diverse contextualized liturgy and praise by a diverse and pluralist multitude.[xxv][25] They worship Elohim the only Creator God and the Lamb, the only Sovereign Lord, who exercises His kingship upon

the whole earth. Religious pluralism that usually accompanies the overemphasis on ethnic diversity has been completely eliminated. The so called "richness" of ethnic diversity coheres in the richness of a unified human race which bows and worships its Maker, thus celebrating not diversity or ethnicity and multi-culturality in and of themselves, but celebrating the unity of the new Adam or redeemed mankind.[xxvi][26] Thus man's destiny has been brought to its ultimate purpose for which it was created (Mounce 1977, 163). A God-centered consciousness has replaced an ethnic-centered consciousness (against Shea 1977, 86-87). Rev. 7:13-15 shows that the cultural values of the new creation which began with Christ's death and resurrection run counter to the cultural values of the old world (Beale 1999, 175). As Beale powerfully puts it:

> The symbol describing the new world spell out the eternal significance and consequences of Christ's life, death and resurrection and of the present choices and behavior of the readers. Part of the main point is to motivate the readers not to compromise with the world but align their thoughts and behavior with the God-centered standards of the new creation. They are to see their own situation in this world in the light of the eternal perspective of the new world, which is now their true home (Beale 1999, 175).

4.   GOD'S KINGDOM AND GOD'S "COVENANT PEOPLE" IN THE NT (See Figure 3)

God's people is historic as well as an eschatological model God intended for society. But to understand the historic and eschatological place of God's people one needs to understand first the Kingdom of God

4.1   God's Kingdom: His sole rule over the whole cosmos

The Kingdom of God is God's rule or sovereignty which has come with Jesus' presence and is still to come (Ladd 1993, 60,64; Jeremias 1971, 103; Klappert 1976, 2:383).[xxvii][27] God's sovereign rule presupposes two facts which the Bible declares without hesitation. The fact that Yahweh, Elohim, as revealed in both Old and New Testament is the only Supreme God who made heaven and earth, who sent Jesus Christ to redeem the human race and to gather them into one people, the people of God. But at the same time, it presupposes the real presence of evil in the cosmos which is represented by the power of Satan. The presence of Jesus as the ruler of God's Kingdom means not only His powerful presence on earth, but also the binding of Satan till his utter destruction at the consummation of the age (Rev. 15:3, 19:6).[xxviii][28]

The presupposition that God (as Trinity) is the sole Supreme God of the cosmos at once declares both the inclusive and the exclusive nature of biblical Christianity. As Spencer puts it:

> Christianity's inclusiveness has to do with all the sheep called into Christ's fold from all nations, not a plurality of divine shepherds to divide them into parallel herds in God's global flock. In that sense, Christianity is exclusive. Inclusive to all people, it is exclusive to one Supreme God (Spencer 1998, 19).

According to the New Testament, humanity either belong to God's kingdom (Jeremias 1971, 167) through obeying Christ's message and demands, or they belong to Satan's kingdom (Matt. 4:8; 12:16) as they remain faithful to the values of the kingdom of evil (or fallen angel culture) (Matt. 25:35-45, Gal. 5:21).

God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven as theo-culture interacts with homo-culture and angel-culture. In this interaction, God's Kingdom, as the transcendent presence of theo-culture in history, defeats the power of fallen angel culture (Satan being the chief representative) and brings this present age to a new level of existence.[xxix][29] This new level of existence is represented by God's people where God's Kingdom is particularly manifested and the values of the Kingdom lived out (Morris 1986, 332).[xxx][30]

This holistic theological understanding of God's Kingdom implies that any effort of contextualization must take into account that the Kingdom of God is present in this age and is marching on towards its consummation at the end of this age. The presence of God's Kingdom has transcended homo-culture and therefore has lifted it to new level of redeemed life (Ladd 1993, 67).

