

E Pluribus UNUM

OLIVER R. PHILLIPS,

Compiler

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Preface

This is a compilation of essays. It is, as the title suggests, an interpretation of the challenges and opportunities the immigrant population brings to the evangelical community in terms of its missional strategies. The book does not promote any particular strategy, but every effort has been taken to expose missional challenges and to suggest that God may be expecting us to be diligent in the strategies we use to take advantage of our ever changing cultural demographics.

E Pluribus Unum is the result of a God-given necessity that was laid upon me to encourage the Church of the Nazarene to create a climate of inclusion and opportunity. To be involved in multicultural evangelism is exhilarating and sometimes hazardous. My hope is that these essays will help you clear the land mines that are present in the multicultural landscape and encourage you on this exciting journey.

The Church of the Nazarene has some excellent leaders in the field of multicultural ministry. The experiences and insights they share throughout the book will help you fulfill the ministry God has given you, and I express my thanks to them.

The book also includes the wisdom of three non-Nazarene contributors because of their long standing involvement with multicultural issues within the evangelical community. I am grateful for their willingness to be partners in this initiative. These authors are:

Ken Baker was a church-planter and missiologist in West Africa for twenty-four years, serving primarily in Islamic regions, both urban and rural. Last year he became director of Culture ConneXions, a ministry focused on helping churches toward multiethnic outreach and inclusion.

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American Mission Board. Over the years, Begaye has initiated the planting of scores of multi-ethnic and Native American Churches in the U.S. He is a Navajo Indian.

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A special word of thanks is in order for Rhonda Kyncl who helped edit each of the essays. Additionally, from the USA/Canada Mission/Evangelism Department, Rich Houseal and Bryon McLaughlin ably assisted as liaisons with Nazarene Publishing House.

To all who have been daring enough to share their reactions to these essays either with constructive criticism, simple gratitude, or searching questions, I give my eternal gratitude. I invite readers of the book to respond by e-mailing me at missionstrategy@nazarene.org.

Oliver R. Phillips

USA/Canada Mission Strategy Director

Church of the Nazarene

Introduction

Jerry D. Porter

E Pluribus UNUM ... Out of many ONE

The “holiness folks” who gathered at Pilot Point, Texas in 1908 to launch what is today the Church of the Nazarene, were astounded at the work of God’s grace that allowed post-Civil War Southerners to embrace Northerners! The bitterness and “separateness” that followed that tragic bloodbath ran deep in the soul of the nation. Overcoming that hatred and distrust was symbolic to them of the Kingdom of God that was tearing down the walls of hostility and building a grace-bridge of acceptance, mutual respect, and love. Our church was born in the crucible of reconciliation and unity in Christ.

There were, however, no Native Americans, Blacks, Latinos, or Asians at Pilot Point that day. The delegates represented emerging churches among the poor with minimal, if any, ethnic diversity. It probably did not occur to the early leaders of the merging streams of the American holiness movement that the call for unity in diversity would go far beyond an embrace across the Mason-Dixon Line. The groups that came together had limited missionary work in a few “foreign” fields. The same Lord God who called this fellowship into existence a century ago multiplied that vision, propelling the church from Pilot Point to every continent, nation, and people group around the globe. We obediently and passionately embarked on the mission of sharing Christ in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.

From Pilot Point to Pakistan, from California to Colombia, from New York to New Zealand, from Alabama to Algiers, the Church of the Nazarene has proclaimed God’s transforming grace to everyone regardless of culture, color, nationality, education, language, race, or social standing. We have all met as equals at the foot of the cross! Being many peoples . . . we are

becoming one people of grace! We celebrate the centenary missionary fervor and effectiveness of the Church of the Nazarene in almost 160 world areas.

Now we have an even greater privilege! We not only have the quadrennial joy of coming together as a multicultural, multilingual, global holiness family at our general assembly ... we also thrill with the awesome satisfaction of experiencing this international unity each year at our district assemblies and even each week in our local communities of faith! The Kingdom of God has come and is coming. We who have been so missionary minded are now given the delight of demonstrating, not the forgiving embrace of a Yankee holiness white man and a Dixie holiness white man, but rather the reconciling embrace of people from every tribe and nation who gather in our churches and assemblies as ONE family. Whether our local congregation is richly diverse or whether we orchestrate multiple opportunities for our children, students, and adults to come together across racial and cultural lines, we all proactively demonstrate that out of many ... God is making ONE!

The extraordinary compilation of essays that Dr. Oliver Phillips has brought together in this book is an inspiring missional call for the church to truly be “the Kingdom come” in our communities. These authors call us to embrace with new enthusiasm the unity in diversity that is the body of Christ in our local churches, on our districts, across this continent, and around the world. As we read these passionate chapters, we will renew our commitment to making

EVERY CHURCH ... an inclusive church
 ... a missionary church
 ... a unique church
 ... a compassionate church
 ... a culturally sensitive church
 ... a reproducing church, and
 ... a holiness church

TO THE GLORY OF GOD!



MAJOR SHIFTS IN IMMIGRATION PATTERNS

Oliver R. Phillips

The Facts

Without a doubt, immigration to the United States is burgeoning beyond imaginable proportions. By the term “immigrant,” we mean “residents”, both legal and undocumented, that were born outside of the United States, who now number, according to the 2003 Population Size and Composition Statistics, 33.5 million persons.

The number of immigrants living in American households has risen 16 percent over the last five years, and increasingly, immigrants are bypassing the traditional gateway states like California and New York, settling directly in parts of the country that until recently saw little immigrant activity — regions like the Upper Midwest, New England and the Rocky Mountain States. By far the largest numbers of immigrants continue to live in the six states that have traditionally attracted them: California, New York, Texas, Florida, New Jersey, and Illinois. The fact still remains true: immigrants continue to flood the country in unprecedented numbers.

America has failed to come to grips with the stark reality of this increased immigration. Forrest Gump was right, “Life is like a box of chocolates, you never know what you’re going to get.” More to the point, the American church has not come to grips with what opportunities and challenges are presented by this giant shift in people groups, guided wittingly by God’s hands. The box of chocolates begins to unravel and surprises abound.

Feelings vary about this new phenomenon. What most Americans are not willing to admit is that immigration is the

key to current economic growth. Additionally, immigration is also central to future growth, not only because immigration will continue, but also because the children of immigrants today are the labor force of tomorrow.¹ Immigration might also be the key to sustained membership growth in the U.S. congregations. Research has shown that in my denomination, the Church of the Nazarene, from 1993 to 2003, 820 new churches were started. Of that number, 429 or 52.3% were among ethnic groups, mainly immigrants. Furthermore, 218 or 50.8% of the ethnic-specific congregations were Hispanic. This is an encouraging sign, but it should be accepted with an appreciation for the new windows of evangelistic opportunity provided by the coming of immigrants to these shores.

The advent of this surge of evangelistic prospect has touched states that were previously immune to such immigrant explosion. According to a New York Times reporter (2006), Indiana saw a 34% increase in the number of immigrants; South Dakota saw a 44% rise; Delaware 32%; Missouri 31%; Colorado 28%; and New Hampshire 26%. Over all, immigrants now make up 12.4% of the nation's population, up from 11.2% in 2000. That amounts to an estimated 4.9 million additional immigrants for a total of 35.7 million, a number larger than the population of California.²

No other topic will consume the minds of sociologists and anthropologists in the 21st century more than the implications of increased immigration. America is presently witnessing major demographic shifts in immigration patterns. At the time of this writing, Congress is embroiled in rancorous debate about the manner in which this country should solve the problem of undocumented immigrants. At the same time, we struggle to understand those immigrants who have made America home through legal channels and processes. Millions have earned permanent residency and have become naturalized citizens in this land of hope and opportunity. America is faced with the demanding task of defining the assimilation matrix that emerges from such circumstances.

This scenario suggests that we revisit the American self-image of English playwright Israel Zangwill in his signature work, *The Melting Pot*. The play, written at the beginning of the 20th century, endorsed by many Americans, presented a utopian vision of America as a crucible that blended all peoples into a new nation, interethnic and interracial, who would build “the Republic of Man” and “the Kingdom of God.” For decades thereafter, this play became the social mantra for an America faced with a rapidly increasing immigrant population. In 1908, when the play opened in Washington, the United States was in the middle of absorbing the largest influx of immigrants in its history – Irish and Germans, followed by Italians and East Europeans, Catholics and Jews – some 18 million new citizens between 1890 and 1920.

It was not until 1963 that Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan published the volume *Beyond the Melting Pot*, challenging the assumption that there never was a melting pot, did America dare review this vision of ethnic utopia. The publication raised the ire of some who idealized that the melting pot metaphor was a Godly goal to be aggressively sought after. Many felt betrayed.

Then in 1972 Michael Novak published *The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics*. In a review of this compilation Bayard Rustin, a prominent black scholar claimed that “there never was a melting pot; there is not now a melting pot; there never will be a melting pot; and if there ever was it would be such a tasteless soup that we would have to go back and start all over again.”

As if to add fuel to fire, in the height of the Civil Rights crusade, a Christian clergyperson, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. reminded America that 11:00 am on Sunday morning was the most segregated hour in America. This poignant observation by King mobilized some Evangelicals to join a crusade to reverse this reality by advocating for a homogenous worship experience that would blend various cultural groups together.

Today, the church community must again grapple with the

question of what is the proper expression of a multicultural society. “Multiculturalism,” say some, has become the new civil religion of the United States. Yet it is unclear what is meant by “multiculturalism.” Welcomed enthusiastically by some, deplored by others, and maligned by many as an overused and tired buzz word, the issues of multiculturalism continue to pose a challenge of classic proportions to American society in general and to evangelicals specifically.

Before one attempts to offer relevant ideas, however, the gravity of the immigration crisis, reaching every corner of society, must be acknowledged.

Consider for a moment these salient observations:

- Asian-American students comprise one-sixth of the student body at Yale, one-fifth at Harvard, and one-fifth of all students enrolled in medical schools in the United States.
- By 2050 the proportion of Hispanics in the US population will double to 24%, while non-Hispanic whites will comprise a mere majority at 52%.
- In New York, Koreans own 70% of the independent groceries, 80% of the nail salons, and 60% of the dry cleaners.
- Between 2005 and 2010 the white population will grow by only 3.2%, the Census Bureau projects. The Latino population will grow at a rate of 14.4%, Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders at 15.4%, and blacks at 6.3%. The growth rate for the overall population during that timeframe will be 4.2%.
- According to the 2000 Census, there are over 30 million immigrants in the U.S., representing 11 percent of the total population.³
- One in five children in the U.S. is the native- or foreign-born child of an immigrant.
- Immigrants and citizens live together in families: 85% of immigrant families with children are mixed status families (families in which at least one parent is a non-U.S. citizen and one child is a U.S. citizen).

- Between 1970 and 2000, the naturalized citizen population increased by 71%.⁴

Taken together, these factors indeed reflect a society in which dramatic changes demand a new way of thinking, as well as an innovative way of doing evangelism. The task of understanding the multicultural mosaic and the approach that the community of faith must design are fraught with difficulties caused by outmoded presuppositions. Three premises that have found prominence in discussions of evangelism and church growth could potentially undermine an effective ecclesiology.

The first assumption is that immigrants come to these shores *Tabular Rasa*, with a cultural “blank slate”. Many ignore the deep cultural roots that are imbedded in the worldview of immigrants. One is naïve to attempt to assimilate new arrivals into the cycle of mainstream American church life and expect them to shed all past allegiances.

Second, it is often assumed that the attitudinal portal into which immigrants come to America has been unchanged over the past century. This has resulted in misguided notions of assimilation, which unfortunately have become the foundational impetus for church planting strategies. The America to which immigrants have come in these early years of the 21st century differs greatly from early 20th century America.

Third, because of these first two assumptions, evangelism has claimed a “one size fits all” status. Granted, the claims of the Gospel are universal in its core ingredients. However, effective evangelism only takes place when thoughtful consideration is given to cultural particularity. The Donald McGavran (eminent founder of the Church growth movement) adage that people like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic or class barriers, though it may be a pragmatic sociological observation, may be a deficient prescription for evangelism.

This chapter intends to decipher the second assumption

above about the misguided notions of assimilation, with the hope that a clearer understanding of the new multicultural America might lead to a more open-minded approach to the immigrant mission field. Unquestionably, new immigrants to this country are a source of renewal and vitality.

Watersheds in Immigration Patterns

The challenge for our time is to understand the changes in immigration that have taken place over the past 100 years. It is the daunting task for the church that seeks to be a catalyst for diversity and inclusion, as well as for all those who seek to contribute to the new mosaic that America has become. The attitudes have changed. Americans must not be seduced into thinking that millions of immigrants were welcomed with affection, be their welcome political, economic, cultural, or religious.

There are six significant historical events that amount to watershed moments because they assault the “melting pot” metaphor, for both good and bad. On the surface, they may not appear as potent contributors to changing the context. However, in combination, they have indelibly imprinted the process by which immigrants enter, successfully or unsuccessfully, the American human landscape. These events are: *first, the two World Wars; second, the Immigration Act of 1965; third, the Civil Rights Act; fourth, Affirmative Action; fifth, Dual Citizenship; and sixth, 9/11.*

World Wars I & II

Prior to these world-reshaping battles, immigrants demonstrated great pride in their homelands. An example may be found in attitudes toward pre-war Germans. They boasted of pride in German ancestry, identity, and culture. In states with large German populations, German was taught in the public schools. Indeed, the mind-set of the general public was one of tolerance.

World War I changed this. As nationalism ran high, pin-pointing Germany as the enemy, the German language was

banned. The story is often cited that the Woodrow Wilson administration was so hostile to the German culture that it renamed sauerkraut “liberty cabbage.” This prompted a widespread move that encouraged forced and immediate assimilation into the US population. While this targeted the German population specifically, it had a ripple effect upon all immigrants. Because of widespread animosity towards the German populace, their immigrants felt that assimilation into the American citizenry was the prudent option. Becoming a naturalized American would shield one from being targeted as the enemy.

Similarly, World War II repeated the response toward the Japanese. History testifies to the ugly episode of nationalist fervor that demanded the incarceration of thousands of Japanese. In three West Coast states, Japanese Americans were placed in internment camps. Yet Japanese men joined the Armed Forces serving in the European theatre of war, most notably the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. This, they felt, would prove their loyalty to the United States.

In the midst of confusion and resentment, Japanese-Americans were often left with no option other than rejection of the Japanese culture. Their hyphenated identity quickly gave way to a rush to become naturalized citizens.

These two world conflicts drove immigrants toward a forced assimilation into the US citizenry. Any current discussion about the role of assimilation must take into account these unnatural situations and circumstances. It is true that these adaptations took place three and four generations ago. However, they continue to be significant because some have used these responses as referents for present dialogue.

Immigration Act of 1965

The restrictive immigration laws of the 1920s favored applicants from Northern Europe. In 1965, President Lyndon Johnson signed a bill that dramatically changed the method by which immigrants were admitted to America. This act, also known as the Hart-Cellar Act, not only allowed more individ-

uals from Third World countries to enter the US, including many Asians who had traditionally been barred from entering America, but also addressed a more liberal policy for refugees. Under the Act, 170,000 immigrants from the East were granted residency, with no more than 20,000 per country. 120,000 immigrants from the West, without “national limitations,” were also admitted. The new formula in the immigration reform listed seven visa preferences in order of priority:

1. Unmarried adult sons and daughters of U.S. citizens (maximum 20%).
2. Spouses and unmarried sons and daughters of permanent resident aliens (20%).
3. Members of the professions and scientists and artists of exceptional ability (10%).
4. Married adult sons and daughters of U.S. citizens (10%).
5. Brothers and sisters of U.S. citizens (24%).
6. Skilled and unskilled workers in occupations for which labor is in short supply (10%).
7. Refugees (6%).⁵

However, with the passage of this Immigrant Act came “family sponsorships,” which afforded preference to relatives of immigrants already residing in the United States. The bill was significant in that future immigrants were welcomed because of their skills/professions, and not categorized by their countries of origin. Before President Johnson signed this bill, the Senate voted 76 to 18 in favor of this act, with opposition primarily by Southern senators. The House likewise voted 326 to 69 in favor.

The results of the new policies directly affected how immigrants viewed assimilation into mainstream America. The adverse effect was that it resulted in the emergence of geographically concentrated immigrant clusters – Cubans in Florida, Mexicans in California and Texas, Dominicans and other immigrants from the Caribbean in New York — a move seen by many as threatening assimilation.

This gathering of immigrants however, is not necessarily an unwelcome phenomenon. The traditionalist view has been that any attempt at specific ethnic communities only serves to polarize the immigrants from the American community. Not necessarily! This view fails to appreciate the social capital that is vibrant within these communities. Rather than polarizing, these enclaves serve to teach immigrants how to assimilate without losing their original identity. Such communities help to ease intergenerational and bicultural conflicts. Second generation immigrants often perceive their parents as the “guardians and protectors” of the culture they left behind.

Multiculturalism must now be redefined because immigrant America is not what it once was. The newcomers of the last 35 years are Mexican, Salvadoran, Dominican, Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Korean, Vietnamese, and Cambodian. Altogether, between 1971 and 2000, the United States admitted approximately 21 million immigrants, far exceeding the number who came during the first three decades of the 20th century; but in contrast, more than 80% of them were Latino or Asian in origin. The latest census reports that the U.S. population is 75.1% white, 12.3% Black, 12.5% Latino, 3.6% Asian, 5.5% some other race, 2.4% two or more races.⁶

Civil Rights Act

The date was March 7, 1965, when Congressman John Lewis, then chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), led one of the most dramatic protests of the civil rights movement. Six hundred marchers crossed the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, singing “We Shall Overcome” and claiming their full rights as citizens of the United States. Needless to say, these visitors did not enjoy a hearty welcome; they were greeted by state troopers and local police in a confrontation that has claimed the epithet “Bloody Sunday.”

In 2003, on another Sunday morning, 90 immigrants and their supporters, part of the Immigrant Worker Freedom Rides,

reenacted the Pettus Bridge march, this time singing “*We Shall Overcome*” and “*Las Mananitas de los Inmigrantes*” and chanting “*Somos Uno/We are One.*”

This is no repeat moment that should be shrugged away as an ordinary event. It has serious implications. The new immigrants to the US have discovered that the Civil Rights Act provides them with an umbrella under which they may reside without necessarily assimilating into the mainstream. The rights justly claimed by proponents of civil rights legislation have not been the sole proprietorship of those who aggressively pursued its passage. Prior to the historic Civil Rights Act, it was never conceived that immigrants would necessarily view assimilation as personally non-productive. However, with the myriad privileges that were enacted by this legislation, immigrants chose to co-opt these advantages, placing the need to assimilate on the back burner of secondary importance.

Affirmative Action

The Supreme Court’s 2003 decision upholding affirmative action at the University of Michigan and enshrining “diversity” as a compelling national interest only encouraged new Americans to see themselves as being different. This paraphrased observation made in a leading newspaper editorial finally brought to light an issue that has been avoided for the better part of five decades. Major studies of immigration avoided discussing affirmative action. Conversely, most experts agreed that immigrant participation in affirmative action remained the ultimate nightmare of affirmative action.

At the core of all the contention has been the immigrants’ understanding that to be different (i.e. racial preferences in affirmative action) was to open the door to opportunities that were prohibited under other circumstances (i.e. restrictive immigration policies).

American immigration has been caught in a puzzle of unintended consequences. The Immigration Act of 1965 collides with the well-intended Affirmative Action policies of the

60's and 70's. As noted earlier, during the 60's and early 70's, most immigrants came to America from southern and eastern Europe. Legal immigration from Latin America and Asia however, increased sharply after 1965. Latin American countries sent 88,400 immigrants to America in 1965, as compared with 113,400 from Europe and another 38,300 from Canada. Significantly, by 1970 immigration from Latin America had grown by 30% to 115,200.

Between 1965 and 2000, approximately 35 million immigrants had come to America. Accordingly, close to 26 million of these immigrants could claim affirmative action preferences on the basis of historic discrimination they had never experienced. This represents a political puzzle for policy makers, but a cultural and economic loophole for immigrants.

Immigrants have become the beneficiaries of affirmative action policies in the job hiring arena in unprecedented proportions. Ethnic networking has been the result of this shift. One can easily observe the tendency for language, kinship, and community ties to convert certain American jobs into immigrant enclaves as is seen in restaurants, hotels, janitorial services, and furniture manufacturing in major cities in the US.

Affirmative action policies have been viewed by immigrants as a *sine qua non* for assessing the set aside programs which opened the doors of opportunity. The result of such appropriation has been a resistance to assimilate into the mainstream without some particular label. It is not enough, immigrants would argue, to be an American; it is expeditious to be labeled a "minority" since by so doing doors will be opened.

Evangelicals are often puzzled by the unwillingness of immigrants to divorce themselves from "designated minority" labels. This is a matter of self-interest and economic survival. The gains from embracing the melting pot hypothesis don't seem to balance the beneficence accrued from seeking inclusion into the targets of affirmative action. For the foreseeable future, there will be a continued tension between the historic minorities – Native Americans and African Americans – who consid-

er immigrants' acceptance into the affirmative action dialogue as an unwelcome and intrusive interplay.

That being said, affirmative action, a legislative mechanism designed to offer race-conscious remedies for unjust policies and practices of the past, will continue to attract immigrants to its side.

Dual Citizenship

Exclusive loyalty to the United States was once considered compulsory for anyone contemplating citizenship. Going back to the 1790s, the language in the oath of citizenship conveys such allegiance directly. It states:

I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state or sovereignty; that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by law....

This would seem to fly in the face of any attempt to consider dual citizenship. However, the import of these words no longer conveys the same pungent uni-national allegiance. Another example of the propensity for such allegiance could be found in every American passport:

Under certain circumstances, you may lose your citizenship by performing any of the following acts:

1. naturalizing in a foreign state
2. taking an oath or making a declaration to a foreign state
3. certain service in the armed forces of a foreign state
4. accepting employment with a foreign government;
5. by formally renouncing U.S citizenship before a U.S consular official overseas.

Some have suggested that the Supreme Court, in many rulings, seems to have dissected the language of these documents and has rendered them lame-duck instruments for such allegiance.

One should not take lightly the occasion when, in 2001 on

Cinco de Mayo, Mexico's national day, President George W. Bush sent a message in Spanish to the Mexican-origin population. Some may argue that it was an astute political ploy on Bush's part and thereby miss the subliminal significance embedded in the action. Dual citizenship is today an accepted option for millions. More than 25 nations presently allow for dual citizenship. In 1998, Mexico amended its Constitution allowing its nationals who became U.S. citizens to retain Mexican citizenship. These moves appeared to enable naturalized Mexican citizens to inherit and buy land in Mexico, allow immigrants to protect their interests and rights in the U.S., and furthermore help Mexican Americans to serve as interests groups on behalf on Mexican interests in the U.S.

What this shift in immigration means is that no longer is there an urgent obligation to shed the moorings of one's culture in order to be assimilated into the American culture. One can have the best of both worlds. America drifts further away from the "melting pot myth" by these subtle but inclusive shifts. Forceful assimilation has lost its sharp exclusive edge, and multiculturalism itself must be redefined.

What then, are we to make of the fact that immigrants today maintain such stronger ties than in the past to their homeland and its people? It represents a stark departure from the immigrant kaleidoscope of the early 20th century European patterns. Immigrants today may become American naturalized citizens, but the allegiances to their home remains partially in tact. Added to this confusion, the rate at which immigrants have chosen to become citizens has declined dramatically. Naturalization rates of legal immigrant adults, which had been as high as 80% in 1950, fell to 44% in 1990. Even discounting the impact of continuing immigration, this is the lowest rate in a hundred years.

Until this change took place, dual citizenship was looked upon as an incongruity to be eliminated as quickly as possible. Nowadays, many immigrants remain citizens of both countries, with more than 500,000 children born in the United States

each year, who by that very fact alone are American citizens, but choose to remain citizens of their parents' countries of origin. It must be noted that this new fad is different from the earlier exceptions of European dual citizenship. Then, dual citizenship was more or less a passive legal status made aware to the immigrant upon a casual visit to the homeland, where one might discover that conscription to the Armed Services is his legacy to be responded to. Today however, dual citizenship is a conscious and deliberate matter accommodating constant contact with friends and relatives through regular visits. Added to this stimulus, many immigrants are encouraged by their countries' leadership to maintain their allegiance, further promoting identification and commitment.

This trend indisputably affects the myth of the melting pot, simply because hundreds of thousands of immigrants keep such close contact with the homeland that they remain internally hybrid, while externally it may seem that they have conveniently assimilated into the mainstream.

September 11, 2001

The effects of September 11 on the immigrant population have been varied and difficult to gauge. As with World Wars I & II, vis-à-vis the Germans, Italians, and Japanese, there was measured bigotry. September 11 is cited as an important trend affecting the melting pot theory, not because it discourages it, but because it places a new twist on what it means to be American.

When the president of the United States visited Ground Zero on Friday, September 14, someone yelled from the crowd that he couldn't hear him, to which Bush responded, "I can hear you. The whole world can hear you. And the people who knocked down these buildings will hear from all of us soon." Immediately the crowd of rescue workers began chanting, "U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!" This crowd comprised Americans of all nationalities, and their unforgettable message was: We are all Americans. Cab drivers from Pakistan, Haiti, Ethiopia, and

Latin America, displaying American flags were among those who honked their horns in support of a ready response by the US.

Not since World War II have Americans demonstrated such unabashed patriotism. It would have been an easy ploy for this country to have deteriorated into ethnic disharmony, disunity, and reprisals among immigrant groups. Stigmatizing or isolating any group would have destabilized the very values that immunize all Americans – including those of the Muslim faith or Arab ancestry – against letting ethnic or religious loyalties engulf their bonds to countries of origin.

The events of 9/11 placed America on a defensive path that would affect immigration policy for the foreseeable future. All foreign-born citizens, particularly Arab-born, understand quite well the suspicion and unease that have surfaced in America because of the horrendous acts against American citizens. Quite understandably, there was some adverse reaction. However, Americans resurrected a national cohesive spirit of patriotism that has become the envy of many a nation that came unglued because of such a catastrophe.

Interestingly, it is reported that applications for citizenship multiplied in the months following 9/11, well over 60% more immigrants applied for naturalization in that period than in the same period the year before.

Opportunities

From its beginning, America has not been the mythical melting pot but has been marked by its diversity.⁷ When 78% of Los Angeles residents are ethnics, and more Jews live in New York City than in Israel, and when Chicago is the second largest Polish city anywhere in the world,⁸ it represents a tremendous evangelistic opportunity.

Bible translators insist that people never will be reached effectively for the gospel until the gospel is in the language of their souls. If the church is to reach these immigrants with the gospel, ethnic leaders must be developed. When an ethnic

church sponsors a new ethnic church, 98% of the pastors come from that ethnic group. When leaders encourage indigenous leaders to arise within ethnic population groups, the growth of churches of that ethnic segment often doubles.⁹

The greater ethnic diversity will require an understanding of the distinctives of the respective cultures. A key to ministry in the new era will be the creation of multiethnic faith communities that reflect the demographic makeup of their populations.¹⁰

It seems to me that the crucial aspect of the challenge facing the 21st century church would be the recognition that ministry in this pluralistic culture would require two things. First, people evince different responses to the claims of the gospel. Some people are early adopters, eager to adapt to any kind of change, becoming convinced quickly and wanting to make the necessary adjustments in a new cultural context. Second, it is important to understand people's differing cultural perspectives. Each culture marches to a different drummer, and its peoples themselves sometimes demonstrate different perspectives of the new environment. We must listen to each beat and be culturally sensitive so that we can better communicate spiritual truth.

The Unity in Diversity we Seek

When I entered this country in 1968, I had every intention of being assimilated into the norms, customs, and cultural identifications of these United States. After 38 years, I don't know that I am any closer to being a melted specimen of assimilation. Granted, I arrived with every intention to say goodbye forever to my homeland of 24 years. However, I must be grateful to the soil that gave me birth and a fundamental educational foundation. It is Trinidad that responded to my innate passion to achieve and to strive for the highest possible apexes of life's aspirations.

To this day, after recently having embarked on the U.S. naturalization process, my nostalgia for the homeland is still colonized by the occasional smells, sounds, and acquaintances that

remind me of a land 2,469 nautical miles away. This is by no means a reflection on the US, but a testament to the powerful influence that one's culture dispatches to the very core value system and the making of the individual. America, in the "flat world" template, is more of a clearing house for global imagination and capacity. I have become a patriotic participant in the "land of the free and the home of the brave," but as America competes in the global war of ideas she is richer because of the diversity that I bring to its shores. As America has become part and parcel of who I am, I believe that I have in part, made America what it is today.

Interestingly, the America that I met in 1968 is vastly different from the America I know today. America is no longer a monolithic community where the superiority of the Anglo-American culture is proposed. America today has been infected by the incursion of immigrants to the extent that it has become a porous composite of various cultures, each contributing to the subtle changes that have affected the whole. Assimilation is a two-way street. In the long run, America absorbs and accommodates the cultural variety of its new citizens, and on the other hand its citizens convey pride in their ethnicity.

Assimilation was once a clear-cut proposition for many who immigrated to these shores. On the other hand, as has been the thesis of this article, the melting pot has co-opted for a complicated fusion cuisine, one that leaves an unpleasant taste on the traditional American palate.

Perhaps Jurgen Moltman can speak to us all:

Trust is the art of living not only in what we have in common, but in our differences as well—not merely with people like ourselves but with others too. If in the Christian community common trust springs from the love of Christ, and if it is the fellowship of the Spirit which brings together people who are different, that fellowship will become the source which strengthens our capacity for community in the natural relationships of life.¹¹

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 - 2 Rick Lyman, *Census Shows Growth of Immigrants*, New York Times, August 15, 2006,
 - 3 Michael Fix, Wendy Zimmerman, and Jeffrey Passell, *The Integration of Immigrant Families in the United States* (Urban Institute, July 2001).
 - 4 U.S. Census Bureau, *Profile of the Foreign-Born Population in the United States: 2000* (U.S. Department of Commerce, December 2001).
 - 5 E. P. Hutchinson, *Legislative History of American Immigration Policy, 1798-1965* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), pp. 492-520.
 - 6 U.S. Census Bureau, National Population Estimates.
 - 7 Oscar I. Romo, *American Mosaic: Church Planting in Ethnic America* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1993), p. 41
 - 8 This data is from Richard Harris, *The Planter Update* (Alpharetta, Ga.: North American Mission Board, 2002).
 - 9 Romo, *American Mosaic*, p. 90.
 - 10 Craig Kenneth Miller makes this observation in his article "Creating New Faith Communities," *Partners in Discipleship*, May 2004.
 - 11 Jurgen Molten, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), p. 146



The Biblical Foundation for Multicultural Ministry

by Ken Baker

When you read Bible stories, how does your imagination portray the characters? Recently, I taught a seminar in a youth room decorated with a continuous mural depicting the chronological events of the Bible. I could not help but notice the choices the artist had made regarding various characters. David was a blond-haired, light-skinned fellow slinging a stone at a huge dark man with curly hair. What is this saying about ethnic assumptions and the way we present ‘good’ guys and ‘bad’ guys?

Part of our characteristic worldviews is to shape the world according to our particular cultural orientations, and the dominant culture generally sets the interpretive tone. However, biblical and historical evidence present the peoples of the biblical period as exclusively dark-skinned and occasionally black. Likewise, the biblical record yields some surprises: did you know that Moses was married to a black woman (Num. 12:1); that Phineas, the zealous priest of Israel (Num. 25:11-13, cf. Num 31, Josh. 22, Ps. 106:28-31) was black, and that people from Africa (Cush) regularly appeared in the Old and New Testaments?

Those delivered out of Egypt were part of a mixed multitude as Exodus 12:38 reveals, and “...*many other people went up with them.*” Thus, the “sons of Israel” became a mixed brotherhood by virtue of their varied ancestry through marriage. In fact, the ‘people of God’ throughout the Scriptures, but particularly in the formative years of Israel’s history, were always ethnically diverse.¹

The degree to which this introduction surprises you shows the scope of the task in reshaping your biblical framework for understanding God's program for the nations, as well as the church's role in this plan. However, before launching into the biblical foundation for multicultural ministry, I will identify the questions I seek to answer:

- What does the Bible say about ethnicity?*
- What is the biblical responsibility of the people of God toward the nations?*
- What place does ethnic diversity have in God's plan?*
- What role does ethnic migration play in God's redemptive plan?*
- What are the greatest obstacles to biblical multiculturalism?*

The space allotted for this chapter does not permit an exhaustive treatment of these questions. Rather, we will touch lightly, but effectively, the core issues in the hope that a new, fresh conception of a biblical, multicultural Church will emerge.

1. What does the Bible say about ethnicity?

The biblical theology of ethnicity rests on Genesis 1:26, where we learn that God created all people in His image. Everyone, everywhere, in all time, is unique before God and the rest of creation. This truth torpedoed any claim to ethnic superiority. God alone, and no specific ethnic group, is worthy of praise, "Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nation, I will be exalted in the earth." (Ps. 46:10)

Clearly, humankind's relationship with God began with such promise in the garden, but when the curse entered through human sin, the relationship radically changed. Despite this tragedy, God still displayed His loyal love through a plan of redemption that He promised to Abraham in Gen. 12:1-3. This glorious promise halted the spiraling degeneration described in chapters 3-11 and provided hope for humankind. Right from this beginning, we note God's singular intent to use a people consecrated to Him through whom all peoples would

be blessed, “. . . and all peoples of the earth will be blessed through you.” (Gen. 12:3b) Therefore, God’s ultimate redemptive program will culminate in glory to His name, “*Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.*” (Rev. 15:4)

While the Scriptures do not directly discuss ‘ethnicity’ per se, the pulse of biblical history beats the rhythm of cultures and kingdoms, regions and genealogies, as various peoples interact with each other and God’s chosen people, Israel. However, the concept of a ‘chosen’ people appears to counteract the leveling reality that all peoples were created in the image of God. Does this mean that God does prefer one people over the rest? It certainly seems the case, as in Lev. 20:26, “*You are to be holy to me because I, the LORD, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own.*” However, as we will note below, this special relationship comes with a weighty responsibility, “*But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.*” (Ex. 9:16)

2. What is the biblical responsibility of the people of God toward the nations?

Typically, many Christians have often assumed that mission, vision, and responsibility appeared at the close of Christ’s earthly ministry, when Jesus commanded His disciples, “*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations . . .*” (Matthew 28:19a). On the contrary, God intended, right from the calling of Abraham, that His redemptive plan would extend to all peoples of the earth. However, the Israelites and their descendents, the Jews, chronically struggled with this universal, inclusive vision to call the nations to their God, the Creator. From their perspective, He called them, and not others. So, it was natural to consider themselves as special. Besides, look at all that God had done for them! But the reason for the call was clear; God’s relationship with Israel was to be an abiding testimony to the nations of the earth:

“But for their sake I will remember the covenant with their ancestors whom I brought out of Egypt in the sight of the nations to be their God. I am the LORD.” (Lev. 26: 45)

“The LORD will establish you as his holy people, as he promised you on oath, if you keep the commands of the LORD your God and walk in his ways. Then all the peoples on earth will see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they will fear you.” (Deut. 28: 9-10)

“The LORD your God did to the Jordan just what he had done to the Red Sea when he dried it up before us until we had crossed over. He did this so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the LORD is powerful and so that you might always fear the LORD your God.” (Joshua 4: 23-24)

The faith life of the nation of Israel was intended as an instrument of revelation to the nations of the earth. What was their obedience to reveal? The character and power of the LORD. Why? So that the nations might be reconciled to Him, for His glory. The Psalmist “gets it” in Psalm 67:

May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us. Selah. That your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations. May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you. May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you rule the peoples justly and guide the nations of the earth. Selah. May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you. Then the land will yield its harvest, and God, our God, will bless us. God will bless us, and all the ends of the earth will fear him.

God intends for His people to be a light to the nations to bring a faith response, thereby participating in the redemption found in the Messiah promised as the culmination of blessing to all peoples of the earth. Isaiah 56 is a stirring example of God’s heart for the nations to participate in the community of faith:

And foreigners who bind themselves to the LORD to serve him, to love the name of the LORD, and to worship him, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my

covenant—these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.

Later, in the New Testament, Jesus repeats this same theme, quoting Isaiah, when cleansing the temple of those who had made a mockery of His Father's heart for the peoples of the earth, "And as he taught them, he said, *Is it not written: 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations'.*" (Mark 11:17) Sadly, the people of Israel, the Jews, consistently denied their responsibility to all nations. They were pleased when God's blessing enriched their lives and dismayed when suffering came their way. [Does this sound familiar to us today?] In Luke 4, on the cusp of his public ministry, Jesus teaches with awe-struck acclaiming his hometown synagogue of Nazareth, "All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. 'Isn't this Joseph's son?' they asked." (vs 22) All was well until Jesus linked his presence to a movement of God's blessing by mentioning the widow at Zarephath and Naaman, both Gentiles. Then the townspeople, his lifelong neighbors, were ready to throw him off a cliff! This was a hard teaching for those steeped in the illusion that they enjoyed exclusive possession of God's attention. Their (tribal) God was not to be shared with foreigners, outsiders, usurpers! Thus, when Jesus talked of intimate relationship with those the Father would bring Him, "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also . . ." , it sowed rejection and confusion. (John 10: 14-16)

Following the resurrection, the disciples embarked on a steep learning path as all that they had heard and experienced evolved into a purpose. Each successive encounter with their risen Lord brought further insight into God's Kingdom plan. Then, Acts 1:8 set the tone for the rest of their lives and for the life of the Church after them, "But you will receive power when the

Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

In reference to ethnicity, there are two vital aspects regarding this vision of mission involvement: geography and timing. Jesus’ charge to his disciples envisions a simultaneous, as well as a seamless endeavor. The activity of witness had to be progressive, unfolding movement, beginning in Jerusalem and continuing everywhere. Each stage was not to be abandoned for the next; rather, the message was to flow outward reaching ever further, without abating anywhere.

These concentric stages, though, do not represent merely geography. Each manifests something different in relation to the hearer. For our understanding today, Jerusalem means “those who are like us in ethnicity, culture, and language”. Judea refers to “those who are similar to us, and somewhat nearby, though there may be some cultural or lifestyle differences”. Samaria pertains to “those who may be nearby, but who are different from us in ethnicity, culture, language, and religion”. Finally, the ends of the earth addresses “those who are not only different from us but who live in different countries”.²

3. What place does ethnic diversity have in God’s plan?

While Israel carried an identity as the chosen people of faith, still this ‘nation’ could not claim ethnic purity. God ensured through various means (intermarriage, alliances, assimilation, etc.) that other peoples were included within Israel. Thus, the people of God not only had a responsibility toward the wide array of nations, but they were collectively responsible to those the Lord continually brought among them. The Law recognized that from the outset, “aliens” would be a part of this faith community, not simply to be tolerated, but as equal partners before the Lord.

For the generations to come, whenever an alien or anyone else living among you presents an offering made by fire as an aroma pleasing to the LORD, he must do exactly as you do. The community is to

have the same rules for you and for the alien living among you; this is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. You and the alien shall be the same before the LORD: The same laws and regulations will apply both to you and to the alien living among you. (Lev 15: 14-16)

Likewise, Psalm 87 displays God's intent to assign native identity to those peoples who came to Him. Here we note that God recognizes ethnic diversity and lineage, but instructs that these differences do not matter,

I will record Rahab and Babylon among those who acknowledge me—Philistia too, and Tyre, along with Cush—and will say, “This one was born in Zion.” “Indeed, of Zion it will be said, “This one and that one were born in her, and the Most High himself will establish her.” The LORD will write in the register of the peoples: “This one was born in Zion.”

This dual responsibility, a vision for the nations and acceptance for those God brought into the fold, rests on the Church as well. Furthermore, as Kingdom teaching expands in the New Testament, partiality is strictly erased:

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Gal. 3:26-29)

Paul repeats this theme on numerous occasions, but Eph. 2:11-3:6 in particular, demonstrates the full import of God's vision for His people. The apostle describes the former relationship between the Jews and the Gentiles ('nations') as one of division and hostility, but *“this mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.”* (Eph. 3:6) The clarity speaks for itself. All who have come, by faith in Christ, into the family of God represent a wealth of cultural diversity, but all are equal before God; there is no preference, no advantage.

4. What role does ethnic migration play in God's redemptive plan?

Throughout history God has been moving people in order that His purposes be accomplished. Adam and Eve were driven from the Garden, God dispersed all people at the tower of Babel, Abram left his native land for a promised one, Joseph gave refuge to his family in the face of famine, Moses led the people out of Egypt and they wandered in the desert until they could conquer Canaan. Not only was Israel on the move, but other peoples were as well, especially the dominant cultures: Assyrians, Babylonians, Chaldeans, Greeks and Romans. Major and minor migrations were standard events in the course of biblical history, orchestrated by God's sovereign hand as He worked His purposes.

Surprisingly, despite the manifold information regarding God's vision for gospel expansion, the disciples were still slow to comprehend that all people were to hear, not just Jews. However, we find in Acts the gradual unfolding of God's plan for the gospel to spread to all peoples. On the day of Pentecost we are told that Jerusalem was filled with Jews (and proselytes) "from every nation under heaven" (Acts 2: 5). There are at least thirteen language groups identified as present. Later, in chapter six, we learn of the young church accommodating its structure in order to allow for cultural differences. Note that all the new deacons, though Jews, had Greek names. Incrementally, God was laying the foundation for ethnic ministry!

The first, widespread, cross-cultural presentation of the gospel came to a group of Samaritans in Acts 8. Then the conversion of Paul in chapter nine introduced an unheard of dimension, universal witness to the Gentiles, as God told Ananias, "*This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings . . .*" (vs. 15) Even before the witness to Gentiles began, God had raised up a leader for this vast ministry! Next, it was Peter's turn to encounter God's heart for all peoples through the vision where the Lord claimed, "*Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.*" (vs. 15). As a result,

for the first time since the beginning of the church, Gentiles heard the gospel preached.

Acts chapter eleven has been called the “hinge of the door of church history.”³ Note in verse 18 how the leaders of the church at Jerusalem responded to the evidence of the Holy Spirit’s ministry, *“When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, ‘So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life’.*” The Old Testament, and Jesus’ teaching, had laid out this reality, but only now were the church leaders truly grasping what it meant. In order for multiethnic ministry to flourish, church leadership must choose to intentionally pursue, and encourage, this commitment within the church body.

The latter half of Acts eleven shows the impact of migration on the growth of the church. As a result of the persecution of Stephen, many believers were already scattered throughout the Mediterranean region, taking the gospel with them. It was at Antioch where the first truly multiethnic congregation arose, and where believers were first called Christians (vs. 26). Likewise, from Antioch, a ‘mixed’ body, the wider mission movement emerged when Barnabas and Saul were commissioned for a gospel journey. Often today many fear that a community cross-cultural outreach will undercut foreign missions. No! Multiethnic ministry will not stifle mission projects abroad, it will stimulate them!⁴

Now, in the space of a few years, much was happening and there were legitimate concerns about false teaching circulating among the brethren. Acts 15 demonstrates the final affirmation from the church leadership that ministry to the Gentiles was not only permitted, but it was God’s intention all along that all nations should share in the redemption of the cross. They had finally come to completely embrace what God had designed for His people, and for all nations (ethnicities).

Therefore, in Acts 17 we find the key that unlocks our understanding of God’s purposes in moving people, both those who name Him as Lord, and those who do not know His

Name. In the latter portion of this chapter, Paul is in Athens, seeking to contextualize the message of the gospel by relating to their search for God. In his discourse Paul reveals God's intention for humankind to find their way back to Him:

From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. ²⁷God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. (vs 26-27)

Demographic change is a normal part of history. People have always migrated, seeking new surroundings for an array of reasons. Sometimes such people movements are forced, on other occasions they are by choice. Then again, with many, it is a mixture of both. The push of crisis and the pull of opportunity both function as motivators. Through it all, God is sovereign in the dispersion of people throughout the earth. Likewise, in our national context, God has willingly brought the nations of the world to our shores. Why? So that they might find Him! For the church in America, this is our 'Samaria'; those who are nearby, but who are ethnically, culturally, and religiously different. How will we respond?

5. What are the greatest obstacles to biblical multiculturalism?

Change is a universal phenomenon for every culture. When we perceive it to be a threat, we resist; when we envision an advantage, we embrace it. This is human nature, responding to what we see as best for us. Therefore, perspective makes all the difference. If we are viewing demographic changes from a temporal standpoint, then the pace and impact can feel overwhelming. However, understanding demographics from an eternal perspective highlights God's interests and allows us the joy of finding out that it is in our own best interest as well. Thus, overcoming personal objections to multiculturalism involves a process of asserting Kingdom values over and against temporal fears and personal preferences.

