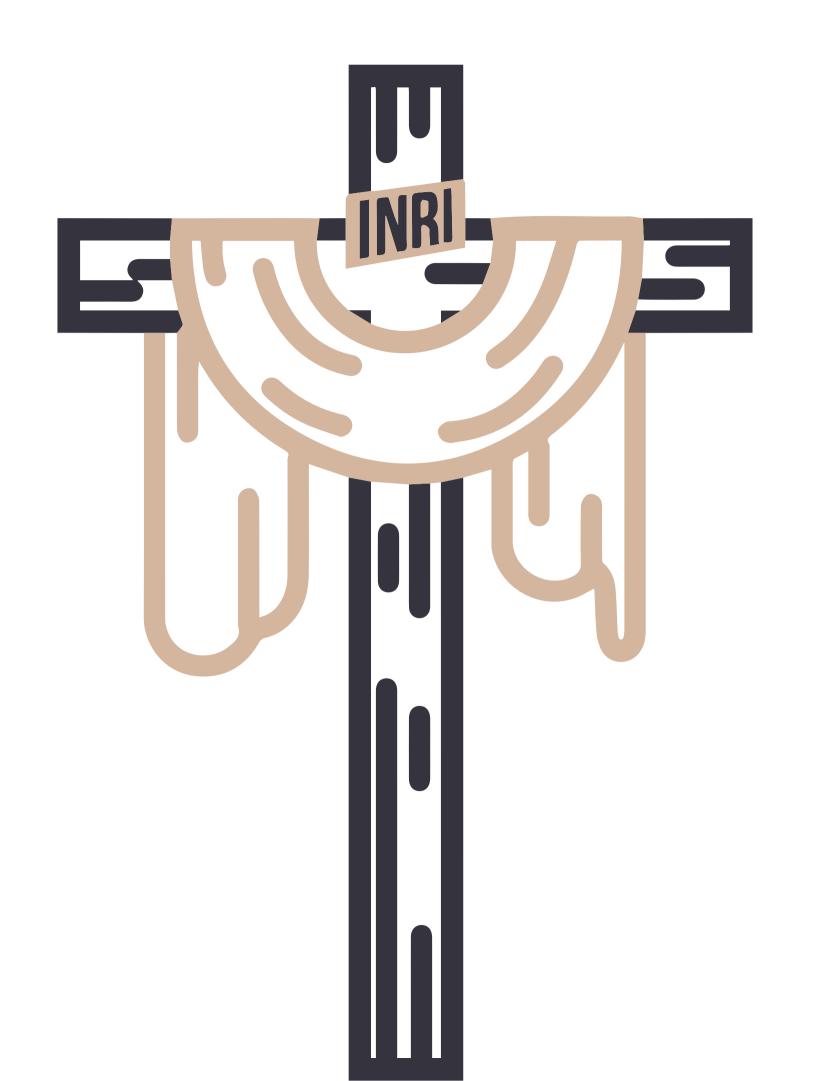
EPHESIANS
gospel project

Presented by Werner Mischke, D.D. & Kristin Caynor







Part 1

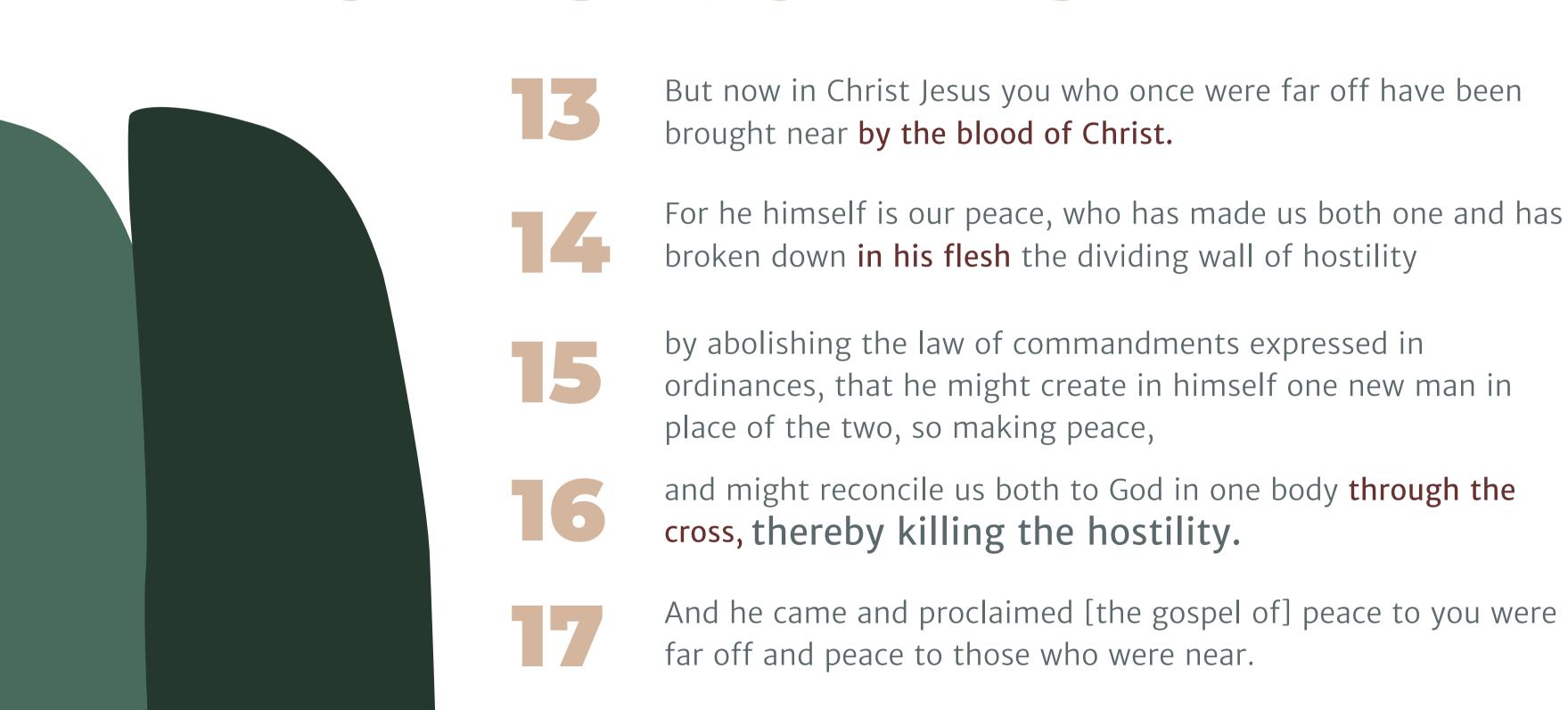
# KILLING THE HOSTILITY

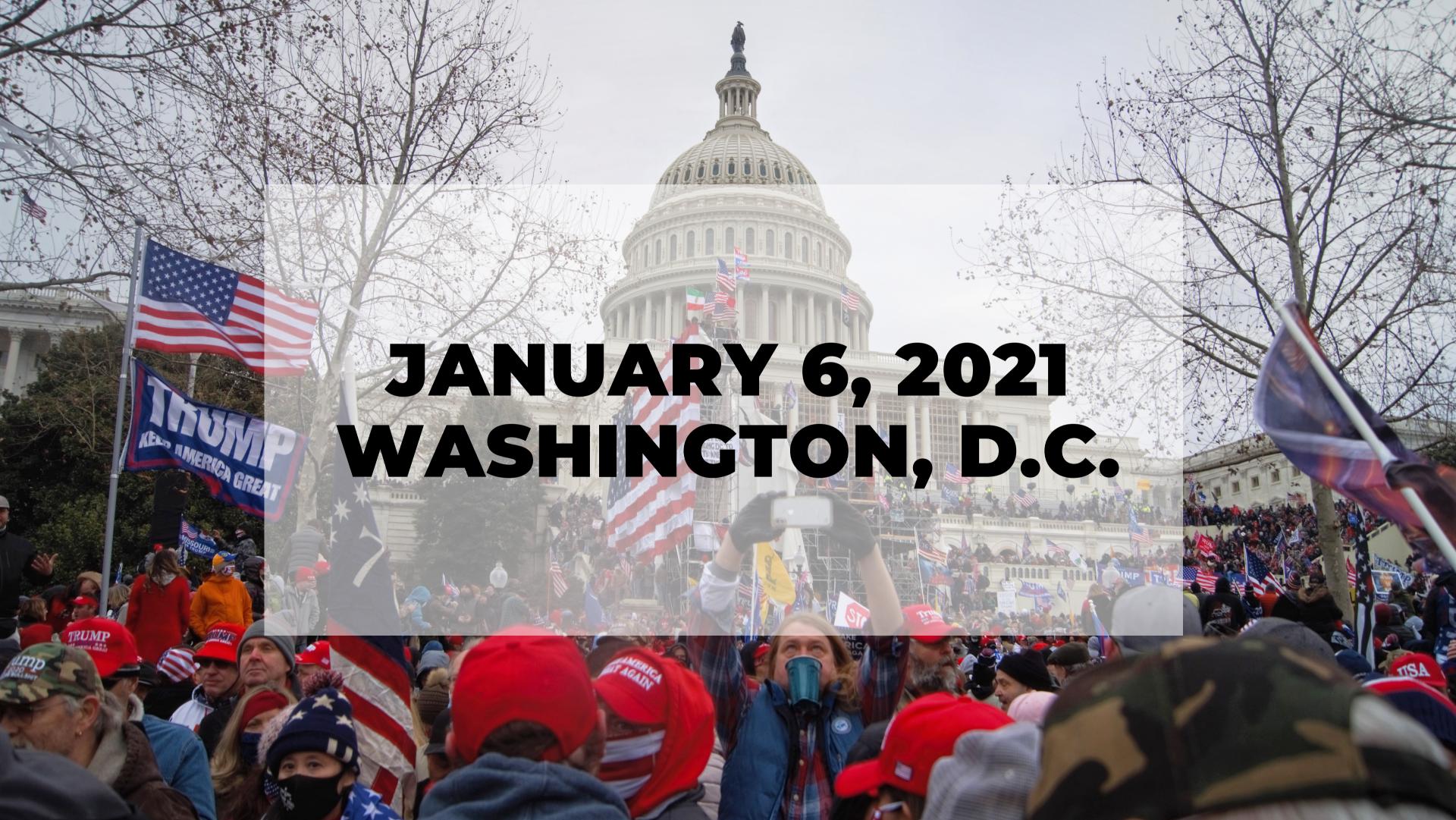
The Atonement Relative to Collective Identity Conflict in Ephesians Chapter 2

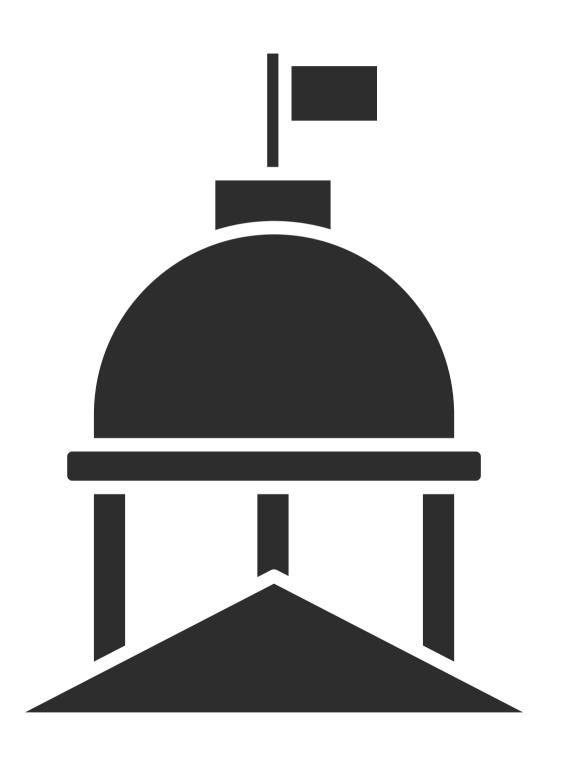
Werner Mischke, D.D.

yeah that's in the Bible. Ephesians 2:16 ESV, let's talk about it.

### EPHESIANS 2:13-17 ESV







The mob's intent was to overturn the 2020 presidential election.

Senators and Representatives narrowly escaped.

Many feared for their lives.

Five people were killed.

138 were police officers were injured.

## MANY IN THE MOB CLAIMED TO BE CHRISTIAN.

How can it be—that Americans confessing to be Christian—did this?

That morning I wept for shame as the name of Christ was dishonored through groupbased conflict ...

a kind of tribal violence.



