A consortium Baptist theological journal

Race: Continuing Models of Progress

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In conjunction with R&E’s cooperative endeavor with Smyth & Helwys to promote an annual Bible Study program, we are offering 2 new products: a CD with the 3 previous R&E issues on the Letter of James . . .

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At the end of the previous volume, we began looking at models of progress. We wanted to illustrate how reconciliation is actually happening with individuals, churches, educational institutions, and collaboratives.

Dr. J.W. Wallis begins by telling of his experiences pastoring two churches in racially/culturally changing communities. One church found new vitality and is now a strong congregation. The other helped a new congregation to grow and become effective in its location. Both are compelling stories.

Dr. Randy Nabors began an intentionally interracial and intercultural congregation in Chattanooga, Tennessee, some years ago. That church is now a large multi-racial/cultural congregation with outstanding ministries. It has birthed at least seven other congregations in several states that also began as intentionally interracial and intercultural. As he approaches retirement, Dr. Nabors will enlarge the ministry in other places.

Dr. Nabor’s success was helped by the cooperation of his minister of music, Rev. James Ward. When one attends the New City Fellowship Presbyterian Church, one sees a healthy mixture of Anglo, Asian, Native American, African American, Hispanic, Caribbean and African presence. Rev. Ward manages to include several of these cultural expressions in each service with the whole congregation participating. He lets us in on his strategies.

As President of Central Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas, Dr. Molly Marshall has developed procedures that ensure every student a culturally sensitive theological education. That is not an easy task. Dr. Marshall shares her philosophy and strategies.

Four State Coordinators for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship share how they minister interracially and cross culturally in their states. Each is
doing phenomenal work. Dr. Ray Higgins speaks for Arkansas. Dr. Raymond Johnson speaks for Florida. Dr. T. Thomas represents Oklahoma. Shortly after providing his article, Dr. Thomas began his relocation to Paris, France, to pastor a church. Dr. Rick McClatchy shares his ministries in the great state of Texas. We can learn from each of these men as they have developed programs that are succeeding.

Dr. Gerald Durley, a renowned pastor and community activist from Atlanta, sums up what both volumes of these issues is about. It is about love, God’s love for us and ours for each other. His is a compelling article that you do not want to miss.

During his years as General Secretary for the Baptist World Alliance, Dr. Denton Lotz addressed each meeting of the Executive Committee and each gathering with “Windows on the World.” He would take a place or several places, give vignettes of what God was doing, and how the people were at work with God. Denton brings a world view as he describes what he sees into the future about human relations across racial/cultural lines.

We certainly hope the reader will continue to read other recommended reading in the bibliography, and will make use of the DVD’s provided by the Baptist Center for Ethics. They are excellent resource materials.

As you read these pages, “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Rom 15:13, NIV).
A Word From . . .

By R. Alan Culpepper*

The Dream Plus Fifty

We are approaching the fiftieth anniversary of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s, “I Have a Dream” speech (August 28, 1963), and many will be taking stock of how far we have progressed toward achieving King’s dream, and how much it still remains an elusive hope. Others will write the definitive assessments. Let me just share a few reflections here particularly as they bear on our churches and schools of theology.

Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell remind us that “Black churches have long served to reinforce African Americans’ racial identity and spur black empowerment. Most famously, the civil rights movement was born and nurtured in black churches.”¹ The civil rights movement was born in the South in response to dehumanizing prejudice and legalized oppression of African Americans. The shackles of slavery did not end with the abolition of slavery in the nineteenth century but were passed on from generation to generation. King and all who supported the Movement, black and white, looked forward not only to the eradication of prejudice (“We Shall Overcome!”) but also to freedom from poverty and the dawn of a new day of opportunity (“Free at last, free at last!”).

So, how are we doing? The answer varies from place to place, community to community, and the social setting of the one asking the question. But there is no question that we live in a vastly different world than that of August 1963. “Separate but equal” bathrooms and schools have been abolished. At least the overt expressions of prejudice have thankfully been silenced in most communities. African Americans can vote, work, eat, travel, and go to school and to church where they choose.

¹ R. Alan Culpepper is Dean of the James and Carolyn McAfee School of Theology, Mercer University, Atlanta, Georgia.
In 1963 Black Baptists were barred from worshipping in all but a few white churches, and the Southern Baptist seminaries were just breaking “the color barrier.” Although 11:00 a.m. Sundays is still “the most segregated hour in this nation,” and most whites and blacks choose to worship separately and maintain different traditions and styles of worship, some churches are breaking new ground and finding their identity and their connection with their community in integrated, blended, and diverse congregations. One Baptist church in Atlanta with a white pastor called an African American associate pastor this year—and we celebrate the fact that both are McAfee graduates! And, whereas most white Baptist churches inside the perimeter of Atlanta are struggling, this church is growing.

Integration of our theological schools, not surprisingly, has outpaced the integration of our churches. McAfee is the most integrated of the CBF partner seminaries, schools of theology, and houses of Baptist studies with 45% of its enrollment being African American (and this primarily by virtue of our location in Atlanta), followed by M. Christopher White with 30% African American, and Campbell, Candler, Duke, Logsdon, and Wake Forest all reporting 20-30% of their enrollment being comprised of minorities (all minorities). The average at all ATS accredited schools is 13% African-American in all degree programs.

The effects of this demographic shift have been dramatic. While some African-American seminarians lack strong academic skills (a broad liberal arts background with emphasis on history, English, academic writing, and interpretation of texts—skills now often noticeably lacking among white seminarians as well!), they come committed to ministry, the church, and making a difference in their community. Many are already involved in ministries. Although we have more African-American women than men in our programs, many of the men come aspiring to become community leaders (something we find less often among younger white male seminarians). The African-American seminarians, therefore, tend to be more vocationally focused than the twenty-something white seminarians—though the latter usually get there by the time they graduate!

The effect of this diversity in the classroom is striking. Seminary classes today tend to be smaller and more dialogical than the large lecture halls of my student generation and my years of teaching at The Southern Baptist Seminary. And, in a setting in which classes discuss a wide range of issues related to faith, worship, congregational life, marriage, family, ethics, economics, peace and justice issues, and young adulthood, the differences of perspective related to life experience (race, gender, and age) are striking.
Students and faculty have had to learn new sensitivities, awarenesses, and skills for embracing and fostering community with such diversity. It has made me realize that we live in a superficially integrated society in which the old walls of segregation have been torn down, but few people have the experience of sustained conversation in an integrated community over the course of a semester about issues and topics that matter. The importance of this new element in theological education can hardly be overestimated. God is doing a new thing in our time and in our classrooms, and it just may save the church in the generation to come.

But that is only one slice of life, and that in the elite halls of Academe. What is going on in African-American neighborhoods? Reports in the Atlanta Journal Constitution this past fall tell another part of the story. A September 23, 2011, headline read, “African-Americans See Gains Reversed,” and David Markiewicz reported that “black Americans continue to have markedly higher unemployment rates than other ethnic groups.” The report continues, “persistent joblessness among African-Americans and its effect on home ownership and wealth building—is raising concerns about the future of a black middle class that had grown to become a potent economic force in cities such as Atlanta.” While unemployment hit 10.4% in Atlanta in August 2011, “unemployment among black teens aged 16-19 in metro Atlanta was a staggering 56 percent last year. For black men it was 20 percent.” The national unemployment rate for blacks was 16.7%, compared to 8% for whites. Homeownership has declined among whites as well as blacks during the recession (black homeownership to 44.2%, white homeownership to 73.7%), but “owning a home is a much larger share of net worth for black households than it is for whites.” All of this also has a direct bearing on the health of black churches, since Putnam and Campbell have documented that among African Americans “religion has increasingly become a middle class affair.”

The numbers paint a grim picture. On August 27, 2011, Angie Drobnic Holan reported that according to Pew’s Social & Demographic Trends project, in a report about racial disparities in family wealth released July 26, 2011, for white families the median household wealth is $113,000; for black families, $5,000. Because home values are a critical component of household wealth, the bursting of the housing market bubble in 2006 and the recession that followed took a far greater toll on the household wealth of minorities than whites.

Clearly, we still have a long way to go because many African Americans still live “on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity.”
But the dream is alive, and it is powerful. In a time when government is doing less by way of social programs the church can realize that the gospel is about the poor and do more. Churches that do not make a difference in their communities are often failing to reach the younger generation that wants to be involved, make a difference, and see results. Churches that work together and focus on their communities adapt to the needs of their communities, and thrive. The process of experimentation, adaptation, and “survival of the fittest” is almost Darwinian, but I believe there is hope for the dream, and hope for the church. In no small measure that hope lies in the idealism, the passion to be of service and make a difference, the freedom from the no-longer-effective patterns of traditional ways of doing things, and the new sensitivities that are being nurtured in our future leaders by the diversity in our schools today. The new day is not here yet, but it is most certainly still “a comin’.”


2 See Emmanuel L. McCall’s account of what it was like at Southern Seminary at this time in When All God’s Children Get Together: A Memoir of Race and Baptists (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2007), 12. “At the time, the majority of students of color were African or Caribbean. There were seldom more than two American blacks on campus at any given time.”

3 Putnam and Campbell (American Grace, 613 n. 32) say that even though this phrase was popularized by Martin Luther King, its origin is less clear.

4 Minority enrollment in ATS and CBF partner schools, Fall 2010:

Campbell: 25% all minorities, all degree programs
http://divinity.campbell.edu/Admissions/StudentBodyProfile.aspx

Candler: 29% all minorities, all degree programs
http://www.candler.emory.edu/admissions/student-life/student-body.cfm

Duke: 24% all minorities, all degree programs
http://divinity.duke.edu/admission
Hardin-Simmons: 20% all minorities, all degree programs
http://www.logsdonseminary.org/index.php/prospectivestudents/student-profile

Gardner-Webb University School of Divinity: 30% African-American, all degree programs (2009 data)
http://www.gardner-webb.edu/about-gwu/who-we-are/administrative-departments/institutional-research/student-data/STU%20Sociological%20Data%20of%20Students%20Fa%202009.pdf

Wake Forest: 21% all minorities, all degree programs
http://provost.wfu.edu/files/2010/07/WakeForestUniversityDeanofDivinityPositionProfile.pdf


6 Putnam and Campbell, American Grace, 276. The more education African American Protestants have, the more likely they are to be active church members.


A Word About . . . The Cross and the Lynching Tree

By LeAnn Snow Flesher*

Race has been a topic of great concern in our nation since the beginnings of the Civil Rights Movement (1948 to present). I am delighted that the Review and Expositor has given two full issues to the topic and even more delighted to provide a “Word About . . .” for this issue. In this brief “Word about . . .” I would like to highlight a new publication, The Cross and the Lynching Tree, by Dr. James H. Cone. In this recent publication Cone addresses the historic reality of mob violence and torture that led to the lynching of blacks after the end of slavery in our nation. In the book Cone notes:

The cross and the lynching tree are separated by nearly 2000 years. One is the universal symbol of Christian faith; the other is the quintessential symbol of black oppression in America. Although both are symbols of death, one represents a message of hope and salvation, while the other signifies the negation of that message by white supremacy. Despite the obvious similarities between Jesus’ death on a cross and the death of thousands of black men and women strung up to die on a lamppost or tree relatively few people . . . have explored the symbolic connections (p. xiii).

In chapter one Cone provides numerous accounts and details about lynchings that took place in the United States post emancipation and during the time of Jim Crow. From a sociological perspective, one can say that lynching was an extra-legal punishment sanctioned by the community. Many scholars date its origin in Virginia during the Revolutionary War when Charles Lynch or William Lynch (both were called the original Judge Lynch),

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with the support of the community punished Tory sympathizers (p. 3). During this era it was considered necessary to protect the community from bad people that were out of reach of the law. In later years it was applied to the freed Black slaves, for whom resistance to lynching was out of the question as it would lead to even more of the same.

In chapter two, Cone discusses the significant theological contribution of Reinhold Niebuhr, not only to the terrible beauty of the cross (i.e., salvation in the cross, victory in defeat, life in death) but also to Christian social ethics. Cone touts Niebuhr as “probably the most influential single mind in the development of American attitudes which combined moral purpose with a sense of political reality.” (32) Throughout the first half of this chapter Cone gives Niebuhr numerous accolades for his work to create theologies that confronted the injustices and inequities lived out in the United States during his lifetime, and rightly so—for Niebuhr did indeed significantly change the landscape of American theology. His work was seminal for many of the ideological emphases that we see today. Towards the end of the chapter and throughout the remainder of the book Cone provides honest critique of Niebuhr’s work; affirming the positive as mentioned above and challenging his silence and lack of action around the cry for legislation that would outlaw lynching.

According to Cone, Niebuhr was “at most a moderate on racial justice. Rather than challenge racial prejudice he believed it must ‘slowly erode’” (p. 48). In chapter three, entitled “Martin Luther King Jr.’s Struggle to Redeem the Soul of America,” Cone emphasizes King’s famous discussion on “Why We Can’t Wait.” Niebuhr encouraged patience; King responded “It is hardly a moral act to encourage others patiently to accept injustice which he himself does not endure” (p. 39). For the transition from slavery resulted in the development of Jim Crow, yet another means for controlling Blacks in America; and along with Jim Crow came the rise of lynching Blacks in America.

King is famous, of course, for his Gandhian inspired non-violent resistance theology that undergirded the Civil Rights Movement. For King Non-violence was more than a strategy; in his thinking it was the only way to heal a broken humanity. In response to the fall out that came from King’s “Beyond Vietnam” address at New York’s Riverside Church (April 4, 1967) King states: “. . . when I took up the cross I recognized its meaning. . . . It is not something that you wear. The cross is something that you bear and ultimately that you die on” (p. 84). It is clear King had seen the power of the
cross that was made even clearer by Oscar Romero’s famous statement pronounced shortly before he was martyred “. . . if they kill me I shall be resurrected in the hearts of the Salvadoran people.” In these two brief examples, I hope the reader can catch a glimpse of the profound significance of Jesus’ death on the cross that goes well beyond ideas found in classical traditional atonement theology.

As a “professional” student of theology for more than twenty-seven years now, I want to state clearly that it was not until I took a study trip to El Salvador, heard the stories, talked to the people, and read the theological reflections of their contemporary theologians that I truly understood the significance of the cross and, consequently, of its comparison to the lynching tree. All of our big fancy theological words such as atonement, substantiation, propitiation, expiation, and so on, do not and cannot bring to life the truths found in the martyrdom of these great theologians (Martin Luther King, Jr. and Oscar Romero) who understood theology as something practical and active; who lived their theology and called out for others to do the same. The martyrdom of these two men changed the world and the theological enterprise forever.

In The Cross and the Lynching Tree, of which I have shared but a small portion in this brief “Word about, . . .” James Cone has exposed the gap between White progressive theology and the Black theology of Liberation. He has dared to be open and honest about the theological developments in Black culture and in so doing called the progressive White theologians to task for not adequately and actively addressing issues of race in their ethics. To Dr. Cone I say “Thank you for your honest reflections and your challenge to White America”; to White America I say “Please read this book and embrace its truth.”

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Thematic Words
From the beginning of my time as pastor of Second Baptist Church of College Park, Georgia, I knew that managing a church in a changing community would be my responsibility. The area was in transition both racially and because of the expansion of Hartsfield-Jackson airport.

The Fairburn Baptist Association prepared the first report addressing the community racial change. The Association undertook a thorough study of how the racially changing communities had affected their churches. The report clearly stated that Second Baptist Church of College Park would have to make adjustments in reaching our racially changing community. According to the report, “Those churches most likely to begin to feel the impact of the continuing racial transition of southwestern metropolitan Atlanta area are: Bethel, College Park Second, Faith, Harmony Grove, Heatherwood, First Shadnor, and South Perimeter Parkway.”

Aware of this study and its predictions, Second Baptist of College Park engaged in a strategic effort to reach and to welcome all people in our community. Prior to the report the church had a Ministry to Laotians, built an Activities Building, had an aggressive Youth Ministry, and had a Child Development Center. Following the report from the Fairburn Baptist Association on the racially changing community, Second Baptist Church of College Park began a mission church in College Park. The new mission, Metropolitan Baptist Church, which was in a largely African American community, called an African American pastor. All of these efforts, however, did little to stabilize the decline of Second Baptist Church.
Second Baptist Church began a process of introspection and a search for ways to stem the tide of those leaving our congregation. In a proactive move, the deacons led the church in the Home Mission Board’s (now North American Mission Board) PACT Study (Project Assistance to Churches in Transition). The purpose of the study was “to ferret out the facts pertaining to a church in a changing community in order to shape a future for the church.”

After a thorough study, the recommendation was to continue working in our present location through aggressive efforts to reach the community. In addition, the Long Range Planning Committee was charged with looking for a location to establish a mission that would ultimately become a new location for College Park Second Baptist Church. The PACT study reported: “By failing to recognize that eventually it may be necessary to relocate Second Baptist Church, we could miss the opportunity for the church to continue its ministry for years to come.” The study concluded with the adoption of the report by Second Baptist Church. There was a lull in activity following the recommendations until a committee set out to locate property in another location. Property was located and purchased with no immediate plans for establishing a mission.

While Second Baptist Church of College Park was on the scene struggling to survive, a nearby Baptist congregation was in a different kind of struggle. A strong south Atlanta African American congregation was struggling with what kind of church they wanted to be. The oppressive leadership and “strong arm” tactics of the pastor did not sit well with the nature of many in the congregation. After a failed struggle to establish a loving fellowship, many in the congregation chose to establish a new church to reestablish the luster of Christian fellowship that had been tarnished.

Over 400 people came together to form the Christian Fellowship Baptist Church under the leadership of Dr. Emmanuel McCall. The congregation soon became weary of wandering from place to place, meeting in chapels, schools, and hotels. There was a desire to have a permanent meeting place.

One of those attending the church, but not yet a member, asked a real estate agent to inquire about the purchase of Second Baptist Church at 1500 Norman Drive in Clayton County. Second Baptist had many such inquiries through the years, but none of them seemed to be legitimate until now. There was something different about this inquiry.
I learned that Dr. Emmanuel McCall was the pastor of this fledgling congregation. His reputation gave me a good feeling about how events would unfold. I had a frank conversation with Dr. McCall about what we were planning, and how it would work only if his congregation was serious and able to purchase the property at 1500 Norman Drive. With a letter of intent and a document titled “Mission Statement and Proposal,” our journey began. I met with the real estate agent and the man who alerted her to our property. In a short time, we had a contract for renting our facility and jointly meeting together with the young Christian Fellowship Baptist Church.

A two-year journey began that enriched the lives of many people across racial barriers. I remain friends with many of the folks with whom we forged a relationship when the Christian Fellowship Baptist Church and the College Park Second Baptist Church met together for those two years. The first year the Christian Fellowship Baptist Church rented from College Park Second Baptist. Then the property was sold to the Christian Fellowship Baptist Church, and College Park Second Baptist Church rented from the new owners until we completed educational space and a temporary sanctuary in Fayetteville, Georgia. It was a sad day when we left in a motorcade from the facilities at 1500 Norman Drive, the location that we had occupied since 1969, when the church moved because of the expansion of the Atlanta-Hartsfield Jackson Airport.

Dr. McCall and I had our personal pastor’s conference almost daily. We managed small issues in those meetings that could have become major issues if we had not maintained such close contact. We forged a friendship that has served both of us well. It is the bridge that brought us together years later in the second model that I will address later.

Our congregations met often for joint worship. The Women’s Missionary Groups from our congregations met for mission programs and activities. One of the most solidifying activities was a group of quilters. Women from each congregation who were interested in quilting proposed quilts for each congregation that told the story of our individual and separate journeys. The women wove together small squares with images or texts provided by members of each congregation. The quilting squares had an icon or text that was an important event to the contributor. Not only did the women weave together the stories represented by these thoughtful squares of cloth, but lives were intermingled and woven together as well. We shared together in Vacation Bible School and other activities.
Two different churches struggling with separate issues converged for a time to allow God to provide what each needed to be the Church. The story does not end here, but another leg of the journey unfolds. Years of a joyful journey ended for the Christian Fellowship Baptist Church with a change of pastors. Once again, the Christian Fellowship Baptist Church found they were struggling to retain the spirit of Christian Fellowship. A new pastor with an agenda of autocratic leadership infringed on the spirit that brought many of this congregation together initially and forced the church to vote on his style of leadership.

The majority of the congregation voted to retain the new pastor, and, once again, many in the congregation found themselves seeking to maintain a Christian spirit that had been a hallmark of the church. A small splinter group had left before the new pastor’s leadership style was challenged by a vote of the church. They called themselves The Higher Calling Baptist Church. A larger splinter group began meeting together with a temporary pastor, once they realized that the Christian spirit they treasured was broken. The Higher Calling Baptist Church approached East Point First Baptist Church about meeting in their facilities. An agreement was reached and Higher Calling Baptist Church met for some time at East Point First Baptist until a breach occurred in the relationship between the two congregations.

The second remnant (Fellowship Group) asked Dr. Emmanuel McCall to come out of retirement to shepherd this struggling people. Dr. McCall agreed to serve this new congregation. Once Dr. McCall became interim pastor, many who had scattered to other congregations found their way back to form the Fellowship Group Baptist Church.

Charles Worthy, a former seminary classmate of Dr. McCall, was at that time pastor of the East Point First Baptist Church. Dr. McCall approached Rev. Worthy about his congregation meeting at East Point First Baptist Church.

Some of the folk in the new congregation had been part of The Higher Calling Baptist Church. It was going to be a hard sell. Once again the reputation and integrity of Dr. McCall became the cement that sealed a relationship that otherwise may not have been possible.

A thorough legal document made it possible for East Point First Baptist to feel comfortable that they could continue the journey with this congregation. One of the most important steps taken was to elect a “Liaison Committee.”
Persons from each congregation were elected to meet regularly to address any issues that could potentially rupture the relationship. The successful relationship of these two congregations was largely a result of this proactive and practical approach to working together.

Unfortunately, Rev. Worthy died before his vision and dream for these congregations became a reality. The foundations for the unfolding developments of these congregations were laid, however, through the relationship established in seminary days between Charles Worthy and Emmanuel McCall.