Two biblical passages, one from the Old Testament, one from the New, reveal strikingly similar lessons regarding the deceptions of the human heart. The first is the story of Jonah; the second is commonly called the Prodigal Son.

God commanded Jonah, the prophet, to go to Nineveh and cry against it. This city was the center of the Assyrian empire, the most feared people of the period. They were brutal in their warfare, striking terror among all neighboring peoples. Jonah, though, did not obey God's word. Instead he fled in the opposite direction, where God brought calamity on the ship and crew until Jonah gave up his flight. After the storm on the sea, and Jonah's three days in the belly of the fish, Jonah relented to go to Nineveh where he preached the message God had given him, "*Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned.*" (3:4). Incredibly, the fierce, wicked Assyrians believed!

How thrilling! This is a prophetic breakthrough for an unreached people group! Jonah must have been overwhelmed at God's hand of power and mercy. No, Jonah pouted. He is thoroughly put out that God did not keep his word to destroy everything:

But Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry. He prayed to the LORD, "O LORD, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. (Jonah 4: 1-2)

Was Jonah afraid of the deadly Assyrians? Perhaps, but that is not the reason he chose the opposite direction. He refused to go among the Ninevites because he despised them. He felt they deserved to be destroyed. When God did not do it, he pouted.

Jonah's behavior is a microcosm of Israel's national attitude. The Jews were content to keep God and His blessings for themselves. They had no desire to wield His mercy, only His judgment. The story of Jonah pitifully ends with him sitting to the East of the repentant, blessed city of Nineveh. He is on the

sideline, angry, scorched and stubbornly refusing to admit God's right to compassion.

In the face of demographic change in America, evangelical attitudes come dangerously close to the "Jonah Syndrome." Indifference slides toward hostility as we brace against a foreign invasion that threatens our accustomed way of life. Wielding judgment feels much more satisfying than extending grace. Such protective responses preserve our comfort, yet render us irrelevant, just like Jonah. God will be glorified among the nations and we will miss the joy of this awakening.

In Luke 15, Jesus addresses the Pharisees' haughty superiority with a series of parables expressing God's joy at recovering that which is precious to Him. In this chapter, three things are lost: a sheep, a coin, and a son. It would seem that the point of the discourse would be complete when the prodigal son returns to his father. However, there is more, for the heart of the teaching targets the older son in the way he represents the attitude of the Pharisees (vs 1-2). Upon learning that his father has thrown a celebration honoring his younger brother's return, the older son is indignant. He won't lower himself to enter the house, so the father patiently comes out to his older son to beg his presence. To paraphrase his response, the older son remarks, "After all I have done for you, I deserve better! This son of yours is a disgrace and deserves nothing from you!" The older son even refuses to acknowledge that he has a brother. Hasn't the older son been faithful, in contrast to the younger one who had been woefully unfaithful, rejecting everything to follow his own lusts? Certainly! But God rejoices when sinners repent and return to Him. The Pharisees, Jesus' audience in this scene, thought they were the epitome of God's chosen people. In their self-conceived superiority, they were faithfully serving and expecting showers of honor in return. Yet in their indifference and self-righteousness, they had completely missed the heart of the Father for the nations. Tenderly, patiently the father answers the older son's anger, " 'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. ³²But we had to cele-

brate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' " (Luke 15: 31-32)

In each parable something is lost, it is found and then there is rejoicing. However, with the sheep and the coin there is another element, an exhaustive search, a scene missing from the third story. Who should have been looking for the lost son? His brother . . . we see this through the interplay between the older son and his father. The older son repudiates any responsibility for his brother when he calls him, "this son of yours." Whereas his father turns it back on him when he states, "this brother of yours." The older son had spent his life cultivating his father's favor and planning his blessing, instead of searching for his younger brother.

Actually, there are two lost sons in the parable, and only one is found. Likewise, which brother truly understands the heart of his father? Sadly, this story ends with the older son out of fellowship with his father. Poignantly, the only way for the older son to renew this fellowship is through reconciliation with his brother! The one who thought he was in perfect relationship with his father pouts out in the cold, far from the celebration, just like Jonah . . . and just like the Jewish religious leaders Jesus was addressing, or those of us today who are dismayed at the demographic revolution in Christendom.

As these two biblical stories reveal, apathy, indifference, superiority and resentment are significant barriers to opening our hearts cross-culturally. For the most part, we are loathe to share, or relinquish, our place to newcomers. We feel compelled to defend what we believe we deserve. Like the Pharisees, we cannot get over our own goodness! Our high value keeps us from grasping the goodness of God for all nations.

Summary

God created humankind in His image for intimate fellowship; however, sin entered this relationship separating humans from their Creator. In His mercy, though, God shaped a path of

reconciliation through the redemptive sacrifice of His Son, the Messiah, Jesus Christ. In His sovereignty God chose to establish a people through whom all peoples of the earth would be blessed. This initial promise to Abraham in Genesis 12: 1-3 finds its culmination in the heavenly scene of praise in Rev. 5:9, *“You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.”* These two images are the grand redemptive bookends of human history. When God created diverse peoples, He expected to receive worship from them and this is the purpose for our existence: that all ethnicities would worship the King of Glory!

The people of God, from Abraham’s ‘seed’ through the Church today, have always been a mix of ethnicities, blessed with the purpose of revealing the nature of God to humankind. Throughout history this has always involved a dual role: to love equally all those whom God has brought into His family and to be a light to the nations. Unfortunately, though, this joint responsibility chronically suffers neglect as God’s people expect His favor without cost, content to spend blessing on themselves.

The Scriptures present a multiethnic community of faith called to reveal God’s nature and redemption to the nations of the world. However, superiority, partiality, indifference and hostility have kept the Church culturally divided, mocking its redeemed identity. We are called to a Kingdom perspective that rejects self-preservation and reaches for eternal outcomes. God, in His infinite patience gives every opportunity for repentance and redirection. The rapid pace of demographic change, at home and abroad, offers the American church an avenue to embrace eternal values and envision new relationships in Christ that transcend ethnicity, class, and culture. Like the David’s compatriots, “men of Issachar, who understood the times and knew what Israel should do” we have the opportunity to understand our times and respond accordingly. To God be the Glory!

1 Hays, J. Daniel. *From Every People and Nation: A biblical theology of race*. Inter Varsity Press, 2003, p. 85.

2 Ethnic Ministry Mentoring Manual—Ethnic Focus Ministry, SIM-USA, p. 3.6

3 Ibid. p. 3.8

4 Ibid.



Future Cultural Trends in the United States: A Historical Perspective

Dale E. Jones

The United States has served as the home of many cultural groups since its inception. Historically, each religious group has been considered as a separate culture; people from different parts of Europe, even from different parts of the British Isles, have constituted separate cultural groups. In Europe, historical rivalries and political realities reinforced distinct cultural differences.

In America, many of the old rivalries no longer seemed important when compared to the challenge of creating a new society in a sparsely settled land. The commonalities of the early settlers were stressed more than differences. Most were native English-speakers or soon adopted English. While Catholics and Jews were tolerated within some of the earliest colonies, and eventually within all of them, the majority of settlers were Protestant.

Today, modern America regards White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant (WASP) as a single cultural group. But the colonial culture that established WASP as the norm, actually combined several then-distinct groups into what became the dominant culture. Anglicans and Puritans, Midlands English and Scotch-Irish, even landowners and business operators were distinctive groups among the early European settlers.

While the phrase “melting pot” is attributed to author Israel Zangwill in 1908, the phrase did seem to describe, from a European perspective, what happened to the various groups that come to the United States early on. Rather than clinging to

the cultures of the homeland, most immigrants seemed ready to use the American language, traditions, and political processes.

While adapting to the dominant WASP culture, the various immigrant groups have also influenced that dominant culture, which is the truth behind the melting pot legend. But sociologists such as Dr. Paul Orjala have pointed out that America has never consisted of a single, melted culture.¹

The United States recognized that various unassimilated cultures existed within its borders. While the spoken ideal of the nation was supposed to be *e pluribus Unum* (from many, one), Americans did not usually try to suppress the different cultures by legal action. Americans instead assumed that others would want to join the major group and tolerated many differences as a necessary step in assimilation. The English language, no matter how poorly spoken or understood, was an unlegislated prerequisite, as was openness to doing many things “the American way.”

Until the latter 20th century, many comedians earned their living by caricaturing the various groups that had not been totally assimilated into the American melting pot. Specific accents, foods, or customs were thought to be tied to certain cultures within America, and our modern sensibilities are sometimes shocked by the contents of old books, movies, or recordings. While not excusing the insensitivity of earlier generations, the fact that such jokes needed no explanation underscores that differences were recognized, if not always celebrated.

Exceptions

Before going any further, we must recognize that some groups were not usually included in the assimilation efforts. African Americans, once freed from slavery, were rarely invited to become part of the dominant culture. It took many years before Asian immigrants were accepted as legitimate Americans. For Native Americans and those people whose families were part of the American Southwest while it was still

in Mexico, assimilation was sometimes possible, but it required total abandonment of the traditional cultures. And for all but the African Americans, intermarriage with those of the dominant culture was a helpful step in acceptance.

Some progress has been made. America was affected by the worldwide revolt against European domination that swept the planet in the mid-20th century. At the very least, the ideal worlds portrayed in novels, television, and movies now include persons of color as vital parts of every social endeavor. Fifty years ago, such a world was almost inconceivable to those in the dominant culture.

It is also important to note that in the United States, the dominant culture is not protected by law. There is no official requirement of language, religion, race, or cultural identity in order to work, hold office, own property, become a citizen, or otherwise live in America.

Comparisons

All but the smallest nations have subcultures. Complete unanimity in practice or language is difficult to achieve beyond the level of the village and difficult to enforce even in such small communities.

America appeared to be unique because it deliberately encouraged many different groups first to come to the country and then to become part of the mainstream. For instance, the Catholics, Puritans, and Quakers were among many disparate groups that helped to establish European society in North America. Not only were they mutually tolerated by those of the Established Church, but they each became major contributors to the new nation. This was not the case in Europe.

Even today, many nations allow people from other cultures to live and work within their borders, but such immigrants are not welcome to become equal members of the country. In some cases, citizenship is barely an option. Guest worker programs in many nations that value their cultural identity, are intended to increase the ranks of workers without offering

citizenship rights. But the United States has tended to welcome people of various cultures and to allow them full rights to participate and to become citizens, with only the offices of President and Vice-president denied them by law.

Dominance

So long as one group has had major dominance, the risk from assimilation has proven to be minor. The United States has willingly accepted some minor changes for the sake of expansion. This compromise has been acceptable and is the essence of the melting pot theory. But two conditions are required for that compromise to remain acceptable: major dominance and minor changes.

There have been times when one or both of these conditions seem to be threatened. Indeed, they go together sociologically. If a single group does not have major dominance, there is no impetus for smaller groups to assimilate. And if major changes are imminent, the dominant group feels its existence is threatened and then refuses to accept the assimilation.

As mentioned earlier, the dominant group in America was originally White, English, and Protestant. This definition is no longer adequate, but its historic roots will allow us to see the effects of assimilation since the nation's founding.

The Scotch-Irish were part of the original cultural mix. They not only spoke English, but they also were strongly Protestant. But later Irish immigrants were not as readily incorporated. They usually spoke English but were not always either Anglo-Saxon or Protestant. By 1850, over 40% of the foreign-born population in the United States came from Ireland, by far the largest immigrant group. Still, American literature from the latter 1800s indicates that the Irish were routinely excluded from the dominant culture.

The next largest foreign-born group in 1850 came from Germany. By 1880, they outnumbered the Irish-born in the United States. Although these immigrants had to learn English, their closer ties to England's Anglo-Saxon heritage and gener-

ally Protestant outlook allowed them to incorporate more quickly into the dominant culture. In fact, their inclusion gave rise to the more common WASP designation for the dominant group: White, Anglo-Saxon (rather than English or British) Protestants.

But by the turn of the century, a new group of immigrants challenged WASP dominance. Immigration from Southern Europe, especially Italy, provided a group that was both non-Germanic and non-Protestant. It appeared that the numbers of eastern and southern European immigrants were about to end the WASP dominance in the United States. What would happen if Catholicism became the largest religious group? This was perceived by many as a major change that could not be tolerated.

In response, America's dominant group began including the Irish far more readily. By including these northern Europeans, the majority became larger and better able to continue the dominance of American culture. Thus, almost as soon as Anglo-Saxon was incorporated into the dominant cultural title, it was no longer a requirement for inclusion in the dominant culture. Northern European ancestry was acceptable.

Incidentally, while many Irish immigrants were Catholic, a 1990 study by the City University of New York found that the majority of Irish-descended Americans consider themselves Protestant. Either the immigrants tended to be those out of harmony with the dominant religious group of Ireland, or their descendants found it easier to join the American mainstream by becoming Protestant.

Another result of the immigration from Southern Europe was the creation of restrictive immigration policies in the United States. There was an expressed fear that America would have to give up too much to incorporate many more southern Europeans. In 1924, the Johnson-Reed Act established quotas by national origins, with definite preference to countries deemed compatible with WASP criteria.

The immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, like earlier German and Irish immigrants, found that assimilation

into the dominant group brought social and economic advantages. Meanwhile, the dominant group discovered that the immigrants and their descendants were not attempting to overthrow the American values that the quotas were to protect. By the 1960s, immigration policies were relaxed and the quota system retired.

The election of John Kennedy, a Catholic, as President in 1960 was perhaps the official end of the Protestant-only era, but the changes had been underway since 1900. The Catholics had become strong citizens, and their practices, while different, were not so strange to the Protestant children who grew up with Catholic neighbors. Many of today's middle-age adults can remember that school lunches, at least prior to the 1960s, always included fish on Friday in deference to Catholic practice. Catholics became not only the largest religious group (Protestant divisions made that possible) but in many cities the truly dominant group. Movies highlighting Catholic clergy positively became major hits.

Being Protestant was no longer a necessity. Not only were Catholics included, but the term "Judeo-Christian" became a way of welcoming Jewish contributions to the dominant culture. Of the various WASP designations, only White was still a major requirement for inclusion by the late 1900s.

For non-European groups such as Native Americans or Mexican Americans, intermarriage with the dominant group often allowed their descendants to be counted as WASP. Descendants of Asian Americans and African Americans were rarely included, even if only one grandparent was from those groups.

But current immigration trends may be about to change even the White requirement for WASP membership.

Plurality

Projections from the United States Census Bureau show that the White requirement may not last much longer. Based on our current definitions of cultural groups, the White, non-

Spanish group will barely constitute the majority of the population.

Table 1. Projected Population of the United States, by Race and Hispanic Origin: 2000 to 2050

(In thousands except as indicated. As of July 1. Resident population.)

Population or percent and race or Hispanic origin	2000	2010	2020	2030	2040	2050
POPULATION						
TOTAL	282,125	308,936	335,805	363,584	391,946	419,854
White alone	228,548	244,995	260,629	275,731	289,690	302,626
Black alone	35,818	40,454	45,365	50,442	55,876	61,361
Asian Alone	10,684	14,241	17,988	22,580	27,992	33,430
All other races ¹	7,075	9,246	11,822	14,831	18,388	22,437
Hispanic (of any race)	35,622	47,756	59,756	73,055	87,585	102,560
White alone, not Hispanic	195,729	201,112	205,936	209,176	210,331	210,283
PERCENT OF TOTAL POPULATION						
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
White alone	81.0	79.3	77.6	75.8	73.9	72.1
Black alone	12.7	13.1	13.5	13.9	14.3	14.6
Asian Alone	3.8	4.6	5.4	6.2	7.1	8.0
All other races ¹	2.5	3.0	3.5	4.1	4.7	5.3
Hispanic (of any race)	12.6	15.5	17.8	20.1	22.3	24.4
White alone, not Hispanic	69.4	65.1	61.3	57.5	53.7	50.1

Footnotes:

1 Includes American Indian and Alaska Native alone, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, and Two or More Races

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2004, "U.S. Interim Projections by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin,"

<<http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/usinterimproj/>>

It is possible that in our lifetime, the United States will become a nation with distinct and non-assimilating cultures. The percentage of non-assimilated groups may be less than it was a century ago. In 1900, the WASP percentage was perhaps as small as 70%, depending on how large the Irish-descended population was. Today, assuming the "White alone, non

Hispanic” includes only WEJC’s (White, European, Judeo-Christians), the percentage is down to 69%.

A century ago, the dominant group took the unofficial step of expanding its definition while officially changing the laws to protect its perceived privileges. Either unofficial change or new laws or both may be forthcoming as the dominant group perceives unwelcome changes.

If further assimilation is not desired, either by the smaller groups or by the larger group, then we may witness a society like those in India or Lebanon. In those nations, different cultural groups have rights recognized constitutionally. The Indian model seems more stable, inasmuch as no group comes close to dominance but includes specific geographic areas assigned to various cultural groups. Such changes would require major legal shifts within the United States as well as a re-thinking of the melting pot mythology. But historically, America has avoided plurality.

According to the 1850 definitions, WASPs were no longer a majority by 1900. In order to maintain dominance, the WASPs became WNEPs (White, Northern European Protestants).

By 1900 definitions, WNEP’s were not a majority by 1960. In order to maintain dominance, the group became WEJC’s (White, European, Judeo-Christians). If by today’s definitions WEJC’s will not be a majority by 2050, the criteria will likely be modified again. This will not be a matter of legal definition. One or more currently unassimilated groups will simply be accepted as legitimate within the larger group. German Americans are still identifiable today, if one wishes to count them separately. But they have been part of the dominant group for over a century. Catholics are still easy to count separately, but European Catholics have been part of the dominant group for at least 50 years. Hispanics, or Asian Americans, or even African Americans, will still be distinct groups in 2050. But it will not be surprising to find that Americans of the mid-21st century regard one or more of these groups the way we regard Catholics or German Americans today: they have some

uniquenesses, but they are definitely part of the dominant culture.

Role of the Church

The values of America's dominant culture have never been identical with those of Christianity. The emphases on self-gratification and independence are both contradictory to Jesus' message of self-denial and service. Whether the nation embraces plurality or creates a new majority, any national value system will still differ from that of Christian disciples.

Christians have been expected to downplay any differences in order to be part of the dominant culture. This will continue to be urged if the dominant group expands again, especially if religious perspective is no longer deemed important. On the contrary, if plurality becomes important, Christians will be urged to create their own subgroup to fight for Kingdom priorities. But the Christian assignment has not changed since the time of Christ's commission: we are to be His witnesses, calling the world to repentance and transformation.

Whether we do this as part of the dominant culture or as outsiders trying to be heard, we are to be faithful to Christ first. Duty to country is a Christian duty, but not the first duty of disciples. While Christians should make their voices heard on political issues and ought to be involved in civic matters, their larger duty is as citizens of the new Kingdom.

In a nation like America, where unofficial-but-real distinctions are made between groups, Christians have a special charge. We must continually remind our fellow-citizens that Christ died for all, not just for those privileged to be part of the dominant group. And any invitation to take part in decision-making processes must be recognized as a temptation, if it involves downplaying any role that true disciples should take.

1 Orjala, Paul J.: *Get Ready to Grow*, Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City: 1978, p.65



THE MULTI- CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN THE NORTH AMERICAN CONTEXT (United States and Canada)

By: Roberto Hodgson

INTRODUCTION

There is great diversity in the United States and Canada; the church has a great opportunity and challenge to efficiently “do” and “be” in ministry with those who are present in the community. The multi-congregational church is a model that can be used in the mosaic of these two North American countries that represents the diversity of the people groups of North American society. There are biblical and theological foundations that serve as departure points for this new and spontaneous, missional church movement. There are also sociological bases that reflect the new social trends of celebrating diversity. The multi-congregational church will serve as a bridge between different people groups and between those groups and the larger culture. Such a church will foster a better understanding among cultures, as well as provide models of different liturgical experiences, as each culture expresses itself in worship. The multi-congregational church will enable the local congregation to become a missionary church in its own community without crossing geographical national boundaries. Also, it will bring a revitalization of the church in changing transitional neighborhoods. Additionally, this model offers some advantages in the stewardship of the resources of local churches which seek to be in faithful ministry. The multi-congregational church is and

will continue to be, one of the most efficient models available to reach and embrace other people groups.

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Tower of Babel

According to the biblical account, the known world had one language and a common speech (Gen.11:1-4).The intention was to keep everybody in a central place and to maintain uniformity among them. The city and the tower became the focal point in the attempt to accomplish that intention. The city and the tower became symbols of the imposition of a single dominant culture and language.

But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower that men were building. The Lord said, “If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come let us go down and confuse their languages so they will not understand each other.” So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world. From there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth (Gen. 11:5-9).

When God confused the language of the city, He also restored the different languages that existed before the city and the tower of Babel. In the context of these passages it is found that there were in existence different “clans, [and] languages, in their territories and nations” (Gn.10:31). It seems that God never wanted one dominant language or culture for the human race. It is part of God’s purpose to have different languages, cultures, and nations exist and to let humanity experience and enjoy those differences. God’s intention is that in the midst of diversity there be unity, but not necessarily uniformity. This unity and diversity should be preserved from generation to generation as a reminder of the Creator God, who celebrates both unity and diversity.

The Twelve Tribes

There is a rich diversity in the unity of the twelve tribes of Israel. The book of Exodus starts with the names of the sons of Israel who are the roots of the formation of the Israelites (Ex.1:1-8). These Israelites in the land of Egypt were fruitful and multiplied to the point that they became a concern for the new king of Egypt. In spite of the fact that they multiplied very rapidly, they were still able to keep their identity as members of their individual tribes. They did not want to lose their traditions as Israelites, nor as members of their own tribe's system. "...they focused on the unifying acts by which the diverse peoples of Israel became and remained one people."¹

God who is the creator of diversity affirmed the identity of the twelve tribes of Israel, creating new ways to keep that diversity alive in the new promised land.

When the whole nation had finished crossing the Jordan the Lord said to Joshua, "Choose twelve men from among the people, one from each tribe, and tell them to take twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan from right where the priest stood and to carry them over with you and put them down at the place where you stay tonight. Joshua 4:1-3

God's mandate to Joshua to build a monument with the twelve stones was a recognition of the peculiar characteristics of the tribes as well as an affirmation to keep the twelve tribes' identity. God desired to impart the understanding that the Israelites could be a nation without imposing one tribe's identity upon another. Also, the twelve stones served as a symbol for future generations to be reminded of the importance of keeping their tribe's values as a heritage for their own groups, as well as remembering where they came from collectively.

The twelve tribes is a paradigm that celebrates diversity and unity. It illustrates that once again God's purpose in history is to preserve diversity and unity among tribes, cultures, languages and nations.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

Jesus and the Kingdom of God

Jesus came to proclaim the incarnation of God's love to humanity in the inauguration of the Kingdom of God as good news to all nations, races, and cultures. Jesus broke the barrier of religious bias that the Jewish religion had erected against other nationalities in the name of their beliefs. The Jewish religion could not conceive that God's kingdom was for all people. If someone wanted to be a part of God's revelation, as understood by Jewish religion, he also had to embrace his religious culture. Jesus' proclamation of the good news included the fact that it was no longer necessary to become part of Jewish religion culture in order to enter into the kingdom of God. Jesus proclaimed that the time was coming when everybody would worship God in his own culture and nobody would have to go to Jerusalem or a specific place in order to worship God.

Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is Jerusalem. Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. Mark 4:20-21

Jesus' declaration was that nobody has the right to impose their cultural religious background on those who would like to worship God. Neither should anyone have to negate their culture in order to be able to enter into the Kingdom of God. God's Kingdom is for all cultures, races, and nations.

Pentecost

The promise of the Holy Spirit to empower the disciples was for the purpose of enabling them to carry the Good News to all nations. The Holy Spirit came to the disciples as the fulfillment of the promise of Jesus to his disciples at a specific point in time, but more than that it was the continuation of God's revelation in history.

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind

came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and come to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Acts 2:1-4

What better time than Pentecost to show the disciples and the people who were there, God's intention to celebrate diversity and to reaffirm the blessing of distinct cultures and languages? God through the Holy Spirit empowered the disciples to speak in other languages in order to help them understand that God's kingdom is for all races and cultures. God used the languages of the people who were there to teach the disciples that God is the one who created all languages, and those people have the right to hear the Good News in their own language. "When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language" (Acts 2:6).

The New Jerusalem

The New Jerusalem is God's new creation after the end of time. The New Jerusalem is the everlasting hope for those who will reign with God for all eternity. The Apostle John saw the revelation of the New Jerusalem when he was on the Isle of Patmos.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. Rev. 21:1-2, 24

In the vision of the New Jerusalem there is a recognition of distinct nations. In the New Jerusalem, there will be a celebration for all the nations walking in the justice and peace of the Holy City. At this feast are people from every tongue and tribe and nation, with more streaming in all the time. This celebration marks the beginning of a new age.

The nations are going to bring their diversity to the Holy City. The kings are going to bring as a gift, their cultural background to enrich the New Jerusalem. The Holy City will be a diverse city that represents God's creation in perfect unity under one reign. There will be a new song of celebration that affirms God's intention to preserve diversity in the New Jerusalem. The song is to praise Jesus who brought that diversity into the City. The four living creatures and the 24 elders (Rev. 5:8b) recognized the people in heaven by their own cultural and linguistic background.

And they sang a new song: you are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. Rev. 5:9

THE AMERICAN SOCIOLOGICAL MOVEMENTS

CULTURE

Culture is both a process and a product. It is formed by people, but a culture also forms its people.

When we speak of the culture of a society or community, we have reference to the entire gamut of tools, institutions, social values, customs, traditions, techniques, concepts and other traits that characterize the way of life of the group.²

No culture is a pure finished product, but it is rather a series of socio-historical events that give birth to a particular way of life. There are some aspects of culture that are very distinct and make a particular culture peculiar and unique, such as its symbols, religion, history, stories, and language. In the American context there has always been a dominant culture as well as many diverse micro-cultures with their own identity and values. The diversity movement is a new song of celebration in American society. That song is the present and the future of most institutions in the American context. Diversity is the representation of the identity of people with regard to race, cul-

ture, religion, economic status, profession, sex, age, and ethnicity. Diversity is a tone that is deliberately set in some institutions to represent their intention of savoring the flavor of their context as well as the global context.

The Diversity movement goes parallel to the concept of cultural pluralism that began to develop under the influence of Horace M. Kallen:

It is the concept of a process in which various cultures would retain over time their specific characteristics and would establish a relation to other ethnic racial groups in the United States, something like a loose federation of peoples, sharing a common unity as citizens of the United States, retaining their native language while mastering English, and retaining a specific identity on their own.³

This is the opportunity and challenge the missional church has to face in its mission in the American context, where the people groups are singing a celebration song of their cultural identity and seeking to pass the song on for the new generations to come. It is in this sociological movement that the multi-congregational church emerged in America.

THE MULTI-CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

The Church of the Nazarene for the first time in its history included an official policy in its 1985 Manual as follows:

100.1. The Multi-congregational Church.

Organized local churches may enlarge their ministry by establishing Bible classes in various languages using the facilities of these churches. These Bible classes may develop into church-type missions or fully organized churches [100]. This may result in more than one congregation existing in the same building, with the approval of the district superintendent.

The Local Church Becoming Multi-Congregational

The local church is where people get together to express

their faith in different types of functions such as worship, prayer meetings, Bible studies, activities for all their members by ages and groups, and services for their constituency as well as for the community. The local church is basically understood to have the responsibility for carrying out the mission of the Christian church whatever the interpretation of that mission is.

There are different interpretations of the mission of the Church. The most conventional one, especially in most churches in the United States and Canada, has been to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to those who are unbelievers and to introduce them to the Christian faith.

In the history of the United States and Canada church there is a chapter of missionary enterprise that took place basically by the middle of the 19th century accompanied by great enthusiasm to accomplish the Church's mission to go to all nations and to preach the gospel (Mt. 28:18-19). The local church enjoyed the feeling that they were indeed fulfilling the mission of the Church and having a cross-cultural experience. This was one of the greatest accomplishments of the mission of the United States and Canada, that of taking the gospel of Jesus Christ to foreign countries in those early days.

As Missionary Church

Today there is a great opportunity and challenge for the local church in the United States and Canada to become a missionary church in its own context. This is one of the most fertile mission fields in the world. By the thousands and for many different reasons, people from different parts of the world have come to live in these two countries. The local church can get personally involved in carrying out and fulfilling the mission of the Church to bring the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The opportunity for the church is now, and the local church has to decide whether to keep the gospel of Jesus Christ just for themselves or to share the gospel with those who in the past they were reaching by praying and sending missionaries.

The local church can have a most enriching cross-cultural experience if they make an intentional decision and effort to become a multi-congregational church..." winning and discipling and, building multi-congregational churches within each linguistic and cultural community"⁴ The local church will have the excitement not just of hearing about cross-cultural missionary, but rather they can become the story tellers themselves, experiencing the signs of the kingdom that characterize a missionary church.

As Cultural Diversity

The multi-congregational church is a diverse community affected by different factors. One of them is the culture, and the church must provide an atmosphere where all congregations will have their culture respected. Also, the church has to encourage its members to understand different cultural values without judgment that one culture is superior to another.

Christ commanded the church to make disciples of *panta ta ethne*, all the peoples. Not to Anglo-Americanize them to behave like white middle-class Protestants, but rather to disciple them within their culture.⁵

The multi-congregational church must understand that they don't have to impose the cultural and linguistic values of the sponsoring church upon the people groups. By the same token, the cultural or linguistic congregations must practice the same respect for the other groups. The fact of cultural and linguistic diversity within the multi-congregational church should be a cause for celebration because it accurately represents the multicultural of the American context as well the diversity of the kingdom of God.

As a Different Worship Experiment

The multi-congregational church will have the blessing of having different worship experiences as the incarnation of the gospel is celebrated by the different cultures. In the worship service the people's culture will be manifested in the incarna-

tion of God in their experiences. The different congregations bring their own experiences of God's dealings with them in their journey. These views will be represented in their worship through the use of symbols, hymns, and choruses with distinctive rhythms, and even the duration of the worship service itself will be a reflection of the culture's view of time:

The church will be enriched by having these diverse worship experiences within the unity of the local church. The precondition of Christian unity is the recognition and acceptance of diversity, plurality, and difference.⁶

From the Anglo congregation's formality to the African percussion, from the Asian's tranquility to the Latinos spontaneity, a whole range of worship styles can be experienced. The piano and organ, bongos, the electric guitar, tambourines and other instruments are all a part of the expression of the different liturgies experienced in the incarnation of the gospel. People love to express the incarnation of the faith in their lives in their own way, and the multi-congregational church allows that kind of experience for all its members. This kind of experience helps the whole church to gain a glimpse of how God is being worshipped in all languages and cultures around the world.

THE SPONSORING PASTOR

Missionary/Missional Minded

The pastor of the multi-congregational church needs to be a missionary and missional-minded to minister in this unique type of church. "One of the major tasks of the multi-congregational pastor is to awaken the church to the change taking place in the community."⁷ The pastor has to see the great challenge and the opportunity for his/her ministry to do a missionary work as a part of the fulfillment of the ministry. The pastor has to open his/her vision to work with those who are present in the context and put extra time and energy into opening the door for the diversity of people groups that otherwise wouldn't be reached with the gospel of Jesus Christ. The missionary

minded pastor in a multi-congregational church has to learn the basic principals of cross-cultural ministry and be especially prepared for the different cultural responses of the persons who will react or behave according to their unique cultural background.

Culturally Sensitive

There are different cultural behaviors that are an integral part of the person depending on his or her cultural formation. The pastor in a multi-congregational church will often observe this to be true with the members of the church representing different cultures. There will be some differences in the approach to different circumstances and problems in the church depending on who is viewing what. There will be times that the pastor has to live with the fact that the norm of doing things in one culture is not necessarily the norm for others. The pastor has to learn not to judge the other cultures with the norm of his/her culture, but rather to interpret situations that are peculiar to a given culture.

In special activities, the pastor needs to respond to the invitation of the other congregations and to be prepared for the fact that there will be gestures and manners that may be different from what he/she is used to. Also, the length of time and the formality of the program will be different. For instance, it is not necessarily rude in some cultures to start a program one half hour or an hour later than the time that has been announced. That is what most people of that particular culture expect, and everybody will be late. And usually, the activity will end later than would be considered proper in a more time-oriented culture. The pastor has to be sensitive to how communication will be affected by the cultural bias of the person. It has been said that communication is an exchange of meaning between people. This simple slogan is true but the pastor in a multi-congregational church has to be aware that real communication is rarely simple, indeed it can be quite complex when trans-cultural exchanges are involved:

Intercultural communication is the process by which two individuals that does not belong to the same culture 'try' to exchange a set of meanings. The mere fact that the two individuals do not belong to the same culture implies that they do not share the same assumptions, beliefs, values, or, to put it differently, the same ways of thinking, feeling and behaving. This phenomenon makes the communication process much more difficult and challenging than we think.⁸

The pastor will be a bridge between congregations, because of the fact that he/she will be in touch in most cases with the other congregations' pastors and will be more aware of some different aspects of the cultures. The pastor also will play an important role in sensitizing the rest of the congregation to the particular cultural differences in the church.

THE FACILITY

The Facility Usage

The high cost of real estate is making the purchase of a facility for church usage very difficult. It is in this reality that the multi-congregational church demonstrates good stewardship of the already existing resources by planting new people group congregations in a single facility.

The facility is part of what people have built in the name of the kingdom of God. The community of believers has dedicated it time and resources to building a central place where they can go to express their faith. This building becomes in a strong sense, a liturgical expression of their faith. At a particular moment in time, the typical community of believers has a ritual blessing ceremony to dedicate the facilities to the purpose of using the structure for the work of the reign of God. The Manual of the Church of the Nazarene for such a dedication ceremony states:

Having been prospered by the hand of the Lord and enabled by His grace and strength to complete this building

to the glory of His name, we now stand in God's presence to dedicate this structure to the service of His kingdom.⁹

Traditionally, the church facilities are used for a limited time each week. With the multi-congregational church, the facility will be put to more use.

Facility Maintenance

The maintenance will be a situation that the church has to deal with. As more people use the facilities, the probability of deterioration increases. There will be more worship services, more weddings, more funerals, more Bible studies, more special activities, more programs and services. There will be more things to keep in order and to maintain. All who use the facilities must see the need for being good stewards of the structure that has been dedicated to the kingdom of God. This is a key issue in the church and has to be faced by all the congregations periodically.

Program and Scheduling

There will be more programs on different days and at different times than is the case for most single churches. There has to be a systematic procedure for all the congregations to schedule their programs. A central calendar must exist, and all the congregations must use it to schedule their activities. Each congregation needs to be aware that it is not the only one using the facilities, and it will be wise before scheduling any activity to be sure that the facilities will not be in use for that particular time.

Also, it is recommended that on Sunday when the facilities are at peak use for the regular programs, to allow at least half an hour between the scheduled programs of the various congregations. It is also recommended that the cultural differences in the concept of time be considered. The congregation which reflects the cultural value of promptness should preferably use the building first, so that the next congregation does not need to wait to use the facilities.

Communication among the congregations will be important in order to decide the arrangements and what area of the

building is most appropriate for the different activities. All surprises in the use of the building must be avoided.

TYPE OF GOVERNMENT

There are different types of government in the multi-congregational church model. These different types of government are based on local agreement or a denominational framework provided to the local church. This government will basically specify how the membership of the different congregations will be set up in the multi-congregational church.

One Membership/Two or more Congregations

One multi-congregational model consists of one membership for the entire church. This means that the church will have one body of government, and all the members of all the congregations will be members of one single church. In this type of government, all the members will have the same responsibilities, as well as privileges and rights. There will be a single church board that will function as the legal representative body of the multi-congregational church. In most cases the finances will be in a single treasury system, and all income will be used for the function and maintenance of the entire church.

One issue that will need to be dealt with is that the larger congregation has to form some mechanisms to deliberately include members of the other congregations in its Board as well as any committees of the church.

Two or more Independent Memberships

Each congregation will be a fully organized one. They will hold separate membership, and each congregation will have its own board that will make policy decisions for their own congregation. They will have their own finances, and they will elect their own committees. There will be two or more fully organized congregations sharing the same facility. In this type of membership it is recommended that there be a structure over all the congregations to determine what policies will stand and which ones have to be denied for the well being of the church.

“However, the authority of the [structure] over each congregation is limited in the scope to matters that are either necessary to the efficient functioning of the whole church or mutually agreed upon.”¹⁰

The multi-congregational church has to ensure mechanisms for the selection of the members of this governing body. This has to be done very carefully so that equal representation will be included. It is recommended that the members of this group will be people who have had cross-cultural exposure.

RELATIONSHIPS AMONG THE CONGREGATIONS

Multi-congregational Worship Services

The multi-congregational church has the opportunity to have a diverse worship service with all the congregations. It will be a unique experience to celebrate God’s diversity in the incarnation of cultures in this kind of worship setting where all the congregations will participate in a celebration of the kingdom of God for all people in unity.

The multi-congregational services can be planned for special occasions as well as on a regular basis to keep the unity and the celebration of the church as the Israelite tribes did on their journey. There should be a representation and participation of all the liturgical aspects of all congregations including their songs, symbols, and musical instruments. Some of the songs need to be written in the language of all the congregations, so that everybody can try to sing not just in his/her native language but as well in other languages. This will be like a glimpse of what the New Jerusalem will be. A translation may need to be provided for the different language groups especially for the sermon, because everyone needs to hear the Word of God in their own language as on the day of Pentecost. It will be a diverse experience where people can learn from each other about the liturgical expression of their common Christian faith with the flavor of their own culture and experiences.

Fellowship Meals

Meals are common things to all cultures and meals can be used to interchange cultural values. The fellowship meals will be another great opportunity to keep the celebration of unity among diversity in a multi-congregational church. Meals have been a great tradition in the Christian church from the beginning of the journey when the disciples and the new Church came together to celebrate the Agape known as the Lord's Supper.

The meals can be a great time for people to learn to know each other in a more relaxed setting. The fellowship meals should be planned to include the various cultural dishes of all congregations. This setting will be helpful for learning more about other cultures that are in the church. This festivity will be an opportunity for people to explain more about their dishes and cultural traditions.

Special Activities

There will be many opportunities to plan special activities in the multi-congregational church. These activities celebrate the diverse unity of the church. The children and the young people will have more things in common that encourage participation in these activities, because most of them are going to be in the same level at school, and the language will not be as much of a barrier as it is for the adults. But these activities should be planned to include all the congregations and ages of the church.

A children's day for all the congregations would be a great opportunity for the children to relate to each other in a church setting, perhaps a combined Vacation Bible Summer.

The young people can go to camps, or for an afternoon of games, or for concerts. A clean up day for the church building is a great time for the adults to feel that they are doing something that is the responsibility of all the congregations. These types of activities help to build strong bridges for the churches.

Community Services

The church will have a great opportunity to serve the com-

munity with all the congregations. The church will be able to penetrate places that other churches will not be able to. With the input of the people group(s) of the church, the church in general will be more aware of the different needs and services that they can provide for the community. For instance some members might recommend that English as a second language is needed in the community because there are no other institutions offering that service at convenient times for people to come. The church will be more sensitized by its own members about specific needs that can serve as new avenues of ministry to the community.

REASONS FOR HAVING A MULTI-CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

Biblical and Theological

The multi-congregational church has its foundation in the Bible as the departure point for this type of church in the American context. The Bible provides most of the principles that sustain this model as being in accord with what the Church believes about bringing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all people. The theology of the multi-congregational church is found in God's creation and celebration of human diversity. God is the Creator of all languages and cultures. God who loves the human creation in its diversity has been affirming and providing meaning to that diversity and sustaining its life. The multi-congregational church is providing an opportunity to do theology from the point of view of diversity of the incarnation of God in the cultures of all people. The faith experience of people from different races, cultures, nationalities and socio-economic backgrounds, brings rich resources for doing theology in the American context.

Missiological

The Church has been taking the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations as the driving force behind its missions outreach. The Church through its history has been inter-

preting that its mission is to carry the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth. The Church has taken this command basically to mean sending people to other nations with the Gospel. The Church has invested a lot of resources to fulfill its mission to convert the pagan nations to the Christian faith. Most of those nations have been in the Third World Countries.

The American churches have one of the greatest challenges and opportunities in history to do and be in mission without sending missionaries to other nations. It has been said that the American mosaic is one of the most fertile mission fields in the world. The multi-congregational church is responding to the mission of the Church by bringing people from different races, socio-economic, and cultural groups into their membership and the fellowship of the Church.

Cultural and Social

The multi-congregational church is a structural model that is responding to the sociological movement of diversity in the American context. The diversity movement has been a voice basically for people of color, through which they have found a way to express and to keep their cultural values. There is a strong sentiment among various people groups to maintain their cultural values for the new generations to come and not to deprive or to cut them off from their roots.

The multi-congregational church is an empowerment structure for those who would like to keep and express their language and cultural values without being maligned for not wanting to be a part of the mainstream society.

The multi-congregational church movement is not a segregation movement as some people might interpret; it is rather an encounter of various cultures respecting and learning from each other in mutual consent, where people from any social or cultural background have the right to express and to maintain their values without being judged as separatists.

The multi-congregational model is helping the church in general to understand its diversity in unity, without imposing

any given culture on another. This is a social and cultural imperative because of the fact that the world is a global village. The American context is a village with people from many different parts of the world living here. The multi-congregational church is helping that village to have a better understanding of and respect for the social and cultural values of its members.

CONCLUSION

The multi-congregational church is a pragmatic model that is giving a new understanding to the local church seeking to do and be in a cross-cultural mission in its own context. This model is changing the make-up of the American church inside as well as outside. One now sees new signs in front of churches in the different languages that represent the various congregations of the local church. To see churches with signs in two or three different languages that announce their services is a reflection of the multicultural context. These signs in different languages represent the transition that is taking place in some churches as well as the changes that are taking place in the American context in general. These signs are symbols of the “diversity in unity” of the Kingdom of God in the church.

There are some challenges ahead in understanding more about this type of church as new ideas are developing in the rapid growth of this church model. The multi-congregational church should be open to review its structure and policy and to integrate new inputs that will help the continuing healthy function of the missionary church.

I hope and pray that this material will be helpful for those who are already working or planning to do and to be in a cross-cultural ministry, planting new people group congregations in a multi-congregational church model.

1 Norman K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh* (New York: Orbis Books, 1979), p. 116.

2 Roger D. Abraham and Rudolph C. Troike, *Language and Cultural Diversity in America Education* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1972), p. 35

- 3 Joseph P Fitzpatrick, S.J., *One Church Many Culture* (Missouri: Sheed and Ward, 1987), p. 144.
- 4 Roger S. Greenway and Timothy M. Monsma, *Mission's New Frontier* (Printed in U.S.A.: Baker House Company, 1989), p. 80
- 5 Ibid, p. 81
- 6 Peter c. Hodgson, *Revisionig the Church* (Printed in the Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), p. 91
- 7 Jerry Appleby, *The Church is in A Stew* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1990), p.79
- 8 Pierre Casse, *Training for the Cross Cultural Mind* (Printed In U.S.A.: Setar second edition, 1981), p. 46
- 9 *Manual, Church of the Nazarene*, (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1989), p. 254
- 10 Appleby, op. cit., p. 97



The Walls Have Come Down in Christ Jesus

Ephesians 2

Ron Benefiel

The Mid-City Church of the Nazarene in San Diego is a multi-congregational church with six language congregations in one church: English, Spanish, French (mostly Haitian), Sudanese, Samoan, and Cambodian. My wife and I had the privilege of participating in the founding of the church in 1996 with a number of other professors and students from Point Loma Nazarene University. I still have fond memories of gathering for worship with the English-speaking congregation and hearing the people from the different congregations echoing their praises to God across the courtyard and through the halls. The hymns, choruses, prayers, and preaching blended together to create a cacophony of sounds that was the music of heaven in our ears. Occasionally, all the congregations would gather together in worship. It was in some of those moments that I was especially aware that many of those I was worshipping with were people whose stories were full of human tragedy, oppression, and persecution, especially my brothers and sisters from Haiti, Sudan, and Cambodia.

