

The Cross of Christ: The Death of Our Hostility and the Birth of our Unity – Ephesians

Clearly reconciliation is no easy matter. The divisions in this world that have grown out of the sins of oppression, injustice, arrogance and ignorance are deep, long lasting and from a human perspective, hopelessly ingrained in tribes and nations, communities and neighborhoods. In 2008, as African nations continue to emerge from their first generation attempts at governing themselves as nation states under the dictatorial rule of tribal leaders, (often placed in power by the Colonial powers who preceded them), the tribal abuses could hardly be more dramatic. Entire national resources have been pilfered by those in power and political control has been maintained through traditional forms of empire rule: the systematic suppression of opposing ethnic groups through political, economic and oftentimes, ruthless military oppression. The evidence of the division comes to the surface in times of national elections, when the hopes of the oppressed often ignite in riots, mass protests and tribal killing. Kenya, Zimbabwe, Congo, Uganda, Sudan, Somalia are all recent examples. In the worst cases, like Rwanda, things degenerate into genocide. The remains of South African Apartheid, North African Muslim/Christian conflicts and the general oppressiveness of Islam leave an entire continent reeling under the divisive hostilities such tyranny leaves in its wake.

China and India, which comprise one third of the world's population, constantly struggle with religious and political hostilities and oppression. Human rights are routinely trampled. The recorded stories of abuses are legion. One United Nations Human Rights report describes the abuse of children in India:

“With credible estimates ranging from 60 to 115 million, India has the largest number of working children in the world. Whether they are sweating in the heat of stone quarries, working in the fields sixteen hours a day, picking rags in city streets, or hidden away as domestic servants, these children endure miserable and difficult lives. They earn little and are abused much. They struggle to make enough to eat and perhaps to help feed their families as well. They do not go to school; more than half of them will never learn the barest skills of literacy. Many of them have been working since the age of four or five, and by the time they reach adulthood they may be irrevocably sick or deformed—they will certainly be exhausted, old men and women by the age of forty, likely to be dead by fifty. Most or all of these children are working under some form of compulsion, whether from their parents, from the expectations attached to their caste, or from simple economic necessity. At least fifteen million of them, however, are working as virtual slaves. These are the bonded child laborers of India.”¹

The conflicts in the Middle East, ethnic tensions in Europe, the vast disparities between rich and poor in Latin America and the exclusive suburbs and inner-cities of the United States all point to an entire globe that is engulfed by different levels of human division. Even in the most progressive university campuses in the United States, the practical separation of students into ethnic enclaves in every situation from the lunchroom to Christian campus groups is simply the dominant reality.

¹ <http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/1996/India3.htm>

How can oppressor and oppressed ever come together? How can rich and poor be reconciled? How can members of warring tribes, after generations of abuses, truly be united? It would take something of earth shattering proportions to bring real, genuine change that could produce reconciliation out of such division. But something more than earth shattering has taken place. Something heaven and earth shattering has happened. The SON OF GOD appeared in human flesh, fully identified with us as a man and all the wrath of God- the justifiable anger and retribution that should be poured out on all the divisive and destructive acts of sinful men- has been poured out on Jesus Christ on behalf of his people, and peace has been purchased. God tells us it is the kind of peace that is able to heal atrocities and make enemies into family members who embrace one another in love. The Apostle Paul states it this way:

“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.” Ephesians 2:13-18

The first four chapters of Ephesians is one long discourse from Paul on reconciliation. Perhaps too often it is read from an individualistic perspective and we miss the overall message of reconciliation not only to God, but profoundly, to one another. Believers are often encouraged to understand the vast richness of their personal salvation heritage in Christ. Chosen, loved, adopted, redeemed, forgiven, predestined and marked with the Holy Spirit, are all themes in Ephesians chapter one that we are rightly encouraged to take to heart, reflect on and allow to shape our understanding of the depth of God’s love to us personally. Good pastors and preachers know that the most important thing for any individual believer to do is precisely to believe and apply these things to themselves. Nothing can replace a personal faith that says, “Christ loved me and died for me” (Gal 2:20).