It was in the providence of God for me to have the opportunity once again to be partners in ministry with Dr. Emmanuel McCall. East Point First Baptist Church asked me to fill in at the time Rev. Worthy fell ill. After his death, I was asked to be their Interim Pastor, and later to serve as bi-vocational Pastor, which I have done since January 2008. One of the primary reasons that I agreed to serve this fine congregation again was so that I could work alongside Emmanuel McCall, who became my friend years ago during our times at College Park Second Baptist Church and Christian Fellowship Baptist Church.

Today Dr. McCall and I are on a different kind of journey as we serve separate congregations meeting in the same complex. Both congregations are racially integrated, one predominately white and the other predominately black. Nevertheless, neither of our congregations wanted to merge into one congregation. The question for Dr. McCall and me is, “How can we create a different model than what we experienced in our former pastorates?”

East Point First Baptist consists of mostly older members who are not interested in moving to another location and starting over. They want to remain in the building they have occupied since the nineteenth century. It was becoming more difficult for First Baptist, however, to provide a staff and to maintain the building properly. We struggled with how we could continue together as a church.

After some discussions within the congregation, the proposal was made to transfer ownership of the property to the Fellowship Group Baptist with an agreement for East Point First Baptist Church to rent the space we were using at the time of the agreement. A price was agreed to that serves as the
basis for a security deed. Each month a prescribed amount of money is deducted from the price agreed upon, and all improvements to the building are deducted as well. East Point First Baptist has contributed to costly unexpected repairs. No cash has been exchanged, and no interest charged in our agreement. Thus, this agreement has become a win-win for both congregations.

The Fellowship Group Baptist Church now has a place for worship and a future. East Point First Baptist Church, with a limited future, has a place to worship as long as we remain a viable congregation. Once we cease to be a congregation, the Fellowship Group will continue the name East Point First Baptist when we dissolve.

The first model of Second Baptist Church and the Christian Fellowship resulted in continued life for several congregations including the Fellowship Group Baptist Church, which will eventually live on as the East Point First Baptist Church. Dr. McCall retired again in 2010. Rev. Montele Crawford was called as pastor, and together we continue this journey.

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1 Letter of Intent dated August 12, 1991, from Dr. Emmanuel McCall.

2 “Missions Committee Report to the Fairburn Baptist Association on the Impact of Racial Transition in our Association and Our Recommendations to Strengthen Our Work, July 30, 1984.”

Observations of a Passing Journey

By Randy A. Nabors*

Abstract

Pastor Randy Nabors comments on various lessons learned in 35 years of planting and living out a “cross cultural church.” He attempts to speak to some of the difficulties and realities of combining different cultures, particularly black and white, while depending on the power of the grace of God to make such a congregation possible.

Since Christianity exploded in the first century across ethnic and cultural lines, it is a wonder of course that we often discuss the dynamics of the cross-cultural church as if it were a new phenomenon. Yet that reality offers but a mere reflection of how difficult racism, ethnocentrism, and cultural senses of superiority have been to overcome in the spread of the Gospel and the building of Christ’s church.

When my family was won to the Lord in the housing projects of Newark, New Jersey, I had no idea that most of my discipleship and formation in the faith, preparation for the ministry, and life in the ministry would be in a cross-cultural context. I was too young to know what that meant or would mean, but I am glad I did not know, since I came to it as an insider rather than one who later came to realize how important cross-cultural ministry is to the Kingdom of God and to our testimony as believers.

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This is not to say I did not and do not need to repent of my own racist and prejudicial attitudes or that I had nothing to learn. I seem always to be at a point where I can say, “I have learned so much, and it seems I have learned nothing at all yet.”

I grew up in an independent church known as Calvary Gospel Church in Newark, founded and pastored by a Wheaton College and Wheaton Graduate School man who originally wanted to go to Africa and be a missionary. His journey to Africa was delayed until he retired from the church some forty or so years later, and he eventually lived out his life in Uganda as the missionary he had always aspired to be.

As Newark became more and more African American and less and less white, many white congregations sold their buildings and moved to the suburbs. Calvary refused to go and began to reach out aggressively to inner city residents, resulting in a harvest of African American folks who joined the church. This eventually created various cultural conflicts, as the white pastor (not only in skin but also in culture) found it difficult to adjust to his parishioners.

The late Pastor Grover C. Willcox loved people, but he did not know anything about the roots of the black church, about black Gospel music, or about the black American experience of slavery and racism. He did not know anything until he began to see the struggle played out in front of him in the riots of 1967, the killing of Dr. King, the economic discrimination, and the political aspirations of a minority become majority in the city. He learned quickly in the confrontation with some of his own disciples: young African Americans who were really saved, really committed to the Evangelical Faith as he had taught them, but also very culturally aware of their own generation’s struggle.

I had the great opportunity to see this drama and dialogue on a first hand basis, especially when some of these young adults came home from college with a heightened cultural awareness. Some of that experience was because along the way I had to come to grips with and acknowledged the common humanity of folks, realizing that it might not only be possible but righteous for me to fall in love with a black woman (I am white), and that the very idea might not sit too well with other Christian folks. I knew nothing of all that black folks had gone through in America, but in a small way, I tasted the sting of racism by being a minority in my housing project and community. I felt it when I stood on the streets and preached in open-air
meetings, surrounded sometimes by Black Panther Party members or Black Muslims who were not hesitant to call me racial names.

When I fell in love with Joan, who is now my wife, I felt that racism as we rode the public bus together and some of the kids I had grown up with, but had now become Black Muslims, called me a devil. The racial hostility and threat was very real for me in my later high school years. I learned personal non-violence in those days, and I also learned the love and solidarity of African American Christians who had, along with me, come to Christ in my neighborhood and city.

I had not yet felt the racism from white Christians who would reject my marriage, sometimes for totally erroneous biblical views such as mistaking the injunction against being unequally yoked to non-Christians as applying to race and ethnicity. I also had not yet learned how divided the Church of Jesus Christ was in our country, the historic basis for that, and the cultural chasm that existed. But I would, and I would also learn how truth and grace are able to overcome it.

The church that I planted and have pastored for the last thirty-five years in the city of Chattanooga, Tennessee, has been a wonderful, challenging, loving, and blessed community in which to live, minister, and grow. It is called New City Fellowship, and it began as a very small inner city Sunday School. I tell people today that probably one of the slowest ways to plant a church is to start with a Sunday School, especially among poor people.

It became a mission church that depended at first on leadership from Christian college students and staff and faculty members. In the early years, no white adult in the church had their own children, so it was a mix of inner city children and these middle class invaders, none of whom lived in the neighborhood.

As a college junior, I moved from the dorms and lived in the tenement apartment where we met on Sundays. That year I married Joan and we rented the apartment next door. We had both grown up in the projects and up to that time the nicest place either of us had lived was on the college campus; now we were back in the inner city, in a ghetto apartment that had fewer amenities than the projects. It would be romantic to say, “but we were in love,” which we were, but we were both too dysfunctional in our personalities to rejoice in that; besides, we were miserable, cold, and broke that first winter.

I had not heard anything about John Perkins yet; he had not really become well known at that time, so I did not know the principle of “relocation.”
Coming from Newark, relocation meant getting out of it and leaving the poor and the inner city behind, so for Joan and me it was more like “returning.”

As the work grew from just Sunday School to preaching services (I was preaching alternatively with the Dean of the Faculty until he turned it all over to me at the age of nineteen), we began to go through the process of self-examination of what we were trying to become and what we had become. It was interesting, of course, while caught up in just trying to survive, to hear what others thought about us. Some said we would never be a self-supporting church, since we were focused on a poor community. Some said we should get rid of all the white folks who were coming to help and give it over to black leadership. Some said we were just tokenism since we had a majority of white adults and many black kids. Some said this inter-racial thing was a passing fancy of our youth and we would get over it. Usually these comments were given as reasons not to support our efforts.

Since I had grown up in an inter-racial church and community I did not necessarily see New City as experimental, but we did realize it was not your average kind of ministry. I did not see it as tokenism or as something the younger generation was trying to prove. I did not see lots of black churches and black leadership attempting to be missionaries among the poor, though there were certainly some in the city of Chattanooga. I did not feel we were in competition with anyone for reaching the demographic in which we were located. We, those of us who had started the work, believed that this was something we should do because Jesus wanted us to preach the Gospel to the poor and to win people to Jesus, and it did not seem like very many other folks were trying to do it in that community.

When working among poor people it is fairly easy to feel self-righteous, and the work we were doing could at times seem heroic. We tried to avoid the hype that so often accompanies fund raising for ministry. We did not have pretensions that we were building something that would be a model for others to emulate, not yet anyway. We began to build an inter-racial team of workers and volunteers, and we were willing to cooperate and learn from
We were demonstrating the power of the Gospel to bring various racial and ethnic elements together, and we were in a lifelong learning experience to figure out what it meant to really love and care for each other.

We had no master plan, no demographic research, and no system of steps to a successful church plant. I am not trying to sound super spiritual when I say that all we had was the Bible, this mandate of the Great Commission and the Great Commandment, and our own small experience of having been saved in and through an inner city church ourselves. What I did not know at the time was how far ahead we were of most of the evangelical community in the entire country in both ministry to the poor and cross-cultural ministry.

Since a good deal of the white evangelical church had been silent if not resistant to the Civil Rights movement, and since the evangelical church was so racially separated, what we were doing seemed so radical and different. We concluded that what we were as a racially mixed community was exactly what God was calling us to be. We were demonstrating the power of the Gospel to bring various racial and ethnic elements together, and we were in a lifelong learning experience to figure out what it meant to really love and care for each other. What was interesting was that we had begun to live out a church experience that liberals seemed to advocate but were usually unable to achieve, even though they proclaimed themselves the ones who stood for equality. Often liberal Christians were confused about our existence even as they pre-judged our conservative evangelical beliefs as being something that would automatically make us racist.

The nation had turned a corner regarding race, in many respects. One of those respects was in the willingness of many (not all of course) white churches to finally say that black people were welcome to attend their worship. Yet obstacles remained, since the worship was “white” worship. It began to dawn on us that efforts to reach African Americans cross culturally,
through relevant music and worship forms, was not that common. While self-conscious about it, but certainly not always confident, we were being missionaries attempting to live out 1 Corinthians 9, where Paul talks about becoming “all things to all men in order to win some.” (This text, I believe, is the foundational methodology of all cross-cultural ministry).

One of the providential gifts the Lord gave us in those early days was a young white musician who became enamored with Gospel music, black Gospel music specifically; his name is James Ward. It did not hurt that my wife was a very talented singer, and loved Gospel music. James not only learned as much as he could along the way, eventually gaining a Master’s degree in jazz, but he was a gifted composer and was able to write new and original pieces to help make our worship unique in many ways. I think music is a key ingredient to a cross-cultural church and the worship needs to be in the “heart” language of the people.

In many churches, music and worship are the battleground, often between the generations. At our church, the argument is settled in our intentional cross-cultural mission focus. (Someone once called us “tenaciously cross-cultural” and did not mean it as a compliment.) We have very few arguments over music, except when it is not pursued with at least an attempt at doing it as well as we can. Our intentionality of vision and mission helps to deliver us from many of the little battles that seem to rend churches apart. Unity is one of our great blessings; anything that pulls us from our purpose, which is the reconciliation across racial lines, is resisted.

Our unifying factor is our common vision. It is not only a theology but also an ideology, based on Scripture and lived out in method and cultural practicality. If we say we are cross-cultural then we have to see it pursued in who we hire on our staff, where we have our church building, where and among whom we do our evangelism, who we raise up as leaders and in our pursuit of the poor—not simply to do ministry for them or to them but to want them to become part of our congregation.

We face a constant challenge among our middle class members, due to their propensity to push for privilege and protection for their own children. Our church has a majority of white people, but exists to reach the black community. That means everyone is challenged to give himself or herself away, to become servants (see 1 Cor 9 again), and to live for a community different than themselves. Often young white couples come with an idealism to be part of that vision. When they have children they sense a risk in their kids going to church with poor kids, of attending a Sunday School that has
different levels of educational skill and socialization, of a youth group where inner city kids can be not only intimidating but certainly less affluent than the middle class kids they might go to school with at Christian or Prep schools.

The challenge of a cross-cultural church is not only for individuals but also for families that cross a generational divide. Some of our families have not infected their own children with the vision and their kids have grown up to think this integration is normal and optional. Some of them go on to join other churches that are completely culturally segregated and though we fear that they might have missed the challenge of the Kingdom, we hope they will motivate other churches to reach more than just “their own kind.”

A cross-cultural church is a challenge for our African American members in that they sometimes have to become the first black friend for many white people. They have to share their culture, their struggle, and their lives with people who can walk away from that struggle at any time. Solidarity means the world to black folk, and it gives them the great gift and burden of loyalty. We acknowledge that everyone gives up something to be a part of us, but if they get it, if they realize the vision and pursue it, they gain so much. One of the challenges for church leadership in a cross-cultural church is to make sure that minority members are not cut off from solidarity with their own racial community, so it is very important for our Senior Pastor to be involved in the broader African American community, both religious and civic aspects of it.

We are not interested in simply being multi-ethnic while remaining mono-cultural. The majority culture can still be smug and self-satisfied in that situation, defining normality by themselves and not providing models of affirmation for minorities. We realize working to be cross-cultural can be hard, but that it can certainly be endured because even though it is not an idol for us it is a worthy and wonderful thing to achieve, and we do not seek to do it in our own strength or understanding.

We think true reconciliation is a necessary by-product of trying to preach a holistic Gospel, in its fullness, across racial and socio-economic lines. We preach Christ and him crucified and that people need to be saved by faith and on the basis of his work on the cross and his victory over death. A holistic Gospel means of course that our Gospel comes not just in words but also in deeds, which in turn non-Christians see and end up giving glory to God in heaven, even if they have not yet come to know him. We have seen
this happen repeatedly from professing non-
Christians who are amazed at what they have seen
and experienced in and from our church. This is
quite amazing because when you look at us as
individuals we are unexceptional, just ordinary
people.

The difficulties and sometimes tensions of a
cross-cultural ministry can, and should, be endured
because of the marvelous grace God has poured out on us to make the spread
of the Kingdom possible. In fact, if this is not of the Holy Spirit, we do not
need or want to endure it. Most of the time the hardship seems as nothing in
the community of love and in the pleasure of joy, which comes in a rich
tapestry of colors in the worship of our wonderful God.
The Lord Will Make a Way Somehow: Strategies for Cross-Cultural Music and Worship

By James C. Ward*

ABSTRACT

With neighborhoods shifting racially and economically, churches are challenged with meeting the new population with relevant and culturally meaningful worship music. Ethnic groups are diverse within themselves as well, with black and Latino peoples having disparate tastes and traditions from Church of God in Christ to South American Evangelicals. Congregations must have strong pastoral leadership and competent, spiritually alert musicians and singers. Although the leadership may want more effective outreach through music, it requires trained musicians, often in jazz, to educate the musicians as well as the congregation. Vocalists must also be melded together, trained and untrained, into a vernacular blend in praise teams or choirs. Musicians must do research in the community for songs and resources that touch the “heart music” of the target population. The result of such a commitment is to see a congregation rally around a new mission and new friendships. Children growing up in such a cross-cultural worship have a more open view of the world. But bearing fruit in cross-cultural ministry is measured in decades and may not have overwhelming success like some homogeneous church plants. If we want to see the church’s witness as credible before a watching world, racial reconciliation and justice fleshed out in the worshipping community must be a greater priority. In a society still plagued with racial alienation, this may be the toughest strategy of all.

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The Lord will make a way somehow
When beneath the cross I bow
He will take away each sorrow
Let him have your burdens now
When the load bears down so heavy
The weight is shown upon my brow,
there's a sweet relief in knowing
the Lord will make a way somehow.
—Thomas A. Dorsey

So many changes have taken place in worship in just my lifetime. I was born in 1950, and in that decade Billy Graham came to New York for the Madison Square Garden Crusade. How that crusade impacted the local church with its evangelistic style and old time gospel music! More recently, there was the Jesus movement of the 1970s, and the era of the mega-church in the new millennium. We see evidence all around us of charismatic worship elements or gigantic campuses of full-service ministry for the family.

But another change in the church has been more subtle and more infrastructural. It has been the shift to the suburbs by African American and Latino families, and the return to urban areas by young white families looking to have the benefits of downtown living. Young families are moving into previously monocultural neighborhoods and playing in the park alongside traditionally black neighbors. One result is that churches planted in the 1950s and 60s as traditional white congregations face a change in the neighborhood around the church much the same as churches in urban residential areas.

One church in the small city of Tupelo, Mississippi, is an all-white congregation positioned across the street from a middle class black housing development. The pastor invited me to come and talk with him after a luncheon we had there. “I want to have a parish church, uniquely positioned to meet the needs of our immediate community,” he said. “How do I begin to do that in our worship if our neighbors are black?”

Thus, in a strategy for reaching another cultural group, white Christians should recognize that within a people or ethnic group there is still diversity. African Americans are not a monolithic group any more than whites or Latinos have uniform preferences. Often whites make the mistake of thinking that all blacks will prefer gospel music or will have had a lot of shouting experience growing up. Black Christians may be part of a black Baptist tradition, African
Methodist Episcopal, or one of several Pentecostal groups. Some blacks are Catholic, Episcopalian, or Presbyterian. The bungling efforts of churches that stereotype reflect the challenge of creating an inclusive worship environment.

If the Tupelo congregation were in a Latino neighborhood, the divergent cultures would be even more pronounced; many Indian groups from countries like Guatemala do not even speak Spanish as a first language. Mexicans prefer certain types of music with instrumentation and exaggerated emotion. Cubans, Dominicans, Brazilians, Ecuadorians, and even some from Argentina have made up the stream of Latino attendees at our church in Chattanooga. Although certain widely known songwriters and worship leaders are popular with Latino worshipers, it often comes out that they may not like certain artists or styles, just like white Americans. It is important to ask immigrants or ethnic visitors who are Christians and who have come from worshipping communities to share their music and their tastes as we seek to welcome them and make a heart home for them in our congregations.

Such is but one motivation for a cross-cultural worship strategy—to reach a local congregation’s neighborhood. There are other reasons for cross-cultural worship. One is to recognize change in American society and the witness of the church in that society. Nowhere is the testimony of Christ’s followers more poignant than in the joining together of different races or different classes and cultures. The universal sin of racism exists in every nation and culture.

For twenty-five years, I was a travelling Christian concert artist, visiting many communities throughout the United States and Canada. My description of our church and its unique worship intrigued audiences. “We really don’t have any black people here,” was the common response. But in the northern provinces of Canada are the Inuit people, an aboriginal group recognized as recently as 1982, who consider the term “Eskimo” pejorative. In Spain and other countries in Europe the Roma are considered social outcasts. With their origin believed to be from India, wherever they arrived in Europe, curiosity soon gave rise to hostility and xenophobia. Roma were enslaved for five centuries in Romania until abolition in 1864. Elsewhere in Europe, they were subject to expulsion, abduction of their children, and forced labor. The Roma consider the common term “gypsy” pejorative. Ironically, the music so associated with Spain, flamenco, is of Roma origin. This cultural contradiction sounds similar to the strong heritage of black music from America throughout the world, while blacks in America have had
so much struggle and discrimination. In Kenya, the South Asians and the black Kenyans are historically separate. During the colonial period in Kenya, Europeans were at the top of social status with South Asians below. “Although some Asians were able to compete with Europeans in the professions, by far the greatest numbers were retail traders who had shops in small towns, or were artisans, clerks, or bureaucrats on limited salaries. They couldn't compete seriously with Europeans, but in African eyes, Indians always seemed to occupy all the positions to which ambitious Africans with a little education might aspire.” Here is an example of a higher social class being an ethnic minority. Racism and ethnic segregation is everywhere.

These examples of racial prejudice show why a church with an intentional commitment to cross-cultural worship is an excellent example of Christianity in action. Recently, the city of Chattanooga asked our choir to sing at the dedication of a Cherokee monument called the Passage. “We want a diverse group of singers to represent our city’s vision,” I was told. On a separate occasion, a large contemporary church invited our racially mixed choir to sing at a women’s conference. “We would like your choir to process into the room with a typical gospel song. We heard that you all were really ethnically diverse, and that’s what we want our conference to tap into.” Even churches without a cultural commitment to diversity recognize its power to communicate.

A third reason for cross-cultural worship is one black preachers who visit our church frequently mention. The guest minister looks out over the assembly and then says, “It is a joy and blessing to be with you all today. As I look out over the church, I think this is the way God wants us to be, together, black and white.” Further, one reads in the book of Revelation of a great multitude of believers gathered around the throne of every people, race, and tongue crying “Holy, holy, holy! Worthy is the Lamb that was slain.” Although it is impossible for us to know what that assembly will sound like, the Bible clearly describes unique cultures united as one in worship. For a vast majority of Christians, black, white, Asian and Latino, that will only be realized in the last day. It is simply impractical, except on certain auspicious occasions, for us to be together. There are too many complications and differences. We are only human.

Therefore, whether one might see the neighborhood changing, or desire to make a statement to the watching world about reconciliation, or maybe want to be a little more like heaven, cross-cultural worship has some very strong, poignant reasons for being a priority for pastors and worship leaders.
If the church leadership decides that a diverse, or cross-cultural, music style is the direction they wish to take, the pastor must first champion it. The undershepherd of the flock is called to set the tone for the local church ministry and to lead the charge for evangelism and mission. The congregation looks to him or her for courage and energy, just as the people of Israel looked to Moses and Joshua for courageous leadership. The pastor can challenge the congregation to step up and choose to submit to one another as different styles of music or worship language are implemented.

Pastors are often plagued with schisms and controversy in the music of the church and some pastors opt for a hands-off approach, letting the musicians work out their differences aesthetically and culturally. Some pastors try to establish a strong worship culture based on “contemporary” models that communicate relevance and technological savvy. So-called contemporary churches spend large sums of money on sound systems, video support, performance-venue worship space, and cool headset microphones to attract a certain kind of worshipper on that brief slice of the week from 8:00 am to 1:00 pm—depending on how many services, and how early the leadership can get going. This is not only true in the white church; there are black pastors who clean house musically in order to have a strong contemporary gospel sound with louder sound, electronic keyboards, and praise teams replacing the traditional choir.

