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**Is the Church for Everyone?
Planting Multi-Ethnic Congregations in North America**

Chuck Van Engen¹

Introduction

I grew up in one of the oldest towns in the Americas: San Cristobal de Las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico. My parents were missionaries, essentially Dutch-American immigrants to Mexico. Born and raised in Mexico, I was therefore the second-generation of an immigrant family. As such, I grew up as what I call a “double-minority.” I was part of a small group of about one hundred and fifty Protestants in a Spanish colonial town of 65,000 people who wished we did not exist. And ours was one of only four or five “foreign” families in town: “Gringos,” strangers, pilgrims in a strange land. Now that I live in the U.S., I consider myself a Mexican-American immigrant of Dutch descent. So when I think of immigrants, ethnic minorities, and multiple cultures in North America, I tend not to identify with the dominant descendants of Europeans, but with immigrants from Latin America—past and present. I’m sure this colors the way I approach the issues in this paper, and I hope the reader will take that into consideration.

The thesis of this paper is this:

Because God’s mission seeks careful and balanced complementarity between universality and particularity, churches in North America should strive to be as multi-ethnic as their surrounding contexts.

I would like to offer some reflections on this thesis by means

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of the five parts of the title of this paper:

1. "Planting" – the *motivation* for mission vis-a-vis multi-ethnic churches
2. "In North America" – the *context* of mission vis-a-vis a history of immigration in North America
3. "Multi-" – the *means* of mission vis-a-vis cultural diversity, looking at the HUP
4. "Ethnic" – the *agents* of mission vis-a-vis cultural blindness of churches in North America
5. "Congregations" – the *goal* of mission vis-a-vis the nature of the Church – models considered

In each section I will reflect briefly on issues of the complementarity between universality and particularity in God's mission.

PLANTING – The Motivation

God recognizes and values cultural and ethnic diversity. Yet within the particularity of ethnicity God loves all peoples and invites all to faith in Jesus Christ, each in their own special cultural and ethnic make-up.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (Jn. 3:16)

These words of Jesus to Nicodemus focus the biblical narrative of God's universality of love for all peoples – and God's particularity of loving a plurality of specific and different peoples. As can be seen in Appendix A, one need only trace this theme through Scripture to see how very important it is in understanding God's mission. Risking belaboring the point, I will simply point out a few illustrative biblical references that may help us see the complementarity of universality and particularity in God's mission.

Genesis

Three times in the first eleven chapters of Genesis we are told that God is the creator and judge of all peoples. All people are created in Adam and Eve; all people descend from Noah; all people have their languages confused and are then spread out over the entire earth after the Babel episode. In each case, there is a recognition of the particularity and difference of various peo-

ples—as is signaled by the inclusion of the Table of Nations in Genesis 10—yet in each case this multiplicity of peoples are collectively and unitedly said to be the object of God’s concern.

Abraham

When God calls Abram, his call involves being a blessing to a plurality of nations—but this happens through the particularity of one clan whose origins are traced back to Nahor and Terah from the Ur of the Chaldeans. They are particular instruments of God’s mission, chosen with the intention of being a blessing to many particular peoples within the universality of God’s love for all peoples.

Deuteronomy and II Chronicles

The complementarity of particularity and universality is repeated in Deuteronomy and, for example, II Chronicles. I Peter 2 draws, for example, from Deuteronomy 10:14-22. The creator Lord God (to whom “belong the heavens, the earth and everything in it”) chose Israel out of all the nations, and now calls Israel to exhibit compassion and care for the fatherless, the widow, and the aliens who represent the plurality of particular nations. Thus many years later, at Solomon’s dedication of the Temple, the symbol of the most centralized form of Israel’s faith, Solomon prays, when “the foreigner who does not belong to your people Israel but has come from a distant land because of your great name....comes and prays toward this temple, then hear from heaven....and do whatever the foreigner asks of you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you....” (2 Chron. 6:32-33)

Jesus and Isaiah

Thus it is no accident that Jesus, the Messiah of Israel, would use Isaiah’s language in speaking of Herod’s Temple as “a house of prayer for all the nations.” (Isa. 56:7; Mk. 11:17) The complementarity of universality and particularity is very strong in Jesus’ ministry. At one point Jesus sends his disciples “to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt. 10:6). Yet this is the same Jesus and the same gospel of Matthew that will strongly emphasize that the disciples are to meet him in the cosmopolitan, multi-cultural setting of Galilee. There he will say, “all authority is given to me in heaven and on earth, go therefore and disciple *ta eth-*

ne—the nations (Matt. 28:18-19).² The gospels strongly support the vision articulated by Simeon at the time of Jesus' dedication in the temple: Jesus is the Lord of lords and the Messiah of Israel and he is "(God's) salvation which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel" (Lk. 2:32). Later, when Jesus describes his own mission, drawing from Isaiah 35, 49, and 61, he will proclaim his mission in Nazareth, but speak of it as a mission of preaching good news to the poor, freedom to the prisoners, recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor in global, universal terms that have specific, local contextual significance in Galilee (Lk 4:18-19; 7:22-23).

Paul

Paul emphasized this complementarity. Even in the oft-cited universal passages like Galatians 3:28 ("There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female...") and Colossians 3:11 ("Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free...") the cultural distinctives are not erased. The particularity of ethnicity, sexuality, and socio-economics is not ignored. Rather, in the midst of such specific forms of homogeneity, there is a universality of union (not uniformity of culture)—a universality of oneness in Jesus Christ: "you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Gal. 3:28); "but Christ is all, and in all" (Col. 3:11). Thus in Ephesians, Paul's ecclesiology recognizes the distinctive differences of being Gentile or Jewish ("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 of Christ Jesus" (Eph. 3:6). Yet Paul also affirms that they are brought together into one new family in Jesus Christ (Eph. 3:15). This does not mean that Jews must live like Gentiles, neither must Gentiles live like Jews. Paul follows the dictum of the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 in affirming the cultural differences, yet creating a new oneness in Jesus Christ. In Acts 21, Paul participates in a Jewish rite of purification in the temple in Jerusalem, knowing he will be arrested, but making a public statement that Jews who are now believers in the Messiah may still follow Jewish custom. Thus, even though "there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all," (Rom. 10:12), yet the proclamation of the gospel, according

to Paul, is “first for the Jew, then for the Gentile” (Rom. 1:16).³

John in Revelation

In Revelation, John echoes the same kind of complementarity of particularity and universality. Peppered all through the Revelation, John keeps emphasizing the fact that Christ is bringing together people “from every tribe and language and people and nation” (Rev. 5:9; 7:9). In Revelation 21, in the vision of the New Jerusalem, a picture of the Church, there is a plurality of “nations” that will “walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it....The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it...” (Rev. 21:24-25). Thus there is a recognition and celebration of the differences and distinctives of a plurality of different peoples and cultures—yet a oneness in their coming into the same New Jerusalem, to be in the presence of the one Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.⁴

And understanding of the complementarity of universality and particularity of God’s mission as described in Scripture is of utmost importance. This biblical orientation will influence the rest of our reflection concerning the planting in North America of multi-ethnic congregations. The way in which we associate these twin truths will affect our orientation to the issues facing the church in North America today. Too strong an emphasis on universality will drive us toward uniformity and blind us to cultural distinctives. Too strong an emphasis on particularity will push us toward either exclusivist homogeneity or fragmented ethnocentrism, and create serious questions about our oneness in Jesus Christ.

As I read Scripture, I see God affirming cultural distinctives. I see Babel as judgment, yes, but also as grace. The beauty of resplendent creativity shines forth in the wonderful multiplication of families, tribes, tongues and peoples of humanity. Rather than destroy humanity (which in the Noahic covenant God had promised not to do), God chooses to confuse the languages. This confusion, although an act of judgment, mercifully preserves all humanity in its cultural and ethnic distinctives, differences so significant that we are given a Table of Nations to enumerate the civilizations known to the compilers of the Pentateuch. These differences are so significant that when the Holy Spirit comes at Pentecost one of the first extraordinary acts of the Holy Spirit is to enable people of many different languages to hear the procla-

mation of the Gospel *in their own language*. Yet these distinctive features of multiple cultures are not allowed to divide humanity's relation to YHWH, nor to support the concept of a national or ethnic plurality of gods. There is one God, creator and sustainer of *all peoples*. Oneness in plurality, plurality in oneness: particular universality, universal particularity. How can we give concrete, lived out shape to this biblical view of reality as God sees it? This theology of humanity should be normative for us as we consider the missiological implications of planting multi-ethnic churches in North America. It is the bottom-line biblical motivation for such activity.

Sociological realities, human justice, economic equity, survival of a unified and functioning society; or greater numerical growth, or being a truer sign of the coming Kingdom of God, or survival of older churches in transitional neighborhoods – all of these situations call for us to re-think the matter of planting multi-ethnic congregations in North America. However, I would suggest that the most basic and pervasive reason derives from the universal scope of God's mission as depicted in Scripture and spoken by a particular Messiah (Jesus) to a particular Jewish teacher of the law (Nicodemus): “:For God so loved the world (of many peoples, tribes, tongues and nations) that he gave his Son....” (Jn. 3:16).

This complementarity of particularity and universality may help us understand more fully our mission in North America. It could help us see that neither cultural superiority or uniformity, nor multicultural fragmentation or balkanization are acceptable forms of Christian mission. For decades, cultural anthropology has worked with two complementary strands: the deep-level themes of common humanity which all people share, and the unique ways in which these themes take shape in both surface-level and deep-level meanings in specific cultural settings.

Young Lee Hertig has pointed out that

“Problems in a diverse community often come from the oversimplification of human complexity. The three dimensions of being human—“like *all* others, “like *some* others,” and “like *no* other”—are very important factors for everyone living in diversity. The universal, cultural, and individual dimensions in human beings are interdependent. (David) Augsburger rightly stresses: ‘Only

when the universal is clearly understood can the cultural be seen distinctively and the individual traits respected fully; only when the person is prized in her or his uniqueness can the cultural matrix be seen clearly and the universal frame be assessed accurately. The universal unites us as humans, the cultural identifies us with significant persons, and the individual affirms our identity.”⁵

This complementarity of the universal and the particular is a built-in feature of Paul’s organic image of the Church as a Body. Is there not a way we could bring both the universality and the particularity of God’s mission to bear upon our mission in the North American context? I will try to do this in the next sections of this paper. But first let’s look at our context.

IN NORTH AMERICA – The Context of Mission

The Reality

We are talking about planting multi-ethnic congregations in North America—with particular focus in the United States. What, then, is the reality of cultures and ethnicities in our North American context?

Sixteen years ago, *Time Magazine* said it this way. “Invited or uninvited, rich and poor—but mostly poor—foreigners are pouring into the U.S. in greater numbers than at any time since the last great surge of European immigration in the early 1900s. Indeed the US today accepts twice as many foreigners as the rest of the world’s nations combined....Although their turn-of-the-century predecessors were mainly Europeans, today’s new arrivals are mostly from Latin America and, to a lesser extent, Asia and the Caribbean. They are transforming the U.S. landscape into something that it has not been for decades: a mosaic of exotic languages, faces, customs, restaurants and religions.”⁶

In 1986, Peter Wagner wrote,

Whether in Oregon, California, or Maine, this is the real America. Today’s America is a multi-ethnic society on a scale that boggles the imagination. The teeming multitudes of all colors, languages, smells and cultures are not just a quaint sideline in our nation; they are America. And it is this America that God has called us to evange-

lize...⁷

Two years later Orlando Costas commented, "Besides the traditional European groups, which have "melted" into the main "pot" of North American society, there are said to be over 120 ethnic groups communicating in more than 100 languages and dialects."⁸

Four years ago, Oscar Romo remarked, "It is said that America is a melting pot where the English language is the 'language' and the 'Anglo' (European) culture is superior. In reality, there are 500 ethnic groups who daily speak 636 languages of which 26 are considered major languages."⁹

Also in 1993, Jorge Taylor, then Associate Provost for Multicultural Affairs at Fuller Seminary, reminded us of our reality.

Almost every day you read about it. It's in the daily news. It's on television. What is this new reality? The *increasingly diverse multicultural society in which we live*. Just a few weeks ago, I read the following statistics in the July Issue of ACCESS, a newsletter for recruiting and retaining students of color.

"By the year 2000, more than half of college-age students (in North America) will be people of color.

Within 15 years, people of color will make up more than 50 percent of the population of California, Florida, New York, and Texas.

In the 1980s the U.S. population increased by 9.8 percent. During the same period, the African-American population increased by 13.2 percent, the Native-American population increased by 37.9 percent, the Asian population by 107.8 percent, and the Hispanic population increased by 53.6 percent.

The July 31, 1992 issue of *The Los Angeles Times* reported: "Los Angeles has become the immigrant capital of the world: 27 percent of the residents in Los Angeles County are foreign-born compared with the national norm of 10 percent. 38 percent of those older than 4 years of age speak a foreign language at home. Of this 38 percent, 26 percent speak Spanish, 7 percent speak an Asian or Pacific Island language."

As a consequence of this increasingly diverse multi-

cultural population, most schools and businesses also will have a multiculturally diverse constituency. Churches, too, will have diverse, multicultural congregations.¹⁰

As I write, I have in front of me two local newspapers that carried related articles on September 10, 1997. One was headlined, "State's Diversity Expected to Rise: Population Areas Will Be Divided,"¹¹ and the other stated matter-of-factly, "California's Future Marked by Diversity."¹² Both articles cite a study by the California State Library's Research Bureau that concluded that Los Angeles County will grow by almost 3.4 million by 2020, with the major share of that growth being in the Hispanic population whose "natural increase...-- the total number of births minus deaths-- will be five times larger than the natural increase among non-Latino whites....By 2040, Southern California, at almost 60 percent Latino, will be an even stronger magnet for immigrants."¹³

Statistics abound, and to give more would be to belabor the obvious. The North American context is increasingly multicultural and multi-ethnic. In the midst of diversity, many are striving for equity and justice and a degree of cohesion, while at the same time seeking to affirm, preserve and celebrate cultural distinctives. We have known about our cultural diversity, and we have heard it presented often. Yet the churches in North America seem reluctant to face what perhaps may prove to be the greatest challenge. So, how do we read reality--what hermeneutic of the context do we adopt? I would suggest we are faced with two different perspectives: universality and particularity.