I remember when I first heard the life story of Bol Lual, the pastor of our Sudanese congregation. At the time, Sudan was the country that had the distinction of the longest ongoing civil war of any country in the world. The war had dragged on for over 20 years and had claimed the lives of over 2 million people. Bol told me that he was 14 when the invading forces from the North came to his village. The invaders were the government-sponsored forces from the mostly Arab Moslem North who were at war with the mostly African Christian and animist

South. The day the invaders came to his village, Pastor Lual ran into the woods for safety. At this point in his story, he paused briefly to point out that in the Sudanese congregation there weren't any older people. He said that when the invaders came to the villages, the older people couldn't run – they couldn't escape – most of them died. Bol said that the day after the invaders came to his village, he came back to see what was left, but it had been completely destroyed; there was nothing to go back to. So as a young man of 14 years old, he turned away from his home village and started walking . . . and then running... not quite sure where he was going. For three months he was on the run, eating whatever he could find to eat and sleeping wherever he could find a safe place to rest. Finally, he crossed over into Ethiopia and into a refugee camp. It wasn't until he had been there for some time that he began to realize how many of his friends and relatives had not escaped from the invading forces. And now Bol Lual is pastor of the Sudanese congregation of the Mid-City Church of the Nazarene in San Diego.

When I think of the calling of the Church of Jesus Christ to be an agent of reconciliation, I have trouble when I think of people like Bol Lual and the Sudanese conflict. I think we would all agree that it would be a wonderful thing if there would be a revival that would break out among the Arab military forces of northern Sudan. Wouldn't it be something if hundreds of those who participated in the slaughter of innocents repented and came to faith in Christ? Ay, but here's the rub... what would Bol Lual do with all those hypothetical converts, if they actually showed up for worship on Sunday morning? It's one thing to pray that the lost will come to Christ, it may be another matter to welcome into the congregation new converts who mercilessly killed your friends and relatives. I'm a sociologist. Sociologically speaking, it's not a very good idea to put people who are at war with one another into the same social organization. Sociologically, it's not a good idea to put Southern African Sudanese and Northern Arab Sudanese together in the same county, let alone the same worshipping

congregation. The history of grief and pain and anger are too much. The walls are too high. It's just not a very good idea.

One afternoon I had the opportunity to sit with Su Ky over lunch. Su Ky is one of the lay leaders in the Cambodian congregation of the Mid-City Church of the Nazarene. As we broke bread together, I remembered the horrific stories I had heard of the "killing fields" in Cambodia during the Pol Pot regime in the 1970's. My memory was that an estimated one million Cambodians died at the hands of the Khmer Rouge during those years of terror . . . about one-sixth of the population. I decided I'd ask if brother Ky had been in Cambodia during those years. I could tell from his response that I was venturing into territory he was not very comfortable talking about. After a couple minutes, he began to tell his story. I later learned that he had never before mentioned the family's experience in Cambodia to anyone outside the family. As I listened, I at first felt honored that he would share his story with me. But then as the story continued, I felt humbled.

In halting English, he began by remembering the day the Khmer Rouge soldiers came to his village. He said that those in the village who had an education were rounded up with the village leaders and taken away. They were never seen again. I asked why he was not taken with the others. He replied that he was a tailor, and that the Khmer Rouge decided he might have something to contribute to the new communist society they were purportedly creating.

The Khmer Rouge was ruthless and merciless in their rule. Life was very hard. Children no longer attended school but were gathered together each morning and put to work all day long preparing fertilizer for the rice paddies. There wasn't enough food to eat. Each of the villager's ration of food was one cup of rice per day. He and his wife talked secretly about running away, and on two different occasions they gathered their children together in the middle of the night and ran into the jungle. But there was no where to go. He said they ate whatever they could find—bark from off the trees—and hid wherev-

er they could find shelter—sometimes just big holes in the ground. On both occasions they were captured, disciplined, and returned to the village.

At this point, he stopped for a minute. I could tell he had gotten to the part of the story that was the most painful to remember. He obviously didn't want to show the emotion he felt inside. His chin began to quiver. A tear rolled out of one of his eyes and down his cheek. And then carefully and with a gentle tenderness he said . . . my two daughters . . . my girls . . . one 13 years old and the other just 8 . . . they died.

When the war was over, Su Ky led those from his village who remained alive out to a refugee camp. Eventually his family was granted asylum and moved to the United States where they became leaders in our Cambodian Nazarene congregation.

Hearing Su Ky's story raised a number of sobering questions for me. I thought about the horrific cruelties suffered by hundreds of thousands of innocent victims at the hands of Khmer Rouge soldiers. And I thought about the church as an agent of reconciliation. And I wondered, "Wouldn't it be a wonderful thing if some of those Khmer Rouge soldiers came to faith in Christ. Wouldn't that be wonderful news?" Come to find out, that is exactly what has happened over the past few years in Cambodia. Hundreds of former Khmer Rouge soldiers, including some of the most notorious leaders, have come to faith in Jesus Christ!

But then I thought about members of the Khmer Rouge who are new Christian converts actually showing up at the local congregation in Cambodia where the survivors of the genocide are worshipping. I believe the gospel is able to save the worst sinners and utterly transform their lives. But I'm also a sociologist by training . . . and I have to admit that sociologically, it isn't a very good idea to have Christian survivors of the Cambodian genocide in the same worshipping body with former members of the Khmer Rouge. The walls between the two groups are too high . . . the memories are too painful . . . it's just not a very good idea.

Obviously, this is not just about Cambodia, it's about the Middle East, and Rwanda, and the Sudan, and Yugoslavia. It's even about the United States Germany, England, and Canada. It's about the walls that divide us: rich and poor, black and white, documented and undocumented. I wonder what it would be like if owners of big buildings were worshipping next to janitors on strike, or if people who had membership in the local country club were part of the same church—the same spiritual family as people who were sleeping under bridges at night. I wonder what it would be like to have all these people in the same church; all gathered together at the same table of the Lord?

We say, and believe, that everyone is welcome in our churches. But if people from all those different groups actually showed up, wouldn't that just cause more trouble than it's worth? Wouldn't it bring unnecessary tension and division to the Body of Christ? As a sociologist, I know that people tend to cluster together on the basis of their common ethnicity, age, or social class. They tend to cluster in a way that is socially comfortable. They cluster in a way that excludes people not like themselves. And then, if you factor in such additional challenges as a history of persecution, war, pain, sorrow, grief... well, sociologically, it's just better to respect the political and historical differences and keep the peace by keeping separate.

I am both a sociologist and a holiness preacher. I learned a long time ago, that the message of hope comes not from sociology, but from the gospel of Jesus Christ. Scripture has some things to say to us about all of this. For some time, I have especially been thinking about the words of Paul in the second chapter of Ephesians. Paul starts out by laying the groundwork for a very important discussion of reconciliation. I think it's interesting that he begins not with a discussion of the differences between groups of people, but rather with an appeal to the lordship of Jesus Christ in the lives of individual Christians. He reminds the Ephesians in rather vivid words that before they were Christian, they were far from the Kingdom. Listen to the first three verses. Paul says:

You were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you
once lived,
following the course of this world,
following the ruler of the power of the air,
the spirit that is now at work
among those who are disobedient.

All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh,
following the desires of flesh and senses,
and we were by nature children of wrath,
like everyone else. (vv. 1-3)

Seems to me, these are not very complimentary words. His descriptions of the Ephesian Christians (and of himself) are pictures of people who were truly reprobates . . . godless sinners . . . helpless and hopeless.

And then, in the first two words of verse four, the whole story changes. The Ephesian Christians were lost and without hope . . . and then these two words:
BUT GOD!

But God who is rich in mercy...
made us alive together with Christ...
and raised us up...

For by grace you have been saved through faith,
. . . not of your own doing
It is the gift of God... (vv. 4-8)

We were lost... but God!
We were helpless and hopeless... but God!
We were dead in our transgressions... but God!
HALLELUJAH!

Now where Paul goes with this discussion next is very interesting. He doesn't stop with what God has done for each of us by His saving grace, but rather, he moves right into a discussion of the different groups of people who God was bringing together in the Church—specifically, the Jews and the Gentiles.

My purpose here is not to review the history of animosity

that existed in Israel between the Jews and Gentiles at the time of Christ. But you will remember that the two groups didn't mix very well, to say the least. Intermarriage was strictly forbidden. Physical contact of any kind was reason enough to require Jews to go through a cleansing ritual in the temple. Some have suggested that some Jews after being in the market place found it necessary to go through the cleansing ritual just in case the bottom of their sandals happened to have touched the same dirt that a Gentile's sandals touched! This is severe social distance . . . lots of animosity.

Paul now makes a very significant connection in this discussion. He connects reconciliation with God to reconciliation between Jews and Gentiles. He appeals to the Ephesian Christians to remember that in the past, they were alienated both from God and from one another. They were enemies both of the cross of Christ and enemies of one another. He writes:

So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth . . . (were) without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. (vv. 11-12)

Here Paul uses the same sentence construction that he used earlier in the chapter. In the first four verses, he reminded the Ephesians of their sinful, hopeless state and then broke through with the grace-filled words, "But God!" Here in verse 13, he reminds the Ephesians of the hopeless state of their relations with one another, and then breaks through again with the powerful grace-filled words, "But now in Christ Jesus"! Paul writes:

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off
have been brought near by the blood of Christ.
For he is our peace;
in his flesh he has made both groups into one
and has broken down the dividing wall,
that is, the hostility between us . . .
that he might create within himself

one new humanity in place of two,
thus making peace,
and might reconcile both groups to God in one body
through the cross,

thus putting to death that hostility through it. (vv. 13-16)

God in Christ Jesus has not only reconciled us to Himself, God has reconciled us to one another! God broke down the “dividing wall” that separated the Jews and the Gentiles. This is probably a reference to the walls of the Temple. The structure of the Temple was constructed as a series of walls that separated people:

- The innermost sanctum, the Holy of Holies, in which only the High Priest entered once a year on the day of Atonement.
- The walls of the temple building that left Jewish women outside in the courtyard while Jewish men entered to offer their prayers and sacrifices.
- The walls of the outer courtyard with “keep out” signs posted instructing Gentiles that they were not to enter the courtyard.

Paul says that the walls have come down in Christ Jesus! The social, political, historical, and even physical walls that divided different groups of people – all those walls have come down in Christ Jesus! Walls built of pain, hatred, prejudice, misunderstanding, and abuse of power – in Christ Jesus - the walls have come down!

I recently had the privilege of talking to the District Superintendent for the Church of the Nazarene in Rwanda. His name is Simon Pierre. He’s a man with a wonderful Christian spirit and a winsome smile. I remembered the horrific genocide in the early ‘90’s when an estimated 800,000 people died in about a three month period. I remembered reading of the terrifying accounts of how the history of conflict between Hutus and Tutsis resulted in the ruthless killings. Thinking as a sociologist, I asked Rev. Pierre if the work of the Church of the Nazarene was primarily among the Hutus or the Tutsis. He

replied that the Church worked with both groups. Thinking that the two groups must, of course, be kept separate, I asked how it worked at church gatherings where both Hutus and Tutsis might come into contact with one another. He said that there is no problem between Hutus and Tutsis in the Church of the Nazarene in Rwanda!

Pastor Pierre then began to tell me some of the story of the work of the Church in Rwanda since the genocide. He said that shortly after the genocide, a Nazarene missionary named Dr. Dumerzier Charles was assigned to Rwanda. Dr. Charles immediately began bringing members of the two tribes together. Over the next few years, the church became an agent of reconciliation between Hutus and Tutsis. Five years after the atrocities, the church held a conference on reconciliation. In a country in which there were many accounts of how churches failed in the face of the tragedy, outside observers visiting the conference exclaimed that this is what a church should look like! This is what a church should do in the midst of ethnic tensions! Pastor Pierre said that a choir consisting of both Hutus and Tutsis travels from church to church across the country singing about the grace of God and serving as a witness of the reconciling power of God's grace. Pastor Pierre said that as District Superintendent, his marriage symbolizes the reconciliation between the tribes in that he and his wife come from different tribes, one Hutu and the other Tutsi!

Paul says to us, the world we live in may be a world of social, ethnic, national, and economic walls, but the Body of Christ is liberated in Christ Jesus from the obligation to be governed, structured, or ordered by those walls. The Church does not acknowledge the structures of separation of this world. For the walls have been broken down in Christ Jesus!

Paul is not finished talking about this yet. Not by a long shot. What we find next is a profound discussion of how the walls have come down in Christ Jesus. Simply stated, Paul says that Christ has accomplished this "breaking down of the walls" through his death on the cross. He, himself is our peace. That

is, Jesus on the cross has taken all the hostility into himself. He has taken all the hostility between us and God — and between us and each other — into himself! Similar to the way that he is the sacrifice for our sin and has taken into himself the hostility between us and God, he is also the sacrificial lamb that has taken into himself the alienation, hostility, anger, pain, distance, and prejudice that exists between brothers and sisters in his church.

If you will, imagine yourself standing before the cross of Christ. As a follower of Jesus, standing there, you are painfully aware of the cost of the forgiveness of your sin. Humbly, you present your offering of thanksgiving for God's unspeakable gift. There you realize, perhaps more than at any other place or time, that you belong to God... and that as a follower of Jesus Christ, you live a life of obedient surrender. That wherever and whatever the Lord requires of you, you will do, because you belong to Him. And in the midst of your expression of thanks and remembrance of the call to take up your own cross and follow Christ, you hear the Lord speak to you. And he says simply, "Look around at your brothers and sisters". And as you look to your left and then to your right, you see hundreds of others gathered at the foot of the cross. People from every tribe and nation. Men and women, rich and poor, African, Asian, Middle Eastern, European, and Latino. Many of those you see have experienced "persecution and famine and nakedness and peril and sword." And you remember the words to the old gospel song:

Some through the waters
Some through the flood
Some through the fire
But all through the blood!

And there in the crowd you see Bol Lual, and next to him is a Christian brother who formerly was part of the invading force that destroyed his village and killed his friends. And then you see Su Ky, and you notice he is standing next to a Christian brother who before he came to faith in Christ was a Khmer

Rouge commander. And then you see Rwandans, Hutu and Tutsi, standing arm in arm before the cross of Christ. There with brothers and sisters gathered from every corner of the earth, you understand that Christ died not only for your sins but for the sins of all humanity. And that in his death on the cross, he took into himself, into his flesh, all the anger, distance, prejudice, and hostility that existed between brothers and sisters in Christ.

And listen to this... now God through Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit has done a brand new thing in bringing all Christian disciples together. "For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, Jews or Greeks, slaves of free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit" (I Corinthians 12:13). He has brought us together and formed us into a new social reality, a new humanity in which there is "no distinction" between people. "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). Paul is describing a whole new Kingdom, a whole new society filled with people who confess Jesus as Lord and King: a Kingdom of love, justice, and peace. And he calls this new people, this new social reality, this new humanity—the Church!

Paul has one more direction to go with this discussion:
So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off
and peace to those who were near;
for through him both of us have access in one Spirit of the Father.
So then you are no longer strangers and aliens,
but you are citizens with the saints
and also members of the household of God,
built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets,
with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.
In him the whole structure is joined together
and grows into a holy temple in the Lord;
in whom you also are built together spiritually
into a dwelling place for God.
Paul offers some wonderful and vivid metaphors in these

verses. First, he uses the metaphor of strangers and aliens from far off countries brought together by the Spirit of God as citizens together in God's new Kingdom. From this, I think you could safely say that in God's Kingdom there is no such thing as an illegal alien! And then Paul takes it a step further and says we are not just fellow citizens but members of the same family. We are brothers and sisters in God's household.

But it is the third image that especially captures my attention. It is the image or metaphor of a new temple being constructed. The apostles and prophets are the foundation of this new temple. Jesus is the cornerstone. And the followers of Christ, the saints of all time... we are part of this new temple!

I can't help but think of how this image is related to the one Paul uses earlier in the chapter when he talks about the walls coming down in Christ Jesus. In my mind, I have this picture of an old temple built as a series of walls. And when Christ broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, the old temple crumbled, leaving huge stones strewn around the landscape. And now, the Lord is building a new temple. A social order built by Christians as an architecture of walls, perhaps one that was even reinforced by the religious establishment, was broken down and scattered around by the breaking down of the walls in Christ Jesus. And here we have this picture of the Spirit of God gathering us up and carefully fitting us into a new temple that is still under construction. This new temple has a totally different architectural plan. Get this... it is not constructed as a structure of walls. In this new temple, there are no keep out signs, no barriers that separate people. But instead, all those who believe are carefully placed side by side together. God's people being fitted together as part of "a holy temple in the Lord". And then these wonder-filled words: this new temple is a dwelling place for God!

The early 1990s were difficult years in Los Angeles. Ethnic and cultural relations were very tense, culminating in the LA Riots of 1992. I was serving as pastor of LA First Church of the Nazarene during those years. LA First was and is today a

multi-cultural, multi-congregational church near the heart of the city — four congregations in one church: Spanish-speaking, Korean, Filipino, and English-speaking. When the riots broke out, we watched helplessly for a terrifying 48 hours as much of our city went up in smoke. About 100 businesses within a mile of the church were looted and/or burned. On Friday afternoon, the third day of the riots, as order was still being restored, the staff and pastors of the congregations gathered to discuss what to do next. We had already planned a combined multi-congregational worship service that Sunday for the four congregations along with a sister Central American immigrant congregation we had helped plant in the next neighborhood. But given the rubble in the streets and the fact that the city was still very much on edge, we wondered if we should cancel that Sunday's worship services. We thought perhaps we should call people in the church and tell them to stay home where it was safe. Finally, we decided to open the doors for any who might come.

Sunday morning rolled around, and the scene was one I will never forget. The city was devastated, the smoke still rising in some places, but as the hour for worship approached, the church of Jesus Christ began to assemble out of the ruins. It was a picture that seemed to symbolize a picture of the end of the age. Even though the world as we knew it had been destroyed, the church was alive and well, the church stood strong. People gathered from the African American neighborhoods, they came from the Korean and Filipino neighborhoods, they emerged from the four story apartment buildings in the Central American neighborhoods. The church was filled to capacity. The worship service was one of the most powerful services I have ever witnessed as the Spirit of God met us in that place and reassured us that He would never leave us nor forsake us.

Frequently at the close of a multi-congregational worship service, I would direct the congregation through a closing exercise that illustrated our Kingdom identity and allegiance. On this Sunday morning, with the hostilities between several eth-

nic groups very real and close, this exercise became more significant than ever. This is the picture: the church was packed with people, many of whose places of work had just been destroyed. A choir made up of people from all four congregations filled the choir loft. Knowing most of the countries that were represented in the congregation, I asked people to stand as I read the name of the country in which they were born. I then began to read a list of countries.

India—a middle aged couple and a young single man stood to their feet.

China—an old retired Chinese minister and his wife stood up.

Bolivia—a talented young musician stood.

Ethiopia —Meselu, Tamru, and their four children stood.

Nigeria—Jolly and Samson stood to their feet.

Cambodia—a family who had survived the killing fields stood up.

Barbados—7 people stood.

Ecuador, Viet Nam, Uganda, Cuba, Indonesia, Costa Rica, Thailand, Argentina, South Africa, Dominican Republic, Hong Kong, Holland, Guyana, Honduras, Columbia—people stood to their feet as I read the roll call of nations.

The organist began to play softly the tune to Amazing Grace.

Belize—25 people stood.

Mexico—35 people stood.

Philippines—65 people stood.

Nicaragua—80 people stood.

Guatemala—115 people stood.

Korea—60 people stood.

El Salvador—120 people stood.

United States of America - a few stragglers stood up.

And no one applauded! For this was not an exercise in national allegiance or patriotic pride, this was the flesh and blood illustration of our unity in the Kingdom of God. And then, in a dozen different languages, the church began to sing the words.

Amazing Grace, How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me'
I once was lost but now I'm found
Was blind but now I see

Through many dangers toils and snares
I have already come
'Tis grace hath taught my heart to fear
And grace will lead me home

And then finally singing with all the exuberance of our
unity and with all of the hope of people of the Kingdom of God,
we sang...

When we've been there ten thousand years
Bright shining as the sun
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we first begun

And we knew we were the Church!

This is my appeal to anyone who will listen.

Even though it doesn't make much sense to sociologists...
And even though it is full of challenges along the way...

God in Christ Jesus through the Holy Spirit
has broken down the walls that divide us
and made us into a new humanity...
a new Kingdom!

Let us live as people of God's new creation.

Let us live as people who know...

that the walls have come down in Christ Jesus!



WHO MOVED MY CHURCH?

Responding to the Changing Ethnic Landscape

Oliver R. Phillips

“From one man [God] made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the earth; and [God] determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek [God] and perhaps reach out for [God] and find [God], though [God] is not far from each one of us” (Acts 17:26-27).

INTRODUCTION

In a recent book, *Who Moved My Cheese?*, Spencer Johnson used a simplistic parable to demonstrate the various ways in which human beings can react to sudden and unexpected change. The theme of this 96-page book is that people see change either as a curse or a blessing.

The book is about four characters who live in a maze. Sniff and Scurry are nonanalytical and nonjudgmental mice who simply want cheese and are willing to do whatever it takes to get cheese. Hem and Haw are little people, mouse-size humans who view cheese differently, and therefore adjust accordingly. The point of the story is that we must be alert to changes in the cheese and be prepared to go running off in search of new sources of cheese when the cheese we have runs out. The author affirms that change occurs, whether we like it or not. However, our positive response to change determines a future that is pregnant with new possibilities for dividends beyond measure.

In the life of congregations, the cheese has moved, and one wonders whether we can exist without cheese, search for new cheese, create our own cheese, or, more frightening, change our

diet and find substitutes. Congregations which once ministered to a particular group because of historical and family allegiances now discover that the surrounding community is no longer what it used to be. The cheese has moved. The Church, if it is to endure, must change!

The environment around the physical edifices where we do church is changing before our very eyes, and it has created a combustible mixture of uncertainty about the future of some congregations. Communities that were once homogenous have witnessed an influx of new immigrants searching for the American dream of a better life. We are surely in the throes of something new, something strange, and something filled with amazing possibilities for evangelism and revival in congregations.

If the truth were told, much good news emerges from our changing demographic landscape. The results of the dramatic changes have made it possible to liberate God and the Church from any dominant cultural bondage. Congregations can now engage in multicultural worship in a manner that has never been imagined. The challenges of cultural pluralism, however, must not be sacrificed on the altars of comfort and ease in Zion.

Any congregation that yearns to be on the cutting edge of evangelism must seriously consider the challenges posed by changing neighborhoods. The thrust for homogeneity in our congregations or for the preservation of cultural comfort zones may very well be an indictment against what we claim to be. H. Kortright Davis, professor of theology at Howard University School of Divinity was prophetic when he wrote, "In our increasingly pluralistic society, it is incumbent on the people of God to check and recheck all their prejudices at the doors of their churches, so that the strange census of the first Pentecost experience . . . does not become for our modern-day Christianity a source of social contradiction, rather than a bastion of religious conviction."¹

This booklet was written as a reminder of the changes that are taking place before us. However, hopefully it will serve as a

guide to help congregations to become energized and stimulated to respond to the changes in ways that would bring about a testimony of Kingdom witness.

Nazarene Multicultural Ministries is committed to helping our denomination become a racially just, culturally diverse, spiritually vibrant, and growing church in the US and Canada, that gives expression to the richness of its faith, heritage, and experiences. It is a ministry that embraces the challenge of including all Nazarenes as partners in ministry at all levels of its corporate structure. It is our prayer that changes may be seen as an opportunity to become the church that God intended.

Who Moved My Church? is more than a booklet. It is a ministry opportunity. It is more than an academic exercise in missional church-growth semantics. It is a ministry opportunity in the midst of a God-ordained demographic kaleidoscope.

Changes

The Western world is the only major segment of the world's population in which Christianity is not growing;² yet we often continue to do church as usual. Of the nearly 280 million people in the US today, only 40% of the adults say they went to church in the past week. According to researcher George Barna, the number of unchurched adults is increasing. One in three U.S. adults is unchurched, which translates to 65 to 70 million people. George Hunter, a leading authority on the Church's impact and effectiveness, says the situation is far worse: "In America, there are 120 to 140 million functionally secular people, many of whom are nominal members of our churches."³

While we lament these facts, in America presently it takes the combined efforts of 85 Christians working over an entire year to produce one convert.⁴ To make matters worse, the church-to-population ratio has decreased in the last one hundred years. In 1900 the U.S. had 27 churches for every 10,000 people. In 1990 we were down to 12 churches per 10,000 people.⁵

Much more startling than those statistics, however, are the

changes brought about by the rapid increase of immigrants to the U.S. Historic ethnic groups, like African-Americans and Native Americans, coupled with these immigrants present the Church with a burgeoning mission field that is unprecedented by any other period in U.S. history.

The Changing Face of the USA

Today, America stands on the brink of a cultural and ethnic revolution. No longer is America the land where differences in race and culture can be ignored or even de-accentuated. Every village, community, school, town, institution, and place of employment brings one face to face with the reality that America has become a salad bowl of ethnic groups, languages, and cultures. Unconfirmed reports indicate that two-thirds of the world's immigrants are finding a new home in America.

God has brought the world's mission field to the United States. One of the Church's greatest opportunities in the new millennium lies in its ability to harness the assets of our cultural and racial diversity. For the Church of the Nazarene to remain true to the Great Commission, it must reach out to the nation's historic minorities and to the millions of immigrants who have made America home.

The changing face of America in the 21st century is composed of significantly different factors than the period from 1860-1930, which sustained the highest rate of increase in church membership in American history. These were years of rapid population and economic growth, of territorial expansion that provided opportunities for the recruitment of members, and of the development of stable communities that facilitated church building.⁶ The Hart-Cellar Immigration Act of 1965 resulted in major changes in immigration patterns to the U.S. It fostered a flow of immigrants that was much more ethnically diverse, and less European, than previously: whereas three-quarters of the immigrants between 1900 and 1968 (when the reforms of 1965 took effect) were from Europe, almost two-thirds of those arriving since that date have been drawn from

Latin America or Asia. As this wave of “new” immigrants gathered strength, it was inevitable that Nazarenes were among them, for Nazarenes were well represented among the population of many of the countries from which they were drawn.

The most conservative predictors estimate that by the year 2050 the English-speaking white majority will effectively comprise only one of a sizable number of minority groups that will collectively constitute the population of the United States. As a denomination, we need an intentional strategy designed to ensure our ability to capitalize on the opportunities God is providing: to do less would be poor stewardship.

Consider the following statistics that clearly seem to support these observations:

- More Jews live in America than in Israel.
- More people of African descent live in America than any country except Nigeria.
- More Samoans live in America than in Samoa.
- More Hispanics live in America than any country except Mexico or Spain.
- More Hispanics will live in America than the total population of Canada.
- More Cubans live in Miami except for Havana.
- More Armenians live in Los Angeles than any city in the world.
- In the 90s in the USA, the Asian population grew by 107%, Hispanics by 53%, Native Americans by 38%, while the general population grew by 6%.

These incredibly amazing demographics should awaken us to the challenge of becoming the New Testament church in this new century. Dr. Bill Sullivan, former director of US/Canada Mission-Evangelism, succinctly warns, “The Church of the Nazarene will rise to the challenge, or it will falter, flounder, fail, and fade.”

How has this affected us and the way we do ministry? It has brought astounding heterogeneity. The 1990 census showed seven distinct Asian nationalities and ten distinct

Hispanic nationalities in the Los Angeles metropolitan area with populations over 20,000. On the other side of the country, in the New York City metropolitan area, five Asian nationalities and eleven Hispanic nationalities have populations over 20,000. This accounts for the fact that Hispanic and Asian populations grew, even though the overall population declined. Imagine the variety of sounds, smells, and sights encountered if one were to travel through any of the urban areas that have attracted immigrants?⁷

Though it may surprise us, this challenge is nothing new to the Church of the 21st century. Dr. Cheryl Sanders, professor of church ethics at Howard University School of Divinity and pastor of the historic Third Street Church of God in Washington, DC., stated at the Multicultural Ministries Conference held at Bethany, Oklahoma in 1998, "So how is it that the Church is just now becoming multicultural, if the Bible says it was born multicultural? Because of Pentecost, we should divest ourselves of the idea that an inclusive, multicultural Church is something new, or something we should pride ourselves for thinking up at the close of the 20th century."⁸

The Present Opportunity and Obligation

The Church of the 21st century will more closely resemble the Pentecostal crowd of Acts 2 where worshippers came from the present-day countries of Iran, Iraq, Israel, Lebanon, Cyprus, Malta, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Greece, Albania, Italy and parts of Asia. The present immigration phenomena are indeed rapidly moving the United States from merely a repository for European offshoots to a multicultural world nation with cultural ties to virtually every race and area in the world. By divine providence, the stage has been set for a 21st century, church-growth revival. The cheese has moved. And the question remains, "How do we practice church amidst this new ecclesiastical climate?" Immigrants have rezoned the Church's neighborhood. How can the Church respond effectively?

To be a truly missional church means to be in touch with

the need to reach out to the new neighbors who merge into our communities. The Great Commission remains the rallying cry for the Church, but the practice of ministry does not take place in a vacuum. The relevant question for the Church today is how to implement effective evangelism in the midst of this flourishing pluralism in society and community? How does a predominantly white denomination become missionally evangelistic within a changing multicultural nation?

If the influence of the congregation is to establish new frontiers, respect must be shown for the rituals and realities that bespeak other peoples' deep beliefs in the histories that made their existence possible.

It is with forceful perception that Dr. Tom Nees, director of the US/Canada Mission Evangelism department for the Church of the Nazarene observes the church's dilemma. He states, "I fear that if we continue to do nothing different than we are doing, in the near future, when and where there is no majority group, this denomination will be marginalized as a predominantly English-speaking white fellowship in a sea of diversity."⁹ It can no longer be business as usual. Nees warns that our objective should not simply be to start culturally specific churches. This initiative should be part of a more comprehensive strategy to make all churches display the welcome mat for all people.

That challenge creates a dilemma for both the predominant white church as well as culturally specific churches. Let me explain. We need to start culturally specific churches that cater to the needs of people who find themselves comfortable in a particular cultural setting. A basic sociological principle proffers that people prefer to be with people like themselves. It is within this context of religious groups that a healthy social fabric is most naturally nourished, thereby establishing social solidarity. Churches exist to provide meaning, belonging, and security.

Now for the other side of the dilemma, according to the 1998 National Congregations Study, about 90% of American congregations are made up of at least 90% of people of the same

race.¹⁰ Despite the seeming displeasure with this stark reality, we need be careful not to attribute this congregational homogeneity to prejudice alone. If groups maintain their strength by providing meaning and belonging, the particularizing force of similarity must be acknowledged.

God works in the language and culture of those to whom salvation is offered. It is not necessary to surrender one's cultural identity in order to be a Christian. God uses our ancestral identities as legitimate gifts, as well as a means of revealing love, peace and justice to the world. Churches that reflect culturally distinct ministries are being used by God to reach unchurched people. These churches must never exclude people of other cultures, but because of their context and/or their calling, they are oriented to a particular cultural, language or geographical setting. As our surroundings become increasingly multicultural, especially in the urban communities, it is right that the people of those communities be given the opportunity of affiliating with a congregation that reflects their cultural heritage and meets their particular needs.

The Significance of Ethnic Consciousness

Many well-meaning Evangelicals struggle with the seeming prominence given to ethnicity and cultural consciousness. This is, of course, understandable. Not to have internalized such a journey is excusable because of the absence of a subjective platform from which to explicate such an important trend. It does not devalue the significance nonetheless.

Let's take a moment to break this down into bite-sized portions. It is only natural that new immigrants choose to be segregated with those who tell the same types of stories in the same language, who eat the same foods and celebrate the same festivals, and who may be helpful in the quest of a job. To do otherwise would be suicidal.

However, the future for these immigrants would go in one of two directions:

Assimilation—The children and grand-children—the second and third generations—will have an easy time letting go of some ethnic identity, because they have been schooled in their new homeland. They are not like their parents. They will have advanced educationally and economically and mixed with the majority to the point that very few visible differences will be evident between the immigrant and the majority. This can be witnessed in a visit to some of the congregations on the Metro New York district, where Afro-Caribbeans have migrated in significant numbers and have found a home in Nazarene congregations.

Pluralism—To expect all groups to likewise assimilate is pure naïveté. Many groups have great difficulty, cling to their ethnicity, and provide a safe haven as repositories of history and culture. It is unfortunate that government and big businesses have united to develop an economically stratified society along these ethnic lines. This easily gives way to discrimination and marginalization. However, these groups should have equal access and opportunities in employment, education, and overall economic well-being.¹¹

Congregational Response to Change

In 1992, the Congregations in Changing Communities Project, a research effort funded by the Lily Endowment and based at Emory University, researched the manner in which congregations responded to the changes that were taking place in their neighborhoods.¹² Several common patterns were discovered:

- Many congregations simply attempted to hold their own, doing what they had always done, with a slowly dwindling membership. Some of these eventually closed their doors or merged with another congregation.
- Some congregations moved. They looked at the possibilities for ministry in their existing locations and opted for friendlier territory. They assessed the needs and what they had to offer and concluded that their gifts could be best used elsewhere.
- A few congregations stared death in the face and deter-

mined they would not go to the grave. They experienced resurrection, often under the leadership of a pastor who helped them start all over again by developing new ministries and new styles of worship.

- A few farsighted and courageous congregations undertook the hard work of rerooting themselves, planning for new ministries and integrating newcomers into their midst even before the situation became critical.
- Some congregations sought their new identity in a set of ministries less tied to a particular place and more tied to the gifts, connections, and passions of their members. They found a niche within the large array of congregations and ministries available in a metropolitan region.
- More common than any other response to change was the founding of new congregations. The survey discovered that 21% of the congregations in the neighborhoods studied in the early 90's had been founded since 1980. A large survey five years later, covering five representative large urban regions, found that 14% of the congregations had been founded since 1985.
- Some congregations merged. By choosing to join forces with another existing congregation, these churches experienced changes that span all the other alternatives. There are elements of both birth and death in merging. Congregations that do it successfully have to create a new congregational culture in ways that are not unlike the tasks facing congregations that re-root or create a new niche for themselves. Many merged congregations also move. While merging is a distinct pattern of change, its many variations create challenges characteristic of nearly all the other patterns combined and compounded.

Look Before Crossing the Street!

Misunderstanding often comes as part and parcel of ministry when we fail to carefully analyze the ramifications inherent in the seizing of the new opportunities placed before us.

Countless initiatives, though well intended, fall on the ash heap of history because the time was not taken to assess with precision the challenges that these new opportunities present. Our parents' admonition still holds true, "Look before you cross the street" or be crushed by oncoming vehicles on their path to legitimate destinations. It is vital to prepare a congregation for the changes that will occur when a church transitions from being mono-cultural to multicultural.

As an example, here are some noteworthy observations about immigrant groups that might be overlooked:

- Today, groups of peoples have a longer-lasting tie to their homelands. Ease of travel allows immigrants to maintain contact with their homelands—unless, of course, they are political refugees. Whereas earlier immigrant groups usually said goodbye to their countries of origin forever when they came to the United States, this is frequently no longer the case. Immigrants are less likely to assimilate as quickly into the dominant culture in the United States, because they maintain contact.
- Among the Spanish-speaking peoples, more than 20 countries of origin are represented. This means that, although they all speak more or less the same language, the cultural differences are often considerable.
- The nature of new immigrant groups in the multicultural mix is of a somewhat different character than was the case in earlier waves of migration. It is not uncommon for Mexican immigrants, for example, to send their children back to Mexico during the summer vacation in order to get to know relatives and the customs of that country—and even keep up the language. There is always some level of assimilation especially beginning with the second generation. But the decidedly slower pace of assimilation, or even outright resistance to assimilation, is certainly bolstered by the fact that access to the country of origin is maintained at least through the first generation.
- While there may be a distinguishable "Little Saigon" in

Orange Country or a “Little Havana” in Miami, immigrant populations tend to be more mobile than in the past. They move frequently and quickly, following economic opportunities, or constantly upgrading their housing as their financial resources improve. This makes ministry to a group more difficult if the people—and sometimes even the culture—change rapidly.

Four Approaches to the Changing Landscape

If we are to seize this moment of propitious fate, we must not be relegated to a “one size fits all” recipe. Manifold approaches should be applied so that the optimum benefit may be achieved. I recommend that we do four things at the same time, thereby maximizing our efforts:

1. Start churches that are community-oriented.

Congregations should reflect the make-up of the community. The sociological DNA of any group of gathered Christians will determine the structures and boundaries of its existence and *raison d’être*. The geographical parameters of a local congregation, although becoming less of a factor than other indicators, are yet the single-most important ingredient in the structures of socialization.

In medieval Europe and in the early history of American religion, individuals were driven to a particular denomination or congregation by ascription, a blind allegiance to the faith of their parents. This is no longer the case. People today select among options to satisfy personal preferences in search of meaning and belonging. The community of faith remains the dominant force in community gatherings. It is a basic sociological principle that the human drives for meaning and belonging are realized through interaction with others.

High levels of solidarity are usually found in community churches. We need to encourage the starting of churches that reflect the community. People like to be with people like them-

selves and prefer to belong to an organization that provides the resultant stable relationships. This reality may create entities that are homogeneous in nature, and to the extent that it is a reflection of the socio-demographic characteristics of the community, it should be allowed to be a viable currency of ecclesiastical engagement. These churches, reflecting the make-up of the community, must make a unique contribution to the social space of the community.

It should be noted, however, that communities that have a growing concentration of African-Americans create different challenges than communities that are experiencing an increasing influx of immigrants. African-Americans are more difficult to attract to the dominant-culture congregations, because they face more residential segregation than other groups. Furthermore, they are less likely to marry people of other races than other racial minorities and have a more difficult time gaining acceptance in society than other minorities.¹³ Research by a Lily study suggests that if African-Americans are to be attracted to predominantly white churches, the congregations must concentrate on two areas: efforts at finding Black clergy or lay leadership and encouragement of discussions of racial issues.

It is highly improbable that one can envision a community, dominant-culture church with no Blacks in leadership positions. In the Lily data, the highest percentage of Blacks that attended a church with no Black clergy was 33 %. The highest percentage of whites and Hispanics who were willing to attend churches without members of their own group in leadership was 50 %. The other issue is allowing for the discussion of racial issues. The Lily study revealed that churches that spend time discussing racial concerns attract more African-Americans than other churches. Since alienation between African-Americans and the rest of society is greater than the alienation faced by other ethnic groups, discussions of racial issues may be necessary for Blacks to vent some of the frustration they experience.¹⁴ We cannot continue to hide racial issues behind the guise of “colorblindness.”

2. Start churches that are immigrant-specific.

Since 1994 Nazarenes have started 820 new congregations. Of that number, 422 (52%) of these congregations are not English-speaking whites. Furthermore, 218 of these have been Hispanic, 48 Haitian, 36 Black, and 30 Korean. The future of ethnic-specific churches is deeply embedded in NewStart initiatives. The case cannot be made for a cessation of this cultural breakthrough.

We once assumed that groups of immigrants coming to America formed the proverbial “melting pot.” That assumption has been proven to be errant. What we have now is more of a “salad bowl”, where we are all in the same bowl but our uniqueness is clearly visible. Folks immigrating today bring their belief systems, worldviews, cultural values, and ritual practices—including worship. They bring their “liturgical homelands”—sights, sounds, touches, and depth of belief. In the turmoil of coming to a new land, it may be that cultural and faith familiarity is crucial for surviving and growing.

God works within the language and culture of those to whom salvation is offered. God uses tribal, cultural, racial, or ancestral identities as legitimate gifts. It is not necessary to surrender one’s cultural identity in order to be a Christian. All Christians, regardless of color, class, size, or gender are chosen people. They are saved, transformed into communities of praise, and sent forth to share the good news of God’s love with people of all nations.

As revealed in the Book of Acts (2:5-8), God uses racially ethnic churches with culturally distinct ministries to help in reaching unchurched people. Today, this same kind of multicultural environment is evident in many communities, exhibiting the same kind of multiracial identity as the churches portrayed in Acts. The churches of these communities are not closed to other cultures, but because of their context and/or their calling, they are oriented to particular cultural settings.

The nation is becoming increasingly multicultural, especially in its urban communities. Therefore, it is only right that

the people of these communities be given the opportunity of affiliating with a congregation that presents the gospel within their cultural heritage and meets their particular needs. We can neither ignore nor avoid responding to this growing national diversity. The challenge to all Christians is to learn how to share the gospel in an increasingly diverse culture, a culture that features a rich variety of languages, music, styles, and modes of worship, ministries, and witness.

The Case for Ethnic-Specific Churches

- *Pragmatic reasons*—If people naturally want to worship with those of their own kind, then ethnic-specific churches provide the pragmatic solution. Donald McGavran has maintained that most people do not want to cross the lines of race or culture to go to church. He argues that this is the most successful approach for the development of growing vibrant churches. Many members of first generation immigrant congregations are converts and would never have been evangelized without such places of fellowship. These new converts were attracted to the church primarily because of the ethnic character of the congregation.
- *Theological reasons*—The history of racial alienation and supremacy contributed to the formation of separate churches based on race and ethnicity. Denied the full affirmation of their humanity, ethnic groups found dignity and self-worth in these congregations. A person's culture and faith interpretation should be upheld and enhanced in the faith community, and this fact is not easily duplicated in a multicultural experience.
- *Activist reasons*—It is important that in various faith communities of color opportunities exist to express the struggle against injustice and lack of equality. Particularly in the African-American church, social and political leaders have emerged to champion civil and human rights.

- *Cultural reasons*—Unless multicultural and dominant-culture churches become intentional about affirming and acknowledging other cultures, the unique ways that ethnic groups understand and worship God will be lost.
- *Sociological reasons*—Ethnic churches serve as a place of refuge and community development. They “are places where people are embraced for who they are, valued for their cultural particularities, free to communicate through shared experiences, and not pressured to change their ethnic ways so as to gain acceptance. These congregations celebrate, safeguard, and pass on to the next generation cultural practices and traditions.”¹⁵

3. Start multicultural churches.

A multicultural church, in the true sense of the term, is a church designed to cater to various ethnicities, cultures, ages, genders, etc. In this usage, we shall restrict the discussion to ethnicity.

With intentionality, the decision must be made to start churches that are multicultural, i.e. composed of various ethnic groups and with the styles of worship geared to a multi-faceted inclusiveness. It is much easier for congregations started in this manner to continue to be multicultural in their life cycles.

Russell Begaye, in his booklet “A Guide for Starting Multicultural Churches,” states:

In most ministry settings, any available, faithful, and teachable believer can be used greatly of God. In a multicultural church, the challenge level increases, especially for the lead pastor. Therefore, the following background and qualities are valuable for anyone in a leadership role in any church, but especially for the lead pastor of a multicultural church. One well suited for multicultural church leadership has:

- A commitment to the authority of Scripture; especially principles of reconciliation and unity.
- A commitment to missions.

- A commitment to include people of all ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds.
- A commitment to prayer.
- A servant's heart.
- A sense of humor.
- An ability to enjoy and compromise with different cultural preferences.
- An ability to handle criticism and rejection.
- Strong leadership and pastoral gifts.
- A strong training in theology and in the social sciences.¹⁶

Multicultural congregations require time, energy, and focus that could be used elsewhere. But neither the ease nor difficulty of the task nor its simplicity or complexity are the issues on which to focus. We are called as Christians to live, work, serve, and be together, forging community that can occur only with God's help.¹⁷

Designing a multicultural church is the result of hard work by the leaders and laity. Even in few instances where this pluralism is the result of community dynamics, it takes a concerted effort to maintain this unique mix.

4. Help mono-cultural churches become multicultural.

A recent report by the Congregation Project of the Lily Endowment discovered the following:

- How we define multiracial congregation: No one racial group is 80 %or more of the congregation.
- About 7% of all American congregations are multiracial.
- About 15% of Catholic churches are multiracial.
- About 5% of Protestant churches are multiracial.
- Non-Christian congregations are more likely to be racially mixed than are Christian congregations.
- The most common type of racially mixed congregation is comprised of Anglos and Hispanics or Asians.

Motivations for Churches to Become Culturally Conscious

- Full utilization of a large facility—congregation is strong

but has a large building and welcomes another congregation to share.

- Financial struggles—smaller congregations struggling financially rents space to another congregation to pay the bills.
- Changing neighborhood—church is in a changing neighborhood, losing members, realizes that if they don't open their doors to persons of other cultures, the church may close.
- Serendipitous—it just happens. (A Filipino attends and brings others, more and more join over time.)