In addition to the pastor, secondly, there must be capable musicians to back up a commitment to cross-cultural worship. These musicians must be willing to grow and stretch. They must be willing to visit other churches, listen to recordings and copy styles, and they must have the musical capacity to decipher the elements in a musical style—rhythm, harmony, melody, timbre, and even the right tempo. In other words, willingness is not enough for music to replicate a cultural focus. Musicians trained in church music are often not trained in improvisation, playing by ear, and transcribing chords and forms from a recording. The best training for this task is in jazz departments. Jazz is the classical music of the African American and Latino communities, and much of the skill to play gospel or salsa is acquired in jazz. Jazz theory is also conducive to cross-cultural church music, since one learns...
chord voicings, chord alterations, and the matching scales for improvisation of the blues and of the variety of urban pop styles—swing, funk, ballads, samba, and fusion.

Thirdly, there is a vocal style of cross-cultural music. Trained singers may have diverse approaches depending on whether they are singing an operatic aria or a popular song. Some trained singers do both very well, and sometimes it is a simple matter of developing articulation for blues, for straighter tone, or for embellishing melodies properly. Untrained singers are usually confident in one or two styles and can "belt" out lead vocals very well if they have a strong accompaniment. It is when trained and untrained are put together that grace abounds! One of the blessings of cross-cultural or multi-cultural music is the openness and acceptance of variety that seems to result. But lead vocalists in a praise team or song leaders need to have a more vernacular, improvisational style to capture the congregation's attention and not its sympathy. Lead vocalists for white praise songs are often simple straight-tone Celtic-style vocalists. Lead vocalists for Latin music are more expressive, almost romantic stylistically. Lead vocalists for African American music are loved the world over for their powerful, soulful delivery. By God's grace and sovereign provision, singers in a cross-cultural church are equipped to sing the wide variety of music needed for unity in the singing body.

Musicians asked to lead in cross-cultural ministry must have a special skill set. Fourthly, however, they must also have a spiritual discernment of the mission of worship as they approach each Sunday and each group of musicians with whom they work. If a musician is hired for musical skill, but does not have spiritual eyes, he or she can become an obstruction rather than a facilitator of cross-cultural worship. A musician acting in the flesh can be prideful of talent, harsh toward amateur participants, and even insubordinate toward the leadership. Cross-cultural worship is also culturally rooted in the church traditions it combines, and if a musician has no roots in a church, he or she will capture the style but not the substance of worship music. If it is necessary to hire musicians, there should always be a spiritually motivated leader, whether it be a singer, an administrator, or pastor who is in charge of the music.

At the center of the commitment to cross- or multi-cultural worship is an understanding of "heart music." This ethnomusicological term references the authenticity and genuineness in worship that goes beyond mere skill or style and is directed toward the heart of God. By God's grace and sovereign provision, singers in a cross-cultural church are equipped to sing the wide variety of music needed for unity in the singing body.

At the center of the commitment to cross- or multi-cultural worship is an understanding of "heart music."
refers to a musical context learned in childhood that most fully expresses one’s emotion. This concept, which has been applied to the study of indigenous music by ministries such as Wycliffe Bible Translators, can be similarly applied to North American worship. When cultures are coming together, or when a person from a minority culture attaches herself to a worshipping body in the majority culture, certain worship expressions are intentionally left behind or even suppressed. I visited a well-known church in Maryland where music is created and recorded for their worship in the dominant contemporary Christian style. I noticed the presence of 200-300 African Americans in the Sunday morning service. When I remarked that there was a significant number, the worship leader enthused, “Yes, they love our worship” but admitted that they were less than enthusiastic about the style of music. In this kind of setting, one worshipper is nourished culturally while the person next to him is unsatisfied. Population shifts have changed the very fundamental heart language of congregations. When cultural blending occurs, a new heart language emerges for our children—one that is sensitive to the worship sense of disparate peoples. One such song in our congregation is the African American song, “We’ve Come This Far by Faith” which has become an anthem of unity and mission, but originated in the black community of the 1970s.

Because “heart music” is so integral to a sense of belonging, it is necessary that the dominant culture give place to the minority group stylistically. In my experience, black worshipers will always want the music to be blacker, while white worshipers will notice the slightest unfamiliar tune and think, “Wow, we’re a diverse congregation.” I have been asked several times to come lead worship for a convention to provide diversity. Some committee decided that they needed to diversify. To a white client, diversity is mostly familiar praise songs with a few Latino or African American songs. Whites assume that they are the majority. This is why minority groups of believers have a problem trusting white authority figures who, the minorities believe, are looking out for their own, and using blacks to enhance their image.

Ethnic diversity is a frightening prospect to some whites and to some blacks as well. There are fears of a loss of something one holds dear and there may be sinful fears of the effects of blending cultures attached to one’s sons and daughters marrying someone of a different race or class. There are misunderstandings and stereotypes and other genuine bases for distrust. One African American man about forty years old in our church testified that the greatest witness to him was a white man in his seventies who accepted and respected him. After all, it was not until 1965 that schools in Chattanooga were desegregated. Further, it is hard to come together in worship when one worshipper thinks of the scripture, “Let
all the earth keep silence” as a standard for true worship, while the next one is thinking, “make a joyful noise.”

One aspect of cross-cultural worship in which I have no experience is that of an existing church deciding to embrace a new ideology of worship and music. Our church in Chattanooga was founded on the principal of blending together. Many other churches must come to an agreement from a previous position of homogeneity. One part of a congregation in Jackson, Mississippi, decided to stay in a black neighborhood while another segment moved and purchased a building in another community in order to remain uniform culturally. Recently the music leadership, white and black, taught the original congregation several gospel choir and congregational songs from a New City Fellowship music conference. The people there are energized and excited, posting choir anthems on Youtube.

As frustrating and challenging as it has been, it has also been rewarding and energizing to our congregation. Having a purpose for choosing certain kinds of music that goes beyond one’s own tastes and preferences is an exercise in self-denial in the Pauline sense—“Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved” (1 Cor 10:33). It is one thing to speak of mercy and justice in a seminar or a book, but quite a different thing to act it out in the worship service.

It is also difficult to see a cause such as racial reconciliation as important, only to see your children grow up to leave the cause for more homogeneous pastures. As wonderful as it may sound, cross-cultural worship seems not to be for everyone. It seems that some of us are more wired for this than others. Alternatively, sometimes cause-oriented churches raise a generation of principled young adults who have tasted of the fruits of racial harmony and express that concept differently, like enrolling their children in a public school with diverse population. The heart language of worshipping together reaches those who give themselves to it, and passes over those who are not convinced. That does not make it irrelevant or undeserving. Most things worth doing are hard in some way.

Yet, for those who are still determined, one of the important details of cross- and multi-cultural worship is resources. Frequently after a worship service, a visitor to our church will come up to the stage and ask, “What was the third song you did today? Could I get a copy of the words?” Maybe this happens in many churches, but the worshipper should also be asking, “Where does that song come from? Has it been published or recorded? Is it on YouTube?” Finding music for blended worship is one of the most persistent tasks of cross-cultural musicians and pastors. “We have an Intervarsity Christian Fellowship worship
leader from college and we need him to sound like...uh...Andrae Crouch. What songs would you recommend?” asked one church planter from Miami.

Some resources are readily available in published hymnals. Three I would recommend are:

1. *Songs of Zion* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981);
2. *Libro de Liturgia y Cántico* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1998);

The first is one of the best collections of traditional black gospel and spirituals. The second is a Spanish-language hymnal published by the Evangelical Lutheran Church, so it is a good resource for mainstream hymns in Spanish—as well as a variety of Spanish liturgical music. The third is a collection of praise songs from world cultures, and is good for churches experimenting with worldwide music styles. I recommend these, not as the single purchase one might make, but as the beginning of a collection of similar songbooks, depending on a congregation’s direction.

Another important resource is real live worship in churches where the target group may be found. In the early days of our mission, we would go to black churches and listen to their choirs, their pianists, their soloists, and their songs. It was there that we heard “I’m So Glad Trouble Don’t Last Always” and “There’s a Leak in This Old Building.” These songs gave a familiar ring to our otherwise halting efforts. I am often amused when I hear a black praise team member say, “this is the New City way of doing that song. It’s not the way I grew up with.”

Increasingly, online resources are available for minimal cost. If you know a song you want to do, chances are it is on iTunes, YouTube, or Amazon.com. Sometimes it is knowing which songs to start with, and that comes from listening, visiting, and going to the fountainhead of culture. There is no shortcut. One cannot create authenticity overnight. Frequently the resources that will be the most valuable and durable are right in your own church. Ask a Latino or African American worshiper what the equivalent of “How Great Thou Art” is in his or her culture. When I asked that question a few years ago, my friend said, “What a Fellowship.” That is the same as “Leaning on the Everlasting Arms” found in most white hymnals. But it is the way it is sung and played that gives it authenticity. Ask your own people to bring you CDs or music of songs they love. This will build a strong sense of belonging when your favorite gospel song turns up in the order of worship next Sunday!
At this writing, our church music ministry is slowly uploading content to a website for this very purpose. www.ncfmusic.com will be sheet music of public domain hymns like “Down at the Cross/Glory to His Name” written out in 12/8 time the way it is played by gospel pianists. The site will include audio recordings, video, and podcasts, as well as written articles on ethnic worship from several angles. There are other resources like this in a variety of places, so dig deep and find what works for you. GIA Publications, the largest Roman Catholic music publisher even has the African American Heritage Hymnal.

Finding the right songs to use can be a hit or miss proposition. Your musicians may think they are on the right track, but they must listen, listen, listen to the minority population in your church and meet people where they are. Just because a song has a nice backbeat or is soulful in the melody does not mean Aunt Hattie will like it. You may find yourself with a hip group of musicians thinking they are hitting the target with cool chords and R&B, when all the while there are certain traditional songs to be explored and rendered. Even contemporary gospel artists who have created a “new standard” for praise music will sometimes include a remake of some old song like “The Lord Will Make a Way Somehow” by Thomas A. Dorsey. In other words, the cross-cultural palette is a blend of traditional dominant culture, contemporary dominant, traditional cocultural music, and contemporary cocultural music.

These few thoughts and anecdotes are important but they do not define the only way to do cross-cultural worship music. The demographics of the city of Chattanooga may skew our strategy a bit. We do have visitors from around the world, however, and it seems we are getting close to what folks expect of a cross-cultural worship setting. It is my experience that church music is generally a stressful task for the full- or part-time music director. One must sense what the pastor wants, put that together with the available volunteer pool, sprinkle in some instruments and resources, and mix it with special events. But adding in the element of cross-cultural strategy increases the pressure on the church musician to produce results that are almost impossible without a generation of trust and development. If the church is working in a neighborhood with mixed economic and educational aspects, it can be complicated to get folks to work together freely. It can mean handing out lyric sheets that you have carefully prepared to match the sheet music. It can mean working on music that is very
simple notationally, but that requires swaying and clapping or improvising sections of the music at the bidding of the director. It may mean learning words in other languages and pronouncing them correctly. It may mean having a director who is unschooled, but is adept at motivating or relating.

For those of us in the dominant culture who seek to reach outside our own comfort zone, it will often mean stepping back and leading from the sidelines. The focus will be off you and on the other participants, some of whom are not as skilled as you. It will mean laughing at yourself as people in your program are laughing at your clumsiness, but realizing that physical movement is an important part of being cross-cultural, period.

A strategy for cross-cultural worship will bear much fruit in time, as the local body commits to reaching a people group at various levels of mercy, justice, and worship. An initial reaction from a member or new attendee of “wow, thanks for that song, it reminded me of my grandma’s church” gives the rush of excitement when you finally hit a homrun culturally. After a while, you may hit some bumps in the road, whether it is the loss of a great singer to personal problems or the antagonism of ethnocentric members. Progress in cultural issues is measured in decades of various efforts, and if you are reaching out to a different culture, you may not ever get a ringing endorsement from the target group. Sometimes the best indication is that talented folks say “yes” when you ask them to participate.

In 1979, my wife and I returned to New City Fellowship from Pennsylvania, having worked with a jazz band for two and a half years, and finding it unproductive. Sometime during that year I wrote a song called “Make Me a Vessel” about God taking us through the fire and the water to make us fit vessels for his Kingdom. By that time, one of our members was an old African American woman who had lived the hard life of years in the South. She had even played guitar in speakeasies as a young woman. Her teeth were stained from chewing tobacco. She was thin and stooped over but she had a ready smile and a testimony.

On a Sunday morning at the dilapidated YMCA where we were meeting, I sang the song as a special selection. By that time, I was playing and singing in a soulful style. As the song came to a crescendo, there was a scream from the back of the small meeting room. We were all surprised, and then realized that Miss Betty was “shouting” in response to the performance. This song was not an old
traditional gospel song. I was as white as the driven snow. But God gave me a gift that day, the gift of a uniquely ethnic response to my musical offering in the early days of our worship's taking shape. It remains as a milestone in my heart of his calling to cross-cultural music and worship.

So think hard about whether this is God's calling on your vocation or your church. Some musicians never make a conscious choice; they simply find themselves needed and able to fill that need. Your strategy may be a great one, but God's calling is in his sovereign wisdom without all the answers spelled out. He will make a way, when there is no way. He did for me.

1 Black folks have come a long way from cultural uniformity of even a generation ago. Black professionals, educators, or artists may have a completely different perspective on social interaction. “Traditional black neighbors” here refers to working class families, sometimes matriarchal, housed in black enclaves within the city.


4 Untrained vocalists often refer to accompaniment as “music” as in “We can come and sing, but we don’t have any music.”


6 This would be a more multicultural approach, resulting in an appreciation for the music of other countries. It may or may not be effective in reaching people from these cultures.

7 C. Michael Hawn, Gather Into One: Praying and Singing Globally (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003), 4. This is a term used rather than “subcultural.”
One Student at a Time: The Hospitality of Multicultural Theological Education

By Molly T. Marshall*

ABSTRACT

Theological education prepares women and men for ministry in both church and society. As the demographic landscape shifts, seminaries must adapt instructional approaches, patterns of community life, and methods of formation to provide inclusive opportunity for all. The hospitality of the Triune God who creates space for otherness grounds this approach to ministry preparation.

I have often tried to imagine becoming a student in a theological school where the language of instruction and textbooks was not my first language. How far behind and dislocated I would feel! Required readings for graduate level seminary classes are renowned for rigor, and the technical nomenclature of these texts is challenging even for those skilled in English.

I have also considered what being a minority in a majority culture institution might mean if I were skeptical of things written, e.g., Native Americans’ revulsion of paper “treaties.” A student of Kiowa-Commanche heritage at Central illuminated the daunting task of trusting what was contained in her reading and the misgivings she experienced when trying to reduce her cultural reflection to a neatly constructed paper.

For others, the nimble orality of their preaching tradition (African American) finds reducing imaginative narratives to style-guide approved

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prose a distortion or truncation, at best. And the attentive silence of majority students when Black students preach in chapel may seem like a quenching of the Spirit when “call and response” has been the norm in their home churches.

What if the worship did not incorporate practices such as dance, and thus felt incomplete (as a student from Cameroon informed me)? It just does not feel like we have fully worshipped, he said, if there has not been a dancing, drum-accompanied procession to the place of baptism, to bring the offering, and to welcome the visitors.

I have not had these challenges in pursuing a theological education, and I wonder if I would have the perseverance I see in so many of our students at Central. The closest analogy was my discomfort at Trinity College, Cambridge, as my classmates found my southern drawl-accented Greek a little too funny. At least I was semi-acquainted with the Queen’s English.

Recently Dr. Heather Entrekin, Des Peres Associate Professor of Congregational Health at Central, and I spent a week teaching a doctoral seminar at Myanmar Institute of Theology in Yangon, Myanmar. The students were selected for this first cohort not only because of their excellence in the practice of ministry, but also because of their facility in English. We witnessed their arduous toil over reading assignments and their commitment to improvement. At times there was need to talk over an issue “in their own language” (Burmese) for clarity to emerge. In those intervals (when Heather and I fell silent), I appreciated even more the goal and labor-intensive dimensions of multicultural education and experienced a measure of cultural exclusion.

This brief essay will describe approaches that Central is undertaking to practice inclusive theological education. CBTS’s commitment to diversity in learning is stated in its core values: “We respect the richness of diversity as we engage voices of different ages, races, ethnicities, genders, and faith traditions in a welcoming and open environment.” While we have miles to go before we arrive at full inclusion of our varied learners, we are growing ever more intentional in how we shape pedagogical patterns, plan worship, and structure opportunities to strengthen our life together. We do this because it is essential educationally; even more we do this because it is God’s beckoning for our time. I begin with a theological perspective on hospitality, which issues forth from God’s life as trinity.
The Trinitarian Virtue of Creating Space

For several years now, I have been delighted to witness the remarkable revival of trinitarian theology in academic circles. From the writings of Karl Rahner¹ and Catherine LaCugna²—Roman Catholic theologians—to the writings of Jürgen Moltmann³ and Miroslav Volf⁴—Reformed theologians—to the writings of Paul Fiddes⁵ and Stan Grenz⁶—Baptist theologians, we are learning that trinitarian theology is not an esoteric doctrine that only scholars can engage. We have been learning that the fundamental truth about God’s life is that God creates space for otherness. The theological grounding for the work of hospitality is the self-giving life of the Triune God. The word that the Cappadocian Fathers of the fourth century used to describe the life of God was *perichoresis*. (Students at Central joke that if they learn how to spell this and have some idea of what it means, they can dance their way through theology courses!)

*Perichoresis* depicts a relationship of mutuality in which persons draw their identity from being related to others. It is movement, an interplay, of self-giving that calls forth reciprocal sharing of life.⁷ By creating space for others, i.e., Son and Spirit, God lives eternally in communing relationship without demanding sameness. Trinitarian life is shared life; it is welcoming of that which is other—even the humanity of the incarnate one. The root of the word, *chorein*, simply means to create space, to make room.

Dwelling in the richness of eternal relationship, the Triune God demonstrates the practice of relational wholeness. The willingness to de-center self in perichoretic movement is not only the inner life of God, but God’s kenotic embrace of the world. God never uses power in a coercive modality, but comes to seek and to serve. God’s trinitarian history with humanity is for the making of peace, bringing those who are “afar off” and those “near” into one new humanity (Eph 2:17). There was room for both Jew and Gentile in the new people formed by God. Creating space for others is critical to inclusive theological education. Persons need space to enter fearlessly with their distinctive perspectives on the life of faith. Hospitable embrace of otherness transforms all, and guest and host distinctions soon ebb.
What if we constructed ministry formation as capacious welcome, a place where life can flourish? Elizabeth Newman, Baptist theologian and ethicist, has suggested that “God’s triune hospitality calls us to a different place, a place where we practice living lives determined by God’s giving across the grand sweep of time rather than our own limited grasp of the ways things are.” Inclusive theological education that welcomes diversity as a means toward greater truth will require radical hospitality and humility to acknowledge the limited and provisional perspective each harbors.

Ministerial Formation in Multicultural Context

One of the key emphases in Central’s curriculum is global Christianity. This is the frank acknowledgement that Europe and North America are no longer the strongholds of Christianity and that there is much to learn about the discrete expressions of Christian faith around the globe. It is also the keen recognition that many cultural forms of Christian identity flourish all around here at home, which can also inform the processes of ministry preparation.

A simple definition of multicultural education is the commitment to making education equally accessible to all students. This commitment requires attentiveness to making space for the differences learners embody in ethnicity, gender, race, social class, and educational experience. Far more than being politically correct, this approach to education demonstrates a core value of the Gospel: hospitality. Hospitality requires the decentering of dominant privilege in order to make welcome those who bring other capacities and insights; the whole learning enterprise is transformed by crafting a larger, more inclusive framework for learning the competencies needed for effective ministry.

Ethically and nationally, significant diversity has characterized CBTS. Over the past fifteen years Central’s student body has included students from the African American community, Euro-American heritages, Myanmar, India, Nagaland, Japan, Indonesia, Cameroon, Sudan, Kenya, Armenia, Korea, Russia and other republics of the former Soviet Union, England, several Native American tribes, and more. We delight in this breadth and seek to shape ministry formation in appropriate ways to include them all.
Strategies of Hospitality

How is Central Seminary learning to be multicultural? Besides participating in ATS workshops on race and diversity, we engage these realities regularly as our faculty members continue to grow in hospitable theological education. Some of our approaches include:

- Using textbooks by African American, Korean, Latino/a, etc. writers, using articles by Chin and Karen scholars, and building more expansive bibliographies for classes all demonstrate receptivity to non-white scholarship. Diversity also includes varied theological perspectives, and we seek to create space for those who bring pre-critical perspectives on biblical interpretation and doctrine.

- Naming social location as a hermeneutical reality is significant. One professor of biblical studies requires students to complete a self-inventory that requires them to consider how ethnicity, gender, community priorities, social class, family influence, tradition of biblical interpretation, and other matters will shape their approach to biblical texts.

- Cultivating an environment of trust and openness allows students to share their cultural perspectives and grow in understanding differing expectations. This becomes challenging when expectations about gender roles are informed by language. For example, my syllabus in Constructive Theology includes this statement on the use of inclusive language:

  “Using inclusive language demonstrates awareness that linguistic conventions are changing so as to stress equality and respect for gender and ethnicity. It is also more true to biblical and theological insights. Humanity as male and female is created in the divine image. Further, God as the Triune One transcends gender.

  “I invite you to be intentional in the practice of inclusive language in written and oral material. Since all of us are growing in this area, let’s try to be patient with one another, especially those for whom English is not their first language.”

When one does not achieve this goal of learning inclusive language, hospitality requires a non-judgmental encouragement to learn new
patterns and a patient acceptance of the time required to unlearn prior conventions.

- Inviting guest lecturers who provide a fresh perspective or challenge to the more dominant Euro-centric culture at Central is helpful. African American women, Asian men, and a Latino Diversity Officer, to mention a few guest presenters, all contribute to cultural appreciation as they address classes at Central. This year’s commencement speaker was a Latina from Chile; next year’s speaker will be a Chin from Myanmar. Using resources that name forms of oppression and ethnocentric identity is also productive. One professor has changed the name of one session in Ethics from “racism” to “privilege and racism” in response to a documentary film, “The Color of Fear.”