Universality: An Immigrant History

A quick review of American history would point to the fact that the church in the U.S. has been an immigrant church from its very inception. Twenty-five years ago, Sydney Ahlstrom documented the rise of what were essentially immigrant, ethnic churches in North America. In the American colonies, he speaks of the development of the English Puritans, the Dutch Reformed, the Quakers, the German Pietists, and the German Reformed and Lutheran churches. Later Ahlstrom chronicles the rise of the Scottish Presbyterians and the mostly English Congregationalists.¹⁴ The fact is that the history of Christianity in America is a

history of ethnically-defined and culturally-shaped religion—although the Americanization of that is also part of the history, as, for example, in the case of early Methodism. Ahlstrom says, “No group prospered more in the West or seemed more providentially designed to capitalize on the conditions of the advancing American frontier than the Methodists. A small and highly suspect adjunct to Anglicanism before the Revolution, this church had begun its independent American history only in 1784. Since then its web of preaching circuits had come to cover almost the entire country. In 1789 even New England had been invaded.”¹⁵

Ahlstrom summarizes,

“Immigration has had from the first a decisive effect on the religious affiliation of Americans and the relative size of the various churches. The statistics of church membership, to be sure, are a notorious quagmire. But even when full allowance is made for the known inadequacy of existing figures, certain drastic changes are manifest when one compares the ecclesiastical situation before and after the Great Migration.

At the end of the colonial period (1775) three large ecclesiastical blocs, all of British background, accounted for at least 80 percent of the Americans who could be regarded as affiliated with any church. They were distributed about evenly among the Congregationalists of New England, the Anglicans of the South, and the Presbyterians whose chief strength lay in the Middle Colonies. Small but influential Quaker, Baptist, and Methodist groups added two or three percentage points to the British Protestant total, while Dutch Reformed churches, strongest in New York and New Jersey, had over the years become very closely affiliated with the English-speaking population. Roman Catholics and Jews constituted at most 0.1 percent of the population....

The Great Migration of the nineteenth century, as everyone knows, drastically altered the religious composition of the American people. Steady acculturation was naturally a major feature of the passing decades, yet by the twentieth century the United States had become far more than before a nation of religious minorities whose

self-consciousness was by no means rapidly disappearing. In 1926, by which time 40 percent of the population claimed a religious relationship, Roman Catholics were the largest single group (18,605,000), while the next three largest denominations—Baptist (8,011,000), Methodist (7,764,000), and Lutheran (3,226,000)—accounted for 59 percent of the Protestants. At that time Jews constituted 3.2 percent of the total population. Immigration, of course, was not the only reason for these radical changes in the American religious balance, but it alone had ended the possibility of speaking of the American churches solely in terms of a common British background.”¹⁶

Certainly, immigration is at least one of the most significant determinants of the nature of American religion, as historians like Withrop Hudson,¹⁷ Jerald Brauer,¹⁸ and William Sweet¹⁹ have forcefully demonstrated. This special nature of American Christianity is such a strong feature that Martin Marty calls American Christians, “Pilgrims in Their Own Land.”²⁰

In North America *we are all immigrants*. To lesser or greater degree, all Christianity in America has been ethnic Christianity. The reality of Christianity in North America is that churches have always been immigrant, ethnic churches that are culturally influenced and culturally circumscribed. For example, I am an ordained minister in the Reformed Church in America, the 370-year-old Dutch Reformed church whose roots, history and to a large extent even its present forms are shaped by its ethnic particularity.

There is, however, a very important difference between the Nineteenth Century immigrant churches and the immigrant/ethnic churches of the 1980s and 1990s. With a few notable exceptions, the culturally-shaped churches of last century all shared a common world-view in their Western European roots deriving from the Enlightenment. By contrast, the new immigrant churches of the last three decades in North America represent Christians from every part of the world, a global church located in the cities of North America speaking a host of languages like Spanish, Portuguese, Hindi, Gujarati, Tagalog, Indonesian, Korean, Mandarin, Japanese. In Los Angeles alone more than 96 languages are spoken, and member of Christian churches speak many of them. Oscar Baldemor, a doctoral student at Fuller Sem-

inary, for example, has found 58 Filipino churches in Los Angeles, many of recent origin. And Natarajan Jawahar Gnaniah has studied thirteen Asian Indian churches in Los Angeles, all begun since 1960.²¹ We are all immigrants. Part of our self-understanding must be the fact that we are “aliens and strangers in the world.” (I Pet. 2:11; Hebrews 11:13; Gen. 23:4; Exod. 22:21-22; Lev. 24:22; 25:23; Ps. 39:12; 105:12; 119:19; 146:9).

This perception could transform some of our contextual hermeneutic. For example, in terms of my own context in Southern California, if the predictions are correct and by 2040 Southern California will be 60 percent Hispanic, it simply means that Southern California will return to the cultural make-up that marked its beginnings in the late 1700s and early 1800s when it was Spanish Catholic and later Mexican territory.²² In Southern California, only the Native American peoples who were here before the Spanish arrived might be considered an exception. But in remote history, they too are descended from immigrants to the North American continent. All of us need to remember, *we are all immigrants*.

Particularity

So now we must ask, How do we then read our context? What hermeneutical spectacles influence what we see? Although written twenty years ago, Peter Wagner offers helpful clarifications regarding ethnicity, based on his doctoral dissertation done at USC on the subject, the product of which became *Our Kind of People*. I believe his hermeneutic of multi-ethnicity in North America needs to be re-read by many. Wagner clarifies what ethnicity is not and then offers a definition.

- An ethnic group should not be confused with a nation. A nation, as currently defined, is a group of people under a common government at a particular time and place. Typically, a nation is eligible to join the United Nations. Most nations contain within their borders and under their government several ethnic groups.
- An ethnic group should not be confused with race. Race is closely related to genetics. A group of people who share prominent

physical characteristics that are transmitted genetically constitute a race....

- An ethnic group should not be confused with a tribe, a designation that has become hopelessly imprecise. Tribe has been used to describe states, ethnic groups, nations, districts, and many other social entities. An ethnic group can and does often correspond to a tribe, but the words are not properly synonymous.
- An ethnic group should not be confused with a social class.
- An ethnic group should not be confused with a minority group. A minority, according to sociologist Louis Wirth, is 'a group of people who, because of their physical and cultural characteristics, are singled out from others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment....'
- Finally an ethnic group should not be confused with a homogeneous unit. Ethnicity is an important part of a homogeneous unit, but it is only one of several considerations necessary in describing a group of people as a homogeneous unit....

If ethnicity is not any of the above, then what is it? Common to the prevailing usage of the term, is the concept of 'ancestry.' Shibutani and Kwan provide the most concise definition I have found: '*An ethnic group consists of those who conceive of themselves as being alike by virtue of their common ancestry, real or fictitious, and who are so regarded by others.*'²³

C. Peter Wagner and others have made a case that we need to seriously re-consider, if not discard, the "melting pot" idea prevalent at the beginning of the Twentieth Century.²⁴ I will draw at this point from Natarajan Jawahar Gnaniah's excellent doctoral work in which he simply calls the "melting-pot" concept "a myth, an illusion."

Though the melting-pot theory is an ideal, it was not a practical one in the history of this nation. All the races

and cultures and values and ideas do not melt into a smooth, even, well balanced mixture. The "melting-pot" theory of assimilation appears to have been rejected by members of the dominant culture as well as by members of the culturally different populations²⁵ McGavran puts it bluntly: 'America is not a melting pot in which all metals are speedily reduced to a single comprehensive alloy. Rather, what used to be called the new world is a curry in which potatoes are still potatoes and chunks of meat are still meat.'²⁶ As Thom and Marcia Hopler write, "The task of Northern European Protestantism dominates the soup."²⁷

In today's North American context, the "melting-pot" model of assimilation is inadequate, inappropriate, and irrelevant. In 1988, Orlando Costas suggested that the "melting-pot" theory of assimilation was no longer valid. "Besides the traditional European groups, which have "melted" into the main "pot" of North American society, there are said to be over 120 ethnic groups communicating in more than 100 languages and dialects. They represent roughly one-third of the total population."²⁸

Also in 1988, David Shenk and Ervin Stutzman stated, "A major stream contributing to ethnic self-consciousness is the massive immigration into the United States and Canada during the last decade or so. During the 1980s the immigration numbers to the United States, legal and illegal, are reported at significantly more than one million annually...Many of the immigrants, particularly those from Latin America, Asia, and Africa, have no intention of becoming submerged into a homogeneous Anglo culture. All our cities have become rich mosaics of ethnic diversity. For example, in 1985 the public school system of Los Angeles was teaching in some 65 languages! In that same year, 25 American cities enjoyed the distinction of minorities being the majority."²⁹ Five years later, Oscar Romo caricatured the "melting-pot" idea by pointing out that many in the U.S. still want to say, "All are equal! It is said that America is a melting pot where the English language is "the language" and the "Anglo" (European) culture is superior. In reality, there are 500 ethnic groups who daily speak 636 languages of which 26 are considered major languages."³⁰

All over North America, we need to re-examine what we

mean by “minority” and “ethnic,” since the minority ethnicity may in fact be White, Anglo-Saxon Protestant. “The real America,” Peter Wagner says, “is not a melting pot; it never was. The real America is a stewpot. While some prefer using the analogies of salad bowl, mosaic, tapestry, or rainbow, I prefer the stewpot. In the stewpot each ingredient is changed and flavored by the other ingredients....each ethnic ingredient now has the potential to be enriched through intercultural contact with the others.”³¹ Following Wagner’s lead, C Wayne Zunkel expressed this dream. “The patterns may vary, but somehow caring Christians will put aside the old “melting pot” attitudes and come to see the beauty in each people, each culture.”³²

So, what do you, the reader, see when you look at the North American context? There are a number of options. Melting pot, stewpot, mosaic, multiculturalism, postmodern political-correctness, complete fragmentation and balkanization of a multiplicity of “ethnicities” and viewpoints. Our perspective of the present and future context in North America in relation to cultures and ethnicities will greatly influence our assessment of, and approach to, the matter of “planting multi-ethnic congregations in North America.”

MULTI – The Means of Mission

Particular universality, universal particularity. How can we understand this dialectical perspective of God’s view of humanity that Scripture? In the next two sections of this paper I will outline what happens in our North American context when either one or the other of these twin viewpoints is over-emphasized.

First, no examination of the issues of the *means* of multi-ethnic church planting in North America would be complete without a re-examination of the Homogeneous Unit Principle (HUP) upon which church planting in North America has based its emphasis on planting ethnically homogeneous churches rather than multi-ethnic ones. In section “C” that follows I will suggest that the HUP may represent an over-emphasis on particularity, with an accompanying loss of legitimate openness to universality. Then in section “D”, I will examine three major streams of analysis of the church in North America, using them to illustrate how in each case there is an ethnocentric blindness evident in them due possibly to an over-emphasis on universality. Finally, in section “E” I will review some of the models of

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multi-ethnic church planting in North America in terms of their potential for exhibiting the dual nature of the Church as being particularly universal and universally particular.

In this section, then, I would suggest that the historical development of the missiology of the Homogeneous Unit Principle (HUP) calls for a re-examination of its emphases. Given the changes reflected in the North American context, the original intent of indigenization and contextualization may suggest that planting multi-ethnic churches may be as contextually appropriate as planting homogeneous ones.

The origins of the Homogeneous Unit concept can be traced back to India, to Donald Anderson McGavran, and to his association with J. Waskom Pickett.³³ In 1938 McGavran first published *Church Growth and Group Conversion* in conjunction with Pickett and A.L. Warnshuis of the International Missionary Council.³⁴ In 1938, John R. Mott wrote the Foreword to the second edition. "The distinctive and important contribution of this most instructive, stimulating and reassuring book has been the setting forth with clarity and frankness why on the one hand the work of so many churches and mission stations has been so comparatively sterile, and why in other cases their labors have been attended with wonderful fruitfulness." The answer McGavran and Pickett offered to that question of "why" was centered in the concept of "people movements." In the 1973 edition of this work, McGavran wrote,

Across the world today, in practically every non-Occidental country numerous people movements to Christ are going on. Some are making good progress producing strong churches. Some are limping along producing weak churches. Some have stopped. Some have even died....

The people movement point of view describes these movements, defines their essential nature, defends them as being a valid, common, and significant mode of church growth. It seeks to correct the common misunderstandings concerning them and to focus attention on them as an important highway of the spirit along which Christ is advancing to the heart of the nations....Readers may find the term "people movement" unfamiliar. By it we mean church growth which has variously been called

mass movements, revivals and group movements....Our principal term, however, is "people movement" because we are describing the way in which a people (tribe, caste, or clan) first becomes Christian...

Another term used is "an approachable people." Approachability does not mean merely that the people in question is friendly, can be addressed, or listens to the Gospel; but that some of its sub-groups are actually accepting Jesus our Lord, being baptized and formed into congregations. On the basis of this kind of response, we judge that we have an "approachable people."

How does the Church grow when it grows greatly?

It grows within some social stratum. If to the necessary difficulties of denying self and following the Lord Jesus are added the unnecessary abandoning of one's own race (caste in Mid-India) and joining another, then church growth will inevitably be slow. Great growth has almost always been caste-wise. When the Church has made its greatest strides, individuals became Christian with their fellow tribesmen, with their kindred and with their people....Not only so, but multiplication usually occurs within some prepared people. One of our basic assumptions is that God prepares certain peoples to accept His son.....If our evangelism is to bear the richest fruit these two basic assumptions should be considered in their varied aspects. If the Gospel is preached to such peoples, chains of families may be expected to decide for Christ. Churches will be built up in which social solidarity has not been impaired.³⁵

McGavran's original conceptualization, then, included the beginning formulation of three interrelated observations: (1) that there are distinct culturally-defined subgroups in any given population in a specific context;³⁶ (2) that at a specific time certain sub-groups appear to respond more readily to evangelistic efforts than others; and (3) that this is an important factor in being able to explain why some churches grow numerically more quickly than other churches. Notice that in this early formulation McGavran's desire was to find methods of evangelization that were culturally-appropriate to the particular context of a specific

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people group. McGavran assumed that greater cultural appropriateness would be more effective in yielding more-rapidly growing churches. Later McGavran would draw upon others for words like "indigenization" and "contextualization" that would build upon these early suspicions.

