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Functional Diversity

Eric M. Brown

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

NEWBERG, OR

FUNCTIONAL DIVERSITY

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED

TO THE FACULTY OF GEORGE FOX EVANGELICAL SEMINARY

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

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POCATELLO, ID

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ABSTRACT

The question at the heart of this dissertation is, “can it be different?” The “it” is the way church is organized, worship happens, and the very flavor of the church in the United Methodist Church in Oregon and Idaho. Today, church is generally organized following the traditional Anglo experience. The hymns, food, and organizational patterns generally follow the patterns of the white, English-speaking majority in the churches. A different formula would be one that is more multicultural and multiethnic. In this dissertation, the different way of organizing and thinking of church is called functional diversity.

Functional diversity is explored through the Wesleyan Quadrilateral, the traditional United Methodist formula for doing theology. The Wesleyan Quadrilateral looks at any theological issue through four lenses: Scripture, tradition, reason and experience. After exploring the Scriptural call to welcome strangers and aliens, listening to the theology of marginality as discussed by J. Y. Lee, discovering a time in the history of the church where diversity existed, and taking note of my own experience with diversity, this dissertation claims that there is another way, that the church can be different.

Throughout this dissertation, I argue that the church is called to diversity and that diversity is a valid, biblically-sound way to build a church. In chapter one I introduce the idea of functional diversity. In chapter two I explore the biblical witness that calls the church to diversity as I key into the bible’s special concern for the strangers and the aliens. In chapter three I read the theology of marginality as imagined by J. Y. Lee and hear this as a call to diversity in the church. In chapter four I explore the time of the

Egyptian monks of the third and fourth centuries and hear their monasteries and places of diversity. In chapter five I listen to my own experience and that of United Methodist Churches in Oregon and Idaho as the area has become more diverse. In chapter 6, I consider the idea of missiology and the teachings of the Church Growth movement. The Church Growth movement suggests that, rather than diversity, a church will grow best if it is filled with homogeneous ethnic units. I suggest that, while the teachings of the Church Growth movement are one biblically-principled way to grow churches, there are other, equally correct and biblically-principled ways to grow churches. Erwin McManus' Mosaic Church is one such way. In the final chapter, I draw conclusions from the previous chapters and suggest that a functionally diverse church is the way I feel God calling me to grow churches.

DISSERTATION ACCEPTANCE CERTIFICATE

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A story introducing the problem

Eric and Adriana attend a medium-sized United Methodist Church in a suburban Northwest city. Adriana was born and grew up in Latin America; Eric grew up near the town in which they now live. Adriana's native language is Spanish; Eric's is English. The church they attend is monocultural, filled entirely with Anglo people.

Adriana and Eric's world is multicultural. When the phone rings, it is likely to be someone who speaks Spanish, possibly Adriana's mom or sister. When the family sits down to dinner, the recipe is as likely to come from Latin America or Asia as it is to be "American" food. The movies, music and art they choose are from a variety of cultures. The couple's children are bilingual.

Adriana and Eric have friends who live in a different part of the metropolitan area. Their names are Alexi and Jennifer. They attend another white United Methodist Church. Jennifer is from the area, but Alexi is from Russia. Their children speak at least two languages, and sometimes three, because the children they play with at school are often Latino.

One night, as the two families sat together having dinner, Alexi voiced a frustration. "Why is it that we're the different ones at church?"

"I hear you there," said Adriana. "The people at church are very nice, but they don't look anything like the world we live in. They can't conceive of someone's mother living in a different country."

The reality is that many, many people in the USA have family in other countries. Regardless of location in the USA, chances are that immigrants live nearby. The immigrants may be from Mexico or from Africa or from Eastern Europe; they may speak English or they may not. They may be married to other immigrants or they may be married to native-born Americans. Many more people are a second or third generation removed from immigrants – their parents and grandparents may be immigrants to the USA. Right next door, across the street, and around the corner, there are people of different cultures. From small towns in Arkansas which have attracted huge numbers of Central American immigrants (come to work in burgeoning chicken processing plants) to medium-sized university towns which have attracted foreign students and staff, to the metropolitan areas, there is virtually no place in the USA that is now monocultural.

It is more complicated yet. Within the American culture, there is a variety of sub-cultures. Each region of the country, each economic status, and even different generations live in different cultures. The fact is, nearly everyone is different from each other. Each sees the world through unique eyes. This dissertation, while it recognizes this world has more variables than simply language and racial differences, will focus on the multiculturalism as it relates to race and language.

The church, however, seems unaware of the reality that people are different. The churches of my experience (United Methodists in the NW region) are islands of sameness within their complicated neighborhoods. There are just 1307 people who claim a racial background other than “white” in the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. This same Conference claims 33,909 “white” people.¹ Most

¹ “Journal,” The Journal of the Thirty-Sixth Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, ed. Robert W. Burtner (Portland, OR: The Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, 2004), 317.

churches are content to do “missions” to people of other cultures. They are glad to send money and people away to distant countries and people who look nothing like themselves. Church folks draw the line, however, at bringing “those” people into “their” church. And these church people are often unaware that “those” people live next door. Some are even unaware that they themselves are different from others.

The church’s sameness is not a new problem; the timeline stretches far back into American history. Many, many churches began with a single linguistic or cultural group. There were Finnish Lutheran churches and German Lutheran Churches. African-Americans worshiped in one church while Anglo-Americans worshiped in another. The past cannot be changed; this sameness, however, is not satisfactory for the future. This dissertation invites the United Methodist Church into a different way of living and a different way of organizing and sustaining churches.

“Exactly,” said Alexi, “and they wouldn’t consider doing Christmas or Easter in any other way.”

“We always celebrated the Novena at home. I miss the Novena,” said Adriana.

“I miss Orthodox Easter,” said Alexi.

“I miss how the priest would come to my parents’ house as soon as they moved in. The priest would bless the house, and then it felt like we were finally home,” said Adriana.

“We did ask the church to try a Novena celebration, remember, Adriana?” said Eric. “No one really got it. ‘Have a get together every night? That’s impossible!’ they said.”

Most churches celebrate Easter and Christmas exactly the way they were celebrated the year before. These churches ignore other expressions of celebration, and other expressions of culture. For many people, the most powerful memories they have of their culture are religious ones. The outward signs of faith are important ways to connect with their cultures. Many Mexicans have a statue of the Virgin of Guadalupe on their dashboard, even if they do not claim to be Christians.

The majority of the United Methodist Church in Oregon and Idaho often ignores these outward symbols of faith. The leaders and people in the pews cannot envision celebrating Christmas or any other holiday in another way. Furthermore, they cannot imagine that there are other holidays worthy of their celebration. Each time they miss the opportunity to celebrate, they further alienate the people next door who are of a different culture.

Jennifer made a suggestion. “We could go to different churches. There’s no reason why we have to go to the church we’re going to now.”

“No,” said Adriana, “I like our church. It’s not about liking or disliking what we have. The people are so nice, we have good friends, and the kids are happy. It’s about welcoming something different.”

Most well-meaning Christians want to welcome other views to their church. They would like to worship next to someone who looks different than they do. They like the idea of everyone, everywhere coming to their church. The problem arises when those new people, the ones that look different, ask to change things. When the ones that look different suggest different ways of doing traditions, or different images in the sanctuary, or a discussion of other views, well-meaning Christians are slow to respond. And then

the people of other cultures within existing churches keep silent or leave the church – and often faith – all together.

Functional diversity: a solution

Adriana said above, “it’s about welcoming something different.” I believe it is possible to “do church” in a different way. I believe that churches can remake themselves into God’s image, an image of variety and difference. I believe the church can practice functional diversity. Functional diversity is a term that I will use (found in other contexts) to define healthy, non-patronizing diversity. It is one that allows a variety of celebrations, flavors and culture into the pews and into the church leadership. It is a diversity that looks like the world. In a recent presentation, Erwin McManus explained, “God has tilted the edges of the earth in, and the nations are running together.”² The church – my United Methodist Church in particular -- can wake up and begin to reflect the wonder of God’s creation. This dissertation invites the church to embrace functional diversity and sets the claims of functional diversity in a biblical, theological, historical, and experiential context.

What is functional diversity? The term is currently in use in the business world and in the scientific world. This dissertation follows the use of the term found in the scientific world. Mason et al., defines functional diversity in a scientific context in this way: “It has been suggested that ecosystems with a greater diversity of functional traits,

² McManus in a keynote address at “Origins,” a conference organized by the Mosaic Church on May 17, 2003.

i.e., a higher functional diversity, will operate more efficiently.”³ Speaking of the root systems of plants, Petchey writes, “For example, greater species richness can increase the variety of root architectures in a plant assemblage and this can lead to more efficient and complete use of below ground resources.”⁴ In the world of biology, functional diversity is a description of a variety of organisms in an ecosystem that, because they are all together, bring about improved functioning.

The business world uses functional diversity differently, and the majority of the literature is now suggesting that it has limited value. In the business world, the idea is usually expressed as cross-functional diversity. Following this, teams will be drawn together from many parts of the company in hopes that the cross section of functions will bring creativity. For example, a team might be drawn together with people from the marketing division, the accounting division, research, and human resources to solve a specific problem. The value of such teams, much of literature concludes, is limited. An article in the Harvard Business Review expresses this idea.

Many managers, for instance, believe that cross-functional diversity provides the variety of perspectives and ideas essential to creative thinking. But we found that merely including people from a large number of functional areas on a team doesn't improve its innovativeness. . . . While more ideas may come to the table as diversity increases, team problem solving gets harder. Information overload can bog down the process, canceling out the benefit of having more perspectives and ideas to work with.⁵

Here, we will follow functional diversity as it is used in the scientific world. This definition imagines a forest filled with a variety of trees, plants and animals that, because

³ Norman W. H. Mason, et al., “An Index of Functional Diversity,” *Journal of Vegetation Science* 14 (2003): 571.

⁴ O. L. Petchey, “On the Statistical Significance of Functional Diversity Effects,” *Functional Ecology* 18 (2004): 297.

⁵ Rajesh Sethi, Daniel C. Smith, and C. Whan Park, “How to Kill a Team's Creativity,” *Harvard Business*

they are many and diverse, create a healthier ecosystem. I believe that the ecosystem of the church, when it is filled with many different kinds of people, is a healthier system. The church's functional diversity is filled with many different kinds of people, each with an equal voice, each playing a unique role, and together they create a healthy church.

I define the functionally diverse church as a church with some, if not all, of the following characteristics: 1) It is a church where the membership reflects the variety of peoples and cultures in the neighborhood or the town. 2) It is a church where the diversity of the membership and the town are reflected in the church's governance. 3) It is a church where the ideas and ministries come from the church's grassroots. This is to say that the margins of the church, the people in the pews, set the church's agenda and drive the church's ministry. 4) It is a church where worship and activities can happen in multiple languages and in multiple cultural flavors; no one cultural expression dominates the church's ministry, worship or activities.

I contrast functional diversity to no diversity or non-functional diversity. No diversity is a church community that is only of one ethnicity or a church community that does not reflect its community. For example, many of the churches I have served are nearly entirely Anglo and have a scattered number of other ethnicities in them. The Anglo majority makes all decisions, controls the church governance, and chooses a worship style that reflects its tastes. Non-functional diversity is a church that has several (perhaps even a majority) of its worshipers from a variety of ethnicities, but the governance of the church is controlled by a single group. There are a number of churches in my area that have worship services (and even congregations) that speak another language (a Korean congregation, Tongan congregation, or Mexican congregation), but

the non-English speakers take no part in the church's governance. They set no agenda and often are ignored when church policies are made. Such a church may have diversity, but it is not a functional diversity; the people who are not a part of the majority have no voice, and the diversity is, in reality, only the illusion of diversity.

What is the road to functional diversity? Quite simply, the church – its leadership and its membership, the folks in charge and the person-in-the-pew – chooses to be functionally diverse. The choice is similar to the one that Michael Slaughter, lead pastor of the Ginghamburg Church, made when he decided that the people in the chancel should reflect the diversity of the church they were going to have. Slaughter recognized that the area around the church was approximately forty percent African American.⁶ After he made this recognition, Slaughter's intention became to lead the church to have four of every ten people – musicians, speakers, preachers, worship leaders – on the church's chancel during worship African Americans. This move is shaking the church to its core, challenging traditional beliefs, and changing the way the people understand their church. Slaughter is insisting on similar diversity within the larger church leadership.

Methodology of the dissertation

The dissertation, along with my own thinking, follows traditional United Methodist theological thought. I am a United Methodist minister serving in the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. As a United Methodist minister, I have been trained to follow a theological process known as the Wesleyan

⁶ Slaughter told of this vision and leading the church to this goal during the second plenary of the 2002 Change Conference, October 2002, Tipp City, OH.

Quadrilateral.⁷ This process is defined by the *Book of Discipline*, the United Methodist document that defines our structures and beliefs. The process looks at theological questions through 4 lenses: scripture, reason, tradition, and experience. The broad outline of this dissertation is to look at the issue of church diversity through these 4 lenses and draw conclusions based on what I see through these lenses. The dissertation's structure follows the Wesleyan quadrilateral; each of the chapters will look at the issue of diversity in the local church through one of the four lenses. At the end of each chapter, we will consider the learnings of the chapter and the way they shape the functionally diverse church.

In chapter two, I will explore what I understand as the biblical mandate for diversity. Wesley began his own research and theological reflection by exploring the Scriptures and their statements about an issue. In chapter two, I will look at the issue of the stranger and the alien in the bible. The words stranger and alien appear numerous times, and the treatment of these people is a significant theme in the Bible. The theme of aliens and strangers significantly impacts the church's outreach to immigrants and strangers in the neighborhood.

In chapter three, I will explore the theology of marginality as written about by Jung K. Lee. The theology of marginality looks to the margins of society, especially the hyphenated people, to find creativity and to discover God. I believe that the functionally diverse church looks to the margins to discover God's voice, and I suggest that a functionally diverse church looks to the theology of marginality for its theological grounding. This third chapter mirrors Wesley's look to reason as the second part of the

⁷ The *Discipline* reads "Wesley believed that the living core of the Christian faith was revealed in Scripture, illumined by tradition, vivified in personal experience, and confirmed by reason." *Book of Discipline*, 2004:

work of theology. Theological reflection is the reflection of reason – the work of reason – that brings one’s thought and logic to bear on a topic.

In chapter four, I will look through Wesley’s lens of history and explore a time in the church’s history when diversity worked: the time of the Egyptian Monks. In response to their changing social conditions, these monks retreated to deliberate communities. Once they arrived, these monks lived lives of clear rules and boundaries, lives where behavior was strictly regulated, and they experienced diversity within their communities. I suggest that they have much to teach the church of the twenty-first century.

Wesley’s final lens through which he looked at the topics of faith was experience. In chapter five, I will explore the places in my own church and my own experience where diversity has worked and where it has not. This dissertation is a personal journey for me, as much as an academic journey because the topic of diversity is close to my own heart and life. My experience is that the church (especially the United Methodist Churches I have served and the one in which I grew up) matches neither the world outside its doors nor the world in which I live.

In chapter six, I will consider missiology and explore the church growth movement. The church growth movement has its missiology and the functionally diverse church another missiology. Each missiology is biblically-grounded and valid expressions of God’s desire for the church. In this chapter, I consider some of the literature and reflection produced that suggests the best way to grow a church is to create communities of affinity and similarity. The proponents of the church-growth movement have solid biblical reasons for building such churches. While I acknowledge that these churches are healthy and one expression of God’s kingdom, I believe that there are other ways.

Functional diversity is another way.

In the conclusion (chapter seven), I will again argue that God is inviting the church to form and sustain churches in another way, especially United Methodist Churches in the Northwest. This is the way of functional diversity. This chapter will sum up all the research and thinking I have done through the chapters and explain the shape of the functionally diverse church.

I have in mind a specific audience for this dissertation. Obviously, this dissertation is for the faculty of George Fox University. I hope, however, that it will reach beyond the faculty. The context in which I serve (churches in Oregon and Idaho) is in the midst of a radical change from a place of perceived monoculturalism (most people thought that everyone was alike) to a place of multiculturalism, a place of diversity. In the past fifteen to twenty years the number of Latinos has grown from about two percent of the population to about fifteen percent. Other ethnic groups have also grown (albeit in smaller numbers) in our midst. Our United Methodist Churches need new ways to do church because our churches are declining⁸, and our neighbors are not attending church.⁹ This dissertation is for Northwest United Methodist clergy and church leadership as we grapple with the population shift going on in our midst. I hope that this paper might be overheard or over-read by clergy of other mainline denominations who are also looking for another way to be church.

⁸ The 1970 *Journal of the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference* reports 69,150 (p. 176) United Methodists in Oregon and Southern Idaho. The 2004 *Journal of the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference* reports 36,162 (p. 324) United Methodists in Oregon and Southern Idaho.

⁹ Oregon and Washington are notable for being the U.S. states with the highest proportion of religiously-unaffiliated and self-identified “nonreligious” residents. Only 1.2% of Oregonians describe themselves as agnostics (and a statistically negligible number are atheists). But about 17% of Oregonians classify themselves as “nonreligious” (while the U.S. average is only 7%; Washington is 14%). (found on Adherents.com)

CHAPTER 2

SCRIPTURE: GOD LOVES THE STRANGER AND THE ALIEN

The United Methodist tradition looks to the bible for the beginning of all theological reflection. For that reason, we begin our own theological reflection by studying the bible's witness regarding diversity within the faithful community. What we learn is that God has a special love for the stranger and the alien. This love calls the church into relationships with strangers and aliens. The church that responds to God's call is a diverse church, and the church that works to include these strangers and aliens in all levels of the church life is the functionally diverse church.

Even in a casual survey of the scriptures we see that God has an obvious love for the strangers and the immigrants that lived in the midst of the chosen people, Israel. We read that both Jesus and Israel are often the strangers and the immigrants. For this reason, God demands special attention to both strangers and aliens. In the following paragraphs, we will listen to the story of Abraham, the first of God's chosen people and a stranger and alien himself, survey the teachings of the law on strangers and immigrants, explore the texts that call for poor treatment of the aliens and strangers (for these texts, too, are a part of our history), and finally we will consider Jesus' teachings on strangers and aliens.

The treatment of strangers and aliens is of critical importance when one talks of diversity. It is one thing to talk of political and opinion diversity but quite another thing to talk of the diversity of strangers and immigrants moving to town. This dissertation is primarily concerned with understanding how to "do church" in a time when the neighbors

are from all points of the globe and our communities are experiencing radical change. The faithful community of United Methodist Christians faces, day after day, the question of how to live with, worship with, and evangelize strangers and immigrants. My community is in desperate need to hear the bible's core teaching on strangers and immigrants. This teaching informs who we are and points the way to live in diversity. I believe that the bible shows us the way to functional diversity by telling us how we are to treat the strangers and immigrants we encounter. Quite simply, we are to treat them with love and respect, hospitality and invitation.

The theme of treatment of aliens and strangers is the beginning point of the functionally diverse church. The functionally diverse church begins by seeking out people of all sorts, especially strangers and aliens. In chapter six, we will explore two different kinds of missiologies. Here I advocate missiology that is rooted in the biblical witness of God's special concern for strangers and aliens. This chapter discovers why the functionally diverse church reaches out to strangers and aliens; later chapters discover what the functionally diverse church does with the strangers and aliens once they are part of the church.