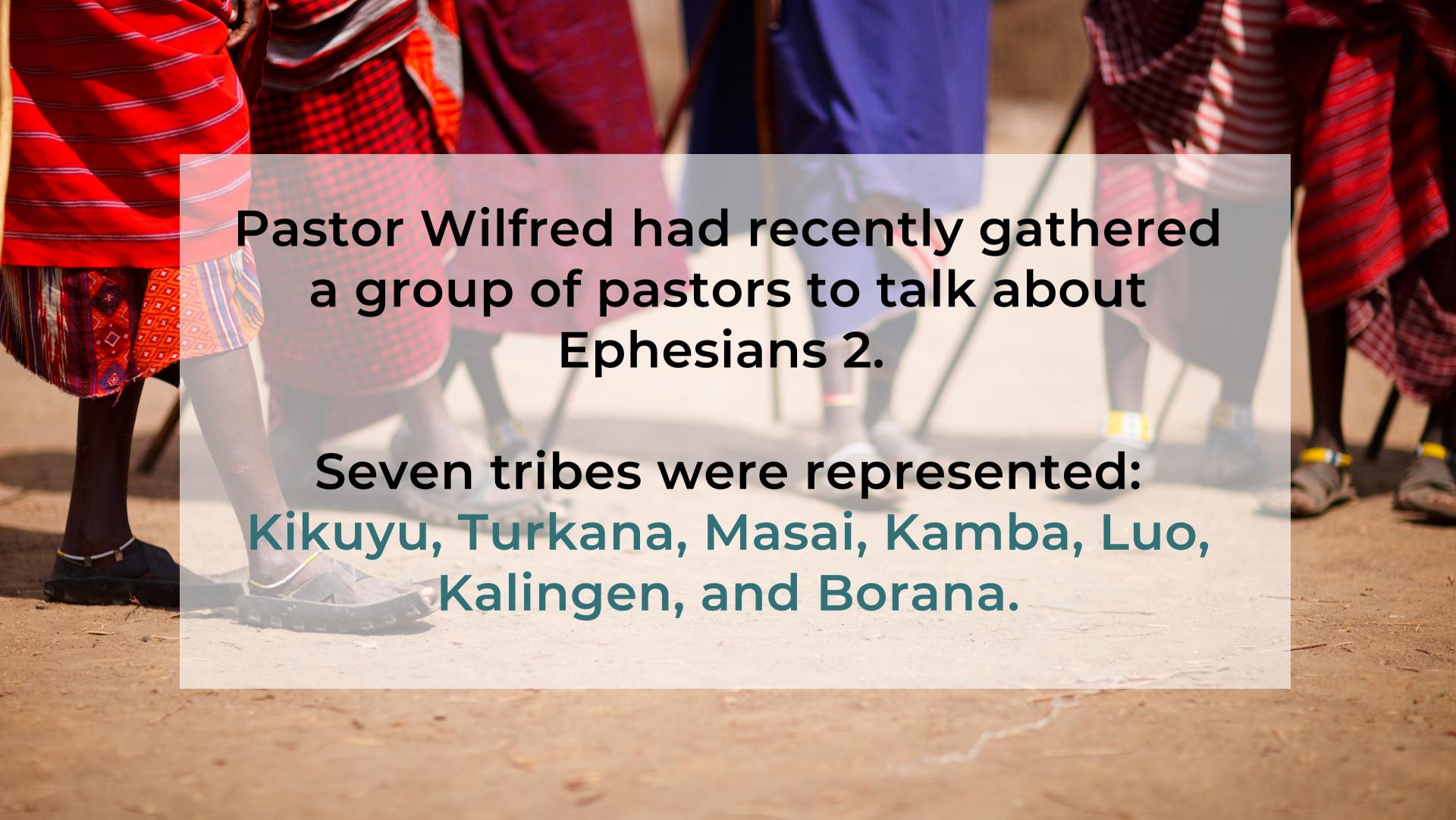
When groups feel threatened, they retreat into tribalism. They close ranks and become more insular, more defensive, more punitive, more us-versus-them.

-Amy Chua Law Professor, Yale University

Amy Chua, Political Tribes: Group Instinct and the Fate of Nations (New York: Penguin, 2018), 9–10.

Is there a gospel, a theology, that speaks to the problem of tribalism and collective identity conflict?

On August 17, 2021, I spoke Pastor Wilfred Githongo in Kenya, East Africa.





"We ate a meal. We drank tea. I asked them to each go into their own corner to read Ephesians 2."

Then Wilfred called them back together. They went to verses 13–17, reading carefully.

We teared it apart.
We sang. We prayed. We confessed tribal conflict in the church. We shared about sins we hid in our hearts.
We cried in great love. We went until 2:00 am.



I had asked Pastor Wilfred, "Did you learn in Bible college that Eph. 2:13-17 is part of the Bible's teaching about the cross? And that it speaks to tribal conflict in the church?"

"NO, WE NEVER LEARNED THAT."

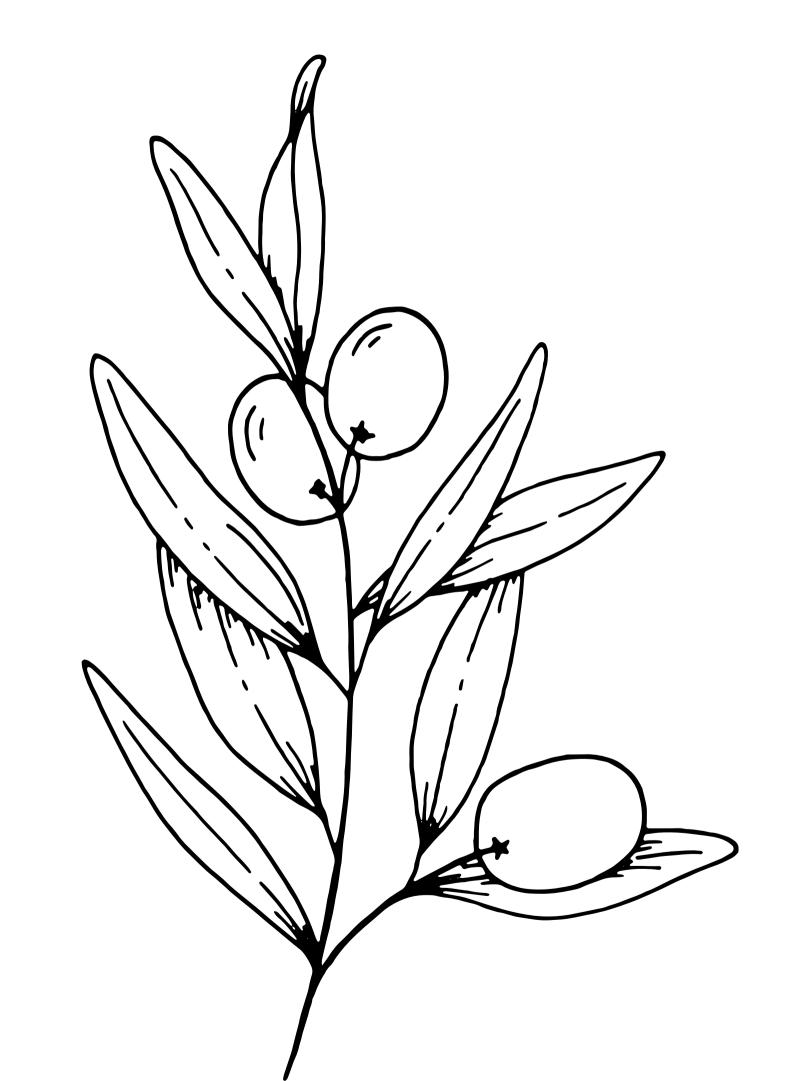
## KENYA

is said to be 85% Christian.

Yet, the nation is still much affected by tribal conflict.



Today, we are introducing the Ephesians 2 Gospel Project. We invite the fellowship of our Mission ONE partners and other leaders in the Global Church in a quest to address this mystery.





### MYSTERY

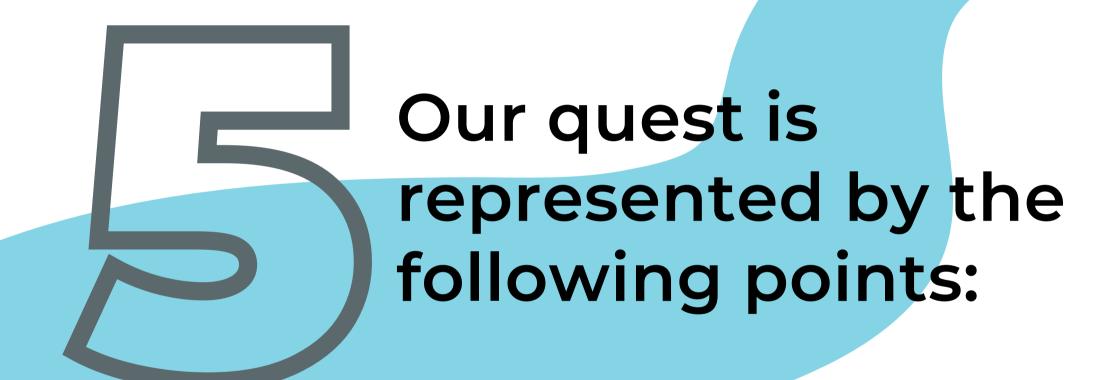
Why is Ephesians 2:11–22, a text addressing groupbased conflict, widely ignored as part of the gospel—despite its significant atonementand-gospel content?



### MYSTERY

We are also extending an invitation:

We invite the fellowship of our partners in India and other leaders in the Global Church in a quest to address this mystery.



# PROBLEM — GROUP HOSTILITY

We have much group-against-group conflict in the church. Racism, tribalism, casteism, nationalism—these idolatries dishonor God and cause much suffering.



# SOLUTION — THE GOSPEL

—with all its social implications. There is a social, horizontal dimension to the gospel of Christ because there is a social, horizontal dimension to the atonement of Christ. The gospel of peace offers reconciliation to groups in conflict (Eph. 2:13–17).



# DESIRE—GLOBAL HERMENEUTIC

We desire an international conversation of scholars to explore collective identity conflict relative to:

- Sin / Atonement
- Other dynamics



# SHORT TERM GOAL— A BOOK

along with companion resources that are by and for the Global Church.



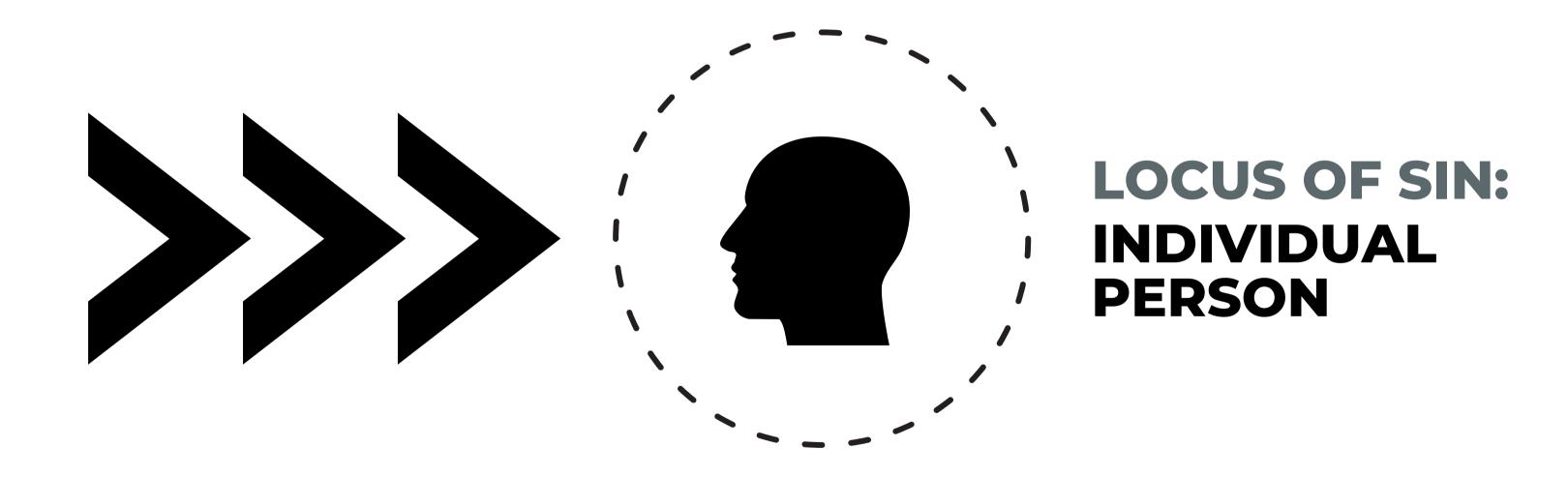
# LONG TERM IMPACT— SHALOM

We envision God's people embodying Christ's peacemaking work—his shalom—through the gospel.



[S]in is any failure to conform to the moral law of God in act, attitude, or nature. Sin is here defined in relation to God and his moral law. Sin includes not only individual acts, such as stealing, lying, and committing murder, but also attitudes that are contrary to the attitudes God requires of us.

-Wayne Grudem Systematic Theology "[S]in is any failure to conform to the moral law of God in act, attitude, or nature."



lagree

Individuals fail to conform to the moral law of God.

Individuals steal.
Individuals commit murder.

Individuals have selfish attitudes.



## We all know this is true.

However, in the Bible, we also observe:

The failure to conform to the moral law of God exists within the individual and outside the individual.

The Bible reveals that sin also exists at the supernatural cosmic realm, as well as in the familial, tribal, civic, corporate, national, and imperial levels.



In the West, the dominant model of sin and salvation ... has long relied on a courtroom analogy.