In what follows, I will survey the development of McGavran's thought as it flowed into two missiological streams. (a) globally in terms of targeting responsive "unreached peoples," and (b) locally in North America in the use of the HUP to support planting ethnically homogeneous churches.

From People Movements to Unreached Peoples

In 1955 McGavran first published his landmark book *The Bridges of God*.³⁷ Here he affirmed "five great advantages" of people movements over what he called "the mission station approach." "First, they have provided the Christian movement with permanent churches rooted in the soil of hundreds of thousands of villages....(Second), they have the advantage of being naturally indigenous....People movements have a third major advantage. With them, 'the spontaneous expansion of the Church' is natural....³⁸ (Fourth), these movements have enormous possibilities of growth...The fifth advantage is that these (people) movements provide a sound pattern of becoming Christian...."³⁹

Four years later, McGavran began emphasizing the fact that different peoples demonstrate varying degrees of receptivity. In *How Churches Grow*,⁴⁰ McGavran wrote, "A nation is usually a conglomerate of peoples, sometimes bound together by language, religion and culture and sometimes divided by just these factors...Each people is played upon by many different forces to prevent or produce responsiveness to the Good News....How populations are composed is a factor of great importance for church growth. It is essential to discern each separate community and its degree of readiness...."⁴¹

In 1965 McGavran wrote a book chapter entitled, "Homogeneous Populations and Church Growth." Here is one of the earliest instances I can find of McGavran using the terms "homogeneous unit" and "mosaic."

Men (sic) meet the Church not only as isolated individuals but as multitudinous societies, each made up of inter-

related individuals who are often of one blood, skin color, language, dialect, or section of the country....Among the many aspects of human society none is more important to church growth than these homogeneous units of (hu)mankind.

This technical term, *homogeneous unit*⁴² is elastic...The Church will grow differently, not only in each different culture, but in each of the many homogeneous units that make up most human cultures....The general population may be compared to a mosaic. Each piece of the mosaic is a society, a homogeneous unit. It has its own way of life, its own standards, degree of education, self-image, and places of residence....

What is commonly called group conversion is really *multi-individual conversion*. It is many individuals believing on the Lord at the same time in shared knowledge of the joint action and mutual dependence on each other....

People movements...are only one way in which churches grow; the structure of society affects church growth at every level. Even in our relatively homogeneous American Society, churches are recognizing that certain denominations flourish in certain sections of society and not in others. An inescapable and significant truth is that society not only has a mosaic type of structure, but that different pieces of the mosaic are responsive to the Christian message in different measure.⁴³

In 1965 as well, McGavran made a strong case for this sociological hermeneutic in a controversial article published in *International Review of Missions*. "Right strategy tailors mission to fit each of the thousands of separate communities, so that in it the Church may grow...", " McGavran stated. "The one world we often speak of is made up of numerous ethnic units, suddenly brought close together but not yet fused into one race. Nor are they likely to be so fused in the near future....The hard fact is,...that by far the largest number of *growing* churches are growing *in* some tribe or segment of society."⁴⁴

McGavran further refined this line of reasoning, publishing, in 1970, the foundational work for all Church Growth thinking,

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Understanding Church Growth.⁴⁵ "The *homogeneous unit*," McGavran wrote, "is simply a section of society in which all the members have some characteristic in common. Thus a homogeneous unit (or HU, as it is called in church growth jargon) might be a political unit or subunit, the characteristic in common being that all the members live within certain geographical confines....The homogeneous unit may be a segment of society whose common characteristic is a culture or language, as in the case of Puerto Ricans in New York City or Chinese in Thailand....The homogeneous unit might be a tribe or caste....As these illustrations indicate, the homogeneous unit is an elastic concept, its meaning depending on the context in which it is used....A *Homogeneous Unit Church* may be defined as 'that cluster of congregations of one denomination which is growing in a given homogeneous unit....'"⁴⁶

The development of this line of reasoning led McGavran to articulate the observation which became foundational to all subsequent thought on the issue in the Church Growth Movement:

"MEN (sic) LIKE TO BECOME CHRISTIANS WITHOUT CROSSING RACIAL, LINGUISTIC OR CLASS BARRIERS."⁴⁷

Over the next fifteen years, McGavran's thought changed little on this subject, although he softened and qualified the way he spoke about homogeneous units. In 1972, Alan Tippett, McGavran's colleague and associate, articulated the concept by affirming, "When we speak of 'responsive populations' we are thinking of large homogeneous units of people who, once they have made their decision, act in unison. Many peoples have become Christian in this manner....Today the people-movement idea is more widely accepted by evangelical missionaries and strategists because it is better understood....Church-growth writings,...have been working on people movements for years and have resolved the basic problem by means of the term *multi-individual* to describe the phenomenon....Side by side with (the use of group structures in...the process of church-planting), some new dimensions, and warnings, have been developed about the *indigenous church concept*....The concept relates to the *permanence of culture change* when the social group accepts it, and speaks especially to *directed change* and therefore is significant both in anthropology

and mission."⁴⁸

In 1983, McGavran said it this way. "Consider, for example, a form of contextualization adopted in societies where important decisions are invariably multi-individual. In those societies, *until the group decides*, no one moves....In such cases, contextualization means making the decision to follow Christ a group decision, or better, a *multi-individual decision*. This form of contextualization has been enormously influential in the spread of the Christian faith."⁴⁹

The next year McGavran re-affirmed, "*Men and women like to become Christians without crossing linguistic, racial, and class lines*. This missiological principle, sometimes called the homogeneous unit theory, has been vigorously attacked from both the left and the right....Churches must fit the segments of population in which they are multiplying. Each must read the Bible in and worship in the language spoken by its segment....Since urban (hu)mankind is a vast mosaic of innumerable pieces, my thesis is that the Church in the cities of the world must have multitudinous new urban faces. A significant part of the plateaued or declining membership of many congregations and denominations is that their image of the church is limited to what it should be like in *their* segments of the urban population."⁵⁰ And, "In almost every land some pieces of the mosaic are receptive to the Gospel."⁵¹

One can find a consistent emphasis in global Evangelical missiology on the concept of people groups (reached and unreached), on their differentiation in terms of their receptivity or resistance, and on the strategic importance of focusing on responsive populations from 1974 through 1995. Examples of this could be drawn from the 1974 International Congress on World Evangelization in Lausanne, Switzerland; the Lausanne Continuation Committee meeting at Pattaya, Thailand in 1980; the World Consultation on Frontier Mission held in Edinburgh in 1980; the gathering of Lausanne II in Manila in 1989; and the AD2000 World Missionary Conference held in Seoul, Korea in 1995. Ralph Winter's strong advocacy of Frontier Missions, Winter's inclusion of this concept as central to the "Perspectives" program in church-based mission studies, David Barrett's statistical work on "unreached peoples," and the AD2000 Movement's emphasis on "a church for every people" are some of the arenas

that have highlighted this viewpoint in the minds of evangelical churches, pastors, and missionaries.

So, for example, Ed Dayton and David Fraser wrote about the various streams of thought that had contributed to the missiological foundations of their book on *Planning Strategies for World Evangelization*, not least being, “the work of MARC and other research groups which have sought to clarify, classify, and identify peoples and people groups throughout the world who are unevangelized or underevangelized....”

Evangelization must focus on a specific group or people group within its larger context. Only then is the target suitable for designing a plan to engage in evangelism.⁵²

What we need is more agreement as to how precisely to define an unreached people group. The best and most widely used definition emerged out of a 1982 meeting of forty mission leaders: “A people group within which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians able to evangelize this group.”

“When we consider the world in particularistic focus we classify individuals in terms of *people groups*: a significantly large sociological grouping of individuals who perceive themselves to have a common affinity for one another. From the viewpoint of evangelization this is the largest group within which the gospel can spread without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance.”⁵³

From People Movements to Planting Ethnically Homogeneous Churches in North America

The most intentional, focussed and thorough-going application of the concept of homogeneous groups occurred in American Church Growth led by Peter Wagner and helped along by Donald McGavran, Win Arn, and others. Already in 1971, when C. Peter Wagner was just beginning his tenure at the School of World Mission/Institute of Church Growth (SWM/ICG) at Fuller Seminary, Wagner wrote in *Frontiers in Missionary Strategy*, in a chapter entitled, “Strategy for Urban Evangelism,”

Homogeneous Units: Try not to allow diverse social and cultural elements to mix on the congregational level any

more than necessary. Churches must be built as much as possible within homogeneous units if they are to maintain a sense of community among believers.⁵⁴

By 1973, Donald McGavran had begun to pool his efforts with Win Arn in relation to North American church growth and McGavran's emphasis on people-group homogeneity came through clearly and forcefully. Together they authored a book entitled, *How to Grow a Church: Conversations about Church Growth*. The book is organized in an interview format.

ARN: "Earlier in our conversation you suggested that one of the reasons why churches grow is that the Gospel was preached to a clearly receptive part of the mosaic. Now, what you're saying is that responsiveness grows as we recognize that a community is a mosaic of many homogeneous groups."

MCGAVRAN: "Yes. Every community has many different segments. Many different communities live within the general community."

ARN: "The significance of homogeneous groups must be remembered as we consider growth."

MCGAVRAN: "Let's consider these homogeneous units. Some are ethnic. One thinks immediately of Blacks, Chicanos, Chinese, and Japanese immigrants; but among Caucasians also there are many ethnic or almost ethnic units...To use another illustration, the *hippies* with their counter-culture formed a distinct homogeneous group, a unit of society most "straight" churches were utterly unable to influence....⁵⁵

In 1976, Wagner presented McGavran's concept of homogeneous groups in a social mosaic not only as a hermeneutic of the cultural context, but as a desirable characteristic of a local congregation. In *Your Church Can Grow: Seven Vital Signs of a Healthy Church*—a basic textbook used for the next twenty years in many church growth courses—Wagner stated,

The fifth vital sign of a healthy, growing church is that its membership is composed of basically one kind of people...In church growth terminology this is called the

“homogeneous unit principle.” Its classic expression is found in McGavran’s *Understanding Church Growth*: “People like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic or class barriers....” A “homogeneous unit” is simply a group of people who consider each other to be “our kind of people.” They have many areas of mutual interest. They share the same culture. They socialize freely. When they are together they are comfortable and they all feel at home.⁵⁶

Notice that at that time, Wagner spoke of “the homogeneous unit PRINCIPLE,” something that McGavran consistently avoided doing. McGavran remained strictly descriptive in his observations about homogeneity – and he predominantly used the concept of homogeneity as a tool of social analysis of the reality outside the church. Thus Wagner transformed the concept into an ecclesiological characteristic, adding an imperative twist to it, making it a “principle” of the nature of vital, healthy, growing congregations.

In 1977 Donald McGavran and Win Arn stated that, “churches grow as they rightly discern the community.”

Community has typically been defined in terms of geography, that is, people who live within areas. However, for Church Growth thinking, it is more useful to define *community* as a group sharing common characteristics and or interests. In a given geographical area many different kinds of people can exist. An adequate understanding of *community* seeks to identify and understand the various groupings and the ways in which they interact....

The ministry area may include diverse ethnic and linguistic groupings. At least fifty-eight million people in the United States consider themselves ethnics....It may be un-Christian to demand that the ethnic become part of white, middle-class congregation. In the United States, the melting pot hasn’t been very hot. Racial, color, language, and cultural distinctions are important considerations for the growth of the church....

Certain congregations will be more effective in reaching certain kinds of people. Since all people need to be evan-

gelized, effective Church Growth strategy recognizes the diversities within a given ministry area and focuses its message for responsiveness....Each church, much like the fisherman, seeks responsiveness by using the right approach at the right time...⁵⁷

During the next several years, McGavran continued to advocate the same line of social analysis of the mosaic of multiple ethnicities in the North American context. In *Ethnic Realities and the Church*, published in 1979, McGavran wrote,

One cannot talk about society in any country without explicit mention of the sociological components of its population. In the United States, for example, out of a population of 220 million, 25 million are African Americans and an equal number Americans of Spanish name. Indeed, there are over fifty block of ethnics Americans, a few larger, most smaller than these. America is not a melting pot in which all metals are speedily reduced to a single comprehensive alloy. Rather, what used to be called the New World is a curry in which potatoes are still potatoes and chunks of meat are still meat. Ethnic, linguistic, economic, and occupational homogeneous units in every land are what make up the total population.⁵⁸

In 1980 in *Church Growth Strategies that Work* written with George Hunter, McGavran stated, "The faith spreads most naturally and contagiously along the lines of the social networks of living Christians, especially new Christians. Receptive undisciplined men and women usually receive the possibility when the invitation is extended to them from credible Christian friends, relatives, neighbors, and fellow workers from within their social web...When the church grows so fast that it becomes a movement, the following two events are usually occurring: (1) The faith spreads between persons who know one another within a particular social unit. (2) It spreads from one particular social unit to another within the same subculture or homogeneous population....Multitudinous homogeneous population units in American society call for tens of thousands of new churches....Protestant denominations must have many congregations of many different ethnic groups. They must have them soon. That

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means new churches, a costly multiplication of new churches in ethnic units and subunits all across the country...The thousands of pieces of the American population mosaic in which are millions of God's children who could be reconciled to him in the Body of Christ is abundant reason for thousands of new churches, especially designed to incorporate our ethnic brothers and sisters...."⁵⁹

In 1981, McGavran again emphasized the importance of recognizing the social realities of the multiple cultures in the cultural "kaleidoscope" of North America. "I am asking, 'Why are some American churches growing?' My ...answer is that in devising a growth strategy for their churches, they *recognize the social realities* and teach these to their members, leaders and task forces. Church growth does not take place in a vacuum. It occurs in an enormously complex society, which is really a kaleidoscope of changing parts. Society is constantly changing....Ethnic enclaves are enormously important....Nongrowing congregations and denominations refuse to see social realities....Hundreds of exclusive homogeneous units now in America prove that thousands of new churches are needed. American society is not composed of one kind of people....American churches ought to place glowing congregations in every homogeneous unit....Furthermore, most existing American congregations will not actively seek new immigrants and provide the care and linguistic accommodation which they crave...."⁶⁰

In 1979, Wagner wrote his doctoral dissertation on the subject, published as *Our Kind of People: The Ethical Dimensions of Church Growth in America*. "An increasing body of missiological research worldwide and sociological research within America itself," Wagner wrote, "indicates that most Christian people meet together for worship and fellowship within the basic sociological groupings into which they were born. Where Christianity is taking root in different nations and cultures of the world, it seems to develop most vigorously when it is allowed or even encouraged to grow in specific homogeneous units rather than forced to include different groups."⁶¹

At this point, Wagner seems to have been aware of the need to differentiate between a descriptive approach of sociological analysis of the context and a prescriptive affirmation of what church should be like.