Motivations for Individuals to Attend a Culturally Conscious Church

- Integration—African-Americans intentionally join a European-American church specifically to integrate it.
- Assimilation—immigrants join European-American congregations where they can polish their English skills and learn the cultural norms of their new country.
- Denominational loyalty—immigrants join denominations they attended in their home country.
- Linguistic or racial bonds—persons of same language group but different cultures choose to worship together (Spanish), or same culture but different languages (Native Americans).
- Acceptance—seeking a church that will accept them, feel comfortable (divorced persons, persons with disabilities, ex-prisoners).
- Making a difference—choosing a congregation because they can fill a need.
- Multicultural environment—people who have grown up in multiethnic schools, work in multiethnic environments, exercise in multiethnic gyms, etc., or the family is biracial.
- Justice oriented—because they believe that striving for justice and peace on earth requires people to cross

boundaries, to negotiate differences, and to work for a sense of well being for all. They want the richness of diversity.

- Geographical proximity—others don't own a car and can walk or take public transportation to the church.

Multi-congregational Opportunities

There is an increasing availability of buildings with dwindling memberships that can be the catalysts for district initiatives and church sponsorships. With gradual shifts in urban populations, movements of people, and exploding immigrant groups, often new opportunities arise to use existing buildings to house culture specific congregations.

Rev. Ian Fitzpatrick has been involved in multi-congregational initiatives for a considerable length of time with great success. As pastor of the Emmanuel Church of the Nazarene in Toronto, Canada, he has developed a missional model for using the church building for the nurturing of ethnic congregations. His observations about the checks and balances that should be put in place should be heeded:

As the pastor, you have a unique opportunity to expand the ministry field of your local church. As with any ministry opportunity, you will probably be the one to “make it fly” or “see it die”. If you are thinking of pursuing a multi-congregational ministry, there are a few things I would suggest:

DO have a personal passion for it to happen.

DON'T surrender your conviction to a committee just yet.

DO pray and ask God to confirm that this is indeed a conviction and not just another fad.

DON'T move any further in the process until this is confirmed.

DO formulate a vision in your mind consistent with the community in which you minister.

DON'T try to duplicate what someone else has done in another part of the country.

DO shape and construct your vision into a plan that can be understood by your hearers.

DON'T be vague or uncertain about your plan.

DO make a biblical, reasonable and visionary presentation of your plan to the church board.

DON'T ignore objections or concerns that members of your board might have.

DO pursue a positive response to the plan and involve key leaders in the implementation of it.

DON'T go it alone.

DO look for key lay people who can be instrumental in carving out a non-English speaking ministry group.

DON'T try to lead a non-English speaking group if your only language is English.

DO provide as much as you can to the group so that they can concentrate on “ministry” (free space, use of equipment, etc.).

DON'T inhibit the success of their reason to exist (to seek the lost) by imposing secondary rules and regulations that would seriously impede their efforts. (There will come a time when shared costs are appropriate but not yet.)

DO publicly promote the ministry of the new “congregation” in a very natural way; this is what the Kingdom is all about.

DON'T make excuses for why we had to go in this direction; this is our calling!

DO your very best to promote a climate of equality from the very beginning.

DON'T try to establish equality when you are already way down the road; this will be interpreted as “tokenism”.

(For pastors and boards who already have more than one congregation meeting in a shared space facility).

DO make it a priority to eliminate a landlord-tenant arrangement.

DON'T maintain or try to establish an “authority” congregation.

DO meet with all pastors regularly.

DON'T assume that all is well simply because you haven't heard otherwise. You can only be in tune with what is happening if you are in regular consultation with your “peers”.

DO create an atmosphere of equality, not only among the congregations but also among the pastors.

DON'T abuse the privilege of your position as a catalyst.

DO establish a contractual, working agreement.

DON'T assume that everyone involved will simply understand the system.

DO meet and pray with the entire pastoral/leadership team on a regular basis.

DON'T allow issues to go unresolved.¹⁸

Dr. Ron Benefiel, former pastor of Los Angeles First Church of the Nazarene, comments:

At L.A. First, we decided on a plan in which any one of the pastors is eligible for election to a two-year term as chair of the multi-congregational board. Once elected, that person effectively and legally becomes the senior pastor for the church as a whole. In compliance with the Manual

and to avoid confusion at the congregational level, we used the title “administrative pastor” rather than “senior pastor”. One of the responsibilities of the administrative pastor/multi-congregational board chair is to convene meetings of the pastoral council, a non-legislative coordinating group consisting of the pastors of all the congregations. In this setting, the “administrative pastor” is again not referred to as the senior pastor, but the “administrative pastor” and is the “first among equals”. We found it advisable to keep the terminology of senior pastor for the pastors of each of the congregations to emphasize their authority with the people they pastor.

ADDENDUM A

LEADERSHIP AND THE URBAN CHURCH

Much has been written about church leadership in general, but very little about context-appropriate training for urban ministry. The danger we face is in assuming that since scriptural principles are universal, they fit anywhere without the need for contextualization. Most evangelical denominations have their congregational epicenter in the non-urban areas and are not really prepared for leadership in urban areas. We need a redirection.

Conn and Ortiz distinguish three kinds of leaders: relocated leaders, indigenous leaders, and multiethnic leaders.

Relocated leaders are selected from outside the community, usually from a rural or suburban setting. These individuals are from a totally different homogeneous environment, respond to a call from the Lord, and are aware of urgently spiritual needs within the community. Representing a different socioeconomic culture, the urban mix is often viewed as awkward and oppressive.

Indigenous leaders have grown up in the city and belong to

a particular culture. Indigenous leaders are the greatest asset to any denomination. They are the contextualizers in the community and filled with the Spirit of God. Indigenous leaders are a natural fit for starting urban churches because:

- They see the city as their home
- Their commitment to the city is long-term
- They embody an urban lifestyle and know the boundaries for survival
- They know the hardships of the city and have been nurtured to live with them
- They understand the temporality of property and possessions
- They find high density or living in close proximity comfortable.¹⁹

Multiethnic leaders are often found among congregations with a multicultural mix and in areas close to the center of our cities. We are witnessing an increasing number of individuals who wish to attempt a church plant with various people groups in the community and the racial struggle that this kind of pluralism presents in the city. These leaders are interested in showing that God is interested in reconciliation and harmony among His people.²⁰

If we can harness the energies of a combination of these three groups, the difference could be a harvest of souls through a variety of approaches to the city with love.

ADDENDUM B

Focus Areas, Goals, and Objectives for
Transition to a Multicultural Church

Accountability and Responsibility

Goal 1: Pastors and staff will be held accountable for creating an environment that fosters diversity, acceptance of all cultural, racial, or ethnic groups.

Goal 2: All members will be responsible for understanding and promoting diversity.

Education and Training

Goal 3: Everyone in the church will be provided appropriate training in diversity.

Goal 4: Church members will participate in community outreach programs to reach and prepare the culturally diverse for church membership.

Path of Christian Ministry

Goal 5: The pastor will ensure that every church member, regardless of ethnicity, has access to training and mentoring for Christian ministry in a multicultural environment.

Leadership Policy

Goal 6: The church will review and update church policies to ensure that a culture of diversity is being practiced in every aspect of church life.

Goal 7: The issues of diversity will be reviewed when planning and conducting conferences and other special meetings within the church.

Community

Goal 8: Enhanced community relations and media advertising will be used to increase positive perception of the church's commitment to diversity.

Goal 9: Church members will actively participate in local events, youth activities, youth mentoring, and other outreach programs among whites, minorities, and all ethnic groups in the community to establish and enhance community relationships and partnerships.

Outreach and Discipleship

Goal 10: The church will establish a five-year marketing and communication plan that addresses the its openness to racially, culturally, and ethnically diverse people.

Goal 11: The church members involved in outreach and discipleship programs will reflect the diversity of the minorities and ethnic groups in the community.

Goal 12: The church will establish a highly visible outreach and service presence in minority and ethnic communities.

Measurement

Goal 13: The church will develop, deploy, and periodically review an effective system to measure and communicate progress on the goals of diversity.

Funding

Goal 14: The church will provide funding in support of all programs and efforts of diversity.²¹

Epilogue

This booklet encourages two efforts at the same time. On the one hand, it embraces the initiatives to start congregations that cater to the cultural needs of a particular people. On the other hand, it encourages the creation of multicultural churches. These are not antithetical promotions, but are meant to complement each other. The choice should never be either/or but both/and.

The apostle Paul, when faced with similar challenges, never promoted a theology of oneness that encouraged the loss of one's own culture of origin or the assimilation into another group's culture. Jewish Christians were not asked to become Gentiles, nor were Gentile Christians asked to become Jews. Theologian William Campbell writes that Paul did not "discourage Jewish Christians from following a Jewish lifestyle after they had become Christians. . . . The two positions, i.e., Jewish Christians continuing to follow a Jewish pattern of life, and Gentile Christians continuing to follow a Gentile pattern of life, are not mutually exclusive."²²

1 Kortright Davis, *Serving with Power* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), p. 16

2 Verified by personal e-mail July 10, 2000, from Eddie Gibbs, Donald McGavran Professor of Church Growth, School of World Mission, Fuller Theological Seminary.

- 3 George Hunter, in a presentation entitled “*The Church’s Mission to Secular People*” given in Chicago, Illinois, on October 17, 2000, Beeson Institute for Advanced Church Leadership.
- 4 Thomas S. Rainer, *The Formerly Unchurched* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2001).
- 5 The Almanac of the Christian World, 1993-1994 edition (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1992), 485.
- 6 N. J. Demerath et al., *Sacred Companies: Organizational Aspects of Religion and Religious Aspects of Organizations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).
- 7 Harvie M. Conn & Manuel Ortiz, *Urban Ministry: The Kingdom, the City & the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2001) p. 319.
- 8 Sanders, Cheryl J. Unpublished document, *Bridging the Divide: The Changing Face of the Church in the Light of the Scriptures*, 1998
- 9 Tom Nees, Unpublished document, *Building an Inclusive Church in a Multicultural Society*, 19—
- 10 Mark Chaves, *National Congregations Study*. Machine-readable file. Department of Sociology, University of Arizona, 1999.
- 11 Conn & Ortiz, pp. 322 -23.
- 12 Nancy T. Ammerman, *Congregation and Community* (New Brunswick, NJ.: Rutgers University Press, 1997).
- 13 George Yancy, *Who is White? Latinos, Asians and the New Black/NonBlack Society* (Boulder, CO.: Lynne Rienner, 2003).
- 14 George Yancey, *One Body One Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2003).
- 15 Curtiss Paul DeYoung et al, *United By Faith* (New York, NY.: Oxford University Press, 2003)
- 16 Russell Begaye, *A Guide for Planting Multicultural Churches*, (Alpharetta, GA: North American Mission Board, 1999).
- 17 Curtiss Paul DeYoung et al, *United By Faith* (New York, NY.: Oxford University Press, 2003)
- 18 Ian Fitzpatrick, Unpublished document, *Multi-congregational Pastors*, July 31, 2002.
- 19 Conn & Ortiz, pp. 379 – 80.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Guidelines adopted by Joseph Henriques from the Air National Guard’s Objectives for Managing Diversity.
- 22 William S. Campbell, *Paul’s Gospel in an Intercultural Context: Jew and Gentile in Letter to the Romans* (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Peter Lang, 1982).



The Immigrant Churches: Toward A Stranger's Theology

Dr. Sam Vassel & Professor Gabriel Salguero

Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!

—Emma Lazarus

Philosophy is afflicted, from its childhood, with an insurmountable allergy: a horror for the other which remains the other.

—Emmanuel Levinas

Why A Stranger Theology?

We may be asked, why write on the immigrant church? The United States experience by and large, except for the obvious case of the Native Americans, is an experiment in immigration. Everyone, in some way, whether by force, coercion, or choice is part of the immigrant realities. Immigration is not a new phenomenon. Every generation has established some form of immigrant church. Before 1890, the U.S. witnessed the emergence of Protestant Puritans, Dutch Reformed, Irish Catholics, German Lutherans, and Swiss Mennonites just to name a few.¹ Since the turn of the 20th Century, U.S. immigration has included Asians, Africans, Latin Americans, Caribbeans, and increasing numbers of Eastern Europeans. In short, immigration continues to be a major topic in the collective consciousness of the U.S., (and we would argue the world in light of globalization), and its impact should not be ignored. Why write about the immigrant church? Simply put, the immigrant church is who we have been and who we are. Pastor and urbanologist Manuel Ortiz articulates this reality clearly:

The world is in a state of movement, responding to

what demographers call push-pull factors, and it is making its mark on America . . . In 1985 Time magazine entitled an issue “ ‘ The Changing Face of America’: How Long Will It Be Before the Third World Overwhelms the First World?” In 1990 there appeared an issue entitled “What WILL the U.S. Be Like When Whites Are No Longer the Majority?”²

As if the history of the Church in the U.S. were not reason enough, Scripture concludes that God is the immigrants’ God. The God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Rachael, and Rebekah is the God of the sojourner. Even before the divine mandate for Abram to leave Ur of the Chaldeans (Gen. 12), God had been a God of the nomads. Afterwards, in the Exodus and Exile, YHWH was continually on the move with Israel. Jesus is a stranger in Egypt. In Jesus’ earthly ministry, the Markan witness shows him always on the go. The Pentecost event begins with people from every nation living in Jerusalem (Acts 2:5). Later, the Petrine epistle is addressed to the exiles in five regions of Asia Minor (I Pet 1:1). God has always been the God of the sojourner, exile, and immigrant.

Churches of all stripes have struggled toward an ecclesiology and missiology that would be welcoming to new waves of immigrants. Simultaneously, newly founded immigrant congregations have wrestled with how to “do church” in a strange land. The Psalms of the Israelites in captivity articulate this struggle, “How could we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?” (Psalm 137:4). Every generation of worshipers must ask two important questions: what can we learn from the immigrant church? What has the immigrant church learned from its relocation in a different context?

A fruitful dialogue that has implications for both long-standing congregations and hundreds of immigrant churches has begun and should continue. Our stories are only two of many and cannot encompass the complexity and nuance of all immigrant congregations. Still, the hope is that sufficient insights can be drawn for the building of the Kingdom of God. This kingdom establishes ties that bind between the immigrant congregations and their sister churches in the “dominant culture.”

We believe in the power of story. Our Master was a storyteller who changed the world. We share the stories of a first-generation Jamaican pastor in the Bronx, New York and a second-generation Puerto Rican from the Jersey shore. Our stories are shared in hopes of transformation. Although our narratives vary, there are overlapping markers, which may provide clues toward a more healthy and inclusive global Church. We begin by describing the waves of immigration that have arrived at our respective congregations. After unearthing the layers of arrivals, we share what this has meant for our congregations in terms of re-examining our way of doing church. We hope that in our sharing we open the doors to a chorus of witnesses that will broaden and deepen the Christian faith in our time and place.

These two stories have something to teach. In a world where the Church is often an afterthought, the Church's lessons can "bring the weight of unjust societies, politics, and spiritual practices tumbling down."³ A tale from two ever-changing immigrant congregations is our invitation for you to travel with us as we seek to understand the Zeitgeist, the Spirit of God moving through history. Our changes have led us to underline some conclusions about the DNA of the immigrant church. Whether in Lakewood, New Jersey or the Bronx, New York immigration has brought its promises and challenges. The tale of two churches is taking a close look at a small segment of the immigrant church and asking God to make us like the children of Issachar, "understanding of the times, knowing what Israel ought to do (1 Chronicles 12:32)."

A Tale of Two Churches

Imagine visiting a Spanish-speaking congregation that is mostly Cuban and Puerto Rican. Moreover, the assembly includes a small group of African-American congregants and a handful of other congregants from diverse parts of Latin America. If you can imagine this, you have just stepped into the church of my youth. From January 1979 until August 2005 I attended the Spanish Pentecostal Church. The changing face of

the church community in those 26 years is the initial point of entry into this larger conversation. We, like many immigrant churches around the world, were experiencing first-hand how migration impacts the way we do ministry.

It is in my home congregation where I learned to *caminar con Jesús*.⁴ When my parents began their pastoral ministry the membership was predominantly Cuban and Puerto Rican, with a smaller contingency of English speaking members from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Many of the Cubans arrived directly from Cuba or via Spain after leaving during the Cuban Revolution of 1959. Some of the Cuban immigrants were well educated, although not all. On the other hand, the majority of Puerto Ricans that arrived during the Great Migration of 1946-1964 worked in manual labor, particularly manufacturing. Cubans were considered immigrants because they were required passports. Conversely, Puerto Ricans were citizens even if the U.S. culture was totally foreign to them. Even the initial founding members of the congregation were radically different in education, citizenship-status, and socio-economic standing. Sociologist, Joan Moore, adequately describes the immigration patterns of this founding group at the Spanish Pentecostal Church:

The major surge in Puerto Rican migration to the mainland U.S. came earlier—shortly after World War II—in the Great Migration of 1946-1964. The population has been characterized as a “restless” movement of people back and forth from the island, with a steady accretion on the mainland population. The flood of Cuban migration started, of course, when Fidel Castro took power in 1959. Successive waves of refugees almost quintupled the number of Cubans, although recently the overall rate of growth decelerated.⁵

Since the late 1980s and early 1990s there has been a steady influx of immigrants from all over Mexico, Guatemala, and El Salvador. The harsh economic and political crises of these countries translated into large numbers of immigrants. Both documented and undocumented immigrants arrived in Texas, California, and New York. These were not the only places they

planted roots. Many came to Arizona, North Carolina, and New Jersey. This new wave of immigrants represented yet a new economic reality. Many of these immigrants worked in agriculture or as day laborers in construction, as nannies, and child-care providers. The church now had two classes of Latinos in their midst: a middle-class upwardly mobile group and a group that was struggling to survive economically. This is often the case. As one wave of immigrants meets with economic opportunity, the new wave is economically disadvantaged.

Since the early 1990s, we are no longer the Spanish Pentecostal Church but rather the Missionary Pentecostal Church. A change in the congregation's name is a manifestation of the change in local demographics.⁶ The children of the Cuban and Puerto Rican members have grown up in a wider culture that was Anglo-dominant. In addition, there are several more Italian and African-American families who have become members. English was the only language an increasing number of parishioners spoke.

About 60 miles north of this Jersey Shore church at 971 E. 227th Street in the Bronx is the Bronx Bethany Church of the Nazarene. In the early 1960s, a small group of West Indian immigrants initiated this congregation. Regrettably, this group was not welcomed as part of a prominent white Manhattan church in the 1960s. Frustrated attempts to find a locale for worship led them to gather initially in their homes. After 4 years, in 1964 under the leadership of Dr. V. Seymour Cole and 21 charter members, they organized and affiliated with the Church of the Nazarene. In the 42 years since its inception, the congregation has grown to almost 700 members.⁷ This growth is a classic case of how immigration impacts a congregation. The nature of the growth at Bronx Bethany is worth examining as a template for understanding immigration patterns and their impact on institutions, particularly the Church.

Nevertheless, considering this predominantly Jamaican congregation a monolith is to misunderstand the realities of immigration. Throughout the four decades of its existence,

Bronx Bethany has received different waves of immigrants from the West Indies. Each immigrant group brought with it different expectations and a different understanding of their culture. Having left Jamaica at different times in its history, they all left a different Jamaica. In addition, immigrants from diverse parts of the Caribbean were attracted to this fellowship. Their arrival made a significant impact on the DNA of the congregation. The memories of the parishioners' homeland reflect what they expect from the Jamaican immigrant church in the U.S. What this has meant for Bronx Bethany is a careful nuance of how to "do ministry." This is doing ministry to a congregation of different generations of immigrants who define their culture in radically different ways.

First, there is the Jamaican gentleman and lady who left Jamaica in the late 1950s and early 1960s and have fresh recollections of the British influence in the West Indies. A new wave of nationalists emerged at the forefront of politics and culture after Jamaica left the Federation of the West Indies in the 1960s. The sway of such weighty figures as Alexander Bustamantae and Norman Manley impacted the ideology of Jamaicans both in and outside the church. Bronx Bethany in addition to receiving some of the earlier group was now receiving a generation of Jamaican nationalists. Moreover, some of the children of the earlier group were U.S.-born Jamaicans. Decades later, the emergence of the neo-nationalists in Jamaica and a search for cultural renewal produced yet a different wave of worshipping immigrants at East 227th Street. These neo-nationalists often followed the thought of Michael Manley and other socialist's ideologies. Recently, the arrival of many Jamaicans who grew up in the post-Cold War reality has added yet another layer to this complex milieu.

The mosaic at Bronx Bethany is a microcosm of what is happening in immigrant churches all over the world. The colonized, nationalists, and neo-nationalists Jamaican realities are coupled with a generation of U.S.-born Jamaican all with different understandings of how to do church. In addition, in early 2006 the congregation in recognition of the large Latino influ-

ence in the Bronx launched a Latino ministry. English speaking immigrants reached out to Spanish speaking immigrants.

As the years went by, the neighborhoods changed and so did these congregations. The changing context of the Missionary Pentecostal Church and Bronx Bethany required some reinterpreting of identity and mission. Our radical demographic shifts were in part a realization of the eschatological foresight pronounced in Revelation 7:9, “After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne.” The motley crew that was gathering together at these congregations had very different expectations of what “church” should be. The challenges and promise of worship, proclamation, leadership, and fellowship abound at both Bronx Bethany and the Missionary Pentecostal Church.

The milieu is even more complex. U.S.-born Jamaicans and Latinos who are now adults are dating and marrying across cultures. The church must not only be inclusive of the different epochs of migration but the burgeoning group of second-generation congregants. This group like any other second-generation group deals with what black sociologist W.E.B Dubois called a “double-consciousness”: they are both Jamaican and American or Latino/a and American.⁸ Perhaps even a triple consciousness black, Jamaican/Latino/a, and American. Immigration continues to mean adaptation to these realities. Immigration requires transformation. If we want to be inclusive of the other immigrant groups that join, the church we need to change with the times.

The Pluralistic Immigrant Church (Promises and Challenges)

One thing is clear: immigrant churches are not the representation of a homogeneity or monolith. There are waves of immigration. Each wave brings a different set of people with different expectations. There is an eclectic dimension even within each wave of immigration. If you visit a Latino or a Jamaican immigrant congregation, expect diversity. This diver-

sity is representative of the time in which each group migrated. Not only is the immigrant church heterogeneous in terms of culture but also ideologically. The successive generation of immigrants and their children are formed by diverse world-views. The post-Cold War immigrant and the pre-Cold War immigrant have different formative experiences that contribute to this ideological montage.

Pluralism poses both promises and challenges for leadership, worship, and proclamation. For instance, how does one provide an amalgamation of leadership that is representative of the congregation? Pluralism is not just diversity in the pews but also in leadership and proclamation. This is not an easy task, and it requires much compromise from all groups involved. Still, the investment in being a sign of the Kingdom is worth the effort. We do things because they are right, not because they work.

After 36 years of Dr. Cole's leadership, the Bronx Bethany Church recruited a new pastor. The fact that they brought in Jamaican-born Dr. Samuel Vassel as pastor shows that the ties to Jamaica remained very strong. Still, this new pastor was intentional in including U.S. born men and women on the pastoral staff. In addition, the worship at Bronx Bethany combines high liturgy that appeals to the first wave of immigrants with contemporary worship that includes Caribbean and American styles. Preaching is not just the use of the Queen's English but the patois can be heard from time to time, so as to honor the lingua franca of many parishioners. The influence of African-American preaching and worship is also being included particularly among the younger generation. Contemporary Christian singers Kirk Franklin and Fred Hammond are not unknown. New forms of leadership, worship, and proclamation are reflections of the different streams flowing into Bronx Bethany.

At the Missionary Pentecostal Church, the leadership of Pastors Héctor and Raquel Salguero had challenges akin to Bronx Bethany. The Salgueros incorporated a new multi-ethnic leadership that included an African-American woman pastor, an Italian-American trustee, and a worship team led by second

generation worship leaders. The worship was a symphony of salsa, merengue, and contemporary worship music in both Spanish and English. All sermons were simultaneously translated and a project to have all songs written in both languages if possible was initiated. Today, MPC is a blend of Latino/a and non-Latino worship and leadership. While the senior leadership at Bronx Bethany and MPC remains first generation émigrés, windows of opportunities have been opened for the succeeding generations to assume these positions in the near future. Signs of change continue to emerge.

The Providing Immigrant Church

What then is the promise of the immigrant churches? The immigrant churches provide not only a spiritual haven but also a social and ethical response to minority groups that “live and work under a dominant church and society.”⁹ Christian ethicist, Eldin Villafaña, borrowing from Orlando Costas, writes of several identifiers that make Hispanic Pentecostal congregations a gift for the immigrant. These gifts are also true of immigrant churches across denominations, geographical regions, and language. Villafaña’s taxonomy is a helpful tool for understanding how immigrant churches serve to ease the transition from a known culture to a foreign one. We will highlight four of the seven social roles Villafaña underlines as indispensable tools the immigrant church provides:

- Survival (“A Place of Cultural Survival”): “. . . It helps preserve or to reconstruct the value systems, language, music, art, costumes, symbols, and myths of its respective communities.”
- Signpost (“A Signpost of Protest and Resistance”) “. . . a disturbing sign on the fringes of an unjust society . . . a prophetic indictment against the racism, political oppression, economic exploitation and social marginalization . . .”
- Seedbed for Community Leaders (“Emerging Leaders . . . Nurtured”)
- Social Service Provider (“Natural Support Systems—Source of Strength”)¹⁰

Cultural Survival:

How is the immigrant church a place for survival? The immigrant church is the postmodern manifestation of the synagogue. The immigrant church provides what the synagogue did for the exilic community. It brings the community together. Where else but in the synagogue could we ask questions and hear one another without fear of being labeled strange? Many who come to these congregations seek continuity to their lives and culture in a new context. The worship style is a critical component to this transition. Singing in their native tongue and preaching with a familiar cadence makes this transition much easier. Cultural survival is no small matter for the immigrant who experiences anomie and alienation in a dominant culture that misunderstands him/her and is often suspicious of his/her customs and language. During the hours of corporate worship and fellowship there is the validation and appreciation of the home culture and all that it offers. For those limited hours on Sunday or in the middle of the week, we are not singing in a strange land but at home.

Social Service Provider:

The immigrant church takes seriously that YHWH is often referred to as Jireh, the provider. Not only is the congregation providing a space for grace that seeks to overcome cultural shock and anomie, the congregation is also a social-service provider. At both the Missionary Pentecostal Church and Bronx Bethany many congregants sought the churches help with connecting to sources to facilitate the transition of new arrivals. The members who have been in the United States for some time have established a network and relationships that facilitate the transition into a new and often hostile context. New church members are connected with these networks via church relationships or at times pastoral intervention. It is not uncommon for the pastor or one of the deacons of our congregations to translate for new members at the immigration or introduce them to the social service offices in our neighborhoods.

The benevolent fund offerings, which were often used for new immigrant arrivals who were not prepared for the cold winters of the Northeast, are clear evidence of this social service commitment. Although limited economic resources often challenge the immigrant church, it pools its reserves together to provide initial sustenance for the newest arrivals. The challenge of resources fosters a creativity and camaraderie that is a marker of our location in life. Silver and gold we do not have much of but, what we do have, we give generously (Acts 3:6). It is no wonder that Dr. Cole and Rev. Salguero were both bi-vocational for the first decade of their ministries as they nurtured their congregations' fiscal health. The analogy of the widow of Zarephath is continuously repeated in the life of the émigré. We give to Elijah and the jug of oil does not run dry (1 Kings 17:14).

Indigenous Leadership:

The provision the immigrant church fosters is not just cultural survival and social service but also the gift of developing indigenous leadership. The immigrant church is the seedbed for leadership. The Missionary Pentecostal Church and Bronx Bethany have a strong history of cultivating leadership. The classical examples of Richard Griffiths (Associate Pastor for Youth), and Althea Taylor (Associate Pastor for Community Outreach), at Bronx Bethany and Angel González and Jeanie Wilson at Missionary Pentecostal Church are just a few of the many that could be highlighted. Within the confines of a culture that respects and fosters their talents, these men and women were able to thrive. The safety provided them in a non-hostile environment as educators, preachers, and indigenous leaders prepared them well to navigate the often difficult terrain of the dominant culture. Anecdotal evidence is the children's ministry at MPC. Resident grandmother and sage, Olga Sanchez, ensured a legacy of leadership for years to come.

Richard and Althea are not just local leaders in the congregation but leaders in their District and community. The empowerment they received and the opportunities to both suc-

ceed and fail within the confines of a nurturing community released them to do the same in a more diverse context. Althea's M.Div from Howard University, and Richard's leadership in Nazarene Youth International, have a direct corollary to a supportive community that gave legitimacy to their cultural expression of the Christian faith. Angel and Jeanie's success as an international evangelist and educator respectively are a natural outgrowth of a congregation that allowed them to take leadership roles within a smaller and non-threatening immigrant church. Many ethnic-minority global leaders of denominations and para-church organizations today were fostered in the incubator of small immigrant churches. This incubator is so successful because it not only protects but empowers generations to be who they are and impact God's Kingdom.

The Prophetic versus Parochial Immigrant Church:

Prophetic Mission:

The immigrant Church also serves as an embodiment of what Walter Brueggemann calls The Prophetic Imagination. His hypothesis holds true as one of its identity markers. The task of prophetic ministry is to nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception to the dominant culture around us.¹¹ Villafañe points out that the church on the margins can be a prophetic indictment against all manner of oppression and marginalization. In the worship and proclamation themes of the Exodus and Exile abound. Within this theme, there is a denunciation of all the oppression that is antithetical to the liberating Gospel of Christ and an announcement of a Gospel that makes us all free and equal. The immigrant church is like John the Baptist, *ego vox clamantis in deserto*,¹² proclaiming that not everything in the dominant culture is consistent with the liberating Gospel of Jesus Christ.

As strangers, the immigrant church is uniquely situated to provide insights about the culture that insiders may miss. The

opportunity for the larger church to glean from a different set of eyes is a blessing that should not be overlooked. Indeed, the immigrant church is often heard paraphrasing Elisha's prayer, "O Lord, open the eyes of the church so they may see what we see (2 Kings 6:17)." The perspective of the outsider brings a certain perspicacity and insight that could lead the church to a more comprehensive understanding of God's purposes in the world.

In what ways is the immigrant church prophetic? It resists cultural imperialisms and decries any homogenization that collapses the Gospel into the assumptions of the dominant culture. The poor among us see the downside of a merciless capitalism that can have avarice as its basic grounding and *modus operandi*. Moreover, the collective experiences of colonialism or neo-colonialism brought over from immigrant homelands is a hermeneutical lens that is watching guard over abuses of power in society and the church. The deep wounds of economic dependency, colonialism, and brutal puppet regimes places this group in a place to loudly echo the now famous maxim of Lord Acton, "Power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely." Walter Wink's challenge to the church to name, unmask, and engage the powers¹³ is particularly evident among those of us in the exile. Prophecy, for us, is speaking truth to power and challenging the savage inequalities of power that are still prevalent in our day.

Parochial Mission:

If the immigrant church provides unique giftings to the entire body of Christ, it also faces unique challenges. The immigrant church does not in every case serve as a prophetic alternative. Conversely, it at times serves as a conclave that stifles its own growth. The area of its greatest strength is also one of its greatest challenges. Its particularity could be a strength-weakness. Conclave is from the Latin – *con* (with) – *clave* (key), literally to be locked in with a key. While this may stir up feelings of security and protection for a group in transition, it simultaneously can rouse feelings of isolationism by those outside the

community. The implications for evangelism to succeeding generations and the dominant culture are great.

The challenge to the immigrant church (perhaps even more so to the dominant culture) is not patriotism but a nationalism that could lead to ethnocentrism. It is critical to discern the difference between healthy patriotism and nationalistic or ethnocentric idolatry. Patriotism is love of patria – (homeland, motherland, fatherland). Patriotism is the spark for a genuine love and celebration of one’s formative communities and culture. God honors celebration of one’s home. We must be careful also to note that some forms of nationalism are a reaction to centuries of bitter and cruel colonization that sought to obliterate a national identity. In this case it is a nationalism birthed out of what Paul Tillich called *The Courage to Be*.¹⁴

Still, there exists a dysfunctional nationalism equivalent to the sin of idolatry that declares God prefers one nation to others, one people over others, or one language over others. Dysfunctional nationalism rises from a very myopic theology of nations that says, “God bless us and nobody else.” The immigrant church, while celebrating and honoring its distinctives, should be sure that it has understood itself as one out of the multiple cultural manifestations of the multiform grace of God. *E Pluribus Unum* is not just a slogan or motif but an experiential reality we proclaim daily.

Beyond Parochial Mission:

The Jonah paradigm is here most noticeable.¹⁵ “And the word of the Lord came to Jonah, son of Amathia, and he said, “Go to the capital of Iraq (Ninevah is the capital of Iraq), and preach against it. Go to the capital of Iraq and tell them I have an opportunity for them. I’m giving them a second chance.” But consider that Jonah had suffered from an Assyrian trauma. The Assyrians, when they took people, cut their ears off, so they would never hear again. They plucked their eyes out, so they would never see again. And they cut their tongues out, so they would never worship again. Jonah’s hatred was a serious one. He was the colonized, and they were the colonizers. It is

like evangelizing the very center of the people who have treated you wrongly and overcoming your hatred.

Jonah's mission is a decolonizing text in which the oppressed becomes the messenger. Jonah is mission from below. Mission from below overcomes the missiological challenge. It is the immigrant church saying, "We cannot overpower you and say you must listen so we'll do it another way." It is that great paradox for mission that is a prophetic-servanthood (not to be misread as slave) always challenging, transforming, and redeeming. This is not a colonial mission but a post-colonial mission that resists suppressing and eradicating everything it encounters. Colonial mission was too often "patronizing, condescending and mentally enslaving."¹⁶ This mission from below is a gift that seeks to redeem the roots of Christian evangelism from the many centuries of European colonization. Mission from below finds its hope in the Biblical witness that began from the underside in a militarily occupied Jerusalem and changed the uttermost parts of the earth.

This does not mean that there is no place for the monolingual first-generation immigrant congregation. Rather, this first-generation congregation must allow for other manifestations of second and third generation children to establish new methods of ministry for their time and place. No single type of immigrant church will minister to the entire immigrant reality. There are multiple methodologies that can be employed: a) a homogenous, monolingual congregation made-up of mostly first generation immigrants, b) a heterogeneous congregation with one worship service that is inclusive of all styles and preferences (a monumental pragmatic challenge), c) a congregation with multiple worship services and programs and one intentionally-diverse governance, d) multiple congregations sharing the same space with distinct governance.

Toward A Stranger's Theology (Initial Steps)

Although a project that highlights the full theological and

missional significance of the immigrant church is beyond the scope of these initial musings, we are simply outlining some initial steps, which may lead to a more fully developed stranger's theology. We must ask and re-ask the fundamental query: what role does the stranger play in God's economy? We are inviting the global church to a prolonged conversation that will seek to establish what Eric H.F. Law calls, "The Peaceable Realm."¹⁷ This preliminary cartography is the aperture to an extended commitment to a more mature articulation of the *intellectus fidei* concerning God and the stranger.

The immigrant church is Christological declaration. We are the hybrid, mestizo, and multicultural church that understands experientially the incarnation. The incarnation is Jesus navigating his divine-human hybridity: he is both fully God and fully human. The immigrant Church understands that we often have to live in the in-betweenness of being American and being "other."¹⁸ We are always neither/nor and not both/and to those who do not understand the complexities of living in both worlds. We challenge both the Gnostic or Docetist's heresies that say you must be only one, the present manifestations of these heresies writ large is the homogenizing of the church without respect to its diversity. We celebrate Christ's incarnation and hybridity because it models for the Church what it ought to be living in and with the people while celebrating oneself.

This church is a theological-anthropological statement. It boldly declares that we are all *imago-Dei*. Since we as a people gathered from all over the earth are created in the image of God, we have worth and dignity. Our worth is not predicated on our place of birth, our native tongue, or our economic status. *Imago-Dei* says that God's imprint on humans is what gives them their worth independent of the color of their skin or on which side of any border they were born. *Imago-Dei* proclaims that God's image is reflected in multiple colors, languages, and cultures.

The immigrant church is an embodiment of the Trinitarian creed. Our God is a relational God. God's internal relationship is

the model for the church. In the words of the classic hymn, “God in three persons, blessed trinity.” The immigrant church declares that we don’t have to be one person to be one. In our ontological differences, our very personhood is not merged but rather accepted as co-equal. The life of the immigrant Church allows us to be Trinitarian not just in our creed but also in our deeds.

This church is a pneumatological confession. We believe that the Spirit that gathered all the regions of Asia Minor at Pentecost for the benefit of global mission is blowing still. The Holy Spirit is not subject to cultural preferences and a Social Darwinism that privileges one group over another. The Spirit allows us all to hear in our own language so that the Kingdom may be established. The Spirit challenges biases and parochialisms while celebrating culture and language. The pneumatological impulse of the church is that we are all immigrants led by the Spirit’s power and wisdom.

The immigrant church is an eschatological sign. In its paradox of respecting and resisting culture, it demonstrates God’s intent to work through and in life without being subsumed by it. In this sense, the mission of the immigrant church shares the impetus of pre-colonial evangelism that had the potential to engage pagan culture to empty it of its demonic meaning and to reload its symbols with the redemptive message of the Christian faith. Samuel Vassel puts it well:

The history of Christian evangelism before the colonial era was characterized by cultural sensitivity and the adaptation of the message to the receiver culture. This is demonstrated, for instance, in Christianity’s classical and persistent formulation of Christology in the form of Greek ideas which is epitomized in the ‘standard’ creeds such as the Chalcedonian formula. This formula is loaded with Greek categories of thought, because of the Greek ethos and mind set in which it was formed. . . . Christian faith adapted itself to the new environment and addressed the question of the new ethos and answered them in the form that the culture asked them.¹⁹

The immigrant church is able to respect the receiver culture, resist it in the new prophetic imagination that it brings, and be an agent of redemption and a model of recreation in the new culture. The Kingdom is already and not yet. Wherever and whenever we are consistent with God's plan for the whole human family, we catch and project glimpses of the eschaton. We are an eschatological sign as we seek to model the vision of Isaiah 11:6-9, where the wolf and the lamb dwell together. The immigrant church is a sign of the powerful emptying themselves and all partaking of God's shalom. We seek to form and reframe a new reality consistent with God's Kingdom. Dr. Vassel's insights once again clearly elucidate this historical-eschatological project:

Progress in Europe saw Christianity doing the same thing embracing and reloading pagan festivals . . . and in the process giving to the faith such important days as Christmas and Easter reloading them with their distinctive and definitive meanings. They were adopted from and adapted to cultures that celebrated these times in the year as central to their existence. Interpreting and responding to the culture's existential questions were roles that Christianity then sought sensitively to assume and this was done in terms of the Christian gospel.²⁰

Strangers No More

Victor Hugo, the famous French novelist, once wrote, "There is nothing so powerful as an idea whose time has come," this volume, *E Pluribus Unum: Challenges and Opportunities in Multicultural Ministry*, is a manifestation of that idea for the Global church. Anthologies that are predicated on the reality of immigrant experiences still need a hearing and should be continuously developed and broadened. Just as Reformed, Wesleyan, Liberation theologies have dominated much of the ecclesial and academic landscapes, the realities of globalization invite us to further investigate how we treat and understand the stranger or "other" in our midst. The 21st cen-

ture Church can ill afford to ignore the winds of demographic, culture, ethnic, and generational change. Indeed, Jesus was clear, the “wind blows wherever it pleases” (John 3:8), it is the task of the spiritually engaged church to seek to understand that blowing of the wind.

If journalist Thomas L. Friedman’s work *The World Is Flat*²¹ is correct, the forces of globalization need to be examined in light of the mission of the Global Church. How do we engage “strangers from different shores?” Emmanuel Levinas has accused much of Western thought to be afflicted with an “allergy to the other.” Perhaps the Global Church can provide an antidote by learning from the Emmaus paradigm of Luke 24. Initially, in our journeying together, we may not be recognizable or esteemed as stranger. Still, after we pray, open the Scriptures, and break bread together, our eyes can be opened and our hearts can burn within us. The stranger among us is the face of Jesus (Luke 24:32).

1 See Thomas J. Archdeacon, *Becoming American* (New York: The Free Press, 1983); John Bodnar, *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America* (Bloomington, IN.: Indiana University Press, 1985).

2 Manuel Ortiz, *One New People: Models for Developing a Multiethnic Church* (Downers Grove, IL.: Intervarsity Press, 1996), 29.

3 This is a my paraphrase of Harvie M. Conn, “Foreword” in, *One New People: Models for Developing a Multiethnic Church* by Manuel Ortiz (Downers Grove, IL.: Intervarsity Press, 1996), 9.

4 We will be using some words in their original language to convey the ethos of our realities. *Caminar con Jesús* translated is “walk with Jesus.”

5 Joan Moore, “The Social Fabric of the Hispanic Community since 1965” in, *Hispanic Catholic Culture in the U.S.: Issues and Concerns*, edited by Jay P. Dolan and Allan Figueroa Deck, S.J. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 9.

6 Much of this narrative is drawn from Gabriel Salguero, “Multicultural Ministry: A Vision of Multitude.” *Perspectivas: Occasional Papers*, Fall 2003, 83-91.

7 Bronx Bethany Church of the Nazarene, “Our History” at www.bronx-bethany.net.

8 We are using the term American with a major caveat. If you are born in Canada, Mexico, Latin America, or parts of the Caribbean you are American. We would rather use the word United Statesean from the Spanish *estadounidense*. This word for many is a neologism but is a more accurate description of the realities of the Western hemisphere.

- 9 Eldin Villafañe, *The Liberating Spirit; Toward an Hispanic American Pentecostal Social Ethic* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 102.
- 10 Ibid, 102-109.
- 11 Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Philadelphia, PA.: Fortress Press, 1978), 13.
- 12 Latin version of Matthew 3:3, " I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness."
- 13 Please see Walter Wink, *Naming The Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (Basingstoke, Marshall Pickering, 1984); *Unmasking The Powers: The Invisible Forces that Determine Human Existence*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986); *Engaging The Powers: Discernment and Resistance In A World of Domination* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1992).
- 14 Paul Tillich, *The Courage To Be*, 2nd Edition (New Haven, CT.:Yale University Press, 2000).
- 15 I am drawing heavily from Gabriel Salguero, *Joppa: A Shifting in Mission*. (Kansas City, MO: Church of the Nazarene Multicultural Ministries, 2006), Published sermon preached at Bronx Bethany Church of the Nazarene.
- 16 Samuel Carl W. Vassel, *Understanding and Addressing Male Absence from the Jamaican Church*, (D. Min Doctoral Dissertation, Columbia Theological Seminary/United Theological College, 1997), 54.
- 17 Eric H.F. Law, *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb: A Spirituality for the Leadership in a Multicultural Community* (St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 1993).
- 18 The term "other" has much significance we are indebted to Gabriella Lettini's Ph.D dissertation work at Union Theological Seminary on "Otherness.," see also. Levinas, Emmanuel. *Ethics and Infinity. Conversations with Philippe Nemo*, Translated by Richard A. Cohen. (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1985); Emmanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other*. Translated by Richard A. Cohen. (Pittsburgh, Duquesne University Press, 1987).
- 19 Samuel Carl W. Vassel, *Understanding and Addressing Male Absence from the Jamaican Church*, 55-56.
- 20 Ibid, 55-56. See also William Watty. *From Shore to Shore* (Kingston, Jamaica: Cedar Press 1981). 18-19.
- 21 Thomas L. Friedman, *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* (New York, N.Y.: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2005). While we understand Friedman's thesis that globalization is making the world more interconnected we do not necessarily share his thesis that the economic playing field is being leveled.



The History of the Black Church in America

By L. H. Whelchel, Jr.

I. White Religion Encounters Black Spirituality

The story of the African American Church began with the history of America itself. In 1495, three years after Christopher Columbus had stumbled upon America, he was asked by the Spanish government to return to the island of Hispaniola (present day Haiti and the Dominican Republic) to quell a revolt by the indigenous people of that island (people given the misnomer “Indians”), who opposed the European occupation of their land, the enslavement, rape and murder of their people, as well as the disregard for their welfare and beliefs. Columbus and his militia returned and engaged in an unmerciful massacre of these Native Americans. After observing the bloodbath, Bartholomew de Las Casas, a missionary to the native people of Haiti and later a Roman Catholic priest of the Dominican Order, lamented the brutality suffered by these people. His sympathy for Native Americans, along with the rapid depletion of the native population, led Las Casas to appeal to King Charles IV to desist from enslaving Native Americans and to enslave Africans instead. Charles was receptive to the request and gave permission for four thousand Africans to be sent to the West Indies colonies.¹ Africans were then captured and brought to the American colonies to clear the land, cultivate the plantation, and work in the mines. This marked the beginning of the horror of the Atlantic Triangular Slave Trade.