The bible spends a great deal of time discussing the strangers and aliens. The New International Version uses the word "stranger" eighteen times and "alien" seventy times. This topic – of strangers, aliens, immigrants and outsiders in the midst of the faithful community – is one of critical importance to the bible writers. Throughout the history of Israel, there seems to have been an open question about whether or not they should welcome outsiders. This is an important issue in the bible. It is also an issue that Jesus dealt with. Jesus tells his followers that their job is to give special attention to

strangers and outsiders. Unfortunately, the limited scope of this paper, however, does not allow us to explore each of the occurrences of “alien” and “stranger.” We will explore several appearances of the words and these appearances are representative of others.

Abraham, the first stranger and alien

One encounters God’s profound concern for the stranger and alien early in the book of Genesis in the story of Abraham. In Genesis 15:13, God promised Abraham that his own children would wander the earth as strangers. One day, God promised, they would receive a land of their own, but the “chosen” ones were going to live as strangers for generations. Through Abraham, Jews began a journey with God into and out of their own land. The Jews would journey from being strangers to being natives. This is how God loved them and the way God intended things to be.

One of the stories of Abraham and strangers that comes first to mind is the story of Abraham welcoming three strangers under the trees at his tent near Mamre in Genesis 18. In this story Abraham, who is an outsider and stranger himself, went out of his way to host three strangers. Abraham and his wife Sarah prepared a meal for them, attended to their needs, and treated them with great respect. These strangers turned out to be the Lord. Abraham receives a blessing because of his hospitality, and he is able to advocate for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Throughout the bible, including into the New Testament, Abraham is remembered as a faithful follower of God. The writer of the book of Hebrews remembers Abraham

lived as a stranger. Hebrews 11:9 reads, “By faith he [Abraham] made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise.” Abraham the stranger is a powerful symbol throughout the bible and to people of faith. He is a symbol of how to treat the stranger and a symbol of how one ought to love God. It is the stranger who is the powerful symbol.

Throughout history, Abraham has been interpreted in a variety of ways, but always as a stranger. In his book *Abraham*, Karl-Josef Kuschel explores the historical interpretation of the story of Abraham. Different times called for different readings of this seminal figure. Kuschel points out that in one of the earliest readings, one written during the Babylonian exile tells that, “God chose the ‘stranger,’ the one without property, who stood outside the social classes, to bestow a homeland on him. Here, too, Abraham is the symbol of a dialectic of divine action.”¹ Through the generations, Jews read the story of Abraham theologically for their particular situation. The beloved stranger – as the Jews in exile read Abraham – could be given a homeland by an all-powerful God. If the faithful and beloved stranger could find hope and a homeland, so could the Jews living in exile.

Kuschel continues by telling the story of Philo and his reading of the Abraham saga. Philo was a Jewish philosopher who lived in Alexandria and died around 40 CE. Philo’s writings worked to connect Judaism to the Hellenistic culture. “Philo deliberately portrays Abraham as foreigner. It is not by chance that he emphasizes that Abraham was a ‘Chaldean’, a ‘lone wanderer’. . . Philo points out that a Gentile stands at the beginning

¹ Karl-Josef Kuschel, *Abraham: Sign of Hope for Jews, Christians and Muslims* (New York, New York: Continuum, 1995), 19.

of Jewish history.”² Philo reads the story of Abraham as the story of God’s love of the stranger. That love extends through history and through the problems of Judaism. God loved the stranger Abraham, loves other strangers, will love the Jews who live as aliens in a variety of lands.

The Rabbis, writing immediately after Philo, interpreted Abraham’s story in a different way. They were concerned about the purity of Israel and the invitation of proselytes into the faith. In Abraham, they read of God’s invitation to non-Jews. “So Abraham is the door through which even ‘sojourners,’ non-Jews, find access to Judaism. What is left of the blessing of the nations is at least that individual people from the nations are blessed if they convert to the true God.”³ God loves the stranger, the non-Jews and the aliens; God wants them to convert to true faith.

Habel reads the Abraham narratives in a slightly different way. Rather than reading a continuing love for people who are on the outside, Habel hears in Abraham God’s plan for an immigrant-hero. He writes, “It is my contention that the Abraham narratives reflect a distinctive immigrant ideology that views the land as a host country and its inhabitants as potentially friendly people.”⁴ Habel goes on to say,

the characterization of Abraham as an immigrant is evident also from the use of the term *ger* and associated verbal forms. The term has been variously rendered ‘stranger,’ ‘resident alien,’ and the more archaic ‘sojourner.’ Frank Spina has argued, quite convincingly, that the term *immigrant*, which reflects the social factors and conditions associated with both the emigration and immigration process, is a more appropriate reading.

² Ibid., 43.

³ Ibid., 63.

⁴ Norman C. Habel, *The Land is Mine: Six Biblical Land Ideologies* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), 115.

Another reading of the Abraham saga, then, would be to hear Abraham as an immigrant whom God loves. This again points to God's love for strangers and immigrants.

The functionally diverse church learns from Abraham that God has a particular concern for the stranger, especially the faithful stranger, Abraham, who became an immigrant and eventually the foundation on which the covenant between God and the chosen was built. This is a lesson for the church: God loves strangers and eventually, they become the foundation of the covenant between God and God's people. This lesson is foundational for the functionally diverse community: those who are now strangers and aliens are part of God's plan for the future. We build a community with and on these strangers and aliens because they have a special insight into God's desire. Furthermore, the strangers and aliens carry with them a blessing from God.

The law and the stranger

The books of the law stand next in our survey of God's love of stranger. In Exodus and Leviticus we encounter particular concern for the alien (the immigrants) living among the people of Israel. A large portion of the law begins with God and Moses' encounter on Mt. Sinai in Exodus 19-34. It continues, writes Dozeman, with nearly "one hundred chapters of legislation."⁵ Taken together, the revelation and the legislation are known by scholars as "the Sinai Complex." In the Sinai Complex, Moses goes up the mountain to receive the word from God. He then mediates the message by delivering it to the gathered people of Israel on the plain, below the mountain. Modern

⁵ Thomas B. Dozeman, *God on the Mountain: A Study of Redaction, Theology and Canon in Exodus 19-24* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1989), 2.

critics, looking through the eyes of source criticism, literary history and traditions history, see a number of redactors working (traditionally J, E, D and P but more recently scholars have argued that the texts were “reinterpreted by two or more authors or redactors, one closely related in outlook to Deuteronomy and one with a major interest in the origin of priesthood and sacrifice”⁶) after the original event; these redactions are recorded in Exodus and the following books. Redaction, which is creative editing and theological reflection, accounts for the repetition that one encounters when reading these books.

In the law, God grants or gives the land to the people of Israel. This gift of land to a landless people is a sign of God’s generosity and the beginning of God’s covenant with the people of Israel. It is also God’s plan from the beginning. The writings of the law understand that God owns all land and can grant it to whomsoever God sees fit. “The owner of all lands, who assigns peoples to their lands, has assigned or deeded Canaan over as Israel’s national territory. In a tradition preserved in [the] text of Deuteronomy, this allocation is not a decision of YHWH at a particular point in history but part of a primordial ordering of all lands.”⁷ The people Israel may seem landless, but God has a plan for them all along: God takes strangers and makes them landowners.

Matthews and Benjamin, writing from an anthropological viewpoint, see things slightly differently. They see that everyone, including Jews, is an alien and a sojourner on God’s land. “Villagers also used hospitality to acknowledge their status on the land as guests of their divine patron. As hosts they did for others what their divine patron was doing for them. The Hebrews understand themselves as strangers, not landowners (Dt

⁶ Graham Davies, “The Theology of Exodus,” in *In Search of True Wisdom: Essays in Old Testament in Honour of Ronald E. Clements* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 140.

⁷ Norman C. Habel, *The Land is Mine: Six Biblical Land Ideologies* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), 41.

26:5-11; Ps 39:12). They did not own the land, Yahweh did (Lv 25:23). As the divine landowner, Yahweh fed and protected the Hebrews as guests (Ps 104; Is 26:6-8; Jl 3:18; Am 9:13-15).⁸ Habel suggests that God is the land-giver and the one who endows people with land in perpetuity. Matthews and Benjamin propose that YHWH is the ultimate owner of the land and that everyone, even the Jews, are sojourners. Either way, the proper attitude of the Jews is the same: gratitude. The Jews are to be grateful and live in welcome to all who pass their way because this is what God has done for them.

As people who had received the gift of the land from God, the Israelites had a special responsibility to those who did not have land and to the guests, the strangers and aliens, in their midst. Exodus 22:21, found in the revelation part of the Sinai Complex, contains the first word about aliens in the midst of the people of Israel. It reads, “Do not mistreat an alien or oppress him, for you were aliens in Egypt.” The books of the law remember that the people of Israel, God’s chosen people, have a history of life as stranger and immigrant.

Brueggemann writes, “Israel’s protective affirmation of the socially marginal is rooted in its exodus memory.”⁹ Israel cannot forget that it was once a people of strangers, a people of slaves, and this memory informs how it is supposed to treat others. The Exodus story (and its laws) looms large over Israel’s theological memory. The above commandment is supported by what Brueggemann terms “motivational commands.” “The first, concerning the sojourners, appeals to the exodus tradition. As

⁸ Victor H. Matthews and Don C. Benjamin, *Social World of Ancient Israel 1250-587 BCE* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993), 83.

⁹ Walter Brueggemann, “The Book of Exodus: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections,” in *The New Interpreters Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck et al, vol. I (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 867.

Israel was protected in its time of marginality, so it is to be the protector of the marginal (cf. Deut 10:19).”¹⁰

Leviticus 19:9-10 is found in a section (vv. 9-18) that discusses how Israel is to live around its neighbors and treat its neighbors. Leviticus 19:10 commands “Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien.” The commandment is to care for the poor and the alien; these people who have no land are to be remembered.

The functionally diverse church learns that the law – which was revealed by God and reflected on by the priests and scribes – has a powerful memory of the Exodus story. In this Exodus story, God lifts a people who are slaves and aliens out of their suffering and onto the road to the Promised Land. This memory continues to inform the faithful through laws that require special treatment for the strangers and the alien, along with the poor. The memory teaches that the land is not owned by individuals but by God, and the people are merely stewards of the land. The functionally diverse church understands that we have a special responsibility to the alien among us and works to follow God’s desire towards these people.

The Bible records bad treatment of strangers

We recognize that the bible also contains a sad history of treatment of foreigners, strangers, and the people who were not part of the Jewish people. The phrases “put to death” and “put to the sword” appear dozens of times. Generally, these phrases chronicle the armies of Israel slaughtering the people of a neighboring town, strangers in their

¹⁰ Ibid., 868.

midst and enemies of the Lord. We cannot ignore these texts, but we can seek to read them in their context, to understand the sentiment behind them, and to figure out their intention. In this section, I will look at I Samuel 15 where God commands the people of Israel to destroy Amalekites, and Ezra 10:11 where the priest commands the people of Israel to leave their foreign wives. These are two of many troublesome passages that advocate cruelty toward aliens and strangers. These passages, I believe, are representative of other passages. They are not, however, an expression of the larger and overarching sense that the bible has of God's feelings toward strangers and aliens.

I Samuel 15 records God, through the prophecy of Samuel, commanding the armies of Saul to destroy all of the Amalekites. In I Samuel 15:3, Samuel commands, "Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy everything that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys." Saul followed this command, but not completely. God then became angry because Saul was disobedient. Saul saved the good things, the best sheep, cattle and goods, and made them his own. Saul even spared the life of an Amalekite.

In coming to terms with this story, Campbell wrote, "We will not understand this story if we do not recognize that the ban [God's commandment to destroy everything] denied to a military campaign the major motivation for most military activity in the ancient world – plunder, the taking of captives, and spoil."¹¹ With this knowledge as a background, it becomes clear that the story is entirely about obedience to God. The story is not about the slaughter which, Campbell points out,

did not happen. In I Sam 15, Agag is the last living Amalekite and he dies at the end of the chapter. In I Sam 27, the Amalekites are about to be raided by David (27:8). In I Sam 30, the Amalekites raid David's camp

¹¹ Anthony F. Campbell, *I Samuel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003), 153.

and, when David wages a victorious battle against them, there are still four hundred young men from the camel corps who escape (30:1-17).¹²

Why did God command a slaughter, and why was God upset that Saul did not follow God's will to the letter? Birch claims that

both the Amalekites and *he 'rem* are secondary interests in this episode. Instead, the primary issue is obedience to the direct command of the Lord. No question is raised by the text (though it is by some commentators) about the appropriateness of a campaign against the Amalekites or the morality of utter extermination of enemies (*he 'rem*).¹³

Again, God's concern is not the slaughter, but about faithfulness. God's concern lies entirely in whether or not Saul will be faithful to God's direction.

Birch continues by explaining the concept of *he 'rem*.

The Hebrew verb *he 'rem*, also translated 'to exterminate,' 'to place under the ban' is used in connection with warfare for the practice of dedicating to God all of a conquered enemy and their possessions by killing and burning. The practice is associated with holy war, in which the battle has a sacral purpose and God is often said to fight as a warrior for Israel (Josh 6:17; 10-11). Deuteronomic law (Deut 13:12-18; 20:1-20) provides prescripts for such practices. . . . Although associated with the concept of holy war, the practice seems infrequently applied, and recent scholarship has stressed that the notions and institutions of holy war itself do not seem standardized or uniformly applied at different times and in different places in Israel's story.¹⁴

Following Birch, it seems the *he 'rem* is not the important part; rather, the important part of the story is Samuel's faithfulness.

Instead of reading this as a story of faithfulness, Polzin reads the main theme of I Samuel 15 as that of repentance. "The word *repentance* wonderfully captures the central concerns of this chapter. . . . What happens when God repents, when humans repent?

¹² Ibid., 153.

¹³ Bruce C. Birch, "The First and Second Books of Samuel: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections," in *The New Interpreters Bible*, ed. Leander E. et al Keck, vol. II (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 1085.

¹⁴ Ibid., 1087.

And what is the exact relationship between divine and human repentance?”¹⁵ Polzin claims that, although Saul repented and followed God’s direction, God did not repent (that is, change heart and direction) and allow Saul to continue as king, in spite of Samuel’s urging. While interesting, this opinion is not a majority opinion and does not seem like the central issue in the text.

Various commentators agree that the central issue is Saul’s faithfulness to God’s command. Klein wrote, “Samuel’s response in vv 22-23 is couched in Hebrew poetry (was it once preserved independently of the narrative?). The opening question in v 22a specifies the accusation: what Yahweh wanted was obedience to his voice, not burnt offerings and communion sacrifices.”¹⁶ Again and again, the point of the passage is obedience. The story tells of Saul’s unfaithfulness.

Given that David had to fight the Amalekites in following chapters in I and II Samuel, and that *he ’rem* is not a clear or consistently applied concept, I believe that the point of the story is faithfulness. If faithfulness, not God-ordered murder, is the point of this story, then the lesson we are to learn is the lesson of faith to God’s command. While we can learn that God is serious about calling the church to diversity and that we need to be faithful to this call, the lesson of faithfulness to God’s commands is tangential to the treatment of strangers in our midst. I read this story from I Samuel not as a story of mistreating strangers and neighbors, but about faithfully following God. As such, we cannot draw conclusions about God’s desired treatment of strangers and others from this passage. We do, however, draw clear conclusions about God’s desire for obedience to God’s command.

¹⁵ Robert Polzin, *Samuel and the Deuteronomist: A Literary Study of the Deuteronomistic History* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), 140.

¹⁶ Ralph W. Klein, *Word Biblical Commentary: I Samuel* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), 153.

In the book of Ezra, we hear Ezra, the chief priest, commanding the people to leave their foreign wives. The marriage to foreign women was apparently a sign of faithlessness to God. Ezra 10:11b reads, “Separate yourselves from the people around you and your foreign wives.” Ezra was concerned that the people of Israel were being unfaithful to God by associating with foreigners and taking foreign wives (and husbands?).

By taking foreign wives and interacting with foreigners, some Jews believed that they were weakening their community. We know that the community of Jews returning from captivity in Babylon was relatively small and considered itself to be a remnant. The remnant saw itself as “a small community that has been delivered and that is the down payment on a greater future to come.”¹⁷ Diluting their community would make it difficult to maintain purity and be great in the future. We also know that “marriages to foreigners are prohibited in the Torah because they could lead to the worship of the gods of the foreign women (Deut 7:4).”¹⁸ When people marry foreigners, they risk picking up the foreign ways. In the same vein, Kidner wrote that Ezra and Nehemiah’s “task was to preserve the identity of Israel as ‘the holy seed’ (Ezra 9:2), and its loyalty to the Lord as something entire and absolute, not to be swamped and diluted by the culture that encircled them.”¹⁹

Ezra was concerned about this diluting of the Jewish people; it is not clear how concerned the people of Israel were about the problem. Following the command to divorce the foreign wives, the book of Ezra records a list of people who followed the

¹⁷ Ralph W. Klein, “The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections,” in *The Interpreters Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck et al., vol. III (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999), 736.

¹⁸ Ibid., 733.

¹⁹ Derek Kidner, *Ezra and Nehemiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 22.

command. After studying family names and the numbers of people who were reported in chapter 2 of Ezra, Klein concludes that “the percentages [of people who divorced and sent away children] range from 0.28 to 13.4!” and “if the list of those who divorced their wives in chapter 10 is more or less complete, the problem involved slightly more than half of 1 percent of the people.”²⁰ Myers suggests that this may not have been the whole list of those who gave up their wives. “Some scholars (e.g. Schneider) see a schematic arrangement in the list of laymen corresponding to the Chronicler’s favorite theme of twelve, which could indicate the presence in the list of only representative names, pointing to the extension of guilt through the whole community . . . The list includes, for the most part, members of the upper classes. The absence of temple slaves and Solomon’s servants seems to support that conclusion . . . The writer was not attempting to minimize the seriousness of the intermarriage problem; as a matter of fact, he clearly shows how widespread it really was by implicating so many prominent families.”²¹

In the face of Klein’s conclusion of such limited divorce, he reflects, “It is important to note that post-exilic Jews did not always have such a hostile attitude to outsiders. Ezra 1-6 lacks the theme entirely, and all those who had separated themselves from the uncleannesses of the nations were allowed to participate in the Passover.”²² This conclusion is exactly the opposite of Myer’s conclusion.

Miller and Hayes note that we simply do not know how things came out with Ezra’s reforms, including the mass divorce decree. “Unfortunately, nothing is known about the final outcome of Ezra’s work and his effort to force the divorce of foreign

²⁰ Klein, “The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections,” 745.

²¹ Jacob M. Myers, *Ezra-Nehemiah: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1965), 87-88.

²² Klein, “The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections,” 747.

women and thus purify the ‘holy race.’ . . . All appearances suggest that Ezra’s work was aborted and never carried to completion. Had he been successful, this would surely have been reported.”²³ In short, we just do not know what happened to all the foreign wives. Scholars seem to say that either a few people or lots of people divorced their wives. The academic community does not speak with one voice. We cannot say whether or not the people of Israel completed this cold and rather heartless act of mass divorce.

We do see signs of welcome in the book of Ezra. Kidner wrote, “The Passover that marked the completion of the Temple, we are told, ‘was eaten by the people who returned from exile, and also by everyone who had joined them and separated himself from the pollutions of the peoples of the land to worship the Lord, the God of Israel.’”²⁴ Converts, it seemed, were welcome at the Seder table. These foreign wives (along with all the Canaanites and foreigners living around the Jews) were welcome if they were willing to forsake their pagan ways and convert to Judaism.

In conclusion, we cannot deny that Ezra did command the faithful to separate themselves from their foreign wives. We cannot, however, know whether or not this command was followed and if the people of Israel divorced their spouses. On the other hand, these foreigners in the midst of the faithful were not a problem in the earlier chapters of Ezra. The Passover described in chapter 6 is open to foreigners who are willing to convert.