But that is still only an application of the main point Paul is making. The great promises of Ephesians 1 are all stated in plural and corporate terms: “blessed us” (1:3), “chose us” (1:4), “predestined us” (1:5), “given us” (1:6), “we have redemption” (1:7), “lavished on us” (1:8), “guaranteeing our inheritance” (1:14). The reason Paul is not addressing this on an individual basis is not simply a matter of indifferent grammatical style, but it is plainly because he is addressing the church as a reconciled group. He wants us to know that what has been promised to us personally has been promised to all God’s people corporately and that it is equally important to apply this peace, acceptance and forgiveness in a very deliberate way to everyone else in the church, just as much as we need to believe it for our own lives. We simply are not given the option to think of these things only as true for ourselves in a way that practically ignores the other members of the body. At the very heart of all these amazing promises of our status as sons and daughters of God, is this climactic declaration of God’s purpose:

“And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their

fulfillment-- to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.” (Eph 1:10)

The Greek word translated “bring together” in the NIV, means to “sum up” or “unite,” and then Paul adds, “all things... in Christ.”² He tells us in the most comprehensive way possible that reconciliation, all things being brought together and unified in Christ, is nothing less than the full revelation of the mystery of God’s will in his saving purposes in Christ. All the related promises are made to “us” corporately, because they are commitments God has made to all of us to effect this unity and reconciliation. Paul is unpacking the depth of the “glory” Christ has given to us so that we may be one (Jn 17:22). Together, and only together, all of us are thoroughly equipped with this presence of God’s glory to fulfill the purpose of being united under Christ’s Headship. Together, through the anointing of the Spirit, we have been predestined to manifest the praise of God’s glory (Eph 1:14). Together we need the anointing of the Spirit to understand just how far this reconciliation and manifestation of God’s glory extends (1:16ff).

If we think of our unity only in terms we can imagine through human reasoning, we will miss the full measure of what God intends to accomplish. The power of God to bring about this reconciliation in the world is rooted in the resurrection power of Christ who Sovereignly overrules every other power for the sake of us collectively as his church (Eph 1:19-23). All of us were dead in sins (2:1); but now, “God, who is rich in mercy, has made us alive with Christ” (2:5). And together, “we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works” (2:10). If we exclusively individualize these texts, we can miss the larger glory of God’s purpose in reconciling us to one another.

So, as the Lord of history and the King of kings who sits at the right hand of the Father until all the nations become his inheritance, do we really believe the Son is overseeing and ruling over the flow of history to accomplish this great purpose of re-uniting all things, and all peoples in Himself? When we look at this great moment in history when the nations are on the move and one in thirty-five people are living in alien nations and the diversity of the nations is continually increasing, is the same God who directed the fate of Abraham and Joseph to “bless” and “save” the nations (Gen 12, 50) also directing the fate of these immigrants and refugees to ultimately move his people to the very reconciliation he died to achieve, prayed for and revealed as the ultimate plan and purpose of history?

Returning to Ephesians 2:11-13 Paul describes more completely the only foundation for this reconciliation:

“Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (that done in the body by the hands of men)-- remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.”

² “Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament” Bauer Arndt Gingrich, University of Chicago Press 1975, p.55

How can this be? Is it possible that Jews and Gentiles are truly, substantially, deeply united as one in Christ? The Jews had a covenant heritage with God. They were his chosen people. They had generations of special knowledge of God's Law and generations of living under the promises of God's grace and kindness (Rom 2:17-3:1). The Gentiles, all other ethnic groups, were truly without hope and without God in this world (Eph 2:12). There was a long history of hostility between these groups. Enslaved by the Egyptians; at war with the Philistines, the Amorites, the Syrians and a host of smaller Canaanite nations; invaded and crushed in the north by the Assyrians and in the south by the Babylonians, the Jewish history would have naturally fed anger, resentment, self-protection and bitterness. They had suffered their homes being burned, their women being raped, their pregnant women killed, starvation to the point of eating their own flesh and blood for survival, their Temple and capital city burned to the ground and dismantled and then being exiled to a foreign land. Then they suffered under the dictatorial empires of Babylon, Persia, Greece and ultimately the hard rule of Roman law.

Of course, the Jews were guilty of some of the very same things. They had worshipped idols, shed innocent blood, cheated the poor, offered their children on altars of fire as a sacrifice to false gods (Isa 1-5), and by the time Paul wrote the book of Ephesians, conducted a mock trial of Jesus, claimed the ruthless dictator Caesar as their only king and crucified the very Son of God. There was one notable difference between them and the Gentiles; they claimed exclusive knowledge of the One true God, and despised the Gentiles as "unclean." In return, the Gentiles hated the Jews and blasphemed the God they claimed to worship (Romans 32:17-24).