- Visiting other ecclesial traditions in the worship course, as well as other religions, e.g., such as worshipping with a synagogue on Friday evening Shabbat services, has opened learners to respect for the lived religion of others. Members of our faculty (and staff) are regularly involved in interfaith clergy gatherings and provide leadership when Jewish, Christian, and Muslim dialogues occur.

- Participating in global immersion experiences provides students and faculty the kind of contextual displacement and learning that grows awareness of the relativity of cultural norms. Engaging Christianity—as well as other ways of faith—in Hong Kong, Thailand, Turkey, Greece, Philippines, Kenya, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Myanmar allows new insight on the culturally embedded expressions of Christian discipleship. It is my goal as President to find ways to make possible such an experience for all learners at Central.

- Leading chapels reflective of the diverse cultural contexts from which the students come (including American Indian “smudging” ceremonies, sweat lodge, Black church music and preaching, Naga worship music, etc.) has strengthened appreciation of the expansive traditions of our students. To worship together does more to bridge racial and cultural divides than anything else in the seminary community.

To worship together does more to bridge racial and cultural divides than anything else in the seminary community. One of my senior colleagues has
remarked that his favorite experience in worship is when we gather for Eucharist and see the beauty of the Body of Christ in all its diversity.

- Adding minority scholars to the core faculty of Central has been essential; we have also recruited and utilized non-white adjunctive professors in several of the degree programs. It is very important that students identify with role models in scholarship and ministry. Kindling the imagination for vocational possibilities can be enhanced by this kind of racial and cultural identification. Additionally, faculty meetings gain depth and richer insight as new viewpoints offer critical awareness to the tasks of ministry formation.

- Recruiting ethnically diverse board members has been a particular goal of the past few years. We want representatives from the great variety of communities that send us students and that will help place our graduates. Diverse ecclesial experiences on the part of board members can call the seminary to a more expansive and relevant mission.

- Collaborating with Myanmar Institute of Theology is proving transformative. Together we are offering a Doctor of Ministry in Congregational Health. By design it is multicultural and requires close and collaborative working/travelling relationships with Burmese colleagues and students.

- Creating diverse cohorts of learners enhances intercultural consciousness. Central has two degree programs that entail a cohort model of educational delivery. Enrollment strategies pay attention to the need for diversity in recruiting students and building these learning cohorts enrich the learning opportunities for each student and offer a more holistic education. In addition, our extension sites in Wisconsin and Tennessee are quite intentional in making sure that learners experience the kind of multicultural exchanges that form “humanly sensitive” ministers, which is one of the objectives of Central’s mission statement.

We know that there is further work to be done in constructing instructional processes that make it easier for international students to participate. While able to follow clearly presented content, the expectation of participation in
Often we learn the best practices of hospitality from our students as they prepare ethnic food, offer the insight only “fresh eyes” can bring, and teach the shape of faithful discipleship from their homeland or church.  Often we learn the best practices of hospitality from our students as they prepare ethnic food, offer the insight only “fresh eyes” can bring, and teach the shape of faithful discipleship from their homeland or church.

Central Seminary is learning multicultural education one student at a time as he or she helps make preparation for ministry more hospitable.  God is calling us to this horizon, and Central desires to be found faithful.  Central desires to create a hospitable space for all we are privileged to educate.  We have been learning new practices and exploring ways to transgress harmful cultural boundaries for effective outcomes. Hospitality, diversity, and generativity are core values for our school, and we seek to be an icon of the Trinity as we practice embrace rather than exclusion.

Often we learn the best practices of hospitality from our students as they prepare ethnic food, offer the insight only “fresh eyes” can bring, and teach the shape of faithful discipleship from their homeland or church.

Conclusion

Central desires to create a hospitable space for all we are privileged to educate. We have been learning new practices and exploring ways to transgress harmful cultural boundaries for effective outcomes. Hospitality, diversity, and generativity are core values for our school, and we seek to be an icon of the Trinity as we practice embrace rather than exclusion.

Often we learn the best practices of hospitality from our students as they prepare ethnic food, offer the insight only “fresh eyes” can bring, and teach the shape of faithful discipleship from their homeland or church. Central Seminary is learning multicultural education one student at a time as he or she helps make preparation for ministry more hospitable. God is calling us to this horizon, and Central desires to be found faithful.

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10 This information is drawn from Central’s 2011 self-study for the Higher Learning Commission.

11 I am drawing from insights and practices of Central colleagues, including Robert Johnson, David May, Tarris Rosell, Richard Olson, Wallace Hartsfield II, and Heather Entrekin.

12 Every new syllabus from any location within the CBTS system (whether a new faculty member, new course, or new delivery method) is evaluated by members of the Faculty Senate for appropriateness of content, rigor, goals and objectives, and diversity of perspectives offered through bibliography, reading assignments, and treatment of course topics.
Current Baptist Initiatives in Arkansas

By Ray T. Higgins*

ABSTRACT

Two specific initiatives in Arkansas provide examples of ways black and white Baptists are working together to model healthy relationships and promote community development. These current partnerships emerge out of the efforts of courageous Baptist leaders in Arkansas who spoke up, stood up, and shared in ministry together in the past.

Introduction

Similar to all local contexts, specific initiatives like race relations are shaped by the work of leaders in the past and by the vision of current leaders. Current race relations partnerships in Arkansas reflect this reality. This article provides a brief description of two of these partnerships and the work in the past that created the positive context for these initiatives.

Together for Hope in Arkansas

In 2001, the national Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, based in Atlanta, Georgia, announced a rural poverty initiative called Together for Hope. CBF made a twenty-year commitment to the twenty poorest counties in the United

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States. The twenty counties are located in five regions of the country: South Dakota (Native Americans), Texas (Hispanic Americans), the Delta (Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi), Perry County, Alabama (African Americans), and Appalachia in Kentucky (Anglo-Americans).

A missionary family, Ben and Leonora Newell, asked CBF to send them to Helena, Arkansas to begin Together for Hope in the Arkansas Delta. Bringing global field experience from Indonesia, Ben, with a master’s in business administration, and Leonora, with a bachelor’s degree in occupational therapy, moved along with their young children, Lucas, Nate, and Gabriella, to the racially divided, impoverished community of Helena.

They began their ministry through building relationships with leaders, black and white, with churches, black and white, with businesses, black and white, and with the poor, black and white. They worked hard to communicate an authentic love for God and for people, a compelling vision for a better community and a richer quality of life, and a practical plan for bringing individuals within the community together to create a new spirit in the city.

Now, ten years later, as they prepare to move and bring their ministry to the poorest counties in Texas, we celebrate their catalytic leadership in race relations. For nine years they have organized a two-week mission experience in Helena called the All Church Challenge. During these two weeks, churches within the Helena area, in Arkansas, and from North Carolina, Texas, Missouri, Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, and Virginia send mission teams to lead spiritual and recreational activities. As a result, several hundred children and youth have accepted Christ, and the teams have given thousands of dollars each year to support water wells in Africa or backpacks of food for children in the Helena schools.

Six different types of facilities have been created or renovated in Helena: two community gardens; a renovated Community Center that was burned out and unusable; a new swimming pool house and renovated pavilion and pump house; a “store” for small business entrepreneurs called the Eden Market; and a new church facility for New Light Baptist Church in downtown Helena.

At least twenty new community-focused ministries have been launched, including a literacy effort called Stories on Wheels, a Delta Christmas event that provides coats to needy children, a Back to School event that provides school supplies to needy students, swimming lessons for children, youth, and adults.
and a Blessings Ministry that performs home repairs and random acts of kindness.

In addition, Dr. Chester Thompson, pastor of Zion Hill Baptist Church in Camden, Arkansas, and former moderator of CBF of Arkansas, leads a Pastor Peer Learning Group with Helena area pastors. National CBF supports the peer learning group.

During Together for Hope’s ten-year presence in Phillips county, over $2 million has been brought into the local economy, over 3,000 mission volunteers have come to the area, thirty-one “student.go” interns have worked in Helena, and local leaders, ministers, churches, and citizens have come together to bring spiritual, relational, and organizational transformation to a racially divided community.

The ABC-CBFAR Partnership

In August 2007, the Coordinating Council of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Arkansas voted 20-1 to begin a partnership with the historic Arkansas Baptist College, founded in 1884.

This author accepted an invitation to a luncheon meeting with the college’s new president, Dr. Fitz Hill, a graduate of Ouachita Baptist University, former head football coach at San Jose State University, armed with a doctorate in education, and medals for serving in Desert Storm and Desert Shield. From that meeting, we began conversations about how our two Baptist organizations might partner together.

Through the Council’s vote, CBF of Arkansas moved its state office from a Little Rock suburb to ABC’s urban neighborhood, just south of the state capitol. Dr. Hill and the college extended their campus by purchasing a condemned 1880s Queen Anne cottage and vacant lot, and funded the renovation of the cottage into an office, under the planning and supervision of CBF of Arkansas’ associate coordinator, Charles Ray. In February 2008, we moved into the newly renovated office, which became the initial piece of physical evidence for Dr. Hill’s vision for the college and the neighborhood. Over the next three years, Mr. Ray supervised and completed twenty housing-related projects for Dr. Hill and the college, including the complete restoration of four homes: an office for CBFAR; an office for another non-profit, faith based organization—The Nehemiah Network; ABC’s GED center; and ABC’s Student Services and Enrollment Management office.

In December 2008, CBF of Arkansas and Arkansas Baptist College sponsored a conversation about race relations. The event presented a screening of the newly released, award winning DVD entitled Beneath the
Skin: Baptists and Racism, produced by the Baptist Center for Ethics, based in Nashville, Tennessee. Two hundred people attended the event at Second Baptist Church in downtown Little Rock, where the audience saw the documentary, participated in a panel-audience conversation, and heard black and white ministers describe ways of working together and moving forward. At the conclusion of that event, one local pastor, on behalf of his church, offered to purchase a house and property for the college, and a board member donated a house to the college.

Since the spring of 2008, CBF of Arkansas, eight black and white Baptist churches in Little Rock, and Arkansas Baptist College have partnered in hosting an annual Racial Unity Worship Service. Over $12,000 has been raised for ABC in those three events.

Another aspect of this partnership involves ABC’s Division of Religious Studies. Dr. Stan Wilson, director of pastoral care at Baptist Health in Little Rock, works with Dr. Clifton Conley, ABC’s Chair of Religious Studies, to offer a chaplain internship program for religious studies majors in their senior year. Beginning in the fall of 2011, Dr. Wilson and this author will team teach the Senior Seminar and provide internships for students in the medical center, in prison ministry, and in local churches.

Out of CBF of Arkansas’ partnership with Dr. Hill and ABC, Dr. Hill has served as a motivational speaker for a CBF national, state, and regional coordinators’ retreat, served as a panelist for the New Baptist Covenant meeting in Oklahoma City, served as keynote speaker and panel leader for the Delta Caucus annual meeting at the Clinton Presidential Library, served as a panelist for the 2011 annual meeting of the Baptist History and Heritage Society, and has led a pastors’ retreat for CBF of Florida, which led to students from some of those churches enrolling at the college.

In addition to Dr. Hill serving on CBF of Arkansas’ Coordinating Council, three ABC Board of Trustee members have also served or are serving: Judge Wendell Griffen, who serves as pastor of New Millennium Church; Regina Favors, an insurance CEO; and Dr. Chester Thompson, pastor of Zion Hill Baptist Church, Camden, Arkansas.

Two black-white church partnerships in Little Rock have formed out of this initiative: Christway Missionary Baptist Church and Calvary Baptist Church, and New Millennium Church and Second Baptist Church.

Influence from the Past

Key leaders, black and white, planted the seed for these current partnerships in race relations among Baptist in Arkansas.
U.S. Congressman Brooks Hays represented Arkansas from 1943-1959 and taught a Men's Bible class at Second Baptist Church, downtown Little Rock for decades. Congressman Hays, a layperson who served as a two-term President of the Southern Baptist Convention (1957-59), lost re-election to Congress due to his stance on addressing the integration of Little Rock's Central High School during the 1957 crisis.

A second key leader was Dr. Dale Cowling, pastor of Second Baptist Church, downtown Little Rock, who, during that September 1957 crisis, opened the church to integration and publically supported the integration of Central High School. His courageous stand as pastor immediately resulted in membership and financial loss to the church.

A third key leader was Dr. Robert Willingham, pastor of Mt. Pleasant Missionary Baptist Church in Little Rock, who began an annual worship event with Dr. Cowling and Second Baptist during the early 1970s. This annual worship experience grew to include another black church, Mt. Zion Baptist Church, which helped found Arkansas Baptist College, and Lakeshore Drive Baptist Church, which began as a breakaway new church start from a white, racist Baptist church. These churches continued to worship through 2007, leading to the annual Racial Unity Worship event in support of Arkansas Baptist College.

The friendship of two key Baptist ministers through the years extended the network of positive race relations. Dr. W. O. Lindsey served as the pastor of the Emmanuel Baptist Church in Little Rock, and Dr. Bob Ferguson served as the director of cooperative ministries for National & Southern Baptists through the Arkansas Baptist State Convention in Little Rock. Their friendship and leadership created understanding, trust, friendship, and shared ministry among black and white Baptist pastors and churches that makes it possible for current partnerships to flourish.

The friendship [and leadership] of two key Baptist ministers [W. O. Lindsey and Bob Ferguson] created understanding, trust, friendship, and shared ministry among black and white Baptist pastors and churches that makes it possible for current partnerships to flourish.
Creating a Climate of Cultural Diversity in the Sunshine State

By Raymond Johnson*

ABSTRACT

Florida’s faith leaders who intend to create favorable conditions for increased cultural diversity within their respective communities must contend with historical realities of the South and current demographic trends that are wont to collide with one another. An awareness of the potential for conflict as a community becomes more diverse will help those leaders who seek such diversity. In light of the potential for such conflict, five factors may mitigate the stress of growing more heterogeneous communities of faith: 1) courageous pastoral leadership; 2) decision-making that is intentional about creating diversity; 3) an incarnational approach to ministry and mission; 4) building relationships that can survive risk-taking; and 5) embracing reciprocity as a principle of community relationships.

I am the son of a migrant worker. My dad was in the United States Navy, so every two or three years we packed up and migrated to a new state and new home. During the summer after my first year of high school, my family migrated to the South from Pennsylvania. It was my first experience living in the so-called Bible-belt. I was, to borrow the lament of the Jewish Diaspora, “a stranger living in a strange land.”

The year was 1971 and the public school system in which I was enrolled had recently been forced to integrate. Prior to my life in the South, I had attended middle school in Pennsylvania and elementary school in San Diego,

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California. To be honest, I had not seen many African Americans in my first fifteen or sixteen years of life, except on television.

Shortly after arriving in my newest community, I went downtown where I passed by an insurance company's building and noticed on the back door a sign that, with clearly visible raised lettering, had been painted over. Through the whitewash I could still easily read, "Colored Entrance." The message was clear: gone but not forgotten.

Then, in my sophomore year, I caught wind of the anger of the "Ag Boys" about the forced integration of my high school. (Ag Boys were the students who were majoring in agriculture.) There was talk fluttering around about a possible fight with the black students. Nothing ever came of the talk, but it was serious talk nevertheless.

On another occasion, I was on a field trip with one of my high school classes. I do not recall the impetus for my teacher's comment, but I will never forget hearing her call African Americans "darkies." Perhaps that word should not even be penned in polite journals, but it is where things were in the early and middle 1970s in north central Florida.

Years later while at seminary in Louisville, I was chatting with one of my best friends, who happened to be African American, and Rosa Parks came up in our conversation. I remarked that I had not grown up in the South and had never witnessed anyone being asked to sit at the back of the bus. My friend looked at me and said that when he was growing up in South Carolina he was always told to sit at the back of the bus. On that day, at that moment, the issue became personal.

I hear and read in the media from time to time that America has come a long way since the 1960s. I suppose that is true. I do not see "Colored only" signs anymore. I have not seen anyone being asked to go to the back of the bus. Instead, I have seen bumper stickers that say, "Will the last American out of Miami please bring the flag." I have heard a deacon in a church I attended tell me half-jokingly that no self-respecting southern man will have a fifty dollar bill in his wallet. (Figure it out.) I have had Baptist deacons complain and threaten to leave the church because I invited an African American pastor to fill the pulpit for me on a Sunday evening. I have had long-time Christians come to
me gushing over an interpretation of Genesis given
by some televangelist charlatan who was using
Genesis to prove white supremacy. I still hear the
“N” word. One of my Hispanic friends was fired
from his job in the Midwest and was told that the
supervisor had simply said, “We don't need that Jose
working here.” And I live in a state that is trying to
outdo Arizona and Alabama when it comes to anti-
immigration legislation.

These recollections are, in my opinion, a necessary precondition for
understanding some of the good, and even beautiful, things that are taking
place in Florida at the beginning of the third
millennium. They are necessary because
xenophobia, or racism, or racial prejudice—
whatever one wants to call the sin—is not a
part of America’s distant past. The sin is still
ether in the culture’s air. Therefore, anyone
who seeks to create a multi-cultural, diverse
community of faith may at some point inflame
misunderstanding, confusion, fear, anger, hostility, and opposition.

Now, for the beauty: In the fall of 1998, I came to serve a Southern Baptist
congregation in Miami, Florida. Shortly after I arrived, I conducted a survey
of the members and attendees of the congregation. I discovered that on an
average Sunday forty-two different nationalities were represented in worship.
The people represented by those nations spoke thirteen different languages.

The church’s heterogeneity, in spite of its being in one of America’s most
culturally diverse cities, was the exception, not the rule. Most churches in
Miami tend to cater to one or perhaps two ethnic groups. Thus, one will
often find Hispanic congregations, Haitian congregations, African American
congregations, and Anglo-congregations. The truly multi-cultural,
multilingual church, however, is much rarer.

How was that particular church able to achieve such diversity? In my
opinion, the most significant factor was courageous pastoral leadership (not
the author’s!) when it mattered. In the early 1960s, when this congregation
was still located in downtown Miami, the pastor of the church, Dr. James
Monroe, led the church to vote to accept all people of all backgrounds, all
colors, and all languages. That move in the direction of openness and love
for all people laid the foundation for the congregation that I eventually came
to pastor.

As noted previously, however, confronting the racial and cultural
prejudices that exists within communities is not without risk and fallout. In
this particular case, a number of disgruntled members, including several deacons, left the church on the Sunday following the vote.

A second factor in developing cultural diversity, particularly within communities of faith, is intentionality. My experience has been that diversity does not “just” happen. The inertia of the status quo and the gravity of homogeneity are powerful forces whose effect upon a community of faith is unconsciously experienced but rarely acknowledged. Thus, for example, Cooperative Baptists have, since their inception, openly and unashamedly supported the idea of women serving as pastors of local congregations. The reality, though, is that it is much easier for churches to affirm women pastors as a concept than it is actually to hire a woman to be the pastor of a real, local church.

To address that divergence between head and heart, Cooperative Baptists in Florida redefined their approach to strategic church planting. Prior to 2010, a strategic church plant was primarily identified in geographical terms. In other words, the question was asked, where should a church be planted so that it will be in proximity to the greatest number of people who do not have access to a CBF church? As a result, population growth trends and density were the driving considerations in planting a church.

In 2010, however, the governing body of Cooperative Baptists in Florida, its Representative Assembly, decided to redefine the characteristics that marked a church start as “strategic.” It was decided that a strategic church plant was one that advanced the DNA of Cooperative Baptists, and that one part of CBF’s genetic code was the inclusiveness of God’s calling. To that end in 2010, Florida’s Cooperative Baptists hired a woman, Susan Rogers, to be the state’s first strategic church planter. In 2011, CBF of Florida announced its second strategic church plant, this one an African American effort led by Barry Wright, himself an African American. Both of these decisions were made intentionally in order to help Cooperative Baptists in Florida grow into the people they believe God has called them to be.

A third factor in growing diversity among communities of faith in Florida is an incarnational approach to faith and ministry. The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Florida, partnering with the national Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, birthed two ministry centers in south Florida in the early 1990s, viz., Touching Miami with Love and Open House Ministries. Open House began
as a compassionate response to the people of Homestead, Florida, following the devastation of Hurricane Andrew in 1992. *Touching Miami with Love* formed the following year in an effort to connect CBF’s mission efforts to a global community.

In the case of *Open House*, CBF initially provided what I have sometimes called “parachute-drop ministry.” This kind of ministry response is valuable, even life-saving, following disasters of immense proportions. Humanitarian organizations performed parachute-drop ministry in Indonesia following the Boxing Day tsunami, in Haiti following the 2010 earthquake, in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, and in Homestead after Hurricane Andrew. What set *Open House* apart, though, was the determination by Cooperative Baptists months after Hurricane Andrew to practice incarnation as expressed by Eugene Peterson in his translation of John 1:1-14, “The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood.”² To that end, Cooperative Baptists built a ministry center, founded a healthcare clinic to reside in the center, and sought field personnel to move to Homestead. Cooperative Baptists quit delivering meals on wheels and started becoming good neighbors from whom to borrow a cup of sugar. They had moved into the neighborhood.

I would argue that diversity has increased and, in fact, normalized as a part of life in the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Florida because of this incarnational approach. Not only are ministry centers serving communities, but CBF field personnel also live in the neighborhoods around the ministry centers. They worship in the communities’ churches. Their children play with children from the neighborhood. When they go home at night, they do not drive away to some gated community miles away. They sleep in the neighborhood. This is not “drive-by” missions. This is “skin in the game,” incarnational, “move into the neighborhood,” being-the-presence-of-Christ ministry.

The result of this incarnational approach to ministry is that the entire CBF Florida family knows children and families in Homestead and Overton (the historic African American neighborhood in downtown Miami). When Florida’s Fellowship Baptists picture themselves as a statewide community of faithful people, they include their neighbors and friends from south Florida.

Fourth, to invite and grow diversity, people of good will must build risk-taking relationships. More than a year ago, I was invited to attend a program that about a half dozen college-aged students led. They had several speakers,
all of whom were students, most of whom were undocumented. Their intention was to lobby for change in US immigration policy in general and to advocate the adoption of the DREAM Act in particular. The DREAM Act is a piece of legislation that provides children of undocumented parents a pathway to US citizenship through college studies or military service.

