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Grace Relations vs Race Relations

I. Multiethnic diversity in creation

A. A creation narrative of unity in diversity

These great truths are highlighted in the creation story of Genesis, with a focus for the purpose of this project on Genesis 1:26-28

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

In Genesis 1:26, God says, "Let Us make man in Our own image." Gordon J. Wenham explains:

The context makes clear which meaning is intended.... The primary meaning of 'man' is "human being" or "human race," and a hearer or reader generally understands the term in this way, unless the sentence in which "man" is used clearly demands the sense "adult male." Similarly, "mankind" always means "the human race," or "humanity" unless it is explicitly and most usually contracted with 'womankind.'¹

B. One blood, various people, one humanity

Luke's writings of the apostle Paul's ministry at Athens described an encounter with cultural paganism and philosophy. Within these writings is a model for addressing the philosophy of human reasoning related to Darwinism, misapplication of Scripture, and cultural insensitivity.

¹ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1 (Waco: Word, 1987), lii.

Ken Ham related this about an ABC News report:

More and more scientists find that the differences that set us apart are cultural, not racial. Some even say that the word *race* should be abandoned because it's meaningless. . . . We accept the idea of race because it's a convenient way of putting people into broad categories, frequently to suppress them – the most hideous example was provided by Hitler's Germany. . . . What the facts show is that there are differences among us, but they stem from culture, not race.”²

The term “race” is really an improper way to define the various people groups of mankind. As a result of the influence of Darwinism, evolution theory, misinterpretation of Scripture, and the misappropriation of Scripture, the use of the term “race” should be stricken from the Christian’s vocabulary. Ham stated: ‘The Bible does not even use the word ‘race’ [in the original languages] in reference to people but it does describe all human beings as being of ‘one blood (Acts 17:26).’³ “And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings.” In verse 26, Paul turns from the description of who God is to the fact that this God created humanity. The Creator of all things generally is also the Creator of the human race specifically.

Therefore, it is the Project Director’s position that there can be no scientifically, sociological, or culturally superior dominate race or ethnic group, just variations of the one human race. God created the human race from one man, Adam, to whom all blood must trace its roots and beginnings. God gave Adam the whole earth as a dwelling place for humanity.

God was the One who provided and determined the appropriate living areas of the various nations. The divine placement of the nations and their national boundaries has biblical significance, as found in Deuteronomy 32:8: “When the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel.” Bruce stated: “According to the Genesis account, the earth was formed and furnished to be a home for humanity before humanity itself was brought into being to occupy it; the tenses of the Greek verbs here similarly suggest that ‘the determination of man’s home preceded his creation, in the Divine plan.’”⁴

² Ken Ham, “Are There Really Different Races?” November 29, 2007, *Answers in Genesis*, <https://answersingenesis.org/racism/are-there-really-different-races/>, citing “We’re All the Same,” September 10, 1998, ABC News, www.abcnews.com/selections/science/DyeHard/dye72.html.

³ Ham and Ware, *One Race, One Blood*, 115.

⁴ F.F. Bruce, ed., *The Book of Acts*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, rev.ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988) quoting James H. Moulton, Wilbert F. Howard, and Nigel Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1906), 133.

C. The dispersion: united we stand, divided we fall

Of the world's nations, two-thirds are experiencing the influx of the human and cultural diversity challenge. Refugees flee to neighboring nations because of civil war, famine, and political oppression. As people of various ethnic origins, speaking different languages and professing different religions, settle into new geographic localities and life under new political sovereignty, the reaction is often one of having or showing a dislike of or prejudice against people from other countries. Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. has concluded, "Ethnic and racial conflict, it seems evident, will now replace the conflict of ideologies as the explosive issue of our times."⁵ Ken L. Davis stated,

Thus the greatest challenge for getting the gospel out in our postmodern world may well be crossing the "distance" of race and ethnicity more so than that of geography and culture. In a time of increased ethnic strife and fragmentation within the human family, how will Christians, both in America and globally respond? Will we be bewildered cultural bystanders to this multiethnic transformation of our world? Or will we welcome this enormous ethnic mix of nations as a grand opportunity to preach the gospel to all nations?⁶

Ken Ham, Carl Wieland, and Don Batten state:

Ham, an Australian creation research scientist, attributes the medium-brown complexion of Adam and Eve to a high level of melanin content in their skin, whereas McKissic and Evans believe it was due to the soil from which they came. Ham contends, from a scientific perspective, that all humans are basically the **same color** because we all have [within *our DNA*] the same pigment called melanin. Some people just have more of that color than others. This, he argues, is why the majority of the world's population today are medium brown.⁷

⁵ Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *The Disunity of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992), 10.

⁶ Ken L. Davis, "Building a Biblical Theology of Ethnicity for Global Mission," *Journal of Ministry and Theology* 7, no. 2 (Fall 2003): 91.

⁷ Davis, "Building a Biblical Theology," 93, referencing Ken Ham, Carl Wieland, and Don Batten, *One Blood: The Biblical Answer to Racism* (Green Forrest, AR: Master Books, 1999), 93, n. 17.