How could the history of this division be undone? Paul's answer: both of you have been brought near to God and to one another "through the blood of Christ" (Eph 2:13). In Ephesians 2:14-18, Paul describes the work of the Cross as something we must continually focus on in order to build and experience deep unity in the body of Christ. We must make much of the shed blood of Christ as the basis of our peace. The work of Christ in purchasing salvation and reconciliation is of first importance (1 Cor 2:2,15:3) and is the very central issue on which everything else hinges. Paul tells us why and how the death of Christ, his shed blood, can effectively bring reconciliation between enemies; reconciliation so profound that Paul states it as an accomplished fact: Christ "has made the two one" (Eph 2:14):

"For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit." (Eph 2:14-18)

The barrier to reconciliation is "the dividing wall of hostility." This dividing wall is not about our separation from God. It's about our separation from each other. Paul tells us this "wall" is "the law with its commandments and regulations". What does Paul mean? According to John Calvin, and subsequently many commentators in the Reformed tradition, this is fundamentally a reference to the ceremonial aspects of the law. Circumcision, feast days, sacrifices, etc., all

marked the Jews as a separate people, different from all the other nations. According to Calvin, since those outward ceremonies have been done away with by the shedding of Christ's blood, they now no longer stand as a barrier to Jews and Gentiles being one. "The mark of difference has been taken away; for ceremonies have been abolished."³ Simply put, Gentiles do not have to practice Jewish ceremonial customs to be acceptable to God. They only need faith in Christ.

While this explanation certainly has exegetical merit, it does not seem to sufficiently take into account either the historical seriousness of the divisions addressed or the breadth of the promise to reconcile. You can take away all the outward symbols you want, but if your tribe or clan murdered my father or brother or raped my sister, I am going to need a lot more than "symbols" removed to destroy the hostility. Instead, I would suggest we find a better explanation in Colossians 2 where Paul tells us,

"When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins,¹⁴ having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross." Col 2:13-14

"Abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations" (Eph 2:15) is very close in terminology to "having canceled the written code with its regulations- he took it away, nailing it to the cross" (Col 2:14). The difference is that in the Colossian passage he is applying the peace purchased by Christ's death to our relationship with God, and in the Ephesians text he is applying it to our relationships with each other.

The "law with its commandments and regulations," as Paul refers to it in Ephesians 2, called for the death of all who broke the Law (Deut 28). Oppression and injustice call for judgment. Jews and Gentiles alike were, by the biblical account (Rom 3:9ff), both under a very deserved judgment from God, and no doubt, a justifiable judgment from one another. Just like many hostile tribes and nations today, they were stuck in a cycle of mutual animosity and judgment that each side deserved. What could break through all that hostility and bring unity? Only the death of Christ.

By taking on human flesh as a man while at the same time remaining fully God, and having been given the God-ordained position of acting as our legal representative (Rom 5), Jesus Christ offered himself on the Cross and the justified, deserved and lawfully required wrath of God that should have been poured out on Jew and Gentile, was instead poured out on Christ. The just condemnation of the Law was satisfied. The legitimate thirst for legitimate wrath and anger and due punishment were quenched. And here is what is critical- both God's wrath towards us and our wrath towards one another has been fully addressed. Peace has been purchased. The deepest penalty for sin, the brokenness and the demand for vengeance (condemning someone to hell) that lies deep in the heart and psyche of the offended person- - was paid by Christ on the Cross. Peace has been purchased.

³ Calvin's New Testament Commentaries, Galatians Ephesians Philippians and Colossians, Eerdmans 1976, p. 151ff.

It is one thing to make this last statement and claim this reality of peace, but on a practical level, what makes this “work” as the basis of reconciliation? How do we enter into this peace so that we can truly love our enemy and embrace one another in peace? There is only one good, biblical answer: the reality that every one of us is guilty of sins worthy of the same punishment and wrath that we truly believe God ought to inflict on our enemies (Rom 3:10ff). We were all “dead in transgressions and sins” (Eph 2:1ff.). There is no one who is righteous, not even one! (Rom 3:10). The kinds of sin we are all guilty of are not simple, fairly innocuous sins of uttering a curse word or cheating just a little bit on our taxes, or occasionally losing our temper. Instead we are all guilty of acting in oppressive ways- even those who have been oppressed. We have all shed innocent blood, if not actively and intentionally, then through passive neglect (Isa 1:21-23, 5:8-13, Amos 6:1-7, Mt 23:23, 24). Only the blindly self-righteous can hold themselves apart from other forgiven believers and refuse to be reconciled. This is something intuitive to every believer who has truly, personally experienced the love of God in Christ (1 John 2:20), but still needs to be taught because of the ongoing stubbornness of our hearts (Acts 10; Gal 2:11ff). When we fully realize the wrath of God against us has been satisfied and we have received real forgiveness, it gives us the perspective both to forgive others and to embrace them as equal members of the family.