Considering their undocumented status, these and other students like them had very little power with which to leverage awareness, let alone change the status quo. They did, however, have a network of relationships that included Open House Ministries, CBF Florida, as well as a host of other faith-based organizations throughout the southeast. Utilizing this network of support, four students from south Florida “came out” as undocumented and walked 1,500 miles from Miami to Washington DC in what became known as the “Trail of DREAMS.” Their march earned them the ire of the Ku Klux Klan, which protested them in Georgia. They also earned the first annual Freedom from Fear Award, an award produced by Public Interest Projects “to recognize ordinary people who have committed extraordinary acts of courage on behalf of immigrants and refugees—individuals who have taken a risk, set an example, and inspired others to awareness or action.” Those students, their friends, other college students and other undocumented individuals were able to parlay their relationships into power, namely power of the press, power of religious sanctuary, power of finances, political power, and the power of relational networks. By building these relationships and engaging other people of goodwill in their story, the prospect of diversity enlarged.

A final factor in promoting diversity, particularly among Florida’s Cooperative Baptists, is the embrace of reciprocity. In other words, from CBF Florida’s ministry centers in south Florida to local congregations, from partnerships in the Caribbean to the new student ministry on the campus of Stetson University, Cooperative Baptists have developed partnerships that bless in both directions. In the Bahamas, for example, a friendship developed years ago following Hurricane Floyd in which Cooperative Baptists in Florida provided relief to the people of Abaco, an outlying island in the Bahamas, through the ministry of Rev. John McIntosh, pastor of Mount Hope Baptist Church in Abaco. Over the years since Hurricane Floyd, Cooperative Baptists have worked with Baptists in the Bahamas, particularly on Abaco, and recently on the east end of Grand Bahamas, to bring mission teams to the churches and to provide theological training for the local pastors and church leaders. Then in July 2011, the people of Abaco pulled together a small
mission team to travel to Homestead, Florida in order to lead a week of summer camp at Open House Ministries. Through such reciprocal ministry, the beauty of diversity becomes apparent.

Similarly, CBF Florida has developed partnerships with churches in Puerto Rico. Through the catalytic leadership of Rev. Rubén Ortiz, the pastor of Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana de Deltona (in Deltona, Florida) and Rev. Carlos Peralta, CBF Florida’s Hispanic ministries liaison, CBF Florida has built friendships with congregations in Puerto Rico, particularly the Iglesia Bautista de Metrópolis, located in Carolina, Puerto Rico. Again, these partnerships have become reciprocal. Mission teams have gone from Florida (and other states) to Puerto Rico, and the church in Metrópolis has sent a mission team to Deltona to renovate property that the church had purchased. Also, the worship team from Metrópolis journeyed to Tampa for the twentieth anniversary celebration of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship in order to perform during one evening's worship services.

Cooperative Baptists in Florida have chosen to formalize the reciprocity of the relationships between themselves and Baptists in the Bahamas, Puerto Rico, and elsewhere in the Caribbean. In October 2010, the Representative Assembly added a sixth district, The Caribbean Islands, to the existing five districts. As a result, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Florida is now the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Florida and the Caribbean Islands.

Forty years ago, a church in Miami lost about a dozen deacons when it voted to open its doors to all of God’s children. A year ago, a group of four Hispanic students walking to the nation’s capital were greeted in Georgia by the Ku Klux Klan. Cooperative Baptists in Florida greeted the formation of a sixth district and welcomed the churches from the Caribbean with a standing ovation. The Kingdom of God is breaking forth and it is a thing of beauty indeed.


Ministering to the People of Oklahoma

By T. Thomas*

ABSTRACT

The Cooperating Baptist Fellowship of Oklahoma came into existence in 1992. This essay offers a brief overview of how this new organization has tried to relate to the various ethnic groups in our state.

Land of the Red Man

Oklahoma is truly unique in its history and ethnic make-up. It is the place where the pioneer spirit of European immigrants collided with the idea of an Indian or Native American home. The result was Oklahoma, which means the land of the red man. Through all of its recent history, Baptists have been present sharing God’s love through Jesus Christ with inhabitants of the Sooner State.

A brief look at the history of the state is necessary to set the stage for understanding Christian ministry, especially that of moderate Baptists, in Oklahoma. Such ministries have of course involved work among Native Americans but they have also included Hispanics, African Americans, and others. In recent years, moderate Baptists have also shared the Good News among and with all of those groups and a few additional ones.

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Overview of Oklahoma History

Every school child in Oklahoma learns that Vasquez de Coronado of Spain first explored the area in 1541. He found the hunting grounds of Native American tribes, grounds that date back to the time of aboriginal Americans. Coronado was followed by De Soto and his men and later by Jesuit missionaries. Lewis and Clark even visited the area in one of their early expeditions.

Most of what would later become Oklahoma was acquired from France as a part of the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. Established as Indian Territory in 1834, the region was subsequently divided into the Indian Territory and the Oklahoma Territory (for whites) on May 2, 1890.

The original goal for establishing the Indian Territory was that it would one day become a great Indian State and home for all the Indian tribes in America. As early as 1803, Thomas Jefferson had talked of creating a permanent Indian territory beyond the areas where whites had already settled. “By the time Andrew Jackson became a candidate for president in 1828, the subject of Indian removal had become a national issue.”1 Jackson was the prime mover behind the controversial Indian Removal Bill of 1830.

This began one of the saddest chapters in American history and explains in part why the Native Americans forcibly resettled from east of the Mississippi ultimately landed in Oklahoma. These forced migrations are popularly known as the trail of tears.2 This Indian Territory was meant to be theirs forever!

The whites’ growing desire for additional land changed all that. On April 22, 1889, the first of several land rushes occurred, opening up Indian Territory for settlement. Those who set out before the starting canon blast were called “Sooners,” hence the state’s nickname. Later, on November 16, 1907, the Indian Territory and the Oklahoma Territory were merged to form the forty-sixth state, Oklahoma. The land of the red man forever became the land of the red and white man.

Beginnings of Baptist Work in Oklahoma

The displaced Native American tribes and the white settlers brought their faiths with them to these new territories. Many were Christians and
established congregations in their new hometowns. In addition to early Catholic missionaries, Methodists, Presbyterians, and others settled throughout the Sooner state and founded churches.

Isaac McCoy was an early Baptist pioneer in Oklahoma. According to E.C. Routh, in his book The Story of Oklahoma Baptists, McCoy founded the first Baptist church in the state in 1832. The Muscogee Baptist Church was located in the Creek Nation just west of Port Gibson and had five original members plus the pastor. Primitive Baptists were also active in the state and their first congregation founded prior to 1871 was likely the Pilgrim’s Rest Church near Healdton in Indian Territory.

The American Baptist Convention had been working in Oklahoma since before statehood and of special note was their establishment in 1880 of Bacone College in Muskogee. From its inception it was to be a school for Native Americans, especially the Cherokee and Creek or Muscogee Indians. Today it is the oldest institution of higher learning in the state. More will be said about American Baptists later in this study.

Southern Baptists in Oklahoma were originally called the Baptist General Convention of Indian Territory. They changed their name to the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma or BGCO on November 9, 1906, one year before statehood. These Baptists have been involved in work among Native Americans for over a century.

Ethnic Groups in Oklahoma

According to the most recent census, the population of Oklahoma is 3,751,351 - an increase of 8.7% since the 2000 census. Of those 72.2% are white, 8.6% are Native American, and 7.4% are black. The most surprising figure from the 2010 census is that the second largest ethnic group in Oklahoma is now Hispanics at 8.9% of the population and growing! Native Americans still remain a large minority in the state.

In his book The Indians of Oklahoma, Rennard Strickland writes,

The contemporary facts are unmistakably clear. Oklahoma has more Indians than any other state in the Union. It has more separate tribal groups historically associated with the state and more currently recognized tribes than any other state. A higher percentage of its population is Indian... than in Arizona, New Mexico, or the Dakotas.
Since the state has been predominantly settled and populated by whites, the majority of Christian and especially Baptist work has been Anglo in nature. This fact aside, almost all religious groups in the state have focused on Native Americans as their primary mission work. This has been true especially for Baptists and moderate Baptists.

**Moderate Baptist Work in Oklahoma . . .**

The Cooperating Baptist Fellowship of Oklahoma\(^7\) (CBFO) came into existence within a year of the founding of CBF National in 1992. Currently based in Norman, CBFO is a relatively small but very missional organization. It has about thirty partnering churches and another fifteen or so missions.

These churches are of various sizes, mainly traditional in their practice and mostly Anglo or white in make-up. A number of the congregations and missions are also composed of people from other ethnic groups. Each of those congregations has fascinating stories related to its history and leaders. Because Oklahoma was initially Indian Territory, let us begin with moderate Baptist work among Native Americans. Two pastors and two churches typify this work.

. . . **Among Native Americans**

Reverend David Flick could be a chapter by himself in the story of Native American work in Oklahoma. Though raised as a white, he is a card-carrying Cherokee Indian and grew up in Cheyenne territory in Hammon, Oklahoma. He not only lived among the Cheyenne but he also attended the Indian Baptist Church (a mission of the First Baptist Church of Hammon) where his father was active.

During his studies at the Oklahoma Baptist University, he was pastor of the Seiling Indian Baptist Mission (1966-1968). Following seminary, he was the pastor of the Canton Indian Baptist Church (1974-1978) and later the Watonga Indian Baptist Church (2002-2011). According to him, he was never fluent enough to preach in Cheyenne but was able to converse comfortably in the language. Rev. Flick laments the fact that most Native American languages are dying out in Oklahoma and as a result, much of their culture is being lost.
At this author’s request, David Flick wrote what he called *Random Thoughts about Working with Native American Churches.* In that document, he outlines some realities worth mentioning. First, he underlines the fact that most Native American churches are poor. This is because most Native Americans in Oklahoma live in poverty or on its threshold. The vast majority collects welfare and is dependent on the Indian Health Care system for medical services.

Rev. Flick also highlights the fact that family structure among Native Americans is in disarray. Fathers are absent from families and grandmothers often raise their children and grandchildren. This translates over into church life where there are few men, even fewer male leaders, and salaries for them almost non-existent. This means that Native American clergy are in general poorly educated and lack basic theological training. It is no wonder that indigenous Native American work has been slow in developing.

Rev. Flick has been active in CBF of Oklahoma since its formation and has served on its Coordinating Council. His last church before retiring was the Watonga Indian Baptist Church. Although the church is affiliated with the American Baptist Convention, David considers himself a Cooperating Baptist. In fact, he and the Watonga Church have done numerous mission projects and activities with CBFO churches over the years.

The Native American Baptist Church in Canton where David was pastor in the 1970s, mentioned earlier, was eventually closed by Southern Baptists who were supporting it, the building torn down, and the property given to the Cheyenne-Arapaho Tribal Council. The reason given was that the BGCO did not feel that the church would ever give back to the state convention the money invested in it or become self-supporting. This left the Canton Indian congregation orphaned and with no place to meet, but God provided in the person of Dr. Richard Kahoe.

Dr. Kahoe is a former college professor who first began working with Native Americans as he approached retirement. He was first interim pastor of the Watonga church for thirty-nine months. During that time, he met a Cheyenne woman from Canton who had been a member of the Indian Church there. She encouraged Richard to return to Canton and start another church. Reverend Kahoe not only agreed but he convinced the Watonga church to consider Canton as a mission.

After finding a young Native American man who felt called to ministry to join him, Dr. Kahoe purchased with his own funds a house to be used for worship. Then on Easter Sunday 2003 he and Pastor John David White Eagle, Jr. began the Watonga Indian Baptist Church. In the ensuing months, a number of CBF of Oklahoma churches sent mission teams there to work on
the building and to encourage the new church. CBFO even placed a summer missionary in Watonga to coordinate the work of those teams.9

Like the church in Watonga, this one in Canton is affiliated with the American Baptist Convention. Dr. Kahoe is nonetheless a member of the Coordinating Council and has always been active in CBFO. For the first few years of the Canton church’s existence both CBF National and CBF of Oklahoma provided financial assistance for this church (re)start.

It is interesting to note that there has emerged a striking difference between the ways the SBC and CBF do missions, basically a difference between what could be called “ownership” missions and “partnership” missions. All of the church planting and other mission activities of CBFO are aimed at nurturing churches and encouraging ministry with no regard to who gets the credit or whose name is on the sign.

Before leaving moderate Baptist work among Native Americans, let us consider the case of Dr. Mitch Randall. His situation might be described as “reverse ethnic ministry.” Mitch is the pastor of NorthHaven, a new and growing CBF church in Norman. This congregation began in 2004 and now has its own campus on the northwest side of town.

What is interesting is that while NorthHaven is predominantly an Anglo or white congregation, Dr. Randall is a Muscogee or Creek Indian. As someone brought up at least in part in the Native American culture, he brings a unique vision to ministry. For example, in discussing funeral services, he shared that in white churches funerals are about eulogizing the departed and comforting those left behind. Native American funerals, on the other hand, are more about helping the departed along on their trip to the next life. “That is why small gifts of food are given for the journey!”10

When asked what special skills or strengths he as a Native American brings to Anglo church work, Mitch said this: “(White) American culture is based on rugged individualism whereas Native American society is grounded on what is best for the tribe. As a pastor this helps me keep the good of the congregation in focus when dealing with individuals and their needs.”11 Added to this is his love of story-telling and sharing about his unique upbringing. Tales of naming ceremonies, powwows, and Indian church services illustrate his sermons. For the members of NorthHaven Church, it is evident that their pastor brings a cultural richness to his ministry.
As noted above, Hispanics are the second largest and fastest growing segment of Oklahoma’s population. CBF of Oklahoma has thus been proactive in working among that portion of the state’s population. By way of example, let us first look at Tulsa and the Braden Park Baptist Church.

Dr. Darryl DeBorde is active in the Tulsa Baptist Association and also in CBF and CBFO. For thirty-seven years, he has been the pastor of Braden Park, a church located in an older neighborhood in the midtown area. In 2000 he and the church were approached by a small group of Hispanic Baptists from the area around the church, who were meeting some twelve miles away in Broken Arrow.

Darryl and his church offered them space in their facility and the group grew to more than ninety people. In January 2010, with financial help from the Braden Park Church, the Hispanic congregation purchased its own property and formed the Iglesia Bautista Monte los Olivos. Along the way, they received encouragement from Bernie Moraga, the former CBF Hispanic Consultant and some financial assistance from CBFO. The Mont of Olives Baptist Church is currently running 135 on Sunday morning and contributes materially to the work of CBFO.

A second Hispanic group approached Dr. DeBorde around 2005 to ask for help securing property. The Iglesia Nueva Jerusalen was meeting in east Tulsa and their group of seventy-five people had outgrown their space. They asked Braden Park for help and Darryl in turn asked the Tulsa Metro Baptist Association and CBF of Oklahoma to partner with his church to purchase a piece of property for this Hispanic congregation. Amazingly all three contributed financially and the property was secured. The church now averages 150 in worship and also participates financially in the work of CBFO.12

Administratively, the Cooperating Baptist Fellowship of Oklahoma includes Kansas. For that reason it is also involved in Hispanic church planting with Rev. Manuel Perez, pastor of the Primera Iglesia Bautista in Ulysses, Kansas. CBF National is also a part of this partnership and Rev. Perez has been actively involved in church planting in southwest Kansas and the Oklahoma Panhandle for four years.

A veritable Hispanic Apostle Paul, Manuel never saw a town with Hispanics where he did not want to start a church! To date, he has begun a dozen or so churches and a number of them already have their own buildings or rented space. He seems to have a spiritual gift for not only beginning new
congregations but also convincing groups and individuals who own abandoned or defunct church buildings to give them to the new Hispanic churches.

With African-Americans

Oklahoma is well represented with a number of historic African-American denominations and churches. Many of our CBFO congregations have African-American members who participate fully in the life of their church. Thus far, CBF of Oklahoma has not engaged in any specific ministry to begin African-American churches or ministries. It has, however, worked closely with a number of African-American congregations in such projects as the New Baptist Covenant Midwest Regional meeting in Oklahoma in 2009.

One African-American church, Holy Temple Baptist in Oklahoma City, is a partner church with CBF of Oklahoma. Their pastor, Dr. George Young, is active in many areas of common ministry and has spoken at the CBF of Oklahoma annual meeting and his choir has also sung.

Among Cowboys

According to some reports, church planting among cowboys and those of western culture is among the fastest growing ministries in the country. For those who are unaware of this phenomenon, it seems that cowboy churches are filling a need throughout the middle section of the USA from south Texas to the Canadian border. People who love country and western Gospel music drive for hours to find a cowboy church where they can worship in their boots, jeans, and cowboy hats, with people who grew up just like them on the ranch or farm.

The Cowboy Country Church of Chickasha is one such church and is a part of the Cooperating Baptist Fellowship of Oklahoma. Pastor Lynn Walker is a real cowboy, but more importantly a professional musician and preacher. When CBFO first began working with him and his church, they were averaging thirty or so in worship and meeting in a rented space. Today they are purchasing their own building (a former Pentecostal church facility) with the help of a no-interest loan from the Oklahoma Fellowship. They are bursting at the seams with 200 plus in worship and have had to add a Sunday night service. It is hoped that their model of Cowboy church planting will be duplicated in other towns.
Other partnership ministries and church plants involve work with ethnic groups from Southeast Asia and China. First, the Chin, an ethnic group from Burma, arrived in Oklahoma City. There, First Baptist, a CBFO partnering church, welcomed them with open arms. CBFO is helping to provide for an on-staff minister to work with the Chin and other international groups.

CBF of Oklahoma is fortunate to have not only its own office space but also a ministry center on the campus of the University of Oklahoma, which is ideally suited to do student ministries. In 2010, the South Oklahoma City Chinese Baptist Church entered into a partnership to use CBFO’s building to reach students on the OU campus. Each week during the school year Chinese students gather to eat, pray, and study the Bible with others from their homeland. Many of these are not yet Christians but are eager to have fellowship with people from their own country.

Recently a Korean Church restart in south Oklahoma City has begun partnering with CBFO. A partnership is developing with the First Baptist Church of Oklahoma City to help this small church and its missionary pastor. Their goal is to develop an outreach ministry to Koreans, of course, but also to the Hispanic neighborhood that is located just outside their front door.

**We Are All a Part of God’s Ethnic Work!**

This is a rapid overview of ethnic ministries in Oklahoma being carried out by the Cooperating Baptist Fellowship. One undeniable lesson about God’s theology of missions has been learned: Everyone, regardless of their race or background, is invited to be a part of God’s eternal family. To put it another way, God is colorblind and calls all women and men to be a part of his family, his church.

The term “ethnic ministries” usually means working with those who are not like “us” whoever the “us” happens to be. But in reality, we are all a part of one ethnic group or another and thus all invited to his banquet table. With this in mind, it would seem that “ethnic work” or “ethnic ministry” is just that: a state of mind or way of looking at the missionary task that is before us.

In Oklahoma moderate or Fellowship Baptists have endeavored to have that same mind-set and to include all groups as a normal part of their ministry and mission work. They have not, as some other Baptist groups and
denominations have done, created separate categories or classes of ministry designated as “ethnic.” Being the Presence of Christ in Oklahoma and the World is not only the motto but also the daily marching orders of the Cooperating Baptist Fellowship.


4 “A Sketch History of the Primitive Baptists in Oklahoma” from the Primitive Baptist Library web site: http://www.carthage.lib.il.us/community/churches/primbap/FamHist-OKPBIStory.html.

5 “Quick Facts on Oklahoma” from the US Census Bureau’s web site: http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/40000.html.


7 Whereas “Cooperative Baptist Fellowship” is the name of the national organization and most of the other state expressions of the movement, in Oklahoma it is called the “Cooperating Baptist Fellowship.” This is due to a state law forbidding groups from using the word “Cooperative” in their name unless they are directly related to agriculture. Most of those involved in CBF of Oklahoma prefer the term “Cooperating” as they feel that it is a more proactive word.

8 David Flick, “Random Thoughts About Working with Native American Churches” (an unpublished document written in June 2011).


10 Unpublished interview notes with Dr. Mitch Randall, June 11, 2011.

11 Ibid.

12 Darryl DeBorde, unpublished report on Hispanic ministry by the Braden Park Baptist Church of Tulsa, OK (June 2011).
Building a Multi-Cultural Organization in Texas

By Rick McClatchy*

ABSTRACT

Texas’ diversity requires that religious organizations develop strategies to overcome racist and segregationist tendencies. The following strategies have proven to be helpful in the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship’s attempts to become a more multi-cultural/ethnic organization: 1) promoting a passion to overcome racism; 2) creating structures that embrace a more multi-cultural future; and 3) cultivating relationships across racial/ethnic lines.

Texas, from its very beginning, has been a meeting place for different cultures. This occurred through several major phases. The first phase happened when the Europeans encountered the indigenous tribes, which led to settlements by Spanish and French. The next phase was the period in the nineteenth century when Mexicans, southerners from the USA, and Germans coming directly from Europe faced each other. The last phase started in the twentieth century and continues today, with a growing immigrant Hispanic population and a diverse population of immigrants from all over the world moving to the larger cities; e.g., Houston has one of the larger Muslim populations in the USA and, according to one source, has 120 mosques.¹

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Any Christian organization in Texas that is not adapting to the changing cultural and racial milieu is diminishing its future growth and impact. This adaptation is not an easy task because the notions of race and culture are fluid social constructs. Peoples’ notions of race are often based upon arbitrarily selected physical characteristics, such as skin color rather than height. Establishing the boundaries of a culture is also artificial since cultures are always in a process of change as they adapt to changes and interact with other cultures. However random these social constructs of race and culture might be, they simply cannot be ignored because they have a profound impact upon human behavior. Therefore, any Christian organization must give them due consideration.

Furthermore, all expressions of Christianity are tied to particular cultural expressions. There is no such thing as a culture-free expression of Christianity. Christianity started in a Jewish cultural context of Palestine in the first century and soon had to struggle with the issue of moving into a context that was Gentile and more specifically Greco-Roman. The consequence was a new expression of Gentile Christianity, which was necessary for Christianity to grow and survive as a movement. This process of Christianity adapting in response to changing and emerging cultures can be good, because it gives Christianity relevancy and allows it to thrive. On the other hand, some adaptations can result in a loss of the original vision of Jesus. Responding to these cultural changes calls for great discernment.