This prompts us as Christians theologians and missiologists to reconsider the much debated problem of contextualization by deliberately making it as a step for the Kingdomization of homo-culture as the only proper a response to the presence of God's Kingdom.[xxxi][31]

At the same time, this kingdomization of homo-culture leads the human race to reconsider their values, their diversity and their unity as humans living under the influence of two powers: i.e., the power of evil and the power of God. Entering into God's Kingdom means, then, to enter into the new age inaugurated by Christ's death and resurrection, and to live in this new level of redeemed society. This new society will at the consummation of the Kingdom worship only Yahweh Elohim and the Lamb. It will sing praises to Him at unison and eternally. This new homo-culture has been completely kingdomized and has been clothed in righteousness (white robes). In this new homo-culture diversity has reached its unity and lives under God's tabernacle (eternal presence). Thus homo-culture's finally destiny has been reached (Rom. 15:24-28; Rev. 7:9-15; 21:2-3). [xxxii][32]

Figure Error! Bookmark not defined. **- Unity with Diversity in Soteriology**

SOTERIOLOGY	
Unity	**Diversity**
CHRIST	**CHRISTIANS**
First fruit	Many to follow
First Born	Adopted: many
One Lord	Subjects: many
One faith	Faithful: many

Uniqueness of Christ: the only way	Universal brotherhood of Christians
The cornerstone	Living stones

4.2 God's people is Historic: Israel, His covenant people

God's covenant people are historic, they can be traced to the historic person of Abraham. In Abraham, God selected Israel as his historical people. Abraham is the historical ancestor of Israel.[xxxiii][33] If Abraham is seen in the Bible to be the creator's means of dealing with Adam's sin, then Israel as God's covenantal people, understood herself to be God's true Adamic humanity (Wright 1991, 262). This fact explains why in the covenant God said of Israel:

וּנְתַתִּיךָ לְאוֹר גּוֹיִם לִהְיוֹת יְשׁוּעָתִי עַד־קְצֵה הָאָרֶץ I (... I will set you as a light to the nations so that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth) Isaiah 49:6.[xxxiv][34] God's covenantal purpose for Israel indicates his program to unite the whole human race through His redeeming activity in Israel. The historic people of God have a very definite role to fulfill in history, as Wright correctly says:

> Within the Jewish worldview itself, Israel's vocation is not compromised but is in a sense fulfilled when the Gentiles come to join the people of God (like Ruth the ancestress of David), listen to his wisdom (like the Queen of Sheba), or otherwise share the life of his people (Wright 1992, 267).

But God's people also have an eschatological dimension. This eschatological dimension can be seen when we ask the following questions. Why Israel was not ruling the world as promised in the covenant? Why was she suffering under Gentile powers? Why did God not at once to put the world right under a righteous Israel?[xxxv][35] This set of questions prompts the reader of the Bible to think through eschatological dimension of Israel as God's covenant people. God has in mind to remake and restore the whole world, through Israel, and indeed to restore Israel herself (Wright 1992, 268). Figure 5 below shows unity with diversity in ecclesiology:

Figure Error! Bookmark not defined. – Unity with Diversity in Ecclesiology

ECCLESIOLOGY	
Unity	Diversity
Abraham: -father of faith	Christians: -children of the same faith
Israel: the olive tree (Ro 11:24)	Gentile: grafted branches
CHURCH: -Body of Christ -household of God -chosen nation -temple of God -holy priesthood	CHRISTIANS: -members of the body -members of God's family -citizens of the Kingdom -being built/indwelled by HS -servants of the Lord

4.3 Israel and Christ and God's people in the NT

With a richness of word-pictures, Jesus recurrently spoke of the new people of God he was gathering. He called it flock (Matt. 26:31ff; Mk. 14:27; Lk. 10:3, and John 19:1-29), God's planting (Matt. 13:24; 15:13), etc, and members of the new covenant (Mk. 14:24 and par.; I Cor 11:25) in and through whom the promises of the OT covenant are fulfilled by having God as their teacher (Matt. 23:8; cff. Jer. 31:33ff) (Jeremias 1971, 168-69). In the NT, Jesus and his apostles are not confined to bringing the good news of the Kingdom to Israel only. Although for the most part Jesus limited the good news of the kingdom by which God's new covenant people are to be gathered in, he made it clear that it is also for the nations or Gentiles (Mk. 7:24-30; Matt. 8:5-13). Jesus himself looked for the full gathering in of the Gentiles together with the saved Jews into one single people of God at the consummation of time.[xxxvi][36]   This fact is what explains the hesitance of Jesus to openly minister to the Gentiles during his earthly ministry. But after his resurrection, His gospel is openly and abundantly shared with all the Gentiles. Paul firmly believed in the unity of human race (Acts 17:28,29) to the extent that, through Christ, Jews and Gentiles have become fellow members of God's new people (Eph. 2:12-15; 5:1-7).[xxxvii][37]