Perhaps it is best if we read the story of Ezra, with its confused divorce outcome but its obvious invitation of strangers and aliens to the Passover feast, as a call to convert the strangers and aliens in our midst. Perhaps this is an invitation to evangelization. It is

²³ J. Maxwell Miller and John H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1986), 474.

²⁴ Kidner, *Ezra and Nehemiah: An Introduction and Commentary*, 22.

consistent with the biblical witness to hear God call God's people to convert the nations but, if they refuse to convert, to abandon them. Jesus himself tells his followers to "shake the dust off your feet" (Luke 9:5) should people refuse to extend a welcome.

After this brief look at two stories of mistreatment of strangers and others, I maintain that this poor treatment of foreigners and strangers is a minority opinion within the bible. While God does, occasionally, command his people to treat others with callousness (and sometimes murder), God generally commands God's people to care for strangers. Robert Morris makes this very point when he writes, "The scriptures go so far as to command this: 'you shall love the stranger' (Dt 10:19)."²⁵ Loving the stranger is consistent with God's character.

Jesus' concern for the stranger

The God we meet through Jesus Christ is profoundly partial to the lost, the stranger, and the alien. Jesus' own story is the story of an immigrant. The bible tells the story of the unborn Jesus' travels to Bethlehem, and then the young Jesus' travels to Egypt to escape the wicked king Herod. Jesus lived as an immigrant. This image came from author Ray Bakke, a pastor who serves urban settings. "As our cities swell with immigrants and migrants, I'm reminded that Jesus was born in a borrowed barn in Asia and became an African refugee in Egypt. So the Christmas story is about an international

²⁵ Robert C. Morris, "Fear or Fascination? God's Call in a Multicultural World," *Weavings*, XVIII, 6 (September/ October 2003): 17.

migrant.”²⁶ Jesus’ concern for the stranger and the foreigner began at his birth and continues throughout his whole ministry.

Jerome Neyrey argues that Jesus’ ministry is one of turning the world upside down by redefining who is in and who is out. “In the eyes of some, then, Christians appeared to urge a revolution against the traditional values and structures of the Israelite faith. Christians would argue that they were not revolting against the system but only reforming it.”²⁷ Neyrey continued by explaining that there were clear lines in Jewish society, and these were lines of purity. Some people, days, body parts, and places were clean while others were unclean. Jesus’ ministry was one of crossing the boundaries into impure places. Put another way, Jesus’ ministry was one of redefining the categories of strangers and immigrants. He redefined who was a stranger, who was an immigrant, and who was an insider in God’s great plan.

Neyrey focuses on Luke-Acts and in this work he finds Jesus working as the physician for sinners, bringing health and healing to people who were outside of the purity lines – the strangers. Jesus brought health and healing and made all clean. Some examples are as follows: “1. The dead were raised up (Luke 7:11-17; 8:54-55). 2. Lepers were ‘made clean’ (Luke 5:13). 3. Menstruants were healed (Luke 8:44). 4. The blind were made to see (Luke 7:21).”²⁸ Similar to the new definition of who was sick and who healthy, Jesus redrew the map of clean and unclean people, the ones inside of Israel and the ones outside, the Jews and the Gentiles. “To the Jew, the only people on the map were God’s holy people, who had been ‘set apart.’ . . . but the new true map of God’s

²⁶ Raymond J. Bakke, *A Theology as Big as the City* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 29.

²⁷ Jerome H. Neyrey, “The Symbolic Universe of Luke-Acts: ‘They Turn the World Upside Down,’” in *The Social World of Luke-Acts*, ed. Jerome H. Neyrey (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc, 1991), 272.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 292.

chosen people was not restricted to Israelites living in Judea and speaking Aramaic, but included peoples from all countries (see Acts 10:44-48; 15:8-9).”²⁹ This crossing of boundaries includes the non-Jews and the strangers to God in God’s saving activity. God, working through Jesus, loves the stranger and works to change the lines of definition.

Jesus’ interaction with the Canaanite woman as recorded by Matthew is an example of this boundary crossing and concern for the stranger and foreigner. The story starts at Matthew 15:21 and takes place when Jesus was on a journey outside of Israel. In the region of “Tyre and Sidon,” surrounded entirely by strangers, Jesus met a woman who asked him to heal her daughter. Echoing Neyrey’s claim that Jesus maintained his own purity, Boring notes Jesus did not enter the woman’s house. “Jesus does not enter a house . . . to conform to Matthew’s rule that Jesus never enters a Gentile house.”³⁰ At first, Jesus refused her request (or, according to Boring, “ignores her”³¹) telling her that, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel” (verse 24) and “it is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to their dogs” (verse 26). Eventually, the woman’s faith won Jesus over and he granted her request by healing her daughter. Jesus initially focused on the Jews, but his concern extended far beyond the Jewish community. Boring writes that Matthew has several overarching themes including, “God has plan for salvation history in which salvation is offered first to the Jews (during Jesus’ ministry, 10:6; 15:24) then broadened to include all nations after Easter (28:16-20).”³²

²⁹ Ibid., 93.

³⁰ M. Eugene Boring, “The Gospel of Matthew: Introduction Commentary and Reflection,” in *The New Interpreters Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck et al., vol. VIII (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 336.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., 337.

One could see in this story that Jesus intended to ignore the woman, thus suggesting that perhaps Jesus was not particularly interested in strangers and aliens, but rather in the salvation and well-being of Jews. Hare notes, “Some find this passage distressing, because it seems to present Jesus as responding in an uncompassionate way to the cry for help of a Gentile woman. His initial response is simply to ignore her.”³³ Yet Hare argues that the point of the story is faith. “Jesus was no ordinary physician dispensing wonder drugs to any who would pay him; a relationship of faith was essential. It is only because of the woman’s faith that Jesus heals her daughter.”³⁴ Similar to the story in 1 Samuel, God’s concern is for faithfulness (and, in 1 Samuel, obedience) above all other things. This takes some of the sting out of Jesus’ first move, which was to ignore the woman. He was waiting for her to demonstrate her faith before he gave her the blessing she desired.

Albright and Mann consider this story to be further conversation in the church on the relationship between the Jew and Gentile, the clean and unclean, the known and the stranger. Their reflection on the passage reads, “Sayings such as those in Matthew 10:5-6 would demand explanation when non-Jews began pressing into the Messianic Community.”³⁵ Albright and Mann suggest that the reason for maintaining this story in the gospel is to explain that God’s grace is extended after the Jews have received it, and when the one seeking God’s grace is found faithful. This assertion – that God cares for the stranger and the alien after his chosen people are cared for – is also one that can find voice in the scriptures. I find this assertion rather disturbing for the church, especially the

³³ Douglas R. A. Hare, *Matthew* (Louisville, TN: John Knox Press, 1993), 176.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 178.

³⁵ W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, *Matthew: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1971), 188.

church I envision, for it suggests that the people in the church need to be cared for before outsiders. The problem with this interpretation is that it ignores that the whole church is filled with outsiders and gentiles; Christian churches rarely have Jews. I suggest that it would be wrong to read that church-people deserve God's care before the strangers and aliens in our midst because all of us are outsiders. There is no two-tiered approach for God's grace; God is reaching to everyone, those in the church and those not.

Another example of Jesus' concern for the stranger is found in Matthew 25 when he explained how the sheep and goats were to be separated. The sheep, those loved by God, will one day be separated from the goats, the ones who let God down. The sheep are known by their deeds, and one of the deeds is to welcome the stranger. In verse 35 Jesus said, "for I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in."

There are several opinions in the scholarly community about the identity of "the least of these," the ones which were shown the kindness that received the reward of sheep-hood or eternal life. Jacob writes, "Some opt for 'Christians' and some for the narrower 'Christian missionaries.' Others say the reference is to the 'underprivileged' or people in need generally."³⁶ In other words, does caring for just anyone in need bring God's blessing, or is the blessing reserved for the people who care for Christians? This question is reminiscent of the lawyer's question to Jesus in the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10), "Who is my neighbor?" Boring concludes that all Christians are responsible for caring for those in need. "The needy brother or sister is not restricted to Christians or missionaries, for *adelphoi* is dropped in Matthew 25:45 and is used

³⁶ Emmanuel M. Jacob, "Discipleship and Mission: A Perspective on the Gospel of Matthew," *International Review of Mission* 91, no. 360 (January 2002): 104.

elsewhere in Matthew of any person whose need calls for response (Matthew 5:22-24, 47; Matthew 7:3-5).”³⁷

Jacob hears in the passage that Jesus identifies with the little ones by claiming that Jesus, himself, is one of the little ones. This is a more radical interpretation than Boring’s read of the story. Boring concludes that Christians are responsible for caring for those in need. Jacob argues that, “Jesus is to be identified with ‘the least of these,’ and more importantly the identification of Jesus with human beings in need.”³⁸ Hare takes the same conclusion: “Matthew intends ‘brothers’ in 25:40 to be taken in a much broader sense than is usual in his Gospel: the poor and the distressed, whoever they may be, should be regarded as Jesus’ brothers and sisters.”³⁹ Hare insists these brothers and sisters are in fact representatives of Jesus, whether they are pagan or Jewish; all persons who are powerless and needy are Jesus’ brothers and sisters, his representatives.

Everyone, pagan and faithful, has a responsibility to the needy and a responsibility to welcome the stranger. Yet this is not a particularly Christian understanding. Hare notes, “There is nothing specifically Christian about the passage so interpreted.”⁴⁰ The interesting thing here is that Jesus seems to recognize that both Christians and pagans have a set of minimum standards, and this includes care for the needy and welcome to the stranger. Hare suggests that this gives some hope to inter-religious dialogue. He wrote, “The passage offers encouragement to Christians who participate in dialogue with members of non-Christian faiths.”⁴¹ The starting point we all have is that we are all called to care for the needy and to welcome the stranger. This,

³⁷ Boring, “The Gospel of Matthew: Introduction, Commentary and Reflection,” 337.

³⁸ Jacob, “Discipleship and Mission: A Perspective on the Gospel of Matthew,” 104.

³⁹ Hare, *Matthew*, 290.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 288.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 291.

however, is not the end of the church of the church's outreach and not the end of our responsibility to God.

In his reflection on this passage Jacob wrote, "The question, 'who is Jesus Christ?' receives the answer: 'He is the God incarnate, the power of God in the world.' In Matthew 25:31-46, the answer is given that Jesus Christ is to be found in the poor and the needy."⁴² Jacob claims that Jesus' answer means that "we are called to challenge people to live with mutual respect, and to enter into a constructive and healthy relationship in a culturally diverse world" and that "we are called to challenge one another to learn to live creatively with difference and to work constructively together to build harmonious communities."⁴³ The diverse church, especially the functionally diverse church, takes this challenge and runs with it.

Conclusions

The bible has a strong and clear witness toward treatment of strangers. While the bible records mistreatment of aliens and strangers, along with the conquest of people deemed unrighteous, the story of Abraham, the law, and the teachings of Jesus command care for strangers. The biblical witness is one of loving the other, as hard as this may be to do. We can add to the stories discussed above the story of Ruth, a sojourner who became the great-grandmother of Jesus, the story of Sodom and Gomorrah which tells of God's condemnation for the mistreatment of strangers (among other things), or the story of the Good Samaritan which is a story of a stranger who offered special kindness. Even

⁴² Jacob, "Discipleship and Mission: A Perspective on the Gospel of Matthew," 105.

⁴³ Ibid., 106.

without these stories, the biblical witness is clear: love those who are unlike you and who are strangers in your midst.

A diverse church is a church that welcomes a variety of people into its pews. A functionally diverse church is one that goes out of its way, a church that works double-hard at bringing the strangers and aliens into its pews. The functionally diverse church welcomes everyone and is built on a foundation that is faithful to God's call because this is the bible's mandate. Along with the mandate comes the blessing and the promise that God will make these strangers and aliens into the cornerstone of the kingdom.

A functionally diverse church is one that takes Jacob's challenge of entering into mutual respect, entering into a constructive and healthy relationship in a culturally diverse world, deeply to heart and builds creative responses to the Gospel call. The following chapters will further consider the shape of the creative response to this call. This chapter saw why church is called to be diverse; later chapters will explore how this diversity might happen and what it might look like.

CHAPTER 3

THE THEOLOGY OF MARGINALITY: A THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION IN SUPPORT OF THE FUNCTIONALLY DIVERSE CHURCH

Thus far I have explored the biblical witness that calls for diversity in the church. We heard that God has a particular concern for the stranger and the immigrant. A functionally diverse church is built on God's particular concern for the stranger and the immigrant by seeking these very people out. This section explores the idea of the diverse church through the lens of theology. The particular theological reflection that we will explore is that of Jung Young Lee. He is, in my exploration, the only one writing about diversity with a theological perspective.

In my research on diversity, I encountered Jung Young Lee's "Theology of Marginality" in his book, *Marginality: The Key to Multicultural Theology*. In this book, Lee argues for a theology that looks to the margins of society for inspiration and hope. The USA is a place where there are many margins, many marginalized people, and many "hyphenated" people (this is explained in detail following). Lee sets out a theology that claims these hyphenated, marginalized people, along with the margins of society, as holy people and holy spaces. In the following paragraphs, we will explore the theology of marginality, encounter reviews of Lee's work, and explore the implications for the ministry of the functionally diverse church.

Before we plunge into Lee's work, I need to answer the question of "why this?" Why have I chosen Lee's theological reflection over others? There are two reasons. First, Lee is important because he writes as a person who has lived the marginal life.

Because of this, Lee speaks in a genuine way about how it feels to live as an outsider, and he does theological reflection from this perspective. Second, while the church's great writers have a word or two about diversity, there is little systematic theology on the topic of diversity. Lee's approach is unique in that he approaches diversity from a theological framework in a systematic and complete way. I have not been able to find anyone else looking at or writing about diversity in this way.¹

The Theology of Marginality as Envisioned by Lee

Jung Young Lee's book, *Marginality: The Key to Multicultural Theology*, is a profound piece written from an Asian-American perspective. Listening deeply to the experience of the Asian-American community (which is long and sad), Lee discovers that the view from the margin of society offers unique power. He also maintains that the margin is exactly where Jesus – and other leaders in the Bible – lived.

Early on in the book Lee explained what it was like to be a marginal person. The marginal person is not always on the margins of society (not necessarily poor, for example) but is a person in two groups within society simultaneously. The marginal person straddles the margin, straddles the line, between one group and another. They are hyphenated people; they are African-Americans or Mexican-Americans. "I am situated ambivalently between two worlds – America and Asia – and I absorb the repulsions and

¹ This claim speaks directly to works about the theology of marginality and theology from the perspective of the marginalized. There are numerous works that urge the church to listen to forgotten voices (see J. Rieger, *God and the Excluded: visions and blind spots in contemporary theology*, Fortress Press: 2001) but this calls the church to listen to feminist theologians, womanist theologians, mujerista theology, liberation theology and the like. Similarly, there are numerous works that suggest how to organize multiethnic and multicultural churches (see G. Yancey, *One Body, One Spirit: principles of successful multiracial churches*, Intervarsity Press: 2003) but they are more practical "how-to" works and not a theology of marginality. Lee's theology from the perspective of marginality is unique.

attractions or the rejection and acceptance of each. The marginal person has to live in these two worlds, which are not only different but often antagonistic to each other.”² In other words, Lee’s experience is that he does not belong wholly to either place and lives in the margins.

In his book, Lee spent some time exploring the idea of “in-between” (where “marginality is defined by two or multiple dominant groups”³) and “in-both” (where “two or multiple worlds are defined by marginality”⁴), eventually discarding both definitions. He settled on a new definition of his social location known as “in-beyond (the “holistic definition of marginality”⁵). The person who is in-beyond is authentically in both worlds, in between both worlds (living on the margin) and able to give to both worlds without losing anything. The in-beyond person is in their two worlds and beyond the definition of any particular world. The in-beyond person is authentically part of his or her situation yet still beyond that social location, not defined or limited by the situation at hand.

Throughout the book Lee uses an image of a dandelion. The dandelion is an image of what in-beyond looks like. The dandelion is seen as a weed and a nuisance to gardeners. Lee likes the flower, however, because it brings brightness and color to its environment, is edible, and grows with vigor. The in-beyond person is like a dandelion. She or he is fully below the dirt as roots, fully above the dirt as the greenery, and beyond both dirt and air as a force that beautifies and brightens the whole yard.

Lee explains it this way,

² Jung Young Lee, *Marginality: The Key to Multicultural Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 43.

³ Ibid., 57.

⁴ Ibid., 57.

⁵ Ibid., 60.

Explaining the paradox of coexistence of in-between and in-both will help us understand the meaning of 'in-beyond.' In-between, as I said, focuses on the negative characteristics of marginality, while in-both stresses the positive characteristics of it. In an exclusive way of thinking, the negative characteristics must be eliminated or nullified through the positive characteristics so that marginality is overcome.⁶

Jesus-Christ (hyphenated, similar to Asian-American, Hispanic-American, or African-American because he straddled the border between Jesus, a human, and Christ, the son of God) is, in Lee's understanding, the ultimate marginal person. "Jesus Christ was a new marginal person *par excellence*."⁷ As the ultimate marginal person, Jesus shifts the center, changes the priorities, and re-creates the world. The in-beyond person, the marginal person who gives to both groups while not allowing him to be fully defined by either group, is a change agent.

Consider Jesus' marginality: "He was a stranger to his own people. . . a friend of marginalized people: outcasts, tax collectors, Gentiles, women, the poor, the oppressed. . . , rejected by his own Father . . . homeless . . . he was human and divine."⁸ Not only was Jesus marginal, but many of the leaders of the Christian movement were equally marginal. They lived on the edge of their social class, ethnicity and religion. In fact, Lee claims marginality in many of the Bible's leaders, including Moses (born Hebrew, raised Egyptian, lived as a Midianite) and Paul (the Roman citizen who was also a Jew).

From the margin, led by the in-beyond people, Lee claims that new understandings arise. The new understandings come from the creative core. The creative core is the person (Jesus-Christ) who stands on the margin between all things, bringing

⁶ Ibid., 61.

⁷ Ibid., 71.

⁸ Ibid.

new life. “The creative core is where the Son, Spirit, and Father are present.”⁹ The creative core is not at the center of society, not in the place we expect it. If one locates a creative core at the center of society, that creative core is false. It becomes manipulative or a tool of those who want to manipulate. Consider, for example, the creativity wielded by marketers. They use a creative core, a creative power, to convince society to believe or buy things that the larger body would never choose on their own. The marketers’ creative core is, at its heart, manipulative and coercive. Or consider the creative core that is found within the defense industry. The defense industry harnesses creativity – the work of engineers, graphic designers, and the like – to create better ways to kill people. Both the marketers and the defense industry are at the center of our society. They are both respectable professions filled with well-paid, respected people.

True creativity, on the other hand, comes from the margin. It comes from the margin of the margin, where one can see beyond old beliefs, established paradigms and traditional thinking. In general, creative art and new thinking comes from those on the outside. Similarly, true salvation comes from the outside, from the margin. One can achieve all of society’s goods and still be unsatisfied. Christian belief stands on the idea that neither things nor fame make a person truly happy, nor do they last for eternity. Christians are warned not to build big barns or to count on the things of this world. These – goods and fame – are the blessing of the false core, not the blessing found at the margins. Salvation comes from Jesus-Christ, the creative core and the most marginalized of all.