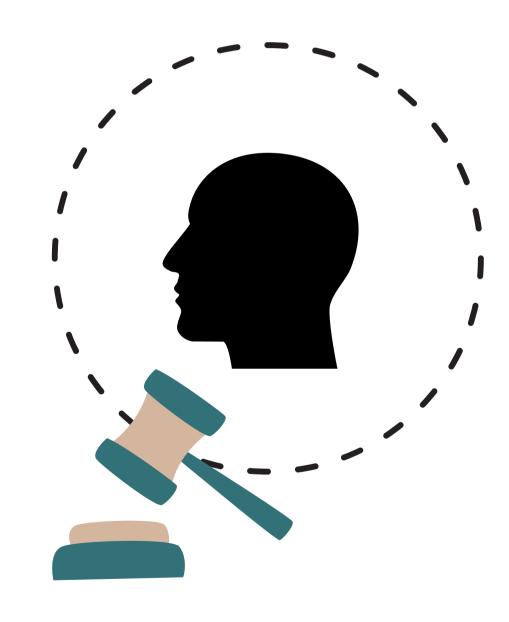
-Mark Biddle
Missing the Mark:
Sin and Its Consequences in
Biblical Theology

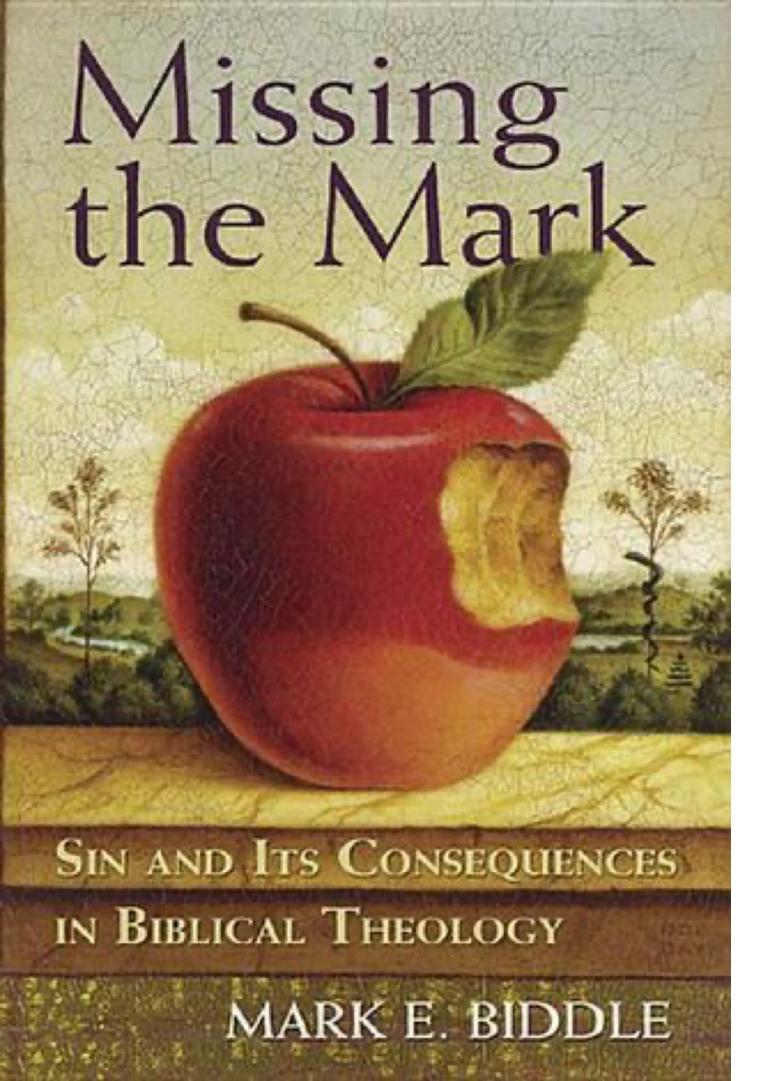


Mark Biddle, Missing the Mark: Sin and Its Consequences in Biblical Theology (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), viii.

## "LEGAL FRAMEWORK"

- violation of God's law
- the crime of sin
- individual guilt
- penalty of death







Biddle says this framework "addresses certain aspects of the problem of human existence. Yet, although dominant in the Western popular mind, it does not fully reflect the biblical witness."

Mark Biddle, Missing the Mark: Sin and Its Consequences in Biblical Theology (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), viii.

### RANGE OF HUMAN GROUPINGS IN THE BIBLE CRITIQUED OR JUDGED-SINGLE TO INDIVIDUAL TO ALL HUMANITY, EXAMPLES

### SMALLER TO LARGER TO ALL HUMANITY

### **CITY CHURCH** PEOPLE-NATION **EMPIRE** FAMILY/TRIBE Babel Corinth **ISRAEL** Gen 11:1-9 1 Cor 3:1-4 **HUMANITY PERSONS** Egypt • Num 14: • "to the third Jericho Galatia Exo 1-12 26-30 and fourth Jos 6 Gal 1:1-7 Adam as humanity Adam / Eve • Jud 2:11-Babylon generation" Jerusalem Seven Gen 3 Gen 3:1-7 15; 3:7; 6:1 Isa 46, Exo 20:5 Eze 5:5–12 Churches 1 Cor 15:45; Cain Aaron & • Deut 28:64 Rev 14:8 Nineveh Rev 2-3 Rom 5:12-14 Gen 4:8-10 • Hos 1–14 Rev 18 family Jon 1-4 • "all" David • Eze 22 Four beasts Num 18:1 Babylon Rom 1:18-21; 3:23; 2 Sam 11 Aachen & • Rom 9–11 (empires) Rev 18:9-24 Rom 5:12, 18 Ps 51 Dan 7:1-8 family **EGYPT** "condemned Jos 7:19-25 **Emphasizing** • Isa 46 already" Benjamin individuals: • Eze 29–32 John 3:18 Jud 20 • Deu 24:16 **MAGOG** Ananias & • Eze 18:19–20 • Eze 38–39 Sapphira • John 3:16 **VARIOUS** Acts 5:1-11 John 9:1–3

Rev 20:15

• Rev 17:15

Rev 18:23

## WOULD NOT A BIBLICALLY ROBUST THEOLOGY ADDRESS THE PROBLEM OF HUMAN SIN ACROSS A WIDE SPECTRUM OF HUMAN GROUPS?

### **CITY CHURCH** PEOPLE-NATION **EMPIRE FAMILY/TRIBE** Babel Corinth **ISRAEL** Gen 11:1-9 1 Cor 3:1-4 **HUMANITY PERSONS** • Num 14: Egypt • "to the third Jericho Galatia Exo 1-12 26-30 and fourth Jos 6 Gal 1:1-7 Adam as humanity Adam / Eve • Jud 2:11-Babylon generation" • Jerusalem Seven Gen 3 Gen 3:1-7 15; 3:7; 6:1 Isa 46, Exo 20:5 Eze 5:5-12 Churches 1 Cor 15:45; Cain Aaron & • Deut 28:64 Rev 14:8 Nineveh Rev 2-3 Rom 5:12-14 Gen 4:8-10 Rev 18 • Hos 1–14 family Jon 1-4 • "all" David • Eze 22 Four beasts Num 18:1 Babylon Rom 1:18-21; 3:23; 2 Sam 11 Aachen & • Rom 9–11 (empires) Rev 18:9-24 Rom 5:12, 18 Ps 51 Dan 7:1-8 family **EGYPT** "condemned Jos 7:19-25 **Emphasizing** • Isa 46 already" Benjamin individuals: • Eze 29–32 John 3:18 Jud 20 • Deu 24:16 **MAGOG** Ananias & • Eze 18:19-20 • Eze 38–39 Sapphira • John 3:16 **VARIOUS** Acts 5:1-11 • John 9:1–3 • Rev 17:15 Rev 20:15 Rev 18:23

# TRIBAL CONFLICT

WE DO NOT TALK ABOUT TRIBAL VIOLENCE IN THE CHURCH. BUT EVERYONE KNOWS IT.

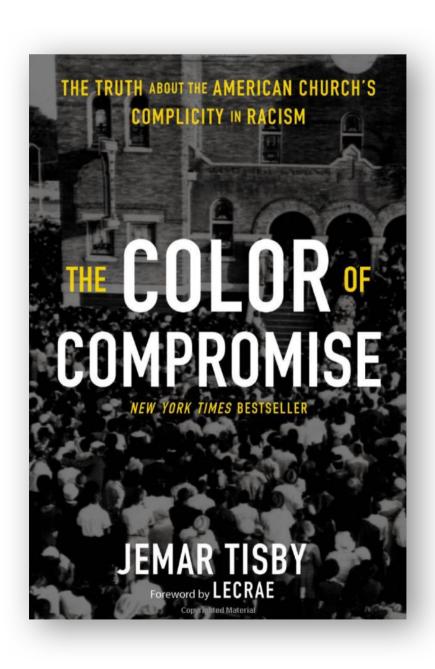
-PASTOR WILFRED GITHONGO, KENYA

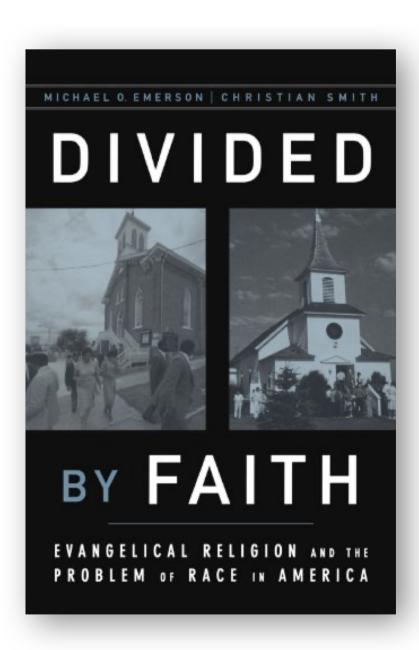
WE NEVER TALK ABOUT IT.

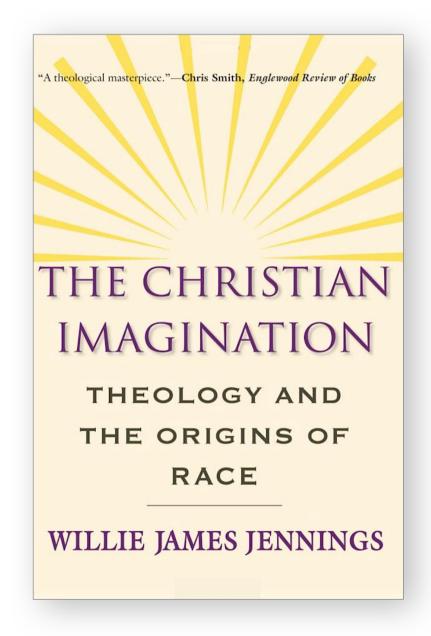
-PASTOR IDRIS NALOS, SOUTH SUDAN In America, racial division in her churches has for 500 years been a national sin, and a local community sin.

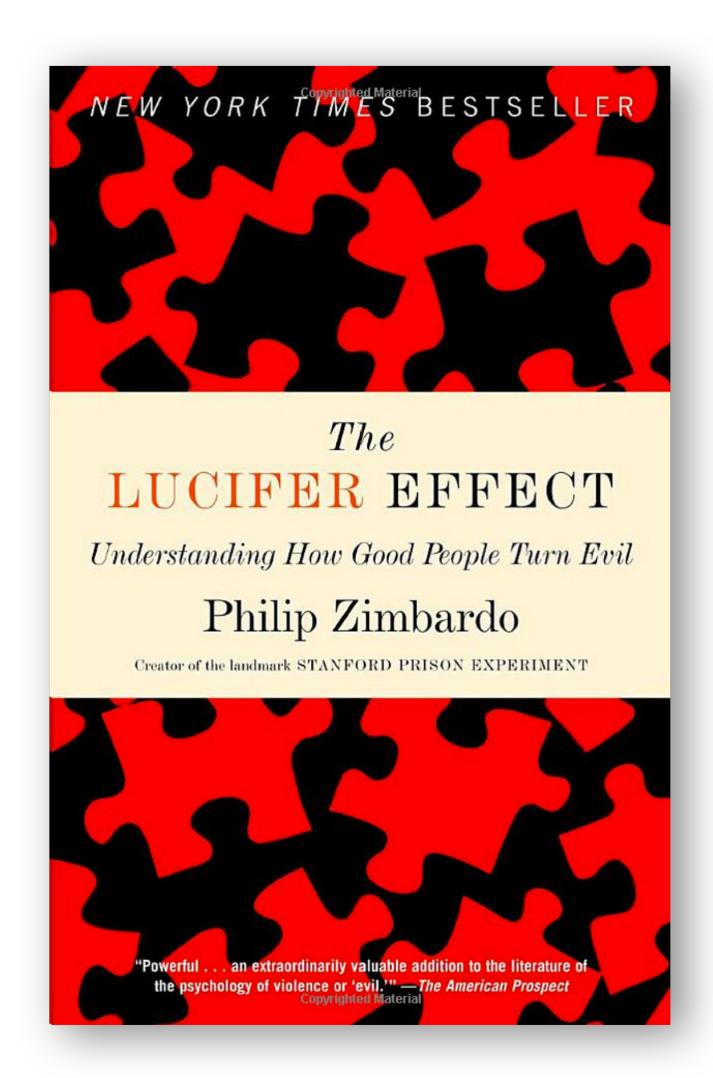
Pastors have often reinforced this sin—sometimes by theology, sometimes by outright exclusion and white supremacy, most often by silence.

## This has been documented in many books. Here are three classics:









The social sciences also offer powerful evidence that evil exists in collective and systemic ways in society.

## THE LUCIFER EFFECT:

Understanding How Good People Turn Evil by Philip Zimbardo

Zimbardo, Philip. The Lucifer Effect (p. 2). Random House Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

A large body of evidence in social psychology supports the concept that situational power triumphs over individual power in given contexts. However, most psychologists have been insensitive to the deeper sources of power ...



Zimbardo, Philip. The Lucifer Effect (p. 2). Random House Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

... in the political, economic, religious, historic, and cultural matrix that defines situations. A full understanding of the dynamics of human behavior requires that we recognize the extent and limits of personal power, situational power, and systemic power.