Israel existing as God's people in the OT, is called church. Consequently, in the NT, God's is also called the church.[xxxviii][38] Therefore, God's people are the same as God's church or Christ's church in the NT which is made up of all of God's saved people from all time and from all nations of the earth. As Grudem correctly states:

> Therefore, even though there are certainly new privileges and new blessings that are given to the people of God in the New Testament, both the usage of the term "church" in Scripture and the fact that throughout the Scripture God had always called his people to assemble to worship himself, indicate that it is appropriate to think of the church as constituting all the people of God, both Old Testament believers and the New Testament believers (Grudem 1994, 854).

In Genesis, God's revelation presents us with a garden which man lost because of his disobedience. But in Revelation we are presented with a picture of God's re-creation of world in which the garden has become a city. As Spykeman says, "Between these two great epochs and binding them together, is the gospel of the coming kingdom which sweeps the redeemable aspects of human culture along with the 'new Jerusalem'" (Spykeman 1992, 558).

5. CONCLUSION

Thus the richness of human diversity under the influence of sin (fallen angel culture) became a painful experience for God's people in the OT. This same diversity is in the NT, and indeed at present, and is the main cradle through which the worship of false gods and religious plurality is fostered. Both negative aspects of human diversity will be corrected in the consummation of the kingdom. When it will reach its perfect harmony intended by God from the beginning. That is, His people have become a multicultural and multiethnic unity, and the fallen angel culture completely removed.   It is in this light that Christians and the Church must view their commitment to God in this world for the kingdomization of homo-culture in all spheres of its multi-culural and multi-ethnic

expressions. For, as Longenecker put it, "Outside the sphere of God's power, plurality fragments into negative disassociation; within the Sphere of God's power, plurality is brought within the positive context of interconnectedness and wholeness" (Longenecker 1998, 67).

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ENDNOTES

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i[1] Dyrness correctly states that before the Enlightenment "believers and, even nonbelievers for that matter understood human life in terms of a larger pattern of things, ultimately in terms of God's purposes..." (Dyrness 1997, 59).

ii[2] Speiser, however, has correctly explained that this alleged interchangeability in the main is due to a late use in the Bible and in the stylistic variation or poetic parallelism as may be seen in Ezekiel 36:15 and Isaiah 1:4 (Speiser 1960, 158).

iii[3] De Vaux is also of the opinion that the same term "nation" "is often used to depict the other nations in the world" (De Vaux 1978, 154).

iv[4] In this respect Cody concurs that "the strong connection of the term *goy* with land tenure made it a fitting word to use in contexts having to do with the Israelite possession of the promised land, without which the chosen people could not become an authentic *goy*" (Cody 1964, 5). For a similar opinion see also De Vaux 1978, 163.

v[5] Dumbrell sheds more light in this regard by affirming that גּוֹי "in the Old Testament is reserved for the description, normally, of a political entity which can be delimited by appeal to geographical, ethnic, social or cultural factors and thus the use of such a governmental theme in this context could broadly have the later political constitution of Israel in mind" (Dumbrell 1982, 43).

vi[6] Dumbrell's view that the גּוֹי is often used of Israel in the pejorative sense and is usually reserved for the world community excluding Israel must be acknowledged (Dumbrell 1982, 43). However, it must be also borne in mind that this is a much later theological distinction made in the Old Testament. What distinguishes the גּוֹי promised Abraham in the Book of Genesis is that Abraham's descendants will be Yahweh's possession (Genesis 17:7).