My studies of a number of churches showing membership growth consistently indicate that they are growing within fairly homogeneous units....

Just because Christian churches do tend to be culturally homogeneous and just because they do seem to maintain more growth and vitality when they remain as such does not, of course, lead to the conclusion that they should be homogeneous. A description of what *is* cannot be taken as what *ought* to be, and more substantive ethical considerations must be brought to bear on the issue....⁶²

However, Wagner was clearly more optimistic about the growth of homogeneous congregations than heterogeneous ones, although at this point he was open to considering both options, both heterogeneous congregations and homogeneous unit churches..

The debate continues and probably will for some time to come, but the issue is clear. The classic statement of the homogeneous unit principle remains McGavran's: "Men like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic, or class barriers." Notice that McGavran is focusing here on non-Christians rather than Christians. His purpose in advocating the homogeneous unit principle is consistently that of bringing non-Christians into the Christian movement. An underlying assumption of the principle has always been that once people become Christians and are growing in their application of biblical ethical principles to their daily lives, they will lose their inclinations toward racism and prejudice....Other things being equal, a higher rate of conversion growth can be predicted for the homogeneous unit church.

The issue that needs urgent attention is how to do both. Ways and means must be discovered so that Christian brotherhood can be enjoyed to the greatest possible extent while at the same time maintaining a high evangelistic potential....⁶³

In 1981 Wagner wrote *Church Growth and the Whole Gospel* in which he tried to respond to some of the criticism which *Our Kind of People* had generated. "The 'homogeneous unit principle' is by far the most controversial of all church growth principles.

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Because it relates directly to socio-cultural issues, it cannot be omitted from this book....The homogeneous unit principle should be seen at the very beginning for what it really is: a tool which many have found helpful in implementing the evangelistic mandate. But it is nothing more or less than a tool....The essential purpose of the Church Growth Movement is not to fulfill the homogeneous unit principle, but to fulfill the evangelistic mandate...."⁶⁴

In response to the criticisms leveled at the HUP, Wagner explained that McGavran's view on the issue of homogeneity was descriptive, not normative; phenomenological, not theological; and involved a principle of evangelism, not Christian nurture. "The homogeneous unit principle should be regarded as a penultimate spiritual dynamic," Wagner affirmed. "The ultimate is that believers are all one in the Body of Christ, and the more this is manifested in a tangible way, the better..."⁶⁵

However, throughout the 1980s, Wagner became more forceful in his support of planting homogeneous unit churches, based on what he called the "homogeneous unit *principle*." Where this became especially strong in terms of almost exclusive support of homogeneous unit churches was in Wagner's descriptions of churches that grow in North America—and by inference, an affirmation of what churches in North America *ought* to be like. As I mentioned earlier, in 1976 Wagner had published *Your Church Can Grow: Seven Vital Signs of a Healthy Church*. Here Wagner stated, "The fifth vital sign of a healthy, growing church is that its membership is composed of basically one kind of people....Of all the scientific hypotheses developed within the church growth framework, this one as nearly as any approaches a 'law.'⁶⁶

In the same volume Wagner proposed the opposite of the "vital signs," that is, pathologies of churches that are not healthy. One of these was "*ethnikitis*...caused by a failure on the part of the church leadership to understand and apply the homogeneous unit principle to their planning in time. This failure will just certainly cause debilitation and death in a church as a failure of the liver or the kidneys will in the human body." A second related disease that Wagner pointed to was "*people blindness*" which "comes from a failure to recognize the homogeneous unit principle of church growth."⁶⁷ Wagner had developed these patholo-

gies in 1969 in *Your Church Can Be Healthy*.⁶⁸

This two-pronged emphasis on the HUP on Wagner's part in terms of both the signs of health and the signs of disease was a consistent emphasis throughout the 1980s in relation to American Church Growth. These same vital signs were repeated by Wagner in 1984 in *Leading Your Church To Growth*.⁶⁹

By the mid-1980s, however, Wagner was beginning to qualify his view of the HUP. "Every church growth principle has exceptions. Some church leaders are so accustomed to thinking in categories of true-false or right-wrong that they mistakenly place church growth principles in those frameworks. This is one reason why the homogeneous unit principle, for example, has offended many people. They have understood church growth leaders to say that homogeneous churches are the right way and true way for churches to grow, when they haven't been saying this at all. They have simply been describing the observable fact that, worldwide, most unchurched men and women are first attracted to Christ by hearing the gospel from those who talk like them, think like them, and act like them. Apparently God has been using such culturally-relevant channels of communication for the spread of the gospel for centuries, just as a matter of history. McGavran calls those channels "bridges of God." But he has never suggested that a church be kept homogeneous as a matter of doctrine or ethics. His ideal and mine is a church where lines of class, race, and language are completely broken down. Are there exceptions to the homogeneous unit principle? Of course there are. Are there exceptions to the seven vital signs of a healthy church? Certainly..."⁷⁰

Yet in 1987 when Wagner published *Strategies for Church Growth: Tools for Effective Mission and Evangelism*, the eight diseases were again prominently highlighted with little critique or qualification. Later in this book, in a section entitled, "Targeting the Cities," Wagner emphasized the HUP approach. "Traditionally, the geographically distant peoples have been the chief target of those we send to the mission field. But in today's cities, culturally distant peoples may be living in any neighborhood at all, and we are frequently blind to their existence as important targets for sharing the gospel. A first step is to see them as legitimate people groups who must be reached on their own terms or not reached at all....Some ethnics, particularly the upwardly mo-

bile, will want to become part of Anglo congregations. Some, the nuclear ethnics, will be reached only by homogeneous unit churches which gear their ministry to a single people group.”⁷¹

Three years later Wagner wrote *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest: A Comprehensive Guide*. A treasure-trove of excellent and helpful information on church planting, this manual works from the basis of the HUP. “In most American urban areas....geography and culture do not coincide. Webs of human relationships often supersede geographical boundaries. Social networks play a powerful role in human behavior....Social ties are more important (to people) than geographical locations. This is why the parish system where the ministry area of a local church is limited to prescribed geographical boundaries may have been useful centuries ago in relatively stable homogeneous societies, but is dysfunctional in today’s mobile urban mosaic. All this means that when you select a site for the new church, locate it in a place where the members of the social networks of your target audience or audiences can most easily get together....In any geographical territory will be found different people groups, homogeneous units, “ethclasses,” life-style groups, social networks or whatever term one wishes to use to describe the target audience....Skillful use of demographic information can help you estimate beforehand the degree of receptivity the members of the target audience will have to your methods of sharing the gospel.”⁷²

In 1996 Wagner published an updated and expanded version of the 1969 book, *Your Church Can Be Healthy*, repeating the eight pathologies and adding a ninth dealing with spiritual issues. The book includes recommendations from an impressive group of people involved in church planting and church growth in North America: Ted Haggard, John Maxwell, Lyle Schaller and Elmer Towns. The second pathology (ethnikitis) and the fourth (people-blindness) are offered there with little modification from the way they had appeared in 1969 in *Your Church Can Be Healthy*, and in 1976 in *Your Church Can Grow*.

One conclusion we might draw from the foregoing survey of Wagner’s emphases is that the prominence of the HUP in American Church Growth may have been the result of its strength in the “vital signs” and the “pathologies.” The importance of the “vital signs” and “pathologies,” may be appreciated by seeing

their impact on a colleague of Wagner's and a member of the American Church Growth Movement, Kent Hunter. Hunter became the founder of the Church Growth Center in Corunna, Indiana and also the editor of what was *Global Church Growth*, no known as *Strategies for Today's Leader*.

In 1983, in reviewing Wagner's "Seven Vital Signs" of growing churches in North America, Kent Hunter affirmed Wagner's fifth sign with no qualification or critique: "A healthy church is one that has basically one kind of membership. People like to be with people like themselves. They share common life styles, goals, foods and a common language...." Hunter then drew from Wagner's eight pathologies or diseases that inhibit the growth of congregations in North America, stressing without critique the second disease: "Ethnikitis: The key to understanding *ethnikitis* is the recognition of different cultural groups called *homogeneous units*. The church must make opportunities available for people to become disciples of Jesus Christ without leaving their own cultures. If there continues to be less and less of the old culture in the original church, it will die of *ethnikitis*."

Next, Hunter tackled "People Blindness." "The disease occurs when Christians look at all other people as being the same. It is a failure to see the distinctives of various groups of people. It is a problem of failing to accept people as different. Different people are reached for Christ in different ways...The answer to *People Blindness* in the church is to open the eyes of Christians to see that here are ethnic groups in the so called melting pot of society who refuse to melt. In fact, many people are becoming more ethnic oriented. They are more concerned about their cultural roots....Being able to see the world as a mosaic of cultures will enable the church to reach out within each segment of society, rather than trying to force everyone into the mold of the majority. The result is that more people will be won to Jesus Christ."⁷³

So one can appreciate the influence that the "seven vital signs" and the "eight pathologies" have had in strengthening the impact of the HUP on American Church Growth. Thus if one were to ask the American Church Growth Movement what it would advocate in relation to church planting in America—homogeneous churches or heterogeneous churches-- the answer is quite clear. In the view of the American Church Growth Movement, homogeneous unit churches are predicted to grow—

heterogeneous churches will apparently tend to be neither vital nor healthy.

But let's take the discussion one step further in terms of today's environment in North America. Exactly what do we mean by "homogeneity" today? Even following McGavran's concept of socio-cultural mosaics, how do we read our present reality? Clearly what I would call the "macro-cultural" categories of the U.S. Census Bureau (African-American, Asian, White, Native American, etc.) simply do not work. Hispanics are sometimes lumped among whites, ignoring places of origin and a host of other ways in which Hispanics differentiate themselves one from another. "Asian" is a catch-all term that is essentially meaningless, given the wide differences between, say the Korean, Chinese (American-born or Overseas-born) Japanese, Taiwanese, or Vietnamese, Thai, Cambodian, Laotian, and so forth.

When one gets into generational issues of immigrant families, the second- and third-generations are so culturally dissimilar to their immigrant parents that to lump them into the same "ethnic" categories is to ignore some of the most important features of cultural differences which anthropologists and sociologists would want us to hold dear. Further, when one begins to take into account major generational shifts even in "Anglo" culture (boomers, busters, twenty-somethings, retirees, etc.) the compartmentalization of society stretches the limits so far as to produce a profound balkanization, fragmentation, and atomization of American society. Eventually, "ethnicity" is reduced to the peculiarities of each individual person. That would mean taking the HUP to its absurd extreme of encouraging the creation of a church for every person. But maybe this is not so extreme as we think, given the present North American context. As Robert Bellah and his associates pointed out in *Habits of the Heart*, American religion has in fact moved to a high degree of individualization. As Lesslie Newbigin has emphasized during the last decade, modern Western religious values have become very strongly personalized and individualized to an extent that reduces faith to a matter of taste, and eliminates religious proclamation from the public arena.⁷⁴

Eddie Gibbs is right in his warning of the "dangers of over-emphasizing the homogeneous unit concept...By elevating the homogeneous unit concept into a principle which is normative and universal the church growth movement has laid itself open

to misunderstanding and misrepresentation...."⁷⁵

Whether intended or not on the part of McGavran,, Wagner, Arn and others in the American Church Growth Movement, the emphasis on homogeneous units tends to stress cultural differences to such a degree that oneness, togetherness, the universality of the Gospel is in danger of being lost. This issue is not the same as the ethical, racial, and social criticisms which many of the mainline church persons leveled against the HUP. Rather, I mean to point here to the fact that too strong an emphasis on the HUP makes its strengths (cultural sensitivity, contextualization, receptor-oriented communication, careful targeting and wise presentation of the Gospel in appropriate ways for specific audiences) – become glaring weaknesses.

They too quickly can atomize social cohesion and relegate persons to ever smaller units of homogeneity – completely ignoring the ways in which all persons share common human traits within a social structure which calls for common sharing of resources and experiences. In our present context in North America, especially in our cities, persons from so-called “homogeneous” groups may in fact represent people who all together attend the same schools, use the same banks, shop in the same stores, go to the same health facilities, use the same freeways, enjoy the same entertainments, rent the same videos, and maybe even live in the same neighborhoods. To divide these persons up into little “homogeneous units” is in fact to super-impose a social viewpoint that may be quite foreign to the reality of North America today. This calls us, then, to consider the other side of the coin – those who have studied North American reality from the point of view of universality rather than particularity. We will meet them in part “D” below.

ETHNIC – The Agents of mission

The thesis of this section is that an over-emphasis on universality tends to blind people to cultural distinctives and will then tend to superimpose one cultural perspective on the multicultural reality of North America.