As a caretaker of a Christian organization in Texas, namely the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) Texas, I must devote considerable thought to the dynamics of race and culture in Texas. In candid honesty, if one takes a long historical perspective, not so much a recent one, the historical roots of the churches in the Fellowship come from a group of “white” churches in the South that were infected with racist assumptions, from which they have not fully recovered to this day. Historically speaking, “white” Baptist churches in the South were not unique in this regard, because the other major religious groups in the South, Methodists and Presbyterians, were also infected by racist views. This is not to diminish our Baptist forebears’ guilt but simply to show how pervasive racism was in southern culture.
The racist views held by southerners find their origin as far back as the sixteenth century when Europeans began to encounter Africans in their travel along the African coasts and rivers, and were also manifest by the European settlers in Americas. The basic racist view that emerged was that Europeans were superior to Africans—intellectually, morally, and socially, which provided the underpinnings for slavery and later segregation. These attitudes remain intact through the present in some quarters, with the main difference being the expansion of the racist views toward other groups—Hispanics, Jews, and Asians.

Baptist leaders in the south reinforced racist assumptions explicitly and at other times implicitly by their support of slavery or segregation. Consequently, the Baptist churches of the South became either “white” churches or “black” churches, and as time progressed other ethnic groups also formed segregated churches. Most of the Fellowship churches are “white” churches that carry the baggage of this racist past. As a leader in CBF Texas, it is my responsibility to encourage Fellowship churches to keep moving beyond the past to a future that embraces a more multi-cultural appreciation and identity. Quite frankly, our success in doing this has been limited, but there is enough history now in the Fellowship to begin to identify our successes and the work that remains to be done. In very broad strokes, what I and the leaders within CBF Texas have worked to do is: 1) to promote a passion to overcome racism; 2) to create structures that embrace a more multi-cultural future; and 3) to cultivate relationships across racial/ethnic lines.

Cultivating a Passion to Overcome Racism

Every church reform—and overcoming racism is a reform—requires a new way of reading the Bible. When addressing a “white” general audience in Texas about the need to become a more multi-cultural/racial society, one is often accused of being a politically correct liberal. This is the presupposition by some in our “white” Baptist churches as well. Therefore, it is imperative to not argue against racism using lofty, secular philosophical language, but to argue based upon our Christian passion—that is our theological passion and our passion for the times in which we live.
Theological Passion

Four major theological themes move directly against racism and call churches to become more multi-cultural.

The Kingdom of God: Jesus’ central theme was the Kingdom of God, which he insisted was breaking into the present as people worked to make this world look more like what God intended. The Kingdom was focused not upon escaping this world for heavenly bliss, but upon transforming this world. The model prayer reads, “Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” The prayer is that the Father’s will be done, not in heaven but upon earth. Therefore, our task as the church is to continue the Kingdom work that Jesus started of transforming this world so that it looks more like what God desires. Jesus intended for his followers to break down the barriers that separated people and to bring them together as his followers who see themselves as brothers and sisters with God as their Father. Distinctions based upon race, ethnicity, or culture that separate people or lead to discrimination are counter to the Kingdom of God vision.

Creation: The creation story affirms that all humans are bound together. We share a common ancestry. We are all physically of the same stock, and attempts to divide people according to race are human inventions not rooted in our most basic understanding of creation. There is only one race according to the Bible, and it is the human race.

Golden Rule and Service Ethics: Our most basic Christian ethics move against racism. Christian ethics are rooted in acts of love toward others, which might be summed up in “do to others as you would have them do to you,” or “love your neighbor as yourself.” No one wants to be prejudged and discriminated against. Racism does just that, prejudging people based upon their race or ethnicity. Furthermore, Jesus taught that the greatest in the Kingdom was not one who dominated others, but one who humbly served others. Racism is a system that assigns to a particular race special privileges
and rights over other races, which runs counter to servanthood. Our most fundamental Christian ethics negate racism.

**Missional Church:** One aspect of the missional church paradigm is the striving to engage the entire congregation in interacting with and ministering to the community, a community that, of course, in Texas is becoming more ethnically diverse. The focus of the missional church is external rather than internal in that the work of the church should be outside of rather than within the walls of the church's buildings. By moving out into that ethnically diverse Texas community, the church is driven to become more multi-cultural. This missional paradigm moves against the consumer attractional model, which usually promotes a very homogeneous church. Consumer churches provide spiritual goods and services, which entice spiritual consumers to attend events and programs offered on the church's property. Consumers, in general, are prone to want to be around people who are like themselves, and consumer churches know this and cater to it. This often promotes a more racially segregated church. CFB Texas has pushed very diligently the missional church paradigm rather than the consumer church paradigm, which is one way that CBF Texas is helping to create a more multi-cultural expression. Religious organizations of course cannot dictate to Baptist churches what they do, but they can inspire and challenge Baptist churches.6

These four theological themes are so basic and central to Christian thinking that it requires little effort to build a strong case to refute racism. Furthermore, they are so fundamental that denial of them, by either outright rejection or twisted interpretation, should ignite a passionate response by committed Christians. Teachers and leaders must passionately argue that any practice of racism can never be allowed to stand unchallenged by the church, because it is an ultimate denial of all for which Jesus stood.

**Passion for the Time**

Our present time is shaped by two major movements, globalization and postmodernity, each of which demands a more multi-cultural expression in religious organizations.
Globalization: Globalization has had a profound impact upon Texas. The global business world has brought thousands of people of different races and cultures into our major metropolitan areas. In Houston in 2007, 26% of the population were foreign born. Moreover, Texas has one of the larger international student populations in the USA. Additionally, the poverty in Mexico and other Latin American countries has made Texas a home for a rapidly growing and vibrant Hispanic population. In recent years, the drug violence in Mexico has only pushed more people across the border. All of these global issues impact Texas. This is a great time for a multicultural/ethnic vision of the church.

There are great opportunities for the church to become a force for unifying people and thereby demonstrating its relevance to an ethnically diverse population. On the other hand, when racism starts to raise its ugly head, which is happening on the Texas political front, and if “white” churches join suit, then the growing non-white population will write off these churches as an irrelevant force for living in an emerging, ethnically diverse context.

Postmodernism: The growing postmodern world view among the millennial generation will probably only continue to grow among future generations. Presently, the millennial generation is more disengaged from the church than any previous generation. One should not assume that disengaged millennials do so because of a lack of belief in God or love for Jesus. For many, it is due to their disdain for the church. Many of them view the church as a selfish group of people that are part of the world’s problem rather than the solution. When a church condones racism or fails to become a multi-cultural group, then that church is no longer seen as a relevant instrument for good in the world. If churches remain racially segregated communities, then more of each succeeding generation will abandon the church.

In my role as CBF field coordinator in Texas, I have tried to advocate and model a theological vision and passion for the times that embraces a more multi-cultural/ethnic future for Fellowship churches. The elected leadership for CBF Texas has supported this understanding too. It has not been without detractors of our work along the border with Hispanic immigrants, some who may not have proper documentation. Certainly, we encourage and try to assist anyone in their effort to obtain legal documentation, but the degree
of hostility we have encountered from some toward the undocumented is clearly rooted not in law-and-order concerns, but in racism. Religious organizations must have a clearly defined passion for overcoming racism in order to not be intimidated by such critics.

Creating Structures to Overcome Racism

Passion, as outlined above, is essential, but unless structural changes occur within a religious organization that allows these passions to operate, then they will never become a reality. There are two strategic structural changes that CBF Texas focused upon to promote a more multi-cultural expression.

Organizational representation

CBF began as a group of primarily “white” churches, and, therefore, our representation on the state and national governing bodies was comprised overwhelmingly of that constituency. Several years ago, CBF Texas decided that there needed to be more intentional outreach to ethnic congregations. For that to occur, some slots on the council would be filled by leaders from ethnic congregations that had little or no connection with CBF. The plan was to select people who were respected leaders in the ethnic network of churches so they could help us develop goals and ministries that would be engaging to ethnic churches. Furthermore, they could interpret to ethnic congregations what CBF was like.

The invitations to ethnic leaders to join the council were in most cases graciously accepted, and some that entered the council this way have gone on to serve as officers and national representatives. Our state council now represents a more multi-cultural body, and this has shaped our organization’s work. It is too early to predict what all the outcomes will be, but it does look promising that we will have some significant involvement and partnerships with Hispanic congregations in the future. This structural change in organizational representation looks to be worth the effort.

Staff Diversity

I believe it is essential for religious organizations to have religious diversity on their staffs. CBF Texas has only one staff person, so building
staff diversity is problematic. On the whole, however, our efforts on the national level have not been too successful. It is important that the CBF hire people that look like our hoped for future rather than our past.

Cultivating Relationships

It is easy within religious organizations to make pronouncements against racism and even to establish some proportional representation on governing boards. The much harder work is cultivating relationships across racial lines. This, however, is probably the most important aspect of building a multi-cultural organization.

Spending Time Together

Cultivating relationships takes time together. I think some of the greatest success that I have had in building a more multi-cultural organization is working to build and maintain friendships with people from ethnic congregations. One of my Hispanic friends said to me that he had wondered how someone like me, coming from Oklahoma and not speaking Spanish, could be accepted so well. He decided it was because I just kept showing up where Hispanic Baptists were gathering and working. The simple effort of showing up helped to overcome my obvious handicaps and inadequacies. Relationships take time to cultivate, and on several occasions, if it had not been for my relationships with ethnic leaders, I think that they would have totally given up on CBF when we made disastrous organizational mistakes in relating to ethnic leaders.

Working Together

Our work along the Texas border with Mexico with poor Hispanics living in the colonias has gone far in helping Anglo and Hispanic churches build strong relationships. Working side-by-side has built lasting bonds that have endured beyond just seeing each other for a few days each year. It has resulted in colonia children going to college in communities where partner churches were located because colonia familias believe there is someone there who cares
for their children. It has led partner churches to respond quickly to emergency situations that have arisen in particular colonias because the people were not just people in the news but were friends they deeply cared about. There can be no substitute for building healthy, durable relationships across racial and cultural lines. It takes time and hard work, but it is absolutely essential.

CONCLUSION

I have not become by any means an expert on building a multi-cultural organization. We are farther down the road than when I first came to serve the CBF Texas organization. But much remains to be done in order to be where God would have us to be as his people. I hope the strategies that I have identified for our modest success will inspire others to do the same and share with others their successes too.

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3 Matt 6:10, NRSV.

4 Matt 7:12, NRSV.

5 Matt 22:39, NRSV.

6 Missional driven churches in Texas are using different models of becoming more multi-cultural. Some create multiple congregations, usually along language lines, but function as a single church when it comes to staff and utilization of the church's property. The things done separately, such as worship, are, from time to time, done jointly to help
build a greater sense of unity. One such church described itself as a “four congregations, one church.”

Another church worked to create a highly integrated model in which there is no ethnic majority, just as the Texas landscape is moving more that way. This highly integrated model requires people to learn how those very different from them thought and functioned. There is no one model for a church to become more multi-cultural, but a church that becomes more missional will be driven to become more multi-

cultural.

We Must Find the Love Again!

By Gerald Durley*

ABSTRACT

The Christian Church was founded to be an inclusive body of believers who welcomed all people regardless of their race, creed, gender, ethnicity, cultural background or other differences. The principles that constituted the basis of this doctrine were love, forgiveness, and acceptance. Unfortunately, in modern times, religious dogmas and spiritual agendas have grossly overshadowed that love, a circumstance that has created a frightening climate and environment of exclusivity, based on personal interpretations and perceived privileges. This article will explore what Christianity was originally created to accomplish by seeking to love and receive all who sought its refuge for spiritual sustenance, as well as, to offer a few basic guidelines that may assist members of the Church to find the love again. The idea is to share one another's stories through honest, open transparent communication seeking to establish understanding.

... the foundation of the Christian faith [is] the unselfish principle that everyone is important and has some value.

The founder of the Christian religion, Jesus Christ, is known to have said, “Now I tell you to love each other, as I have loved you” (John 13:34; 15:12). These few profound words constitute the foundation of the Christian faith: the unselfish principle that everyone is important and has some value. Therefore, no one should be excluded; everyone should be accepted and loved. As a child, I was

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taught that we are to love even those who do not love us in return. I have learned that we are to care for and appreciate those who may be different from us, and that if God can love us we can do no less than to commit that same act of friendship to others.

Growing up in a Christian home and having a father who was a minister of the Gospel, I prided myself in attempting to know and do the will of God. To deny anyone access to God’s house of worship, or to discriminate in any form, was considered wrong. There was no excuse for excluding anyone from their God-given status based on their faith, race, gender, cultural background, or ethnicity. These principles were drilled into me at an early age as I grew up in California. Working side by side in the agricultural fields with those who had migrated from Mexico was a normal way of life for me. As we harvested the crops (cotton, tomatoes, potatoes, grapes, peaches), mutual bonding developed that increased my awareness, sensitivity, acceptance, and appreciation for other races and nationalities. I recognized our differences and was compelled to gravitate toward that which we had in common.

Most of those who labored alongside me were faithful, practicing Catholics, and I was a budding member of a Christian congregation pastored by my father. I consciously memorized passages of Scripture that extolled the virtues of caring, sharing, acceptance, forgiveness, and love. Scripture quotations that spoke against any form of discrimination were always in my thoughts and on my lips whenever and wherever they were needed to defend God’s Word against the notion that it endorsed excluding those who were different from me. I fervently desired that other faiths would know me by the love I showed for all of God’s people. In my youth, I firmly believed that no one should be denied the same love that Jesus gave to me when he surrendered his life. The Sunday morning and Wednesday evening instruction and Bible studies at the church prepared me well to understand, confront, and challenge anyone, or any group, who would deliberately belittle or embarrass others because they were of a different race, or gender, or living in poverty.

Upon graduation from high school in Denver, Colorado, I was vigorously recruited to Nashville, Tennessee, to attend college and play basketball. I felt that this was a wonderful and glorious opportunity to live in the Deep South in the early 1960s. I was not familiar with the Deep South’s hatred across racial lines even though it existed in California. I was unprepared to
witness the racially divided congregations, which literally worshipped while obeying unwritten laws of blatant discrimination. My third Sunday in Nashville, I could not wait to attend and worship with the white congregation that had been printing and sending Sunday School literature to our congregation for years. I rushed to the Sunday morning service with an air of spiritual exuberance. I was uncharacteristically detained in the vestibule of the building throughout the initial songs, the announcements, the prayers, and then as the preacher began to preach. I was told that I was “not welcome there and that I should go back to my side of town!” Needless to say, I was surprised, shocked, stunned, hurt, confused, disappointed, and then angry. This was the House of God denying me access, which was against everything I had been taught and believed as a Christian. I felt that the usher was completely out of order and did not realize that I was a visiting Christian, not “a militant” from the African-American community.

It is relevant at this time to review briefly what the Christian faith, as it was created, reveals about “hospitality for all.” It is important to remember in a world that has become so engrossed in its negative feelings and fear of others that we seek positive lessons, examples, and solutions for re-awakening the true hospitality of Christians for this present age. We need to tell and listen to one another’s stories.

Hebrews 13:1-3 states, “Keep being concerned about each other as the Lord’s followers should. Be sure to welcome strangers into your home. By doing this, some people have welcomed angels as guests, without even knowing it. Remember the Lord’s people who are in jail and be concerned for them. Do not forget those who are suffering, but imagine that you are there with them.” The basis for the fellowship outlined in this passage of Scripture is love. When they became Christians, many Jewish people were no doubt rejected by their friends and families. The deepest kind of fellowship, however, is not based on race or family relationships; it is based on the spiritual life we have together in Christ. It is quite clear that a church fellowship established on anything other than love for Christ and for one another simply will not stand the test of time. Romans 12:10 says, “Love each other as brothers and sisters and honor others more than you do yourself.” Peter said, “You must sincerely love each other and do it with all of your heart” (1 Pet 1:22).
Where there is true Christian love, there will also be hospitality (Heb 13:2). This was an imperative of the ministry in the early church, because persecution drove many believers away from their homes and places of worship. In addition, there were traveling ministers who needed places to stay (3 John 5:8). Many poor saints could not afford to stay in an inn, and since the churches met in homes (Rom 16:5), it was natural for a visitor simply to stay with the host. There was an honest sense of sincere hospitality, welcome, and genuine love in a Christian’s home or place of worship.

Congregations should take their lead from those who oversee congregations when they involve hospitality or welcoming those who may seem different. Congregational leaders have a moral obligation and responsibility to destroy any barriers that negatively impact those who come to worship. The Bible says Christians are to include and enjoy entertaining strangers (Titus 1:8). Love and God’s law mandate that Christians “take care of God’s needy people and welcome strangers into their homes.”

The book of Genesis (Gen 18) tells the story of Abraham showing generous hospitality to the Lord and two of His angels. Abraham did not know who they were when he welcomed them. It was only later that he discovered the identities of his illustrious guests. You and I may not entertain angels in a literal sense (though it is possible), but any stranger could turn out to be a messenger of blessings to us. (The word ‘angel’ simply means ‘messenger.’) Often we have turned away messengers bringing God’s blessings.

Have we, as Christians, forgotten and abandoned our mission to love the unlovable? Love must express itself in concern (Heb 13:3). It was not and is not unusual for Christians to be arrested and imprisoned for their faith. To identify with these prisoners might be dangerous; yet Christ’s love demanded ministry to them. To minister and show love to a prisoner or one who is in poverty is to minister to Christ himself (Matt 25:36, 40).

Christians have the perfect role model when it comes to understanding and demonstrating love. The church tends to sing, pray, and preach about the all-inclusive love of the Christian faith; unfortunately, ignorance, fear, doubt, racism, classism, sexism, and the church’s inability simply to communicate among its own members and those who appear different, but who crave for love, overshadows this all-inclusive love. The role model for the Christian faith, Jesus Christ, was exceedingly clear when he spoke in the synagogue about how Christians are to treat those in need. We read about
We must find the love again
and let it be our motivating force daily to do what has become uncomfortable for some Christians.

his example for Christian hospitality as expressed in Luke 4:16-22, where Jesus went to the synagogue, as was his custom, to tell his story about how he planned to treat others. Jesus went to ‘the church,’ because he wanted to establish an example for the people to learn and model. He could have gone out under the open sky, on the hills, or in the fields to teach this universal lesson. He could have chosen a golf club veranda, on the first tee, or the eighteenth green. He deliberately chose the house of worship, because that is where he had gone since he had been a little boy. He went to his Father’s house to think and feel God’s consecrated presence.

The church has a way of linking the present with the past when God is allowed to permeate those who seek to love him and others. The synagogue meant fellowship where the hopes, desires, and needs of immediate life could no longer seem occasional or accidental. The church is a place where souls are brought together in one flame and no soul can stay aflame without other souls. Jesus and his example of inclusive love gave sincere credibility to the notion of everyone worshipping as one family. Those who in their complacency imagine that public worship has no importance for them may well look at Jesus and consider whether he represents for them agreement or rebuke. Jesus gave his life so that no one would even feel being looked over, or left out. He lived and died for us all.

Here is what Jesus’ hospitality message, as read from the prophet Isaiah, said, “The Lord’s Spirit has come to me, because he has chosen me to tell the good news to the poor. The Lord has sent me to announce freedom for prisoners, to give sight to the blind and to free everyone who suffers.” Jesus’ message was profoundly inclusive and transcended the barriers of race, gender, class, and economic status.

What Jesus taught as hospitality for Christians was that they must take the good news to the poor and set at liberty those who are oppressed. No one can strive passionately for justice who has not first himself or herself suffered in sympathy with the poor and oppressed. None of us can take our everyday business or profession and lift it up out of the arid dust of mean detail into something greatly inspired and inspiring unless the fire of human emotion is burning in our hearts. **We must find the love again and let it be our motivating force daily to do what has become uncomfortable for some Christians.** We must actively open our hearts, homes, and houses for worship to whoever comes.
The Bible stresses that each of us must overcome prejudice, racism, hate, and be unafraid to share one another’s stories. Every ethnic, racial, cultural, and faith group has a story. Unfortunately, ethnocentric values and myopic fears have forced some people into believing that “their faith” is the only faith that will accomplish God’s mission here on earth. Certain faith groups have gone as far as to declare war against those who believe and worship differently. People of diverse faiths have been ostracized and discriminated against for their religious views. Walls have been constructed that have prevented people from conducting honest, open, transparent conversations about the differences among their respective faiths. These invisible, yet apparent, walls have created the greatest deterrent for people to dialogue across denominational and faith lines.

Communication is the lifeblood of genuine and transparent hospitality among faith communities. Without sincere dialogue, any chance for cordial, mutual levels to discover common aspirations cannot exist. Communication is essential and is based upon people understanding one another, respecting one another, and trusting one another. Without understanding, respect, and trust there can be no communication. Where there is limited, poor, or no form of communication among those of goodwill, the floodgates are thrown wide open for misinformation, stereotypes, and myths to flow and flood the minds of well-intentioned people. Negative, ill-founded information shared about any group perpetuates ignorance about that group. An ignorant person or group is dangerous, because they become fearful, defensive, and ultimately offensive. Their words, behavior, and actions are punitive and poisonous.

To assist in eliminating the ignorance that generates fear, people must tell the stories about their life experiences, their joys, their losses, their victories, their defeats, their cultural mores, and their faith traditions. In other words, they must create an air of warmth, love, hospitality, and feelings of inclusiveness and acceptance. It is critical that we learn to share our different stories. Every story is unique. Every story is important. Every story is steeped in personal revelations about a person or group. Unfortunately, we live in a world where people have become fearful to share their convictions as to who they are, what they believe, and what they plan to contribute on this short journey through life. When we do not share our stories, hundreds of human ‘silos’ dot the landscape, silos that contain
individual stockpiles of negative fear. People tend to hold on to their respective stories, values, and virtues while meaningful communication is stifled. To re-create and re-establish the Christian hospitality of welcoming the least, the lost, the left behind, and the stranger into our midst, we must once again find the love to care. Many in the Christian tradition listen to sermons, record messages, quote Scriptures, sing the songs of Zion, attend multiple seminars and workshops, but never learn to communicate as did our role model—Jesus Christ. The epitome of Christian love is when Jesus said, “For I was hungry and you fed me; I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger and you welcomed me” (Matt 25:35, 43). Jesus washed the dirt off the feet of those whom he did not know; he fed multitudes who merely asked for food. He healed those whose bodies and minds had degenerated. Jesus told a simple story about a man who was not Jewish, but who was beaten, robbed, and left for dead. He said that a total stranger, of another faith, took the responsibility to restore his health. Jesus then declared that a ‘neighbor’ is the one who shows mercy and renders hospitality in love and service (Luke 10:25-37).