vii[7] This approach is concurrent with Speiser's proposal that Israel is both גּוֹי and עַם (Speiser 1960, 162).

viii[8] Speiser rightly points out that: "The reason, then, behind the patriarch's departure from Mesopotamia and the Israelites' liberation from Egypt was that Israel might be a nation. The עַם had been in Egypt for centuries anyway, where its numbers are stated to have become very large (Exodus 1:9) (Spesier 1960, 163).

ix[9] Wan & Konieczny (2004, 10) talks about theology of multiculturalism, it is better to talk about theology of muli-culturality and ethnic diversity in order to distinguish between the ideological underpinnings of these terms from the factual existence of multi-culurality and diversity in our current global world.

E. Wan offers a new definition of culture as "the context/consequence of patterned interaction between personal beings (Beings)" (Wan 2004:1) that can account for the cultural interaction/relationship between human and angelic beings, and their

interaction with the "Triune God" showing the convergence of various realms of terrestrial and anthropological levels (Wan 1999).

[10] For the different views on the interpretation of the meaning of the image of God in man the reader is directed to the following main sources: Barr, James. 1968-9. The image of God in the book of Genesis: A study of terminology. Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, 51:11-26. Ahuviah, A. 1984-5. In the image of god he created him. Bmik, 30:361-91. Bird, P.A. 1981. Male and female he created them. HTR, 74:129-59. Clines, D.J.A. 1968. The image of god in man. TB, 19:53-103. Horowitz, M.C. 1979. The image of god in man--is woman included? HTR, 72:175-206. Kline, M.G. 1977. Creation in the image of the glory-spirit. WTJ, 39:250-72. Miller, J.M. 1972. In the 'image' and 'likeness' of god. JBL, 91:289-304.

[11] This balance must be kept in any biblical theology of ethnicity, especially in the light of our current context in which "the cultural left" has appropriated for themselves diversity as their watchword (Devine 1996, xiv)

[12] Bernard Anderson proposes that ethnic pluralism was the result of God's creative blessing renewed after the fall. If our explanation is correct, Anderson's interpretation is inaccurate.

[13] The Cainite line was characterized by the exercise of violence, sexual corruption, development of cities, art, mining and agricultural instruments (Gn. 4:16-24).

[14] On the relational concept of man see (Spykeman 1992, 228) for further details.

[15] On the concept about the New Adam see, Wright (1991, 91ff).

[16] N.T Wright has correctly suggested that the corporate dimension of Adam which is represented by the covenantal Israel (Wright 1991, 262-65). This point will addressed later.

[17] Lee's argument that Gal. 3:28 does not teach that we are all the same is essentially correct (Lee, 1991, 24). But in charging of being ethnocentric to those who would affirm that all should worship, serve and love Christ in exactly the same way, he fails to distinguish the essential elements of worship, service and love from the circumstances. One wonders how he would explain Christ's declaration that to love him is to keep his commands (John 14:21). There is no other way of loving Him than by submissive obedience, and this applies to all. That submission and obedience may take different cultural manifestations one must grant, but these are circumstances and not essentials.

[18] Here we engage Anderson, Wan & Konieczny who basically agree that Rev. 7:9-12 points to ethnic diversity upon which God rejoices.

[19] Bauckham is right in saying that these passages refer back to Exodus 19:6 where the church is the eschatological people of God and Christ is the eschatological Passover Lamb. This fourfold phrase is also related to Daniel 7:1-4 and Genesis 10:20,31 (Bauckham 1998, 327-29).

[20] Bauckham affirms that the "sevenfold use of this fourfold formula indicates that reference is being made to all nations of the world. In the symbolic world of Revelation, there could hardly be a more emphatic indication of universalism" (Bauckham 1998, 326).