With the blessings of both the Roman Catholic Church and the civil authorities, all the major European powers of that time: Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, France and England

engaged in the Atlantic Slave Trade under the banner of Christianity. These nations attempted to justify their involvement in the slave trade on the grounds that Africans were uncivilized pagans, and that Christian nations had a special calling to bring the light of civilization and Christianity to Africa. The slave traders even attempted to invoke God's blessings upon their slave ships by giving them "holy" names including: Brotherhood, Charity, Gift of God, Morning Star, and Jesus.²

Africans were some of the earliest immigrants to arrive in America, but unlike European immigrants, they were not allowed to integrate the memory of their ancestors and native religious practices into their daily lives. Jon Butler, Yale University professor, has noted the contrasting treatment of Europeans and Africans transplanted into the new world:

Whatever the difficulty and anomalies of colonization, a broad range of religiously inclined Europeans—Puritans, Scottish, Presbyterians, Germans Lutherans, Dutch Reformed, Quakers and Jews—not only survived in America but often eventually prospered both individually and spiritually. But the rich religious systems of Akan, Ashanti, Dahoman, Ibo and Yoruba society—to name only some of the major sources of African religion in America – collapsed in the shattering cultural destructiveness of British slaveholding.³

The uniqueness of the African American religious experience is defined by the struggle to express the presence of God in the midst of unparalleled human degradation and suffering. Never before in the recorded history of the human race have so many people been so thoroughly and systematically deracinated, dehumanized, desocialized and separated from all rights or claims of birth. The horrors of chattel slavery in America lasted for more than two centuries. There is a direct correlation between the systematic natal separation from our ancestors and the self-destructive behaviors that African Americans now struggle with. The holocaust of slavery has left African Americans knowing less about their ancestors and exhibiting

less respect for their forebears as well as showing a diminished capacity to form strong families and communities as compared to other ethnic groups.

Africans Americans are the descendants of people who were enslaved, and who had no claim by birth or family to wealth or land or resources of any kind. They could not even claim a family name. To be born into chattel slavery as practiced in America meant exclusion from even simple acknowledgements of human dignity and respect of one's personhood. The "rite of separation" was carefully thought out and was systematically implemented in the following manner:

(1) *Dehumanization* (stripping away of the humanity) of African Americans began with the capture of blacks from their homeland. The process of dehumanization first of all involved stripping the Africans naked and chaining them together like animals, as they were herded into the holding areas where slave traders loaded their human cargo onto the slave ships. It was of the utmost importance to show these unfortunate captives that they were completely at the mercy of their captors. Brutal beatings and punishment for any real or imagined slight were common. In fact, Africans were often beaten on just the capricious whim of a white slaveholder. This type of treatment induced a psychological state of learned helplessness, as the Africans felt they would be abused no matter what they did. Those Africans who survived the sickening and perilous journey in the death ships across the Atlantic became black gold for the American slave market. Like horses or cows, they were put on the auction block and sold off to go into the rice swamps of South Carolina, the tobacco fields of Virginia, and the vast cotton plantations of Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana.

After the Revolutionary War, White southern politicians had the unmitigated gall to propose counting the slaves as part of the human population in order to increase their level of representation in Congress, even while they treated the slaves as mere animals. The northern politicians cried foul, but not

because they disagreed with the mistreatment of the blacks; they objected only because they did not want the Southerners to gain political power at their expense. So the politicians—these “Founding Fathers of Liberty”—compromised and decided that southern slaveholders could count three-fifths of the slave population when determining legislative representation. They thereby made the United States constitution recognize and legalize human bondage.

(2) *Depersonalization* and sexual exploitation of African Americans denied them the right to a personal dignity and self-worth. The slaves did not have the right to control their own bodies. Besides the frequent beatings, slaves were subject to arduous labor often with little consideration given to their physical well-being. They could be imposed upon physically or sexually at any time, and there was no legally recognized right of self-defense for slaves. Slaves were even sometimes ordered to injure or kill their own wives or one of their fellow slaves. Blacks were in America before the pilgrims and did more to build the material infrastructure of America than did any of the other early settlers. Blacks contributed under duress when not willingly to the abundance and wealth of this nation. Yet, black people were treated as nonentities. As Supreme Court Chief Justice Roger B. Taney put it in the Dred Scott Decision of 1857, “The black man has no rights which the white man is bound to respect . . .”⁴ The deracination (ruthless uprooting from Africa) and natal separation from our culture in Africa stripped blacks of the necessary foundation for easily forming psychologically well-integrated personal identities. The involuntary uprooting of Africans and the transporting of them to North and South America was the largest mass movement of a people from one continent to another in the history of the world. Africans were treated in America as nameless, worthless, valueless, meaningless, and powerless objects, but they were not useless. White Christian America used the bodies and minds of Africans to work for them, to care for them and their children, to take out their frustrations on, to play with, and to have sex with.

(3) Desocialization (disconnection from a sense of community) was a legally encoded set of procedures and prohibitions used to keep Blacks divided and weak as a people. Slaves could not identify with a homeland as the Italians did when they immigrated to this country and then called themselves Italian Americans. Blacks were not allowed to congregate and organize their communities and families in their own best interests. Blacks could not build homes, churches, and schools—the basic institutions of civil society. Those blacks, particularly black men, who resisted or who refused to be treated in an undignified manner were beaten, humiliated, and lynched. The white slave owners only wanted the blacks to be compliant slaves; they were not interested in having slaves to develop their minds, talents, or character.

Black people were forced to resort to various psychological coping mechanisms to deal with being repeatedly and randomly disrespected and mistreated. The attitudes and behaviors that evolved during that time afflict and affect our people even today. Many blacks developed unreliable work habits, as they did not see the use in working diligently to supply luxury and wealth for the very people who so frequently abused them. Men who had to watch their wives, mates, and children being abused, taken away, and sold developed an indifference and emotional detachment from their families. Black women learned not to use or depend on black men, as they were so often rendered powerless by prevailing circumstances. For centuries, black couples were deliberately separated, and the wives of black men were obliged to submit sexually to the white slave owners. African Americans had no custodial authority over their children, who inherited no claim or property from their parents.⁵ The institution of slavery taught mistrust between black women and black men, mistrust between house slaves and field slaves, and mistrust between light-skinned and darker-skinned blacks. Division and exploitation was the order of the day for the slaveholders. These actions of the enslavers have retarded the development of black commu-

nities and suppressed the strength of black families for the two generations since the end of slavery.

These attempts to eradicate the humanity, identity, culture, history and beliefs of Africans were designed to enhance and refine the control of the slaveholders over their slaves. White Christianity played a major role in implementing this physical, cultural, and spiritual holocaust. It is seldom recognized or acknowledged that the religious instruction offered to African Americans by white Christian denominations—Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Baptist and Methodist— contributed to the oppression of Black people. Furthermore, these religious institutions attempted to suppress the indigenous holiness and pietism that Africans brought with them to America. European Americans viewed African beliefs and practices, such as call-and-response, singing and preaching, spirit possessions, holy dancing, shouting, ancestor veneration and drumming, not only as expressions of a heathen religion that they could not tolerate, but also as vestiges of the African identity that they realized they must annihilate in order to effectively manage the black slave population.⁶

Western Christianity is deeply implicated in the atrocities perpetrated against Africans beginning with the Atlantic Triangular Slave Trade. From the very outset of the slave trade in the early sixteenth century, there was only slight opposition to the enslavement of Native Americans, and hardly any when it involved people from the African continent. Any opposition that may have existed was frequently muted by the proclamations that the slave trade was a means of converting heathens to Christianity. However, the religious rationale for controlling Africans was clearly in contradiction to the most cruel treatment they suffered at the hands of the Christian slave masters, and thus inevitably conflicts arose between theological doctrine and the pursuit of profit from human bondage. By converting and baptizing Africans, the colonial Christian slaveholders were compelled to consider the question of the slave's humanity. Also, there was a long standing English tradition that a baptized person, regardless of race or color, should be free.⁷

The established English custom prohibited one Christian from holding another in bondage, which had serious economic implications for the slaveholders. Many of these good, church-going, white Christian slaveholders were primarily interested in free African labor and only nominally concerned with the salvation of the enslaved souls, if at all. The colonial civil and religious establishment found itself with a vexing moral and economic dilemma: To deny conversion and the baptism of slaves would undermine the rationale for the slave trade. On the other hand, to support the manumission of slaves after they were converted and baptized would alienate the slaveholders and destroy their free labor force. Since colonial America was built on a slave economy and both the white church and white society benefited from slavery, the colonial establishment agreed that the conversion and baptism of slaves did not alter their status as slaves. In 1664, Maryland became the first colony to enact laws explicitly denying slaves freedom based on their conversion to Christianity. Without exception, the other colonies enacted laws confirming that the saving of Africans' souls did not extricate their bodies from the bondage of slavery.⁸ Thus, moral conviction was readily sacrificed on the altar of economic expediency.

What is most notable about Africans and their arrival into the new and hostile environment of America was their marvelous creativity and ability to adapt and survive. Slaves were reluctant to relinquish their indigenous culture and beliefs, but overtly they adhered to Western Christianity as a survival mechanism. In colonial America there were few Africans converted and baptized in white churches. The first known black Baptist was a lady named Quassey, who was converted, baptized, and formed a church in Newton, RI, in 1743. The first African American converted to Methodism was a slave named Anne Sweitzer, who formed the Sam's Creek Society in Maryland in 1764.⁹

While most African Americans did not actively resist American Christianity, the masses of blacks were not attracted

to Christianity for the following reasons: (1) most slaveholders appeared to have little interest in religion, except the kind of religion to promote docility and obedience to the master; (2) many slaveholders were reluctant to allow religious training of their slaves because this would negatively impact the productivity of their plantations; (3) the inability of slaves to speak and understand the English language was a major barrier to evangelizing ; and (4) even after Africans were becoming acculturated and learning the language, they continued to view American Christianity as unappealing and a white man's religion.¹⁰ Therefore, simultaneous to the slaves' open embrace of American Christianity, they also surreptitiously engaged in Pentecostal religious expressions more compatible with their African traditions and beliefs.

Slaves would gather secretly in remote swamps and thickets and worship away from the big house and the prying eyes of the overseer. These obscure flocks of worship, hidden from the eyesight of the slave master, were known as "invisible institutions." It was in these bush harbors that slaves vented their pent-up feelings of harm, sorrow, anger and supernatural joy in a spirit-filled manner. The slaves fortified their souls and reinvigorated their Pentecostal African spiritual roots through fiery preaching, holy dancing, fervent prayers, and soulful singing.¹¹

II. The First Great Awakening: The Dawn of African American Religious Expression (1720-1742)

For the first 150 years, the beliefs and practices slaves brought from Africa were systematically suppressed. And it was not until the First Great Awakening (1720-1742) that Blacks became excited about American Christianity. This was because while European Americans were exerting a dramatic and mostly destructive influence on the behavior of Africans, African spirituality with its exuberance for life despite the unhappiness of immediate circumstances, began to influence the minds, behavior, and religion of European Americans. More and more

Europeans became attracted to and began to embrace the pietistic and Pentecostal beliefs and practices Africans brought from their homeland.

Africans are seldom given credit for the tremendous impact they had on shaping the Great Awakening and Revivalism in America. The origin of pietism in Europe and colonial America in the 18th century came about as a negative response to the rationalism and orthodoxy of the 17th century. White Christians in Europe and America began to embrace more personal and less formal religious expressions. The German Lutheran pastors, Philip Spener (1635-1705) and Hermann Francke (1663-1727), took the lead in shaping European pietism, which spread to America. The pietistic practices stressed the importance of experiential religion, which was already deeply ingrained in traditional African religion and spirituality. One of the founders of European pietism said of his conversion experience, "Sadness and anxiety immediately left my heart. And I was suddenly overcome by a wave of joy, such that I praised and magnified God aloud, who had granted me such grace."¹² Also, John Wesley and the intercontinental Wesleyan movement embraced pietism and were influenced by African expressions.

The spiritual excitement of the Great Awakening played a major role in spurring the development and growth of the Black church in America. The worship modalities of shouting, religious dancing, and spirit possession embraced by many whites and blacks during the Great Awakening resonated with the African religious experience. The focus on lively music, call and response, hand clapping, demonstrative worship, and praise were popular then and remain so today in many African American Churches.

The spiritual fervor of the Great Awakening inspired White missionaries for the first time to offer religious training to African Americans. The religious training that these missionaries offered slaves commenced the intimate relationship between education and religion in the African American experience.

Through the conversion and education program offered by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, the missionary arm of the Anglican Church, slaves acquired a more in-depth and meaningful relationship with the religious establishment as well as the linguistic rudiments for literacy. In short, the conversion of slaves to Christianity during the Great Awakening created the impetus for the whole enterprise of African American educational advancement, which in turn helped to make it possible for Black Americans “to become readers and after passing out of slavery, they [would] have their own churches, bishops, colleges, and institutions.”¹³

The Pentecostal fervor of the Great Awakening crossed racial boundaries. The revivals and camp meetings attracted both blacks and whites. The need for salvation and deliverance from sin served as a common denominator for all races. Slaveholders and their slaves attended the same evangelistic services, and on occasion they were converted at the same revival meeting by the same fire and brimstone revivalist. Notable Great Awakening preachers such as George Whitefield, Robert Williams, and Samuel Davies welcomed the energy, enthusiasm, and irrepressible joy blacks contributed to the spiritual fervor of their evangelistic crusades. Many whites as well as African Americans had an insatiable hunger for spiritual and physical transformation. This was particularly true for poor whites, who were also frequently exploited and mistreated by the white social elites. For the most part, the first Great Awakening took place outside of the established church structure and in smaller and less formal Baptist and Methodist Churches.

III. The Second Great Awakening: The Rise of Independent Black Preachers and Churches (1780-1830)

In contrast to the First Great Awakening, which focused on the salvation of the individual, the Second Great Awakening (1780-1830) stressed the spiritual renewal and salvation of society. Beginning in the last two decades of the 18th century, the

Second Great Awakening contributed to the ongoing debate between those who supported slavery and those who opposed slavery. By the mid-19th century, all of the mainline denominations had divided over the issue of slavery.¹⁴

At the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, Christianity experienced unprecedented growth among African Americans. The denominations that benefited the most from the revivalism of the Second Great Awakening were the Baptists and Methodists. Slaves living on the plantations and in small towns often attended church with their masters. The spiritual fervor of the Great Awakening created a climate of openness, which gave rise to independent Black Churches and Preachers. For example, the oldest independent Black Churches are Gillfield Church of Petersburg, Virginia and the Silver Bluff Baptist Church of Silver Bluff, South Carolina. The formation of both of these churches predates the Revolutionary War. By 1779, a group of leaders and members of Silver Bluff Church migrated to Savannah, Georgia and founded the First African Baptist Church. In the early 1800s, independent Black Churches proliferated in and around Savannah. Before the Civil War, the vast majority of African Americans lived on the plantations, isolated from the influence of these fledgling urban independent churches. During slavery and prior to Emancipation, four types of slave churches existed simultaneously: 1) the “invisible” institution, in which slaves would gather secretly in remote swamps and thickets and sing, shout and pray in the old time way, away from the oppressive hand of the slaveholder; 2) the “mixed churches”, which were predominantly white, with a few slaves as members, who were assigned special seats in the back of the church or in the balcony, and of course the blacks were allowed no voice in church governance; 3) there were also separate churches with Black members under white supervision; 4) and a small number of Black churches under Black leadership. The level and type of Black participation in religious life was indicated by the social and political climate. For example, after the most celebrated slave revolts of

Gabriel Prosser, Nat Turner, and Denmark Vesey, white southerners tightened their control over religious activities by closing some churches and prohibiting blacks from preaching.

The soul stirring preaching and spirit-filled singing which accompanied the Great Awakening, inspired the mass conversion of slaveholders Hugh and Jonathan Bryan and the slaves on their plantations. The Bryan family was the largest slave owner in the state of South Carolina. The conversion of Hugh and Jonathan Bryan caused them to treat their slaves with somewhat more kindness and dignity. They also encouraged and supported religious and educational training for their slaves. As the Bryan Family was one of the most prominent families in South Carolina, their actions were bound to catch the attention of their peers. The more humane treatment they provided their slaves after conversion made the Bryan family unpopular with their neighboring slaveholders. The neighbors feared that less harsh treatment of the slaves might result in more independent behavior by the blacks. And in this they proved to be correct. The Bryan plantation was an incubator for the birth and development of the independent Black Church Movement. The religious training and freedom the Bryan Family provided for the blacks on their plantation, paved the way for the formations of independent Black congregations in Silver Bluff, South Carolina, as well as Savannah and Augusta, Georgia. The activities on the Bryan plantation eventually produced such pioneering Black preachers as David George, George Liele, Andrew Bryan, and Andrew Marshall. After the Revolutionary War, David George gained his freedom; he immigrated to Nova Scotia in 1782 and founded a Black Baptist Church in Shelburne. George Liele converted under David George and was a charter member of the Silver Bluff Church. He continued to nurture and cultivate the work started by David George. After the British lost the Revolutionary War, Liele fled Savannah for freedom in Jamaica. Liele took with him the spirit of the independent Black church movement, and he organized the First African Baptist Church of Kingston, Jamaica.¹⁵

IV. The Black Church Rises to the Occasion of the Civil War and Reconstruction (1830-1877)

The Independent Black Church both covertly and sometimes overtly opposed slavery, dehumanization, and discrimination as white racism was not limited to any one region of the country. Race matters affected all segment of American society. There was a national consensus among European Americans that African Americans were to be subjugated economically, politically and in the south physically, and they used the arguments of racial inferiority and white supremacy to justify slavery and subjugation. Many whites, mostly Northerners, were both antislavery and anti-Negro at the same time. They opposed the institution of slavery, but they also condemned the notion of social inequality for the Negro.

The Independent Black Church Movement was fully brought into manifestation by the social subjugation and the humiliation that African Americans experienced in Northern white churches. For the grievous offense of praying at the altar in St. George's Methodist Church, Richard Allen, Absalom James, Wilham White, and Doris Ginnings were pulled from their knees by white parishioners and removed from the church. Specifically, this inspired righteous indignation and moved Richard Allen to found the first African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) church in 1787, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Blacks in other Northern cities were experiencing injustices and racial animosity similar to those that Allen and his compatriots were encountering in Philadelphia. In response to racial harassment in Northern White churches, blacks from Philadelphia, Baltimore, and other communities who were subjugated to second-class citizenship in white churches met with Richard Allen at Bethel Church in Philadelphia to form the A.M.E. denomination in 1816.¹⁶

While the fledgling A.M.E. denomination was emerging in the City of Brotherly Love, 90 miles away in New York City the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (A.M.E.Z.) Church was being

born. The A.M.E.Z. denomination, which is now the second largest Black Methodist denomination, came into existence under a set of circumstances similar to that of the A.M.E. denomination. In 1796, Peter Williams, James Varick, George Collins, and Christopher Rush led African members out of the St. John Street Methodist Church in New York City in protest of the segregation and discrimination imposed on them by the white members. James Varick, who was elected as the first A.M.E.Z. bishop, petitioned Bishop Frances Asbury of the Methodist Episcopal Church to let them hold their own church meetings with their own Black preachers apart from the St. John Street Methodist Church. Their request was approved, and the A.M.E.Z. church began separate and independent worship services.¹⁷

The Christian Methodist Episcopal or C.M.E. (originally called Colored Methodist Episcopal) denomination, which is the youngest daughter of Black Methodist denominations, was born out of a different set of circumstances from the A.M.E. and A.M.E.Z. denominations. The C.M.E. church began in Jackson, Tennessee on December 16, 1870. The denomination was shaped on the anvil of Reconstruction politics in the south. In the aftermath of the Civil War, white church authorities had hoped to continue to maintain control over their Black parishioners and keep them in the fold. However, it soon became apparent that such direct control would not be possible as blacks abandoned white churches in droves. In order to maintain some influence with the emerging Black congregations, the Southern Methodist Church decided to nominally support the formation of the C.M.E. church. Such notables as historian John Hope Franklin and writer Alex Haley have roots in the C.M.E. denomination.¹⁸

Blacks in White Baptist Churches in Boston were also being marginalized because of their race. The Black Baptists in Boston organized the African Baptist Church in 1805 under the pastorate of Thomas Paul. Paul also helped to organize the Abyssinian Baptist Church in New York City in 1808. Under the dynamic leadership of Adam Clayton Power, Sr. and his son Adam Clayton Power, Jr., Abyssinian Baptist Church became

one of the largest and most influential Black Churches in the world. Black Baptists in Philadelphia organized the First African Baptist Church in Philadelphia under the leadership of the Reverend Henry Cunningham in 1809.¹⁹

The independent Black Church Movement became the cultural womb of the Black community. The church emerged as the only civic institution administered by African Americans in support of their own interests. The Black Church became the major platform for promoting the cause of freedom and liberation. Mays and Nicholson maintained, "Relatively early the church and particularly the independent Negro Church furnished the one and only organized field in which [the] slave's suppressed emotions could be released and opportunities for him to develop his own leadership."²⁰

From the unpretentious, invisible bush harbor, the Black Church has become the best representative and most vital social organ of the Black community. No other political, civic, or social institution has contributed to the progress of black people as much as the Black Church. C. Eric Lincoln, long considered the dean of African American scholarship, called the Black Church the institutional womb of the Black community. The Black Church necessarily organized itself to be multitasking and multifunctional. The church functions as a literary society, music conservatory, grapevine for gathering and disseminating information, a political training ground, a sacred order, an economic index, a matchmaking conclave and more.²¹

On the eve and during the Civil War (1861-1865), the Black religious leaders were engaged in the national debate about slavery and saving the union; leading Black ministers such as Henry McNeal Turner, Henry Highland Garnet, Samuel Cornish, Theodore Wright, and James W.C. Pennington, spoke out against the evils and injustices of slavery.²² As the War between the states loomed, these Black preachers persistently petitioned President Lincoln to sign the Emancipation Proclamation. After the first year of fighting, the Civil War was going badly for the Union Army. Lincoln needed a cause

greater than the political integrity of the Union to inspire the people. Issuing the Emancipation Proclamation would raise the cause of the Union Army to the level of a righteous crusade rather than simply a political police action. The circumstances almost dictated that President Lincoln sign a preliminary Emancipation on December 22, 1862, which threatened to free the slaves in the rebellious states, if they did not return to the Union by January 1, 1863. Lincoln was reluctant to enlist Black soldiers in the Union Army, but after a number of devastating defeats, President Lincoln relented and agreed to enlist Black soldiers in the Union Army.

The 100 days between September 22, 1862 and January 1, 1863 were punctuated with question marks of uncertainty and doubt of whether President Lincoln would actually carry out his threat to free the slaves. The Watch Night Service emerged as an event of great historical significance to the African American and American experience. The Watch Night Services were organized to be held on New Year's Eve of 1863, where Black abolitionists and their white supporters would meet to be steadfast in prayer as the midnight hour approached in hopes of influencing the mind of a wavering President. They were watching for liberty from physical and social bondage. On the evening of December 31, 1862, blacks and a small number of white abolitionists gathered in churches from Boston to Charleston anxiously awaiting the news of President Lincoln signing the Emancipation. Prominent Black abolitionist and religious leaders attended Watch Night Service at Tremont Temple Church in Boston awaiting news out of Washington. A few minutes before midnight, a man ran down the aisle of the Tremont Church screaming, "It's coming! It's on the wires!" and someone in the audience erupted with the shout "God may not always come when you want Him, but He is always on time!"²³ Thus, the tradition of Watch Night Services was begun. This is a tradition that is now annually celebrated by not only Black churches but White churches as well, although the meaning and historical significance has been obscured of late.

Nevertheless, it remains important that Black people and all Americans should be informed of the historical significance of Watch Night as the advent of freedom and the end of American slavery. (Watch Night Services in Black Churches may be held as a celebration of hope for the New Year, but if history and heritage have any meaning, then it should also be a commemoration of our deliverance from physical and spiritual bondage.)

After the Emancipation Proclamation, more than 200,000 African Americans joined the Union Army, and they played a decisive role in enabling the Union Army to win the war. In the early fall of 1864, General William T. Sherman of the Union Army began his triumphant march from Atlanta to Savannah, effectively crushing the hopes of the Confederacy. Along the way, Sherman liberated enslaved blacks and most importantly, Black congregations which had been appendages to white churches. The Black Zion Baptist Mission subordinated to the White First Baptist Church in Marietta, Georgia, was set free and became a striving independent Baptist Church. When General Sherman came to the city of Atlanta on November 15, 1864, he set fire to the city but a Black church, Big Bethel A.M.E. Church, founded in 1847, was one of the few buildings left unharmed. As Sherman continued his conquering march from Atlanta to the sea, he passed through Stone Mountain, where he delivered Bethesda Baptist Mission from white control and in their gratitude, this Black congregation had a section of Stone Mountain designated as Shermantown, in honor of the General. Along the way, east of Stone Mountain, Sherman liberated Bethlehem Baptist Mission, which had been under the control of a white congregation. The Reverend A. Williams, the maternal grandfather of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Reverend Joel King, the brother of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s father, both served as pastor of the Bethlehem Church. En route to Savannah, as many as 35,000 young black men deserted the slave plantation and joined General Sherman and the Union Army. After hearing about the great devastation left by Sherman in Atlanta and other places, the city of Savannah sur-

rendered to Sherman without a shot being fired as the Union Army arrived on the outskirts of that city on December 21, 1864. Charles Green, the most prominent businessman in Savannah offered Sherman his luxurious mansion to set up his headquarters.²⁴ A few weeks after Savannah surrendered, General Sherman arranged to meet with twenty Black pastors and religious leaders at his headquarters to discuss the implementation of emancipation. This historic meeting was held on January 12, 1865. After the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln, President Andrew Johnson succeeded him. The new president sent Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton to Savannah to join Sherman and the 20 religious leaders as they explored ways of implementing the Emancipation.

From the very outset of the meeting Sherman and Stanton were impressed with the decorum, intelligence, knowledge, and preparedness of these 20 Black leaders. Instead of all the leaders addressing the questions, they designated a single spokesman, Garrison Frazier, prior to the meeting. The Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton, asked the religious leaders: What manner do you think you can take care of yourselves and how can you best assist the government in maintaining your freedom? Frazier gave the following response: "The way we can best take care of ourselves is to have land, and turn it and till it by our own labor – that is, by the labor of women and children and old men and we can soon maintain ourselves and have something to spare. And to assist the government, the young men should enlist in the service of the government and serve in such manner as they may be wanted. We want to be placed on the land until we are able to buy it and make it our own."²⁵ Only a few days removed from slavery, these religious leaders realized that the ownership of land was the true key to independence and economic security. It is also impressive that these Black leaders did not come to the table with a welfare mentality. The Black religious leaders recognized the importance of family by requesting that the land be allocated to the head of household. They realized that the strength of a nation

begins in the home. The legend that every Black man is due his “forty acres and a mule” originated in the meeting with these 20 religious leaders.

This historic meeting had two important outcomes: first, President Johnson issued Field Order #15, which set aside the islands from Charleston southwards, including Beaufort, Hilton Head, Savannah, Fernandina, St. Augustine and Jacksonville to be settled by blacks, and whites were forbidden to settle on their land. The provisions of the order encouraged the building of strong families by requiring the land to be allocated to the heads of families. The focus on strong family values was initiated and supported by the Black religious leaders. Second, the meeting of these religious leaders with the government elevated the prominence of the Black Preacher and the Black Church in the eyes of the community and the government. From 1865 to the present time, the historic meeting of the 20 religious leaders established the Black Church as the institution to look to for leadership in times of crisis. Immediately following the Civil War, during the period of the Reconstruction (1865-1877), African Americans held more elected positions and exercised more political power than any other time in our history. Much of the Black political and social leadership during the period was nurtured, trained, and developed in the Black Church.²⁶

This Golden Age of Black social, political, and economic ascendancy was of a short duration. It ended with the Hayes-Tilden Compromise of 1877, when federal troops were withdrawn from the South and former white slave owners were allowed to reclaim the political and economic privileges they enjoyed before losing the war. The north won the Civil War, but it did not change the attitudes most southern whites had toward blacks. Southern whites continued to view their former slaves as less than human and ready tools for exploitation. W.E.B DuBois maintained the attitude of southern whites toward blacks after slavery in the Reconstruction period was no different from their attitudes during slavery, “They are

essentially property like books and candles.”²⁷ The central moral and spiritual problem of America after the Civil War, as before, was that African Americans continued to be exploited, subjugated, and dehumanized by those promoting a vicious doctrine of white supremacy. The stigma of enforced Black inferiority was no less pronounced. The Emancipation freed the blacks, but they were now free to do what? Freedom without food, shelter, or employment continued to leave blacks with a very precarious existence as they were still dependent on their white oppressors for their physical well-being.

V. The Black Church in the Twentieth Century: The Resurgence and Retreat of the Black Church

There were three significant developments through which the Black Church helped to shape the story of the 20th century: the first was the Great Migration of Blacks from the southern United States to the north, Midwest, and west. The second was the birth of the worldwide Pentecostal movement, which began on Azusa Street in Los Angeles. And the third was the Civil Rights Movement, during which the Black church reached the pinnacle of its influence and moral authority only to recede to a more conservative disposition after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The Black Exodus or Great Migration of Blacks from the south to the north and west took place between 1915 and 1960. Unlike the Jewish Exodus from Egypt, at the same time of their Emancipation, African Americans only had a partial exodus away from their oppressor, and that did not occur until more than 50 years after their legal emancipation. The conditions for the Great Migration were created after Emancipation, because there was no immediate exodus from the white oppressors at the end of slavery and the promised forty acres and a mule never materialized. Many blacks were motivated to migrate north, because living conditions for blacks in the south were obviously not improving in the foreseeable future. “The eman-

cipation freed the slave and ignored the Negro.”²⁸ The horror of slavery was replaced with the cruelty of legal segregation in 1896, which maintained cheap labor, peonage, sharecropping, deprivation of civil rights, poor schools, if any at all. This regime was enforced by mob lynching, disenfranchisement, and police brutality.

The possibility for improvement of these deplorable conditions was the primary psychological motivation, which moved blacks from the south to other regions of the United States. These migrants were essentially refugees in what was supposed to be their own country. They moved in search of better schools, better jobs, better housing, and better living conditions. African Americans by the hundreds fled from the south’s repression and sought out opportunities in the north to make a new start. “Every person, I don’t care who he is nor where he is, wants to see New York some day,” affirmed a South Carolinian migrant. The tales spreading through the south of the northern “promised land” were often exaggerated and at times outright lies. Still they enticed Black southerners who dreamed about a better life. “Don’t blame us for leaving,” begged one migrant. “We hear, ‘bout people in the north. Some have automobiles. Some have victorias.” Though few blacks in New York could afford such luxuries, the very possibility of a better life nevertheless enticed southern blacks to seek refuge in the northern cities away from the atrocities of the Jim Crow conditions in the South.²⁹

The new migrants from the south were often unwelcome in many of the established mainline northern churches. Many northern blacks had disdain for southern blacks. Northern blacks often did not want their churches to receive so many of these uncultured, unsophisticated, country folks with their vocal expression of spirituality. Many northern blacks did not want to be reminded of their southern roots, and they were embarrassed to have to associate with southern blacks in their churches. A northern postal worker in Chicago made the following comment about the worship decorum of southern

blacks, “No wonder white people laugh at colored people and their peculiar way of worship. I don’t believe in shouting. I just can’t appreciate clowning in any church.”³⁰ Such attitudes demonstrate that the mainline Black churches had become largely de-radicalized after the abrupt end of Reconstruction. Prior to the Civil War, the independent Black Church movement was primarily dedicated to the freedom of the people, resistance against oppression, and improvement of the social conditions of the race. However, after the collapse of hopes for Black political and economic empowerment with the tragic end of Reconstruction, many Black churches adopted a more conservative and accommodationist approach, including the acceptance of a mulatto elitist presence, as a way of adjusting to hostile environment of resurgent white oppression.

Due largely to mulatto elitism and classism (mulatto elitism is the bastard child of white racism and is as sinful and disdainful as its parent), the mainline northern Black churches, with a few scattered exceptions, declined to reach out to and address the needs of their brothers and sisters looking for a refuge and better opportunities in the North. Many mainline northern churches had degenerated into second-rate social clubs. During this era the Black church largely ignored the call and responsibility of discipleship. Instead of serving the needs of the new migrants from the south, these elitist bourgeois churches became self-serving “amusement centers” and arenas for recognition and status.³¹ The Abyssinian Baptist Church in New York City, under the pastorate of Adam Clayton Powell, Sr., was one of the few exceptions to the rule as they ministered to the needs of the poor. Adam Clayton Powell, Sr. and his son Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. addressed the needs of the new migrants by providing them with food, clothing, shelter, and employment.

After the mainline Black churches in the north failed to address the needs of the new arrivals from the south, storefronts, spiritual cults, and sects began to proliferate. The new arrivals congregated in storefront locations as they lacked the

resources to build stand-alone churches. These storefront churches addressed the spiritual needs of those who were not welcome in the formal mainline churches in the northern cities. The storefront or house church performed an important role during the great migrations, because it helped the rural southerners to adjust to urban life in the north.

The second great development of Black spiritual and religious aspirations in the 20th century was the emergence of modern Pentecostalism and Holiness. The classism and elitism of the established church, which made them ineffective in addressing the needs of the Black masses, paved the way for the proliferation of Pentecostalism. Also, new immigrants from the Caribbean brought a distinctly more race-conscious or Afrocentric form of religion into the urban churches. Pentecostalism is inherent in Black religion. It has African spiritual origins, which encourage faith healing, and which is often related to the root doctor and herbalist. The islanders brought more African retention to the Black religious experience in urban America. This was because the slavery experience of the Caribbean was somewhat less thorough at the desocialization process than was the case in America, mainly due to the greater ratio of Blacks to whites in the islands.

On January 1, 1901 Pentecost was visited on Agnes N. Ozman, a student at Bethel Bible College. Other students began speaking in a language that could not be understood. The school was for whites only. After, the school's founder Charles Parham, and other students received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, they began conducting a series of revivals in the midwest. Blacks were allowed to attend the revivals, but they were segregated to the rear of the meeting places. Nor were blacks permitted to pray and seek salvation at the altar together with whites.³² Nevertheless, the vigor and vitality of African spirituality prevailed on blacks to pursue a form of spiritual manifestation and worship that could more fully express what they knew was their heartfelt experience of God. The African American founder of Modern Pentecostalism in America,

William J. Seymour, studied briefly at Charles Parham's Bible School in Houston, Texas.³³ William Seymour (1870-1922) was born in Centerville, Louisiana. He had a hunger for education, but because of his impoverishment at that time, he had very little opportunity for formal training. Seymour worked as a waiter in restaurants in Indianapolis and moved to Cincinnati in 1900, where he came under the influence of Martin Knapp, the Methodist founder of the International Apostolic Holiness Union.

In 1905, evangelist William J. Seymour went to Jackson, Mississippi. There he met and worshipped with Charles P. Jones, a Black holiness preacher who became the founder and bishop of the Church of Christ (Holiness) U.S.A. Seymour was invited by the Reverend Mrs. Lucy Farrow, a Black pastor of the Holiness Church in Houston, to serve as the interim pastor of her congregation. Farrow was a disciple of Charles F. Parham who had been conducting successful revivals in Texas. Farrow was hired by Parham to care for his family and supervise his household, and she returned to Kansas as the governess of the Parham family.

In January of 1906, Seymour received a letter from Mrs. Neely Terry who was living in Los Angeles, California, inviting him to pastor a small congregation led by Mrs. Julia W. Hutchins. The fledgling congregation was meeting in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Richard Asbury, 214 North Bonnie Brae Street. Within a short period of time, the growth of fellowship dictated the need for a larger meeting place. Hutchins rented a building at 9th and Santa Fe Avenue. William Seymour accepted the invitation to pastor the congregation and at first he was warmly received; however, that changed when he began preaching holiness and divine healing. Seymour's unbridled preaching and teaching on the baptism of the Holy Ghost and speaking in tongues immediately shocked and dumbfounded the congregation. His preaching divided the congregation and left the people in an uproar. One Sunday evening when Pastor Seymour returned for service, the door of the mission had been

padlocked. Mrs. Hutchins, the founder of the mission, locked him out. Seymour continued to have some supporters, but now he was stranded with nowhere to go. Mr. and Mrs. Edward S. Lee opened their home to Seymour for refuge and worship. Those who embraced Seymour's teachings on holiness and speaking in tongues worshiped in the Lees' home.

On April 9, 1906, Seymour went to the Lees' home to pray for the healing of Mr. Lee. After Pastor Seymour prayed for Lee's healing, Lee asked Seymour to pray that he receive the Holy Ghost. Seymour prayed again and in a matter of minutes Lee became engulfed by the Spirit of God and he began speaking in tongues. Seymour had not been baptized with the Holy Spirit, but he continued preaching until April 12, 1906, and late in the evening, Seymour was baptized with the Holy Spirit. There was a tremendous sensation felt by all who were in that place that they were under the Pentecost and in one accord. Unlike before, they discovered that they were all working together as one body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God, and one Father.

Within one week following April 9th, the congregation was on fire, with many experiencing spiritual ecstasy and it was as though, "suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting." (Acts 2:2) The spirit ignited and excited the whole neighborhood and the residents began to attend the house meetings, until there was an overflow in the yard and the street. There was a demand for a larger facility, and the group learned of the availability of a building at 312 Azusa Street. They immediately made arrangements to rent the building. The First A.M.E. Church congregation built the two story frame edifice, but they had moved out in 1903. Later the building was converted into a livery stable and a storage facility. After volunteers and hired hands worked ardently to clean up the 40 feet by 60 feet livery stable, the building could accommodate 150 people. The new facility opened for worship the third week in April 1906.

Like the birth of Jesus in a stable, the Azusa Street revival marked the dawn of the renewal of the Baptism of the Holy Ghost bursting forth upon all flesh. Within days, the spirit-filled revival stirred all of Los Angeles. On Wednesday, April 18, 1906, *The Los Angeles Daily Times* published a front page story titled: *Weird Babel of Tongues . . .* subtitled, *New sect of fantasies is breaking loose, wild scene last night on Azusa Street. Gurgle of wordless talk by a sister.* The protracted revival was sustained for approximately 1000 days.³⁴ A world-wide proliferation of Pentecost to more than 50 nations on every continent can be traced to the outpouring of the Spirit at 312 Azusa Street, under the leadership of William J. Seymour, an African American. The Evangelical Christian or Charismatic movements that have been embraced by millions of people of all races have been greatly influenced by the Pentecostal expressions that stem from the Azusa Street Revival. The founding and formation of the Church of God in Christ by Charles Mason is another outgrowth from the Azusa Street revival. While attending the Azusa Street Revival in 1907 for five weeks, Elder Charles Mason, W. J. Jester, and D. J. Young were baptized with the Holy Ghost and fire, and they began to embrace speaking in tongues. In addition to presently being one of the fastest growing denominations in America, the Church of God in Christ (COGIC) is one of the major mainline denominations with an international presence that began with an African American legacy and a Black founder.³⁵

The third major expression of African American spirituality of the 20th century was the Civil Rights Movement and its outgrowth, the Black Power Movement. One of the unexpected results of the migration of blacks from the south in the 20th century was that it sparked the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement. Black people voted with their feet and engaged in a silent protest against lynching, Jim Crow discrimination, and disenfranchisement. The Black church and Black ministers were the heart and soul of the Civil Rights Movement. The successes achieved during the Civil Rights struggle were fruits of

the Herculean labors of Black preachers and the irrepressible faith of Black people that has not wavered since Africans first arrived in America. It has only been the faith and spirituality of Black people that has enabled them to survive insult, rejection, brutality, and mental anguish in America. All of the lawyers, union organizers, and militants together could not inspire the courage of the people so much as the Black preachers, telling them that they are children of God. Thus, it is no accident that the Civil Rights Movement formally began in the Black Church. By and large, the Civil Rights Movement was an extension of the church. The first plaintiff of 1954 in the *Brown vs. the Board of Education* case, which was the knock-out punch to legal segregation, was filed from Clarendon County, South Carolina, inspired by the Reverend Joseph A. DeLaine, who was an A.M.E. pastor and public school teacher. Also, the plaintiff for whom the historic class action is named, Linda Brown of Topeka, Kansas, is the daughter of Reverend Oliver Brown, an A.M.E. minister. Black church buildings and properties provided the meeting places; Black church choirs and musicians provided the rhythmic inspiration, and Black ministers provided the rhetoric and leadership for the Civil Rights Movement. The Black church was at in its finest hour during the Civil Rights Movement, praising God on Sunday and picketing injustice on Monday.

The most prominent Civil Rights Leader, Dr. Martin L. King, Jr., was a Baptist preacher. He was a 20th-century prophet, whose mission was to expose the evil of America and move America toward a more humane and just society. Dr. King was a man called by God and endowed with great charisma and a powerful speaking voice. Professor James H. Cone says it best, "Like no other black or white American (King) could set Black peoples' hearts on fire with the gospel of freedom in Christ which would make them willing to give all for the cause of Black humanity."³⁶ On the heels of the *Brown School* case, Rosa Parks ignited the Montgomery Bus Boycott. These crucial events fueled a Civil Rights display of marches

and sit-ins, which exposed the evils and hypocrisy of American democracy and Christianity. Martin L. King, Jr. marshaled a mass movement under the banner of Christian love and nonviolence to end legal segregation and discrimination based on skin color.

With the successes of the Civil Rights Movement in the '50s and '60s, with school desegregation and the Montgomery Bus Boycott, there was a significant paradigm shift in the psychological outlook of many African Americans. More and more blacks not only expressed their impatience with living as second-class citizens and tolerating the crumbs that fell from the master's table, but they also frequently began to reassess the value and meaning of European culture and white Christianity altogether. This ultimately led to the Black Power Movement and the emergence of more African American religious expressions outside of Christianity. Some members of the African American community took a radical position, maintaining that the race problem could not be resolved by integration, since that idea seemed to imply the loss of African ethnic and cultural identity. Hence, Stokely Carmichael's call for "Black Power" represented a shift in the thinking of many blacks toward the theme of racial liberation. This theme was articulated in theological terms by such notables as James A. Cone and Bishop Joseph H. Johnson, Jr. These two Black scholars were key figures in crafting a Black theology to complement Black Power. Cone and Johnson fashioned a theology emanating from the Black experience to address the quest for Black identity and celebrate the biblical themes focusing on "Jesus and the Disinherited" and "The God of the Oppressed."³⁷ In short, Black theology was conceived as the necessary conceptual framework by which Black minds could successfully disengage Black people from self-defeating white images and beliefs that frustrated the thrust for Black liberation. Black liberation theology fueled a wave of new Pentecostalism in mainline Black churches, and they also began to embrace a more demonstrative style of worship. There was also an upsurge in the growth

of nondenominational churches, as Black people no longer felt constrained by social customs that did not serve their needs. Many of the neo-Pentecostal churches were about breaking the bonds of cultural captivity, tradition, and renouncing a racist theology that systematically prohibited the appropriation of African beliefs and practices. Thus, to some degree the Black church had returned to its radical roots in the “invisible institution.” Many (though of course not all) Black churches in mainline denominations have rekindled the Holy Fire of Pentecost by incorporating such gifts as speaking in tongues, spirit possessions, shouting, dancing, and laying on of hands.

VI. The Mega Churches: A Current Development

At the turn of the 21st century, the Mega Church Movement had gained phenomenal popularity among African American churchgoers. Mega churches can be loosely defined as those with more than 3,000 regular attendees. These churches usually have numerous ministries and programs to meet their members’ needs, and they often meet in monumental edifices that aesthetically and spatially dominate their local neighborhoods. A number of Mega Churches have taken on the ambience of a spiritual shopping mall, becoming one stop shops for all social and spiritual needs. These churches are administered like large corporations, with the latest hi-tech facilities, electronic pulpits, and appendages such as full-time schools, bookstores, and real estate concerns.

The Mega Church Movement is evolving in two distinct trends. First, there are a number of traditional mainline churches experiencing spiritual awakening and phenomenal growth. These mainline churches have administrations which remain loyal to their denominations while adopting a more charismatic style of worship incorporating speaking in tongues, ecstatic experience, and laying on of hands. The second trend is of nondenominational (or newly formed denominational) Mega Churches usually founded and led by a charismatic figure.

