



# **Multi ethnic Churches**

**celebrating diversity,  
creating unity**

**5 - 8 June 2013**

**Baptist Church, Krummgasse, Wien**

# Value and Limits of Cultures

1. Our ideal and the reality
2. Biblical approaches
3. Specific areas of cultures

# Value and Limits of Cultures

## 1. Our ideal and the reality

Our Ideal:

In our common faith in Christ,  
all human/cultural differences become irrelevant.

Gal.5.6:

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

Gal.3.28:

There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

# Value and Limits of Cultures

## 1. Our ideal and the reality

The reality in churches:

Misunderstandings, tensions, conflicts, separations because of cultural reasons.

Background:

Differences – personality, life history, faith history, social origin, **cultural origin...**

# Value and Limits of Cultures

## 2. Biblical Approach

Attention!!!

We scan the bible texts with a modern question!

> Danger of eis-egesis (instead of ex-egesis)

# Value and Limits of Cultures

## 2. Biblical Approach

### 1.1. Old Testament

- Culture is part of the divine creation
- Culture is part of the sinfulness of human life

# Value and Limits of Cultures

## 2. Biblical Approach

### **1.1. OT - value of culture**

#### **Creational mandate of men/women**

Gen.1.28: God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

Gen.2.15: The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

# Value and Limits of Cultures

## 2. Biblical Approach

### **1.1. OT – value of culture**

Creational mandate of men/women

Gen.2.19:

Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name.



# Value and Limits of Cultures

## 2. Biblical Approach

### **1.1. OT – value of culture**

Gen.10: The Table of Nations

Cush was the father of Nimrod, who became a mighty warrior on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord...

... These are the sons of Shem/Ham/Japheth by their clans and languages, in their territories and nations.

# Value and Limits of Cultures

## 2. Biblical Approach

### 1.1. OT – sinfulness of culture

Gen.3: curse of sin (labor-ful/painful life)

Gen.11: after the construction of the tower of Babel, the Lord confused the language of the whole world. From there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth.

# Value and Limits of Cultures

## 2. Biblical Approach

### **1.2. NT – value of culture**

Acts 2.6:

When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken.

# Value and Limits of Cultures

## 2. Biblical Approach

### 1.2. NT – value of culture

Acts 6.1-5:

In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food.... Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom... This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism.

# Value and Limits of Cultures

## 2. Biblical Approach

### **1.2. NT – value of culture**

Acts 15 / Gal. 2: The Council at Jerusalem

- Circumcision or not ... > cultural question
- Result: compromise > respect the minority culture (of gentiles)

# Value and Limits of Cultures

## 2. Biblical Approach

### **1.2. NT – limit of culture**

Ephesians 2:

End of the conflict between gentile Christians and Judaic Christians

- through the reconciling sacrifice of Christ
- Peace - unity

# Value and Limits of Cultures

## 2. Biblical Approach

### 1.2. NT – limit and value of culture

Rev. 21f: eschatological view of the nations in the New Jerusalem

[In the first verses: only “human beings”]

21.24ss: The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it... The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.

22.2: leaves of the tree for the healing of the nations.

# Value and Limits of Cultures

## 2. Biblical Approach

### **1.2. NT – value and limit of culture**

#### **Paul: 1. Corinthians 9. 19-23**

Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.



# Value and Limits of Cultures

## 2. Biblical Approach

### **1.3. Outcome**

- Culture is a gift of God and a task of creativity for all human beings
- Culture is a load, inspired by the sinful nature of men/women.

> Culture is ambivalent!

# Value and Limits of Cultures

## 2. Biblical Approach

### 1.3. Outcome

In view of this ambivalent character of “culture”, Christians and churches should

1. take it seriously (no non-cultural existence)
2. foster it in its positive aspects
3. relativise it in its negative aspects

# Value and Limits of Cultures

## 3. Categories of culture

### **Geert Hofstede: Cultures and Organisations: software of the mind, London, 1991**

- influential Dutch researcher in the fields of organizational studies, organizational culture, also cultural economics and management.
- pioneer in his research of cross-cultural groups and organizations and played a major role in developing a systematic framework for assessing and differentiating national cultures and organizational cultures.
- His studies demonstrated that there are national and regional cultural groups that influence behavior of societies and organizations.

# Value and Limits of Cultures

## 3. Dimensions of culture

### Cultural Categories (Geert Hofstede)

- **Power distance**
- **Uncertainty avoidance**
- **Individualism / collectivism**
- **Masculinity / femininity**
- **Time orientation**

# Value and Limits of Cultures

## 3. Dimensions of culture

### Cultural Categories (Geert Hofstede)

#### Power distance

- High: unjust distribution of power
- Low: equal distribution of power

# Value and Limits of Cultures

## 3. Dimensions of culture

### Cultural Categories (Geert Hofstede)

#### Uncertainty avoidance

- How to handle situations which you cannot foresee?
- Avoid uncertainty by laws, rules ...
  - > people more emotional, more nervous
- Allow uncertainty: less rules which you can always change, relativistic attitude
  - > people more relaxed, even phlegmatic

# Value and Limits of Cultures

## 3. Dimensions of culture

### Cultural Categories (Geert Hofstede)

#### Individualism / collectivism

- High: right of the individual: self-determination, responsibility
- Low: integration into networks: “we” is more important than “I”

# Value and Limits of Cultures

## 3. Dimensions of culture

### Cultural Categories (Geert Hofstede)

#### **Masculinity / femininity:**

- Role of men and women
- Index of values
- female values: cooperation, modesty, solicitousness (take care)
- male values: self-consciousness; ready for concurrence



# Value and Limits of Cultures

## 3. Dimensions of culture

### Cultural Categories (Geert Hofstede)

#### **Time orientation / Long-term-orientation**

- G.Hofstede introduced it later
- Planning horizon of a society (short term – long term?)
- Long-term > values: sparingness/economy; pertinacity
- Short-term > values: flexibility, egoism

# Value and Limits of Cultures

## 3. Dimensions of culture

### Cultural Categories (Geert Hofstede)

- **Power distance**
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