The other side of the coin of an over-emphasis of homogeneity is an over-emphasis on universality to such an extent that we become insensitive and blind to cultural diversity and cultural uniqueness. If on the one hand church planting in North America has given too much emphasis to homogeneous units, on the

other hand it is also true that church planting in North America has at times been ethnocentrically blind.

As we saw above, multi-culturalness must not be confused with only race or only ethnicity. Nor should it be allowed to fragment into atomistic multi-culturalism that points only to differences between groups and offers no social cohesion. On the other hand, neither is it any longer realistic or appropriate for social analysts, missiologists of western culture and church planting strategists to pretend that cultural differences are not significant. Briefly I want to mention three streams of analysis in North America – three streams that demonstrate the ethnocentric blindness to which I am referring.

North American Church Growth Strategists

First, it is fascinating to see that apart from the HUP emphasis some of the most prominent strategists of church planting in North America have essentially ignored issues of multi-ethnicity. In the interest of space, I have taken just a brief sampling of works that are otherwise considered to be of major significance with regard church planting and church growth in North America.

The name of George Barna is well known for his demographic and social analysis done primarily through telephone surveys that seek to describe to pastors and church administrators the unchurched people in North America and how they might be reached. One of his most recent works is *Evangelism that Works: How to Reach Changing Generations with the Unchangeable Gospel*.⁷⁶ This work has much to commend it, and serves well to raise the consciousness of folks inside the church as to how differently those outside the church look at religious issues and church affiliation. With such a title, one would expect the book to contain solid research on the multiple ethnicities that make up the unchurched populations in North America. Sadly, this is not the case. There is no reference whatsoever to the multi-cultural context in which we find ourselves, nor to multi-ethnic or even homogeneous churches, or to the impact of multiple cultures on the shape of the church. It is not that Barna says this is unimportant—he simply does not mention it at all. Which of the multiple cultures of North America is he studying?

A well-known and important church planting strategist, Robert Logan wrote an excellent manual in 1989, entitled, *Beyond*

*Church Growth: Action Plans for Developing a Dynamic Church.*⁷⁷ Logan offers some excellent, concrete, practical suggestions for growing churches in North America, emphasizing especially the importance of cell-group ministries. He suggested ten principles for growing churches.

- Visionizing Faith and Prayer
- Effective Pastoral Leadership
- Culturally Relevant Philosophy of Ministry
- Celebrative and Reflective Worship
- Holistic Disciple Making
- Expanding Network of Cell Groups
- Developing and Resourcing Leaders
- Mobilizing Believers According to Spiritual Gifts
- Appropriate and Productive Programming
- Starting Churches that Reproduce.

One would expect that Principle 3 would have something to do with the multi-cultural reality of North America. To the contrary. The only references in the chapter to “cultural” issues refer to the differences in perspective between church and unchurched persons, one reference to the difference between “pre-war” and “post-war” people, and how the unchurched will view the sign and the name of your church (presumably a sign in English). Toward the end of the chapter Logan says, “Once your church of culturally similar people has been established, you will want to look carefully at how you can plant new churches among distinct ethnic or other culturally different groups from your own. Chapter 10 deals more with this idea.” However, chapter 10 only deals with what a homogeneous church needs to do internally to prepare itself to support the planting of new churches. It appears that Logan is dealing only with Anglo-Saxon, white Protestant suburban baby-boomer culture only. Why is the multi-cultural reality of North America ignored?

A third prominent figure among the strategists of church planting in North America is Carl George. In 1991 he published *Prepare Your Church for the Future*.⁷⁸ When I first saw the title, I thought the book would help me a great deal with understanding the matter of being Christ’s church in a world of multiple cultures and worldviews. Although the book has some excellent ideas, particularly with reference to what George called the “meta-church model,” there is not one paragraph dealing with multi-

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ethnicity or multi-cultural issues related to church growth. I would suggest that the meta-church model was almost exclusively constructed for white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant suburban upper-middle and upper-class congregations.

One of the best-known and highly-respected analysts of church growth, and one who has critiqued Church Growth theory is C. Kirk Hadaway. He wrote a helpful book in 1991 entitled, *Church Growth Principles: Separating Fact from Fiction*.⁷⁹ When I saw the title, I thought that surely Hadaway would help me with the matter of planting multi-ethnic churches in North America. Alas, I found no help here. Hadaway mentions some essential and urgent things like “the most important thing a church can do if it wishes to grow is evangelistic outreach and recruitment.”⁸⁰ And he mentions issues of the mix of ages of the members of the congregation, as well as the matter of the length of time the congregation itself has been in existence. Hadaway also says, “Churches must understand their context, their competition and their character.”⁸¹ However, there is no mention whatsoever of culture, ethnicity, ethnic churches, multi-cultural reality, or language issues in church planting. Is this work also ghettoized within a white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, suburban (WASPS) world?

Increasingly disappointed, I turned to two works written by two of my good friends, both works published in 1996. George Hunter III wrote *Church for the Unchurched*. Seeing the picture of faces of many colors on the cover of the book, I was anticipating a work that would help me with the matter of planting multi-ethnic churches in North America. The book is an excellent overview of the characteristics of what Hunter calls “apostolic” churches. Apostolic congregations, Hunter says,

1. Take a redundant approach to rooting believers and seekers in Scripture.
2. Are disciplined and earnest in prayer, and they expect and experience God’s action in response.
3. Understand, like, and have compassion for lost, unchurched, pre-Christian people.
4. Obey the Great Commission....Indeed, their main business is to make faith possible for unreached people....
5. Have a motivationally sufficient vision for what

- people, as disciples, can become.
6. Adapt to the language, music, and style of the target population's culture.
 7. Labor to involve everyone,, believers and seekers, in small groups.
 8. Prioritize the involvement of all Christians in lay ministries for which they are gifted.
 9. The members....receive regular pastoral care....
 10. Engage in many ministries to unchurched non-Christian people.⁸²

Eagerly I turned to Chapter Three: "A Case for the Culturally Relevant Congregation"⁸³ This is an excellent chapter helping people inside the church learn to lower the "culture barrier" between church culture and non-church culture, especially with reference to issues of contemporary worship forms, styles of music, and processes of the organization of the congregation. However, there is no treatment of multi-ethnic churches, of ethnicity, of crossing cultural barriers. There is no entry in the book's index for "immigrants": or "immigration." Language issues are not touched. In what cultural corner is this book located?

From Hunter, I turned to Thom Rainer who did his doctoral work with Peter Wagner, published *The Book of Church Growth*, and is considered a significant leader in church growth matters among the Southern Baptists. His 1996 book deals with *Effective Evangelistic Churches: Successful Churches Reveal What Works and What Doesn't*.⁸⁴ The book is the product of a survey of 576 mostly Southern Baptist churches with effective evangelistic programs in North America. The book is a treasure chest of wisdom and understanding concerning the growing of churches in North America. The research is excellently carried out and clearly reported.

I found two references to "ethnic ministries." One was to note that 130 of the 576 churches have begun ministries to ethnic groups, mostly making their facilities available to a particular ethnic group (I assume this means white congregations lending their facilities to a non-white group.) (pg. 141). The second reference on page 147 reported that, "most of the churches that did not view ethnic ministries as a factor in their evangelistic effectiveness were those that did not have such ministries. Forty-five

of the 576 (7.9 percent) cited ethnic ministries as a main or contributing factor to their evangelistic outreach." I found no other reference to multi-ethnicity, homogeneity, immigration or multi-cultural reality of North America. Could this work also be located so exclusively among the WASPS?

Researchers of the Church in North America

Lest the reader think I am being unreasonably critical of North American Church Growth Strategists, let me offer an overview of some significant works in the field of the study of religion and evangelization in North America. This survey is not intended to be exhaustive or even representative—it is only an illustrative sampling.

In 1993, James Bell with a D.Min. from Fuller Seminary, almost twenty years of pastoral ministry and a Th.D. candidate at the General Theological Seminary in New York City wrote *Bridge Over Troubled Water: Ministry to Baby Boomers, a Generation Adrift*.⁸⁵ Full of good suggestions and wise counsel about ministry to baby boomers, the book contains a chapter on "The Baby Boomer Cultural Ethos." Significantly, this chapter has a section entitled "Cultural Relativism." I expected that Bell would deal here with issues of multi-ethnicity. Instead, he transforms conversation about "relativism" and "pluralism" into a theological discussion regarding a plurality of faiths and the uniqueness of Christ. Important as this is, it is strange that Bell then makes only two passing references to multi-cultural matters and none to the matter of ethnic church planting. Why is there no recognition that dealing with Baby-boomers is in fact dealing with a specific, narrow segment of Anglo, affluent, educated, suburban America?

I found it curious that Donald Posterski's book, *Reinventing Evangelism: New Strategies for Presenting Christ in Today's World*, published in 1989 showed the same mistake found in Bell. The references to "pluralism" found in a chapter with that word in the title deal with issues of inter-religious proclamation of the Christian gospel among people of other faiths, completely ignoring the matter of multiple ethnicities and cultures.⁸⁶

In vain did I search in the following works for references to, acknowledgment of, or suggestions for, multi-ethnic churches in North America: The reader should note from the bibliography that all these works have been published within the last ten

years. What does it say to the church in North America that significant sample works like are essentially blind to matters of multi-ethnicity in North America?

- Harold Bloom, *The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation*.
- Charles Colson, *Against the Night: Living in the Dark Ages*.
- William Pannell, *Evangelism for the Bottom Up: What is the Meaning of Salvation in a World Gone Urban?*
- Wade Clark Roof, *A Generation of Seekers: The Spiritual Journey of the Baby Boom Generation*.
- David A. Roozen and C. Kirk Hadaway, edit. *Church And Denominational Growth: What Does (and Does Not) Cause Growth or Decline*.
- Doug Murren, *The Baby Boomerang: Catching Baby Boomers As They Return to Church*.
- Dean R. Hoge, Benton Johnson and Donald A. Luidens, *Vanishing Boundaries: The Religion of Main-line Protestant Baby Boomers*.
- Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion*.

The one notable exception in this group is Lyle Schaller. In three of his most recent works, Lyle Schaller recognizes the issue, though his treatment is disturbingly brief. In *21 Bridges to the 21st Century*,⁸⁷ Schaller lists forty-eight changes from 1901 to 1950 to 1981 to the present. Among these changes he mentions the matter of immigration and multi-ethnicity in America. However, he has no chapter dealing with ethnic churches and nothing on ethnic church planting or the development of multi-ethnic churches.

In *Innovations in Ministry: Models for the 21st Century* there is a brief notation about ethnicity and the church. "Recently, many leaders from Protestant denominations that served a constituency that in 1975 was at least 95 percent white decided that the all-white denominations should become a multicultural, multiracial, multiethnic, and multilingual religious body. This decision means the number-one audience for future new missions would be black, Hispanics, Asians, and other ethnic minority groups."

⁸⁸ Schaller then mentions as an example of a multi-ethnic urban church the First Presbyterian Church in Jamaica, Queens in New York City. This is a reference to a congregation whose descrip-

tion can be found in an earlier work by Schaller, *Center City Churches*.

In *Center City Churches: The New Urban Frontier*, Schaller included a chapter entitled "A Multi-Cultural Church in a Multi-Cultural Community." that describes in detail the history, development and present ministries of the First Presbyterian Church of Jamaica, Queens, New York City.⁸⁹ The suggestions offered at the end of this chapter are helpful.

"The leaders of the church write, 'Out of our experience in multi-cultural congregations we have learned these lessons.

- (1) Multi-cultural congregations grow best by word of mouth as enthusiastic members share their story and their pilgrimage in God's community.
- (2) Multi-cultural congregations grow when leadership is shared and is representative.
- (3) Multi-cultural congregations grow when the community of faith is nurtured through worship, education, and fellowship in content and relationships.
- (4) Multi-cultural congregations grow as they serve.
- (5) Multi-cultural congregations grow when they extend a warm and genuine welcome to visitors from another culture.

'We have also learned that a single-culture congregation moves to a multi-cultural identity through a combination of hope, vision, planning, prayer—and surprises. Among the central principles we have identified and can affirm are these:

1. The inclusive congregations has its identity grounded in biblical doctrine, especially that of reconciliation.
2. A healthy pride in diversity is nurtured.
3. Leadership is carefully planned, both clergy and lay.
4. Sociological factors are honestly studied and realistically understood, and these include:
 - availability of diverse people
 - peer identity for all
 - attractive, adequate facilities
 - accessible location in a nonthreatening setting
 - parking and security
 - membership of sufficient size to support quality worship, Christian education, pastoral care, ser-

vice/advocacy

5. Structuring and planning in terms of growth patterns, visible leadership, and a variety of styles of worship are essential.”

The Gospel and Our Culture Network

A third group studying the matter of the church and culture in North America are persons who around 1990 formed a network for conversation and reflection called the “Gospel and Our Culture Network” (GOCN), with George Hunsberger as the coordinator. Some of the most significant fruits of the group’s reflection were published in 1996 with the title *The Church Between Gospel and Culture: The Emerging Mission in North America*.⁹⁰ The book is organized in four sections: (I) Focusing the Mission Question; (II) Assessing Our Culture; (III) Discerning the Gospel; and (IV) Defining the Church.

Given the nature of the task that this network has set for itself, and given the obvious importance of cultural considerations built into the reflection of the group, one would expect to find a detailed analysis of the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural reality of present-day North America, coupled with some careful exploration of the forms of the church which would be appropriate for the various cultures of North America. Clearly this is within the arena of interest of the group. In the Introduction the authors affirm,

Every church everywhere will embody a local, particular expression of the gospel. God intends this to be so to give variegated witness to the salvation given in Christ. But each local expression is valid as an incarnation of the gospel only as it is faithful to the gospel’s version of what is good, true, and beautiful. If there is too little identification with the culture, the church becomes a subcultural ghetto. If it assumes too much of the culture’s perspectives and values, it domesticates and tames the gospel. The latter has become the major problem for the churches of North America....