These nondenominational churches also offer a Pentecostal style of worshiping, often breaking with many of the rituals and traditions of the Independent Black Church Movement, with some even eschewing the cause of social justice for an entrepreneurial prosperity gospel. Indeed, several of these churches purposefully bear little resemblance to African American Christian churches of the past. And despite having overwhelmingly Black congregations, they identify with the historical cause and struggle of blacks as little as possible. This break with tradition is in part a reaction to the unfortunate legacy of elitism, corruption, and rejection by some of the established mainline churches.

Conclusion

Students of history may look back at this new wave of revivalism, beginning with the outpouring of the spirit on Asuza Street, as the third Great Awakening in American Christianity. Today, in urban areas across America, the Pentecostal and revivalist style of worship, once popular in the rural south, has moved into college—educated, middle-class churches. The emotionalism that has traditionally been associated with anti - intellectualism is becoming more and more fashionable in white churches as well as Black churches. African American youth and young adults in particular have become more comfortable with their Africanism. Increasingly, African Americans are no longer striving to achieve whatever it means to be white. They have found that new freedom expressed in Black worship is rooted in Pentecostalism. It is a return to our African roots, which has been systematically suppressed by slavery and segregation, which was designed to make us anything but ourselves.

The unprecedented growth of the Mega Churches is both a challenge and an opportunity for the future of the Black church. The tremendous impact of Mega Churches will cause the Black church to reassess and redefine its role in society. However, the jury is still out on whether or not those churches that are cen-

tered on a single charismatic personality and that have little in the way of a coherent philosophy, tradition, ritual, or heritage, can survive over the long run. The white supremacy, economically exploitative nature of American society has not capitulated, although it has adjusted to a new post Civil Rights reality. Perhaps, with the reversals of fortune that are inevitable with time, some of the Mega Church ministries that have strayed away will find it necessary to return to the traditional social justice consciousness of the Black church, as outlined by the prophetic voice of Martin Luther King, Jr. The emergence of the politically reactionary Black ministers also reflects the ongoing tension in the African American mind between a desire to embrace the American materialistic ideal and to confront the ever-present racist actuality. Perhaps in time a new consensus will emerge in the Black church that embraces our unique history and heritage as the necessary platform from which to engage the larger American society with our material aspirations, our self-esteem and, our spiritual awareness fully integrated.

African people have a long and rich legacy of Pentecostalism, and there is a Black Presence at the beginning of Judaism, at the beginning of Christianity and in every book of the Bible. We may never know precisely what happened on the Day of Pentecost, but we do know that Africans were present when the Holy Spirit engulfed the church in a very special way. Our African ancestors were brought to America with the Holy Ghost fire shut up in their bones. They arrived on this continent already endowed with an astonishing capacity to commune with the spiritual world. They have maintained and expanded on this capacity even in the midst of the most degrading circumstances. From west and central Africa they brought a deeply embedded psychological sense that the person and community had an involvement in the spirit world that is commiserate with the practical affairs of daily life. Africans already understood that the whole earth was full of God's glory and that there was no rigid demarcation between

the sacred and the profane, the natural and supernatural.

African Americans were separated from Africa and forced to play a subservient role in the cultural and religious life in America, but through the Black church, they have carved out an essential home in a strange and often hostile land. It is a place where they can establish their African spiritual roots after more than three centuries of cultural separations. The Black Church is a spiritual place where African Americans can sing and pray in the old-time way. Through it all, slavery, humiliation, discrimination, and the resultant self-destructive behavior, which we see too often today in Black communities, Black churches were created to be a way out of no way, for a disinherited, yet somehow resilient people. The Black church has provided a basis for answering the age-old question, "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?" (Psalms 137:4)

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4 Mary Frances Berry and John W. Blassingame, *Long Memory: The Black Experience in America* (New York : Oxford University Press, 1982), 143.

5 Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Press, 1982), 39—51

6 Albert J. Rabateau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 4.

7 *Ibid.*, 152.

8 Archives of Maryland I; Proceedings and Acts of the General Assembly of Maryland, January 1637—September 1664 (Baltimore, Maryland Historical Society, 1883), 526 - 33.

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12 Justino L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985), 207.

13 Frank J. Klingberg, *An Appraisal of the Negro in South Carolina* (Philadelphia: Porcupine Press), 1975.

- 14 Winthrop S. Hudson and John Corrigan, *Religion in America* (Upper Saddle River, N.J. : Prentice Hall, 1999), 146 – 154.
- 15 The Reverend George Whitefield and the Bryans were noted for their success in bringing religion to the Negroes on the Bryan plantation. Some of their servants established the first churches in Savannah. Also the Bryans organized a school for Blacks on their plantation in Prince Williams Parish (Gerhard Spider, Low-Country Settler Helped Area Slaves, *The Beaufort Gazette*, 28 July 1991, sec. C, p. 7) and Carter G. Woodson, *The Negro Church* (Washington, D.C. : Associated Publishers, 1921), 41 – 44.
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- 17 For further study of the A.M.E.Z. Church, see: David H. Bradley, *A History of the A.M.E.Z. Church* (Nashville: Parthenon Press, 1970); William J. Walls, *The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church: Reality of the Black Church* (Charlotte, N.C. : A.M.E. Zion Publishing House, 1974).
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THE MULTICULTURAL CHURCH

Russell Begaye

Introduction

“So you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have been made like him. There is no longer Jew or gentile, slave or free, male or female. For you are all Christians – you are one in Christ Jesus. And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, and now all the promises God gave to him belong to you.” Galatians 3:26-29.

Biblical Basis

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”
Genesis 1:1

The basis of multicultural ministry can legitimately start where Scripture starts. God has displayed his creativity, not only in the creation of “the heavens and the earth”, but in ethnic diversity, in redeeming the world, and in building His church. In a “fast forward” way, we can see God’s plan through other key biblical passages.

“The Lord had said to Abram, ‘Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation . . . ; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing . . . and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.’” Genesis 12:1-3

To this man of faith who would go on a great pilgrimage, God unveiled a plan to reach the world. Through this one man who left his people, “all peoples on earth [would] be blessed”.

“Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and

of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age.’” Matthew 28:18-20

Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth. Jesus commanded his followers “to make disciples of all nations”. This key command echoes in different ways throughout the New Testament (Mk 16:15-16; Lk 24:46-49; Jn 20:21-22; Ac 1:8).

In *Let The Nations Be Glad!: The Supremacy of God in Missions*, John Piper declares, “God’s great goal in all history is to uphold and display the glory of his name for the enjoyment of his people from all the nations.” In step with “God’s great goal” described by Piper, the Lord has allowed world migration today to bring many different peoples to the major cities. In the major metropolitan areas around the globe, multicultural churches are microcosms that simultaneously reflect a fulfillment of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) and foreshadow the reality of heaven (Revelation 5:9-10; 7:9-10; 14:6-7; 15:4; 21:3).

The challenge of the Christian church then,

. . . is to witness in its own life and society a vision of life that transcends those barriers that divide persons from one another. Our baptism into Christ and our celebration of his presence at the Table mark us as people whose shared experience of grace is stronger than any dissimilarities among us. This is the vision of the church’s essential nature toward which we live, and thus it is the measure by which our life as church is judged. The embodiment of God’s reign in this community, the church, is meaningful precisely because it comprises the full diversity of peoples, cultures, traditions, races, and languages. Contrary to prevailing ways of defining people by a particular racial/ethnic identity, gender, language, and culture – that is to say, by the ways we differ from others – Christian faith communities are defined without a common language or racial and ethnic identity. We are tied together not by our own blood, but by Christ’s blood. (Page 103, *Color of Faith*, Fumitaka Matsuoka, United Church Press, Cleveland, Ohio; 1998.)

Definition

The multicultural community is a community of people who do not share a common history relating to each other. It is not a collection of esoteric, cultural nuances that have been transplanted from foreign countries. However, it is a new intelligentsia that reflects America's racial heterogeneity.

The Multicultural Person

A person that has either overcome or constantly keeps in check his interethnic animosities and attempts to build conversational bridges. This is a lifelong process that is constantly challenged from within and from without due to the complex, constant shifting of racial identities.

A person that understands that the world is more than just "me" because this notion leads only to distrust, opposition, and suspicion. Rather, the development of a broader worldview leads to establishing relationships that include sacrifice, durability, and responsibility.

A person that functions in multiple communities whether it has corresponding interests or goals. These communities can be homogenous or heterogeneous.

One segment of this population comes from those that belong to two or more racial groups. The population of this group has been listed by the 2000 U.S. Census as follows:

STATE	POPULATION*
Alabama	44,179
Alaska	34,146
Arizona	146,526
California	1,607,646
Colorado	122,187
Connecticut	74,848
Delaware	13,033
DC	13,446
Florida	376,315
Georgia	114,188
Hawaii	259,343

Idaho	25,609
Illinois	235,016
Indiana	75,672
Iowa	31,778
Kansas	56,496
Kentucky	42,443
Louisiana	48,265
Maine	12,647
Maryland	103,587
Massachusetts	146,005
Michigan	192,416
Minnesota	82,742
Missouri	82,061
Montana	15,730
Nebraska	23,953
Nevada	76,428
New Hampshire	13,214
New Mexico	66,327
New York	590,182
North Carolina	103,260
North Dakota	7,398
Ohio	157,885
Oklahoma	155,985
Oregon	104,745
Puerto Rico	158,415
Rhode Island	28,251
South Carolina	39,950
South Dakota	10,156
Utah	47,195
Vermont	7,335
Washington	213,519
West Virginia	15,788
Wyoming	8,883
TOTAL	5,785,193

Another segment of this population comes from those who have experienced interracial marriages. Presently, five percent

of all marriages are interracial. Two-thirds of Hispanics who attended or graduated from college marry outside their ethnic or racial group. One-third of Hispanics under the age of 35 are involved in an out-marriage. One-fifth of all married Asian women have a spouse of a different race or ethnicity. Thirty percent of Asians under the age of 24 are married to a spouse from a different racial group. Half of married Asians younger than 35 are married to someone of a different group. According to the Frey Data, this trend is evident among all racial groupings.

A larger segment of the multicultural population comes from those who have developed racial and cultural sensitivity. These people welcome societal changes stemming from the conglomeration of races and cultures. They represent 30% of the U.S. population.

States	US Population	Multicultural Pop
Alabama	4,447,100	1,334,130
Alaska	626,932	188,080
Arizona	5,130,632	1,539,190
Arkansas	2,673,400	802,020
California	33,871,648	10,161,494
Colorado	4,301,261	1,290,378
Connecticut	3,405,565	1,021,670
Delaware	783,600	235,080
DC	572,059	171,618
Florida	15,982,378	4,794,713
Georgia	8,186,453	2,455,936
Hawaii	1,211,537	363,461
Idaho	1,293,953	388,186
Illinois	12,419,293	3,725,788
Indiana	6,080,485	1,824,146
Iowa	2,926,324	877,897
Kansas	2,688,418	806,525
Kentucky	4,041,769	1,212,531
Louisiana	4,468,976	1,340,693
Maine	1,274,923	382,477
Maryland	5,296,486	1,588,946

Massachusetts	6,349,097	1,904,729
Michigan	9,938,444	2,981,533
Minnesota	4,919,479	1,475,844
Mississippi	2,844,658	853,397
Missouri	5,595,211	1,678,563
Montana	902,195	270,659
Nebraska	1,711,263	513,379
Nevada	1,998,257	599,477
New Hampshire	1,235,786	370,736
New Jersey	8,414,350	2,524,305
New Mexico	1,819,046	545,714
New York	18,976,457	5,692,937
North Carolina	8,049,313	2,414,794
North Dakota	642,200	192,660
Ohio	11,353,140	3,405,942
Oklahoma	3,450,654	1,035,196
Oregon	3,421,399	1,026,420
Pennsylvania	12,281,054	3,684,316
Rhode Island	1,048,319	314,496
South Carolina	4,012,012	1,203,604
South Dakota	754,844	226,453
Tennessee	5,689,283	1,706,785
Texas	20,851,820	6,255,546
Utah	2,233,169	669,951
Vermont	608,827	182,648
Virginia	7,078,515	2,123,555
Washington	5,894,121	1,768,236
West Virginia	1,808,344	542,503
Wisconsin	5,363,675	1,609,103
Wyoming	493,782	148,135
TOTAL	281,421,906	84,426,572

The Essence of A Multicultural Community

It is not a melting pot community as described by Israel Zangwill at the turn of the 20th century, when he wrote:

There she lies, the great melting pot—listen! Can't you hear the roaring and the bubbling? There gapes her mouth—the harbor where a thousand feeders come from the ends of the world to pour in their human freight. Ah, what a stirring and a seething! Celt and Latin, Slav and Teuton, Greek and Syrian, - black and yellow - east and west, north and south, the palm and the pine, the pole and the equator, the crescent and the cross - how the Great Alchemist melts and fuses them with his purging flame! Here shall they all unite to build the Republic of Man and the Kingdom of God. Peace, peace to all you unborn millions, fated to fill this giant continent.

This definitive ideology has long been rejected by the myriad of races that have made America their home. These multicultural communities have not assimilated but rather have built a mosaic harmony of different races and cultures. The vision of the melting pot was rooted in the desire to control but the new multicultural vision is rooted in a harmony of co-existence.

The new concept envisions people differing in race, culture, gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity living side by side. People overcoming their biases living side by side with differing worldviews, which are often oppositional and adversarial because of painful experiences both past and present. Building of trust that keeps their community from being torn apart across the lines of difference, particularly racial and class lines. These people are challenged daily to regain the “absence of conversation, a loss of speech that engages people in relationships” (The Spiritual Pain of Interracial Environment).

Therefore, a multicultural community is one in which political and social interracial realities have been established dealing with the ingathering of racial groups and powerful economic and ecological forces that demand integration and uniformity.

What is a multicultural church?

The multicultural church is a new vision for the Church of

Jesus Christ. The new vision is shaped by its spiritual convictions that shape its worldview and commitments and not by any social or programmatic concerns. It becomes an agent of God that moves from the loss of speech across lines of difference and alienation to a serious, covenantal conversation that fosters the root form of human relatedness: *koinonia*. It is not silent on the issues of conversation, communication, and communion.

It is unlike the monocultural church, which often presents itself as the framework for the identity of the race it supports. These churches serve as a cohering center of their racial identities and histories. Self-respect and racial pride are nurtured here. It is a haven for singular racial groups in the midst of a hostile and distrustful society. This is where the members express themselves verbally and nonverbally without the fear of being misunderstood and rejected. Shared racial and cultural values are implicit in relationship and interaction, and it is through these that the church fosters and maintains the racial identity of the people.

The expression of the fruit of the Spirit becomes the determinant factor that creates one's status in the multicultural church and not his or her race, income, or educational achievements. This basic expression of the Christian faith leads members to relate to one another by encouraging mutual "reliability, intelligibility, and interdependence" that go beyond the captivity of the binary, adversarial, and oppositional discourse of human relationships.

The reliability of the multicultural church develops a cohesive body of believers that learns to accept differing perceptions of reality expressed by individual ethnic members: a reality that has been shaped by position, experiences, emotions, and needs, with variations in time, place, and situation. This reliability encourages accepting the argument that one viewpoint from one position is as valid as another observed from a different angle. These differing views are accepted unless the issue is clearly delineated in scripture.

A church that builds its foundation with a multicultural agenda unites believers based not on their differences but on the beauty and objective of God creating varied cultures, languages, and races. This agenda leads the church to become the soul of peoplehood for the community or the embodiment of humanity for Christians. As such, the ethnic identities of its members become inseparable from the church's identity or the body of Christ.

This church knows how to celebrate the culture of individual races without leading those groups towards racial alienation and animosity. It becomes more than the ingathering of individual ethnics that might have been ostracized by their homogenous racial groups. Conversely, it becomes a group of individuals who desire to build a community based on Christian values and a Christian agenda.

Ultimately, the multicultural church is a church whose members relate to one another, not on the basis of their differences, but on a new vision of community building, which is based on the perception of the coming Kingdom of God. The differences and similarities of people create a profound synergy that leads to church growth and multiplication. It is a church that creates a powerful and convincing vision that moves hearts, creates communities, and generates new and powerful subcultures with shared values, common processes of evaluation, and regularities of behavior.

Many people are falling through the cracks of existing churches. In an increasingly multicultural, urban society, diverse groups do not fit into the traditional categories of churches.

- Inter-racial couples and families
- Ethnic people who prefer speaking English
- Urban and suburban people in major metropolitan areas who appreciate living, working, and ministering in the midst of ethnic diversity
- Ethnics who are caught between two worlds and find they do not belong to either one.

Let's consider the perspective of one such group. In *Inside the Soul of a New Generation*, Tim Celek and Dieter Zander speak to how Generation X sees God and the church: Busters are not resistant to spiritual matters. They're not resistant to the concept of God. But they view the church as being **separatist, segregated**, institutional, irrelevant, judgmental, holier-than-thou, controlling, and authoritarian. And to some degree, they're right.

The irony is that the impression some people have of church is not what God calls us to be. The people of God are not to be barrier builders, but barrier breakers through Jesus who makes us one (Eph. 2:14-15, 19). In the face of negative church perceptions, a multicultural church can serve as a gracious apologetic to the unbelieving world.

The Multicultural Church Culture

The culture of the multicultural church is best understood by contrasting this new communal society with the established monocultural church. The following is a general listing of these contrasting characteristics:

The Monocultural Church

A place where ethnocentricity is viewed as a haven for the cultural expression of a particular ethnic group.

Where an appreciation of all races becomes the efforts of a singular group towards all people groups.

Members have an appreciation for the variety of skin colors that exist in a singular group.

The Multicultural Church

A place where ethnocentricity is viewed as an exclusivity of a particular ethnic group whose desire is to segregate.

Where a genuine appreciation of race and culture does not preclude the appreciation of others.

Members have an appreciation of their own skin color accompanied by their appreciation of other skin colors as well.

From the singular ethnic group the Anglo is seen as the dominant group or the centrality upon which all races are judged.

From the multicultural viewpoint the white skin is a colored skin. In this sense, Anglo-American members are seen only as one of many ethnic members.

The beautiful mosaic of the church is based on generational and specific cultural nuances of their subgroups.

To be a member of a multicultural church means to be part of a whole, an indispensable section of a beautiful mosaic.

A church that expresses its peculiar ethnic characteristics as each new member adds strength to the cultural of the singular group.

A church that allows Asians to be Asians and Native Americans to be Native Americans. Every member brings his or her ethnicity to the whole.

Acknowledges old enemies by praying for their salvation and views them as a foreign mission field.

Turns old enemies into friends by showing mercy rather than condemnation and being committed to reconciliation.

Reconciliation is often based on the conviction that we have been wronged as a people group.

Reconciliation is based upon the faith conviction that we are all created by God for His purpose. It is based on the power of grace.

Readily sees worth in their singular group members.

Recognizes worth in other people in spite of any historical schisms.

Desires forgiveness from others with the hope it will lead to greater acceptance and the

Ability to acknowledge and receive forgiveness from others with deep appreciation

right to participate in the dominant society.

which leads to a reconciled, just, and harmonious relationship among diverse groups of people.

Understands the basis upon which a singular people group comes together to fulfill their spiritual needs.

Understands the basis upon which the church consists of a varied people adhering to one faith that is used to fulfill expectations of the racial, cultural, social, and spiritual nature of each person.

Has a vision for relating to each other first before building bridges with other ethnic groups.

Has a vision for mutual reliability, intelligibility, and interdependence.

A community connected by the power of the gospel working in a singular people group.

A community connected by the power of the gospel working in the midst of a multifarious racial and cultural group.

Concern more with understanding others rather than breaking down walls with the purpose of eliminating hostilities.

Continuously breaks down the walls of hostility, no matter how painful and difficult it may be.

Provides a platform for members to share insights, wisdom, and pain for their singular church.

Provides a platform for all people to share their insights, wisdom, and pain for the realization of the whole of church.

A singular community coming together.

Communities united by the power of Jesus Christ who brings all humanity together.

The spiritual dimension of the church incorporates its cultural distinctiveness.

The spiritual dimension of the church mixes with its cultural diversity.

Expresses unlegislated behavior within the church that is not experienced without.

Unlegislated or enforced behavior in a multiracial setting.

Committed to one group building a working relationship with another similar or dissimilar people group.

Committed to the possibility of new, mutual, reciprocating exchanges, each dependent on the other.

Recognizes the reality of starting new monocultural churches.

Recognizes that there cannot be a tensionless transition from the old segregated religious establishment to a new vision of a multicultural church.

Worship becomes the force that binds the singular group into a unit.

Worship becomes a powerful expression of the tenacity of the members to bringing down the walls of division and hostility.

The Multicultural Challenge

New multicultural churches are needed in the cities or sprawling metropolitan areas. In the late 1800's, D.L. Moody stated, "Reach the big cities and you reach the nation." Now, Moody's statement could be adapted, "Reach the big cities and you reach the world."

In *A Theology as Big as The City*, Ray Bakke cites the incredible urban growth in the last 100 years, "The spectacular growth of large cities on this planet represents an awesome challenge to the church of Jesus Christ on all six continents. In 1900, 8 percent of the world's population lived in cities. By the

year 2000, that number will be nearly 50 percent.”

As believers, the “GO” part of the Great Commission command is still in force. However, we are now also responsible before God on another level. The very people to whom we once would have needed to “go” many miles in order to reach, have come to us, and they are changing the face of urban America.

In *The Urban Christian: Effective Ministry in Today’s Urban World*, Ray Bakke described the heart of multicultural urban ministry:

When I began to look seriously at the problems of cities, I realized that the Lord is doing something very unusual in this generation. He seems to be shaking up the world. ‘Go and make disciples of all nations.’ We know where all the nations are—in the big cities. God has brought all the nations here—to wherever your big city is.

What have been principle receiving areas in the United States? The list would include but is not limited to: Los Angeles, New York, Miami, Chicago, San Francisco, Washington D.C., Anaheim, Houston, San Diego, and Boston.

All segments of Christianity (denominations, church planters, pastors, etc.) face considerable challenges as they begin dealing with the issues of establishing a multicultural church. Some of these challenges are:

1. To seriously explore the essence of race and its relationship to the coherence of the body of Christ.
2. Continually being aware of ways in which power is used, held, and relinquished in the racially pluralistic community, and how it impacts the church.
3. Intentionally moving the body of Christ from a historic enduring culture of opposition and separation to community building.
4. Not covering over the violence, hurt, and pain experienced by people with “good causes,” conservative moralism, or pious romanticism.
5. Building bridges between racial groups whose ethnic identities are infused with shared history and often

painful events, perceptions, and group allegiances that often result in the investment of their own racial and ethnic identities.

6. The ability to acknowledge the existing estrangement among certain racial groups, self-defined or historically imposed, to prevent the rise of racial essentialism and a desire to provide an alternative expression of communal life.
7. Working with churches and denominations whose very fabric is woven with racism and segregationism.
8. Guarding against the continuing perpetuation of racism stemming from racially and ethnically formed churches. Particularly churches that exist so their memberships could have full access to peoplehood not accorded by the dominant religious society; to confront the apostasy of the dominant religious establishment's racism; and to control their own groups' destinies.

CONCLUSION

The multicultural church is a unique instrument of God that could provide a new vision for the body of Christ, since it has the vantage point of seeing ethnicity as a creation of God and not through the myopia of racial and cultural superiority. The segregated church is incapable of providing this leadership since one of its main functions is to protect the mores of its own membership.

Therefore, the establishment of multicultural churches should be aggressively sought, so a new peoplehood may emerge that will reflect the vision of the Kingdom of God. The emergence of this new peoplehood will help reshape the historically dominant religious establishment. This process will require unusual tenacity, because it will be received with resistance, hostility, and suspicion.

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Signs of Pentecost and Heaven

Tom Nees

In a 1999 address to the Nazarene Theological Seminary chapel, I reflected on the prospects of an inclusive church in a multicultural society, suggesting that unless local churches and denominational centers look more like our increasingly diverse society they risk becoming isolated, culturally specific, religious communities in a multicultural world.

Since then, in October 2006, the US population reached 300 million, growing at one percent or three million annually, equal to a city the size of Chicago every year. Immigration and high birth rates among immigrant and minority groups is fueling the growth. US population will reach 400 million by mid-century. Canada's 33 million population is growing at a similar rate with even more diversity. There is no one majority group in the total population of the 100 largest US cities as the country becomes more urban and culturally diverse.

At the same time, we are told that church attendance in America is declining. Less than 20% of Americans attend church on a given Sunday or weekend. Even though most Americans say they believe in God they are not attending church like they used to.

As America struggles to find its new multicultural identity with no dominant culture, could it be that the health and growth of churches depends on how much they look like our neighborhoods, shopping malls, airports and schools?

There are new signs of hope. Minority leaders are increasingly respected and followed by the general population. In the church world, many congregations are successfully expanding their membership and mission beyond their own racial or language group.

Since more than half of the 1,000-plus new Nazarene churches in the past decade have been started among minority, immigrant groups, there are more minority leaders available for denominational leadership positions. Increasingly, numbers of minorities have been elected to district advisory boards and have been appointed to district leadership assignments. However, the increasing number of minority churches adds to worship segregation. Minority churches are safe places where many people gather in culturally specific enclaves, removed from work, school and other places where they are forced to adapt to the dominant culture. English-speaking, white churches remain the one place where people in the dominant culture are not threatened by their loss of identity.

It's not clear which are most viable - culturally specific or culturally blended congregations. Trends outside the church have much to say about what works best inside the church. All kinds of churches are needed to respond to the ways people choose to come to faith and discipleship, and which churches they choose to attend.

The criteria by which all churches can be evaluated as authentic communities of Christian faith is the degree to which they use culture as a barrier or a bridge to the Gospel. An authentic Christian community will never use its culture, either intentionally or unintentionally, to exclude others. The work of a missionary church is always to cross racial, language, cultural and belief barriers to announce the Good News and build a church that welcomes all God's children. There are times when churches need to challenge rather than mirror society. As people come to faith and discipleship, they are introduced to a new community and, however imperfect, a sign of God's kingdom present and coming.

The memory and experience of Pentecost, when the Spirit of God infused a crowd made up of people from many countries, provides the spiritual foundation of this new community. Pentecost is a sign of God's inclusive church - already and not yet. To pray for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heav-

en is to begin now to incarnate the hope of heaven where all the tribes of earth are gathered around the Risen Lord. In the occasional denominational event with people from many different congregations, languages, races, and cultures, we are often reminded that such inclusive gatherings are a foretaste of heaven – better get used to it. There are a few congregations where the Pentecostal promise and heavenly vision are being lived out even now.

Recently I saw these signs of Pentecost and heaven in two new, growing multiracial congregations: one in Fort Worth, Texas and the other in Kansas City, Kansas. Each has grown to about same size with worship attendance around 400, including an equal number of African Americans and whites and a few others. After visiting these churches I talked with founding pastors Cory Jones (white) from Crossroads Tabernacle Church of the Nazarene in Fort Worth, and Dorzell King (African American) at the Risen Lamb International Church of the Nazarene in Kansas City about their inclusive, multiracial congregations.

Conversation with Cory Jones

How did your vision for a multicultural church develop for you?

I was a youth pastor in Evansville, Indiana—but my calling was pastoral ministry. My wife and I felt extremely uncomfortable in a traditional, predominately Anglo church. Beth was directing an inner-city program for homeless women in Evansville. Even then as youth pastors we both felt a real call to people that had no chance. When I was getting my masters at Southern Methodist University—the process began as we planted the church that we now are. We were in the suburbs – but there, God changed our plans.

How old is the Crossroads congregation?

It started in '96 as a suburban, small group. The Lord spoke to Beth and me at the same time. It was the preparation of seeing my dad's ministry when I was in Nacogdoches, Texas - seeing his

heart for people who were different from us—that’s formative for me. In our apartment one day Beth invited me to listen to the 700 Club—the story of Calvin Hunt—how in New York he was hooked on crack—how the church began to pray.

We asked our small group to change directions with us. We shared with them the story—what God did through Calvin Hunt—what we believed God wants to do with us.

When did you come to this building?

In March 1996, with about 25 people. There were about three families left in this congregation—the Meadowbrook Church of the Nazarene.

What was the neighborhood like back then?

There were \$90,000 homes across the street from the church—seemingly a middle-class neighborhood—but then as you drive around you see a bunch of inner-city teens walking around everywhere without any supervision—inner-city housing—around the church—you hear about a train track dividing the suburbs from the inner-city—we thought we were right on it. We weren’t on either side we were right in the middle—on the train tracks. We noticed a tremendous number of African-Americans in the apartments and in the homes 5 minutes away.

This was a divine appointment—God thinking for us ahead of us really—drawing us toward people of color—plus people who seem to be unable to help themselves with issues like drugs and those kinds of things.

And so here we were needing someplace to go—not wanting to be in a suburb anymore and here was a parsonage and a building. At first we didn’t notice how closely God set us in the middle of what He wanted us to be a part of. Here it all was—right here.

After ten years the congregation is a fascinating mix of middle to upper-middle class whites who are committed to ministry to that neighborhood with all of its problems. How did that happen?

The white families that stayed with us are here because I came. I didn't have to win them to this. They believed in Beth and me – and in the vision. God spoke to Beth and me early on to reach out and love those who couldn't give a thing to our church and with that we believed God's promise to bring people of means because they'll see what I'm able to do. When white, upwardly mobile families come, they at first may be uncomfortable with the mix, but they're amazed at the miracles, at what God is doing in the people's lives. They're seeing God doing something in people's lives that they've never seen anyone else be able to do. No social agency—no program. Here are people that society doesn't seem to have any solutions for, and the Lord Himself does.

Are the people in your congregation unique or do you think that there are more upwardly-mobile white families in America who want to join racially and economically mixed congregations?

I think so. I remember hearing Jim Cymbala say that the Lord had put it on his heart – that if he would reach people in Brooklyn the Lord would send lawyers, doctors – people of means just to come and see the amazing miracles of what God can do.

I noticed that you have prosperous black people as well.

Jesus was led to the needy and the hurting – yet people like the rich young ruler would come to Him – because of the things they saw Him do. And I really believe that's the situation – people come because they're seeing something God's doing that's unexplainable.

Is your target audience the marginalized?

In the first ten years exclusively we targeted the marginalized.

What about now?

I would say that we continue who we were. We don't have any systematic plan to reach so-called upwardly-mobile people. We just keep reaching who walks through the door. One significant outreach was to the homeless last month.

Most of what we hear would indicate that interracial, economically diverse congregations experience some level of tension. Has that been your experience at Crossroads Tabernacle?

It's amazing—the honest truth is there seems to be very little, if any disunity or dissention among us.

Do you address racial or economic issues directly?

In ten years, I've only had to deal with one issue with racial implications.

Do you preach about it?

No. I don't ever preach about inclusiveness or being multicultural.

What do you say to pastors with churches surrounded by multicultural neighborhoods?

Well—the kids are the easiest to reach. If you want to reach people—just go out and reach their children. For the first few years the middle-class white families in the area would have nothing to do with us. I saw the BMWs pull into the lot and drive off. If you trying to reach a race other than your own you're not going to reach the adults because they're going to observe and watch you for a number of years. The ones who are most reachable are children and youth.

You need at least a core group of people who believe in what you're doing. To me it doesn't matter what color they are. It's a commitment to a call—it forced me to my knees and there I discovered that the real power is in prayer. That is the only answer I can give you for the racial harmony – is prayer.

Who are you trying to reach?

I recently baptized a black woman from a very bad neighborhood. She represents a target audience for us—African Americans who have simply stopped going to church—and are out there. They will tell you that they go to their mother's church or their family's church but for all intents and purposes they've quit going. They probably are in their '30's and they have 3 or 4 reasons why they quit going. Whatever those reasons are this

place seems to overcome those objections. We're reaching a group of people who have faith and have background in faith but just don't go to church.

Several of your people mentioned the importance of the Tuesday night prayer meeting. What goes on there?

It is truly a prayer meeting. It's a two hour prayer meeting. We spend a good hour or more in different kinds of prayer. We'll enter with praise—there's no opening—people just come in and stand and just begin praising Him. Then we'll go into some worship time and then we "enter in"—we call it "entering in"—different people lead out in prayer—for the next 45 minutes we'll lift up needs that are concerning us. We may break into small prayer groups—or there may be some specific people who need prayer—and then I'll share a word of instruction or encouragement or correction—whatever the Lord leads me to do.

All of our body life is on Tuesday—baptisms, communion every month. Our people say that the Tuesday night prayer meeting is the only thing that turned the corner for us. Tuesday night is one of the most important services of our week.

How do keep encouraged?

God has to do something life-altering—a burning bush for the pastor. Oliver Phillips told me that I'm trying to plant the hardest possible kind of church. He said that most white people won't want this—most black people won't want this. Then Larry Lott told me that black people are going to watch you for five or six years before they ever start coming. And it was right at five years that they began attending.

A while back I flew to Brooklyn ready to quit—it was in a Tuesday night prayer meeting at Cymbala's church that God showed me how this was going to work down here. And now Calvin and Miriam Hunt have come here about seven times now—have become spiritual mom and dad to our church. Along the way they helped me understand how to do this – because I had no model for it.

Conversation with Dorzell King

When did you begin the Risen Lamb church?

We started in March 2003 with a launch service. It was sort of a parachute situation—in that we didn't have a lot of time for core group building—I had about two months of prayer meetings once a week with a group of five to eight people—and then I took two months off to get married.

How did you happen to be in this building?

The members of the Metropolitan felt that they had come to the place that it was time to dissolve as a church but they wanted to pass the property on to another ministry—the pastor of the church contacted me. The building where we started became the site of another new church—we gave the keys to a Spanish speaking congregation—they're thriving—they were blessed as well.

When we opened at this new location we added the word International to emphasize our vision—our heart to strive for a multi-demographic ministry—we thought that that brought it home—to add that word.

How many people attend now?

About 400 people in our two worship services.

That includes about an equal number of black and white people.

Right—that's our two main groups. But as we continue we really want to pull in more Hispanics—particularly the inter-married families.

What in your calling inspired you to be intentionally multicultural?

I'm not sure that was always in my head—but I think at some point—when I was in high school—the people that would come out to hear me preach—I observed the impact of seeing different kinds of people worshiping together—I became aware of the prejudice in black churches as well as white churches—I grew up in a multicultural church with a white pastor—I didn't realize the impact it was making on me to be in a church with different kinds of people. It wasn't until about a year ago that I began

to realize that my vision of the church was shaped by my experience as a child.

When you were a child did this seem different to you?

It was not. For me it was normal to go to church with lots of different people—to be in a children’s program with white and Hispanic children—and after leaving that and being in an all-white or all-black context I began to revisit that vision. I was brought up in a blended church. I realized that the Lord was able to bring different types of people together with the ministry that He had given me—I knew then that was the direction we needed to go.

Your church is in a semi-rural area where most people have to commute. To what degree are the people here because it is inter-racial?

For most of them a part of the experience here is worshipping in this context. We have a number of bi-racial couples, bi-racial children. It seems to me that there is a need for this—they have a hard time finding a church where no one feels alienated.

Other than the bi-racial couples do black and white people socialize?

They do. We do things to encourage that. We have fellowship dinners for the whole church after services. We have women’s and men’s ministries to provide opportunity to connect other than Sunday morning. You don’t see black families who have a hard time hanging out with white families or visa versa—there isn’t that challenge here. Once you come and have an encounter with the Holy Spirit, something becomes more important than that. It’s almost like you look up and see—oh there are a lot of white people here or there are a lot of black people here. You notice that later. And then when you do notice it you say—oh, I feel so good and comfortable here.

What is unique about Risen Lamb?

I think there is very special presence of God here. It’s expressed in the worship and preaching.

How do you preach?

Maybe conversational. It's important that every sermon conclude with an application to the story of our lives. I intentionally talk about the stories of our lives that aren't so pretty—including my story—and the lives of others because I believe that people think that those are stories that churches are not willing to talk about.

For example?

We can talk about divorce and not make you feel penalized because you went through divorce. One Mother's Day when we honored all the mothers I asked if we had any teenagers who are mothers. We had one particular mother who stood up and we gave her a flower and blessed her and I told her I'm a child of a 16 year old mother. Being a teenage mother is a reality. And we just want you to know we're glad you're here. We don't glamorize these realities. But we really go after them and say that God really does have something to say and to do about any of these issues.

How do you describe your worship experience?

The music is very critical. We have about 15 or 20 minutes of worship that flows. We really work to have a seamless experience—I don't like "mental whiplash" or mental hiccups—stop and start—I like worship to start and just flow—so the worship experience is energetic, but not something that will alienate a visitor or an observer. The time we transition out of praise and worship into the offering and prepare for preaching is always spontaneous with times of prayer. I think it is important that although every worship service is planned we're planning on the unexpected—whether than means testimonies or more singing.

What is your biggest challenge?

First it's tracking. We have so many visitors we are consistently asking how we are keeping track of people. The other is pulling people into service. Since people live so far away when we try to bring them back to mid-week services it becomes a chal-

lenge. Also to develop visible leadership roles. As the growth outpaces our infrastructure we're trying to catch up by creating new opportunities for service.

As a young, new Nazarene African-American pastor what do you have to say about reaching African-American people?

First, African-American and poor are not synonymous. As long as we approach ministry with that old paradigm we're going to miss something. Another thing—our black and white members will all say they want the same thing from the church. I think that what's most exciting is that it's time to break down some of those old barriers and stereotypes and let go of some old baggage and get excited about what God is doing.

I caution pastors when they talk about reaching out to African-Americans to really stay away from assuming that they all identify with the urban experience. I believe that dialogue about multicultural ministry will really settle on those that have and those that have not.

You're talking about wealth and poverty.

And that's to me the real cultural divide. In marketing you have multiple cultures—if we don't get that yet we're missing a real opportunity. I think the real issue that's coming before us is not black/white but how do people of means connect with those who are disenfranchised, whatever color they are. That will become the focal point for Risen Lamb.

Is the church more accepting of differences than the general unchurched population?

The Risen Lamb community certainly is. I don't know that I can speak that way for the church in general. Some people have been shocked that white students would drive out to hear me preach. They didn't quite get that. Here you will really find a spirit of acceptance.

Concluding Thoughts

As I joined in the inspirational, energetic worship at both these multi-racial congregations, I wondered what set them

apart. Why have they been able to attract and retain people from such different cultural experiences? How did Corey and Beth Jones with their original small core group of white members successfully expand their mission to include affluent as well as low-income black people from the neighborhood around the church? And how have Dorzell and Beth King been successful in attracting blacks, whites and Hispanics from throughout the Kansas City area to a church they would have avoided in the past?

Cory and Dorzell will both say that cultural or racial blending is not a strategy for growing their churches. They are very aware and intentional about what it takes to create an inclusive environment, where people from different cultures feel at home. But they almost never draw attention to the differences among them, and their outreach is not to people simply because of racial identities. The racial balance is the result of something other than trying to be inclusive.

In each congregation, I observed something like a spiritual metaculture. In their worship experiences, people were invited to encounter what God was doing among and through them that had little, if anything, to do with the color of their skin, their culture, or their country of origin. The sermons addressed universal human needs. In their testimonies and singing, while giving their offerings, praying and greeting one another, the pastors and people of these congregations are writing a new story.

Could we be nearing a time when people of all races and languages, particularly those in the Christian family, want to be reminded that they are more alike than different?



What Kind of Ministry Leaders Ought We to Be in this New Diverse Cultural World that Confronts Us?

By Fletcher L. Tink

Introduction:

A satirical article, written by anthropologist Ralph Linton some seven decades ago, describes the “100% American”:

Our solid American citizen awakens in a bed built on a pattern which originated in the Near East but which was modified in Northern Europe before it was transmitted to America. He throws back his covers made of cotton (domesticated in India), linen (domesticated in the Near East) or silk (discovered in China). All of these materials have been spun and woven by processes invented in the Near East. He puts on his slippers (adapted from moccasins invented by Indians in the Eastern woodlands) and goes to his bathroom, whose fixtures are a mixture of European and American inventions, both of recent date. He takes off his pajamas (a garment invented in India) and washes with soap (invented by the ancient Gauls).

He puts on garments whose form was derived originally from the skin clothing of the nomads of the Asiatic steppes. His shoes are made from skins tanned by a process invented in ancient Egypt and cut into a pattern derived from classical civilizations of the Mediterranean. He ties a strip of brightly colored cloth around his neck, which is a

survival from the shoulder shawls worn by 17th-century Croatians. Before going out to breakfast, he glances through his window (made of glass invented in Egypt). If it is raining, he puts on overshoes (made of rubber discovered by the Central American Indians) and takes an umbrella (invented in southeastern Asia). On his head, he puts a hat made of felt (a material invented in the Asiatic steppes).

On his way to breakfast, he stops to buy a paper, paying for it with coins (an ancient Lydian invention). At the restaurant, a whole new series of borrowed elements confronts him. His plate is made from a type of pottery invented in China. His knife is of steel (an alloy first made in southern India). His fork is a medieval Italian invention, and his spoon is a derivative of a Roman original. He begins his breakfast with an orange (originally from the eastern Mediterranean), a cantaloupe (from Persia), or perhaps a piece of African watermelon. With this, he has coffee (from an Abyssinian plant) with cream and sugar. (Both the domestication of cows and the idea of milking them originated in the Near East, while sugar was first made in India.) After his fruit and first coffee, he goes on to waffles (cakes made by a Scandinavian technique from wheat domesticated first in Asia Minor). Over these he pours maple syrup (invented by Indians of the eastern woodlands). As a side dish, he may have an egg (from a species of bird first domesticated in Indo-China) or thin strips of bacon (flesh of an animal domesticated in Eastern Asia which has been salted and smoked by a process developed in Northern Europe) (Adapted from Ralph Linton's *The Study of Man*, Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1936).

The citation finishes with the statement that he “thanks a Hebrew deity in an Indo-European language that he is ‘100% American.’”

Of course, nowadays, the images need to be changed. Every car that we drive is a composite of national influences, as are our food choices, clothing, and trinkets. We live increasingly in a cos-

mopolitan world. And our national identity is rapidly changing and browning. Our cities are cauldrons of cultural mixes, and our young people are more and more blended into all types of cultural backgrounds and tastes. Chicago is the second largest Polish city in the world. New York is the largest Jewish city and Los Angeles, the second largest Mexican city; Miami, the second largest Cuban city. Toronto, Canada has a radio station that broadcasts in twenty languages with 38% of its population born outside of Canada. Montreal is the second largest French-language city. The Chinese in Vancouver, the Arabic-speakers of Detroit, the Native Americans of Albuquerque, and African-Americans who hold majority in cities such as Washington, DC, and Gary, Indiana—these are recasting our mission in creative, new, and sometimes perplexing ways. As of 2006, 68% of the United States population was identified as “white, non-Hispanic”, with the number decreasing every year. Sixteen percent of Canadians were not born there.

The church is confronted by these changes and will either see possibilities for ministry, or hide its head in the sand. What is needed are leaders who are “world-class Christians”, comfortable in a variety of cultural settings: people who are able to extend hospitality not just through the formalities of shared meals, or shared services, but who offer strangers and persons different from themselves, places of security and acceptance in the very soul of their being.

What do we look for in these kinds of leaders? How do we train them? Are they gifted, endowed by certain temperamental characteristics? Are they the product of a special “missionary” call but on the home front? Are they the product of extraordinary cultural heritage or experience? Or do all these factors play a role?

Current Challenges

The Church of the Nazarene now operates in twenty or so languages and ethnically-identified people groups in North America. Over 700 churches minister to congregations identi-

fied as something other than the national ethnic majority. The three major groups include African-Americans, Hispanics, and Haitians. Indeed, the growth edge of membership and church planting is among these groups. The Church of the Nazarene in North America is divided into about 82 different geographically-based districts. Many of these districts, especially on the coasts and metropolitan areas, find themselves already tackling the multicultural agenda. Metro New York, for instance, and Los Angeles pursue their ministry task among at least ten different cultural, linguistic, and racial groups each.

God intends His church in America to be multicultural, and this intention has great potential benefits. Any district that seeks to become a mirror of the American society, reaching all people, must readily admit that inherent complexities in organizational structures exist, however well meaning they may be.

The benefits of ministering in a multicultural way are easy to see. Some of those benefits are: 1. The church can learn a broader perspective of the Kingdom of God. 2. It can experience greater openness to new ideas. 3. It can explore the Bible from a variety of cultural interpretations. 4. It can respond to human need with greater creativity and flexibility. 5. It should find new means of problem-solving. 6. Cultures and new people groups may teach enriched knowledge of the Word of God. 7. Engaging cultural diversity may reveal the need for deeper congregational repentance regarding attitudes of paternalism and racism. 8. Reaching beyond our cultural comfort zone may lead to increased church growth, both quantitatively and qualitatively, helping us to see, in a broader sense, the reality and power of Christ's love to all people.