Lee believes that, while most people intuitively know that society’s center of creativity is an illusion, people continue to reach for the false center. Instead, they should

⁹ Ibid., 97.

be listening for the center that seeks them. “The creative core, which is the new center, seeks the people, while the false center is sought by them. That is why the creative core or the new center cannot be found by people who seek it. Jesus illustrated ‘those who try to make their life secure will lose it, but those who lose their life will keep it.’”¹⁰ Jesus-Christ seeks us; Jesus-Christ calls his disciples and followers to himself. First Corinthians 1:9 reminds us, “God, who called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.”

The truth that Christians cling to is that as long as one seeks the false center, they will be disappointed. Again in I Corinthians we read, “For the foolishness of God is wiser than man’s wisdom, and the weakness of God is wiser than man’s strength” (1 Corinthians 1:25). The creative center that is created by society and maintained by marketers and the powerful is illusory and foolish. When we begin to listen to the call of the one who seeks him or her, the call of the core of creativity, then we find salvation. When we are ready to give up all wealth (like the parable of the Rich Ruler in Luke 18:18), ready to forgive those who wrong us “seventy-seven times” (Matthew 18:22), ready to cut off their right hand because it causes you to sin (Matthew 5:31), ready to hate mother and father and “even his own life” (Luke 14:26), we find new life. This understanding lies at the heart of Christian belief.

Reviews positive

The reviews of Lee’s theology of marginality were uniformly positive. The reviewers – both in the United States and outside of the USA – thought that Jung’s

¹⁰ Ibid .

theological reflections were helpful and generally original. Ji, a theology professor at Chinese University in Hong Kong wrote, “He presents his theology of marginalization which is substantially different from the traditional theology of the dominant group and even significantly different from Liberation Theology.”¹¹ Diener, a professor of the theology at York College in York, PA wrote, “The writer's method and terminology are truly his own, and his vision of a genuine and authentic pluralism, which seeks harmony rather than unity, and which allows people to appreciate both themselves and others, is a vision needed in our multicultural society.”¹²

It is significant that Lee’s peers found his writings helpful and original. That they are helpful proves that they add something to the theological conversation around the issue of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is a reality around the world, not just in the USA. Lee added something to the discussion on how to live with a multicultural society in his writing.

Beyond the usefulness of Lee’s work, reviewers noted that Lee was original. In my research, I did not find anyone writing about diversity or multiculturalism in the same way. I found numerous works on pluralism in the church and works that gave practical suggestions on leading a church that is diverse.¹³ I did not, however, encounter theology done with a background in and a profound understanding of diversity. Lee is unique in his outlook and adds a great deal to the conversation.

While Lee is unique, he is within the spectrum of theological discussion, especially around the conversation between Christ and the culture. The terms that Lee

¹¹ Won Yong Ji, “Review of ‘Marginality: The Key to Multicultural Theology’,” *Missiology* 25, no. 2 (April 1997): 222.

¹² Paul W. Diener, “Book Reviews,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 33, no. 4 (1/Sept 1996): 1.

¹³ See books by Foster, Jones and Bakke in the bibliography.

uses are reminiscent of Richard Niebuhr's definition of the relationship of Jesus to the larger culture. While Lee uses three categories and Niebuhr five, both seek to explain how the follower of Jesus might relate to the larger culture and society.

Niebuhr used the categories of "Christ against culture" (in which one "affirms the sole authority of Christ over the Christian and resolutely rejects the culture's claims to loyalty."¹⁴), "Christ of culture" ("the great work of Christ may be conceived as the training of men in their present social existence for the better life to come; often he is regarded as the great educator, sometimes as the great philosopher or reformer."¹⁵), "Christ above culture" (in which Christ "is the fulfillment of true cultural aspirations and the restorer of the institutions of true society"¹⁶), "Christ the transformer of culture" (those who follow this tradition "evidently belong to the great central tradition of the church"¹⁷ and feel compelled to change the culture to respond to Christ's call) and "Christ and culture in paradox." While Lee's categories are much simpler, both ask how a person can live in the world and follow Jesus simultaneously. Furthermore, this issue of Christ and the culture's relationship is one that has been discussed extensively in the twentieth century.

Lee takes the discussion in an entirely new way by looking at it through the lens of marginalization. In Lee's "in-beyond" category, I hear Lee advocating something similar to Niebuhr's "Christ the transformer of culture." The in-beyond person is fully a part of the culture but connected to the creative core and moving the culture on to something better. The "in-both" category gives echoes of Niebuhr's "Christ above

¹⁴ H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1951), 45.

¹⁵ Ibid., 84.

¹⁶ Ibid., 44.

¹⁷ Ibid., 190.

culture” category where the person attempts to be in both worlds but ends up floating above them, reaching for Jesus. Lee is going in a different direction, but he is asking a similar question to Niebuhr: how do we live in a culture and strive toward Christ simultaneously?

Implications for the Functionally Diverse Church

The theology of marginality provides an innovative theological framework for living in the world. The framework provides, I believe, the way of seeing the world and thinking about church. This is the functionally diverse church as I imagine it: a place that works hard to include and goes out of its way to empower. In the next paragraphs, we will explore how the functionally diverse church lives out the theology of marginality. There are two significant ways that this is done: 1) through the recognition that all are marginalized and 2) by looking to the margins for creativity.

The first lesson one learns from the theology of marginality is that Christians are hyphenated people. This is to say we are Christian-Americans, Christian-Oregonians, Christian-husbands, Christians-wives, Christian-engineers, Christian-garbage-people, and the like. Christianity (and religion in general), I believe, is a profoundly marginalizing experience. Almost all religions marginalize people in a secular society. By following a religion, people are choosing not to fully participate in the larger society. They are choosing to reorient their time and energy towards the religion. Christianity is like other religions in that it marginalizes its followers. This is especially significant in the North American context, a context that is often anti-religious.

How, in particular, are Christians marginalized? Christianity marginalizes its participants by calling on Christians to give their entire allegiance to Jesus. In the early church, Christians had to decide whether they would burn a pinch of incense for Caesar. This decision has again become a part of the Christian experience. Today, Christians are not called to burn a pinch of incense for Caesar but instead to participate in the culture's consumerism and to follow the crowd. Christians are called to decide whether or not they will give all of their income to credit card companies, to finance companies selling new cars, and to unending commitments to cell phone companies rather than committing part of their income to Jesus Christ. Christians are called to decide whether to look to the scriptures for inspiration or to the variety of new age, quasi-Eastern, self-help books that fill the shelves of the bookstores.

Next we enter the debate of how much Christians are marginalized. For decades now, there has been debate about whether or not Christians are actually marginalized from the dominant Western culture and, if so, how much? Richard Niebuhr wrote, "Ernst Troeltsch believes that Christianity and Western culture are so inextricably intertwined that a Christian can say little about his faith to members of other civilizations."¹⁸ For several generations, Western Christians have pondered whether or not their faith is distinct from Western culture. It may be, at this point, that Western (specifically the culture of the USA) is synonymous with Christianity. Niebuhr continued, "Troeltsch himself, however, is highly aware of the tension between Christ and Western culture, so that even for the Westerner Jesus Christ is never a member of his cultural society."¹⁹ I see the signs pointing towards a divergence between the Christian faith and the mass

¹⁸ Ibid., 30.

¹⁹ Ibid., 31.

culture of the USA. I see this acutely in my own church setting. I serve a church in a town that is about two-thirds Mormon; these people practice a faith that has a set of beliefs radically different from traditional Christianity. I agree with Niebuhr that Jesus Christ is not a member of the culture of Oregon and Idaho and that, in the early twenty-first century, the culture of the USA is no longer intertwined (if, indeed, it ever was) with Christianity.

Following the Christian faith is marginalizing even when the President of the USA claims to be an evangelical Christian and when the religious right is one of the strongest political forces in the country. This is because there is a distinction to draw between faith and actions of the faith's followers. Christians may vote in a block and churches may take political stands. The political decisions have little to do with the day-to-day decisions of Christians. The marginalizing decisions are questions of the heart, not questions of the head. Christians are marginalized as they take time to pray, take time to share the sacraments, take time to worship, take time to read their bibles. These decisions to give up part of oneself, not to follow the crowd but instead to reach for God, these are the marginalizing decisions. It is not the political decisions that marginalize, but the personal decisions.

Christianity, then, is not a mass culture experience but is, instead, a marginalizing experience. Christians encounter personal choices that push them out of the mainstream and to the edges of society every day. Christians are forced to decide whether or not they will purchase clothing made by children in third world countries. They are forced to decide whether or not they will support entertainment that cheapens the human process of love. They are called to choose how to spend their Sundays – in worship or hiking in the

nearby National Forest. Do Christians spend time reading their Bibles or spend time reading the countless catalogs that come to the mailbox? Christians know what it is like to live on the margins because their commitment to Jesus Christ marginalizes.

The functionally diverse church realizes that everyone is marginalized by living a Christian life. This shapes our worship and life together. Christians have made choices and are making choices that marginalize them. The functionally diverse church is deliberately counter-cultural and deliberately makes hard and marginalizing choices. It goes out of its way to encourage lives of prayer, of small groups, and of worship in its members. The functionally diverse church is a group of people that is not like their neighbors. They are the dandelions in the yard of society; they embrace difference and stick out.

Growing out of its own experience of marginality, the functionally diverse church stands shoulder-to-shoulder with the people who are marginalized by their race, their ethnicity or their language. The church chooses to be like the people who fill its pews. The Mexican or the Korean opens his or her mouth and people can immediately tell that this person is not native, not local, not from around here. The functionally diverse church stands up as a Christian community in a non-Christian world and is clearly different, clearly not part of the society. The functionally diverse church chooses to be marginal, just like the people in it.

Second, the functionally diverse church looks to the margins for its energy and its structure. The functionally diverse church acknowledges that real creativity comes from the creative core that is Jesus-Christ. In acknowledging this, the functionally diverse church is focused on Jesus. Jesus is the core of the church and the reason for being.

Other United Methodist communities, and other churches, may not understand this as their reason for being and have other foci. The functionally diverse church is focused on Jesus.

One of the tools that the functionally diverse church uses to celebrate and acknowledge their focus on Jesus is to look to other marginalized people for leadership and creativity. The functionally diverse church looks to people who are on the edges of the community for leadership. Not only does the functionally diverse church listen to the people who have led the community for years, and not only does the functionally diverse church search out the smartest and the best-regarded thinkers on a subject, the functionally diverse church asks the immigrants, the strangers, and the disenfranchised for their insights. The “functional” part of functional diversity is that each part of the church is invited into the leadership and the conversation. To pick up Lee’s image of the dandelion again, the functionally diverse church acknowledges the dandelions in the yard (along with the morning glory, crab grass, and thistles) and invites these foreign plants into the conversation.

The insights that the whole body brings shape the functionally diverse church’s structure and its ministry. The Mexicans in the church may lead the church to celebrate Christmas with “Las Posadas,” the Russians with “Orthodox Easter,” and the Tongans with lua aus. The ministry may extend past traditional food kitchens to adopting neighbors, or it may find entirely new ways to feed the needy. The Administrative Council or the Trustees may be replaced with community elders or three wise women. There is no right way to do church and no pre-imagined plan.

Instead, the structure and ministry flow out of the creativity of the church, a creativity that is connected to Jesus. In the functionally diverse church, the entire body looks to the edges, to the places where our church is growing, to people who live in two worlds, and to the people who have a unique perspective to find new ideas. The functional part of functional diversity is a constant stretch out to include all voices in the conversation. There is no patronizing, no glossing over the differences, no ignoring the margins; instead, there is a real outreach to the voices on the margins to the place of creativity. This creativity may lead the church into dangerous places, into places that may not be the most efficient, but they will echo the desire of the Holy Spirit. The functionally diverse church hears God's voice and senses the movement of the Holy Spirit by listening to the people on the edges. This brings to mind Paul's words in I Corinthians 1:23-25.

But we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength

Conclusions

Lee's theology of marginality is a unique and fresh way to understand the work of God in the world through the lens of marginality and with a profound understanding of diversity. He demonstrates that Jesus-Christ is the marginal person *par excellence* and that true creativity flows from Jesus. The concept of in-beyond (in both communities but beyond strict categorization or definition) points the church to a way to live in the world.

I maintain that the functionally diverse church implements Lee's theological understandings. The functionally diverse church knows that it is marginalized and lives a

life of marginalization, similar to the lives of the immigrants and strangers who are part of the church. In addition to this, the functionally diverse church looks to the margins, to the people who are not at the center of the church's leadership and structures, for the shape and direction of the whole church's ministry.

CHAPTER 4

TRADITION: WHAT THE FUNCTIONALLY DIVERSE CHURCH LEARNS FROM THE EGYPTIANS

In the past chapters, I have shown biblical and theological arguments for the functionally diverse church. I have shown a God that is concerned with strangers and aliens. The functionally diverse church responds to this call by intentionally seeking out the strangers and the aliens. I have shown a theology that calls the church to look to these strangers and aliens for creativity and direction. In this next chapter, I will explore a time in history when the church did live in diversity. Following the Wesleyan quadrilateral formula, I will look to the church's history and traditions for wisdom and understanding.

In the following pages, we will explore the condition of Egypt and the Egyptian church, meet two early monks (St. Anthony and St. Pachomius), explore the Pachomian community, consider the circumstances of Nag Hammadi library, and then apply the lessons of the Egyptians to the functionally diverse church. The main focus of this chapter is the Pachomian monastic communities. These unique communities were communities of diversity, and they maintained this diversity by carefully ordering the lives of their monks. From these Pachomian communities, the functionally diverse community learns two lessons. First, these Egyptian monks teach that a reasonable response to societal change is the considered formation of unique communities. Second, we learn that a key to strong community, regardless of the diversity of the community, is a focus on community rather than theology.

Before we explore the time of these Egyptian monks, I will confess that the majority of Christian history tells the sad story of exclusion and exclusivity. One is hard-pressed to find a time when Christian communities welcomed each other in the ways I believe the bible calls the church to welcome. The time of these Egyptian monks is an exception to the rule. In a time when the larger church was enforcing sameness and orthodoxy, these monks were able to maintain diversity (it was certainly a diversity of backgrounds and social status; it is unclear that the monks were particularly ethnically diverse) and produce a variety of theological works. These monks lived a life of unity in diversity, a life of functional diversity.

Egyptian change, up to about 400 C.E.

Life in Egypt was in the process of profound change when Christianity first arrived in Egypt. The old system was a mixture of Greek culture (brought by the Ptolemy dynasty) and traditional Egyptian culture (which has thousands of years of history). This mixture of Greek and Egyptian, although it had been mixing for hundreds of years, seems only to have been skin-deep. Bell's analysis, while dated, paints a vivid picture of this mixture of Egyptian and Greek.

Wherever the Greeks went they settled in city communities. These formed little centers of Hellenic culture, but since the Greeks stayed mainly within the city boundaries the influence of this culture on the surrounding country was at best limited. . . . As we study the Greek papyri of the Ptolemaic and Roman periods, with their many-sided interests, we are rather tempted to think of Egypt as a Greek-speaking country and to ignore the native culture, revealed to us through the Demotic legal documents, occasional Demotic tax-receipts or dockets on Greek ones, and some fragments of a Demotic popular literature. But all the time, underground as it were and

little regarded, the native Egyptian life continued, secretly hostile to Hellenism and cherishing its national pride.¹

This complicated mix of Egyptian and Greek was further complicated with the Roman conquest. The story of Anthony and Cleopatra (familiar to many and the subject of one of Shakespeare's plays) was another chapter of the long saga of Roman interference in the affairs of Egypt. Roman money, Roman forces, and Roman influence played significant roles in the nearly continual civil war and internecine fighting of the Ptolemy Dynasty, almost from its beginning. Close to the turn of the millennium, Octavian (also known as Augustus) made Egypt a Roman state and in doing so, stripped Egypt of much local control. This brought a permanent Roman flavor to Egypt, but probably added to the culture in ways similar to the Greek mixture that Bell explained above: yet another veneer.

This change did, however, upset ancient traditions of relationships and methods of production that had existed for generations. Previous to Egypt's integration into the Roman Empire, there was virtually no private property in Egypt. "The Ptolemies had followed the ancient Pharaonic system whereby the state had been personified in and identified with the king. Egypt's territory was his private property."² Everyone and everything worked for the king; there was no private property. "All land technically belonged to the Crown but for practical purposes it was carefully divided into two categories: *basilike ge*, 'royal land' . . . and *ge in aphesei*, remitted land. . . . However, whatever the land title, agricultural activity was meticulously controlled by central

¹ H. Idris Bell, *Egypt: From Alexander the Great to the Arab Conquest* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1948), 113.

² Henry A. Green, "The Socio-Economic Background of Christianity in Egypt," in *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity*, ed. Birger A. Pearson and James E. Goehring (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1986), 102.

government down to the smallest detail with the simple aim of maximizing the return to the royal treasury.”³

The Roman system, however, stressed the importance of private property. The Emperor gave away vast tracts of land to reward soldiers, politicians and his favorites for their service. At the same time, wealthy urban Romans purchased large holdings in the country. Before Roman statehood, there was no private property. Suddenly (after statehood), there were Romans and absentee landowners controlling huge swaths of private land in the provinces.

In addition to this, the Roman Empire expected Egypt to feed Rome, and this caused hardship in Egypt. “Rome was an absentee landlord, and a large part of the corn delivered as rent by the royal tenants or as tax by landowners, as well as the numerous money-taxes, was sent to Rome, for the benefit of the Roman people.”⁴ The drain of food and money, all sent to Rome for Roman benefit, strained Egypt. While Egypt was a wealthy place and its lands productive, the constant drain of resources and foodstuff to Rome brought real difficulties to Egypt. In a land of plenty, people experienced hunger and poverty.

As one might imagine, this strain along with the change from public to private property caused great social upheaval. In general, it was the Romans that received and purchased the newly privatized property. This solidified the Roman control just as it disenfranchised people of Egyptian and Semitic backgrounds. The “changes in Roman fiscal policy and administration accompanied the economic transformation [and] altered

³ Alan B. Lloyd, “The Ptolemaic Period (332-30 BC),” in *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, ed. Ian Shaw (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2000), 411.

⁴ H. Idris Bell, *Egypt: From Alexander the Great to the Arab Conquest* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1948), 76.

the economic and social possibilities of the non-Roman elite.”⁵ The peasants lived similarly to the way they had lived for generations, but the middle class and the non-Roman elites lost their status and purchasing power. The Egyptian and Semitic middle class lost their place in society over several generations.

There was yet another change working in Egypt that needs to be identified: the tax system. Taxes in Egypt were closely connected to the property that one lived on. Taxes were assessed on the produce of one’s land and the value of the goods that were generated by one’s property. If one’s tax debt grew beyond a manageable level, or if someone simply got tired of paying taxes, one would abandon one’s land. By the third and fourth centuries, taxes had risen to a point where many people were simply unable or unwilling to pay. Goehring notes, “Individual flight to avoid taxes and service was common throughout the history of Roman Egypt, and, on occasion, it accounted for a sizable loss in a village’s population.”⁶ Yet again, we see social upheaval which affected many, many people. Not only were the people who left their lands affected, but the neighbors who had barren land next to them were changed, as were the people who had to cope with newcomers in their midst, along with cities that took in an influx of migrants. Everyone in Egypt was affected.

The introduction of Christianity to Egypt

It was against this background of change (and eroding status for many) that Christianity was introduced and grew. Non-Roman people and families that first

⁵ Green, “The Socio-Economic Background of Christianity in Egypt,” 109.