According to such an analysis, the present crisis for the churches is not a matter of regaining lost ground or turf....Rather, it has to do with our need to encourage the encounter of the gospel with our culture. It will mean

learning how to be a church that by its nature lives always *between gospel and culture*, recognizing, on the one hand, the cultural dynamics that shape us as well as everyone else in this society, and, on the other hand, hearing the gospel that calls us to know and value and intend things in a very different way.⁹¹

So with great anticipation I examined this work as a possible guide to help me understand more clearly what is involved in being the church today in North America. Alas, I was to be disappointed. One looks in vain in the volume for any recognition of multi-ethnicity, of the fact of immigration, and of a consciousness of multiple cultures living side-by-side in North America. In fact, what is especially disconcerting is that there is no examination at all of what is meant by "culture." itself with reference to multi-ethnicity in the North American context. This volume demonstrates the cultural blindness can be created by an over-emphasis on the universal side of the continuum we are studying in this paper.

A couple of illustrative samples from the book will suffice. On page 24 we are told, "First, we must *pay attention to culture* (emphasis is Hunsberger's)." But there is no clarification of which culture, except at the bottom of the page we are told to *pay attention to each other*. "It will require of us a new range of "ecumenical" partnership if we are to hear the gospel as it takes form in the variety of cultures, subcultures, denominational cultures, and ethnic cultures of North America...At this point, the agenda takes on global dimensions because the growing pervasiveness of Western culture...has made the agenda Newbiggin has fostered a world-encircling one."

But what is meant here by "culture" in this use of the term? I would suggest that what is really being referred to is Western, WASPS culture which then eclipses all consideration of alternative world views that are in fact present in the North American reality.

This suspicion is borne out in an examination of the rest of the book. The excellent chapters in Part II are helpful if one is thinking of the Gospel's relationship to Western WASPS cultural values. But there is no clarification or qualification in the section as to who the subjects are to whom the word "our" refers. So on page 156 at the end of the chapter entitled, "The Gospel in Our

Culture,” the question is posed, “What is the gospel in our North American culture?” I realize that the author of this particular chapter (a brilliant anthropologist whose definition of worldview and approach to missionary anthropology I share and utilize all the time), and the various authors and editors of this volume did not have in the foreground of their thinking the matter of multi-ethnicity—a plurality of cultures—in the North American context. But that is precisely the point I am making. Is it by coincidence only that this issue was overlooked? The very fact that in the volume there is no recognition of multi-ethnicity and multiple worldviews in the North American reality—that fact itself—should serve to demonstrate how one particular dominant culture can eclipse all other worldviews in a particular context. Too strong an emphasis on the universality of the gospel to everyone keep us from seeing the particularity of the cultural groups that make up that reality.⁹²

Now, lest I be accused of spotlighting only one volume, albeit a symposium volume, let me add some additional titles of works by Evangelical authors whose thinking I deeply respect and whose theological work in many instances provides foundations for my own. Each of these books has excellent and important material. I share many of the concerns and find myself in substantial agreement with much of what they are presenting. However, the issue of planting multi-ethnic churches in North America has given me another set of glasses, a different hermeneutical question with which to read these works, among others. I find disturbing the extent to which they demonstrate the same phenomenon of cultural blindness which we have observed in others. What does this mean for Evangelicals attempting to plant multi-ethnic churches in North America?

Here I will only mention the titles. In each case I have looked in vain for a recognition that Western, WASPS culture is itself a particular contextualization of the gospel and a specific and particular cultural context for the Gospel in relation to multiple cultures and ethnicities in the North American reality.⁹³

John H. Armstrong, general editor, *The Coming Evangelical Crisis*.

James Montgomery Boice and Benjamin E. Sasse, edit. *Here We Stand: A Call from Confessing Evangelicals*.

Harold Bloom *The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation*.

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Os Guinness. *Dining With the Devil: The Megachurch Movement Flirts with Modernity.*

John F. MacArthur Jr. *Ashamed of the Gospel: When the Church Becomes like the World.*

Dennis McCallum *The Death of Truth; What's Wrong With Multiculturalism, The Rejection of Reason, and the New Postmodern Diversity.*

Alister McGrath. *Evangelicalism & the Future of Christianity.*

Douglas D. Webster. *Selling Jesus: What's Wrong with Marketing the Church.*

This section has sought to demonstrate the effect of an over-emphasis on universality that seems blind us to cultural distinctives and then tends to superimpose one cultural perspective on the multi-ethnic reality of North America. Coupled with section "C," I have tried to demonstrate how important it is to hold together both universal particularity and particular universality. On the one hand, when particularity is over-emphasized, as has been the case with the HUP, atomization and fragmentation may occur.⁹⁴ On the other hand, when universality is over-emphasized it tends to blind us to cultural distinctives and often will move us to superimpose one particular dominant cultural perspective on all others. Both of these possibilities may have disastrous and hurtful consequences in multi-ethnic and even multi-congregational settings. This, then, provides us with some sensitivity with which to review the various models suggested for multi-ethnic congregations. Our question, then, becomes, precisely how are they allowing a balance to be offered in which the members may experience the complementarity of the universality and the particularity of the Gospel.

CONGREGATIONS – *The Goals of mission*

The essential nature of the church is that it is a reconciling community, one family made up of persons from all the families of the earth, intended to demonstrate simultaneously oneness in Christ and cultural diversity.⁹⁵ This calls for a particular set of special cross-cultural and pastoral qualities of leadership, and therefore specific needs in relation to ministry formation. In this section I will

1. begin by briefly affirming the dual nature of the church, then
2. suggest a guideline about church planting in North

America that might be consistent with the Church's nature. Given this guideline, I will,

3. demonstrate how the guideline is in fact a consistent application of McGavran's original intent and a more recent concession on the part of Wagner. Finally,
4. I will briefly reflect on what "particular universality/universal particularity" might mean in assessing various models of planting multi-ethnic congregations.

The Oneness of the Church that is Made Up of Many persons

Our starting point here must be the nature of the Church as that is embodied in the local congregation. As I have pointed out in *God's Missionary People*, the nature of the Church resembles the nature of the Head of the Church in having two complementary yet united aspects: human and divine. The Church Universal can only be experienced as it takes concrete shape in the local congregation—wherever in the world that may be. And when we study the local congregation, we are especially struck by the way these two sides of its nature coexist. As we know it embodied in the local congregation, the Church is both theological and sociological; both a spiritual unity in faith in Jesus Christ its Head and a socio-cultural unity of human relationships that come together in corporate vision, sense of purpose, shared interests and similar needs.

Paul made a strong case for this in Ephesians 2:11-11. Reminding his readers that "at one time you were Gentiles by birth..." (differing greatly in their ethnic and cultural background). Yet they are all together united in Jesus Christ who makes them to become one. "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." They are socio-culturally many, yet theologically one. So Paul made it a habit of writing to "the Church" (singular and universal) "in" Ephesus, or Galatia, or Corinth, or Rome (plural in location and contextually particular). Authentic congregations that embody the most essential nature of the Church should demonstrate this dialectical reality-- they are simultaneously universal and particular.

Wayne Zunkel offered a helpful way of saying this with ref-

erence to issues of 'blindness.'

There are two areas of blindness of which Christians must be ever aware. Both are limiting and destructive.

The first is *people* blindness. A failure to see peoples as they are. To recognize that culture is for each person a total thing. Its foods, its values, its language, its little ways of doing things are all bound up together....God comes to us. First by becoming flesh and dwelling among us. By suffering and struggling and by being tempted at every point as we are (Hebrews 4:15). But more than that, by speaking to us in the heart language we understand, in ways that we are best prepared to hear....

But there is a *second* kind of blindness which afflicts us: *kingdom blindness*. Not only must we see the richness of cultural diversity, we must know that God wants his people drawn together into his own family, brothers and sisters together.

We see the breakthrough in the New Testament....

And it is Christ who alone can bring us together....

We need to see people in their richness and in the richness of their culture. We need also, at the same time, to see God's dream that we are all his children. Until we see and understand *both* those truths, we have missed a major part of what the gospel declares.⁹⁶

Thus it is imperative that we understand this dual nature of the Church when we consider the matter of planting ethnic churches and relate this to planting multi-ethnic churches. This greater balance of the two sides of the Church's nature was emphasized by Rene Padilla, David Bosch, Eddie Gibbs and Arthur Glasser. These authors were supportive of many of the directions and emphases of the Church Growth Movement and they shared the desire on the part of Church Growth folks to be sensitive to cultural matters and desirous of being culturally appropriate. However, they each have voiced their discomfort with over-emphasizing the cultural and sociological side of the Church's nature to the detriment of its universal and theological.⁹⁷

A Suggested Guideline for Church Planting in North America

If we take seriously the dual nature of the Church mentioned above, I would suggest we consider a new “guideline” of church planting in North America. The guideline is this:

Church-planting in North America should strive to be as multi-ethnic as its surrounding context.

In *God’s Missionary People* I draw from the work of Alvin Lindgren and Norman Shawchuck⁹⁸ in viewing the local congregation as one of many sub-systems within a larger system. If we utilize such a systems-approach to understand the nature of the congregation’s relationship to its surrounding culture, we will soon notice the following. People representing many different cultures in a place like, say, Cerritos, California, are the same folks who attend the same schools together, who keep their money in the same banks, shop at the same malls, use the same hospitals, buy groceries in the same supermarkets, and drive the same freeways. Is there, then, any reason for them to be “segregated” when it comes to their church attendance?

On the other hand, is it realistic or appropriate to advocate the planting of a multi-ethnic congregation in the middle of the cornfields of eastern Nebraska where my Dutch ancestors lived? Recognizing that the Church is both particular and universal, is it not time we move the discussion about homogeneity to another level and make our recommendation dependent on contextual analysis rather than theoretical dogma? In North America, are we not dealing with a changing context that now calls for different approaches and transformed perspectives? Please notice that this call to consider the planting of multiethnic congregations cuts equally in all directions, directed to all mono-ethnic, culturally-bound congregations: Anglo, Swedish, Dutch, Korean, Chinese, Hispanic, African American, and so on.

McGavran’s Original Intent and Wagner’s Concession

I believe that the approach outlined above is consistent with Donald McGavran’s original intent, although it yields a very different result. In the first edition of *Understanding Church Growth* (1970), McGavran voiced a suspicion that this might become the case. At the end of the chapter entitled “Without Crossing Barriers,” where we have seen that McGavran developed some of the most basic conceptualization of homogeneity, McGavran includ-

ed a small section, "An Urban Exception."

In true melting pots, the fact that the Church is a unifying society, different from any of the disappearing clans, classes, or castes, and seems likely to supersede them, draws men (sic) to the Christian faith....The Christian Church in the cities of the Roman Empire flourished in just such melting pots. She provided a supra-racial community or ecumenical fellowship to which city dwellers, emancipated from their provincial and tribal bonds, flocked in great numbers....In such cities (where there may be a true melting pot), some supratribal Churches are growing rapidly by conversion. Congregations which worship in a standard language and disregard class differences multiply furiously. In such cities the unifying brotherhood should be stressed, breaking with the old homogeneous unit should be a prerequisite for baptism, and worship in the standard language should become the rule.⁹⁹

This early suspicion of McGavran's underwent significant softening in subsequent editions of *Understanding Church Growth*. In the 1980 edition he preserves the title of the sub-section and says, "In (melting pot metropolitan cities) some conglomerate Churches are growing rapidly by conversion....In such cities the unifying brotherhood should be stressed and worship in the standard language should become the rule. In most cities, however, conglomerate Churches are not growing rapidly by conversion...."¹⁰⁰

Then in the 1990 edition, edited by Peter Wagner, the title of the subsection drops out completely and gets changed to "Common Sense Assumed." "The church, I am sure, will not deify the (homogeneous unit) principle I am describing in this chapter....If in a given instance, congregations neglecting the homogeneous unit principle grow better than those observing it, the church will not blindly follow the principle. It will be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit."¹⁰¹

After 1970, McGavran seemed to make a point of mentioning the possible exception to homogeneity in the development of what he began to call "conglomerate congregations."¹⁰² Although McGavran's major interest was in whether such congregations

grew numerically or not, I would like to suggest that there was something else in the back of his mind. As we saw earlier, McGavran's foundational thought had to do with cultural sensitivity that recognizes what is happening in a given context and responds appropriately. This led him to stress predominantly the matter of cultural differences between groups. But behind this was a profound desire to be "indigenous," to be contextually attuned to the cultural realities of the situation in which one was to plant churches. It was by no means coincidental that McGavran's first major faculty appointment when he established the School of World Mission/Institute of Church Growth was to bring in

Interestingly, Alan Tippett, a world-class missionary anthropologist and McGavran's first colleague in the School of World Mission, once wrote a chapter entitled "The Dynamics of the Bicultural Church." In one section he stresses that we should "recognize the ethnic units"¹⁰³ But in the next section he affirms, "Recognize the Multi-Ethnic Context." "I have already suggested that we must go further than just recognize the different ethnic units. We need to realize that we live in a multi-ethnic world. This is our context." Tippett then goes on to describe his experience in a multi-ethnic congregation in Fiji. "We patronized each other's public functions and money efforts; we shared each other's preachers and teachers; and social events like weddings were quite multi-ethnic. Thus in the fellowship of believers, although our organizations were distinct and we retired into Fijian, Hindustani or English at many points, yet we were always glad for the events we shared as a multi-ethnic community, whether these were conducted in English or were multi-lingual....On the level of the Church as the Body of Christ proclaiming the word of Christ to the outside world, we sought to demonstrate that the Gospel was adequate to incorporate all races....In the example of multi-ethnic fellowship and witness I cited above, it was apparent that not only were the ethnic entities recognized, but they were also working together with their hearts beating as one heart. The diversity was within a unity. I venture to say these people were 'one in Christ' in spite of their differences. They were well aware of the fact that they belonged to different *folds*, yet were also one *flock* under one Shepherd."¹⁰⁴ It seems to me that Tippett's emphasis here is in tune with what McGavran

originally intended.