On the other hand, we confront many unique challenges in such multicultural district initiatives: 1. There is increased ambiguity, in that the older, traditional categories no longer fit, leading to, 2. Greater complexity in organizational structure. 3. Typically, there is more confusion and miscommunication because the "road is less traveled". 4. Often there are conflicting agendas and actions. For instance, the "ethnic" congrega-

tion sees its purposes as “cultural affirmation and protection” rather than reaching out to the broader cultural context. 5. Lastly, there is often lack of agreement on symbols, rituals, and assumed meanings, often colored by culture. For instance, what depictions of Jesus ought to be used? How should the church be designed? What music and instrumentation ought to be used? How flexible is the Manual in interpreting emerging structures not yet covered by it?

New Realities

Since 1996, some very important historical factors further add to the complexity of ministering cross-culturally and ethnically.

A. The Patriot Act: The Patriot Act has resulted in the unintended following consequences. We are seeing increased suspicion of people of different ethnic backgrounds, along with expanded surveillance of immigrants. This is resulting in increased paranoia and fear on the part of those immigrants and more legal burdens of formal documentation for immigrants. The result is that there is the risk of entire congregations disappearing due to changing demographic patterns caused by real or imagined intimidation

B. Changing Patterns of Immigration: Depending on international political crises, the ebb and flow of immigrants can often switch and turn precipitously. Russian, Cuban, and Chinese immigration of the 70s and Southeast Asians immigration of the 80s has been replaced by Sudanese and West African immigration in this decade. Recent immigrant groups are more likely to come from more distant parts of the world, less European, and represent very different religious traditions.

C. Negative Reactions to Immigrants: The current political and economic climate is one of increased insecurity for immigrants and, often greater inhospitality on the part of traditional Americans. The current political rhetoric on immigration, both legal and illegal, has great conse-

quences for framing attitudes both in our congregations and among those we wish to reach.

D. Options for Ethnic Congregations: We are witnessing a great growth of institutional options for ethnic congregations. Frankly, some congregations are formed less on theological or missional ideals than on functional ones such as available space, financial support, and legal legitimacy. When better offers come along, or when relationships sour, there are always other denominations or churches around the corner ready to step in and adopt programs nurtured within the Church of the Nazarene.

E. Theological Challenges: We are witnessing the inordinate growth of the Pentecostal phenomenon among ethnic congregations. With this challenge comes the danger of the watering down or subverting of Nazarene theological distinctives. Adopting congregations from other theological traditions has not generally proved to be helpful for the expansion of Nazarene church growth. On the other hand, many of these ministries show a zeal and faith more typical of the origins of the denomination than many of our more “domesticated” churches.

F. Nazarene Headquarters Limitations: Kansas City headquarters is unable to fully anticipate or direct the course of these new ministries and arrangements. Often, our cities are “ahead of the curve”; dealing with multicultural issues that will in turn, inform headquarters. Some of the Kansas City limitations are due to budget cutbacks, lack of clear models, the limited role of national and district ethnic leaders, and the downsizing of our own non-English language publications which, for the most part, have been relocated into other regions of the world. Therefore, many decisions will be experimental, done at the local and district levels, hopefully serving as an information base that Kansas City will eventually utilize and inform.

The good news is that despite these realities, ministry among people groups continues to grow, and the need for dis-

strict ethnic coordinators is becoming increasingly important. The growing insistence of these ethnic leaders for theological training, and for their voice to be heard in the higher echelons of the denomination means that these ethnic coordinators must be better prepared. They must be more sensitive to particular cultural demands, and savvier in developing models that bring all people “to the table”.

Qualities of the Church Leader

Charles Ridley, in a study of church planters in the United States and Canada, has comprised what he calls “13 Prominent Performance Characteristics” important in the selection of leaders for this generation of new churches. The Church of the Nazarene through its NewStart Office has used these characteristics for over a dozen years in an assessment tool to both evaluate and self-evaluate, persons called by God to develop new ministries.

According to Ridley, the ideal new church leader is one who possesses the following qualities:

- A. **Shows Visionary Capacity:** Projects a vision into the future, persuasively motivates people toward that vision, and brings it into reality.
- B. **Is Intrinsically Motivated:** Approaches ministry as a self-starter, committed to excellence through long and hard work.
- C. **Creates Ownership of Ministry:** Instills in people a sense of personal responsibility for the growth and success of ministry, training leaders to reproduce leaders
- D. **Relates Effectively to the Unreached:** Develops rapport, breaks through barriers, and encourages unreached persons to examine themselves and commit to a walk with God, leading people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.
- E. **Exhibits Spousal Cooperation:** Presents a workable marriage partnership that agrees on ministry priorities, on each partner’s role and involvement in ministry, resulting in the integration of ministry with family life.

- F. Builds Effective Relationships:** Takes the initiative in getting to know people, deepening relationships as a basis for more effective ministry.
- G. Commits to Church Growth:** Values church growth as a method for building more and better disciples, strives to achieve numerical growth within the context of spiritual and relational growth.
- H. Responds to the Community:** Adapts the ministry to the culture and needs of local residents while seeking to engage community issues and concerns.
- I. Utilizes Giftedness of Others:** Equips and releases people to do ministry according to their spiritual gifts.
- J. Is Flexible and Adaptable:** Adjusts to change and ambiguity, shifts priorities when necessary, and handles multiple tasks at once.
- K. Builds Group Cohesiveness:** Enables the group to work collaboratively toward a common goal and skillfully handles divisiveness and conflicting situations to positive resolutions.
- L. Demonstrates Resilience:** Shows the ability to sustain oneself emotionally and physically through setbacks, losses, disappointments, and failures.
- M. Exercises Faith:** Demonstrates how one's convictions are translated into personal and ministry decisions through an obvious vital spirituality.

These qualities are important for church leaders in any cultural context. However, they serve as a baseline for multicultural leaders who will have these and additional characteristics listed later.

Although more than 1,000 pastors and prospective pastors have undergone this scrutiny, with the vast majority appreciating the identification of both personal strengths and weaknesses, the same evaluation has not generally been made of district and general administrators. Yet the same traits are crucial in the quality of leadership in these management positions.

Leadership Character Traits

The aforementioned **performance characteristics** are considered key in the success of new church planters. What is not described are **character traits** assumed of all church leaders and expressed in a variety of ways within **Holy Scripture** and in the **Manual of the Church of the Nazarene**. Any Church leader should show consistency in these areas.

- A. Personal Integrity:** Exhibiting unimpeachable moral character in terms of sexual, fiscal (both personal and institutional) and emotional rectitude. Maintaining a clear ethical witness consistent with the “General Rules” and the “Covenant of Christian Conduct” expressed in the Manual of the denomination.
- B. Doctrinal Integrity:** Having a clear ability to articulate the formal doctrinal statements of the Church and to believe and advocate without ambivalence the institutional positions consistent with the doctrinal stance of the Church.
- C. Institutional Integrity:** Expressing public and private loyalty to the Church, seen through diligence to the means of grace, support and participation in its institutions, and accountability to its leaders and those served.

The Evolving Need for District Ethnic Ministry Coordinators

Given the increasingly diverse world of North America, many District Superintendents have neither the time nor experience to handle the delicate issues of cross-cultural ministries. Often, an ethnic coordinator is chosen to address issues of a single people group. One may supervise all of these so-called “ethnic” ministries, or may be population-specific, responsible for a group where there is personal affinity or identification. Some may be paid as a district function. Others may be leading pastors within an ethnic group who advocate, stimulate, and represent the groups that they themselves are a part of.

Typically, three models of diversity are seen in new church development.

- A. **The Multicultural Model:** where a single church has a variety of participants from people groups or has sub-congregational ministries to particular people groups.
- B. **The Multi-congregational Model:** where a church has one or more Nazarene ethnic congregations meeting in its facility. These congregations may be organizationally part of the larger church or may have their own legal identity.
- C. **The Free-standing Ethnic Church Model:** where a ethnic congregation meets in its own facility or is independent from involvement with another congregation.

Essential Leadership Tools for Effective Urban Ministries

The ethnic coordinator has some unusual burdens and responsibilities to bear that require unique skills and insights in order to function effectively. Some of these burdens and responsibilities are due to the primarily urban and changing contexts of these new ministries. David Best, former pastor of The Lambs, in Times Square, Manhattan, has identified “Essential Tools for Effective Urban Ministries” within three basic categories:

The first is **Knowledge:** This would include knowledge of the Scriptures, classic theology, biblical foundations for urban mission, evangelism, urban spirituality, and corporate spiritual formation.

The second is **Skills:** One ought to have the skills to “exegete the city,” to understand its history, its social, economic and political systems. That person should exhibit some skills of community organizing and reading and interpreting culture and intercultural diversity. Such a leader needs to have organizational development/management skills related to nonprofits, boards, building issues, and finances.

Lastly, the coordinator should exhibit appropriate **Attitudes.** For example, he or she should be open to diversity,

cooperation, collaboration, solidarity with the poor (meaning an incarnational attitude, ministering with presence, not paternalism), and patience.

Core Competencies for Multicultural Ministers

Together with the tools of knowledge, skills and attitudes, the need presents itself for more specific competencies for these ethnic leaders. Seven of these core competencies were identified and described by the Nazarene Office of Multicultural Ministries in 1996.

1. An ability to analyze social, economic and political systems, and to organize appropriate ministry responses.
2. An ability to develop organizational and financial strategies to create and sustain ministry opportunities.
3. An ability to analyze and organize a congregation/community for holistic ministry and community-based evangelism.
4. An understanding of culture, ethnicity, religion, and gender within the urban context.
5. An ability to develop strategies for working among diverse cultural groups and developing multicultural ministries and leadership.
6. A clear understanding of biblical and theological themes and paradigms that inform and shape ministry in the city.
7. A clear understanding of the development of personal leadership skills and spiritual formation.

The Evolving Role of District Ethnic Ministry Coordinators

The role of District Ethnic Ministry Coordinators is an evolving one dictated in large part by the need of the increasingly diverse Nazarene constituency in North America. Three different types of ethnic coordinators exist, including variations and combinations among these.

A. Assistants to the District Superintendent, usually of

majority ethnic identity, who are given general district and office responsibilities, including the portfolio of managing “ethnic” congregations. Often, they are not skilled in cross-cultural communications, nor are they particularly informed in the needs of any single ethnic group within the district. These leaders basically fulfill the mandate of the District Superintendent, to stimulate growth and expansion of ministries and to put out fires when conflicts emerge. Sometimes, these consultants have cross-cultural backgrounds as missionaries, and are so assigned because they are assumed to have some cross-cultural savvy in a variety of cultural settings. However, a general knowledge about cultural diversity does not compensate for specific knowledge and experience within any particular cultural group.

- B. Consultants to the District Superintendent**, hired or merely assigned to come into specific situations at the invitation of the District Superintendent—a “fall-back” approach when crisis occurs or major events take place. Often these consultants are pastors of successful ethnic churches, and are representatives of those ethnicities. Their primary loyalties are focused on their own congregations and their district service is seen as a secondary activity.
- C. Coordinators of Ethnic Ministries**, usually are of the particular ethnic group that they are called to coordinate. They may have budgets and office staff, and are given the mandate to develop both cooperative arrangements with the district as a whole and, at times, alternative programs specializing in the needs of the target ethnic community, i.e. separate camp meetings or rallies, training programs, and ministerial credentialing courses.

Because the Church of the Nazarene is currently working within more than twenty formal cultural, linguistic and ethnic groups, we must be very careful not to come up with single mod-

els of leadership capacitation, as each group and leader may come with very different histories, legal issues, theological backgrounds, along with varying English- language ability. Furthermore, some groups have, in their immigration patterns, become frozen in time, with little infusion of new populations, while others are constantly being replenished. Some groups adapt to North American life in three generations, while others do so in up to seven. In addition, the Nazarene districts themselves all have distinct diversity patterns. Some are very overtly monocultural—white—while others show more diversity, are “of color.” Urban populations are usually more ethnically diverse.

Given these realities, the ethnic coordinators will probably continue to serve in varying roles as assistants, consultants, and coordinators, depending on the economic realities of the district office, available personnel, and the distinctive demographic needs of the area. Obviously, the increasing numbers of Hispanics and Blacks now in the general population of our districts, require a higher quality of ethnic leadership and so we will probably look more to “coordinators” than to the other two models.

Additional Important Skills and Characteristics Desirable in Ethnic Ministry Coordinators

The emerging role of the District Ethnic Ministry Coordinator demands some very special additional characteristics. While recognizing that many districts will, for the time being, have to rely on “assistants” and “consultants”, more and more will eventually need to look for people competent in the role of coordinators. What are described below are optimal characteristics, recognizing that many situations will continue to be staffed by those who are not fully skilled.

A. Personal Skills and Characteristics:

- Language skills and, as much as possible, ethnic identification with the people to be served.
- A history of meaningful and successful involvement with the denomination with a history of personal

credibility in the leadership and management styles of the individual.

Networking skills, well-acquainted with Christian and non-Christian leaders within the target community in the interest of promoting the mission of the Church of the Nazarene, celebrating ethnic events in the larger community, and seeking resources, both human and cultural, compatible with the goals of the ministry.

B. Informational Skills:

- Knowledge about the ethnic community to be served, its numbers, its critical mass, its compelling issues and needs, its openness and responsiveness to the Gospel. Knowledge about where to get and how to use this information.
- Knowledge about pertinent INS and IRS law and the variety of situations of immigrants, both legal and undocumented, including awareness of proper legal language, categories, and resources available to clarify people's legitimacy, and how to maneuver legal change when appropriate. On the other hand, if not informed, the coordinator should have competent legal counsel available.

C. Relational Skills:

- Competency as a "cultural broker," who will interpret the needs and expectations of the target community to the officers and leaders of the district while at the same time, conveying the needs and requirements of the administrators to the assigned cultural group; and do so in an evenhanded manner.
- Competence in "conflict-reduction" roles, facilitating relationships within multicultural and multi-congregational church environments, accessing communication, reducing tension, and seeking reconciliation where conflict is or has been apparent. Rapport with "senior pastors" and majority congregations who have neither the temperament nor the expertise to

understand effective mutually rewarding relationships with other congregations in the multi-congregational arrangement.

- Positive relationships with district leaders and within districts in the development of supportive partnerships that will resource and sustain new and growing ethnic ministries. A willingness to advocate for evangelism and church planting within the targeted ethnic population. An openness to promote ethnic leadership to positions of responsibility within local church and district assignment.

D. Organizational Skills:

- Obviously, where possible, adequate language translation. The ethnic leader should be competent in managing parallel resources so that the targeted ethnic group is properly informed about district resources and activities, and should provide the best translators or translating techniques at bi-lingual district activities so that all Nazarenes might feel welcomed. To suggest appropriate models for the multi-congregational settings.
- Effective relationship with the District Superintendent in convergent (joint) activities with the district as a whole, and divergent (separate) activities as the need and opportunity for the particular ethnic group demands. In large part, the balance between convergent and divergent activities will be determined only by the critical mass of the ethnic group that justifies the parallel ethnic activities.

E. Training Skills:

- Identification of emerging leadership within particular ethnic groups found in local congregations, providing referrals or programs to capacitate their desires to serve Christ in leadership roles.
- Identification, screening, and orientation of prospective Nazarene congregations and leaders who

express the desire to join the Church of the Nazarene, for theological, institutional and ethical compatibilities. Great patience must be shown in the mutual orientations that would allow such groups of individuals to understand properly both the rights and obligations of denominational affiliation.

- Assessment of training needs for ethnic leaders, to fully prepare them for meaningful service in the Church of the Nazarene.

Identification of denominational resources available for training, including programs, access and financial assistance, where necessary, for those who are called to serve God in leadership roles in Nazarene ministry from among potential ethnic leaders.

Roles of the Ethnic Coordinator

With these skills and characteristics, the following primary roles of the District Ethnic Ministry Coordinator, over time, may be expanded to include these functions:

- **A Researcher:** Compiling information and studying settings where ethnic church planting can be most efficient and strategic.
- **A Networker:** Learning about the target ethnic community, its leaders, gatekeepers, opinion framers, etc., aware of where needs are, opportunities, goodwill, and previous church planting experiences have gone.
- **An Informant:** Presenting data and dreams to the District Superintendent and appropriate district boards and local pastors.
- **A Cheerleader:** Instilling enthusiasm within the district for ministry both within the ethnic community and congregation and among potential cooperative supporters outside.
- **A Troubleshooter:** Responding to crises within ethnic congregations, between congregations in the multi-congregational setting, between district entities and the ethnic ministries, and between those ministries and the denomination as a whole.

- **An Advocate:** Representing the needs and issues that plague many of the ethnic congregations in a way that not only gives voice but also assurances of competent response.
- **A Resourcer:** Compiling information about legal issues, property issues, personnel issues, etc. in a fashion that expedites service.
- **A Trainer:** Assisting new Nazarenes to understand the nature of the institution with which they are now affiliated. Developing or coordinating orientation and training programs that allow appropriate empowerment of leadership to develop.
- **A Convener:** Bringing together the disparate members of the ethnic community for celebration, retreats, business, and strategic planning. Obviously, no one individual is equally qualified in all of these roles. Furthermore, the reality is that most coordinators are “multi-tasking” with their own pastorates, or secular involvements, or their own cultural commitments not directly related to these roles. However, the naming of these roles and reflection on them may clarify job descriptions, establish priorities, and expedite communication.

A Suggested Model for Preparing and Capacitating District Ethnic Ministry Coordinators.

A typical danger is to set someone up to handle ethnic/cultural obligations and responsibilities without the requisite characteristics and skills to be successful. It is important then to develop and place district ethnic coordinators in meaningful and productive assignments. Here are some steps that can avoid trouble and help place coordinators in situations tilted toward success.

A. Good and Appropriate Selection of Ethnic Leadership Personnel

Importantly the designated ethnic leader should have a natural and healthy compatibility with the district man-

agement team. The “vibes” have to be right. However, just as important is the leader’s credibility with the target population. If the individual under consideration is not recognized within the cultural group as a bona fide legitimate leader, even if graced by district acceptance, then an appointment may be illegitimate or counter-productive.

That leader ought to exhibit credentialized gifts and graces, showing the characteristics and competencies described above, or indicating the potential to mature to these, with the means for doing so. The district leadership ought to make known its reason for selecting such leadership and should do so with the counsel and advice of those who are the audience to be reached.

Furthermore, a clear mandate should be established stating what the position entails, understood by all involved.

B. Appropriate Support Structure for Fulfilling the Mandate

An effective and appropriate support structure for the leader selected must be in place. This will include **personal support**, where possible, that provides for adequate remuneration where services are performed; **institutional support** that provides for office and programmatic expenses; **informational support** that offers participation in district decision-making especially where particular ethnic interests are involved. This support should also provide conduits of communication to denominational resources and representation; and lastly, **strategic development support** that provides for the training of the ethnic coordinator to acquire the competencies necessary for efficient functioning of the role at the district level.

C. Suggested Aspects of a Training Program for the Ethnic Coordinator

Because the needs vary so widely, both in the context and in the individuals assigned, no one form of training can be stipulated. However, a broad variety of possibilities is suggested below that may be helpful in specific situations.

1. Formal Training: Accredited academic courses, or Continuing Education credits, primarily in the following fields:

- Cross-Cultural Communication
- Managing Cultural Differences
- Conflict Management
- Cross-Cultural Counseling
- Specific Cultural Studies related to the group being targeted
- Immigration Issues

These classes can be taken at junior colleges or as directed studies. Indeed, a starting point might be the “Cross-Cultural Communication” course that is part of the IBOE (International Board of Education) curriculum available on a CD. The District should think seriously about subsidizing tuition for these opportunities where possible and insist that the coordinator share the information learned with district personnel.

2. Informal Training: Workshops, Seminars, Conferences, etc. The denomination needs to organize a variety of settings and develop the literature or a bibliography that addresses the topics above. Some suggestions:

- A Convened Meeting of District Ethnic Ministry Coordinators that addresses the issues above.
- Meetings that bring together District Ethnic Ministry Coordinators and General Church leaders (Mission Strategy) for particular ethnic groups to air issues and jointly seek solutions with their denominational ethnic coordinator.
- A meeting with leaders from other denominations who have similar objectives and needs, perhaps hosting at the district level a gathering that would invite other holiness (and other like-minded) denominations to participate.

3. Non-Formal Training: Those molding influences that don’t necessarily fit under the formal or informal train-

ing categories, for instance, mentoring, applicable books, case studies, documents, etc. Some suggestions:

- The development of a tool kit of written materials, including case studies, articles, key books that address the multicultural issues in church growth, with perhaps a plan for encouraging reading, i.e. district financial incentives, or free books. **One New People** by Manny Ortiz is a particularly relevant book.
- The availability of a “hot-line” of referral numbers or e-mail contact to persons who could provide counseling in cross-cultural crises.
- The availability of a blog or web page available to the community of district ethnic coordinators and pastors to share information and solutions to problems.
- The assignment of specific mentors who are skilled in cross-cultural or specific cultural situation. These may or may not be the General Church-assigned ethnic coordinators, depending on availability, and particular concerns.
- The reprint or upgrade of Jerry Appleby’s **The Church in a Stew** for the purpose of informing and mobilizing the General Church to greater attention to these areas of ministry, thereby lending additional and practical support to the district ethnic coordinator’s mission.
- The denominational publication of a **Manual for District Ethnic Ministry Coordinators** that brings together the multiple resources that answers the prominent questions asked.
- The continued development of the Mission Strategy web page with resources applicable to the task of the ethnic coordinators. These coordinators should be made aware of the pertinence and available of the best resources available on line.
- Review of feedback materials, i.e. District Superintendents’ questionnaire, and an update of the questionnaire sent to ethnic pastors to study what their concerns

and issues are. Because so many of these congregations are “hidden”, all efforts should be made to bring them “mainstream.” Among honest questions that need to be researched and studied are these:

- Why do ethnic congregations fold? Why do they leave the denomination? Why do they stalemate or grow?
- How do we deal lovingly with congregations in transition, theologically and stylistically? What are the acceptable parameters?
- How do we train senior pastors in their role in multi-congregational settings?
- What models of multi-congregational ministries do we encourage, discourage?
- What do we do with the unusual financial burdens placed on our ethnic congregations?
- What should be done so that the 2nd ethnic generation is not lost to the Church?
- How do we move successfully from a dying majority congregation to a vibrant ethnic congregation, without winners and losers?
- How do we release our ethnic congregations to become more self-reliant without distancing them from those churches that nurtured them?
- How does the district ethnic coordinator deal with tensions between his/her stipulated role and the role of the District Superintendent or the various District committees?
- Develop a denominational list of ethnic pastors and pastors in training, who would meet acceptable criteria to be placed in a repository of names that could be made accessible to the district ethnic coordinator in consultation with the district superintendent. Many of the coordinators are uninformed as to where human resources are for new ministries.
- Develop a denominational plan for ethnic church starts, including resources from the following sources:

- churches willing to partner or sponsor ethnic congregations either within their facilities or located at a distance
- special funding for new ethnic church starts, either at the district or general church levels
- research from Nazarene Information Service that targets receptive peoples and receptive areas for new ethnic church starts
- Give the district ethnic coordinators more formal and public status in district events.

Guidelines for the District Coordinator of Ethnic-Specific Ministries

As the role of ethnic district coordinator emerges on many districts, it might be useful to suggest a functional job description that can be “massaged” and nuanced for the needs of a particular setting and candidate selection. At least, the items that it describes may serve as discussion pointers for those involved in the selection process.

Job Description

- The coordinator shall answer directly to the District Superintendent (D.S.).
- The D. S. shall define the expectations for the coordinator in specific cases—whether that role is to act after consultation; act and inform; or simply request the opinion of the D.S.
- The coordinator shall serve as assistant to the D.S. in representing the ethnic ministries of the district.
- The coordinator shall report periodically to the District Advisory Board in the manner specified by the D.S.
- The coordinator shall represent ethnic ministries to the various departments and committees of the District according to the discretion of the D.S.
- The coordinator shall develop and present to the D.S. a plan outlining specific strategies for establishing and developing ethnic ministries for the district.

- The coordinator shall serve as the catalyst and visionary agent for the new ethnic congregations of the district.
- In consultation with the D.S., the coordinator will seek, interview, and select pastors for the establishing of new congregations.
- The coordinator shall assist in the development of new congregations—guiding them toward the status of organized churches.
- The coordinator shall serve as the contact person and be available for advice and counsel to those who express interest in initiating a new ethnic ministry.
- The coordinator shall assist the board or committee of a local church in the process of searching for a new pastor.
- The coordinator shall serve as a mediator when any of the ethnic congregations face internal or external conflicts.
- The coordinator shall counsel pastors and churches regarding legal processes (such as incorporation) according to local, state, and federal law.
- The coordinator shall organize specific continuing education events for pastors and general activities to support their ministries.
- The coordinator shall provide opportunities for fellowship and interaction among pastors on specific occasions planned for that purpose.
- The coordinator shall organize and assist in the celebration of camps and retreats for the ethnic churches.
- The coordinator shall define, in consultation with the D.S., the zone division of the ethnic churches for the purposes of fellowship among the pastors and congregations, evangelism, and other growth - oriented activities.

Of course it is understood that with high expectation comes greater district responsibility commensurate with financial and institutional commitments worthy of the job that the ethnic coordinator is being asked to do.

Summary

Because the “cutting” edge of the North American Church of the Nazarene is almost entirely to be found among the ethnic and immigrant populations, it is imperative that those who have both brokering and supervisory responsibilities, namely, the district ethnic ministry coordinators, be the best prepared, most highly qualified and skilled, church planting experts in target cultural groups in the Church. If selection and appointment is done selfishly, ignorantly, insensitively, the “cutting” itself can be very bloody.

It is not good enough that our new church leaders representing diverse cultures be “ethnic” or successful as pastors. They will need that strange and wonderful combination of skills addressed herein, both to avoid problems and to advance the work of the mission of the Church of the Nazarene. The time has come for specific attention to be focused in preparing these men and women for key tasks in the coherency and growth of the Church of the Nazarene among the wonderful populations in which God has gifted us to minister.



Multicultural Concepts & Models

by Richard Houseal

Corporate worship is constrained by the particular setting and culture in which it takes place. Our worship is limited by the language we speak, by the facilities we share, and by the music we like. Worship is even limited by the gifts and abilities of those who are part of our congregation. In heaven, there will be “a great multitude . . . from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb.”¹ But on Earth, it is humanly impossible to have such a worship service.

This is not to say that churches cannot be multicultural. In fact, statistics kept by the Church of the Nazarene show that in 2005 there were 128 (2.5%) Nazarene churches classified as multicultural (no one cultural group represents more than 50% of the congregation).² And according to the 2000 Faith Communities Today (FACT) survey, 26% of Nazarene pastors indicated that the statement, “Our congregation is trying to increase its cross-cultural diversity” described their church “very well” or “quite well.”

On the other hand, some churches are an important factor in preserving cultural identity. This is evident from the FACT survey as well; where 14% of Nazarene pastors agreed that the statement, “Our congregation has a strong racial, cultural or national heritage that it is trying to preserve,” described their church “very well” or “quite well.” The percentage of all congregations in all denominations in the 2000 FACT study indicating that this statement described their church “very well” or “quite well” was 12%.³ But while it may be important for some groups—especially new immigrant and minority groups—to maintain a cultural identity, others will find that as their neighborhood demographics change, the Gospel is best served by the church reflecting those changes.

Still, there are many communities where the population is not racially mixed. The Church of the Nazarene Research Center has determined that 2,113 (42%) Nazarene churches in the USA are located in neighborhoods where the 90% or more of the population is of one race. But the demographics of the USA and Canada are changing. More and more communities today have more than one cultural group present, especially in highly populated areas. This is illustrated by the fact that the Research Center also found 611 (12%) Nazarene churches that were mostly composed of people not representing the majority population group of their neighborhood.⁴

So what does all this mean for the local church as it tries to share the good news concerning Jesus Christ? The following concepts present some thought-provoking ideas and illustrate the differences of some models. Figuring out the approach your church will take should be a matter of prayer, research and needs assessment, identifying and training leadership, and the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Concept 1: Culture is more than race.

For many people the word culture is synonymous with race. While race may provide a quick clue about one's culture, it can also be deceiving. Culture includes language, food, music, economics, arts, politics, work (white collar vs. blue collar), religion, etc. Culture is formed by group experiences. These group experiences take place in the home, at school, at work, at sporting or cultural events, and at church.

My wife is Chinese and was born and raised in the Philippines. Her primary language is Tagalog, but she also speaks fluent English and has conversations in Fookien Chinese and Spanish with her grandfather. She likes Asian foods and is somehow able to drive in traffic where there do not seem to be any rules. My wife knows these languages, enjoys these foods and is able to drive in crazy traffic because of her family and Philippine experiences.

Although I can never change my race, I am learning to

appreciate my wife's Chinese/Philippine culture. I still struggle with eating certain Asian foods—chicken feet, fish heads, pigeon, and balut (a fertilized, boiled duck egg that has been used to test the psyche of those on *Fear Factor*), to name just a few—but I am becoming comfortable in my wife's culture through shared experiences with her family and by spending time in the Philippines.

People outside of the church cannot change their race, but they can adapt to, change, or add a church culture. In the same way, the people of the church cannot change their race, but they can open up the church culture to others. The people of the church must appreciate multiple cultures if they are going to reach people outside of the church. Once the congregants of the church begin to share experiences with people of another culture, then those people are free to share the experience of church. The church needs to adopt people into a new culture—a church community. And while it may be necessary for some people to stop participating in certain aspects of their original culture, for the sake of the Gospel it is usually better for them to stay connected to both their original culture and their adopted church culture.

Concept 2: The Gospel spreads quickest among people with a common culture.

It is much easier for you to share the Gospel with someone who speaks your language, has the same hobby, does the same kind of work, likes the same kind of food, or listens to the same type of music you do. If you do not have a common reference point with a person you want to reach—a way of relating to him or her—it will be very difficult to find a way to relate the Gospel message to that person. It will be much easier for someone with a similar cultural reference to reach that person.

Missionaries to other countries start their ministries by learning the language and culture of the people they are trying to reach. In an ever increasingly multicultural world, we are

going to need to learn the language, culture, food and music of the multicultural neighbor we want to reach. But once reached, our neighbor will be able to spread the Gospel much faster within his own culture than would be possible for us of a different culture.

The local church that is situated in a multicultural setting will never be able to minister to every group in its community; it is hubris to think that it can. Disciples are only made when the language, music and rituals used in worship are familiar enough to help the worshiper connect to God. When the local church understands its own culture, it is better able to see those it is not reaching. But once seen, then the church has a chance to develop a cross-cultural ministry and cultivate a new harvest field.

Concept 3: Multicultural ministry runs along a continuum from weak cultural distinctions to strong cultural distinctions.

When culture is understood as group experiences formed around language, food, arts, work, etc., it's not hard to see that most congregations have more than one cultural group. White and blue collar workers may be worshipping together. Those who have ever worked with the youth group in their church know that the youth have their own culture. And at the other end of the age spectrum are senior adults. Many of these cultural differences are easily overcome by things held in common and are therefore weak cultural distinctions.

My nieces and nephews use words and phrases I am not familiar with. They learn these words and phrases at school, from the TV shows they watch and from websites they like. When they use these words and phrases in conversation with each other, they have meaning; however, the same words and phrases have no meaning to me (or they have a different meaning), because I do not share many of their group experiences. Fortunately, we are able to overcome these weak cultural dis-

tinctions, because we have many other cultural experiences in common.

Strong cultural distinctions are not so easily overcome. Here the language difference is from English to French or from Spanish to Chinese. The economic difference goes from poverty to millionaire. Worship preferences go from reverent to exuberant. Music taste goes from classical to heavy metal. When there are strong cultural differences, few people between the cultural groups share the same experiences. The continuum from weak cultural distinctions to strong cultural distinctions is diagrammed below.



My favorite aliens from *Star Trek* are the Borg. The Borg are master assimilators. They invade other cultures and blend them into the Borg collective. They repeatedly tell other cultures that, "Resistance is futile." In many ways this is similar to the view some have of the United States. They see the USA as a melting pot; that anyone who comes to the USA will be assimilated. In this view cultural distinctions are weak.

On the other hand, many immigrants to the United States often try to preserve their language, religion, and diet. These cultural distinctions are strong and not easily overcome. The church shouldn't expect people to give up strong cultural distinctions. Instead, the church should look for ways to use these cultural distinctions to reach out to people of other cultures.

I've had the privilege of traveling overseas several times. After a few days of the native cuisine I usually am looking for something more "American." It may seem funny, but at home I generally try to avoid eating at McDonald's, but overseas I'm drawn to McDonald's like a French fry to hot grease. It's not just the familiarity of the taste of the food, but the familiarity of the décor and even the ordering process that puts me at ease. People who are not part of the dominant culture look for places

and friends that are familiar to them; things that will help them be at ease.

The local church would do well to identify both weak and strong cultural distinctions that are around them and try to reach out by doing things that would put those of another culture at ease. Starting a new church might be the easiest thing to do to reach a group of people with strong cultural distinctions, but a local church will come up with some creative ideas if they pray and ask God to lead them in reaching a particular cultural group. I've heard of churches having a Sunday School class or Bible study in another language; celebrating Cinco de Mayo or some other cultural holiday; and even adding country music to the worship service, just to name a few. The grid below may help you get started.

Cultural Group	Cultural Distinction(s)	Is Distinction Weak, Strong, or Somewhere in the Middle?	Change or New Effort Needed

Concept 4: Cross-cultural ministry requires bridges to be built.

Culture is important for the solidarity of a group. It allows a group to support one another and exchange goods and services. But the solidarity that is good for the group will effectively keep another group out. The early church struggled with this because many of the Jewish practices kept Gentile believers from having fellowship with them. In Acts 11:2-3 we read, "So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him and said, 'You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them.'" Peter and Paul were Jews who had to build bridges to reach the Gentiles. Paul wrote it this way; "To those not hav-

ing the law I became like one not having the 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 men so that by all possible means I might save some.” (1 Corinthians 9:21-22.) This is bridge building, and the more we find ourselves surrounded by other cultures, the more bridges we will need to build.

A bridge is necessary in order to span the cultural gap between you and your neighbor. A bridge enables you to move from your setting to another place (in this case another culture), and it allows people in other places to come to your setting. The church wants movement to occur in both directions. It must be prepared to include those coming across the bridge to them, and it must continually send people out across the bridge in order to relate the good news concerning Jesus Christ in ways that are culturally relevant.

Importantly, this bridge must also be structurally sound and in the proper location. This means that we need to know our target audience in order to build such a bridge. The church needs to ask, “Who is God calling us to reach? Where is the best location to build a bridge to them? What changes do we need to make to include them if they start coming across the bridge to us? What will best connect with their culture if we need to take everything across the bridge to them?” It is quite possible that people in another culture will not want to cross the bridge and enter your culture. That’s okay. You still need the bridge to enter their culture and find relevant ways to connect them to the good news concerning Jesus Christ. Some have done this by starting an English as a Second Language (ESL) class, having a booth at an ethnic festival, or starting another church on the other side of the bridge. Our Lord Jesus has already given us orders to cross bridges by saying, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations.” (Matthew 28:19.)

You will find that some bridges already exist. Your children may be in the same school as their children. You may be concerned about the same social issues (crime, poverty, abortion, pornography, urban renewal, suburban sprawl, etc.). You may shop at the same location or root for the same athletic

team. Use these bridges as much as possible, but build more direct bridges as God gives you insight.

Concept 5: The church must help those not familiar with the dominant culture acquire social capital.

What is social capital and why is it important? “The core idea of social capital theory is that social networks have value.”⁵ Social capital is the value an individual has to the network or group. Social capital is created and accumulated as relationships are made, trust is developed, and gifts are used. It is the social network that gives worth (capital) and increases productivity for those in the group. If a person doesn’t have any social capital, that person is not important to the group. Naturally, a person that feels unimportant to the group will soon leave. Our church culture often refers to this as having a big back door. We generally think that the person just wasn’t really committed to God, but often the reality is that the person didn’t feel like they fit in—they didn’t have social capital.

Those who share the dominant culture of a church come with the advantage of having some social capital. They have family in the church, or at least know the right families. They sing in the choir or suggest songs for the worship team. Because they are familiar with the dominant culture, they have an edge. They know when to sit or stand, the ritual of communion, and the practice of tithing. But those who are not familiar with the dominant culture are at a disadvantage.

I once attended a Catholic mass with a friend. I looked like everyone else attending the mass but felt like I stood out. I didn’t know how to genuflect when entering the pew (in fact I didn’t learn the word until much later). I was unable to follow along with their singing and reading. I was not permitted to participate in communion, and no one talked with me after the mass (except the friend I went with). In short, I had no social capital; I did not add anything to the group’s value or productivity.

A membership class will help someone new to the church

acquire social capital, but it usually comes too late in the process. In fact, it usually works the other way around. People from a minority culture decide to join the church because they have already acquired social capital and a sense of belonging. Social capital can be acquired by having a newcomers Sunday School class, by getting people involved in the choir shortly after their first visit, or by asking them to participate in a service project. You might even have a person from a minority culture help develop a strategy to build bridges to their culture.

Whatever the method, the local church must help people from minority cultures to acquire social capital quickly. This can be done by finding a place for minorities to use their gifts and by helping them understand the traditions and rituals of the church culture.

Concept 6: People have and move among multiple cultures or subcultures.

Your church may be more prepared to minister to people of other cultures than you think, because people are used to moving from one culture to another. Their home life may be influenced by an ethnic heritage, but their work life may be influenced by being in the service sector, and their school life may be influenced by a different dominant culture. Even when they go out to eat, they may go someplace that is culturally different. The fact that people are used to moving among multiple cultures means they can adjust to and learn a new culture. The local church that wants to reach out to a minority group doesn't need to change everything about their worship. The church does, however, need to make an effort to engage that minority culture and help them learn (acquire capital in) the church culture.

A church may be able to connect more easily with a minority culture in a subculture that they each share. It may be fun for your church board to discuss the different subcultures they encounter each week and the people they meet there. The key is for the people of the church to be looking for these common subcultures and then taking advantage of existing bridges.

Multicultural Models

A church may use four basic models for multicultural ministry. On one axis the church may be located at one site or multiple sites. On the other axis the church may be made up of one culture or multiple cultures. The following diagram illustrates some issues to consider; it is not an attempt to recommend any one model over another.

	One Culture	Multiple Cultures
One Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single Language Used • Single Musical Taste • Centralized Leadership • Weak Multicultural Differences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single or Multiple Languages • Single or Multiple Musical Taste • Centralized or Dispersed Leadership • Middle to Strong Multicultural Diff.
Multiple Sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single Language Used • Single Musical Taste • Tendency to Dispersed Leadership • Weak Multicultural Differences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single or Multiple Languages • Multiple Musical Tastes • Dispersed Leadership • Strong Multicultural Differences

The one site/one culture model may not seem like a model for a multicultural church, but it is an important part of the church. When one considers that many Nazarene churches are located in mono-cultural settings and that many new churches are trying to preserve their immigrant culture, the need for one the site/one culture model is clear. These churches can still reach out to other cultures both near and far through new church sponsorship and payment of their World Evangelism Fund.

The one site/multiple cultures model can be broken down into two sub-categories; one where everyone worships together and another where they share the same facilities but worship separately. An example of the first may include a racially mixed or economically mixed group, but they share a common language and probably a common geographic area. More impor-

tantly, they are able to create a church culture that allows them all to contribute to the social capital of the church.

Churches in neighborhoods where the demographics are changing may find the sharing of their facilities a good way to reach out multiculturally. Language or other cultural differences may make it difficult to worship together, but having a facility to meet in is an answer to prayer for many groups.

The multiple site/one culture model may be the fastest way to spread the Gospel. That's because it effectively multiplies groups and leaders and is not slowed by the complexities of cross-cultural ministry. It allows for weak cultural differences that may exist in different neighborhoods but takes advantage of the resources each site brings.

The multiple site/multiple cultures model is the most complex to develop and manage. Cross-cultural ministries are essential to the organization of this model. Leadership needs to be developed in each group and authority must be shared among all the groups. While this model has the advantage of pooled resources, the potential for conflict is increased.

The model your church chooses will be heavily influenced by the demographics of your neighborhood. Has your church identified the various cultural groups nearby? Is God leading your church into a cross-cultural ministry? God will help your church and give you wisdom as you follow His leading.

“The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, “Come!” Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.”

Revelation 22:17

1. Revelation 7:9

2. Church of the Nazarene Research Center. Statistics compiled from 2005 data collected by the General Secretary of the Church of the Nazarene.

3. Faith Communities Today website.

<http://www.fact.hartsem.edu/research/fact2000/Foldertree/index.html>

4. Church of the Nazarene Research Center. Statistics compiled from 2003 Nazarene data and 2003 Census estimates.

5. Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 18-19.



Starting Healthy Congregations

Jim Dorsey

Scanning the chapter titles for this book reminds us how much God loves variety. Each author describes both a range in style and variety in starting healthy churches. Like every fingerprint is different, and every child expresses God's unique creation, so every new church becomes a visible reminder of God's love for new life. No new churches are just alike, nor should they be.

The scripture reminds us "See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?" (Isaiah 43:19) When Isaiah prophesied those words, he predicted endless changes for the people of God in their spiritual journey. Providential wisdom says the only thing in this world that will not change – is change. God seems to delight in the unexpected. His Spirit breathes new life, sheds new light to our spiritual understanding, and inspires us to sing "a new song." To know God is to experience a new birth, a fresh beginning as "old things pass away and all things become new." While His truth remains the same, and God promises He will never change, He seems to love working in new ways.

How easy for us to become familiar with the sacred and assume we know God's intentions. Like Moses, we try to predict how the miracles happen and when water flows from the rock. But in ministries all across the USA and Canada, new movements signal God's Spirit continues to do "a new thing."

What We're Learning from New Churches

In the early years of launching the NewStart strategy, considerable discussion arose over the theme: "starting strong, new churches the right way." Some initially questioned the

theme, thinking that the “the right way” really meant “the same way”. But nothing could have been further from the truth.

The one-size-fits-all, cookie cutter approaches of the past no longer apply in starting healthy, strong churches. In this changing culture, new church sponsors are learning to creatively align available leadership skill sets with the most effective missional methodologies, to discover God’s ongoing spiritual designs for starting churches.

This book serves as another reminder of the range of approaches for starting healthy, strong congregations. As so many of the faith stories from the scriptures teach us, God loves doing a new thing in unexpected ways. And the Bible seems to reemphasize how the people of God learn new ways to follow Him and guide others to do the same in their spiritual journeys.

After this first decade of new church emphasis, hundreds of new Nazarene churches exist as visible testimonies of God’s faithfulness and the sacrificial service of hundreds of faith-filled leaders. Like children reminding parents of life’s values, these new churches teach us how much God loves variety. Consider just for a few moments some of the more unique variations of new Churches of the Nazarene starting across the USA and Canada.

Multi-Congregational New Churches

An inspiring movement that shares church properties continues to grow in impact and influence across the USA and Canada. In a wide variety of expressions, congregations are mothering new churches by sharing their church properties to reach previously unchurched clusters of people in their community. The model takes on many different forms and approaches.

The Calgary First Church of the Nazarene in Canada hosts three different congregations in its church property that would normally house one congregation. By being willing to share its building, this church ministers to an extended fellowship of

people from at least four distinct cultural groups. They also have plans to start another new church for Polish immigrants in their community. But this ministry is not an isolated example.

The Dorchester Second Church of the Nazarene hosts four different congregations sharing one property. They too are considering starting another new church to minister to an unreached group of Vietnamese in their community. This congregation has expanded its influence to a much larger and influential responsibility enrollment.

These two congregations join the growing list of multi-congregational churches across the USA and Canada. In the Chicago Central District, 40 of 80 churches are already sharing buildings with other congregations. The Metro New York District has practiced this multiple use of church property for many years. Even cross-cultural new congregations are experiencing this innovative trend, as several Korean congregations are now sponsoring or hosting new Hispanic churches. Hundreds of existing Nazarene churches could immediately start a new church by adopting this pattern of sharing their church buildings with other congregations.

What the church experiences today parallels, in some ways, what many immigrants adopt as a way of life near our nation's border states and in nearby metropolitan areas. Many immigrant families commonly share living quarters originally designed for single family dwellings. For most, their hope is to eventually get established and obtain their own property. Many are able to endure the inconveniences, since their living conditions mirror the "in-between" spiritual situation of Kingdom minded believers.