A few very basic, common traits that should be acquired if Christians are to live out their faith across denominations and with other faiths. Christians must decide to communicate by getting to understand, know, appreciate, and respect differences. As a point of growth, asking others about their faith journey and their personal spiritual convictions is a positive initial gesture. Christians should not judge others on their perspective, but rather learn what they believe and why. Christians should ask honest questions about why others adhere to certain dogmas and how their faith influences their daily lives. Christians should research how persons from other faith traditions treat others because of their faith. Christians should try to understand the other culture and learn the racial history that contributes to their outlook on life. Christians should not try to convert a person to our way of life, but rather welcome them as a friend who is different. Christians should be honest about sharing our personal profession and spiritual journey. It is only through honest, mutual exchanges that a sense of respect and trust can develop. Christians should seek to be involved in genuine dialogue in close proximity with others so that there is a sincere transfer of information. Dialogue is like
weaving. The shuttle in the loom goes back and forth creating of two different persons (i.e., groups) a unity, a new creation, a meaningful relationship.

Parties in dialogue can tell each other stories about the common experiences of life—child rearing, making a living, dealing with personal issues, and resolving community problems. Talking about common problems, challenges, and issues serves as a window that allows a look into the real life of another person. To demonstrate hospitality across faiths and denominations, it does not need to be a conversation about scripture or doctrine. It begins with the mutual life that we all share. We all face disappointments. We all have struggles, and we all make choices about our lives. These topics are what bring us together as children of one God.

The essential element for Christian hospitality is the development of an abiding love and respect for each other; the demonstration of appreciation, which goes a step beyond tolerance. Hospitality demonstrates that one appreciates another person’s behavior and that one can find something that one could emulate. It involves the effort to find a quality in a person that one would like to acquire. If we conduct our lives as Christians, we must show genuine love through our personal contacts, understanding, respect, trust, appreciation, and cooperation with those who may be different.

Ben Campbell Johnson, professor emeritus, Columbia Theological Seminary, offers several suggestions that I recommend for establishing Christian hospitality:

1. Treat each other with respect to build trust.
2. Learn why certain aspects of other people are so important to them.
3. Before responding to an issue, state what you think the speaker said and ask, if necessary, for clarification.
4. After prayerful consideration of another’s belief, share your concern directly and with humility.
5. Talk about ideas and not about your suspicion of another’s motives, intelligence, or integrity. Avoid labeling others.
6. Share your personal experience or story of faith so that others may understand the influences that have shaped your life.
7. Seek to stay in community with those who hold different opinions from your own. We can agree to love each other even when we hold
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different points of view.

8. Promise to listen to and be sensitive to the feelings, commitments, and hopes of those who differ from you.¹

The ideas and suggestions offered here are certainly not all that there is to encourage Christian hospitality throughout the world. They should provide, however, more than a thought or mere discussion on how to proceed. We must find the love again. When we do, then we will live out Jesus’ creed to “love each other as I love you” (John 13:34; 15:12). Finding the ability to love again and then doing it requires recognizing that change is needed. This recognition starts within. Love and hospitality are infectious and can change the way people from all walks of life view and treat one another. Through honestly and fearlessly sharing the stories that are the foundations of who we are we Can Find the Love Again, and the hospitality that Jesus commands will govern our lives.

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Baptists Against Racism and Ethnic Conflict . . . Worldwide!

By Denton Lotz

ABSTRACT

One of the most significant and rewarding experiences for me during my tenure as general secretary of the Baptist World Alliance was to sponsor an International Summit on Baptists against Racism and Ethnic Conflict. This significant summit was held from January 8 – 11, 1999, in the historic Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia, Martin Luther King Jr.’s home church. At this summit we learned of the tragedy of racism worldwide. We learned that we needed to expand our definition of racism to include ethnic violence. We came as Christians and discovered the power of Christ to bring reconciliation and unity. The latter part of this article will review some of the horrific examples of racism and ethnic conflict worldwide. We will also celebrate the prophetic witness of many Baptist congregations worldwide in fighting against racism and ethnic violence.

Before illustrating the curse of worldwide racism, I would like to give a brief summary of my pilgrimage against racism. By each of us sharing our stories, we will learn to appreciate our unity in Christ through the various struggles that we have all endured.

*Denton Lotz is former General Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance.*
My pilgrimage against racism and ethnic conflict:

I am sure that all serious Christians need to examine their hearts and consider racism and ethnic conflict in light of their own personal histories as well as their communal and collective histories. Let me share my experience as an introduction to the whole question of racism worldwide. (It is instructive and rewarding to read John Piper's personal account of racism in his book, Bloodlines. Few people realize that this “Northern” preacher was actually brought up a Baptist in the racism of the 1950s in Florence, South Carolina!)

My first recollection of race was in 1945 when my father, a Baptist preacher, was invited to preach in a storefront church in Harlem, New York City. I was six years old. I remember well how the black congregation sang, “Would you be free from your burden of sin? There’s power in the blood…” I believe that must have been when the dynamic of black worship entered my blood. I can truly say that I never heard any racist comments from my parents, both children of immigrants...my father from Germany and my mother from Italy.

Later as a teenager when my brother was recruited for the University of North Carolina basketball team in Chapel Hill new horizons, not all good, opened up to me. In 1956, at 17, I graduated early from high school and became a student at UNC. I left New York City on a greyhound bus for Chapel Hill, North Carolina. No one warned me of segregation. When I got off the bus in Chapel Hill, I was shocked to see water fountains with signs over them, “whites only” and “colored.” The same was true with the rest rooms.

I attended the University Baptist Church and quickly noticed that no blacks were present. In 1957 UNC was integrated. One of the first black students was George Grigsby, whom I befriended and invited to University Baptist Church. We were late and at 11:00 o’clock the only seats available were on the front pew. The service did not begin at 11:00, or at 11:05, 11:10, 11:15, not until 11:20. After the service a deacon and dean of one of the UNC schools came up to me and said, “Denton, do you know what you did?” I said, “No!” He said, “This church does not allow black people to attend.” I was shocked and said that seemed strange since we had just studied in Sunday School the necessity of sending missionaries all over the world and especially to Africa!
That same morning after church another deacon came to me and said, “Denton, next week we are starting a new Baptist church in Gerrard Hall. We are calling it The Olin T. Binkley Memorial Baptist Church, after one of our former pastors who welcomed all people!” Thus, I became a charter member of Binkley Baptist and saw many black friends, including George Grigsby, become members. The Baptist Student Union of UNC, of which I was president, did personal evangelism in the dormitories but was also involved in the struggle to integrate the Chapel Hill restaurants.

Growing up as a fundamentalist in New York, social concern and personal evangelism were not opposed to one another, as often happens today, instead holding it all together seemed to be what Christians were all about. My mother encouraged me to read missionary biographies of David Livingstone, Hudson Taylor, William Carey, and many others. These pioneer missionaries made it seem natural that Jesus loved everybody. Sunday School at First Baptist Church in New York City also encouraged us to love everyone. Our favorite song was, “Jesus loves the little children of the world, red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in his sight.” At an early age, Baptist Sunday School taught us that everyone was the object of God’s love in Christ!

After graduating from UNC, because of a scholarship from NROTC, I was obligated to serve as a lieutenant in the US Marine Corps and was sent to Futenma, Okinawa. Kennedy was the United States President and McNamara was the Secretary of Defense. As a lieutenant, I was asked to give lectures to the troops on democracy versus communism. The military was integrated. I thought it unusual to be giving lectures on democracy to many blacks who were coming from segregated states. I asked the troops how can we speak of democracy when our own black troops were denied that same freedom of which we spoke when they went back home? A Marine Major took me aside and asked where I got those ideas. I was not asked to speak to the troops about democracy anymore.

As a communications officer, I began to see many messages about a place called Vietnam. My platoon of young Marines was excited and wanted to go fight. For them it was like cowboys and Indians. But when the first body bag came back their enthusiasm died. One morning the colonel asked me to go to Danang, Vietnam, and pay all the troops. With $100,000 in a briefcase and
a .45 pistol I flew on the next plane to Vietnam. It was a beautiful tropical country. The officer’s quarters were rustic. The Vietnamese waitresses were pretty and kind. At the end of the week, I flew back to Okinawa leaving friends behind, particularly a young doctor from Nebraska. When we arrived back we learned that the officer’s quarters where I had stayed had just been blown up by one of the pretty waitresses who was Vietcong! My doctor friend was killed. I was shattered. One more day in Danang and I could have been a victim! It was this experience that made me realize that my dream of being an American congressman or senator or US ambassador was not for me. I felt the Lord was calling me to be an ambassador for Christ and to enter the Christian ministry.

Not knowing which seminary to attend, I wrote Harvard Divinity School and was accepted. I had to write US Marine Commandant, General Shoup to be released early. My colonel said, “Lotz, they will never let you out early.” Soon I received a letter from Commandant Shoup which read, “Congratulations! God bless you in your seminary studies.” (Little did I realize at that time that my uncle who was a Navy Chaplain had baptized General Shoup on Iwo Jima during WWII!)

Harvard Divinity School was a dizzying experience after the Marine Corps. It turned out that many of the students had come to get out of the draft. It seemed like there was little commitment to ministry. It was also the time of the Civil Rights movement. I became involved in student government and as student body president led the many discussions and meetings that led to our student body sending a delegation on the 1965 March on Birmingham, Alabama.

One evening students met and agreed to march around the Federal Building in Boston in support of the Civil Rights Act of 1965. Early the next morning, the evangelical students all gathered and we began our trip to Boston. We had signs that read, “In Christ, we are all one.” When we got to the Federal Building there were radicals who wanted us to carry signs that read, “Auschwitz – 1935, Selma -1965.” We insisted that we would carry our signs of Christian witness. Oddly enough the liberal students were up all night debating and never made it to the demonstration! As we marched around the building, I was again sensitized to the raw emotions of racism. While we were marching around the Federal Building, nicely dressed white executives
swore at us and spat at us. I had expected this in the South but not in the North!

As a student, one of my jobs was assistant minister at Harvard Memorial Church when Charles Price was University Preacher. It was a great occasion when Martin Luther King Jr. came to preach. I will never forget how he began his sermon. He told the story of Rip Van Winkle who, when he went to sleep, saw a picture of King George III on the wall, but when he woke up twenty years later there was a picture of President George Washington. King warned the students, “Rip van Winkle slept through a revolution and he did not even know it. Are you sleeping through a revolution in the USA and do not know it?” Again and again, the Lord was pushing me to see the evil of racism and how as Christians we had to be involved.

It was a very great honor when Dr. Price asked me to be Dr. King’s chauffeur that afternoon. I drove him back to the hotel. During our drive we had a good discussion about Baptists, Northern and Southern! I told him I was a member of a dually-aligned church. He said that his church was dually aligned with the Northern Baptists (ABC) and would even like to join the Southern Baptists, but they would not allow them to join! What a sad history! But the Lord was using all of these experiences to prepare me for leading the Baptist World Alliance along the path of racial reconciliation.

The passage of the Civil Rights Bill of 1965 accomplished much good: restaurants were integrated, as were schools, buses and other areas of public life. But the 1990s continued to be a time of racial violence in the United States. The beating of Rodney King and his famous plea, “Can’t we all just get along,” dominated the news. On a world level, it was also the time of ethnic cleansing all over the world, especially in the Balkans. Daily we read of Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia. And of course at our BWA meetings we received horrific reports of ethnic violence in many countries of Asia and Africa. Thus, the General Council accepted our proposal to inaugurate a Baptist Against Racism Commission. There was much enthusiasm from all our member bodies. Even though as Baptists from around the world we had been at meetings for almost 100 years, we often whitewashed our differences and never really shared our experiences.
our experiences. Now African, Asian, Caribbean, European, Latin American, and North American Baptist leaders and theologians began to listen and hear the pain of each other’s personal history of racism. Confession and repentance took place. It was a time when many were encouraged in their faith and rejoiced at the new life and reconciliation that Jesus Christ brought to our fellowship.

North Americans and Europeans became sensitized by Baptists from around the world that racism was more than the black/white issue in the United States and South Africa. Racism was a worldwide phenomenon. It included ethnic violence and ethnic cleansing. Therefore, our Baptist Against Racism Commission soon expanded its vision to include ethnic violence.

Because of America’s tragic history of slavery and segregation, most Americans thought of racism in black/white terms. Those of us brought up during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s could not think otherwise. Our generation’s mind will never forget the nonviolent demonstrations of the Civil Rights movement. We remember Martin Luther King Jr. and his march on Selma. We remember the bombing of the Baptist Church in Birmingham. We remember Bull Connor and the vicious dogs let loose on demonstrators. We remember the assassination of Dr. King.

Indeed our generation’s mind was formed into viewing racism as the tragedy that prevented the United States from living up to its ideals and visions of justice for all. Each of us needs to deal with our racist past, but we also need to expand our vision from local issues to world issues. We need to understand that the present conflicts in the world are also at heart racist conflicts, maybe not black versus white, but tribalism, ethnic conflict, religious hatred and bigotry.

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**Ethnic Violence, another Form of Racism:**

In May of 2011, I led a group of students in the D.Min. program at Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary to Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia. We had read of course of the tragic ethnic cleansing in the Balkans, but only after witnessing the death and destruction does one understand the deep pain and sorrow of the victims and of humanity in general!
We visited Vukovar, Croatia. It was amazing to experience the history of this town that before the war was divided among Croats, Bosnians, and Serbs. For many years they had lived together peacefully, but with the break-up of Yugoslavia all the hatred of centuries came out of its cage. Ethnic conflict ruled. One day the Serbs came to the hospital and took the 450 patients and by identifying their names segregated out the Muslims. They were taken to an isolated part of the surrounding area and massacred. The mayor, now an evangelical theologian, has worked a miracle of reconciliation among the people who are rebuilding their lives together.

Then we went to Sarajevo, Bosnia, and met with our small Baptist congregation. The pastor said that in Bosnia, which is 90% Muslim, one cannot really evangelize or call oneself a Christian. Bosnians identify the term “Christian” with the Serbs who killed their people. Therefore, Baptists in Sarajevo call themselves “Christ followers.”

This experience made me realize again how so often the greatest enemy of evangelism and sharing the Good News of Christ’s love has been the burden of an unrepentant church, a heretical church that uses the name of Christ only for nationalistic identification but is far from the suffering and compassionate Lord Jesus! It reminded me again of Nietzsche’s statement, “If the redeemed would act more like their redeemer maybe I could believe!”

After being in Sarajevo, we traveled on to Srbnica. We met with the deputy mayor, a young Muslim educated at a Catholic university in New Hampshire. The Muslim mayor told of the continuing hostility with the Bosnian Serbs who control that part of Bosnia. The relationship continues to be strained and reconciliation has been hard to attain.

After visiting with the mayor, we went to the memorial cemetery and saw the sad consequences of ethnic violence and hatred. There were more than 8,000 gravestones of Muslim men who had been murdered by so-called Serbian Christians. Row upon row of tragedy. Indeed there was more darkness than light!

As a Christian and a Baptist, I had much time to reflect and meditate on this scene of ethnic violence. One thing became very evident: the tragedy of a national and ethnic church or religion. The Croatians are Catholic;
Serbians are Orthodox; the Bosnians are Muslim. Religion became the great divider, not the great uniter. What a tragedy that Christ who came to unite the whole world should now be used to divide and conquer!

These experiences convinced me more than ever that the Baptist insistence on and defense of separation of religion from the state was the solution to the present day worldwide conflict of ethnic violence. Many of the present conflicts and wars are religious and ethnic.

The intention of these articles on racism in this issue of The Review and Expositor are not to be merely a sad commentary on the hopeless experience of humanity’s inhumanity, but the goal and purpose of these articles is to show positive aspects of how Christian witness can bring reconciliation and hope! This is the beautiful witness of our Baptist congregations in the Balkans. It was a joy to visit Belgrade, Serbia and worship in the First Baptist Church. Here one saw the reconciling power of Christ. Serbs, Bosnians, Croats were worshipping together. The love of Christ transcended ethnic differences. The same is true of congregations we visited in Novi Sad, Sarajevo, Osijek, and Zagreb. Baptists were united around Christ not around their ethnic background.

This positive witness of the transcending and powerfully transforming witness of Christ makes the difference. What an amazing experience to meet Muslims in Mostar who had become followers of Christ, even though their ethnic brothers and sisters had been massacred by so-called “Christians.” The transforming power of Christ and his cross makes all the difference around the world!

**Expanding our definition of Racism:**

After this circuitous route of testimony and personal experiences, we now return to the report of the International Summit of Baptists against Racism and Ethnic Conflict mentioned at the beginning of the article. This significant international summit of Baptist theologians and leaders involved in the struggle against racism and ethnic conflict provides a model and blueprint of where we have been and where we need to go as Baptists in struggling in Jesus’ name for a church and world without racism, prejudice, and ethnic violence.

The honorary co-chairs of this summit were Billy Graham and Coretta Scott King. In announcing this meeting, Billy Graham made this prophetic statement: “Racism may be the most serious and devastating social problem facing our world today… Tragically, the Church of Jesus Christ is not free of
the sin of racism, and yet we of all people should be at the forefront of demonstrating to humanity Christ's love and reconciliation. Racism is also one of the greatest barriers to world evangelization.1

The delegates to this Baptist summit issued an Atlanta Covenant, which is a prophetic statement for all Baptist conventions, unions, churches, and institutions, helping them to institute policies and programs to eliminate racism and ethnic conflict. The covenant also gave a broad definition of racism which is helpful in expanding our understanding of this worldwide phenomenon:

Racism is rooted in the sinfulness of humankind and is evident where a group or groups of people: a) Assert that by heredity and by nature they are superior to the rest of humanity, b) Oppress others through economic and political means to find security and self-acceptance, privilege and power, c) Project onto another group or groups their own anger, hostility, hatred and failures in order to rationalize feelings of superiority.2

Other speakers expanded even more this definition. John Kinney in his plenary address on "The Theology of Fallenness: The Roots of Racism" added to this definition the following:

Racism provides the social, rational and philosophical justification for debasing, denying, and doing violence to persons on the basis of ethnic identity. Racism emerges as a dogma, which is deliberately cultivated by a "dominant" group and informs pervasively the principles of human relationships and the character of social institutions.3

Forrest E. Harris, Sr. expanded on a widely accepted African American definition of racism: “Racism is race prejudice plus power.” Harris asserts,

The essence of racism is the belief that a certain group is genetically inferior. Racists claim that this supposed genetic inferiority, also reflected in skin color, is the reason for social and economic deprivation: “they’re in that condition because that’s the way they are.”4
John Jonsson completes this expanded definition of racism by stating,

Racism is a belief in the myth of a people being a superior “race,” an assumption that they are a “pure” race. This belief is perpetuated throughout the societal infrastructure of media, education, religion, and human relationships.  

With this enlarged and expanded definition of racism, delegates were able to move from their local and geographically limited view of racism to a larger understanding of racism around the world. In his address on “Racism from a Hispanic Perspective,” Osvaldo L. Mottesi helped delegates realize the sinful nature of racism and that all of us participate in some form of racism:

Everything in the entire creation proclaims the unity of the human race—everything except sin, self, pride and prejudice. No human being is altogether free from some taint of racial pride, because no human being is free from sin. A sense of racial superiority is natural to us all, even if it is secret and undiscovered. Everyone assumes that his or her race and color, culture and language are the norm, and that others are abnormal—the deviation. This is simply the self-centeredness of sin. But there is no norm in the color of human skin. There is no norm in cultural traits. The only norm is humanity. The so-called races, or perhaps better said, ethnic groups are only variants of this.

The Situation Worldwide: Places of Conflict, Signs of Hope:

With this expanded view of racism, we can now enter the world and understand the tragic nature and consequences of racism when practiced not only by individuals but also by societies and governments. Let me add the aside, however, that with this expanded view of racism individuals who have participated as a “majority” in a racist government should not feel relieved that they are not so racist after all. On the contrary, in recognizing our sinfulness before God we must confess the even more tragic nature of having participated in a racist regime!

That having been said, we now therefore look at the worldwide sin of racism. It is not possible for me to make a complete list, but I will only name
Christian groups are working to see that the Dalits receive their fair rations, in spite of their religious identity.

3. North India and Burmese Tribals: For many years the tribal people of North India suffered from lack of education and government concern. When the missionaries came the tribal people of North India and Burma
became educated and serious Christians. However, land disputes, because of government boundaries not recognizing traditional tribal properties, have caused tragic fighting among tribal groups, especially the Nagas and Kukis.

The good news: The BWA and Baptist mission agencies have been working many years for reconciliation. Joint prayer meetings have brought reconciliation among many churches and closed schools and churches are now open. The tribal groups in India and Burma include: Nagas, Kukis, Karens, Pwo Karens, Chins, Kachins, and many others. When the Gospel came to the tribals, it came as a liberating power. Now these tribal and Baptist young people are among the best-educated leaders.

4. Refugees: Refugees in every country are often a hated minority. Not only is there prejudice against them in work and government rights, but they are also often exploited by unscrupulous and evil men. For example, there are many Burmese Baptist refugees who have escaped from Burma and live in a small area of North Thailand near Maesot. Evil men tell the parents that they have jobs for their young women in Bangkok. These young women end up in forced prostitution. Very often, their lives are ruined or they commit suicide.

The good news: Baptist mission agencies, especially American Baptists, have established a New Life Center in Chiang Mai. Here rescued young women are taught skills in sewing and cooking and other areas which will enable them to get a profitable job. Many of the young women attend Bible class and have become shining witnesses to the transforming power of Christ.