C. Peter Wagner has been changing in his assessment of the HUP, and moving in the direction of grudgingly affirming the possibility that planting multi-ethnic congregations may be appropriate. In 1981, in *Church Growth and the Whole Gospel*, Wagner offered the suggestion that in specific multi-ethnic situations, the church planter should consider a continuum from homogeneous to “conglomerate” (multi-ethnic or multi-cultural) relationships in a congregation. There, Wagner suggested that *primary* relationships are best developed along homogeneous lines, and *secondary-level* relationships might take place in conglomerate settings. Wagner then tied this in with his well-known “family, cell, congregation, celebration, festival” typology of congregational life, suggesting that at the level of “family” homogeneity is best affirmed—and at the level of “festival” there is a place for conglomerate relationships.

This concession was significant, since it built on an affirmation that Wagner had made two years earlier in *Our Kind of People*. “The local congregation in a given community should be only as integrated as are the families and other primary social groups in the community, while intercongregational activities and relationships should be as integrated as are the secondary social groups in the community or society as a whole.”¹⁰⁵

Interestingly, by 1996 Wagner was willing to view a multi-ethnic congregation with in a somewhat more positive light. In *The Healthy Church*, he lists several solutions as to how one might respond to “ethnikitis.” Wagner states, “Many church leaders, aware that in the kingdom of God barriers of race and culture and social class should not divide believers, desire their congregations to mix people of various cultures in worship, fellowship and ministry.” (Notice that these are for Wagner primary relationships, not secondary.) “This would, by far, be the most ideal way to handle church ethnikitis. A few experiments in developing conglomerate churches have succeeded.” (Here Wagner mentions the Church on Brady with Tom Wolf, a church which Manuel Ortiz also mentions.)

“Realistically speaking,” Wagner says, “the odds of success for a conglomerate church are so low that I include it in this list of options somewhat reluctantly. I know of many pastors who invested deeply in such efforts, only to find that their subsequent failures led to critical setbacks in their personal lives and their

ministries, and I hesitate to do or say anything that would tend to add to their numbers...."¹⁰⁶

Harvie Conn recently edited *Planting and Growing Urban Churches: From Dream to Reality*. This symposium contains a chapter by David Britt entitled, "From Homogeneity to Congruence." I believe what Britt is calling "congruence" is very close to the contextual approach I am suggesting in advocating the planting of multi-ethnic churches. After a thoroughgoing analysis of McGavran's concept of homogeneity, and having noted the difficulties we face in using it in urban settings, Britt suggests that we substitute a linear, stacked-up analysis of the multiple institutional and contextual factors that impact church growth with the concept of "congruity" which compares the make-up and nature of the congregation with the make-up and nature of the context. Britt writes,

Congruence is similar to homogeneity in that congruence also assumes that most of us are attracted to others who share like values. Congruence differs, however, from homogeneity in that it refers not only to a characteristic of the congregation, but to a relationship between the congregation and its community context. My adoption of the term stems from my understanding of social theory, especially that of (Peter) Berger...

Where the cultural symbols of a congregation are congruent with those of a local community, the gospel will receive an easier hearing. Church-community congruence forms the backdrop for church growth or decline....

The church-community congruence model argues...that conservative congregations grow best when they articulate the values already present in their cultural contexts. These values may be different from the values assumed to be dominant in the national culture, but they are community values in a local sense.¹⁰⁷

It may be that the concept of "congruence" will offer us a helpful way to allow the multi-ethnicity of the context to influence the multi-ethnicity of the congregations we plant in that context. The reader should note that this approach does not say that planting *homogeneous* congregations is inappropriate. Quite the contrary. The "guideline" I am suggesting allows us to affirm

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the planting *both* of homogeneous *and* multi-ethnic congregations. As David Shenk and Ervin Stutzman said in *Creating Communities of the Kingdom*,

In a pluralistic society like North America or in most large cities around the world, it is desirable to plant both homogeneous people group churches and heterogeneous churches which are highly diverse in ethnic composition. Furthermore, it is never right to exclude any true believers from the church of their choice. No congregation is a true colony of heaven on earth if it denies membership to a person because of racial, ethnic, language, social, educational, or economic considerations. That fact is central to the New Testament understanding and expression of church. At the same time, it is right for people to worship in the language and idiom of their choice. It is for this reason that we believe it is both biblical and wise, especially in urban settings, to plant both heterogeneous and homogeneous congregations.¹⁰⁸

*Models of Multi-ethnic Church Planting*¹⁰⁹

Eldin Villafañe has suggested that there are at least four options which address the matter of multi-ethnicity. "The first model is the 'multi-congregational model'....This pattern is 'as a corporation composed of several congregations (Anglo and ethnic) in which the autonomy of each congregation is preserved and the resources of the congregations are combined to present a strong evangelistic witness in the community.'"

"The second model is the 'temporary sponsorship model.' This model pictures an Anglo congregation using its resources to minister to the ethnic groups in the neighborhood by aiding them to establish their own ethnic congregation...."

"The third model is the 'bi-lingual, bi-cultural model.' This is an 'integrated church' model, where members of more than one homogeneous unit hold membership and participate in the activities of a single congregation.

"The fourth model is the 'total transition model.' This pattern involves the planned phasing out of the original congregation and the phasing in of a new ethnic neighborhood congregation...."

The above models and others than can be added represent

structural adaptations that try to respond to communities undergoing ethnic transitions. While the 'multi-congregational model' may be the ideal for urban ministries in transition communities, the other models are viable options. The particular *context of ministry*, with its distinct demographic trends, cultural/ethnic diversity, and socioeconomic reality, coupled with the 'health' of the receiving and the original church, are the most determinative factors in the Spirit-led selection of the appropriate model."¹¹⁰

Oscar Romo has advocated what he called, "Transcultural Outreach," which he describes as following at least two different paths. The models he mentions involve a number of multi-ethnic dynamics and overlap with what some seem to be calling "models of multi-ethnic church planting."

Transcultural Outreach is the effort of an existing homogeneous church to share the gospel with persons of another ethnic/language-culture group residing in the community...

The recent emergence of the "indigenous satellite" approach uses the bases of the concept (of Transcultural Outreach), encouraging a continual ministry. Transcultural Outreach provides a way for a local church to minister to all the people in the community regardless of culture and language. It also permits the usage of existing facilities initially. Often this has led to the development of a bilingual, bicultural church...

Decades of change in America and the diversity of value systems call for a mission strategy focused on ethnic people. The strategy should consider the nation, especially the urban areas, as a related unit made up of people who live not only in a geographical, professional, and socio-economic community, but also in the ethnic community.¹¹¹

In *The Hispanic Challenge: Opportunities Confronting the Church*, Manuel Ortiz described a number of "ecclesiastical structures" as possible options in ethnic church planting. He mentioned "Model 1: Growing Alongside," "Growing Within," "Growing Without," "Growing Through House Churches," and "Growing Into (Assimilation)." Without taking time here to describe each of these, it is significant to note that in this work Ortiz

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suggests that primarily contextual matters and issues of the historical development of particular congregations should assist the church planters in selecting from among these models. Clearly Ortiz's thinking has progressed since the 1993 publication of this work, and in *One New People* Ortiz is wrestling more deeply with the issues that face congregations in affirming ethnic diversity while finding processes that positively contribute to oneness and unity.

Here is the issue. These and other "models" should not be evaluated only on the basis of whether they grow numerically, nor only on whether the "work" in terms of reducing cultural conflict and preserving the cohesion of groups. They should not even be evaluated on whether they are well-received by the people or groups in a particular context. I believe the primary criterion on which models should be evaluated is the extent to which they are able to preserve a contextually-appropriate balance between the UNIVERSALITY and the PARTICULARITY of the Church. We should seek to avoid both cultural blindness nor cultural imposition. Thus, given a particular missional context, particular styles of leadership, specific cultural emphases, and concrete changes occurring over time, the models that best seem to foster a complementarity of universality and particularity should be the ones we encourage. In other words, we should seek to balance the "multi" aspects with the "ethnicity" factors.

In today's multi-ethnic North America, we need to find ways of planting "multi-ethnic" churches where cultural and ethnic differences are affirmed, appreciated and celebrated. Yet at the same time we are beginning to understand that ethnicity (particularity) as such must not be the basis of unity for these congregations. They are brought together and held together as disciples of Jesus Christ, as the Church. Their basis for unity needs to relate to the *universality* of the Gospel—but that universality must complement rather than eclipse the marvelous richness of ethnic diversity which can be fostered in multi-ethnic congregations.

Here, then is both the exciting possibility and deep pitfalls facing us when we attempt to construct congregations that celebrate and embody the complementarity of the universality and the particularity of God's mission.

CONCLUSION

The extent to which a particular congregation embodies the

fullness of the Church's nature depends on many internal and external factors past and present. Thus a variety of models needs to be encouraged and attempted.

So, what kind of church should I attend in North America? A Spanish-speaking congregation because I grew up in Mexico speaking Spanish? A congregation predominantly made up of people of Dutch descent? Or a congregation of WASPS baby-boomers with a degree from a university in North America? Does it not seem that such questions are rather absurd? And yet, I also know that my ethnic and cultural history affects the way I see the world, the way I relate to Jesus Christ, and the manner in which I relate to other people. In fact, I often find I feel most comfortable in a worship service that is bi-lingual in Spanish and English. Or could I say that I feel most at home in a multi-ethnic church?

If the church is for everyone, why is not everyone in the church?

The challenge lies before us. Let's get on with the task of planting multi-ethnic congregations in North America.

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NOTES

1. This paper was originally delivered at the Ted W. Ward Consultation on the Development and Nurture of Multiethnic Congregations, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Chicago, Illinois, Nov. 3-4, 1997." The participants also read Manuel Ortiz, *One New People: Models for Developing a Multiethnic Church* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1996), a work I

would highly recommend for the readers of this paper as well.

2. This combination of universality and particularity, with special emphasis on the Gospel of Matthew was the subject of Paul Hertig's Ph.D. dissertation done at the School of World Mission at Fuller Seminary. His work will be forthcoming from Mellen Biblical Press as *Galilee in Matthew's Narrative: A Multicultural and Missiological Journey*.

3. In this regard, I have offered an outline of Paul's missiology in Romans in, "The Effect of Universalism on Mission Theology" in *Mission on the Way*.³ (Van Engen 1996a: 159-168).

4. In *Mission on the Way*, I spoke of this as a missiology that is "faith-particularist" in Jesus Christ; "culturally pluralist," dealing with all the various peoples of the earth; and "ecclesiological inclusivist" all peoples are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb (Van Engen 1996a:183-184).

5. Young Lee Hertig, "Female Leader," *Theology News and Notes* 40:4, December, 1993, 14. She is quoting here from David Augsburg. *Pastoral Counseling Across Cultures*. Phil.: Westminster, 1986, 49-50.

6. Quoted by Eldin Villafañe, *Seek the Peace of the City: Reflections on Urban Ministry*. G.R.: Eerdmans, 1995, 47.

7. C. Peter Wagner, "A Vision for Evangelizing the Real America," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, X:2, April, 1986, 59.

8. Orlando Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate: Mission Beyond Christendom*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988, 72-73.

9. Oscar Romo, *American Mosaic: Church Planting in Ethnic America*. Nashville: Broadman, 1993, 207.

10. Jorge Taylor, "'Preparing Leaders for a Diverse, Multicultural Church,'" *Theology News and Notes*, 40:4, Dec. 1993, 11.

11. *San Gabriel Valley Tribune*, Wednesday, Sep. 10, 1997, B1.

12. *Inland Valley Daily Bulletin*, Wednesday, Sep. 10, 1997, A1.

13. *Ibid.*, A1.

14. Ahlstrom, Sydney E *A Religious History of the American People*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1972, 121-471.

15. *Ibid.*, 436.

16. *Ibid.*, 517-518.

17. Winthrop S. Hudson, *Religion in America: An Historical Account of the Development of American Religious Life*. N.Y.: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965.

18. Jerald C. Brauer *Protestantism in America: a Narrative History*. Phil.: Westminster Press, 1953. Brauer says, "Thus the early years witnessed the planting of the Christian Church in America. The Church came in many ways, using many languages. It came with the Anglicans, with the Puritans, with the Dutch Reformed, and with the Swedish Lutherans. To this day there is no one Christian group that embraces all the American people. It is strange, because each group thought that it was establishing its form of Christianity as the true and final form for

the New World. This was not to be...By 1646, 18 languages could be heard along the Hudson River alone. The gospel was preached in all tongues." (28).

19. William Warren Sweet. *The Story of Religion in America*. N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1930. Sweet says, "From 1865 to 1884 more than seven million immigrants entered the ports of the United States, nearly 50 percent of whom came from Ireland and Germany. This immigration was mostly Catholic, Lutheran, or rationalist and its influence upon American Protestantism is most important" (334).

20. Martin E. Marty, *Pilgrims in Their Own Land: 500 Years of Religion in America*. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 1984. See also Martin Marty early thought-provoking and uncannily predictive work, *The New Shape of American Religion*. N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1958.

21. See Oscar Baldemor, "The Mission of the Church Among the Filipino Immigrant Communities in Los Angeles Country," (Dissertation Proposal), Pasadena: FTS, 1991; and Natarajan Jawahar Gnaniah, *Developing a Missiological Basis for Reaching the Immigrant Asian Indian Community in Southern California* (Ph. D. Dissertation) Pasadena: FTS, 1996.

22. A couple of excellent summaries of this history have been compiled by a number of people; for example, Juan Francisco Martinez, "Hispanic Catholicism in the 19th Century United States Southwest (1848-1880). (Doctoral tutorial., Pasadena: School of World Mission, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1992.) and Francis Raymond Lyons, *Growth of Episcopal Hispanic Ministry in Los Angeles: 1980-1990* (unpublished M.A in Missiology thesis, Pasadena: FTS. 1997.