-Philip Zimbardo Psychologist, Professor Emeritus, Stanford University

## ZIMBARDO'S THREE CATEGORIES OF POWERS

personal

individual

situational

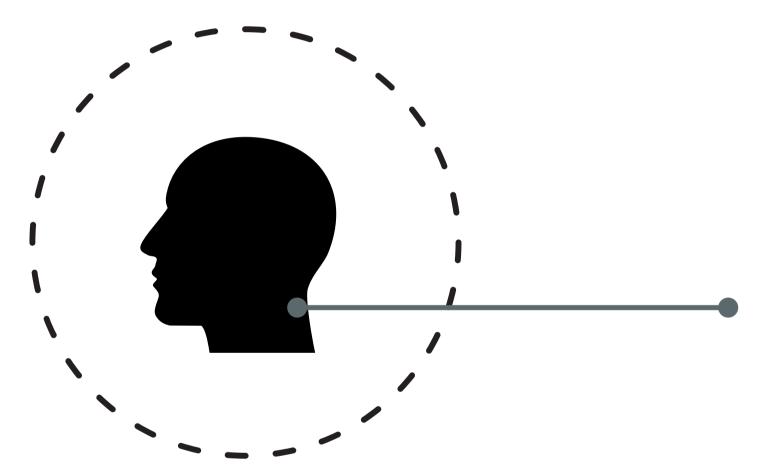
social

systemic

cosmic

1

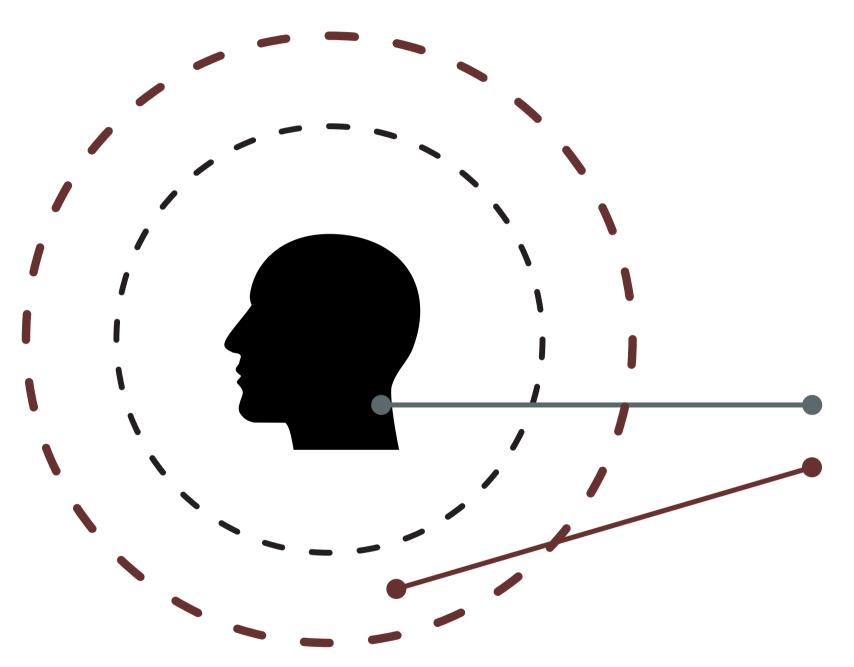
3



### SIN:

## an interaction of forces

1) Personal/individual
Power of individual persons to
choose, create, and move—toward
self-destruction, or toward human
flourishing



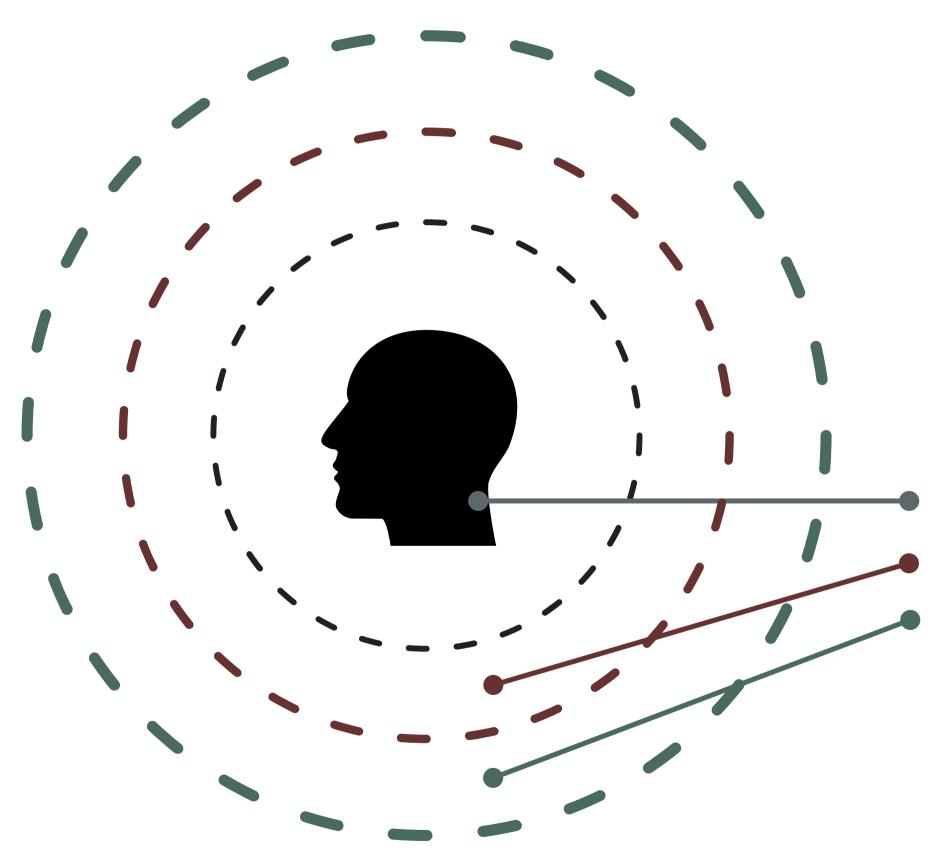
## SIN:

## an interaction of forces

#### 1) Personal/individual

#### 2) Situational/social

Power of the situation and social groups—family, network, tribe, community, friends, social location, all forms of media.

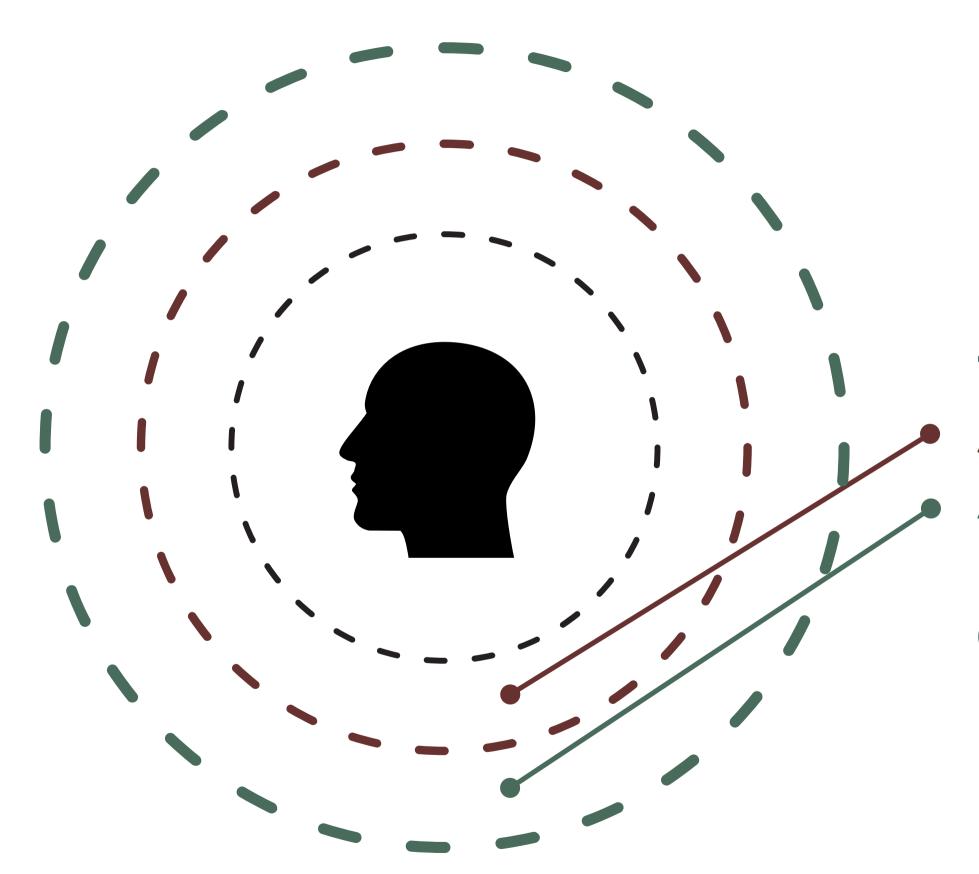


### SIN:

## an interaction of forces

- 1) Personal/individual
- 2) Situational/social
- 3) Systemic/cosmic

Power of spiritual forces, worldview, dogma, religion, family traditions, empire, economics, culture



Have theologians been insensitive to the power of situational/social or systemic/cosmic evil in collective identity conflict sin?

# THREE NATIONAL TRAGEDIES

- 1. Holocaust in Germany
- 2.1994 genocide in Rwanda
- 3. Slavery / racism in America

# THREE NATIONAL TRAGEDIES

1. Holocausti Cermany

2. Saganocide at Iva Saga

## THE CONTRADICTION IS THIS:

Widespread social and systemic evil occurring despite the widespread impact of Christianity.



To what degree have the church or various theologies been complicit with violence in these tragedies?

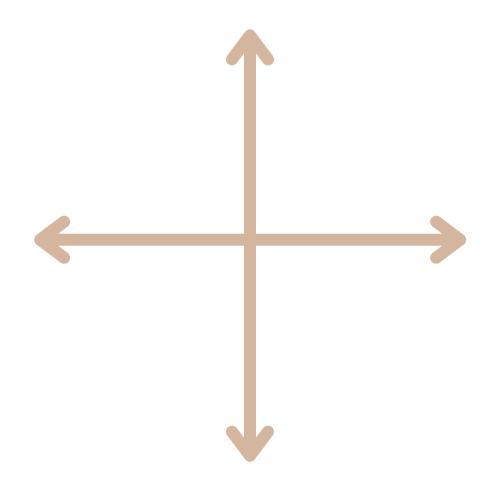
Our quest is to share lessons learned with the Global Church.



### DEFINITION

"The atonement is the work Christ did in his life and death to earn our salvation."\*

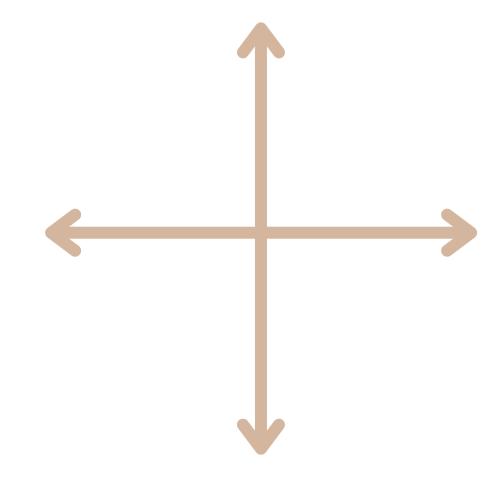
As we will show, the scope of that salvation includes both vertical and horizontal dimensions.



<sup>\*</sup> Grudem, Systematic Theology, 1093

In the Ephesians 2 Gospel Project, we contend that the atonement of Christ offers a salvation to reconcile social-horizontal divisions and group hostilities in the family of God.

And this salvation removes social boundaries just as thick and hostile as what existed between Jews and Gentiles in first century Palestine.





The New Testament celebrates a salvific transformation that has both vertical and horizontal dimensions. Personal salvation in the New Testament is inextricably linked to ... the new humanity of Ephesians 2:15.

-Timothy TennenT President, Asbury Seminary There is both personal and corporate sin and personal and corporate dimensions to God's redemption.

-Paul Hiebert World-famous missiologist

Paul Hiebert, "The Gospel in Human Contexts: Changing Perceptions of Contextualization" in MissionShift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium, ed. Ed Stetzer and David Hesselgrave (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2010), 99.



Reconciliation through the cross of Christ has a horizontal and a vertical aspect. Humans are reconciled to each other, and both are joined in one community in a new, reconciled relationship to God.

-Lynn Cohick Provost and Dean of Academic Affairs, Northern Seminary

Lynn H. Cohick: The Letter to the Ephesians (New International Commentary on the New Testament (NICNT), 225. Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

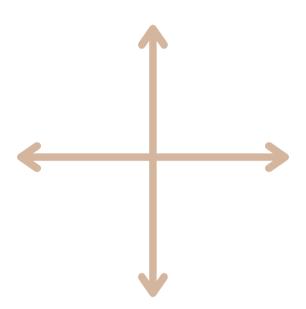
Traditionally, theories of atonement have tended to [focus] on the removal of barriers between individuals and God. However, here [Eph. 2:11-22] the concrete barrier being removed by the death of Christ is the one which separates human groups from each other.

-John Driver Biblical scholar, writer, missionary



John Driver: Understanding the Atonement for the Mission of the Church (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1986), 220.

### EPHESIANS 2:13-17



Why is this gospel text concerning the social effects of the atonement so widely ignored?



### I met with Ugandan Christian leader Calvin Echodu

Calvin Echodu is the Founder of Pilgrim Africa, and a candidate for elected office in Uganda's Parliament.

"and might reconcile us to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility." -Eph. 2:16



"I grew up where that text was preached."

REALLY?

"and might reconcile us to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility." –Eph. 2:16



"Yes. And this is why there is tribal reconciliation in the church in Uganda. ...