In the creative intent of God was the creative diversity of the one human people group. God made within Adam the DNA necessary to make it possible for Adam and Eve to produce and multiply, both dark brown and light-skinned offspring, who would do likewise. These pigment variations existed before in Noah's three sons after the flood (Genesis 9:18-19 Now the sons of Noah who went out of the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And Ham *was* the father of Canaan. These three *were* the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth was populated.)

II. Multiethnic diversity in salvation

Paul's primary objective in Romans 5:12-14a, was to explain how one man's death provided salvation for many.

- A. The universal problem of humanity is sin (Romans 5:12a)
 - 1. Sin entered the world through one man (Romans 5:12a)
 - 2. Death entered the world through sin (Romans 5:12b)
 - 3. Death spread to all men because all sinned (Romans 5:12c)
- B. The universal principle of humanity is death (Romans 5:13)
 - 1. History proves that sin reigned over all men in the world. (Romans 5:13a)
 - 2. History proves that death reigns even without law. (Romans 5:13b)
- C. The universal predicament of humanity is that sin and death reign (Romans 5:14a)
Sin and death reigned from Adam to Moses. This means that death was a universal predicament even though there was no law.
- D. The gospel demands a new view of ethnic relationships by Christians

The gospel became the means of redemption for people everywhere on the earth, starting with the mending of the broken relationship between God and man. Therefore, the new reality was to be evidenced in the new community called the church, made up of Jewish and Gentile Christians, and as a unity they were to be a witness to the world.

Paul has now effectively redrawn the boundaries of the people of God – the one God of Jew and Gentile, no longer the boast of Jew as Jew (2:14; 3:29); the covenant promise to Abraham’s seed, not determined by physical descent (4:16; 9:8); “works of the law” in flesh and outward form marking an ethnic identity set aside in favor of “the work of the law written in the heart” by gracious call which knows no social boundaries (2:15, 28-29; 3:20; 9:12; 11:6); a gospel open to all who believe, Jew first but also Gentile (1:16-17), a mercy that embraces all Jew as well as Gentile. With the people of God thus redefined, an equivalent rule of life needs to be formulated, the “walk in newness of life” as over against the walk in the ordinances of Israel’s Law (6:4).⁸

“Paul begins with an exhortation which summarizes the claim of his gospel, which sets out the basis for all Christian lifestyle and relationships, and which deliberately indicates the balance necessary between personal commitment and divine enabling” (Rom 12:1).⁹ “For a Jew it would be self-evident that faith and theology must come to expression in daily living. What follows [in Romans 12-16] is instruction on how the newly redefined people of God should live as such.”¹⁰ In the phrase “διὰ τῶν οἰκτιρμῶν τοῦ θεοῦ, ‘through the mercies of God’....the emphasis on divine mercy confirms the connection of thought with the preceding section.”¹¹

The church has the enabling power to demonstrate the dynamite of the gospel, not to be blind to ethnic differences, to eliminate ethnic difference, or to value ethnic differences at the sacrifice of relationship, but the gospel provides the means to transcend differences as we become one in Christ Jesus. The church must learn to model the picture of celebratory unity in the midst of diversity. The church must learn, celebrate, and grow, so all the world can see the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[Taken from Dr. Victor Clay’s dissertation entitled “The Principles and Practices of Multi-ethnic Churches]

“It is critical that the church pursues grace relations rather than race relations. Grace, God’s reconciliation at Christ’s expense, offers a healthy foundation for dealing with the sins of the past, as well as the alienation of the past.” [Dr. Charles A. Ware]

Practiced Principled Outcomes of Grace Relations vs Race Relations

I. Grace relations model

- A. Grace dreamers - Biblically diverse visionaries and leadership

⁸ James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 38B (Nashville: Word, 1988), 705.

⁹ Ibid., 707.

¹⁰ Ibid., 708.

¹¹ Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 708-9.

- B. Grace **reality** - A reliable guide, the Bible
- C. Grace **expectation** - Authentic, transparent, loving, forgiving, and empowering environment
- D. Grace **applications** - Wise contextual application of grace and truth
- E. Grace **measurables** - Next steps in pursing the vision and model of Christ and heavenly diversity.

II. Creating a grace environment

- A. Grace creates an environment where confession, repentance, and transformation is encouraged. (Acts 10-11; 22:3-5; Galatians 2:11-21; Philippians 3:3-9)
 - 1. An **authentic** environment
 - 2. A **transparent** environment
 - 3. A **forgiving** environment
- B. Grace creates a **repentant** environment
(Acts 10-11; Matthew 18:15-17)
- C. Grace creates a **transformational** environment
(John 13:34-35; 2 Peter 1:3-4, 8; 3:18)
- D. Grace models real **love** both in the pulpit and the pew, in the leadership and the laity. (John 13:34-35; 1 John 4:7-19)
- E. Grace models real **humility** both in the pulpit and the pew, in the leadership and the laity. (Acts 10; Ephesians 4:1)
- F. Grace models real **unity** both in the pulpit and the pew, in the leadership and the laity. (Romans 14-15; Ephesians 4:1-6)