⁶ James E. Goehring, “Withdrawing from the Desert: Pachomius and the Development of Village Monasticism in Upper Egypt,” *Harvard Theological Review* 89 (July 1996): 276.

encountered Christianity could easily remember better times. They could easily remember that they were once treated with greater respect and had greater opportunity than they did presently. They could remember grandparents and parents that lived better and had access to more goods and opportunity than was available to later generations. They could remember when they lived on and tilled their own land. Into this matrix of change and chaos, a new religion came. This new religion – Christianity -- offered salvation from a messy and disappointing world. It told them to “store up your treasures in heaven” (Matthew 6:20) and not worry about the world in which they lived.

How many people were there in Egypt, and how many became Christians? These are hard questions to answer. The overall population of Egypt is difficult to ascertain, even though there were regular censuses. Griggs writes, “If Josephus’ estimate of the total Egyptian population is credible (7,500,000, exclusive of Alexandria), the Jewish Egyptians then comprised approximately an eighth of the entire provincial population.”⁷ Unfortunately, “estimates of the population of Roman Egypt are fraught with difficulty, not least because the two principal historical sources contradict one another. . . . Calculations by modern scholars give a total population of 4.75 million, of which 1.75 million lived in the towns.”⁸

Among this population there were many Jews, and from the Jewish community came a number of the first converts. Green asserts that, “in the first century CE, ten to fifteen percent of the Egyptian population was Jewish.”⁹ With a number as large as 10 to 15 percent, the majority of the population would have had some passing knowledge of

⁷ C. Wilfred Griggs, *Early Egyptian Christianity from Its Origins to 451 C.E.* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 14.

⁸ David Peacock, “The Roman Period (30 BC-AD 311),” in *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, ed. Ian Shaw (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2000), 444.

⁹ Green, “The Socio-Economic Background of Christianity in Egypt,” 110.

Jewish thought. The regular “man on the street” may not have been able to name the number of mitzvot (Jewish laws), but he or she certainly would have known that the Jews followed a special set of laws. This hypothetical “regular guy” may not have known the Jewish prophecies or scriptures that hoped for a Messiah, but he or she would have been aware that Jews were expecting God to send some sort of saving figure.

When one takes the familiarity with Judaism, adds to this the social dislocation and change of the first and second centuries, we see clearly fertile ground for the growth of a new religion, especially one with roots in Judaism. Furthermore, beyond Judaism there were many, many cults and religions existing side-by-side in Egypt. Many writers describe Egypt awash with cults, religions, and practices. Peacock notes, “with so many cults in existence, one more could be accepted and absorbed.”¹⁰ It is not surprising that Christianity grew quickly.

The time and manner that Christianity arrived in Egypt remains a mystery. There is an ecclesiastical tradition that the apostle Mark brought Christianity to Egypt, but there is little historical proof that this is the case. Bauer claims, “Certainly there were Christians in Egypt in the middle and at the beginning of the second century.”¹¹ But, “with the exception of Apollos, an Alexandrian Jew who was an associate of Paul’s. . . Alexandrian Christians are unknown in the first century.”¹² There is, however, “general consensus that Christianity had to be taken to Egypt by approximately 50 C.E., and most commentators accept that interpretation.”¹³ Or, as Bauer argues, Christianity “must

¹⁰ Peacock, “The Roman Period (30 BC-AD 311),” 441.

¹¹ Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, 1964, trans. a team from the Philadelphia Seminar on Christian Origins, ed. Robert A. Kraft and Gerhard Cordell, second German edition (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1971), 48.

¹² Green, “The Socio-Economic Background of Christianity in Egypt,” 110.

¹³ C. Wilfred Griggs, *Early Egyptian Christianity from Its Origins to 451 C.E.* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 17.

therefore have originated prior to 180”¹⁴ and “thus in Egypt at the beginning of the second century – how long before that we cannot say – there were gentile Christians alongside Jewish Christians, with both movements resting on syncretistic-gnostic foundations.”¹⁵ The syncretistic-gnostic nature will be discussed further below.

Regardless of the date of its arrival, Christianity grew quickly upon arrival in Egypt. It was, of course, illegal when it was first introduced, just as in the rest of the Roman Empire. “Eusebius refers to a group of Christians (almost certainly quarry-workers) who had their eyes gouged out and their hamstrings cut before being deported to Palestine – presumably for trying to proselytize the garrison.”¹⁶ Yet in Egypt, there seems to be greater tolerance than in some other parts of the Empire. “Even Christianity was generally tolerated, as a number of inscriptions attest.”¹⁷ This tolerance allowed for quick growth. Within a hundred years or so, Christianity was a dominant religion in Egypt. The exact number (as noted above) is hard to ascertain.

Another of the things that attracted people to Christianity was its ability to touch a nationalist sentiment. There was a lively nationalist movement comprised of native Egyptians (and some other Semitic people) who did not care for the Greco-Roman society in which they lived. This nationalist sentiment was reflected in the growth of Coptic and its use in the church. Demotic, the traditional language of Egypt was notoriously difficult to write and to read. “But in the third century the practice began of using the Greek alphabet, with the addition of six characters taken from Demotic, for

¹⁴ Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, 49.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹⁶ Peacock, “The Roman Period (30 BC-AD 311),” 432.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Egyptian texts.”¹⁸ This new language, known as Coptic, began to grow among bible scholars and people of faith. By the fourth century, the bible was translated into Coptic and “thus an abundant Coptic literature, Biblical, theological and liturgical, but very rarely secular, grew up; and for the first time since the third century B.C. the very soul of Egypt found unfettered expression.”¹⁹ Christianity, then, appealed to the masses that experienced the dissonance of a changing society and to the masses who wanted to find a uniquely Egyptian expression of faith and self.

It was Christianity, finally, that made the deepest change in Egypt. “Major cultural change took root in the third century AD, when Christianity gained widespread acceptance, as it did throughout the empire generally.”²⁰ There were seeds of cultural change sowed by the change of empire, the cultural changes, the changes in property ownership and the like, but Christianity brought the final and deepest change to Egypt. Finally, Egyptians had their own native religion and language; finally, Egyptians had a faith that offered hope to a dismal world. Christianity changed Egypt profoundly, as it arrived at a time when the tide of change was rolling.

A move to one Christian understanding

We know that Christianity, once it arrived in Egypt, took on a variety of forms. This is to say that Christianity was not monolithic in its expression or its beliefs. Around the empire, nearly from the very beginning (certainly by the second Christian century),

¹⁸ H. Idris Bell, *Egypt: From Alexander the Great to the Arab Conquest* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1948), 113.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ David Peacock, “The Roman Period (30 BC-AD 311),” in *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, ed. Ian Shaw (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2000), 445.

there were a variety of sects and understandings of Christianity. There were Gnostics, Stoic Christians, and people who understood Christianity in a distinctly Jewish way. Indeed, “orthodox” Christianity as such may have been a minority form in Egyptian Christianity. Christendom’s “personal representatives of whom we hear are the Gnostics – Basilides, with his Isidore, Carpocrates and Valentinus, with various of his disciples, Theodotus and Julius Cassianus – the overwhelming majority of whom demonstrably come from the land of the Nile.”²¹

In the early days of Christianity, there seemed to have been little problem with a variety of interpretations of the Christian message. There were many leaders of the church that railed against people who held wrong beliefs. At the same time, there was a large variety of Christian understandings living side-by-side and in little conflict, other than academic. This variety of Christian understandings seems to have coexisted peacefully until the third century. “A radical bifurcation of Christianity into orthodoxy and heresy cannot be shown to have existed in Egypt during the first two centuries.”²²

To return to the quote from Bauer above, these neighbors, while both Christians, saw the world very differently. Their experience and understanding of Jesus and of Christianity were colored by their Jewish heritage or their pagan heritage. Their faith was syncretistic in that it added faith in Jesus to the beliefs that these people already had. In fact, the various Christians living next door to one another may not have even shared the same Gospel. “Each group,” wrote Bauer, “congregated around a distinctive gospel .

²¹ Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, 48.

²² Griggs, *Early Egyptian Christianity from Its Origins to 451 C.E.*, 45.

. . these people, whose primary religious books were differentiated as the *Gospel of the Egyptians* and that of the *Hebrews*, called themselves simply ‘Christian’.”²³

Things began to change around 300 C.E. First, Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity and brought the Roman Empire with him. With Constantine’s change, there was an increasing pressure throughout the Roman Empire to harmonize and regularize belief. This pressure was echoed in Egypt, where the bishop of Alexandria began to assert control over the churches of Egypt, similar to Constantine’s assertion of control over the church throughout the Empire. Griggs writes,

to the middle of the third century, therefore, one notes at least in Alexandria a developing awareness of doctrinal unity and ecclesiastical authority . . . The undifferentiated Christianity of the first two centuries was being officially, if not completely, replaced by the more severe Christianity which existed in Rome and her allies and satellites.²⁴

Slowly but surely, all Christians were encouraged (and later forced) to share one common Christian understanding.

Of course, not all Christians chose to align their belief with that of the Christian leadership in Constantinople. Martin Palmer gives a helpful image to explain the shape of early Christianity. “Beginning in the fourth century, Church historians and teachers presented a view of the early Church as a single ship plowing its way steadily through the tempestuous seas of the pagan world . . . Perhaps a better analogy would be to see the early Church as a series of small boats, setting off from different places, using different designs, but all under the sail of the personality and teachings of Jesus.”²⁵ Eventually many of these early churches went their own way, defined their own beliefs, and sailed

²³ Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, 52.

²⁴ Griggs, *Early Egyptian Christianity from Its Origins to 451 C.E.*, 70.

²⁵ Martin Palmer, *The Jesus Sutras: Rediscovering the Lost Scrolls of Taoist Christianity* (New York, NY: Ballantine Wellspring, 2001), 89.

off the map. The Coptic (or Egyptian) Church is one of these, eventually going its own way, but in this time period it seems to be in the main stream of Christian thought; it certainly produced many leading orthodox or catholic writers and thinkers.

As Christianity worked to define what it meant to be orthodox and heterodox, there were contentious arguments. Indeed, even the categories of “orthodox” and “heresy” are flexible and unclear. Bauer wrote, “Certain manifestations of Christian life that the authors of the church renounce as ‘heresies’ originally had not been such at all, but, at least here and there, were the only form of the new religion – that is, for those regions they were simply ‘Christianity.’”²⁶ While it is difficult to define heresy and orthodoxy through the lens of history, Bauer explains the traditional view of heretics as:

True Christians blinded by [Satan] abandon the pure doctrine. This development takes place in the following sequence: unbelief, right belief, wrong belief. There is scarcely the faintest notion anywhere that unbelief might be changed directly into what the church calls false belief. No, where there is heresy, orthodoxy must have preceded. For example, Origen puts it like this: ‘All heretics at first are believers; then later they swerve from the rule of faith.’²⁷

Rather than dividing people into camps of orthodox and heresy, it may be more helpful to understand who saw themselves as Christians. For his book *The First Christian Centuries*, Paul McKechnie sets forth the following definition: “The definition of ‘the Christian movement in the widest sense’ will be that a Christian is someone of whom there is a reason to believe that he/she regarded Jesus as Messiah or Savior, or in some comparably strong role within a religious system with Jewish derivation or connections.”²⁸ These definitions present a helpful picture of people living their lives,

²⁶ Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, xxii.

²⁷ Ibid., xxiii.

²⁸ Paul McKechnie, *The First Christian Centuries: Perspectives on the Early Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 14.

believing that they are Christians, while in the next village or perhaps next door, others were also living their lives and believing themselves Christians, yet the two neighbors had little theology in common. I can then imagine, as some outsider came in and declared certain people to be enemies of God because of their belief, that some people would feel great anger and hurt. I can imagine how disagreements arose and why they were painful.

Generally, the disagreements were expressed in letters from one group to another and then circulated throughout the Roman Empire. “The heresiologists believe that those against whom their volleys were fired were at best Christians gone astray and usually worse, that the heretics were not Christians but men who had simply paraded under the banner of Christ while continuing in paganism.”²⁹ Following Bauer above, one can understand how the tension could run high: these Christians gone astray could also lead others astray and lead whole communities to fall from the true faith. The consequences were enormous. The letters often turned to confrontations which frequently turned violent. Complicating matters was that bishops had the power of the Roman Army on their side and could enforce their will (and their theology) throughout their episcopal see.

One such Egyptian disagreement was over how one dealt with people whose faith had slipped during a certain persecution. Following Bauer’s understanding, these people were dangerous; they had been led astray by Satan and could lead their neighbors and churches into similar sin. In the “Meletian” schism, Peter, the bishop of Alexandria, and Melitius, the bishop of Lycopolis violently disagreed. In 303 there was a persecution by the Emperor Diocletian and many Christians lapsed, meaning they sacrificed to pagan gods or disavowed their belief to save their lives. “Peter favored a more lenient process

²⁹ Griggs, *Early Egyptian Christianity from Its Origins to 451 C.E.*, 45.

for admitting those who had sacrificed to pagan gods, but Melitius held a more rigid position for harsher requirements.”³⁰ The two camps – the catholics and the Meletians – remained at odds for years, jockeying for control over churches and monasteries. Priests and church leadership had to regularly escape to a place outside of the episcopal see to save their own lives.

Going out to the Desert

The third and fourth centuries were filled with conflict for the people of the Roman Empire, and especially the people of Egypt. There were wars and rumors of wars, persecutions, and great theological disagreements. There were social and economic dislocations. Overnight, the Empire changed from officially pagan to officially Christian. Suddenly, bishops were government employees. Suddenly, the Roman army was able to enforce theological agreement. The world, in the eyes of many, especially faithful Christians, was corrupt and messy.

These changes and the ensuing chaos inspired a large number of people out of society and into monasteries, although there was no one factor that pushed people out to the monasteries. “Early monasticism has been said to have arisen as a quest for knowledge (gnosis); a flight from taxes; a refuge from the law; a new form of martyrdom; revival of an earlier Jewish ascetical movement; a rejection of classical culture; an expression of Manichean dualism; a response to a call from the Gospels.

³⁰ Ibid., 117.

These are only *some* of the explanations which have been proposed over the years.”³¹

Obviously, people went to the desert, to the monastery, for a number of reasons, and each was a personal decision.

Regardless of the pull that finally brought these faithful Christians to the desert, they shared a feeling that was, notes Roberta Bondi, “especially aware of the seriousness of the demand of Jesus that we be perfect as his father in heaven is perfect. In a new way the conviction grew among many women and men that while it is not theoretically impossible to be a Christian and live an ordinary life in the world, surely only the exceptional person could make a go of it.”³² If it really was possible to live in the world and be a Christian, then there had to be another option, one outside of the ways of the messy and corrupt world.

The monastic life was a response to a messy world and to the Gospel’s call. It was a unique community, formed quite intentionally. The first monks went out to live as Anthony (discussed below) lived and to stop living as the world lived. They consciously rejected the lives they were living and sought to live differently. In a similar way, the later monks who joined the Pachomian communities (discussed below) chose to live differently from their neighbors. The Pachomian communities were more ordered and structured than the community that gathered around Anthony, but similar in that they were intentional communities and a response to the world around them.

³¹ Douglas Burton-Christie, *The Word in the Desert: Scripture and the Quest for Holiness in Early Christian Monasticism* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1993), 4.

³² Roberta C. Bondi, *To Love as God Loves* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1987), 14.

St. Anthony and St. Pachomius, the first monks

“Out of this conviction Anthony, the man who was credited with being the founder of monasticism in antiquity, took up his new life.”³³ Anthony’s new life began with giving up all he had (in about 269 CE) and seeking out teachers to instruct him on the path to holiness. He tried to be a solitary holy man, but soon he attracted followers and people who wanted to learn from him. Athanasius, the great theologian and bishop of Alexandria, wrote Anthony’s biography. He tells of a man who lived a simple life, was filled with wisdom, and was generous to all. Central to the telling of Anthony’s life are the scriptures; Anthony prays and recites the scriptures constantly. This praying and reciting the scriptures constantly became a practice repeated by monks through the centuries. Also central to Anthony’s story was a struggle against demons. Much of the *Life of Anthony* is filled with stories of struggles with demons; in all of the struggles, Anthony wins. Also, Anthony is remembered as a person who was gracious to all.

According to Athanasius, Anthony’s biographer, Anthony had a faith that was profoundly correct. “Anthony was wonderful in his belief, being devoutly orthodox. He never had fellowship with the Melitians, knowing their wickedness and their apostasy, nor with the Manicheans, except to teach them to change and become worshipers of God . . . in the same way he hated the Arians, instructing everyone not to go near them for any reason.”³⁴ Furthermore, Anthony’s fights with demons were often against demons that had attempted to throw off his correct belief. “And they [demons] are ever ready to

³³ Ibid., 14.

³⁴ Saint Athanasius, Patriarch of Alexandria, “Life of Anthony,” trans. Tim Vivian, *Coptic Church Review* 15 (Spring-Summer 1994): 47.

change shape. Frequently, they pretend to chant the psalms and they give readings from the scriptures. And again, when we are reading, they recite what we are reading.”³⁵

Throughout Anthony’s biography, one reads of a profound concern for community. Many of Anthony’s own words (in quotes that one reads in the *Life of Anthony*) are words of concern for his community and directives of how Christians are to live with one another. This was a concern because people set up camp around him and religious communities formed (rather haphazardly) so that people could be like him. Christians of Egypt of all social backgrounds held Anthony in high regard and flocked out to learn what they could from him. They saw his lifestyle and quest for God as a powerful testimony. Anthony pointed people in a direction in which they were hungry to go. He pointed people away from the corrupt and messy world (with its equally corrupt, contentious, and messy church) to a life of purity, of Godliness. This life was found in the lifestyle people lived, and in the communities in which they lived.

Soon after Anthony came another great monk, Pachomius. Whereas Anthony’s community gathered in a haphazard way around him and his teachings, Pachomius’ community was highly structured and ordered; newcomers joined into the structure. “[Pachomius] founded the first real religious communities in Tabennesis, far up the Nile from where Anthony was located. These were highly organized with a complex social structure.”³⁶ Several communities were organized, and then a number of other communities previously organized under other leadership choose to ally to Pachomius’ movement and live in Pachomius’ way. One of the most famous of the Pachomian communities was that which was located at Pbow. It will be discussed below.

³⁵ Ibid., 22.

³⁶ Bondi, *To Love as God Loves*, 16.

Pachomius also had his biography written. The biography of Pachomius was subsequently translated, discussed and circulated throughout the church and around the Empire. As it was translated (the biography was written in Coptic but quickly translated into Greek and subsequently into Latin and a number of Slavic languages) and adapted, it seems to have been interpreted to meet the different circumstances of the monasteries in which it was read. Because of this, multiple versions (with a variety of textual changes) exist. What does come clear, through all of the translations and interpretation, are rules for and concern about the community. The Pachomian order – and Pachomius himself -- seems most concerned about how people are to treat one another.

One illustration of this concern is the story of a fig tree. “Once on a visit to Thmousons, Pachomius observed a large fig tree in the middle of the monastery which was the cause of temptation to the young monks. He ordered the gardener to cut it down.”³⁷ Pachomius was concerned that the fig tree would cause people to sin. The gardener might sin with pride because it was such a fine tree. The brothers in the monastery might sin as they coveted the fruit. This tree, which seemed so innocent, was a green and leafy source of temptation. Pachomius wanted this community to live in harmony, and the price to purchase this harmony was a fig tree. The biography of Pachomius tells stories like this over and over again. All the stories have the same moral teaching at their heart: Pachomius was concerned that the monks would care for each other correctly and avoid sin.