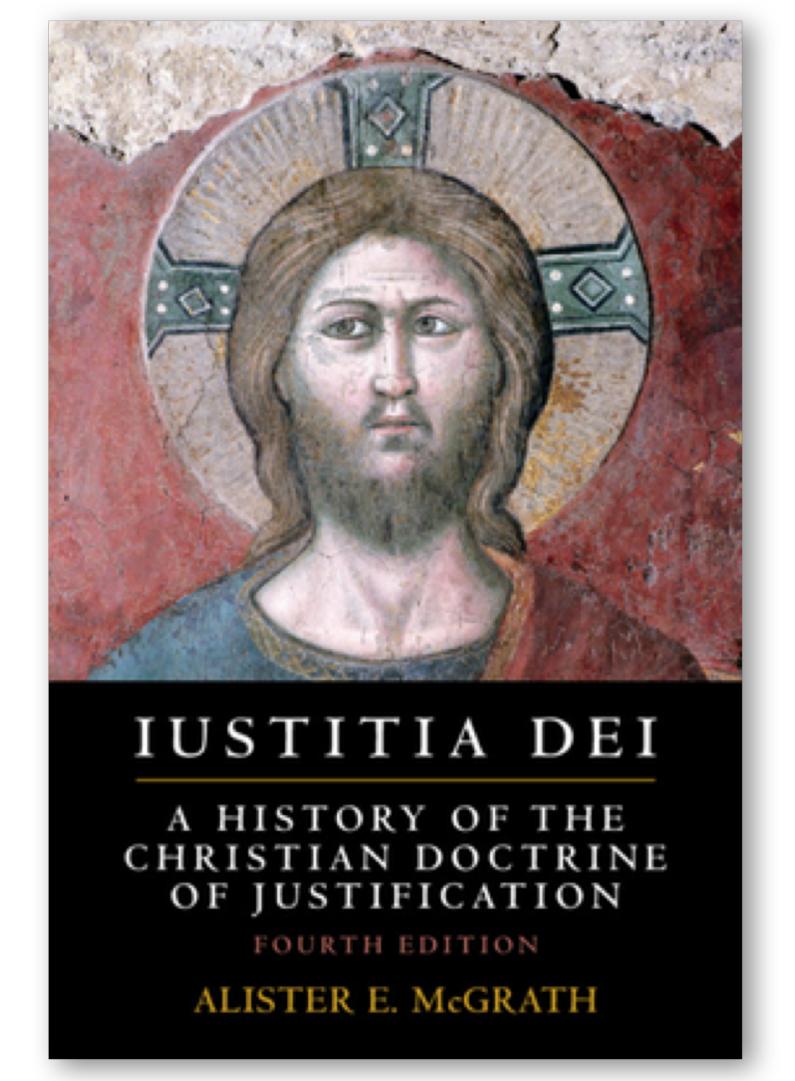
The hatred was SO BAD.

The racial and tribal divisions in Uganda were SO BAD.

But in the last 25 years, the church has taught this text and it has brought healing."



"The tribal distinctions and differences are still there, but the hostility is gone."



## Justification by faith is not the whole gospel

"For a relatively short yet theologically significant period, the reconciliation of humanity would be discussed within the entire western theological tradition primarily in terms of 'justification by faith' (Romans 5:1)."

Alister E. McGrath: *lustitia Dei* (pp. 7-8). Cambridge University Press. Kindle Edition.



Today, the saving work of the cross of Christ is still primarily taught in evangelicalism as justification by faith, thereby excluding other **New Testament texts** such as Eph. 2:13–17 which emphasize the horizontal effects of the atonement.

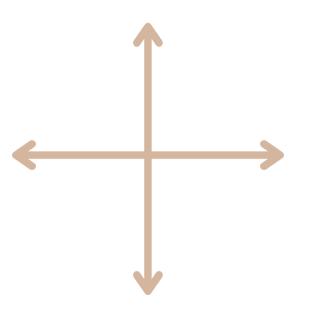
This exclusion is plainly seen in Wayne Grudem's widely used Systematic Theology. In the chapter on the atonement, not one mention is given to Eph. 2:13-17, despite the density of material in those verses relative to the blood (v 13), the cross (v 16), his flesh (v 14), killing the hostility (v 16), and the 'gospel of peace' (v 17).

In fact, Eph. 2:13–17 is mentioned nowhere in the entire volume.

It must be noted that Dr. Grudem's work *Christian Ethics* gives ample attention to Eph. 2:13–17 in describing the cross-cultural unity of the church.

But this begs the question:

### EPHESIANS 2:13-17



On what basis is this text about the effects of the atonement included in Christian ethics, but excluded from atonement doctrine in systematic theology? Now, we dare not dispute the truthfulness of the vertical reconciliation of individual persons to God, through justification by faith.



## We compromise the gospel when we [merely] settle for the truth.

-Jackson Wu, PhD
Author,
Theologian-in-Residence, Mission ONE

We may rightly say our gospel presentation is true, but if our gospel preaching is merely individualistic, vertical, or legal in its framework, what gospel themes are silenced?

We are silent about the regal framework of the gospel of the kingdom. Silent that Jesus is King. Silent about Christ's victory over the powers of darkness.

And silent about the reconciling work of Christ "killing the hostility" between Jew and Gentile to create "one new man" (Eph. 2:15–16).

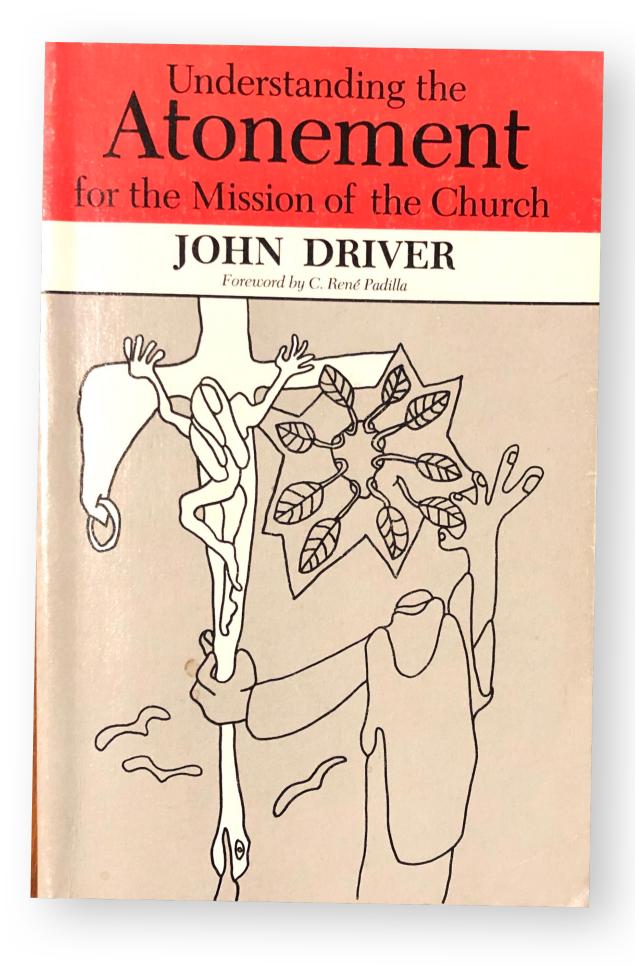
## QUESTION

What happens when theology is silent about Jew-versus-Gentile reconciliation through the atonement?

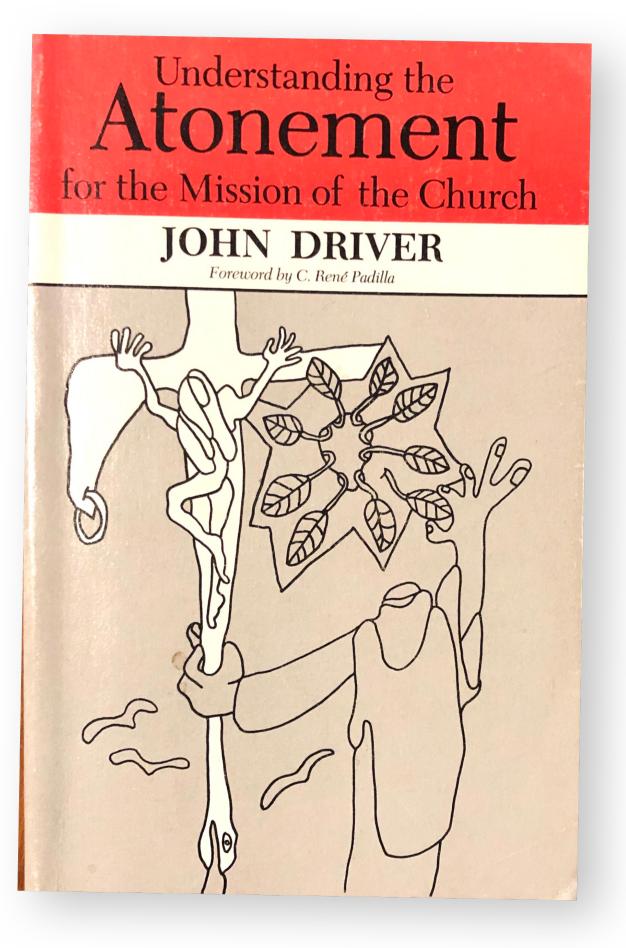
## ANSWER

Pastors remain silent about reconciliation through the atonement concerning collective identity conflicts in their own churches and communities.

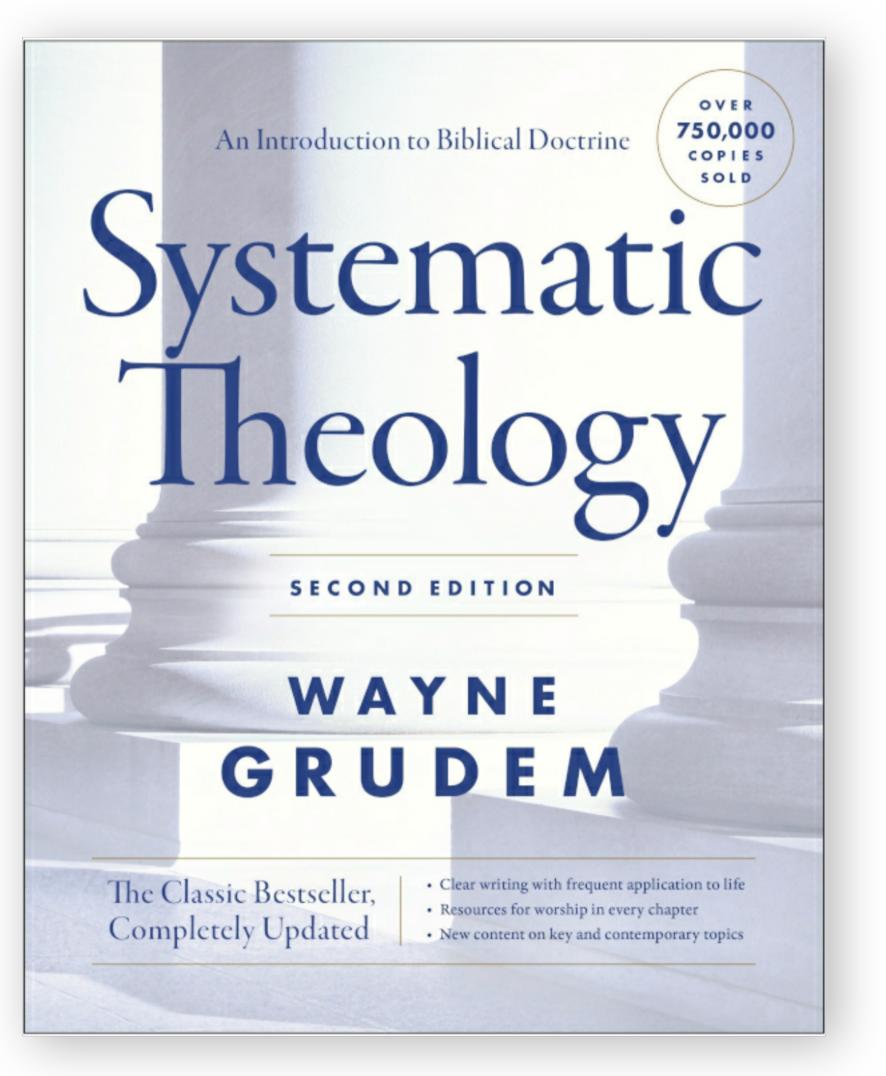
John Driver examines ten atonement motifs in his book Understanding the Atonement for the Mission of the Church. In chapter 13, he makes an astonishing claim:



In Ephesians Paul gathers up ... the various strands of thought about the work of Christ found in the New Testament. We find here direct references or allusions to all ten of the New Testament [atonement] images ... all ten of these motifs are present ... in the key passage of Ephesians 2:11–22.



Driver offers quite a contrast to the popular systematic theology textbook that has not one reference to the atonement verses in Ephesians 2.