23. C. Peter Wagner, *Our Kind of People: The Ethical Dimensions of Church Growth in America*. Atlanta: John Knox. 1979, 38-39. Wagner is quoting from Louis Wirth, "The Problem of Minority Groups," in *Theories of Society: Foundations of Modern Sociological Theory*, ed. Talcott Parsons et al, 2 vols.(N.Y.: Free Press, 1961), 1:309; and Tamotsu Shibutani and Kian M Kwan, *Ethnic Stratification: A Comparative Approach* (N.Y.: Macmillan, 1965) 47. Wagner adds in a footnote: "Ancestry is also a prominent dimension of Max Weber's discussion of ethnic groups. He regards as ethnic those human groups that 'entertain a subjective belief in their common descent...in such a way that this belief is important for the continuation of non-kinship communal relationships,...' M. Weber, "Ethnic Groups," in *Theories of Society*, 1:306. See also Natarajan Jawahar Gnaniah, *Developing a Missiological Basis for Reaching the Immigrant Asian Indian Community in Southern California* (Ph. D. Dissertation) Pasadena: FTS, 1996, 19-20.

24. C. Peter Wagner, in *Our Kind of People*; op cit., documents the rise and strength of the "melting-pot" concept in American social ideology, especially strong around the turn of the century. See pp. 45-48; 95-96.

25. Gnaniah cites here Don C. Locke, *Increasing Multicultural Understanding: A Comprehensive Model*, Newbury Park: SAGE, 1992.

26. Gnaniah is quoting here from Donald A. McGavran, *Ethnic Realities and the Church*. So. Pas.: William Carey, 1979, 7.

27. Gnaniah is quoting from Thom and Marcia Hopley, *Reaching the World Next Door*. Madison: IVP, 1993, 126.

28. Orlando E. Costas, op cit., 72-73.

29. Shenk, David W. and Ervin R. Stutzman. *Creating Communities of the Kingdom: New Testament Models of Church Planting*. Scottsdale: Herald. 1988, 126.

30. Oscar Romo, op. cit., 207.

31. C. Peter Wagner, "A Vision for Evangelizing the Real America," op cit., 60.

32. C. Wayne Zunkel, *Church Growth Under Fire*. Scottsdale: Herald, 1987, 112-113.

33. Helpful overviews of the development of the "people group" concept toward the formation of the HUP in Donald McGavran's and Peter Wagner's thinking – and through them throughout the Church Growth Movement – may be found in Eddie Gibbs, *I Believe in Church Growth*. G.R.: Eerdmans, 1981, 115-130; Wayne C. Zunkel, *Church Growth Under Fire*. Scottsdale: Herald.. 1987, 100-119; and Thom Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth: History, Theology and Principles*. Nashville: Broadman. 1993, 254-263.

34. In his Preface written for the Third Edition in 1955, McGavran describes how the original work by Pickett, Singh and McGavran was first published in 1936 under the title *Christian Missions in Mid-India*. A second edition in 1938 contained a foreword by John R. Mott. For the third edition the title was changed to *Church Growth and Group Conversion*, and Pickett's terminology of "mass movement" was changed to "people movement."

35. J. Waskom Pickett, A. L. Warnshuis, G.H. Singh, and Donald A. McGavran. *Church Growth and Group Conversion*, Pasadena: William Carey, 1973, 1-7, 98-99.

36. In seeking to understand McGavran, one must take into consideration the context that provided the background for his thinking: the Indian sub-continent where for centuries populations have been divided into distinct castes. However, this does not necessarily mean that McGavran works from a racist set of presuppositions, as some have simplistically tended to accuse him.

37. N.Y.: Friendship.

38. Here McGavran is borrowing and affirming the phrase used by Roland Allen in Allen's book by that title.

39. D. McGavran, *Bridges of God*, 88-92.

40. This seminal work of McGavran's includes a very favorable Introduction by Hendrik Kraemer!

41. Donald A. McGavran, *How Churches Grow*. N.Y.: Friendship. 1959, 41-44.
42. The emphasis here is McGavran's.
43. Donald A. McGavran, "Homogeneous Populations and Church Growth," in Donald A. McGavran, edit. *Church Growth and Christian Mission*. So. Pas.: William Carey, 1965, 69-74.
44. Donald A. McGavran, 1965 "Wrong Strategy, the Real Crisis in Mission," *IRM* 54, October, 451-461. This was reprinted in Donald A. McGavran, edit. 1972, 97-107. The quotations here are taken from the 1972 reprint, 103-106.
45. Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*. G.R.: Eerdmans 1970 (Revisions in 1980 and 1990). The 1990 revision was done by C. Peter Wagner.
46. *Ibid.*, 83-87, 210-211. (The emphasis is McGavran's.)
47. *Ibid.*, 198. See Eddie Gibbs, *op cit.*, 117; C. Wayne Zunkel 1987, 100; Thom Rainer 1993, 254, 256; Reeves and Jenson 1984, 37; C. Peter Wagner 1976, 110; 1979, 32; 1981, 167.
48. Alan Tippett, "The Holy Spirit and Responsive Populations," in: McGavran, Donald A. edit. *Crucial Issues in Missions Tomorrow*. Chicago: Moody, 78-79.
49. Arthur F. Glasser and Donald A. McGavran. *Contemporary Theologies of Mission*. G.R.: Baker. 1983, 148.
50. Donald A. McGavran, *Momentous Decisions in Missions Today*. G.R.: Baker, 1984, 100, 180.
51. Donald A. McGavran, "Ten Emphases in the Church Growth Movement," in Doug Priest, Jr., edit. *Unto the Uttermost, Missions in the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ*. Pasadena: William Carey, 1984, 252.
52. In a footnote, Hesselgrave says,
"And so, over the years since World War II both the vision and the plan... for world evangelization have slowly emerged. The slogan 'the evangelization of the world in this generation,' has taken on new meaning. People groups must be identified, described and targeted. Then the gospel must be proclaimed with a view to establishing viable churches among them." David Hesselgrave, *Today's Choices for Tomorrow's Mission: An Evangelical Perspective on Trends and Issues in Mission*, G.R.: Zondervan, 1988, 59.
53. Edward R. Dayton and David A. Fraser. *Planning Strategies for World Evangelization*. (Revised Edition) Monrovia: MARC; G.R.: Eerdmans. 1990., 50, 72, 102.
54. *Frontiers in Mission Strategy*. Chicago: Moody. 1971, 194.
55. Donald A. McGavran and Win Arn, *How to Grow a Church: Conversations about Church Growth*. Glendale: Regal. . 1973, 47-48.
56. C. Peter Wagner, *Your Church Can Grow: Seven Vital Signs of a Healthy Church*. Glendale: Regal, 1976, 110.

57. Donald A. McGavran and Win Arn. *Ten Steps for Church Growth*. N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1977, 74-76.
58. Donald A. McGavran. *Ethnic Realities and the Church*. So. Pas.: William Carey, 1979, 7.
59. Donald A. McGavran and George G. Hunter III. *Church Growth Strategies that Work*. Nashville: Abingdon. 1980, 30-31, 111-113.
60. Donald A. McGavran, "Why Some American Churches are Growing and Some are Not," in Elmer L Towns, John N Vaughan and David J. Seifert, edits. *The Complete Book of Church Growth*. Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1981, 290-294.
61. Atlanta: John Knox, 1979, 11. Wagner goes on here to give as an example of rapidly-growing churches in North America the ethnic church planting work of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.
62. *Ibid.*, 16.
63. *Ibid.*, 32-33.
64. C. Peter Wagner, *Church Growth and the Whole Gospel: A Biblical Mandate*. N.Y.: Harper & Row. 1981, 166-167.
65. *Ibid.*, 167-168. Wagner cites here McGavran's "classic formulation of the principle....'Men like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic or class barriers'" (pg 167).
66. Glendale: Regal, 1976, 110.
67. *Ibid.*, 125, 128. Wagner gives an example here the growth and development of Circle Church in Chicago, stating, "If Circle Church does turn out to be a mixture of homogeneous units, this might be one reason why it is not growing. The homogeneous unit principles is a vital sign of *growing* churches, not plateaued churches....I still argue....that Circle Church is a homogeneous unit." (Emphasis is Wagner's, pg. 129).
68. C. Peter Wagner, *Your Church Can Be Healthy*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1969.
69. C. Peter Wagner, *Leading Your Church to Growth: The Secret of Pastor/People Partnership in Dynamic Church Growth* Ventura: Regal. 1984, 37. (pg 44).
70. *Ibid.*, 44.
71. C. Peter Wagner, *Strategies for Church Growth: Tools for Effective Mission and Evangelism*. Ventura: Regal, 1987, 191.
72. C. Peter Wagner, *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest*. Ventura: Regal, 1990, 80-81.
73. Kent R. Hunter, *Foundations for Church Growth*. New Haven, Missouri: Leader Publ. Co. 1983, 108-116.
74. See, e.g., Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* G.R.: Eerdmans, 1986; *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*. G.R.: Eerdmans, 1989 and *Truth to Tell: The Gospel as Public Truth*. G.R.: Eerdmans, 1991.
75. Eddie Gibbs. *I Believe in Church Growth*. G.R.: Eerdmans, 1981,

126-128. Gibbs draws here from Rene Padilla's very forceful and credible critique of the theological, biblical and ecclesiological issues involved with elevating observations about homogeneity to a "principle." See C. Rene Padilla, "The Unity of the Church and the Homogeneous Unit Principle," *IBMR* VI:1, January, 1982, 23-30; reprinted in Wilbert Shenk, edit. *Exploring Church Growth* G.R.: Eerdmans, 1983, 285-303.

76. George Barna. *Evangelism that Works: How to Reach Changing Generations With the Unchangeable Gospel*. Ventura: Regal. 1995.

77. Robert E. Logan. *Beyond Church Growth: Action Plans for Developing a Dynamic Church*. G.R.: Fleming H. Revell. 1989.

78. Carl F. George *Prepare Your Church for the Future*. Tarrytown, N.Y.: Fleming H. Revell, 1991.

79. C. Kirk Hadaway. *Church Growth Principles: Separating Fact from Fiction*. Nashville: Broadman, 1991.

80. *Ibid.*, 192.

81. *Ibid.*, 202.

82. George G. Hunter III. *Church for the Unchurched*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1996, 29-32.

83. *Ibid.*, 55-80.

84. Nashville: Broadman, 1996.

85. Wheaton: Victor Books, 1993.

86. Downers Grove: IVP, 1989.

87. Nashville: Abingdon, 1994.

88. Lyle E. Schaller, *Innovations in Ministry: Models for the 21st Century*. Nashville: Abingdon, 48.

89. Nashville: Abingdon, 1993, 99-108.

90. George R. Hunsberger and Craig Van Gelder, edits. *The Church Between Gospel and Culture: The Emerging Mission in North America*. G.R.: Eerdmans, 1996.

91. *Ibid.*, xvi-xvii.

92. A sequel volume flowing from the same network's work is Darrell L. Guder, edit. *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*. G.R.: Eerdmans, 1998. I could find only one reference in this second volume to the matter of multiple cultures in North America. In Chapter 6, "Missional Community: Cultivating Communities of the Holy Spirit," Inagrace T. Dietterich asserts that "As the church interacts with all cultures, the issue is not to identify the characteristics (language, tradition, beliefs, values, needs, customs) of a particular culture and then figure out how to relate or apply the beliefs and practices of Christianity to it. The primary issue, instead, is the identify, name, and critique the ways in which various social realities form or make—cultivate—a people." I would suggest that Dietterich has the matter exactly backwards. The pastoral and missionary issue *par excellence* is in fact to examine the ways in which the Christian faith may be presented, shaped and understood anew in each cultural set-

ting.

93. I would encourage the reader to carry out this exercise for yourself and peruse a number of recent Evangelical works that deal with theology, evangelism, missiology and gospel in the context of North America. I believe you will find a degree of cultural blindness as striking as that which I found in preparing this paper.

94. Orlando Costas pointed this out a number of years ago in *Christ Outside the Gate*. op. cit., 166.

95. See C. Rene Padilla 1983.

96. Wayne Zunkel. *Church Growth Under Fire.*, 105-114.

97. See, e.g., C. Rene Padilla, "The Unity of the Church and the Homogeneous Unit Principle," 285-302; David Bosch, "Church Growth Missiology," 21; Eddie Gibbs, *I Believe in Church Growth*, 120-128; and Arthur F. Glasser, "Church Growth at Fuller," *Missiology* XIV:4, October, 1986, 415-418.

98. Alvin J. Lindgren and Norman Shawchuck. *Management for Your Church: How to Realize Your Church Potential Through a Systems Approach*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1977, 34. See C. Van Engen. *God's Missionary People*, 138.

99. pp. 214-215.

100. pg 244.

101. pp 177-178.

102. See, e.g., *Ethnic Realities and the Church*, 250-251.

103. Alan Tippett, *Introduction to Missiology*, 363.

104. *Ibid.*, 366-367.

105. pg. 150.

106. pp 34-35. See also Thom Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth*, pg 262, where Thom suggests that Rene Padilla's call for the unity of the Church and Wagner's later perspectives seem to be approaching one another.

107. David Britt, "From Homogeneity to Congruence: A Church-Community Model," in Harvie M. Conn, edit., *Planting and Growing Urban Churches: From Dream to Reality*, G.R.: Baker, 1997, 144-147. Britt's conclusions are based on a careful and thoroughgoing study done in 1985 of 70 churches in Jefferson County, Kentucky. Britt feels the data gathered in that study support the concept of "congruence" as being a much more dependable predictor of numerical growth than the concept of "homogeneity."

108. Scottdale: Herald, 1988, 138-139.

109. Given the fact that the participants in the Ted Ward Consultation for which this paper was originally written were asked to read Manuel Ortiz's masterful work, *One New People*, I have kept this section on "models" necessarily brief. However, it might stimulate some discussion for the reader to take note of the pro's and cons of the options that various persons have offered.

110. Eldin Villafañe, *Seek the Peace of the City: Reflections on Urban Ministry*. G.R.: Eerdmans, 1995, 54-56.

111. Oscar Romo. *American Mosaic: Church Planting in Ethnic America*. Nashville: Broadman, 1993, 146-147.