These two monks, and the lifestyles they founded, were in direct opposition to the age in which they lived. Instead of a meddling Emperor, a bishop engaged in theological

³⁷ Rodolph Yanney, “Saint Pachomius, Father of the Koinonia,” *Coptic Church Review* 5 (Spring 1984): 18.

debate and politics, wars and rumors of wars, we see have leaders who are most concerned about the health and well-being of their communities. These holy men offered people another way. This other way was a concern that everyone is treated fairly, that those with needs receive care, that Christ is honored, and that the teachings of scripture are followed carefully.

The Pachomian communities

Above, in the discussion of Pachomius, we learned that Pachomius was most concerned with the treatment and relationships within his monastic communities. In the next several paragraphs, we will further explore these monasteries. As we explore Pachomius, let us be clear about Pachomius' organization: it was fully controlled by one man, Pachomius. This was not a democracy. As we think of Pachomius, I would suggest that the functionally diverse church can be organized in a number of ways, including democracy and dictatorship.

“Between AD 323 and 345 Saint Pachomius built nine monasteries for men and two for women in Upper Egypt. . . During his life they were inhabited by three thousand monks, and when Palladius wrote the *Lousiac History* (AD 420), the number reached seven thousand.”³⁸ Thus, these Pachomian communities were relatively numerous and full of people. Each community had hundreds of monks all living under the same roof. These people came from all over Egypt (and even from other parts of the Roman Empire). They came for a variety of reasons, but upon arrival, they agreed to live in the same way.

³⁸ Ibid., 42.

Each monk agreed to live according to the direction of the “father” of the monastery. This father was ultimately responsible to Pachomius himself (the father of the entire system of monasteries), who ordered all aspects of the community and was the creative energy of the movement. “Pachomius succeeded in creating a *koinonia* of the Spirit sharing the common prayers, meals, and labor, while its members were bound together by obedience to a father, which was understood as a way of obeying the heavenly father.”³⁹ The labor included things like agriculture and the weaving of mats for sale to nearby communities.

Let us consider several instances from the monks’ daily lives. The buildings in which the monks lived were simple. “The monks built with bricks made from mud and dried in the sun, and what was necessary to existence determined everything about the work. This restriction to essentials is a fundamental aspect of the life of the monks of Egypt. There is no mystique here of bare and simple buildings, but a necessary poverty dictated by the materials and time available.”⁴⁰ In a similar way, the food was simple. Additionally, food and fasting were often used as paths to piety. Fasting was a practice much used by the Egyptian monks. The *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* records, “Abba Joseph asked Abba Poemen, ‘How should one fast?’ Abba Poemen said to him, ‘For my part, I think it better that one should eat every day, but only a little, so as not to be satisfied.’”⁴¹ As were the buildings and food regulated, so was sleep. “The monks regulated and controlled the need for sleep . . . Some of the monks of Apollo at Bawit stayed awake all night . . . the attitude is positive; the monks are not refusing to sleep but

³⁹ Yanney, “Monastic Settlements in Fourth-Century Egypt,” 43.

⁴⁰ Norman Russell and Benedicta Ward, *The Lives of the Desert Fathers* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1980), 22.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 23.

‘keeping watch.’”⁴² We see, over and over again, a controlled, regulated life that worked to build strong community.

There were, however, two aspects of the communal life that were not strictly ordered. From the viewpoint of the 21st century (and among writers who have commented on the Pachomian movement since its inception), these two items were critical. Yet for Pachomius, they did not seem so important. The aspects of life that Pachomius did not clearly order were theology and worship. Worship practices and theological expressions seem to have been left open to a variety of practices.

The monks did worship with one another. They prayed together, generally chanting the Psalms. Yet this worship and prayer was not the same as most popular images of the monastic life portray. Usually, when one thinks of the monastic life, we imagine medieval monks such as the monks in the stories told by Umberto Eco in *The Name of the Rose*. Those monks gathered at certain times during the day for set worship, with specific rituals and orders of worship at specific times of the day. These Egyptian monks, however, did not seem to fix their lives in this way. “The impression given in other sources is that few of the monks of Egypt were priests and the daily celebration of the Eucharist was not central to their way of life.”⁴³ Instead, it was the ordered life and the shared spiritual practices (of fasting, sleeplessness, and prayer, for example) that bound the monks together. It was their obedience to the spiritual father that bound them. Worship, especially the sharing of Eucharist, was not the binding tie and as such, was not clearly ordered and decreed by Pachomius.

Theology was also not strictly ordered or decreed by Pachomius.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., 24.

It is doubtful that the Copt Pachomius felt the same need for systematic theology. Henry Chadwick has observed that ‘it is not inherently probable that Pachomius was interested in the niceties of orthodox doctrine or a theological system . . . ; it is reasonable to think the early Pachomian tradition largely indifferent where dogma is concerned, content to make use of a diversity of gifts so long as they all encourage renunciation of the world.’⁴⁴

It was noted above that there was no “radical bifurcation” of orthodoxy and heresy, and there were variety of Christian understandings in the early Egyptian Christian movement. Pachomius allowed this openness to various Christian understandings. Later writers attempted to overlay clear boundaries and definitions of orthodoxy and heresy onto the Pachomian movement. These definitions, however, were not present in Pachomius’ day, nor even in the second generation of leadership. They came much later.

It would be overstating the case to say that Pachomius had no interest in the theologies of his communities. But it was not his most pressing concern. “While it is conceivable that Pachomius may have exercised discrimination with regard to the theology of individual novices admitted to his monasteries, there is no indication that he tested the orthodoxy of the monks in those originally independent monasteries admitted to his system, or excluded certain of them as unacceptable.”⁴⁵ Living together in community was the most pressing concern. Theology was the second concern.

Nag Hammadi

⁴⁴ James E. Goehring, “New Frontiers in Pachomian Studies,” in *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity*, ed. Birger A. Pearson and James E. Goehring (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1986), 246.

⁴⁵ Charles W. Hedrick, “Gnostic proclivities in the Greek *Life of Pachomius* and the *Sitz im Leben* of the Nag Hammadi Library” (English), *Novum Testamentum* (Leiden, The Netherlands) XXII, no. fasc. 1 (January 1980): 81.

A good case study of this flexibility with theological boundaries and openness to a variety of theologies is found in the collection of materials from Nag Hammadi. In December of 1945, a set of manuscripts was discovered by a youth in a jar near Nag Hammadi. "The site of the discovery, it turned out, lay in the near desert at the point of a triangle, the remaining two points of which were formed by the central Pachomian monastery of Pbow (some 8 kilometers distant) and its affiliated community of Seneset (some 6 kilometers distant). The [Pachomian] federation's original monastery of Tabennese was also located nearby."⁴⁶ Nag Hammadi is in Upper Egypt, on the Nile River, near the city of Chenoboskion which is located northwest of Luxor. The texts were written in Coptic and date from between 306 and 350 CE.

The documents in this collection are quite varied. Some are "orthodox," meaning they agree with catholic theology. The majority of the others are Gnostic Christian (although how Gnostic and what kind of Gnostic are open questions), meaning they understand Christianity as an apocalyptic mystery religion, with a grand mystery revealed only to those who are faithful, and salvation coming at an end time (again, only to the faithful). The Gnostic writings are the most famous of the collection but certainly not the only ones. "The works of mythological gnosis which come into question for being Sethian are only a minority among the writings in the collection. The others include some other Valentinian and Hermetic tractates [and] a considerable number of Christian writings which deny classification in terms of the heresies, Gnostic or otherwise,

⁴⁶ Goehring, James E. "The Provenance of the Nag Hammadi Codices Once More." *Studia Patristica*, International Conference on Patristic Studies, 13 (1999): 34-38, 234

described by heresiologists . . . [none of these] fit comfortably into orthodox categories.”⁴⁷

Gnosticism seems to have emerged about the same time that Christianity emerged and appears to have both Christian and non-Christian strands. “Gnostic writing allegedly contained revelations from primordial times that were hidden until the appearance of the elect in the last days.”⁴⁸ In its Christian form, Gnosticism’s revelations generally came from the risen Lord Jesus. In its non-Christian form, Gnosticism’s revelations generally came from particular teachers who started schools of thought (i.e. Valentinus or Basilides).

Gnosticism spread quickly through the Empire, transmitted by the same conditions that encouraged the growth of Christianity. Gnosticism existed in Egypt and North Africa, just as it existed throughout the Empire. And it was against Gnosticism (among other things) that the first and second century leaders of the nascent catholic church struggled. There were, it seems, a number of Gnostic Christians in the Egyptian Christian movement.

It seems clear that the documents from Nag Hammadi come from the nearby Pachomian communities, and there is plenty of evidence that points in this direction. First, the Nag Hammadi documents are found in close proximity to three of the most important Pachomian monasteries. Next, “John Barns discovered among the papyrus pages used as cartonnage filling for the bindings of the codices were letters and receipts from the Pachomian monasteries in the area of Nag Hammadi. This made it very

⁴⁷ Frederik Wisse, “Gnosticism and Monasticism in Egypt,” *Gnosis* 1 (1978): 432.

⁴⁸ Perkins, PHEME *Gnosticism and the New Testament*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1993, 9

probable that the codices were produced by Pachomian monks.”⁴⁹ With these two pieces of evidence and mountains of research into the provenience, style, and items found with the documents, scholars agree with Goehring’s 1999 publication that claims these are Pachomian texts.⁵⁰

If these Nag Hammadi texts are Pachomian, which means the Pachomian monks were involved in the writing and saving of these texts, the next obvious question is: Was the Pachomian movement orthodox or hereseical? Or rather, did the Pachomian movement subscribe to Alexandrian (that is to say, catholic) or some other type of theology? Goehring writes, “It is doubtful that Pachomius defined ‘orthodoxy’ so carefully. His emphasis was on orthodox practice and not orthodox theology.”⁵¹ Goehring also writes, “Any division between Pachomian and Melitian monasticism is in fact a by-product of the tendency, ancient and modern, to define early Christian movements in terms of theological issues rather than organization and lifestyle.”⁵²

Lessons for the functionally diverse church

I believe there are two lessons that the functionally diverse church can learn from the Egyptian monks. First, these monks responded to the changes in their society by forming unique communities. This is a powerful model for the church of the early twenty-first century which lives, too, in a changing society. I propose that the twenty-

⁴⁹ Frederik Wisse, “Gnosticism and Monasticism in Egypt,” *Gnosis* 1 (1978): 433.

⁵⁰ see Goehring, James E. “The Provenance of the Nag Hammadi Codices One More.” *Studia Patristica*, International Conference on Patristic Studies, 13 (1999): 34-38

⁵¹ James E. Goehring, *Ascetics, Society, and the Desert: Studies in Early Egyptian Monasticism* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 160.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 188.

first century church respond to the change of our society by forming unique communities; I propose the twenty-first century church (specifically my Northwest United Methodist circles) form functionally diverse communities. Second, these monks were successful because they focused on community and praxis over the differences that may have divided them. Again, this is a model from which the church of the early twenty-first century can learn much. I submit that the success of the twenty-first century church (specifically the northwestern United Methodist Church) depends on a focus on community and practice.

As we explore this first lesson – that monks responded to the changes in their society by forming unique communities – let us consider some of the changes in North American society. The North American landscape has changed physically, technologically, and socially over the last several hundred years. The physical changes can be seen in the dramatic growth in the size of our cities and the number of people living in them. The US Census reports that in 1900 about 40 percent of the population of the USA lived in urban areas. In 1990, the USA's towns and cities house some 75 percent of the population.⁵³ While many of the primary cities have not experienced growth in the past 25 years, the suburbs which circle these cities have grown exponentially. The last church I served was in Sherwood, OR. The Population Research Center of Portland State University reports that the population of Sherwood grew from 3093 in 1990 to 13,680 in 2002.⁵⁴ I experienced this dramatic growth during my 6 years in that community. Furthermore, many cities in the USA (including Sherwood) are

⁵³ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *1990 population and housing unit counts* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1990), 17

⁵⁴ *Oregon Population Report*, Population research center, Portland State University (Portland, OR: College of Urban and Public Affairs, Portland State University, 2003), 12.

physically different than they were just a few years ago. Many other cities exist and are quite large that either did not exist 100 years ago or were little more than a crossroads.

Not only has the physical space in which people live changed, the distance between people and areas has changed. The past centuries saw an explosion in the ability of people to travel. Interstate highways and faster cars made it possible to live miles away from where a person works. People can easily travel 100 miles to visit a loved one. Air travel is convenient and inexpensive, and there are daily flights to all points on the globe readily available. People are living in different space, and the space that separates people is rapidly shrinking.

On top of the living space changes and the changes in the distances that can be traveled quickly, North Americans have experienced a constant revolution in technology. This technological revolution has changed the ways that people work, play, and communicate. Today we have cell phones that allow one to call anywhere at any time at a very low cost. The cell phone in my pocket regularly calls my sister in Washington, D.C. and my friend in Boise, ID, for the same price that it calls my office. My wife regularly calls her mother in Bogotá, Colombia, for pennies a minute, and the call quality sounds as if she is next door.

Are these changes like those of Egypt in the first 3 centuries of the millennium? Some of the changes are similar, but many are not. The Egyptians did not experience technological change (although the Romans dramatically increased grain production by undertaking massive engineering projects); farming and the methods of production were unchanged from previous generations. The Egyptians, however, did join a global market place when they entered the Roman Empire, and the distances between one part of the

Empire and the other were shortened and made safer by Roman roads and the Roman army. Thus, communication and markets were changed, as were some cities. Yet people's experience of physical distance was not changed in the same way it has been in the last 100 years in North America.

The Egyptians did experience a radical shift in their social patterns and social structures. In this way, the Egyptian experience is similar to the experience of the North Americans (and Northwesters) in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. These people knew social dislocation and the cognitive dissonance of changing relationships and relationship patterns. North Americans in general and the people who live in Oregon and Idaho specifically, the people whom I am in ministry with, understand social dislocation and cognitive dissonance as their communities change and their children move away to all parts of the globe.

What is the church's response to these changes? I submit that churches form unique communities. Sometimes these communities are formed intentionally. Examples of intentional communities would be neighborhood bible studies or children's play groups. Both of these kinds of intentional communities target specific populations – people who live near one another or parents with children of similar ages. Other times unique communities are formed unintentionally. Either way, an appropriate response to a changing society is for the church to form unique communities.

The United Methodist circles in which I travel have created all sorts of unique communities unintentionally. Unintentionally, people have stayed put in their church while their communities moved on. These unique communities that many churches in United Methodist circles have created are congregations of sameness. In a messy,

changing world, many United Methodists have retreated into communities where everyone looks and thinks alike. Our churches are uniformly gray, vote similarly, sing the same hymns year after year, and eat the same food. This is one kind of unique community that is forming as a response to a changing world. The Egyptian monks created another, very different, kind of unique community.

The intentional and unique community that speaks to my own heart is the functionally diverse church. Rather than form unintentional communities of sameness, I propose we create communities of intentional diversity. Let us choose to build churches where many people sit at the table, where many kinds of music are celebrated, where all sorts of food are eaten. I believe this is similar to the communities created by the Egyptians monks. The monks created communities where the rules of the community were clear. This helped them to keep chaos and change manageable. I pray for communities of diversity where chaos and change are managed by embracing differences. I pray for communities with clear rules.

This brings us to the second lesson, the lesson of orthopraxis rather than orthodoxy. The unique communities of the monks were successful because they focused on practice and community rather than the issues that divided them, especially theology. From the Egyptians we learn that right practice – orthopraxis – is more important in a cohesive community than right belief – orthodoxy. When we focus on practice, on how each member of a community is treated, on how we avoid sin together, on ways that we spend our time together, we focus on problems that can be solved. It is possible to solve a disagreement over the way one person treats another. It may not be possible, however, to “solve” theological difference; in the end, two parties may not agree. Well-meaning

and faithful Christians can have profound disagreements over theology, yet both be correct in their beliefs. When the community focuses on the things it cannot solve such as theology, it spends its energy fruitlessly. Practice, however, can be solved. A community can agree on the treatment of its members and how it will live in community.

I believe that this lesson can be applied to the functionally diverse church. The lesson is to focus on practice, not on the things that divide. There are many things that threaten to divide diverse churches. There can be divisions over the language of worship, the music of worship, the food cooked in the church kitchen, the pastor's work hours, and much, much more. To overcome these divisions, I submit that the key is to focus on practice. We cannot overcome basic differences in theology, nor can we overcome that some people prefer to speak Spanish while others prefer Korean. We can set rules of treatment. We can agree that each week a certain set of things will happen. We can focus on practice rather than the dividing factors.

A word from John Wesley

United Methodists have a history of living with a diversity of opinions while focusing on treatment of one another. John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement wrote, "but although a difference in opinions or modes of worship may prevent an entire external union, yet need it prevent our union in affection? Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without all doubt, we may."⁵⁵ This is the spirit of those first Egyptian

⁵⁵ John Wesley, "Catholic Spirit," in *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology*, ed. Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1991), 305.

monks. They strove, each and every day, to be of one heart. This is striving to be perfect and to love perfectly as our Father in heaven loves. When one works on practice, there is little energy left over to invest in arguing about theology or criticizing another's worship, dress, or language.

CHAPTER 5

EXPERIENCE: LIFE AND MINISTRY EXPERIENCES IN OREGON AND IDAHO THAT POINT TOWARD FUNCTIONAL DIVERSITY

Above, we have shown that God has a particular love of the stranger, foreigner, and immigrant as expressed in the scriptures. We demonstrated a theology where diversity is the key to creativity and realizing God's desire. We found that there has been at least one instance in the history of the church where diversity did exist. The above chapters demonstrated God's desire for a diverse church and they begin to imagine what the functionally diverse church looks like. The functionally diverse church hears God's call to diversity and creatively shapes itself to empower all of the diverse voices.

Now we turn our attention closer to home. In the Wesleyan Quadrilateral formula, the fourth lens through which one views the issue at hand is the lens of experience. In this chapter, I will begin by sharing my own experiences on the road towards diversity. Next, I share some of the attempts that my church, the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, has made towards diverse ministry settings. These attempts are told in three stories of multicultural ministries in the Conference (two in the camping ministry and the third from Wilder, ID.). These are not necessarily examples of successful and functionally diverse ministries, but simply the experience of the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference. Finally, I will offer analysis of these ministry experiences and offer several conclusions. These conclusions help to guide the functionally diverse church.

In these following paragraphs we will discover the profound changes toward diversity that have taken place in Oregon and Idaho. These two states contain a

profound diversity and our church can reflect this diversity. We have a diversity of terrain (with deserts, mountains, urban areas and the beach) and a diversity of people (with significant communities of English speakers, Spanish speakers, Russian speakers, and many people of Asian descent). We will explore ministry successes and failures to discover a successful way to do ministry. This exploration then leads to the lessons the functionally diverse church learns.

Why are these experiences important or valid? First, this dissertation is written to the clergy of Oregon and Idaho. I am a son of Oregon and grew up within the United Methodist Church (participating in its churches and camps all through my formative years and now through my adult life). My experience is a fair representation of the experience of many within the Conference. Second, this dissertation is a personal journey to discover another way, a more holistic way, to do church. To leave my own experience out of the journey would be a disservice to my reader and to me.

The sharp-eyed reader will note that the multicultural ministry successes of the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church come from the camping program. I include these stories for two reasons. First, they are the only success stories that showcase functional diversity. The other successful multicultural churches involve Korean and Tongan churches that share space in Portland-area United Methodist Churches but the Koreans and Tongans have no say in the governance of the church. These are not functionally diverse churches.