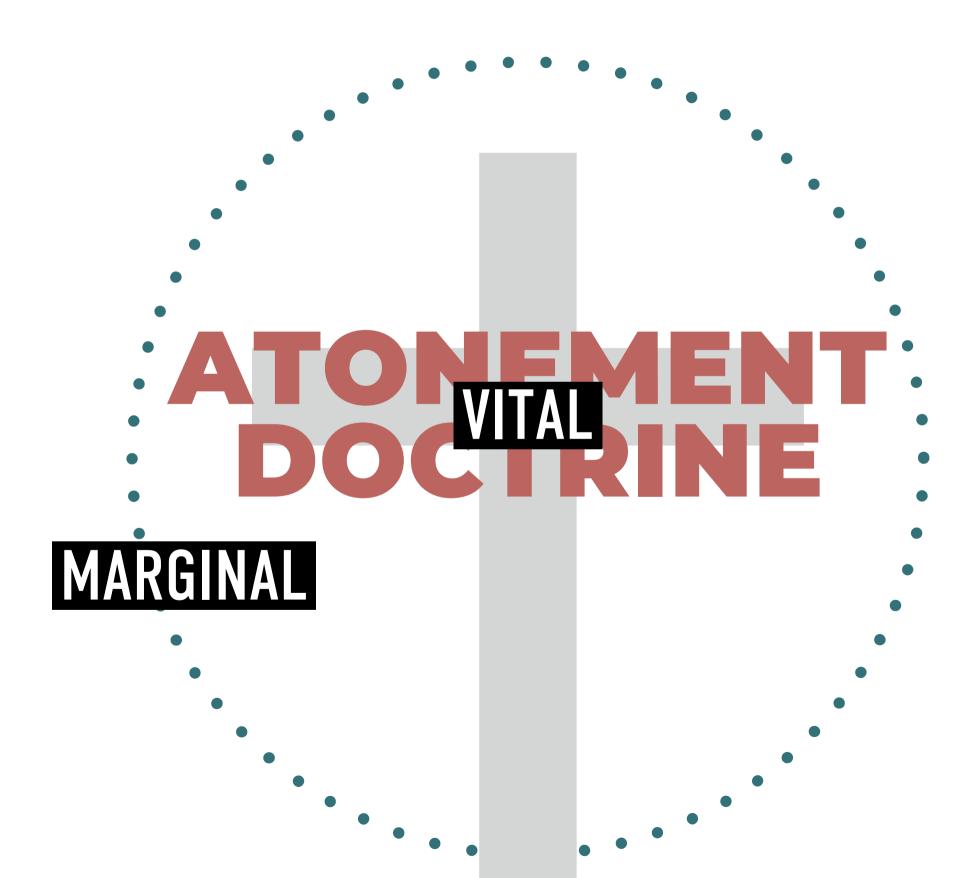
Ephesians 2:11–22 is the key and high point of Ephesians, a fundamental capstone to Pauline reflection on the meaning of the saving work of Christ.

-John Driver Biblical scholar, writer, missionary



# RELATIVE TO THE DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT, IS EPHESIANS 2:13–17 MARGINAL OR VITAL? IT'S DISPUTED.

# EPHESIANS 2:13-17



### EPHESIANS 2:13-17

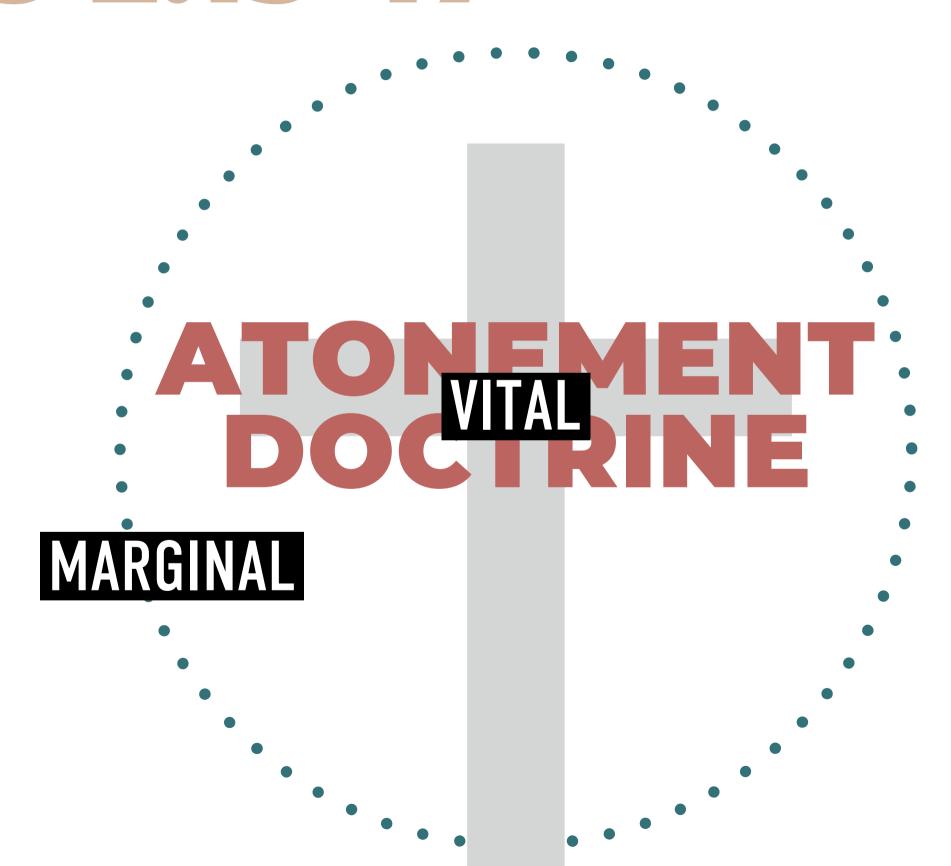
Is John Driver's analysis correct, his exegesis sound?

Isn't this worth exploring?



## EPHESIANS 2:13-17

The theological significance of Eph. 2:11–22 is in dispute.



There remains much to explore about collective identity conflict—relative to Ephesians 2:11–22.

## WILL YOU JOIN US?





# EARLY CHURCH THE MULTICOLORED WISDOM OF GOD:

The Gathering of the Nations and the Defeat of the Gods

**Kirstin Caynor** 



Who we are is not an accident. God created and ordained the cultural diversity of humankind in order to more fully reflect his glory, his majesty, and his truth. For this reason, our cultures and contexts matter for how we read the Bible.

In the book of Ephesians chapter 3, verse 10, Paul calls this reality the mystery of the Gospel, and the "manifold" wisdom of God.

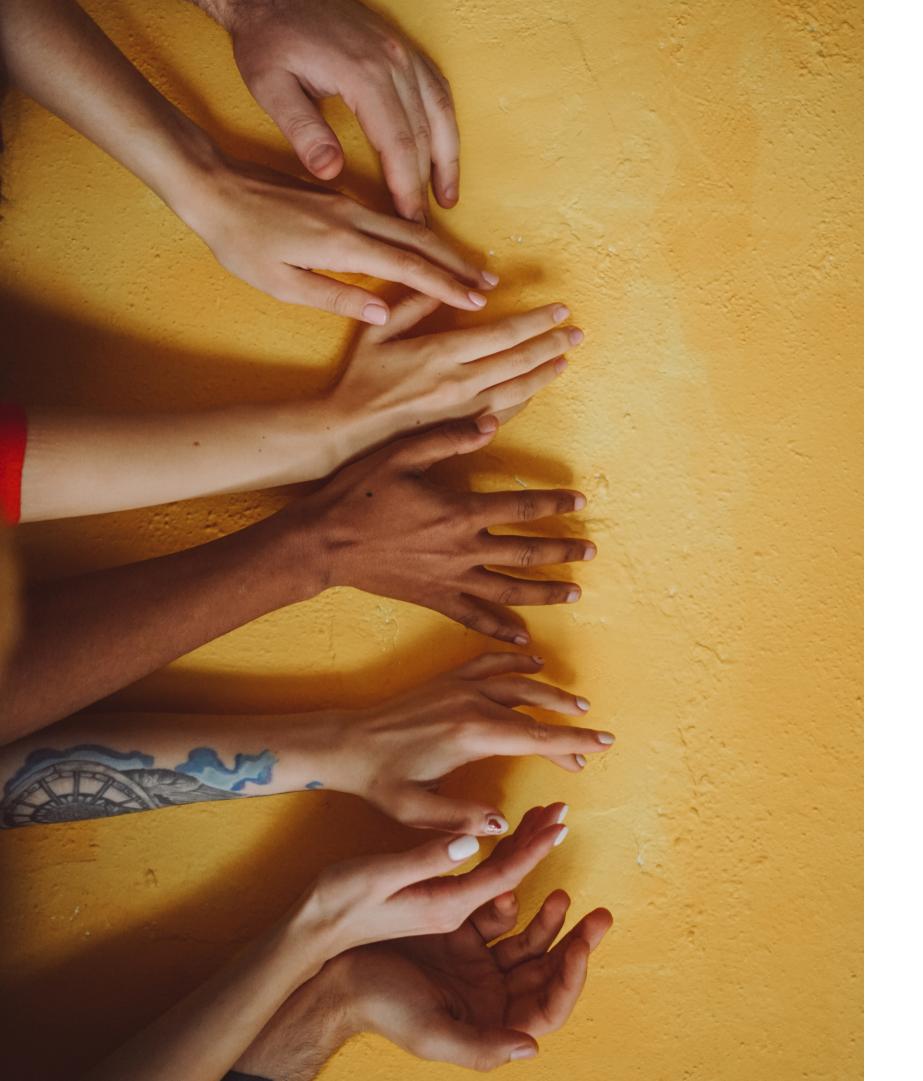
That word "manifold" or πολυποίκιλος (polypoikilos) in Greek means the diverse, many-colored, intricately woven, richly variegated, abundant, multi-formed wisdom of God.





SO THAT THROUGH THE CHURCH, THE MULTI-COLORED WISDOM OF GOD MIGHT NOW BE MADE KNOWN TO THE RULERS AND AUTHORITIES IN THE HEAVENLY PLACES ...





God's wisdom revealed in the church is multi-formed, and multi-colored; and that, brothers and sisters, is because we—the living stones with Christ as the cornerstone—are multi-formed, and multi-colored.

God placed us in the lands of our birth, in the cultures of our families for a great and mighty purpose, giving each of us unique and indispensable gifts for his Body, the Church.





THE GLORY THAT YOU HAVE **GIVEN ME I HAVE GIVEN TO** THEM, THAT THEY MAY BE ONE EVEN AS WE ARE ONE, I IN THEM AND YOU IN ME, THAT THEY MAY BECOME PERFECTLY ONE, SO THAT THE WORLD MAY KNOW THAT YOU SENT ME AND LOVED THEM EVEN AS YOU LOVED ME.



**JOHN 17:22** 



Jesus comes to share his own glory with us, the same glory that the Father gave to him, and to make us a display of his wisdom in unity to the Powers and Principalities.

According to Eph. 1:9–10, God makes known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth (ESV).

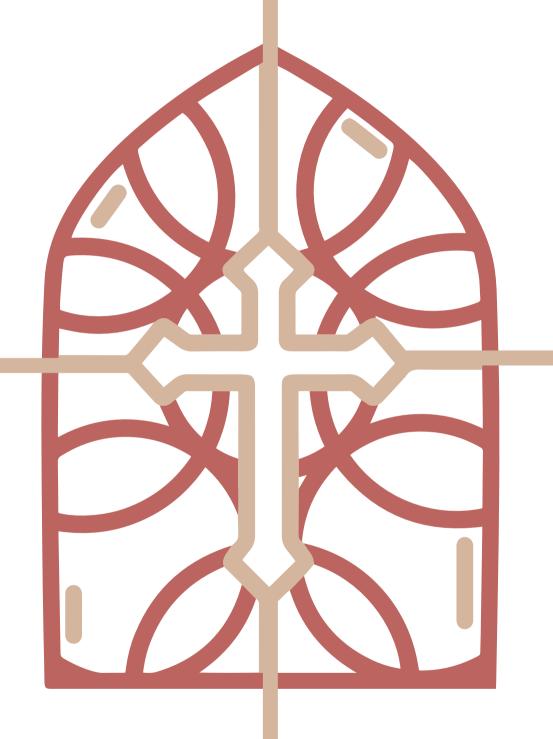




MAKING KNOWN TO US THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL... AS A PLAN FOR THE FULLNESS OF TIME, TO UNITE ALL THINGS IN HIM, THINGS IN HEAVEN AND THINGS ON EARTH.



**EPHESIANS 1:9-10** 

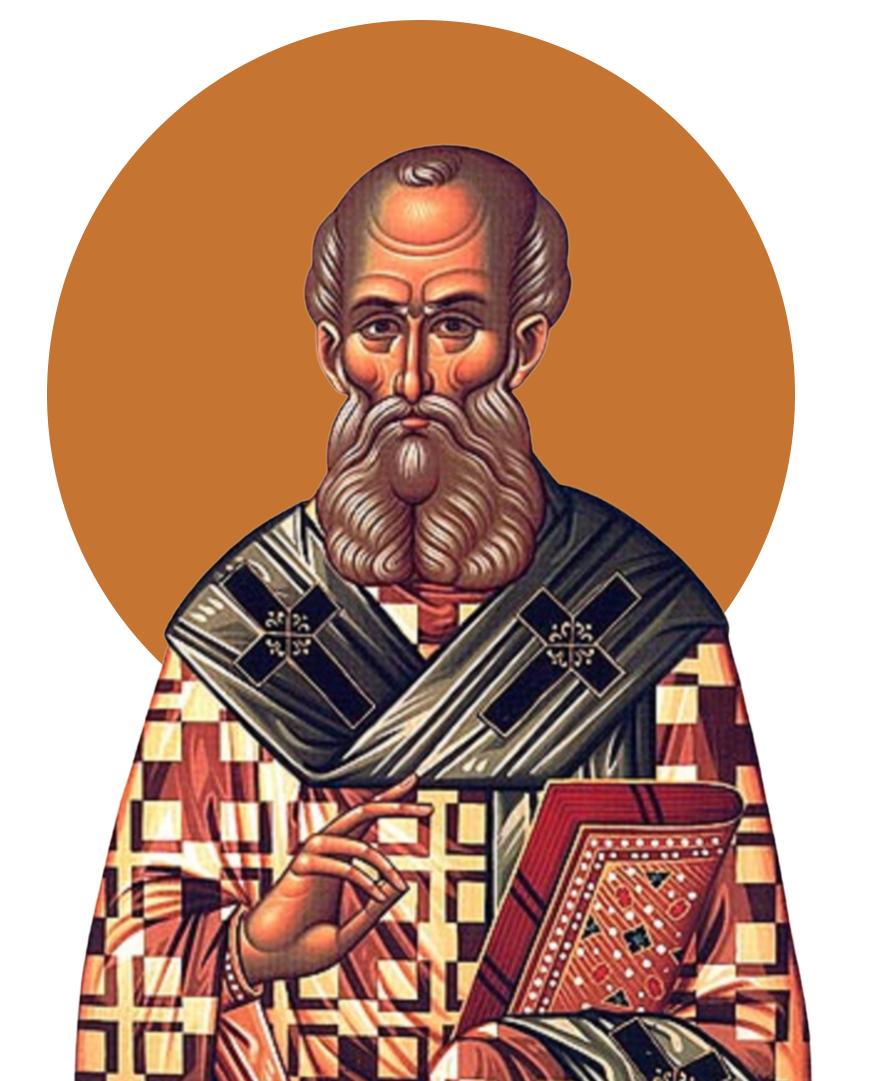


Because of verses like this one, the early church overwhelmingly held a view of the atonement that was cosmic.