That forgiveness costs us something. We must bear the cost of turning away from anger and retribution, and suffer some of the cost of lost loved ones, lost property, and sometimes lost physical health and the emotional stress and spiritual warfare that can go with it. I traveled to Uganda in 1995 for a month long stay and visited four major regions throughout the country. There was no city, no village that was without scars from the Idi Amin reign of terror during the late 1970’s. One of the more striking realities was simply the sheer number people who had lost an arm or leg or were in some way permanently disabled by being shot as they passed through check points- oftentimes by child soldiers. In addition, nearly everyone had family members killed. How could anyone in that situation ever learn to forgive and not simply spiral down into a cycle of vengeance and destruction? The freedom to embrace and bear the cost of forgiving is found in the reality of knowing the ultimate penalty for all our sin has been paid for at the Cross. Christ has suffered the very agony of hell- the judgment of eternal separation and punishment from God- on our behalf, and fills us with a freedom to love and forgive others that can only be explained as the supernatural work of the Spirit applying the work of Christ in our hearts.

But there is more. We are not simply in a state where we can now forgive and love; the work of Christ on the Cross actually made us one: “he himself is our peace, who has made the two one” (Eph 2:14). This is reminiscent of the language used by Jesus in Matthew 19:6 to describe marriage, “What therefore God has joined together, let man not separate” (cf. Gen 2:24). In both instances it is something God Himself has done to us. Later in Ephesians Paul will talk about the unity of the marriage relationship and the commitment of husbands and wives to love one another with these words:

“After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church-- for we are members of his body. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a profound mystery-- but I am talking about Christ and the church.” Eph 5:29-32

Two people becoming one flesh, under the Lordship of Christ, is the perfect analogy to the church described in Ephesians 2: two formerly hostile groups becoming one new man, under the Lordship of Christ. Just as husband and wife must work out their oneness, so the people of God must intentionally be committed to developing and expressing the unity that is already purchased for us by Christ. There is, existentially, a reality to the marriage unity. This is what makes divorce so hard, so tragic and devastating in its effect. Whether a couple understands the implications of the marriage vows or not, the reality is that God sees them and binds the two people inextricably together. Couples cannot escape this reality. God “hates divorce” because it is a fundamental breaking of a deep covenant obligation (Mal 2:14) and is therefore often connected to violence (Mal 2:16). In the church, the reality of our existential oneness exists as well. Whether we are free enough to acknowledge it or not, our separation creates all kinds of negative effects, some of which we will address later. We simply cannot be made “one” by God and then ignore that reality and not expect negative fallout.

In order to draw us more fully into a practical mindset to understand and apply the depth of our unity, Paul goes on to tell us:

“For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.” Ephesians 2:18-22

The family unity is complete. We have the same Holy Spirit inside and we all have access to the same Father. Echoing Old Testament references to the foreigner and alien, and the promise of Isaiah, “Let no foreigner who has bound himself to the LORD say, “The LORD will surely exclude me from his people” (Isa 56:3), Paul tells us in every way he can that we are united: as fellow citizens; as members of one household family; as those having the same foundation and the same chief cornerstone- Christ. He expands the foundation imagery to say we are all being built into one structure, one building that is actually the holy temple of God. The comparison to the original Temple could not be missed. We are the new dwelling place of the Spirit of God (1 Kings 8:10ff.) and the emphasis is on all of us, Jew and Gentile, being built “together.”

What are the practical, negative effects of ignoring this unity? To name a few: a toleration and practice of slavery and continued racism in the West, Apartheid in South Africa, and just as horrendous, tribal oppression in Africa- sometimes practiced or at minimum permitted by “the blind eye” of Christians within the church.

Justin is a member of the Banyamulenge tribe of Eastern Congo, from a village known as Muzinda. He is a Christian, with a vibrant, living faith in Christ. So are many of the other members of his tribe, and importantly, so are many members of other tribes in that region of Congo. However there is little to no practical tribal reconciliation being practiced. In 1996 Laurent Kabila began the overthrow of long time dictator Mobutu Sese with the aid of Rwandan mercenaries. Justin's tribal background is Tutsi-Rwandan. Even though his family has lived in Eastern Congo for three generations, the new regime under Kabila decided to rid the country of

the Rwandans after they were done using them in their war, and made a concerted effort to not only destroy Justin's village and claim the property for their own, but to commit genocide and wipe this small tribe off the face of the earth. They not only raped, killed and burned the village to the ground, they also pursued the Banyamulenge into refugee camps and tried to kill them there⁴. Certainly the church in eastern Congo is not directly responsible for these things. But what they are responsible for is a failure to be salt and light in their community by embracing one another, walking together and standing with one another in this time of crisis. Who knows the effect their reconciliation would have had on the broader community and the possible mitigating effect on this cruel display of hatred? The same question can be asked about the negative side effects of a lack of reconciliation in the church around issues of civil rights for black Americans in the U.S., Apartheid in South Africa and the recent election riots in Kenya between Luo and Kikuyu.