However, some cultures and families are far more communal in nature. The concept of extended families sharing living spaces is both the acceptable and preferred environment. Grandparents, aunts, and uncles are all a part of the many demands of child rearing. Mentoring becomes intergenerational, both for individuals and for couples. The same could be said for many multi-congregational churches. Driven by the

ever present needs and limited resources, common conveniences give way to the more pressing necessities of life. Love can find a way to make it work.

Multi-Site Churches

New venues for worship are springing up in the most unlikely places. Public high schools, places of business, city parks, and community centers are being commandeered to serve as new worship venues. Existing congregations are creatively extending their ministries and influence by providing additional worship venues at various times to reach new people for Christ.

The new book entitled *The Multi-site Church Revolution*, offers a wide range of information and guidance for churches considering the multi-site model for ministry. One of the sections in this significant volume gives a helpful overview of this ministry model and answers some of the more frequently answered questions, like the following:

“What is a multi-site church?” A multi-site church is one church meeting in multiple locations—different rooms on the same campus, different locations in the same region, or in some instances, different cities, states, or nations. A multi-site church shares a common vision, budget, leadership, and board.

“What does a multi-site church look like?” A multi-site church can resemble any of a wide variety of models. For some churches, having multiple sites involves only a worship service at each location; for others, each location has a full range of support ministries. Some churches use video-cast sermons (recorded or live); others have in-person teaching on-site. Some churches maintain a similar worship atmosphere and style at all their campuses, and others allow or invite variation.

“What kind of church uses the multi-site approach?” The multi-site approach works best for already growing churches but is used by all types of churches. The majority of multi-site churches are suburban, but many can be found in urban contexts and some in rural contexts. Multi-sites are found among

old churches and new, mainline and nondenominational, and in all regions of the country. Smaller churches (30-200 people) tend to do multi-site as a niche outreach or as a regional-campus approach. Medium-size churches (200-800 people) that go multi-site tend to have only two or three campuses. Larger churches (800-2,000 people) and mega-churches (2,000 people and up) are the most likely to be multi-site and to do it in a way that develops a large network of campuses.

“Why become multi-site?” The purpose of becoming a multi-site church is to make more and better disciples by bringing the church closer to where people are. The motivation is to do a better job of loving people, including different types of people, with an outcome of making significant advances in obeying Jesus’ Great Commandment (Matt. 22:37-40) and Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20).

“How long do multi-site churches last?” Several churches have been multi-site for up to 20 years and a handful for even longer. Some churches use a multi-site approach as a transitional strategy during a building program or a seasonal outreach. Other churches intentionally choose to be multi-site only temporarily, as a church-planting strategy to help new congregations start out strong.

Many Nazarene congregations are considering how best to implement this new strategy for reaching new people with the good news. New worship venues and satellite ministries are another new thing God seems to be blessing. Where could your church extend the Kingdom in a new place to reach new people?

Emergent Churches

These new churches are developing in response to a whole new generation of believers. A pastor recently e-mailed me to describe his visit to a nearby emergent church. He wrote:

Part of my reason for wanting to visit was to help me think about the worship needs, tastes, and desires of the next generation. It is easy to become “stuck” in a particu-

lar style of music or worship as the world changes, resulting in churches that eventually stop connecting with their own children as they grow up. It is important for us to be aware of changes in culture and musical tastes among children and youth, and to integrate elements into worship or design separate worship experiences that speak to them. The gospel is unchanging, but the forms of worship and particularly musical styles do change over time. What's interesting about the emerging churches is that they are rediscovering ancient worship practices, yet tying them to modern forms of musical expression, sometimes called, "ancient-modern worship".

Emerging churches seem to be another expression of God's Spirit. Who might your church reach in an emergent service?

New Churches Express New Life

All across the USA and Canada, people with no church background are coming to faith in Christ through new ministries from the Church of the Nazarene. Specific language groups – and nearly invisible sub-cultures in many communities – are being impacted by new ministries and home cell groups intentionally designed to connect with them. We are reaching record numbers of new people each year through hundreds of new home cell groups and new churches. What could your church begin to do to reach new people?

The Mission and Message

Whatever our calling or missional objective, some basic questions still remain the same. While our answers may vary widely, basic components remain universal. One of the things we are learning with new churches is that ignoring these basic universal questions for new churches can put the new ministries and founding leaders at greater risk.

In some ways, the guiding questions for starting healthy churches are like proven principles in parenting. Effective parenting principles for raising healthy children are widely acknowledged, but every parent knows the application of those

principles can vary with each child. For instance, good communication remains essential in every relationship, especially between parents and children. But how a parent communicates effectively with each child can be as different as the children themselves. The wise parent learns to connect differently with each child.

In much the same way, the process for sponsoring new churches follows the same pattern. Basic principles exist that affect the health and growth of every new church, but how they are expressed and applied will be as different as the pastor and members of each new congregation. After this first decade of starting over 1,000 new churches in the USA and Canada, we've learned at least ten questions that are vitally important to answer for birthing healthy, strong, baby congregations.

At the time of this writing, four consecutive years of statistical reports describe an encouraging trend. Well over 100 new Nazarene churches have been started in the USA and Canada each year—and nearly half of them are multicultural. That's three to four times the average annual number of new churches over the past four decades! As the North American continent continues to grow in diversity and cultural variety, new churches will need to reflect the demographics of their ministry areas. The growing number of new churches signals an increasing competence and confidence of existing Nazarene churches in sponsoring more and healthier new Nazarene congregations.

These ten basic questions in the NewStart strategy came from research and an ongoing dialogue with district and local church leaders across the USA and Canada. A study in the early 1990's revealed that only 7% of the new Nazarene churches started over the previous four decades had actually become self-governing, self-propagating, and self-funding. And the total number of new churches had also dropped dramatically over those same years. We were starting fewer churches, and the ones being started were not doing very well.

Another interesting finding in that same study revealed that the 7% of healthy new churches had at least three things in

common: (1) they had leaders who were gifted in new church evangelism, (2) the leader had a strong team of volunteers assisting in launching the new work, and (3) they knew how to make the money work in the new ministry. Realizing the significance of those three common characteristics, the NewStart strategy enfolded the ten components outlined in this chapter to apply to all new churches, in their mission and ministry focus. While the questions are the same – the answers can be as diverse as the churches themselves.

A more detailed explanation of the NewStart strategy is available free from the NewStart offices in the research study entitled *What We're Learning: Starting Healthy New Churches the Right Way*. Additional resources and books on the subject are available on the NewStart website at www.NewStartUSA.org. Now, let's share a brief overview of these ten important questions.

Question # 1—Do we have the right leader?

Church leaders agree the difference in healthy new churches most of the time has to do with the NewStart pastor who starts the church. Rather than only accepting volunteers to plant new churches as in the past, the NewStart strategy assesses potential leaders for their entrepreneurial gifts and graces needed to launch a healthy ministry. The difference has been a careful screening of capable leaders for the significant challenges in starting healthy churches the right way.

Leadership Assessment

The NewStart Assessment Centers are a vital part of the denominational strategy and are offered in various locations around the USA and Canada. Each year, many future, New Start pastoral couples attend one of these events. The process is thorough, focused on assessing the ability of each person to lead in the founding of a new church.

Charles Ridley conducted a landmark study of church planters in the United States and Canada. His subjects in the study represented 13 Protestant denominations. Based upon

his research and subsequent field testing, he developed a list of 13 prominent performance characteristics. For over a decade, these characteristics have been used in the assessment process for NewStart pastors. The 13 characteristics are:

- Visionary Capacity
- Creates Ownership of Ministry
- Relates to the Unchurched
- Spousal Cooperation
- Effectively Builds Relationships
- Committed to Church Growth
- Responsive to the Community
- Utilizes Giftedness of Others
- Flexible and Adaptable
- Builds Group Cohesiveness
- Demonstrates Resilience
- Exercises Faith

At each New Start Assessment Center a team of assessors diligently seek to understand each candidate through the lens of the above characteristics. Many district superintendents have come to understand how critical assessment is in starting churches. Assessment goes well beyond the causal interview and allows sponsoring districts and churches access to a vital first step in the process. Each Assessment Center includes the following:

- In-depth personality analysis
- Self-discovery of individual strengths and weakness
- Private interviews with each couple or candidate
- Sermon presentations
- Case-studies in group exercises
- Strategy development experience
- Worship and inspiration
- Fellowship and network-building

The NewStart Assessments have proven to be a working and effective model. In the last 12 years, nearly 1,200 new Nazarene churches have been registered in the USA and Canada, with projections of 2,008 new churches by the 2008 Centennial Celebration. The assessment centers are held across

the various educational regions throughout the year. If you are passionate about starting a healthy church, make sure that you include the Assessment Center as a part of the process. For more information on future NewStart Assessment dates and locations, or to register for one of these events, please log onto the NewStart website at www.NewStartUSA.org or call their offices toll free at 1-800-306-8294.

New Leaders Are Emerging

Most church leaders would agree that finances seem to flow best to life changing, transformational ministries. In much the same way, new leadership seems to emerge in response to greater challenges. As the call for starting Nazarene congregations has sounded over the past ten years across districts in the USA and Canada, hundreds of new leaders have been responding. Many of these new pastors have come through the sponsoring churches. God's miracles follow our obedient steps of faith into the unknown. As lives are changed, God provides for all the needs of that new ministry.

Question # 2—Are we doing this for the right reason?

What are the motivations for starting a new church? Actually, the reasons can be as varied as the people who have them. A good exercise is to sit and write out all the reasons you've heard for the starting of a church, and then separate them into the following three categories:

Good Reasons

Consider the many positive motivations for starting new churches you have heard: finding a new ministry opportunity, being with a new group of friends, reducing drive time (and gasoline expense), or even developing an expanded leadership influence can all be admirable and positive reason for starting a new church. But invariably to allow any good motivation to become the primary reason for being a part of a new church will lead to disappointment and possible disillusionment.

Wrong Reasons

Have you ever seen a new church start for the wrong reason? Unfortunately, we all have seen those embarrassing examples: someone doesn't like a certain pastor or another leader disagrees with some decision and splits a fellowship. The scriptures speak firmly for discipline of those who would bring division into God's family.

The Right Reason

While many good reasons exist for starting a new church, only one primary motivation keeps a new church on course: new churches start to reach new people with the Good News of the gospel. Other secondary motivations eventually lead to distraction and disappointment.

Question # 3—Have we found the right sponsors?

For nearly five decades, districts were the primary agency for starting new churches in the USA and Canada. But with only 82 Nazarene districts on the North American continent, the resources in leadership, funding and ministry training, and support are severely limited. The NewStart strategy has empowered and encouraged local churches to become the primary sponsors for new churches. Not only do over 5,000 local congregations exist as potential sponsors, they also have much greater access to new leaders, the best locations, networking opportunities, and additional funding. The records show that after ten years local congregations are sponsoring more and stronger new churches – a record 1,200 since 1994!

It's Not Just Members or Money

For many churches still considering sponsoring a new church, a new perspective may prove helpful. Most medium and smaller size congregations could sponsor a new church, if they understood it does not require massive amounts of money or a large group of their members.

Question # 4—Have we recruited the right launch team?

No pastor, however gifted, is able to start a strong, new church alone. The strongest new works have a team of mature believers to join in the effort. Usually, these lay leaders assist in the various ministries, as they are gifted and able. The strongest new churches have at least 40 on their teams before they launch. Usually, the stronger the launch team and leader, the stronger the new church.

Like any Kingdom-oriented movement, such faith driven ministries experience multiple obstacles and challenges. But the spiritual rewards are well worth any temporary tests. Where local church leaders can patiently guide the process for launch teams, the results are both significant and life changing. And with each new church, dozens of new families are brought to faith in Christ.

Scores of churches have discovered that by being willing to adjust a few personal conveniences, whole new communities of faith have been born. Like any birth experience, new life brings some accompanying travail. But as with the thrill of a birth in the family, parents quickly minimize times of discomfort or inconvenience for the joy of new life.

Healthy new congregations launch on their first Sunday with a full set of ministries and competencies to serve their target audiences. The launch team unites in their mission to reach new people with the good news and extend Christ's kingdom. Some of these new churches have conducted informal assessment of launch team leaders and members. Agenda harmony and missional unity became a primary concern. The healthiest launch teams see themselves as staff ministering together to being the new church from the dream stage into reality, rather than seeing themselves as the church.

Every new church will be different, based on a ministry context and conditions. But research suggests the national average for a healthy launch team is 40 people. That means, on the average, if a new church has 40 people attending and involved

before its launch Sunday, it is more likely to achieve a critical mass by breaking the 100 barrier on grand opening Sunday.

Question # 5—What is the right target group?

It's easy for a new church to become preoccupied with the launch team's preferences. As a new church is launched, an intentional effort keeps the target group in mind, and adjusts ministries and priorities to connect with the unchurched and the target group.

The Silent Opinions

One new church made it a practice to have a picture of an unchurched member at the table in every one of their decision making meetings. As if to say, we want to remember the opinion of the unseen member, who is not yet with our group.

Sometimes resistance arises to this idea of preparing a ministry for the people who are not there. Some have a concern about doing church for the unchurched or planning ministries with a target group in mind. To them, it seems we are intentionally ignoring some people who would want to come to the church, but nothing could be further from the truth. Churches that tend to start with the idea "We're here to reach everybody," are more likely to reach nobody. Churches that start with an intentional effort to reach a target group understand they have a limited window of opportunity, limited resources, a limited number of volunteers, and they must make all of these resources have the greatest possible impact in the shortest amount of time.

Wider Diversity and Inclusion

Then, with more success and time, the larger the church grows and the more the ministry goes out to those in the community, the more diverse and inclusive the new church can become.

Each strong new church has a clear target group in mind when they launch. They ask, "Are there significant numbers of unchurched in this target group our new church can reach?"

Then they connect with that target audience, win them to faith in Christ, and enfold them into the church.

Question # 6—Do we have the right ministry action plan?

The most common mistake new churches tend to make is they start too soon. Premature births can cause baby churches to go on life support for too long after they are born. The right ministry action plan will develop the various life support systems before the new church's launch.

What's the Big Idea?

Most people understand that the most significant developmental stage for a new church is the kind that comes after someone has the big idea to start the church. The most important, developmental stage for a new church begins when the idea is initially introduced, and ends at the first public worship Sunday. Some call it the prenatal stage.

The Prenatal Life Systems

The comparison here is to the prenatal care of a baby. This care before the birth experience determines the health and vitality of the child. Once the baby is born and must live on its own, the prenatal care ends. Various life support systems have to be formed before the birth experience: like the skeletal system, the nervous system, the respiratory system, the circulatory system, and the digestive system. All of these systems work together to bring life and health to the child.

The First Public Worship Service

In a new church, similar interdependent life support systems exist. The first Sunday that a church opens its doors to the world and invites everyone to come and worship with them, is the birth experience for a new church. At that point, all of the various spiritual life systems must be operational within the church: in the worship experience, the disciple making process, in the care for children and youth, in small groups, in evangelism, and in the

preaching of the good news. All of the components that make bodily life healthy must be functioning on the first Sunday for unchurched people. You have one opportunity to impact them when they come to worship on that first Sunday. You don't get a second chance to make a good first impression.

Planning Private Worship Services

Many new churches have worked on the premise that the time after the big idea is introduced, before the birth of a new church in the prenatal stage, is the best time to have private worship services. These private worship services allow for relational networking and recruiting of the launch team in preparation for the birth experience of the new church. The pastor is always careful at the start of each private worship service to explain that this is not the actual church yet, it is only preparation to start a church. The only people there are those who are invited by the launch team; there is no advertising, no signs, no mail invitations, only networking by word of mouth. As the launch team works its relational networks to recruit to help the launch team achieve critical mass, they are working toward the day of the birth of the new church.

The private worship services may extend for a number of months. This is the time when a worship team begins to form, children's classes and Sunday school ministries are established, the various small groups are organized, and the life systems for the new church are brought together. The ability of the pastor and the launch team to organize and develop the various life support systems is, in fact, how the ministry action plan is written and implemented.

Question # 7—Have we created the right invitations?

First Timers

An Evangelism Process

The Greenhouse Effect

Growing churches, new and old, have learned how to invite new people to worship with them the first time. Unless a

church has new visitors, it does not grow. Intentional steps are taken for inviting new people to come back the second time and third time, and to eventually become a part of the fellowship. Effective congregations find what works best for them – and then they work at it.

We would encourage each church to strategize ways to attract first time guests into its worship service, then to become intentional in ways to have first time guests worship with them a second and third time. How will these new attendees become regular attendees at the church? What would a church do to encourage that participation? After members are attending regularly, what are the strategic steps a church takes to welcome them into membership and enlist them as ministry partners in a range of activities sponsored by the new church?

Last of all, how will these members involved in their ministry assignments connect with other unchurched friends and family and have opportunity to invite them to worship with them in their new church? That evangelism process becomes crucial in planning the ministry action steps of a church and helping them fulfill their mission in their community.

Question # 8—Is this the right location?

The Real Estate Rule

The old axiom in the real estate business describes the value of a property in three ways: location, location, location. In some ways, the impact of a new church could be directly tied to the location of the worship facility.

The Shoe/Foot Description

Perhaps the second most common mistake new churches make is trying to buy property too soon. One church leader described it as “the shoe tells the foot how big it can grow.” New churches are encouraged to find temporary meeting facilities, until they have the sense of the health and size of the new congregation and can adequately plan for the regular worship attendance.

Demographic Descriptions

A wide range of resources is available at the USA/Canada Mission/Evangelism website at www.NewStartUSA.org. By logging onto this website, research tools can be found to assist every new church in understanding their communities, the range of demographic information available, and where might be the best location for a new church to reach a specific group of people.

New Church Resources

New churches that make a difference do their homework on where to launch. They use the latest demographic information and research community needs for their approaches to ministry. They focus limited funds, the best volunteers, and early efforts in the right place to start.

Question # 9—Do we have the right financial plans?

When it comes to funding new churches, one of the more common mistakes involves looking to only one source for all the income needed for sponsoring the new congregation. With all the financial demands required for starting healthy new churches, most have discovered that single funding sources are very rare, if not nonexistent. The plan that seems to work much better involves generating multiple revenue streams.

When 100 Doesn't Equal 100

The reason for multiple revenue streams involves the very nature of a new church. When is 100 not equal to 100? When 100 new people in a church are compared to the 100 long time members of the sponsoring church. The 100 people in the new church are probably spiritual seekers, who are looking for answers in their own lives, or new believers who have just recently come to faith. The 100 members in the sponsoring church have worshipped together for many years and have been disciplined enough to understand the basic stewardship principles. Most new believers don't know how to spell the word "tithe", let alone practice what it means.

The healthiest new churches develop multiple funding streams that last two to three years at the front end for launching a new church. During those two to three years while the new attendees and seekers are connecting with the new ministry, coming to faith in Christ, and being disciplined into the Church of the Nazarene, they can begin giving at a level that reflects their spiritual maturity.

Coin in the Fish's Mouth

The story of Jesus sending Peter to find the funding needed for the disciples' taxes applies so well to new churches. You remember the story in the gospels where the tax bill came due for Jesus and the disciples. Jesus sent Peter down to the lake with the fishing pole, suggesting that he would catch a fish and have the answer to their problem. When Peter caught the fish and opened its mouth, as the Lord instructed, he found the gold coin. The same is true for new churches. As we are able to become fishers of men and lead new people to faith in Christ, the funding for new ministries eventually comes from doing effective evangelism. Ministry funding comes from the fishing.

New churches learn the money follows two to three years after the people. While 100-200 new people may be attending the new church, their financial support usually lags behind and is tied to their spiritual formation and discipleship. Over the months that follow, they learn to give and are more able to give; the church becomes healthier financially. The process for evangelism is reflected both in the funding of the church and in the evangelistic missional purpose of the church.

In fact, new churches become healthier the sooner they can fund their own ministry. Experience teaches the longer financial subsidies continue past two to three years, the more dependent and less healthy the new church becomes. The strongest new churches have developed a workable financial plan for the first two to three years. These leaders understand that multiple revenue streams must be created for a new church to survive the first two to three years of financial drought when they are getting started.

Question # 10—How have we generated the prayer support?

Prayer Is the Work

As new methodologies develop for starting churches, we're reminded that "unless the Lord builds ... we labor in vain." God's unpredictable answers to prayer are much better than our pre-planned strategies. Today's prayer movements across North America and around the world, synergize with this new generation of churches. "Prayer isn't preparation for the work; prayer is the work," as the saying goes. In many of these new ministries, God has done more than we asked or ever imagined. His Spirit is working in new ways through new churches. God's Spirit moves in unexpected ways.

Praying Through the Problems

New church pastors who build a network of prayer partners soon learn the invaluable resource that a prayer network brings to a new church. For too many new congregations, the need to import the prayer support becomes an important reality. Most new believers and spiritual seekers have a limited understanding of the value of an intentional prayer ministry. For many of the challenges, the only way to move ahead is through intercessory prayer.

NewStart pastors are encouraged to enlist a minimum of 100 prayer partners for each new church. These prayer partners come from the pastor's contacts with friends, relatives, and believers in other congregations – particularly people who really know how to pray!

On a regular basis, NewStart pastors write this team of prayer partners and share the ministry challenges they are facing. Along with the prayer requests, a number of answers to prayer are communicated in each prayer letter. (There is no greater motivation to pray than answers to prayer!)

Starting churches remains a matter of faith.

Most journeys of faith involve moving ahead in that first

step of obedience before having all the answers. Both in sponsoring or starting a new church, faith sees the potential in small beginnings. Faith looks at small beginnings and sees great opportunities.

Research has shown that most sponsoring Nazarene churches average less than 120 in worship. Experience shows that many new churches launch without knowing how all their needs will be met. But even in these small seeds of faith comes an abundant and eternal harvest in new churches: record numbers of new members are now coming to faith in Christ in our denominational family, new ministries are impacting their communities with the good news, and sponsoring congregations are experiencing renewal as they move ahead in hopeful expectancy. It starts with the sowing of the smallest seeds of faith.

Linking to the NewStart Prayer Network

At times, the spiritual challenges in starting a new church can seem overwhelming. (By the way, most parents would say the same thing at various times.) The only way to overcome all the obstacles and challenges in mothering a new church is to import the needed prayer support. Every NewStart depends upon dozens of prayer partners outside that new church who faithfully intercede for the ministry. No human strategy is sufficient. Without God's help, new churches face impossible odds. But with God, all things are possible.

God is Doing Something New

God loves doing "a new thing." We hope you and your church will connect with other faith-filled believers to collaborate in one of these new ventures of faith. Without this kind of risk-taking faith, nothing new will ever happen. Wonder what new discovery waits for you and your church? God says, "See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?" (Isaiah 43:19)



NO EASY ANSWERS

Russell Begaye

In his article, "A Citizen's Guide to the Twenty-First Century", Newt Gingrich made this observation regarding the drastic changes taking place in American society, "Politicians, columnists and academics all seem confused by the scale of change. There is an inevitable focus on the pain of those who have been dominant and the disorientation of those who have been powerful. The agony of the past is outweighing the promise of the future."¹ The dominant and powerful have been the white, Anglo, middle to upper-middle class people, whose wealth originates in a European based economy. The confusion and disorientation comes from this group losing the lofty position it has held since the beginning of the Renaissance. Alvin Toffler, the author of *Future Shock* and *The Third Wave* writes in response to this upheaval, "We are the final generation of an old civilization the first generation of a new one, that much of our personal confusion, anguish, and disorientation can be traced directly to the conflict within us and within our political institutions."² This conflict comes from the old civilization's political expression of "mass production, mass consumption, mass education, mass media (and) mass society."³ According to Toffler, the new civilization is ushering in a "de-massified society."⁴ Demassification means more varied kinds of cultures, values, and work, and leisure, styles of art, political movements, religious belief systems, and more distinct national, linguistic, and socio-cultural groups."⁵ Thus, the definition for the de-massified new civilization is the "Ethnic Millennium", which is creating a new American society.

In the early history of the United States, immigrants came to our shores for religious freedom and an opportunity to build

without governmental interventions. These early European ethnic groups, driven by a desire to build a new nation, quickly amalgamated and became “Americans”. They built on the European economy and technology but always invented new ideas and approaches. This group not only built a large and powerful economy but a culture that catered to their needs. Thus, all other ethnic groups coming to the United States were judged by these set cultural norms.

The cultural distinctive of other ethnic groups that followed were largely ignored, including that of the people native to this land. Up until the middle of this century, the dominant culture could ignore these ethnic groups and view this country as homogenous, though it never was. We can no longer claim such ignorance; these groups are forming the foundation for a new American society that is multiethnic.

According to demographers, in the last decade, the United States has experienced the largest population change in its history. One out of every four Americans now claims African, Hispanic, Asian, or Native American ancestry. The Hispanic population is the fastest growing ethnic group in America: they now number over 35 million.⁶ This figure does not include the majority of Hispanics who are counted as being White if they fit several racial categories. At this growth rate, the Hispanic population will increase to 39 million by 2010, surpassing the African-American population. The Asian population represents 4% of the total U.S. population. They number over 10.2 million. They have been increasing by over 100% every decade since 1980. They are expected to grow to 37.6 million by 2050.⁷

This phenomenal growth is undergirded by the youth of these ethnic groups. The median age of all ethnic groups is below the median age of Anglo-Americans, which is at 35 years of age. The median age for Native American is 22.7, the Hispanics, 25.6, and the Asians, 33. The youth of these ethnic groups account for their high average income and educational achievements. Asian-Americans have the highest median income in the United States at \$59,324. Fifty percent of Asian-

Americans have college degrees, almost twice the proportion for Anglos at 27%. Nineteen percent have their master's degree compared to 9% for the general population. In 2005, the Asian Indians' household income was at \$70,708. In 2002, they owned 319,911 businesses with an annual income of \$307.6 billion. Twenty-eight percent were employed in health care related jobs. These ethnics living the "American Dream" are not assimilating but are maintaining and/or developing new cultural distinctive. The language they speak at home best gauges this. Among Hispanics, 70% prefer speaking Spanish at home. Seventy-nine percent of Hispanic youth, ages 5 through 17, speak Spanish at home. Among Asians, 73% prefer speaking their native language.

The dramatic population shift is occurring faster in some areas of the United States and the mega cities of the nation. In the early 1980's, two-thirds of Californians were of Anglo ancestry. Today, the ethnics outnumber the Anglos. Los Angeles already has the second largest population of Filipinos, Koreans, Mexicans, and Salvadorans of any city in the world. Along with these groups are large numbers of Chinese, Ethiopians, Asian Indians, Indonesians, Iranians, Pacific Islanders, Druze, Tamils, and Vietnamese. More than 80 languages are spoken daily in Los Angeles. A training specialist for the American Management Association said, "You can eat in a restaurant featuring a different ethnic cuisine practically every night of the year without repeating yourself."⁸ In cities like San Francisco and New York, a Chinese person can go to school, marry, and live almost their entire lives without speaking to a non-Chinese.

The 2000 census recorded the largest number of foreign-born persons in the history of the United States. They represent 10% of the total U.S. population. From 1820 to 1970, of the nearly 42 million people who immigrated to the United States, 34 million were Europeans. Since 1970, however, 97% of immigrants coming to the United States come from non-European countries, most of them from Latin America and Asia.

This population shift has other economic ramifications; the

current purchasing power of African-American, Asians, and Hispanics has been estimated at over a trillion dollars. Companies are just beginning to realize that the most profitable market today is the ethnic market and not the traditional yuppie, mature, senior, or women's markets. Some of these companies targeting this lucrative market are doing so with sound strategies, while others are still making mistakes and paying for it. The Estee Lauder Company launched its All Skins cosmetic package as a direct appeal to ethnic women and immediately attracted almost 4,000 new customers a month. The Birney & Smith Company that produced a pinkish beige Crayola crayon for a flesh color developed a skin-tone crayon in its own box. Manufacturers of bandages used to sell pink bandages but are discovering that not all people are pinkish but of many colors. As a result, clear bandages are being produced, including a brown toned colored one.

The greatest wave of this multivalent immigration occurred in the latter part of the 20th century. This is when one of every four foreign-born persons came to America. Nearly half of all these new immigrants moved to California or New York. Three out of every four live in California, New York, Texas, Florida, Illinois, or New Jersey. The new immigrants have caused Miami, Los Angeles, and New York City to have the highest percentages of ethnics. In Miami, the Hispanics alone account for 49% of the population. Thirty-seven percent of Los Angeles consists of Hispanics. Overall, Los Angeles is 44% ethnic. In 1990, Hispanics became the largest ethnic group in New York City surpassing the African-American population. There are more Asians in New York than there are in Hawaii.

The new immigrants are more diverse and better educated than ever. They have an aggressive entrepreneurial spirit that is reshaping America. These immigrants have more college graduates than native-born Americans. Though they receive nearly \$5 billion a year in welfare payments, their payment of \$100 billion in taxes annually more than covers this amount. Most of them create jobs for native-born Americans as they begin busi-

nesses of all sizes. In 2004, Asian women owned 419,793 businesses employing 544,000 people with an income of \$69.7 billion. Hispanics owned 553,618 businesses employing 320,000 people with an income of \$44.4 billion. These immigrants are rebuilding the inner-cities of America.⁹ According to Business Week, without these new immigrants America's 10 largest cities would have shrunk by 6.8% in the 1980s. Instead, with the influx of these immigrants, they grew by 4.7%.

Companies are beginning to cater to this growing market. Those that erroneously view these immigrants as uneducated, unruly, welfare dependents are being left behind. Chemical Bank has installed Russian-language automated teller machines in areas where most Russians are immigrating like Brooklyn, New York. In California, Vons Supermarket developed a separate chain to cater specifically to Hispanics. Certain hospitals, like the one near Manhattan's Chinatown, serve their patients food dishes like congee, rice gruel, and bean curd with black bean sauce.

A new American Society is emerging as these immigrants begin to change America. A huge and hidden market that is thriving in America drives it. This vast and important market desires virtually every service and good, yet most people choose to ignore it, avoid it, deny it, or are totally ignorant of it. Companies or organizations that choose to market to this emerging civilization do the following: (1) Define the ethnic market and determine how to reach each segment; (2) Identify cultural differences among various groups (and subgroups) and incorporate them into their strategies or approaches; (3) Adapt and promote their products to meet special needs and interests; and (4) Avoid inadvertent or careless mistakes that may offend the various segments.

The technology of today has made it possible for us to easily locate and analyze these new ethnic Americans. We can analyze and cross-analyze massive amounts of data. We use research techniques called demographics, geographics, geodemographics, psychographics, geocoding, Geographic

Information Systems (GIS), Values and Lifestyles Analysis (VAL), and Segmentation Analysis. These high-tech approaches to ethnic research give us pertinent information, but they do not tell us how to reach each ethnic group nor do they make our programs culturally relevant.

Why are there no easy answers to reaching ethnic America? The population growth is undeniable. Their impact on all aspects of American society is felt everyday in the marketplace. However, the influence of the American culture on the ethnic population is no longer happening. The manifesto is being rewritten where the new culture is redefining the old culture. In this context, the American church is at a loss. What are the problems or the barriers?

First and foremost is the lack of understanding of who the new immigrants are. They come to America not to become Americans. They want the best education, the best opportunity to establish businesses, and the best environment to raise their families. But they want to do this within the context of their culture. The desire to conduct themselves in the “context of their culture” means the emergence of new communities. In large metropolitan areas, you will find multiple ethnic communities. In smaller towns, the established communities will be more regionalized. For example, a Korean living in rural Alabama will become a part of Atlanta’s growing Korean community. Each community is self-sustaining. It has its own grocery stores, medical doctors, lawyers, social service agencies, hotels, entertainment, clubs, banks, and places of worship. These communities exist parallel to the American culture, including the church. They co-exist without one dominating or influencing the other.

Not only are the ethnics establishing their own communities, but they are also devoted to their homeland. Millions of dollars are wired daily to countries around the world to support families, businesses, and governments. The exporting of this economy is something the American church does not understand. If it did, they would know how to harness it for the furtherance of the gospel.

Devotion to the homeland also means the importation of cultures. Not only are foods, clothing, cosmetics, furniture, electronic gadgetries and many others imported but religious and social ideologies are as well. You will not find many of these imported goods in traditional American stores. The same is true with religious beliefs and practices. As a result, we have the establishment of imported Islamic, Buddhist, Hindu and Protestant churches, which are quite different than the American version. These imported religions are growing faster and becoming stronger than their American counterparts.

At the same time that imported religions are growing, Christianity in America has basically plateaued. However, Christianity has been experiencing exponential growth in many countries around the world. Christians, from these countries, migrate to America having experienced not only unique expressions of faith but persecutions. These Christians immediately see the liberalism and monotonous expression of Christianity. As a result, they begin their own churches reflecting the culture of the church back home. In these churches, you will find members coming to church daily at 4:00 or 5:00 in the morning for prayer. All night Friday prayer meetings are common among church leaders. Members donate their entire family income for the month of January. It is not uncommon to see members taking out second mortgages to fund the building of churches. Since it is more honorable to be a church elder or deacon than a medical doctor or lawyer, these professionals prefer carrying business cards showing their positions in the church. Business people will give as much as \$50,000 to join a congregation. The American church culture in its present form is incapable of embracing this type of Christianity. As a result, the two practice Christianity in the context of their own cultures.

Based on various studies, Christianity has been successful in converting about 3% of these immigrants. A large majority of the 3% has been among refugees and illegal aliens. Converting refugees caused many denominations to experience unusual growth. The main reason was because churches became the pri-

mary arm for resettling refugees. The illegal aliens have also been readily converted to Christianity, because they see the church as a haven either from authorities or the hardships they experience.

An ethnic's view of Christianity and the church may depend on something else as well: language is central complexity to the issue of a church's ability to reach ethnic groups. Learning or not learning how to speak the English language depends on how well the ethnic community is established. If the community is self-sufficient, the need to learn English greatly diminishes. If your primary source of income is from your ethnic community, then the need to know English is considered unnecessary. In these communities, you will find doctors, lawyers, builders, and other professionals turning down potential costumers or clients if they do not speak the language. This is the reason American church leaders question why ethnic pastors or church leaders do not participate in their meetings. This is also the reason why American churches find it difficult to bring ethnic Christians into their congregations. These ethnics will learn "survival English" or "conversational English" but not English necessary for religious instruction, business transactions, or social interactions.

Another complexity that has proven difficult for the church to overcome is the geographical fluidity of ethnic communities. American churches have been surprised to learn that ethnic communities oftentimes move as a whole within the same city, region, or country. A church was bewildered to learn that their Hmong community located in the Midwest had disappeared. They described it by saying, "We lost our Hmong community and the church we were sponsoring." This particular community re-emerged in Orange County, including the church and its pastor. Most immigrants come to the United States based on a particular contact, organization, school, or business. After they settle into that "entry community" they begin to learn, not only where their particular ethnic groups are thriving, but how the immigration system works. Based on this

information, many will move within the first year. Addresses and contact numbers change constantly until a community emerges and begins to sustain itself. This migration pattern has made it difficult for American churches to evangelize and disciple ethnic groups. However, it can be harnessed to develop a nationwide network of Christian cell groups, but the American church culture cannot make this a reality.

While language and other community issues influence the church's work within ethnic groups, a multitude of other complexities complicate this relationship as well. Much has been written about the differences between the Eastern and Western worldviews, but for our discussion we will only look at the family. The family is the focal point for the immigrant population. Everyday decisions affecting all aspects of life are determined or set by the extended family. Therefore, decisions are based on consensus and individualism is looked down upon. This is critical in deciding to become a Christ follower. This could be a major barrier or a great opportunity. The church has to rethink its evangelistic strategies from winning individuals to Christ to winning families and extended families. In some cases, a whole community could become followers of Christ. This type of strategy is causing the exponential growth of Christianity in other parts of the world. The mindset of the American Church nearly makes this impossible to accomplish.

The American church has a great opportunity to impact the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ by simply reaching these ethnic neighbors. The ethnic population in America is growing rapidly and is changing the demographic landscape. These ethnic neighbors are globally connected and many migrate from country to country. Presently, the American Church spends much of its mission dollars and personnel in countries outside the United States and Canada. This mindset greatly hampers the spread of Christianity around the world. Imagine immigrant families from Asia, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe becoming Christians. Through their familial networks, they will become missionaries to their respective

countries. The church will not need to spend mission dollars teaching them the language, understanding the culture, moving them to the country, and finding them a place to live and serve. Some denominations spend nearly half a million dollars to take a single appointed missionary through this process. Some of the recipients of these missionaries are now asking the denominations to not send the person but the funds that can be used to support several hundred indigenous pastors. The sending of missionaries is so ingrained in the American Church culture that it is incapable of developing a new strategy for reaching the world. It will take a new generation of American Christians to change this mindset.

This new generation will have to make an important decision as well: the American Church has to decide whether it is an instrument for evangelizing ethnic people groups or Americanizing them. Americanization includes, but is not limited to, food, clothing, language, worship, individualism, and application of scriptures. There is a mindset, whether intentional or unintentional, that the church should make ethnics as American as possible before presenting Christ to them. The missiological concept of presenting Christ in the “heart language” of the immigrants is foreign to the American church.

On the other hand, political correctness and cultural sensitivity neutralizes the church. The American church often avoids the immigrants because of concerns over miscommunications or misunderstandings. Clear and concise information on cross-cultural communication is available throughout the Bible. The problem is the American Church grew up in a society that embraced its existence for the survival of its culture. As a result, the American Church and the American Society became intertwined with one depending on the other. However, the landscape has changed with the influx of immigrants coming from all parts of the world. The American Church now finds itself in a different society where there is multiplicity of emerging cultures: cultures that are independent and self-sufficient. Even the missionaries sent to foreign lands do not know how to

respond to the new American Society. These missionaries served among homogenous people groups. America is drastically different due to the fact that it has become the most diverse society of any country in the world. Basically, the American Church does not know how to apply scripture to the new Society.

Presently, the American Church is unable to accommodate another church culture or cultures. One example is the preference for translating materials rather than writing new materials written in the cultural context of the people group being reached. As a result, most ethnic congregations import materials from their homeland. This not only widens the gap between the American Church and ethnic congregations but strengthens their ties to church organizations in the homeland. This has caused Christian organizations around the world to send their missionaries to America. It has been so widespread that America now ranks seventh among nations receiving missionaries.

The desire of the American Church to reach its ethnic neighbors has led them to try many approaches. Some have been effective and others complete failures. The most popular is hiring ethnic consultants or specialists. Most of these workers are hired to promote the Church's agenda and to function within the confines of its infrastructure. Since the infrastructure was designed to reach members of the American culture, this approach has led to failure and disappointments. Another well-intended approach has been to intentionally incorporate the evangelizing of ethnic communities into the annual goals of every church office. This concept is like the story of putting new wine into old wineskins. The end result is bankruptcy. The present church leaders have been trained to serve the American Church, and therefore, are incapable of appropriately reaching their goals for evangelizing ethnic groups. Another misconception is that if you diversify your staff you will evangelize the ethnic population. The most positive thing that comes from this concept is that staff members become more aware of the ethnic culture. However, this culture is so foreign to staff members

that it's nearly impossible for this to impact strategic thinking, planning, and action. Some have created ethnic specific offices. However, these offices are often under-staffed, under-funded, and are not allowed to think and plan beyond the stated goals of the Church.

There are some emerging dynamics that could provide some short and long term answers to the dilemma. One is the emergence of ethnic specific conventions. The American Church's lack of emphasis on contextual ethnic evangelism, church planting, and missions is the driving force behind this dynamic. However, these conventions tend to focus on their people back in the home country. Another is shared expertise. The American Church is beginning to look for advice from those groups that are effective in evangelizing ethnic people groups. In most cases, these churches are structuring their efforts based on the advice they receive. At the embryonic stage is the formation of networks consisting of multiple Christian organizations. The American Church is beginning to realize that the American ethnic landscape is so diverse and fluid that it takes multiple approaches to be effective. The diverse Christian organizations provide expertise from multiple strategic viewpoints. One example is the Ethnic America Network hosted by the Billy Graham Center in Wheaton, Illinois. The Network provides pragmatic training for organizations wanting to evangelize ethnics.

Every ethnic church in America makes a choice on the type of church it wants to be. They will either pattern themselves after the church culture in the homeland, the American Church culture, or develop new cultures. Presently, the most successful have been churches that pattern themselves after the church culture in the homeland. This is because the pastor understands how the church functions, and the people are familiar with this culture. These churches quickly become cultural centers where information is exchanged on many subjects, including immigration laws, social services, businesses, real estate, and schools. Being successful in the American society coincides

with being a member of one of these churches. As a result, these churches tend to grow quickly and are able to develop new structures and programs. One of the most important is assisting new arrivals to quickly establish themselves.

The ethnic churches that pattern themselves after the American Church are those that receive financial support. These ethnic pastors spend so much time appeasing the American Church that they suffocate their ministries. The monthly reports, annual evaluations, and visits from representatives are often used as tools to gauge the assimilation process of the ethnic church. Pastors that do not assimilate are often defunded or dismissed. Some ethnic pastors deal with this by compartmentalizing their relationship. They function with two sets of values: one when they are relating to the American Church and quite another when relating to their people. This is similar to ethnic restaurants that have two menus. There is the colorful menu written in English and then the handwritten menu written in the language. Establishing a credible, pragmatic based training rather than one based on institutional training could be a starting point for addressing this dilemma.

The American Church does not always provide a natural starting point or a credible model. In fact, immigrant church leaders have found it difficult to relate to the culture of the American Church. Their first impression of the American Church is that it reflects more the Hollywood culture than the first century church. The building structures, colorful services, attractive promotions, and pulpit presentations all have an aura of entertainment. It appears that the Church reflects what the American society values and admires. The organizational operation of the Church is also difficult for them to understand. This begins with the American Church and society's stringent tie to Robert's Rules of Order. Another is the authority assigned by the Church to different categories of churches and organizational structures. The national offices are seen as the most powerful of the church structure. Regional, state, and local offices follow this. The church is seen as the lowest entity in the American

Church structure. The churches are also viewed as differing in authority, with the mega church having the most authority. Middle-sized churches, small churches, missions, and finally the house church follow this. There is an explosion of house churches around the world except in the American Church culture. In this culture, the house church is at the most a suspect. It's the black sheep in the family of American churches.

Even within this hierarchical environment of American Church society, an Ethnic Church is emerging with its own values and characteristics. Presently, this church is trying to find its own identity. The American born children of immigrants are developing this church. They are finding support from their parents, professionals, and in many cases, from non-ethnic spouses. This church will most likely have multiple personalities. Some will be more like the American Church and will try not to resemble the church of their parents. In the end, this church will develop a new church that will reflect the new American Society.

Where does the American Church begin to win the new American society to Jesus Christ? The most important step is to repent from its myopic concept of what Christianity should look like. The best approach to making this a reality is to establish networking relationships with brothers and sisters in the faith. God has raised up in America a multitude of ministries focusing on various aspects of ethnic ministries. At the beginning, this will be similar to an American shopping in an international grocery store. These individuals begin by buying what is familiar. They soon progress to buying items based on pictures. Finally, through friendships and research, they begin buying items to make genuine ethnic cuisine. The second step is to see Christianity as a global movement rather than as an American-based religion. The Church can begin by establishing a partnering relationship with an ethnic congregation or an ethnic Christian organization. These organizations are difficult to locate, simply because they operate within the sphere of their Christian cultures. These churches and organizations are as

concerned about their people groups in Detroit as they are in Tehran, in Oklahoma City as they are in Hanoi, and in Atlanta as they are in Somalia. The third step is for individual American churches to select specific ethnic groups to evangelize. The effort should begin in the neighborhood of the church, followed by ministry in the homeland of the ethnic group, and finally by establishing mission points to the same group in other parts of world. For example, the church begins a Hmong church in its community. They follow this by establishing Hmong ministries in Thailand, establishing Hmong churches in Russia, Australia, and France follows this. These actions will create an environment by which the church for the new society will emerge and take the gospel to all corners of our world. Fourth, the Church needs to abandon its desire to A

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3 Ibid., p. 92

4 Ibid., p. 92

5 Ibid., p. 84

6 Overview of Race and Hispanic Origin, Census 2000 Brief, U.S. Census, March. 2001; p. 9

7 "More Diversity, Slower Growth—Census Bureau Projects Tripling of Hispanic and Asian Populations in 50 Years", U.S. Census Bureau News, Department of Commerce; March 18, 2004

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9 Ungar, Sanford J., "Enough of the Ethnic Bashing", USA Today, Wednesday, October 11, 1995; p. 11A