Second, the stories from the camping ministry carry with them the implicit claim that camp is church. I believe this to be true: camp is church. While this may not be true in some denominations, it is true in the Oregon-Idaho United Methodist Church. It is true because the camping program is a profound part of the United

Methodist Church in Oregon and Idaho. Camp does not happen one week a summer and does not happen only with children. We have camps year-round, for children and for adults. Our camping program is one of the few remaining all-volunteer programs in the country. This means that the campers share cabins, meals, and faith with regular people drawn from local churches, not paid staff. Pastors serve as camp leaders, choir directors as the music leaders, and the people in the pews fill the bunks. Thousands of adults serve at camp each summer and during the year. This is very different from the many stand-alone, paid-staff camps to which many churches send their kids. Our teens and children are not sent to camp; they go along with our church's adults to share camp.

Furthermore, for many of our smaller churches – churches with few children or teens – camp serves as the only Christian education program that the church offers. Campers regularly tell that they are the only children in their church and that camp is the only place they get to share faith on an individual, one-on-one basis with other children and teens. Finally, many (if not most) of our leaders in church, both lay and clergy, can point to their camp experience as the place where they first encountered Jesus and where they made a commitment to Jesus as Lord. Camp plays an integral part in the larger Oregon-Idaho United Methodist Church. I spend dozens of hours during the year volunteering for and preparing for camp, then a week at camp, and then hours telling the stories of camp. Camp is integral in the Oregon-Idaho United Methodist church experience.

My story

I grew up in Independence, OR in the 1980s. Coincidentally, this was about the time that a wave of Mexicans, who initially came to Oregon as migrant workers,

began to settle down permanently. This part of the Willamette Valley that I grew up in (from south of Salem, OR to Woodburn, OR) experienced large numbers of first- and second-generation Mexicans moving in and becoming permanent residents. They sent their children to school, shopped in local grocery stores, and a few of them joined local churches.

In response to this influx of Spanish-speakers, the kindergarten I attended was bilingual. We learned to count in both languages, learned our first words in both languages, and started reading in both languages. I can remember seeing giant teeth and toothbrushes with the words “tooth” and “diente,” “brush” and “cepillo” next to them. There was a genuine attempt to integrate both languages, and to a certain extent both cultures, into the education system. Unfortunately, that attempt ended when I went to first grade. I did not experience any bilingual education outside of kindergarten.

The attempt also failed to extend outside of the school grounds. In spite of a rising Mexican presence,¹ the town I grew up in had no Spanish-speaking police, no “tiendas” (Latino grocery stores), and no one in city leadership that cared for the concerns of the Latinos. Furthermore, it was not until I entered middle school that the local Catholic Church began offering Mass in Spanish.

My own church (a yoked United Methodist and Presbyterian Church) was located near Western Oregon University. It saw itself as a church of the educated and college-related and had little interest in caring for Latinos. In fact, the only church offering Spanish-language services in town was the Catholic Church. My church made a big deal of providing food baskets at Christmas for needy people (generally

¹ The first wave of immigrants came from Mexico. Subsequent immigrants came from a variety of Central American countries including Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras

Mexicans) but did not extend its ministry beyond this once-a-year outreach. It was generally assumed that Mexicans went to the Catholic Church.

During High School, I went on a Rotary Youth Exchange to Bogotá, Colombia. There I learned to speak Spanish (far beyond what I learned in kindergarten). When I returned home, I had an entirely new vocabulary to use with my neighbors. My parents had a small farm on which they occasionally used migrant labor. Suddenly, I could talk to these people, learn their concerns and discover their joys. My eyes were opened to an entire population of people. What I discovered is that they lived as strangers in a strange land; they lived as aliens. In my years since I learned Spanish, I have maintained a concern for and an awareness of the Spanish-speakers in my midst. Eventually, I married a Colombian and we are working to raise our child speaking both English and Spanish.

What have I seen now that my eyes are open? I have seen, over and over again, that the English-speaking and Spanish-speaking communities tend to ignore one another. It is as though they live in two parallel universes. According to Oregon Department of Education website, 34% of the students during the 2003-2004 school year in my home-town school district (District 13J) are Hispanic.² This compares to a 2.1% Latino percentage³ of the school population when I started first grade in 1978 (overall, 93% of the students in my school were white in 1978). This is radical change, yet the Latinos and the Anglos live in separate worlds, especially in their religious lives. Several Spanish-speaking churches have popped up in the years in Independence, but they have no affiliation with any pre-existing Anglo church (the Catholic Church is an obvious exception to the above statement; they maintain both English and Spanish-speaking Masses.). My home church (called Christ's Church)

² Oregon Department of Education, <http://www.ode.state.or.us/sfda/reports/r0067Select2.asp>, 2004.

³ Ibid., 1.

continues to decline, continues to have only English-speaking worship services, and continues to reach out to “those Mexicans” at Christmas time with food boxes.

A multicultural ministry success: Camping

The Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church is a beautiful place. We have mountains, forests, the ocean, and deserts. The people who live in Oregon and Idaho have a unique connection to these beautiful places. The United Methodist Church in Oregon and Idaho expresses our connection to these beautiful places through our Camping ministry.

Scattered across the two states are 5 Camps, a Day Camp program, and a Creation Vacation ministry. The camps are physical properties with cabins, canoes, campfires, and s’mores. Our Day Camp program is a traveling team of young adults that goes to 8-10 churches each summer to present a day camp program for churches and their neighbors. Creation Vacation is an extended weekend for low-income families at one of our campsites. It is a vacation at a beautiful place facilitated by volunteers and paid for by the United Methodist Church.

Day Camp has experienced particular success in multicultural ministry. The Rev. Lisa Jean Hoefner, the Director of Camping in the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference wrote, “We offered this ministry to local congregations with priority to those who are serious about reaching Hispanic neighbors. . . we are using Day Camp to ‘jump start’ their efforts.”⁴ The way Day Camp works is that the Day Camp director contacted local churches that are situated in locations with significant Latino populations and asked if they wanted help beginning an outreach to their Latino neighbors. If they were interested, then this church would be a candidate to receive

⁴ Hoefner, Rev. Lisa Jean, “Day Camp,” interview by the author, August 2004, 1

the Day Camp team. The Day Camp team also went to churches that requested the team on their own.

Depending on the setting, the multicultural aspect of the ministry has found great success. Success is generally dependent on the demographics of the neighborhood; in neighborhoods with more Latinos, we tend to have more successful multicultural ministry. “Many Hispanic children have been involved. From 10-90% of total enrollment [is Latino] depending on week and setting (for example, Oak Grove in 2001 – 10%; Forest Grove and Aloha in 2003 – 90%).”⁵ In many locations (such as Forest Grove and Aloha, both in Oregon) the ministry has been profoundly diverse. The Day Camp experience happens in both English and Spanish, with children who are from a variety of races, and generally with bilingual leadership. Our leadership has made special effort to recruit both Spanish-speaking but also ethnically-Latino people for Day Camp leadership.

Another successful ministry is that of Creation Vacation. For Creation Vacation, the camping leadership team works with local assistance agencies (housing authorities, for example) to identify families that might want to participate in this Christian event. To maintain confidentiality, the agency staff contacts and invites the families. If the family is interested, their name is forwarded to the camping staff. The camping staff arranges transportation and brings together volunteers to assist the families when they are on camp property. A “family friend” meets each family at the camp boundaries and works with the family to make the weekend extraordinary. The family friend offers childcare, shows the family where the fun things to do at camp are located, helps with camp activities and generally acts as a friend.

⁵ Ibid., 2.

Similarly to our Day Camp ministry, we have found unique success in the integration of Latinos through Creation Vacation. “One-third to three-fourths of Creation Vacation camp participants are Latino,”⁶ said Hoefner. These include “15 of 20 families in 2004 Portland camp and 3 of 9 families in the 2003 Nampa event.”⁷

The success of the Creation Vacation events is found in the fact that Camp leadership is deliberate about both recruiting bilingual leadership and involving participants in leadership. Hoefner wrote, “We have bilingual family friends. Signs and announcements are all done in English and Spanish. Participants are involved in shaping the program as days progress.”⁸ Not only is there a special effort to communicate with all of the participants, the participants are invited into camp leadership. They actually shape the camp schedule and program as they participate in the camp.

From our camping program, we learn two things. First, extraordinary effort and great care must be given to communication. No one can be left out. The staff members that are chosen must be able to communicate across the cultural divide and understand the needs of everyone involved. In Day Camp, we seek out churches that want to cross the cultural divide and reach Spanish-speaking people for Jesus. We resource these churches with Spanish-speaking staff who are able to cross that divide. At Creation Vacation, we seek out Spanish-speaking family friends and help them out by offering all announcements and signage in both English and Spanish.

Second, we have learned that the participants must be part of shaping the ministry. They need to be a part of shaping their specific time at camp and also shaping camp in the future. We actively recruit Family Friends from among our own alumni. Hoefner wrote, “Individuals have gone from participant to Family Friend in 3

⁶ Hoefner, Rev. Lisa Jean, “Creation Vacation,” interview by the author, August 2004, 1.

⁷ Ibid., 2.

⁸ Ibid., 1.

years.”⁹ These people – people who participated and now share leadership – give the camping program assurance that the programs that we do are relevant to the campers.

A multicultural ministry failure: the Wilder Church

In the summer of 1998, the pastor of the Wilder United Methodist Church and the District Superintendent of the United Methodist Church in Idaho, the Rev. Debbie Pitney, attempted to begin a Hispanic worshipping community within the existing United Methodist Church in Wilder. Pitney wrote, “We were interested in ‘nesting’ a Hispanic congregation within the Wilder United Methodist Church.”¹⁰ The intention was that a group of Spanish-speaking people of Mexican descent would use the Wilder church as a place for worship, prayer, and Bible Study. This group was already meeting in someone’s home and had out-grown their space.

Wilder was the perfect place for a church. Pitney wrote, “The community of Wilder, ID was 80% Latino and the congregation there was growing rapidly. We were developing a relationship with Victor Gonzalez, a Pentecostal pastor who was interested in becoming United Methodist and working in the Wilder, Caldwell and Weiser area.”¹¹ There was a growing target population and leadership in place to lead them – everything should have worked. “Victor already had about 25 persons ready to start worshipping together in Wilder.”¹²

Everything, however, did not work. Part of the church leadership was in favor of inviting Victor and his group into the church but part of the church leadership and a

⁹ Ibid., 2.

¹⁰ Pitney, Rev. Debbie, “Wilder Interview,” interview by the author, August, 15, 2004, 1.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

large number of the lay membership of the church was against the idea. “There was suspicion and fear expressed by a handful of vocal opponents to the idea. It was apparent that the church was one of the final institutions in the community that was not ‘taken over’ by the Hispanic population. . . A vote was taken to invite Victor to begin a nested congregation within the Wilder United Methodist Church, but it failed.”¹³ Church members, feeling the mood in the community, refused to allow the Latinos to worship in their building. This action was echoed throughout the community as even the local Grange Hall was closed to Victor’s congregation. Pitney wrote, “When it became apparent the doors of the church were closed to us, we attempted to rent the Grange Hall, for weekly services but those doors were closed to us as well. . . From the perspective of the Anglo community members, we were moving too fast.”¹⁴

Fortunately, the story has a happy ending. The United Methodist Church leadership (the District Superintendent and the pastor of the Wilder Church) did not give up. They moved to a nearby church to find a more welcome home for this critical ministry. “We moved down the road to Nyssa and were able to nest the Hispanic congregation there,”¹⁵ wrote Pitney. The damage, however, was done. There are bad feelings between Latinos and Anglos in Wilder, feelings exacerbated by the disagreement years ago. There are no Latinos in the Wilder congregation to this day (the church has something of a reputation), and the Wilder congregation continues to decline.

We learned an important lesson in Wilder. The larger United Methodist leadership must be aware of the issues on the ground before they attempt to establish a new congregation or a new ministry. Even though the town was an obvious choice

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., 2.

¹⁵ Ibid.

as a location for a new ministry to people who speak Spanish, the town was not interested in such a ministry. Had there been more awareness of the town's feeling and perhaps some education of the Anglo community, we might have avoided the pain and trouble that the vote caused. In reflecting on the failure of the attempted ministry, Pitney wrote, "We probably didn't do our homework. In a small community that already felt that 'life as they had known it' was changing too fast, we needed to take more time to ensure that we would have had a positive outcome."¹⁶

Lessons Learned and Implications for the Functionally Diverse Church

From the above stories several points ring clear. First of all, a dramatic shift has taken place in Oregon and Idaho. All the stories above -- my own story and the stories of the local churches -- bear witness to this transformation. Whether they like it or not, times and the populations of our churches have changed. Our churches are now located in areas of significant Latino population. Also around them are Asians of all kinds and many other ethnicities. Oregon and Idaho, places that were once filled with Anglos, are now places of diversity.

The next several points we hear from the success of the camping ministry. First, ministry needs to be done by people with a heart for cross-cultural ministry. Second, successful ministries make a special effort to recruit those who speak the language of the targeted population. Third, successful ministries involve the people who participate in their ministries in shaping the ministries. Discussion of these three points follows.

¹⁶ Ibid., 1.

Above, I shared that I have a profound interest in cross-cultural (especially Anglo and Latino) ministry and conversation. This profound interest is critical for a multicultural ministry to succeed. Day Camp is a success in neighborhoods and in churches that want to reach out to their non-English-speaking neighbors. Creation Vacation is a success because it uses Family Friends who speak Spanish. The camping program's multicultural outreach is successful because the camping leadership has a heart for cross-cultural ministry. Without a heart for cross-cultural ministry (a heart demonstrated by a willingness to learn a second language and meet neighbors who are different), there is little chance for ministry success.

While the experience of Camping and my own personal experience speak largely to the Anglo and Latino communities, my sense is that this truth – a heart for cross-cultural ministry is necessary for success -- extends beyond these communities. Successful cross-cultural and multicultural ministries happen when a visionary leader with a heart for such ministry leads a group into the ministry. Howard Thurman, a minister, theologian, and civil-rights leader founded The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples as the first multi-ethnic, multicultural church in the USA in 1944. He previously served in Harvard's Divinity School and had experience with both multicultural ministry and cross-cultural communication.¹⁷ This enabled Thurman to build a successful multiethnic ministry.

The second lesson the functionally diverse church learns is that, while it seems obvious that diverse ministries should have leadership that can speak to everyone in the ministry, this is not always the case; not all ministries have bilingual or multilingual leaders. Our experience shows that successful ministries have leadership that speaks the language of the ministry participants. Our Day Camp recruits

¹⁷ For the complete story of the beginnings of the Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, see Howard Thurman's autobiography, *With Head and Heart: the autobiography of Howard Thurman*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1979.

bilingual leaders. Our Creation Vacation “Family Friends” are people who can speak both English and Spanish. These ministries are successful because their leaders can speak to all participants, not just some. This seems like an obvious key to diverse ministries, but all ministries do not do the work required to bring in bilingual leadership

The third lesson learned is that the success of multicultural ministries depends on the involvement of its participants. When participants are involved with choosing curriculum, planning activities, and leading worship, they have an investment in the ministry. This is true across all ministry settings, not simply in multicultural ministries, but it is critical in multicultural ministry settings. The critical part is that the participants, the ones who receive the ministry, are aware of cultural expressions of which Anglo leaders may not be aware. A good example of this is the experience that many of us have of working with a dictionary that offers passable but not good translations. We have all used the wrong word when working across cultures. When participants are involved this happens less regularly.

Participants also give the ministry experience an authentic feel. Many of us have seen Elvis competitions with foreign Elvis impersonators acting like Elvis Presley. There is something incongruent and odd about a Sikh Elvis wearing a turban and singing “Love Me Tender.” I once saw a Filipino child dressed as Elvis singing Elvis’ greatest hits. These scenes, while humorous, do not ring true. One simply cannot take these performers (who do sing with great integrity) seriously. I submit that a ministry that presumes to be multiethnic or multicultural but has only Anglos leading it is as ridiculous as a Sikh or Filipino Elvis. It just does not ring true.

This is another truth at the heart of functional diversity. Functional diversity is authentic diversity. It is diversity that has the right accent and sings the songs that are

deep in the heart of the singer. A church that practices functional diversity will have Bible Studies led by people who really speak the language of the people for whom the study is directed. If the study is for Spanish-speakers, the leader speaks Spanish; if the study is for Gen-X-ers or Baby Boomers or Millennials, the study is led by a member of their group. The leader is not one who speaks the language with a bad accent. Dis-functional diversity is a church where the leaders do not invest in full participation of the target population or a church that has a patronizing attitude toward the people of the “other” culture.

Creation Vacation works very hard to give the participants the opportunity to shape the activities of the week. Then Creation Vacation works to invite the participants into leadership by serving as a Family Friend in following years. In this way, the entire ministry recipients are fully invested in the ministry of Creation Vacation, and the ministry rings true to the people involved in the ministry. This is not Spanish spoken with a poor accent and not a Filipino Elvis; this is ministry by and for the people and an authentic crossing of culture.

Finally, we learn an important lesson from the ministry failure in Wilder. That lesson is that the community beyond the church walls must be educated before one launches a cross-cultural ministry. This is both good evangelism and necessary piece to ensure ministry success. This is good evangelism because it invites people in. Evangelism, at its core, is inviting people into relationship with Jesus. By educating the local community about the mission and nature of the cross-cultural ministry, you are inviting the community to participate. In Wilder, the problem was that the community was not yet ready for one of its institutions to be in cross-cultural ministry. The church understood itself as a community institution (rather than a kingdom institution). It saw itself as beholden to and a part of the local community

rather than beholden to and a part of the community of God and was unable to envision itself in ways outside of the community's norms.

Had the Wilder church's leadership (the part that was interested in building a cross-cultural ministry) stepped out and educated the community, they could have provided an evangelism opportunity. They could have said, "We believe that God calls us to live in harmony with our Spanish-speaking brothers and sisters. If you believe the same, come join us." This would have given a gospel message to the community, a message of reconciliation. This would have been a witness for Christ. It may also have drawn in new people, people who shared this vision. I submit that all community education, education that leads up to a cross-cultural ministry, is evangelism in that it shows the gospel and spreads a message of reconciliation.

Education, beyond being good evangelism, is necessary for a cross-cultural ministry's success. The cross-cultural ministry that explains what it does to the outsiders has less probability of inviting hostility. In the sites where we do Creation Vacation, we are regularly educating the neighbors about the work of our camps. We explain to them that we bring a variety of children and adults to our camps. They come from a variety of economic, social, and religious backgrounds. These camps serve cancer patients, AIDS patients, developmentally and mentally handicapped persons, Christians, non-Christians, mean children, and nice children. Creation Vacation is one aspect of our camping ministry, an aspect that we celebrate and tell the neighbors about. Because we are open about our activities at camp, we have the support of the neighborhood.

If the church leadership in Wilder would have explained themselves to their community, they may have avoided the problems they had to deal with. They may, also, have needed to deal with the same racists who were concerned about the changes

in their community. But the education piece – telling everyone about the church’s intentions – may have brought liberal-minded and reconciliation-minded people to the church’s defense. Education invites like-minded people to participate in the ministry and diffuses some of the potential divisiveness of the church’s activities in the community.

The functionally diverse church is aware of all of the above lessons. In building a church that is profoundly diverse, the leadership must have a heart for diversity, the skills to reach people of other cultures, a willingness to involve everyone in the ministry, and an investment of time in explaining itself to the neighbors.