5. Aboriginals in Australia and Maoris In New Zealand: Native peoples have always suffered from the colonial past. Aboriginals in Australia were often taken from their families and re-educated. Their life span is significantly lower than other Australians. In New Zealand the native people, the Maoris, were often treated as an inferior people. Significant prejudice against them continues today.

The good news: Today there are Maoris who actually have positions of leadership in Baptist unions and churches. The Maori have as their symbol a cross atop a boat. It signifies that Christ has redeemed their past and
that, in the cross of Christ, their suffering has found reconciliation with their white oppressors. Baptists in Australia continue to affirm the Aboriginals. Legal action is supported to ensure their fair rights. The BWA Congress in 2000 in Melbourne helped all of us witness the power of the local aboriginal culture and the love of Christ.

6. Can the Victim become the Oppressor? Such a question in itself becomes a threat to many indigenous and minority groups who, after having suffered for so long, soon find themselves a majority and in leadership positions. This is particularly true of tribalism in Africa as we witnessed the tragic genocide of Hutus by the Tutsis. It is also a question in Israel. Have the Israelis who were persecuted for so long in Europe and experienced the death of millions in the Holocaust become oppressors? Is their wall of separation against the Palestinians another apartheid as President Jimmy Carter indicated? What about the whites in South Africa and Zimbabwe? For so long they held power and oppressed the Africans. Is it fair to say that they now are experiencing prejudice and racism in Zimbabwe when Presidents Mugabe unleashed thugs to kill and shoot and drive out the white farmers? Is that racism or is that justice? If racism is “prejudice plus power” and if the whites have lost their power are they now experiencing racism?

One could go around the world with a litany of the suffering of native peoples from the colonialists or “invaders.” Horrific stories have emerged of missionaries tragically kidnapping young Native Nations children in Canada and re-educating them. The story has not yet been written concerning the treatment of Hispanics in the USA. Governments continue to brutalize the suffering indigenous people of Latin America. The endless line of racism and inhumanity of one group to another continues even today!

What shall we say? Shall we give up and each run into our own ethnic corner and defend their rights? No! As Christians we are called upon to expand God’s universal love in Jesus Christ for all of humanity.

As Baptist Christians we must continue to fight injustice, racism, and ethnic violence all over the world. We must have the courage to be prophetic and concentrate on Christ’s call to all humanity. As Christians we are a people
of hope. Therefore, let us make that hope a reality by engaging in the struggle of Christ to liberate all peoples and to bring in His Kingdom! We conclude with the “Welcome to Atlanta” given to the delegates to the International Baptist Summit Against Racism and Ethnic Conflict by the pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church, Joseph L. Roberts:

We have come today because we are servants of Jesus Christ, who is the Light of the World, and who has taught us that if we are to bring light to the places where we have been lost in the corners of darkness, we must be willing to sacrifice, we must be willing to transcend our provincialisms and our parochialisms, and see how we are one in the Spirit and one in the Lord. The light of the world was not made bright until He was lifted on a Cross, but when He was lifted on a cross, in His solitariness He still said, “If I be lifted up, I will draw all people unto me.”

May that be our prayer and incentive to engage in works of reconciliation!

1 Denton Lotz (ed), Baptists against Racism: Proceedings of the International Summit on Baptists Against Racism and Ethnic Conflict, January 8-11, 1999. Ebenezer Baptist Church, Atlanta, Georgia (McLean, VA: Baptist World Alliance, 1990), 4. (Emmanuel and Maria McCall chaired the Local Arrangements Committee and did an outstanding job in organizing this BWA summit!)

2 Ibid., 170.

3 Ibid., 14.

4 Ibid., 123.

5 Ibid., 126.

6 Ibid., 93.

7 “Hate Thy Neighbor.” Time Magazine, October 17, 2011, 15.

8 Baptists Against Racism, 151.
Select Bibliography on Race


The following are publications of Mercer University Press, 1400 Coleman Avenue, Macon, Georgia, 31207.


Social Justice and Interfaith Documentaries

(Documentaries available from www.ethicsdaily.com)

“Beneath the Skin: Baptists and Racism”

“Beneath the Skin” considers past mistakes and future challenges regarding racial unity and social justice. From the trans-Atlantic slave trade to the current immigration debate, “Beneath the Skin” peels back prejudices and confronts them with biblical mandates. Interviewees come from nearly a dozen states and represent the best in Baptist life, including: preacher and activist Will Campbell, Aidsand Wright-Riggins of American Baptist Churches USA, and Javier Elizondo of Baptist University of the Americas.

Winner of the best documentary award at the International Black Film Festival of Nashville in October 2008 and nominated for the best documentary award at the Texas Black Film Festival in February 2009, “Beneath the Skin” has been screened at national Baptist meetings and widely used in churches. It comes with an online discussion guide.

On a single DVD, the documentary appears in two versions: (1) the short version for public screenings runs 35 minutes; and (2) the long version for Sunday school classes runs 47 minutes and is divided into session chapters.

The price is $25 for a personal or church copy. The price is $100 for a library copy.
“Different Books, Common Word: Baptists and Muslims”

From Boston to the Bible Belt and from Beaumont to the nation’s beltway, Baptists and Muslims are changing history with the way they change each other. Tired of being defined by extremists, some Baptists and Muslims in the United States have sought and found common ground: the common word in both traditions to love God and love neighbor. The courageous Baptists and Muslims in “Different Books, Common Word” will surprise you.

The hour-long documentary follows five stories of interfaith dialogue and action among Baptists and Muslims in the United States.


The price is $25 for a personal or church copy. The price is $100 for a library copy.
“Immigration”

Immigration is the focus of the newest documentary from EthicsDaily.com. Scheduled for release at the end of August 2011, the still untitled documentary explores how goodwill Christians welcome undocumented immigrants, the misperceptions about the issue, and the challenges that undocumented Christians face.

The documentary interviews Baptist, Catholic, Methodist and Presbyterian faith leaders in Arizona, Arkansas, Alabama, North Carolina and Iowa.

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These three documentaries are available to order from: www.ethicsdaily.com
In recent years R&E has produced issues focusing on issues of special interest to the broader Baptist community including:

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Words about Recent Books
I. Biblical Studies


Notable Pauline scholar James D. G. Dunn resumes his recent scholarly forays into the tradition of Jesus in this fascinating discussion of early Christian devotion. On the surface it would appear that the tradition of Jesus as God, and as an object of worship, would be the presumption of the New Testament authors; however, Dunn asks, “Would Jesus himself have welcomed his being confessed as equal with God?” He continues, “The way to an answer may be more difficult or challenging than at first appeared, and the answer to the question may be less straightforward than we like.”

In searching for an answer to the problem of Jesus devotion, Dunn structures his text around the topic of monotheistic belief and worship. If one is to understand whether or not Jesus was worshipped, one should first understand the various rubrics of worship in the first century. Thus, the four chapters of the book are formed by Dunn’s understanding of what constitutes essential worship within the context of ancient Israel’s monotheism and the New Testament.

First, he defines worship. Second, he discusses the practices and sacred places of worship. Third, he explores the question of the object of worship—to whom it is given or directed. The final chapter examines the role of Jesus within these three aspects of worship and explores in brief detail the New Testament witness on the matter. He concludes with a summary of the entire text and his findings.

For Dunn, the New Testament offers a range of meaning and images that the authors felt necessary to use when talking about their devotion to Jesus. His conclusions are humbling. He argues for New Testament reserve on the question of whether Jesus was worshipped and points his readers to embrace the New Testament concept of Jesus as “the subject of…and the content of early Christian worship” directed to God, rather than the object at which our worship stops. Dunn concludes Jesus was largely not
While many would read the title of this text and assume a scholar with an agenda, Dunn is actually attempting to let the New Testament speak for itself on the matter of Jesus as an object of worship within a monotheistic context. The book seriously engages the plurality of the New Testament witness in an area that is pivotal to Christian witness, faith and practice. I heartily recommend it for anyone doing ministry as they attempt to understand the role of Jesus in ancient worship and the role he must play each week as we offer praise to the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit.

Nathan Napier
Cleveland First Church of the Nazarene
Cleveland, TN


This collection of mostly previously-published articles from 1983-2003 displays first-rate biblical
scholarship and cogent commentary on contemporary faith and life. Focusing on 25 questions that comprise 25 chapters, the book ranges from the predictable (e.g., “How Do God’s Love and God’s Wrath Relate to Each Other?”), to the unexpected (e.g., “What Might the Song of Songs Do for People?”), to the interesting (e.g., “Does God Care about Animals?”), and to the controversial (e.g., “How Should We Think about Same-Sex Relationships?”). In each case, seminary professor Goldingay carefully articulates issues and themes in the First Testament (Hebrew Scriptures or Old Testament) and then insightfully draws out their implications for the Christian faith.

As a theologian of a more liberal bent, I particularly enjoyed his suggestion/contention in Chapter 3 that God’s knowledge (omniscience) never-the-less allows God to be surprised.

His concluding chapter on same-sex relationships left me wanting more, however. It is clear that he is trying to strike a delicate balance concerning this divisive, inflammatory issue. To do so, he acknowledges that sexual orientation is not a choice (it is not a “preference”), but that living a life in relationship with someone of the same gender based on that orientation is a choice. Thus, same-sex relationships represent a choice that the Bible does not support. It would have been helpful to this reader to have had this position elaborated, specifically in terms of how the doctrine of creation (how God makes us) and ethics (how we are to act) are related in such a way as to justify more strongly his conclusion.

Too many times, I think and I fear, the First Testament is reductionistically seen as a collection of stories with moral points featuring characters with both fame and flaws. What Goldingay does that is so remarkable is to theologize and not simply moralize about them. Scholars
and people of faith (the two categories are not mutually-exclusive) are the richer for it.

This book is highly recommended and is appropriate for upper-division college courses, seminary courses, and study courses in the life of the local church.

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II. Historical-Theological Studies


This book shows the combined efforts of an ethicist (de la Torre) and a historian (Hernandez) to bring scholarly light to bear on the problem of evil. Theologically, the problem is traced through the rather persistent notion of an absolute Good versus a near-absolute Evil, engaged in a life-and-death struggle ending with the end of the world. The vivid imagery of apocalyptic scenarios can be attributed to the imagination of writers who embellish a few statements and come out with a full-blown notion of Satan and his minions.

Thanks to the work of De La Torre and Hernandez, we can now add a quest for the historical Satan to that of the historical Jesus. Schweitzer brought the latter to light and provided material for thought for years to come. The authors admit that there is a profound interest in Satan as a figure encountered in literature and art, but they question whether the subject is a real entity or a figment of the imagination. Recent history is full of stories of people who are preoccupied with Satan as a metaphysical creature about to wreck havoc on towns, nations, or the world. From Inglis, FL, whose mayor declared it to be “Satan free” to novels like Peretti’s _This Present Darkness_ and the wildly popular _Left Behind_ series, interest in the demonic is powerful and needs scholarly attention.

Polls show a strong belief in Satan in America. The Bible is often thought to be the source of Christian thought on the subject, but the authors maintain that Scripture poses the problem of evil without providing a definitive resolution of the issue. The writers contend that the notion of a “Satan” provides a convenient rhetorical tool for politicians and preachers who want to demonize the opposition. Honest differences of opinion are said to be inspired by Satan and his minions as an effort to gain the upper hand. That strategy, say De La Torre and Hernandez,
leads to the problematic situation wherein some call for purging the world of purported devotees of Satan without any verification of activity by an ontological force of evil. As they say, "Naming the other as 'satanic' or 'demonic' effectively short-circuits moral arguments, political critiques, or social analysis" (p. 8). Unfortunately, such rhetorical flourishes are among the current tools of political division and hysterical social and religious movements.

The authors rightly claim that the theodicy question is more an issue of moral responsibility individually and corporately, than any factual claim as to cause and effect of horrible events in history or nature. “Satan” has been a convenient excuse for adopting unethical actions in opposition to those who are different or resistant to a strongly held point of view. Even so, the authors insist they do not intend to prove or disprove the existence of Satan, but to focus on the reality of evil and the response that is required on the part of a thinking moral community. They provide a fascinating journey through historical images and religious traditions of the complex and changing imagery associated with Satanology. Their aim is not to dwell on the imagery but provide grounds for a more balanced moral life.

The authors appropriately argue that there is neither a universally recognized depiction of Satan, nor a definitive description of Satan as an ontological reality in the sacred texts from ages past. Various portrayals have mirrored the cultural settings of those who reflected on evil in their world. The Middle Ages and Reformation saw a proliferation of powerful imagery. Who can forget Luther’s account of his own encounter with Satan? Such depictions, however, noticeably decreased from the 1700s to 1900. The Enlightenment had its moment of shedding the light of reason on issues of the supernatural.

Movies captured and exploited the popular interest in supernatural evil and its impact on human well-being. The Exorcist probably was more influential than any rational explanation of the power and work of a Satan. The major world religions have re-enforced the belief in Satan by allowing or authorizing various treatments or handbooks for dealing with satanic powers.

Malleus Mallificareum was the church’s response to the possibility of witches inhabiting a human body, and the Ritual Romanum is an effort to standardize strategies to engage in an exorcism. More popular treatments such as those by C.S. Lewis’ Screwtape Letters also tend to lend credence to the notion of Satan as a metaphysical being. The net effect of such publications is to endorse the presence and power of realities never shown to exist. It was
enough that people believed in Satan and his minions and thus merited a practical response.

This is a good and honest book that deserves careful attention in seminary classes and clergy studies. The authors take the difficult and hazardous road to examining an issue that has an enormous hold on the human imagination. They thus set up the conditions for strong criticism from clergy and those who benefit from promoting the notion of Satan as a personal being with power second only to God’s. The notion of the reality of a cosmic force of evil doing battle with cosmic good will not be defeated easily. But this book is a worthy effort on behalf of rationality and a more objective view of historical depictions and teachings.

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III. Ministerial Studies


When the now legendary preacher Fred Craddock was first learning to preach back in the 1950s, the book he read was by the venerable Baptist homiletician, John Broadus. *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, first published in 1870, is probably still the most influential book in the history of homiletical theory, even if most preachers did not realize it. It is the quintessential textbook of the Old Homiletic. When the editor of this volume, Wes Allen, was first learning to preach in the mid-1980s, the book he read was by Fred Craddock. *As One without Authority* is probably the second most influential book in the history of homiletical theory, in many ways the quintessential book of the New Homiletic. As Allen notes in his introduction, most preachers today take for granted the shift that took place in homiletical theory. They more or less assume the current approach is the way preaching has always been taught (p. 1).

For readers conversant with the old and new approaches alike, Allen’s introduction hardly seems necessary. But with the recognition of a new generation of preachers, it proves quite helpful. He notes, for example, the difference between the medieval university sermon and more contemporary patterns of inductive and narrative. Both used trees as a metaphor, but the difference between them is like that between a real Christmas tree and an artificial aluminum one (p. 3-5).

After the introduction, Allen invites readers to a conference on preaching with the likes of Fred Craddock presenting, but also Charles Rice, Henry Mitchell, Eugene Lowry, and David Buttrick. What a treat! In the fall of 2007, Allen, who teaches at Lexington Theological Seminary, hosted these five legends, pioneers in the birth and development of the New Homiletic. Each presenter was asked to share three things (which is somewhat ironic given the preoccupation with
three-point sermons in the older traditional styles of preaching): rehearse the core contributions of their approach; describe what has changed on the cultural, religious, theological, and homiletical landscape since their work was first published; and offer insights into how they might reshape their work now. Each of them also preached in area churches, and a DVD copy of those sermons is included with the book.

Readers familiar with the writings of these five seminal scholars get a refresher course very much like one might expect. But when asked to reflect on what’s changed, the book begins to take preaching theory into the future, a future very much still unknown. It is refreshing to hear the likes of these stellar figures wrestle with topics such as postmodernism, biblical illiteracy, and the changes in technology, contemplating what these factors might mean for preachers today. Readers familiar with Lowry’s writings, for example, will recall his comfortable familiarity with various TV shows, which he uses to demonstrate how plots function, but here is Lowry contemplating the impact of Facebook and Twitter as well.

The other added bonus, whether we attended the conference or not, are reflections by the “next generation” of homiletical scholars. Allen wisely recognized not only the generational differences between then and now, but also gender and race differences. So while the old guard of the New Homiletic consisted of all men, four of them white and one African American, Allen invited a distinguished and diverse group of scholars to reflect on the various presentations: Ronald Allen, Dale Andrews, Valerie Bridgeman, Gennifer Benjamin Brooks, Cláudio Carvalhaes, Richard Eslinger (who first wrote about these five legends in his *A New Hearing*), Ruthanna Hooke, Pablo Jiménez, Eunjoo Mary Kim, Alyce McKenzie, Mary Alice Mulligan, as well as Wesley Allen, the editor. It is a bold move, critiquing the pioneers of the New Homiletic, some of them mentors. But it works well. They offer affirmations as well as critiques.

Even if readers did not get to attend the conference, they will not feel so cheated once they read this volume. It’s a tribute to the past and a look to the future of homiletics.

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Creation longs for transforming justice. Whether released as a deep cry of agony or faint murmur from weary lips, justice’s commotion within the human heart resembles a longing for love, peace and mutual respect. These common desires are birthed and portrayed in the biblical narrative which speaks to the human understanding. A leader within the community of faith attempts to communicate God’s message of love and peace through justice to others in new and creative ways.

*Preaching God’s Transforming Justice* is not merely an overall commentary on the Revised Common Lectionary. The editors envisioned a series that re-creates a world where God’s justice is present in the local congregation. The book’s contributors are half male, half female and forty percent from African American, Hispanic, Asian American and Native American heritage (p. ix). Although plenty of commentaries in the past addressed the mistreatment of the poor and downtrodden, the editors of this newest series hope to inspire churches to practice righteousness by presenting twenty-two holy days of justice. The radically inventive days of justice inspire the church to re-direct attention to the oppressed.

The new calendar includes days for remembering Oscar Romero, Martin Luther King, Jr., and people native to the Americas. New holy days celebrate the earth, remember those suffering from AIDS, and rejoice in the Torah. With a variety of justice holidays, *Preaching God’s Transforming Justice* shares inspiration for somber remembrance and joyful celebration of unique holidays and hope for the future. Although the commentary attempts to tackle several difficult issues, it does so in a tactfully compelling manner.

Preachers, teachers and ministers are called to communicate the freedom found in the biblical message. Through weekly readings and diverse points of view, the book challenges readers to view the world and the biblical message from the perspective of the marginalized community. In addition, it inspires a language of justice that can transform the world. Each lectionary passage and commentary looks for God’s life giving purpose in the reading. The contributors present interpretations for a hurting world by fostering healing and re-creation of well-being (p. xvi). The book names certain systems which frustrate God’s purposes, like hunger or brutality,
and innervates preachers to speak to these issues on Sunday mornings.

If your community does not strictly follow the church calendar, the book offers an index of biblical passages. Without following the lectionary, a community leader may easily search the index for desired passages in order to find assistance from Preaching God’s Transforming Justice. If you are looking for new celebrations throughout the calendar year, the book’s table of contents emboldens innovative holidays for communal instruction.

Much like the Israelites wandering in the desert or Jesus praying in the wilderness, Christian communities wrestle with frustrating issues concerning God’s justice in culture. The contributors of this book enable ministers to educate congregations on frustrating issues in order to improve the concerns for justice worldwide. Although the book is not the ultimate resource for exegetical study, it offers stimulating perspectives of different passages with the intention of shaping a message of transformation for any congregation.

God’s vision for the world and transforming righteousness is a local and global concern. Through further education of this vision, communities emerge as powerful instruments of God’s vision for confronting oppression. Preaching God’s Transforming Justice motivates and equips worship planners, ministers, and preachers to use a prophetic voice when speaking about the kingdom of God on earth and the justice of love, peace, and mutual respect. The book is valuable to those looking for transformation in a congregation or assistance in cultivating conversation concerning justice in the local faith community.

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During the last two decades western missiologists and others have recognized that global mission studies must include “the global South.” Philip Jenkins’s writings, including The New Faces of
Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), brought attention to thriving mission communities that may have been ignored by previous generations of missiologists.

Clouds of Witnesses provides a welcomed collection of biographical portraits of seventeen persons who have contributed to Missio Dei. The editors have chosen to highlight biographical sketches of persons from Africa and Asia. These areas of the world and Latin America have experienced significant growth as David Barrett notes in his annual statistical charts published by The Bulletin of International Research.

The book’s title and contents seek to follow the pattern of Hebrews 11, with application to the heroes of faith of the twentieth century. Who are these witnesses? They are men and women of character, zeal, scholarship, and renown among the world Christian community. Some of them were trained in Western educational institutions and used their contacts for long lasting mission partnerships.

The editors chose an epithet for each one of their sketches. A cursory summary of some of these witnesses includes the following. Albert Luthuli, “gentleman of justice,” was an early advocate of social justice and the struggle against apartheid in South Africa and a contemporary of Nelson Mandela. In 1960 he was the first African to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. Simeon Nsibambi from Uganda was a “revival anchor” with wealth and education. He became a bridge between native revivalist excesses and Anglican perspective during the first three decades of the twentieth century. Mary Stone/Shi Meiyu, one of three women featured in the collection, is an “agent of change.” She studied medicine in the United States and combined medicine and evangelism in her ministry. She is a type of many foreign-born persons who, until the present time, led “faith mission” efforts with financial support from the US. Her contribution in this area is that she used funds for Chinese-led leadership and efforts in medical work with evangelism.

Some characteristics common to all the seventeen “witnesses” discussed in the book are diversity of mission approaches; tenacity in the midst of deprivation and conflict; a good balance of missionary and native contact that resulted in fruitful expansion; cultural instincts that guided much of the enterprise; and reliance on biblical principles, such as the authority of the Scriptures, the fellowship of believers and the power of the Holy Spirit. The western missionaries lit a spark which resulted in Christian expansion through native mission agencies.
The book is a welcomed addition to the study of missiology in Africa and Asia. It provides inspiring and instructing principles of faith and action. This reviewer recommends its use in introductory courses of mission studies to spark inspiration and action for the present generation.

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