Is reconciliation possible for Justin and other surviving members of his tribe, not only with their enemies, but even with their fellow Christians who did not stand with them? Justin is a member of our church in St Louis, Missouri and we have had the privilege of hearing and seeing the love and forgiveness God has put in his heart. In his own words he has told us, "I have forgiven my enemies; I embrace my brothers and sisters in the Lord."⁵ How can a young man who has endured so much not be consumed by bitterness, but instead be filled with God's love for the very people who betrayed him? "He himself is our peace, who has made the two one."

The glory of the new Temple structure, the living body of Christ, that God is shaping us into is further described in Ephesians 3. Paul starts to tell the church how he is praying for our understanding to blossom and grow under the power of the Spirit to lay hold of the breadth the reconciliation of the Gospel brings, but he stops for a moment to reflect on the grace of God poured out through him to be an administrator and messenger of this reconciliation to the Gentiles. Paul's use of this phrase- "the administration of God's grace given to me for you... that through the Gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members of together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus" (Eph 3:2,6) is a revealing perspective on his view of his ministry. He was not just starting churches. He was planting reconciliation-based churches and saw himself as an Apostolic administrator of God's plan to fulfill his eternal purpose described in Eph 1:9,10.

Paul then reveals something profound about the nature of the reconciled church:

"His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence." Eph 3:10-12

The word "manifold" is best translated as "multi-faceted" or "much varied" and is even used in the sense of "marked with a great variety of colors."⁶ Now, the full, multi-faceted wisdom of God would be made known through a multi-ethnic church. What is this wisdom? It is not

⁴ <http://www.dailykos.com/story/2009/3/23/712033/-The-Last-Survivor:-Mambo-Sawa-Sawa>

⁵ Based on a personal testimony interview April 3, 2009

⁶ <http://www.studydrive.org/lex/grk/view.cgi?number=4182;>

simply the ability and understanding to apply knowledge in a practical way to solve problems. For God's people, wisdom is about the application of justice. Solomon prayed for wisdom –“a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong” (1 Kings 1:9) - and God answered him with, “discernment in administering justice” (1 Kings 1:11, 12). Jesus Christ was wisdom on display (Mt 12:42) and he was filled with the Spirit to bring justice to the nations (Isa 42:1). That meant he would not “judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth” (Isa 11:3,4). Now the whole church (Acts 2) is filled with the Spirit and through this ingathering and unity of believers from every nation and tongue, the wisdom of God, bringing justice to the nations through the word and deed of the Gospel (Acts 1:1ff), becomes a display of his glory that all rulers, and even authorities in the heavenly realms must acknowledge. This was the original purpose of God creating all this human diversity – so that our unity and diversity might reflect the glorious (full of goodness) unity and diversity of the Godhead. In Christ, this purpose is now to be finally and fully realized through the church.

When Paul returns to his prayer for the church in Ephesians 3, he prays to the “Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name” (Eph 3:14). And what is his prayer? That we would have the love of Christ and the power of the Spirit “to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ” (Eph 3:17,18); in context, it seems, a specific reference to the extent of Christ's love to bring people together from every tribe, tongue, language and nation (Rev. 5:9,10) to manifest his glory and wisdom. In fact, he wants us to know, in this matter of reconciliation and the manifestation of his glory, that God is able to do more than we could ever imagine (Eph 3:20,21).

It is no wonder Paul appeals to the diverse churches of the Roman Empire in Ephesians 4-

“As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit-- just as you were called to one hope when you were called-- one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it” Eph 4:1-7.

The full manifestation of the glory and wisdom God intends to display through the church can only reach its maximum expression as the ethnic and socio-economic diversity of the body of the Christ works together, with each part contributing the gifting God has Sovereignly distributed to it for the sake of the whole (cf. Rom 12:3-5). We need pastors, evangelists, teachers and prophets from among the Greeks, Romans, Jews, Asians, Hispanics, Africans and African-Americans to help prepare God's people for works of service (cf Antioch, Acts 11:19ff) so that the whole body, from all the ethnic groups, may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and attain to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (Eph 4:11-13). The implication is clear: no one ethnic group of believers can attain this fullness of the expression of Christ in a segregated state. But that is really the focus of the third passage of Scripture in 1 Corinthians 12.