Jesus' life, death, and resurrection were thought to impact not only the "vertical" and "horizontal" dimensions, but every material and spiritual dimension in the universe.

For Athanasius, every act of Jesus in the flesh changed the very fabric of creation itself. Athanasius says,

FOR THE SOLIDARITY OF MANKIND IS SUCH THAT, BY VIRTUE OF THE WORD'S INDWELLING IN A SINGLE HUMAN BODY, THE CORRUPTION WHICH GOES WITH DEATH HAS LOST ITS POWER OVER ALL.



He says further that ...

THE LORD TOUCHED ALL PARTS OF CREATION, AND FREED AND UNDECEIVED THEM ALL FROM EVERY DECEIT. AS ST. PAUL SAYS, 'HAVING PUT OFF FROM HIMSELF THE PRINCIPALITIES AND THE POWERS, HE TRIUMPHED ON THE CROSS'.

# THE DIVERSITY OF GOD'S PEOPLE

and the

# CONQUERING OF THE GODS IN SCRIPTURE

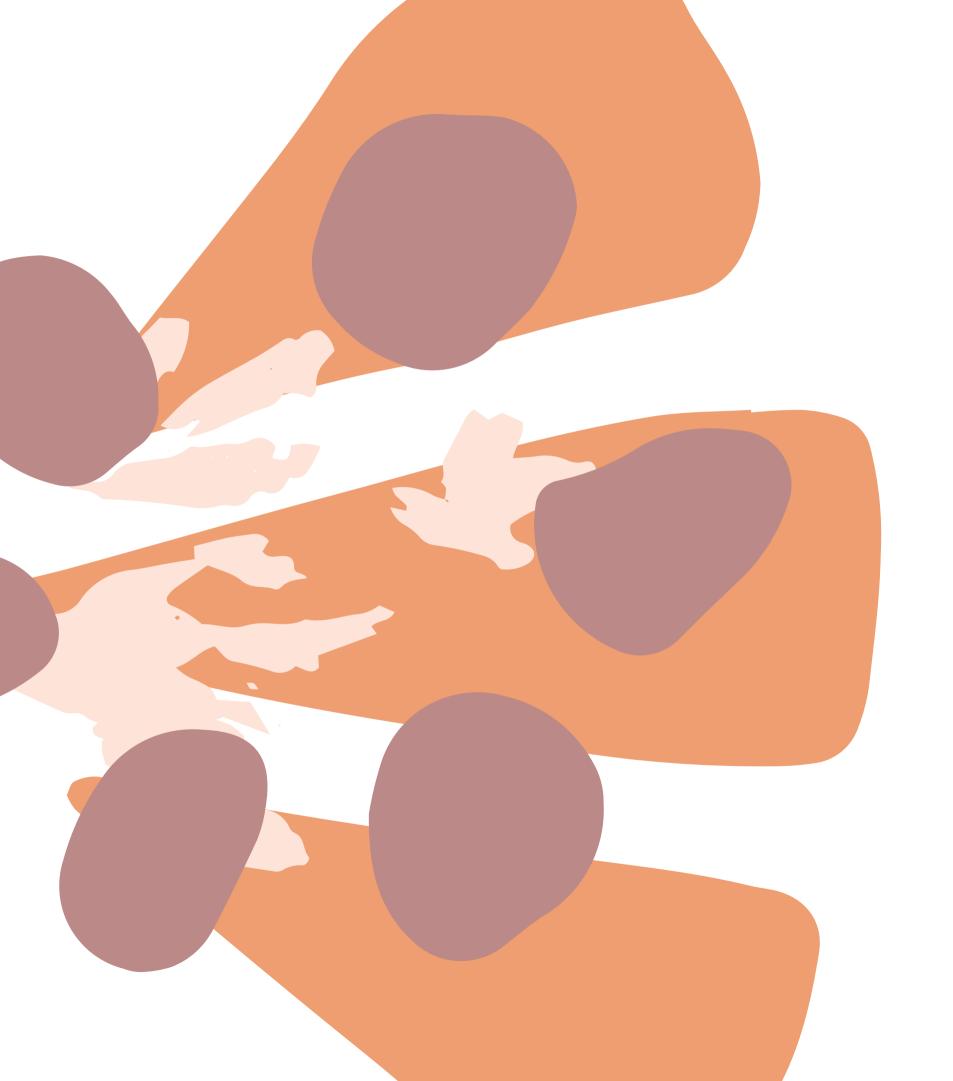
# ON ALL THE GODS OF EGYPT I WILL EXECUTE JUDGMENTS.



#### **EXODUS 12:12**

This suggests that there was more than human willpower at play in the oppression of the Israelites in Egypt. By holding the Hebrews captives, the gods of Egypt flaunted themselves against the LORD.

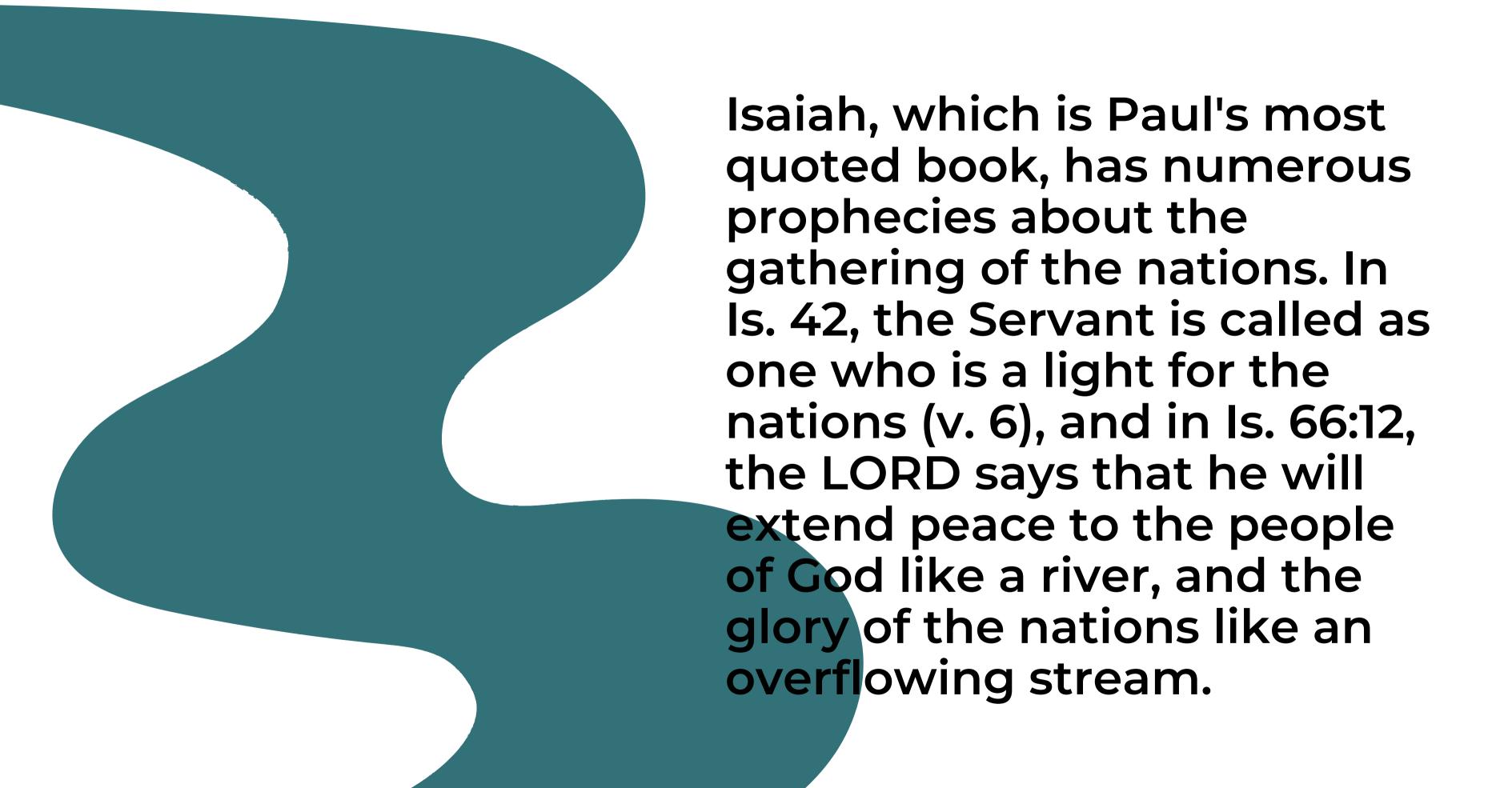




Ex. 12:38 also tells us that the people of Israel left with a "mixed multitude." This is understood by most interpreters, to mean a diverse mix of people—Egyptians and members of other nations who chose to leave Egypt and its gods.

The victory of the LORD is complete not only because he conquered the Egyptian gods by his might, but also reclaimed people

FROM THE VERY BEGINNING, DELIVERANCE because he also WAS NEVER from their empire. JUST FOR THE HEBREWS.



Writing only 100 years after the apostle Paul penned his letters, Irenaeus says that God announced "the gathering together in peace and concord, through the name of Christ, of men of unlike races." Later, he says that those who were once enemies with each other, in the death of Christ will become friends and beloved on account of their faith in him as the reign of sin is ended.





John Chrysostom (c. 347 – 407 AD), writing in the 300s AD, says that on the Cross, Christ takes the hand of both Jew and Gentile with his arms outstretched, and brings them both through the same dividing wall which keeps them from himself and from each other. He simultaneously conquers sin, death, and Satan, and unites humanity.





Notice how Christ tramples on locks, keys, and bones reflecting sin and bondage, as well as the lids to coffins, symbolizing the death that came with the fall. While it's a little hard to see, Satan is also depicted beneath Christ's feet, as an old man bound with ropes.

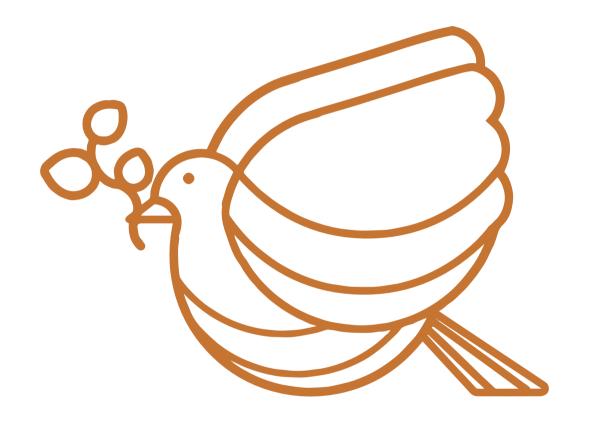


**Beside Christ** are Adam and Eve, who are representatives of all humanity. In one moment, Christ simultaneously conquers sin, death, and Satan, and reconciles humanity.



WHY IN THE WORLD,
THEN, DO WE, THE
DISCIPLES OF LOVE,
HATE ONE ANOTHER SO?
WHY DO WE, THE
DISCIPLES OF PEACE,
ENGAGE IN WARS ...?

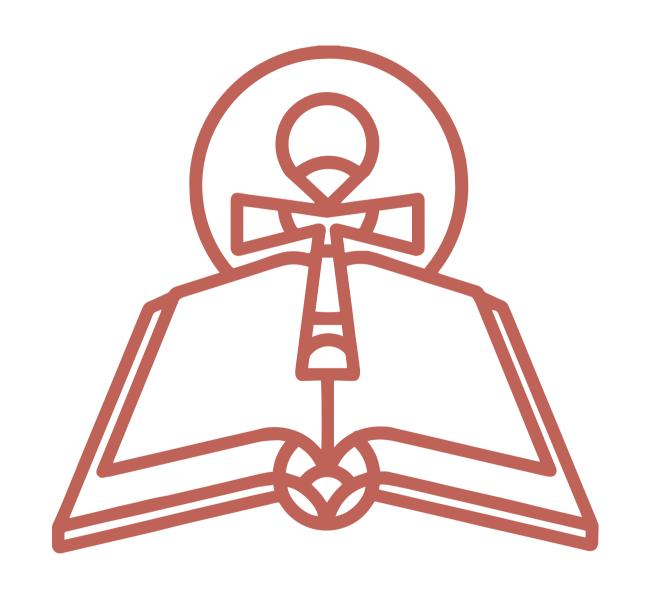
-GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS



For Nazianzus, peace and unity are not only ideals to strive for if possible. Because Ephesians says, "He is our peace," peace is actually the essence of what we believe. Where our stated beliefs in Jesus our Peace are not matched by peace in our churches, we profane the glory of God, and spurn the sacrifice of Christ.

#### **BUT THEN ANOTHER QUESTION IS RAISED:**

### IF WE ALL BECOME ONE PEOPLE, DOES THIS MEAN THAT OUR ETHNIC AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES GO AWAY?