[21] Rev. 5:10 reads "καὶ ἐποίησας αὐτοὺς τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν βασιλείαν καὶ ἱερεῖς, καὶ βασιλεύσουσιν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς."

xxii[22] Baukcham correctly argues that the conversion of the nations to the worship of God is the center of the prophetic message of Revelation (Bauckham 1998, 238-41, 326, 336).

xxiii[23] Mounce has correctly noted that passages such as Gn. 15:5 and 32:12 are referred to here (Mounce 1977, 162).

xxiv[24] Of course white robes here symbolizes the righteousness and victory through Christ's blood, and the palm branches symbolizes the festal context of the passage (Mounce 1977, 162).

xxv[25] Longenecker correctly argues that in Paul's eschatology "eruption is not for Paul about the introduction of new religious configuration on the scene of world history. Instead, it is about God's triumph over competing superhuman forces, about God's invasion into the order of this world in order to set things aright in a new sphere of existence where God's reputation as the cosmic sovereign is vindicated" (Longenecker 1998, 3, cf. p.5).

xxvi[26] A careful exegetical reading of the text does not indicate that the redeemed people here is a multitude of nations, but an ὄχλος πολύς ,that is, a great multitude. It is a single united multitude made up from people from every nation, tribe, peoples and tongues. It is a unity within which there is diversity and therefore multi-culturality.)

xxvii[27] Jeremias correctly understands the New Testament phrase ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ had an eschatological significance in the sayings of Jesus (Jeremias 1971, 103).

xxviii[28] In these verses the resurrected Jesus is called ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν ἐθνῶν (or King of the nations, Rev. 15:3) and Βασιλεὺς βασιλέων καὶ κύριος κυρίων. (or King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Rev. 19:16).

xxix[29] The terms theo-culture, angel-culture and homo-culture were first coined by Enoch Wan in his paper (1996) which proposed a new definition of "culture" that facilitates the formulation of a framework of "tri-cultural-system" at a macro-level. This macro-level understanding of the interaction between God and his whole creation requires a reconsideration of traditional systematic and biblical theological understanding of God's Kingdom and the problem of contextualization.

xxx[30] Jeremias, from his study of the NT, posits that it is better to translate *ecclesia* as "God's people" rather than "church." He furthers understands that God 's people are the members of the new covenant and they are also God's eschatological family (Jeremias 1971, 168-70).

xxxi[31] On God's sovereignty and God's Kingdom see (Spykeman 1992, 266-67).

xxxii[32] Although the NT indicates a close connection between the Kingdom of God and the church they are not to be equated as one and the same. The church is called to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom, she hold the keys of the kingdom (Matt 16:19), the kingdom is manifested through the church but still awaits its full manifestation at the consummation of time. For a full discussion, see Grudem (1994, 864-64).

xxxiii[33] It must be noticed that Abraham's household is already a microcosmic multiethnic family. It was made up of Abraham himself from Ur (Gn 11:31), a Syrian (Gn 15:2), people from Haran, (Gn 12:5) and some Egyptians of whom only Hagar is named (Gn . 12:16).

xxxiv[34] The same purpose of saving the nations through Israel is explicitly stated in Isa. 2:2-4; 11:9-10; 42:1; Mic 4:1-4.

xxxv[35] Questions like these were the subject of Bible writers specially in exilic and post-exilic Israel, for which see (Dumbrell 1994, 75-152; Wright 1991, 268-338).

xxxvi[36] Jeremias puts this way: "It is deeply significant that the hour of the Gentiles only comes at the end of the day. The reason for this is Jesus' view of salvation history. First, God's promises must be fulfilled and Israel must be offered salvation. First, the servant of God must pour his blood for the many, before the hour of the Gentiles comes. It lies beyond the passion, and the help that Jesus grants to Gentiles in individual instances belongs in the series of anticipations of the complete fulfillment" (Jeremias 1971, 247).

xxxvii[37] Among the chief passages that equate Israel of the OT and the church of the NT as the new people of God are: Rom. 2:28-29; 4:11-12,16-18; 9:6-8; 11:12,15,23-26, 28-31; gal. 3:3; Heb 8:8-10; I Peter 2:4-10).

xxxviii[38] For instance in Dt. 4:10 God calls Moses to Assemble God's people before Him and the verb "הַקְהֵל" is used. This same verb is translated by the LXX as "εκκλνσιασον" from which the noun "εκκλησια" is derived.

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