# THE CHURCH FATHERS ON THE GOSPEL OF PEACE.



Citing 1 Cor. 12:19, Chrysostom says that

### OUR DIFFERENCES ARE ACTUALLY THE VERY THING THAT ENABLES

If everyone were a hand, there would be nobody. The unity of the body is actually attained through diversity because the wrist connects to the hand, elbow to wrist, and so on. Indeed, the things which make us think that we are unequal in honor are the very things that make us all, in fact, equal. This is why Paul says, "If all were a single member, where would the body be?" (1 Cor. 12:19)

IF THERE WERE NOT **GREAT DIVERSITY** AMONG YOU, YOU **COULD NOT BE A BODY:** AND WITHOUT BEING A BODY, YOU COULD NOT **BE ONE; AND WITHOUT** BEING ONE, YOU **COULD NOT BE EQUAL** IN HONOR. ...



... AND YET EVEN THESE [BEGGARS] FULFILL A MOST IMPORTANT OFFICE IN THE CHURCH, CLINGING TO THE **DOORS OF THE SANCTUARY** AND SUPPLYING ONE OF ITS **GREATEST ORNAMENTS:** AND WITHOUT THESE THERE COULD BE NO PERFECTING THE FULNESS OF THE CHURCH.

-JOHN CHRYSOSTOM



THEREFORE REMEMBER THAT ONCE YOU GENTILES IN FLESH—CALLED UNCIRCUMCISION BY THOSE CALLED CIRCUMCISION IN FLESH, MADE BY HANDS—THAT YOU WERE IN THAT TIME WITHOUT CHRIST, ALIENATED FROM THE CITIZENSHIP OF ISRAEL, AND FOREIGNERS TO THE COVENANT OF PROMISE, NOT HAVING HOPE AND GODLESS IN THE WORLD.





How does Jesus create this unity? On the one hand, Paul relativizes Gentile identity. In the Greco-Roman world, Judaeans were often derided, and looked on with suspicion. In fact, Roman writers called Jews "alienated" and "godless," but Paul says that in fact this was the status of the Gentiles.

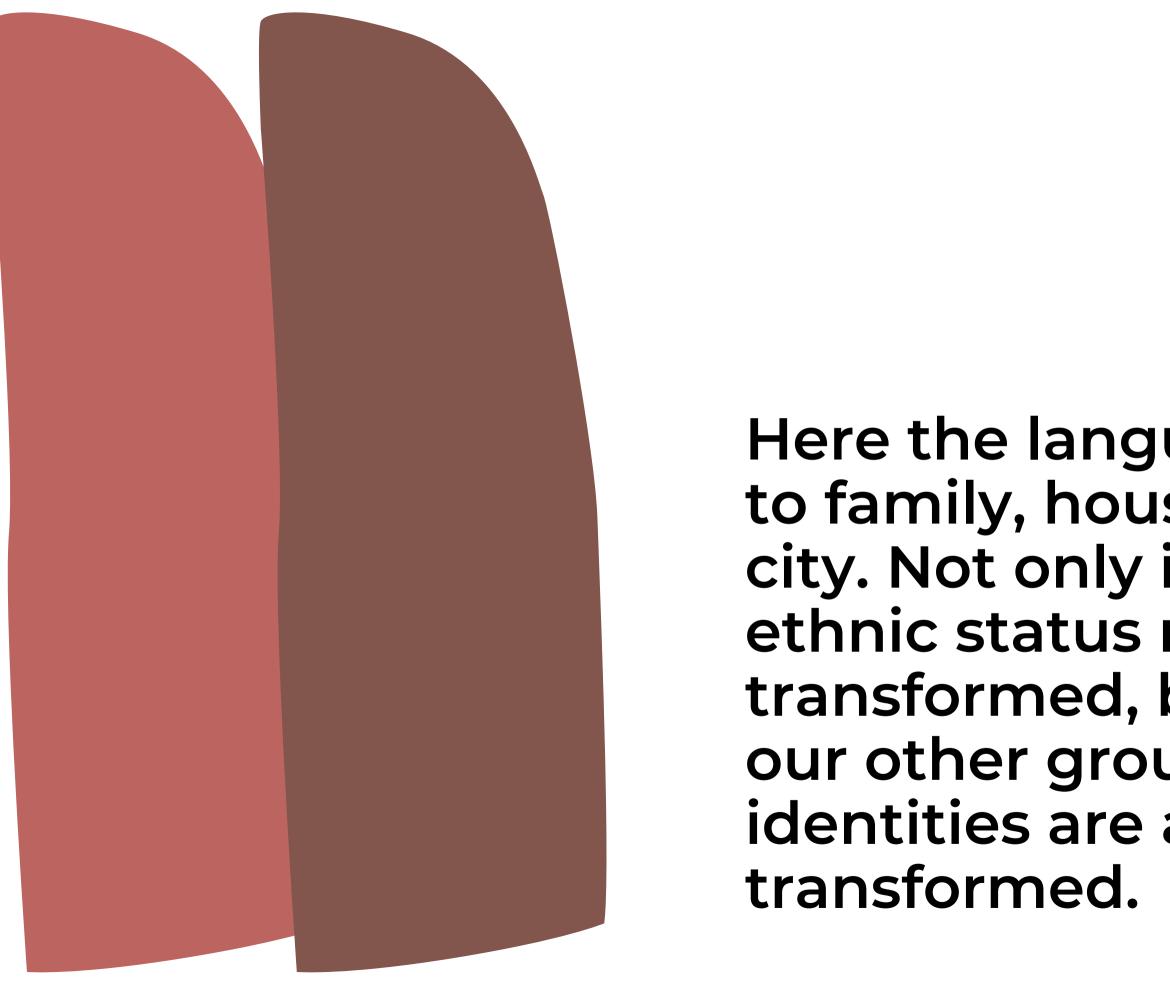
But, he also relativizes Jewish status by saying that the circumcision they value so highly is, in the end, only in the flesh by hands.

#### BUT NOW, IN CHRIST JESUS, YOU WHO ONCE WERE FAR OFF HAVE BECOME NEAR IN THE BLOOD OF CHRIST.

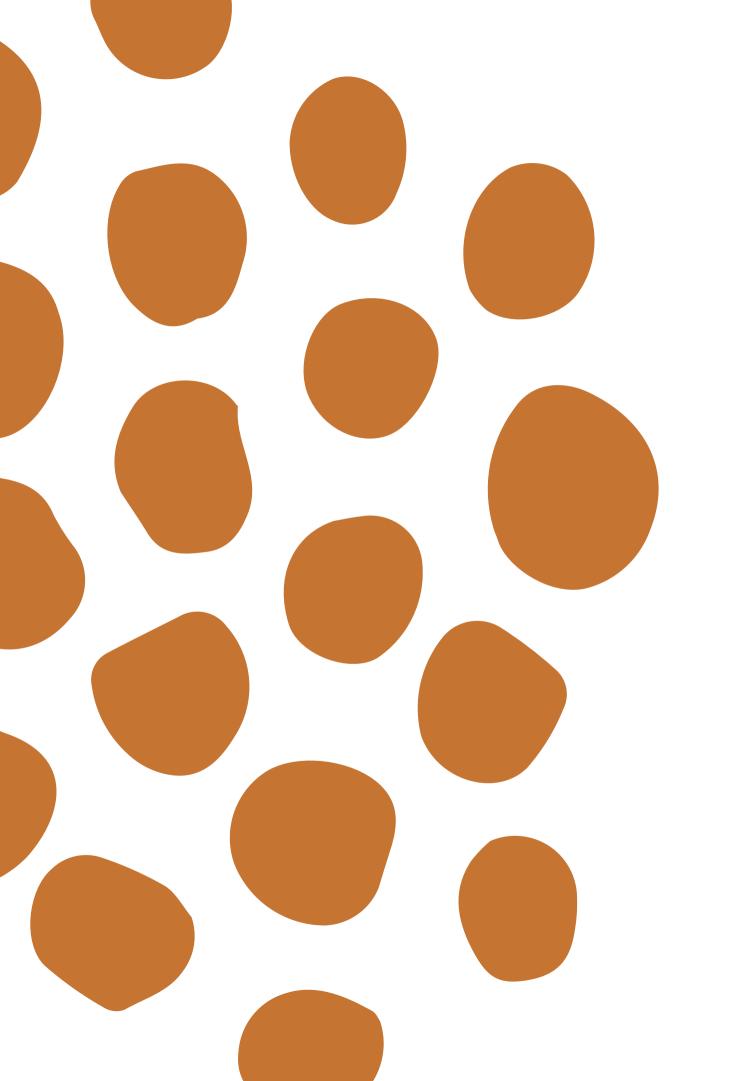


In v. 13, the status of "in flesh" shifts to "in Christ" and "in the blood of Christ" signifying a fundamental change in who and what we are. Because Jew and Gentile previously defined their status by saying, "I am not like you," the change in status of Gentiles means a change in status for Jews as well as the two come together in one new humanity.





Here the language turns to family, household, and city. Not only is our ethnic status radically transformed, but all of our other group identities are also



Paul is clear: it is not through Rome, but through the tribes of Israel that peace comes to the world. Through Jesus, we become a people that is distinct from nation and empire.

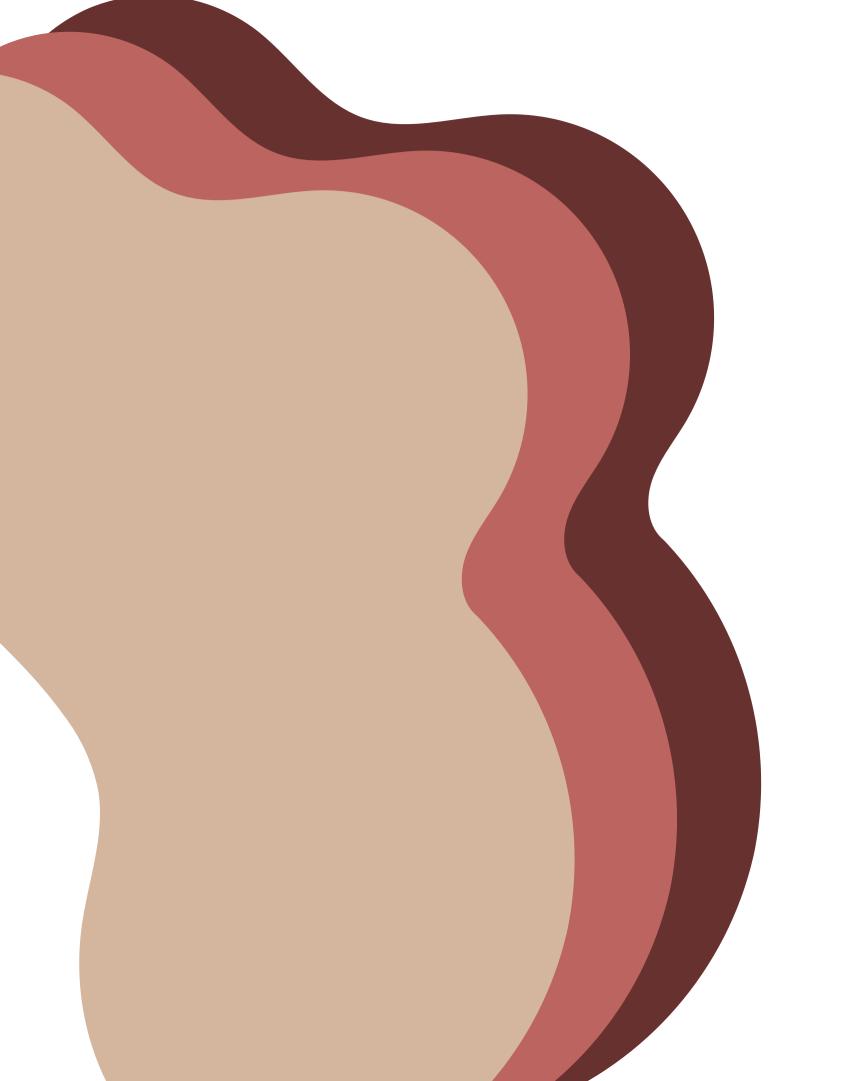
But Paul goes further still.

By suffering the lowest shame, Jesus wins eternal glory, and an eternal status of family with God for all peoples. It is the Cross—a symbol of Roman dominance and of the humiliation of their enemies—which becomes the victory and the glory of Jesus as all peoples come to him. On the Cross Jesus defeats the real enemy, which is enmity itself.



Now, my ethnic, cultural, political, social, and even religious identities get relativized in a new family dynamic. Now, my ethnic identity functions in brotherhood and sisterhood with the ethnic identities of others. I may still retain those identities.





I still in one sense, live a life in flesh; but, as Paul says elsewhere, now the life I live in flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me, and who gave up his own flesh for me. (Gal. 2:20)



# THE LIFE I NOW LIVE IN THE FLESH, I LIVE BY FAITH IN THE SON OF GOD WHO LOVED ME AND GAVE HIMSELF FOR ME.





Now, my status and recognition come not primarily from my group identities, but from the glory that we together share with Christ and the special access that we all have to the Father. This glory is defined within a new multiethnic humanity, reclaimed from the Powers and Principalities which they had previously served, and now displaying all the splendor of the multi-colored, multi-formed wisdom of God.

### THE BODY OF CHRIST NEEDS THE UNIQUE GIFTS AND CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES THAT DIFFERENT CULTURES AND PERSPECTIVES HAVE TO OFFER.



We also understand that The **Ephesians 2 Gospel Project has** much to gain from your participation. We need the diverse perspectives of God's people around the world, and look forward to being able to share those perspectives with people everywhere, so that his glory may be more fully known in his people.

# There remains much to explore about collective identity conflict—relative to Ephesians 2:11–22.

### WILL YOU JOIN US?

## THANKYOU, AND SHALOM.