CHAPTER 6

EXPLORING MISSIOLOGIES: A CONVERSATION WITH THE CHURCH GROWTH MOVEMENT AND OTHERS

The previous chapters have explored the idea of church diversity through the Wesleyan Quadrilateral and found that there are good biblical, theological, historical, and experiential reasons to build churches of profound, functional diversity. This conclusion, however, seems to disagree with the conclusions of the Church Growth movement. The following chapter listens to and dialogues with some of the leading thinkers and writers of the Church Growth movement. The Church Growth movement is a study of the methods and thinking behind church growth. Quite simply, the Church Growth movement systematically asks the question, “Why do churches grow?” From a missiological perspective, the call that the Church Growth movement responds to is the call of God to grow churches.

As noted above, my conclusions seem to contradict the findings of the Church Growth movement. While the Church Growth literature is not widely read in United Methodist circles, it has made a significant contribution to the academic conversation in the areas of ecclesiology and missiology. I would be remiss to ignore the significant contributions of the Church Growth movements in my exploration of diverse churches.

In the following paragraphs we will explore the concept of missiology and consider the current missiology of the United Methodist Church, listen to two thinkers in the Church Growth movement, listen to two pastors who are doing things differently, and draw conclusions that relate to functional diversity. The conclusion that I draw is that,

while the Church Growth movement is a good, valid, and biblically-principled way to grow a church, it is not the only way. Rather, it is one response to God's call. I maintain that God also desires churches that are diverse. Put another way, God's call is wider than the call to grow churches; the kingdom of God is larger than simply growing big churches quickly. Along with Erwin McManus, I feel called to build churches that are functionally diverse. This, I believe, is as valid a missiology as others, including the missiology of Church Growth.

Missiology

We begin by exploring the concept of missiology. Missiology is the theology of missions. It is, according to Muck, the "second-order reflection on the history, theology, and practice of missions"¹ that has appeared in the church universal (in Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical, and Pentecostal circles) since the nineteenth century. Myklebust defines missiology as "the science of cross-cultural communication of Christian faith."² Missiology asks *how* one will reach people and asks this question in the context (and with the awareness) of history, theology, and practices.

Missiology begins with a call from God. "Missiologists often describe this in terms of 'call,'" writes Muck. "God's initiating activity creates a sense of responsibility that proceeds and sets bounds for all subsequent activity. It provides a mandate that

¹ Terry C Muck, "History of Religion and Missiology: Complementary Methodologies," ed. Irving Hexham, Steven Rost and John W. Morehead III (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic and Professional, 2004), 69.

² Quoted in Muck, *ibid*, 70.

precedes sensing, perceiving, thinking, and theorizing.”³ The call lies at the base of the history, theology, and practice of missions, at the call of this science of cross-cultural communication. Without the call from God, there is no reason to reflect on how one reaches people with the Gospel message. Each call is different. The Bible itself tells many stories of calls and response. And just as there are many responses to the call, there are many missiological groundings for a church’s methodology.

The Church Growth movement (which will be explored further below) is one missiological reflection and consideration on how one might grow a church. It says that the way to grow a church is to connect people with affinities to one another and ask them to cross as few cultural boundaries as possible to encounter the Gospel. My own United Methodist experience (which, quite frankly, is not encountering great success) is another missiology and another way of reaching people for Jesus.

Today’s United Methodist Church, in my opinion, has little coherent missiology. In our history, we had a mission plan (indeed, it was a missiology that shaped our entire way of viewing the world) that involved organizing people into classes and then having a visiting clergy person come regularly to preside over the sacraments. This mission plan died away around the turn of the twentieth century as the frontier was closed, as more people began to live in cities, and as the number of United Methodist clergy-people increased. At one time the goal was to “spread scriptural holiness” across the land. That goal died away and was replaced by the mission “to make disciples of all people.” Spreading scriptural holiness meant establishing classes and sending preachers out on horseback to every corner of the United States (and then the planet). Making disciples of all people has another mind-set.

³ Ibid.

Today in the United Methodist Church, mission is generally considered to be something that people do in other lands. Mission is primarily concerned with feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, bringing water to communities where there is no clean water, developing a community's ability to care for itself and its needy, and planting churches in these foreign lands. Our US churches (the Northwest ones that I am most familiar with) take "mission trips" and raise money for missionaries. We see mission as "over there." Rather than reach out to specific groups of people and ask them to cross few boundaries to encounter Jesus (the Church Growth plan), our methodology has traditionally been to start schools, develop communities, build community churches, and wait for people to come in. I call United Methodist missiology in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries (for a lack of a better term or more coherent plan) build-and-wait. This missiology may be responsible for the decline of the United Methodist Church.

Lesslie Newbigin suggests that this build-and-wait missiology is responsible for bringing modernity to many cultures. This modernity has then turned around and rejected the Christian faith. "Missions have themselves been among the primary agents of modernization in the areas where they have worked. Through schools and colleges, hospitals, technological training, and projects for 'development,' they have inculturated great numbers of people, especially of the Christians under their guidance, into the assumptions and lifestyles of modernity."⁴ This build-and-wait theology assumed that mission was someone else's responsibility and needed to happen in other lands. Newbigin continued by writing, "It is now widely accepted that missions in the modern world must be multidirectional, that every church has a responsibility for world mission,

⁴ Lesslie Newbigin, "Culture of Modernity," in *Dictionary of Mission*, ed. Karl Muller, et al. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 99.

and that there is a mission field in every land.”⁵ This sentiment is widely accepted in many places other than the United Methodist Church. Modernity and post modernity, as they have appeared in the USA and Europe, have been accompanied by significant numbers of people leaving faith all together. Leaving behind the build-and-wait missiology (and its baggage of modernity, development, and Western culture) may be the salvation of the United Methodist Church.

Throughout this paper I believe that I have demonstrated another way, the way of functional diversity. The missiology of functional diversity rests on a biblical directive to welcome the stranger, on a theology of marginality, and on the history of Christian communities that have welcomed diversity. This is different from McGavran and his school of Church Growth which calls people to cross few boundaries and different from the current United Methodist missiology of build-and-wait. While Newbigin knew nothing of functional diversity, his sentiment that the church is incomplete until it has every tribe and tongue represented is close to my heart. Newbigin wrote, “We learn to understand what it means to say that Jesus is the King and Head of the whole human race only as we learn to hear that confession from the many races that make up the human family. In the end we shall know who Jesus is as he really is, when every tongue shall confess him in all the accents of human culture.”⁶ This is the call that rests at the base of functional diversity, a call to listen to Jesus confessed by every possible tongue and with every beautiful accent. And we want these many people to be in the same church, sharing worship and space and dreams.

⁵ Ibid., 99.

⁶ Lesslie Newbigin, “The Enduring Validity of Cross-Cultural Mission,” in *Mission and Theology in Global Perspective: Contemporary Challenges for the Church*, ed. Don A. Pittman, Ruben L. F. Habito and Terry Muck (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 337.

Donald McGavran

Let us now consider the missiology of the Church Growth movement. The church growth movement's prime mover and thinker is Donald A. McGavran, a missiologist (that is: one who has studied the science of church mission and outreach) and noted authority in church growth. McGavran was the author of dozens of books and now-deceased professor of Church Growth at Fuller Seminary. Two of McGavran's most important contributions to the conversation on Church Growth (from the perspective of this dissertation) are the ideas that people tend to stay within their culture when they become Christians and that the best way to bring conversion to Christ is through the conversions of entire communities.

McGavran's famous and oft-quoted statement regarding people's propensity to stay within their culture is, "People like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic, or class barriers."⁷ McGavran made this claim after a lifetime of research and experience into the mission field. Around the world and across the United States, McGavran sees that people tend not to abandon their history or their people to become Christians. Instead, they become Christians when there are people who look like them, think like them, or speak their same language already in the congregation.

McGavran explains, "Human beings are born into thousands of very different societies, separated from each other by many barriers."⁸ These barriers are natural and separate people from one another. The barriers stand in the way of all sorts of

⁷ Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 163.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 164

communication, one of which is the communication of the Gospel. McGavran acknowledges that the power of Christ overcomes all barriers, but “the one body is complex.”⁹

These barriers surround “homogeneous units.” “For the sake of convenience, we talk of these as homogeneous units. Some are linguistically, some ethnically, and some educationally different from the others.”¹⁰ In my context, Oregon and Idaho, we have dozens of different homogeneous units. There are educational homogeneous units (such as college-educated 20-somethings), linguistic-ethnic homogeneous units (Spanish-speaking Mexican immigrants), ethnic homogeneous units (Shoshone tribe Native Americans), and cultural homogeneous units (Mormons). Each of these units requires special missionary efforts and unique missionary work.

India is McGavran’s birthplace (born to missionary parents) and the ground of much of McGavran’s experience. Through the years, McGavran witnessed the caste society, in which ethnic and traditional barriers separate people from one another. “India, for example, has more than 3000 ethnic units (castes and tribes).”¹¹ Effective evangelization, McGavran observed, happens within, rather than across, these boundaries. The most effective evangelization happens when the Gospel is shared inside the boundary, from one caste or tribe member to another of the same tribe or caste.

To do effective evangelization within a people, within a boundary, one must convert a whole people. McGavran writes, “To Christianize a whole people, the first

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., 165.

¹¹ Ibid., 164.

thing *not* to do is snatch individuals out of it into a different society.”¹² Unfortunately, traditional missionary efforts focused on converting people to Christianity by converting them to another society, another lifestyle, and often another language. This works against McGavran’s deeply-held belief that people do not like to become a Christian by crossing a boundary.

Instead, effective evangelization builds a bridge of God that moves an entire group to faith in Christ. McGavran calls this a “people movement.” The entire group (whether they be a tribe, village, clan, or sub-culture within a larger culture) moves together because, if they do not, there is great stress within the system. “A change of religion involves community change. Only as its members move together does change become healthy and constructive.”¹³ A few people changing their faith, and abandoning the faith of their fathers and mothers, can cause chaos. Everyone, working together, makes a smooth change.

McGavran recognizes that, even when converting an entire people, there has to be a first member of the group that converts. The key to effective evangelization is that the member of the group who first converts must remain a member of the group.

The few converts who start large group movements deliberately continue on as part of their own folk. They refuse to be mentally excluded. They continue to love their people, identify with them, serve them, spend as much time as possible with them proving to them that though they have become Christians they are still good members of the society – indeed, better members than they were before.¹⁴

In conclusion, McGavran argues that people do not easily cross natural cultural boundaries to become Christians or to be part of a church. His missiology rests on a call

¹² Donald A. McGavran, “The Bridges of God,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement, a Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1981), 274.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 275.

¹⁴ McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 173.

to grow churches, a theology of numerical increase, and a lifetime of experience that shows people's reticence to cross boundaries. To evangelize people and to build churches, McGavran suggests that large groups – an entire people within a particular boundary – be brought to Christ at the same time. To do this, a first few converts must be brought, but these people must refuse to leave their current culture, their place within the boundary, and show the relevance of Christ to others inside the cultural boundary.

C. Peter Wagner

Some people interpret McGavran's writings as racism. They hear McGavran arguing that it is folly to try and reach across barriers with the Gospel message. Another oft-quoted sentiment is that Sunday morning at 11am is the most segregated hour in America. People who quote this sentiment worry that the thrust of the church growth movement – reaching out to homogeneous units – is making the racial and ethnic divide in the USA worse. Some distill the church growth movement down to this essence and write the entire movement off as wrong-headed.

Wagner answers these concerns by arguing, "I have found no compelling reason not to develop churches that are reasonably compatible with existing cultures."¹⁵ This argument is compelling, for a church completely out of step with culture would be unable to reach the culture. A church that sings hymns in German, for example, would be completely out of touch with an African-American neighborhood in Los Angeles, CA or on the Shoshone-Bannock Reservation outside of Pocatello, ID. Wagner continues, "Unity remains an ideal for the Christian church, but authentic unity is always unity in

¹⁵ C. Peter Wagner, *Our Kind of People* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1979), 4.

diversity.”¹⁶ For Wagner, authentic unity is found with many groups of people who have the same hearts, the heart of Christ.

Writing from the point of view of the late 1970s, Wagner finds that most churches that attempt to integrate end up falling apart. He cites example after example of churches that try to remain integrated, or try to integrate their membership (including the United Methodist Church¹⁷) but failed because the two groups that were trying to be integrated were uncomfortable with one another. The 30-plus years in between Wagner’s writing and today echo Wagner’s observations. Many churches that have attempted to integrate have failed, and there are only a few more integrated churches than there were 30 years ago.

Wagner’s answer to critics who call for integrated churches rather than multicultural outreach is that God calls for a “stew pot” of different churches and expressions of faith. This “stew pot” reflects the variety of faces, cultures, and languages that God created. “In a stew pot, each ingredient adds its characteristic flavor to every other ingredient, but each maintains their own identities and integrity. The final result is more than the sum of the parts.”¹⁸

What does this look like? It looks like an outreach to every homogeneous unit in America. And this, as it would carry the Gospel to all people and fulfill the Great

¹⁶ Ibid., 96.

¹⁷ “In 1968, for example, the United Methodist Church decreed ‘no more segregated jurisdictions,’ and abolished its all-black Central Jurisdiction, and integrated its black pastors and black churches into the white Methodist structures. Many thought this step would be the answer to institutional racism within the church. But since then ‘those hopes have, at least for many black United Methodists, turned to frustration, and in some cases even to despair and a sense of betrayal.’” . . . The 1976 Quadrennial Conference of the United Methodist Church, meeting in Portland, OR, expressed concern at the sharply decreasing numbers of Methodist blacks, Hispanic-Americans and Native-Americans. Instead of suggesting further integration as a solution, the delegates established the goal of reinforcing ethnic minority churches as one of the top three priorities.” (Wagner, 148)

¹⁸ Ibid., 51.

Commission, is exactly what God has in mind, according to Wagner. He proposes a model called the “multi-congregational model.” This model, developed by Daniel Sanchez, is a “corporation composed of several congregations (Anglo and ethnic) in which the autonomy of each congregation is preserved and the resources of the congregations are combined to present a strong evangelistic witness to the community.”¹⁹ Rather than churches of diversity, Wagner envisions communities that stay within their ethnic and linguistic boundaries but are closely affiliated with other worshiping communities; the vision is one of a church composed of numerous worshiping communities, a church of churches.

Wagner’s vision and his proposal leave me wondering about leadership and decision making. Who, I wonder, makes decisions for the larger body? For example, if these communities share a building, who decides the schedule? What if all of the communities want to worship at 11 am on Sunday morning? Or, what if something is broken: who has the responsibility to replace that broken thing? Perhaps the thing is not broken but wears out, what happens then? Is there a common treasury? If so, who makes the decisions regarding the policies and procedures of the treasurer? These questions are going to be difficult to decide, but they are not the largest question. The largest question is this: in what language will the shared decisions be discussed and publicized? I wonder if, in the end, each group has an equal seat at the table. If they do not, the diversity of this multi-congregation church is only a façade, only skin-deep, and not profound or functional.

In conclusion, Wagner asks the question: is it ethical to have congregations that are not integrated, congregations that seek to stay within the boundaries of a certain

¹⁹ Ibid., 159.

homogeneous unit? His answer is an unequivocal yes. It is not only ethical, but also biblical and the right way to extend the kingdom of God. Wagner believes, following McGavran's principle that the Gospel is best extended within homogeneous units, that there must be a multitude of churches reaching out to the multitude of homogeneous units.

Erwin McManus

McManus is the pastor of a church called Mosaic in Los Angeles. This church has been operating for more than 50 years but has transitioned in the past 10 years into something new. In his 2001 book *An Unstoppable Force: daring to become the church God had in mind*, McManus tells the faith-story of Mosaic. McManus envisions Mosaic as an organism rather than an organization which he claims is opposite of modern churches. "The problem," writes McManus, "is that we treat the church as an organization rather than an organism. Even an elementary reading of the New Testament would make it clear that the church is the body of Christ. The church in her essence is a living system."²⁰

As an organism, the church lives in an environment. The church's environment is ever changing. And the church's environment is God-created. The environment that God created is profoundly connected. "According to Scripture, everything is connected, and every action has at least some effect on the whole. In the same way, the church is

²⁰ Erwin R. McManus, *An Unstoppable Force: Daring to Become the Church God Had in Mind* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2001), 14.

part of the whole; she is both influenced by the world around her and called to influence the world in which she exists.”²¹

As a living organism that is connected to all things, the church lives by certain principles; this is similar to a human organism that lives following certain principles. Based on these principles, the church makes choices about what it does, where it goes, and how it relates. In *Unstoppable*, McManus tells of the choices Mosaic has made and the directions it has taken. In general, the living organism of Mosaic tended to make the harder choices. McManus claims that these harder choices have led the church and its members in richer directions.

One such choice they have taken, and direction they currently follow, is a commitment to cultural diversity within their church. McManus writes, “This multiculturalism has created tremendous friction for the contemporary church because the church has fashioned itself around monocultural ministry – not simply in its style and texture, but also in its message.”²² Instead of following this path, the path of monocultural ministry, Mosaic has decided to be intentionally multicultural. They reach out to people of all backgrounds, languages and ethnicities. When you worship at Mosaic, you notice this intentional choice in the faces of the people around you. National news outlets have also noticed this intentional choice.²³

McManus finds that the choice to be intentionally multicultural has profound blessings. He writes, “Every week I reflect on the incredible privilege I have of not only leading this community but also living in the middle of a miracle,” and “The global

²¹ Ibid., 15.

²² Ibid., 54.

²³ Numerous stories have appeared in the Los Angeles Times including the latest on October 9, 2004. The church was profiled by National Public Radio’s *All Things Considered* on June 18, 2000.

mosaic gives us tremendous potential for generating momentum. It gives us the opportunity to move beyond keeping pace with culture.”²⁴ For McManus, multicultural, diverse ministry is a miracle that he gets to experience and a source of creative energy. This sounds close to the “creative core” that Yung writes about and is discussed in Chapter 2.

McManus acknowledges McGavran’s homogeneous unit principle in his writing. “Donald McGavran’s description . . . of how people socialize with people who are similar to them has become the Church Growth movement’s prescription for how to evangelize. It would be foolish for me to deny the realities of McGavran’s observations, and so I quickly acknowledge them to be true.”²⁵ Furthermore, McManus writes, “It is also important to acknowledge that the radical ethnic diversity [1/3 Asian, 1/3 Hispanic, and 1/3 a mix of Caucasian, African American, Middle Eastern, Indian, and other ethnicities] at Mosaic has most likely slowed our rate of growth.”²⁶ McManus, however, is less concerned with McGavran’s observations and with the truth that people often avoid crossing cultural boundaries than he is with the call to build a diverse church.

McManus’s real concern is the choices the organism of the church makes as they relate to their guiding principles. The church has chosen to be diverse, chosen to follow God in their unique way, and this is the direction they are going to follow. That this choice causes inconvenience and even slows growth is irrelevant. Mosaic is following God’s call and extending the kingdom in its own way; this is what really matters. Sometimes organisms make choices that are counter-intuitive. This is the difference

²⁴ McManus, *An Unstoppable Force: Daring to Become the Church God Had in Mind*, 55.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 55.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

between living organisms and dead structures: one makes choices (living) while the other follows the laws of nature (dead).

To return to the call language, the ground of a missiology, consider that Mosaic understands itself to be called into a certain way of being. That being is as a living organism and as such, it is called to make certain choices. The missiology of Mosaic begins with a call to be multicultural. The response to this call trumps other truths, including the truth expressed by the church growth movement. This is a call to love people unreached by the Gospel and a call to reflect the messy, multicultural, complicated world of Los Angeles.

Mark Olson

Mark Olson is a Lutheran pastor in Wisconsin who has successfully led a growing congregation over a number of years. Olson's book, *Moving Beyond Church Growth* invites readers – pastors – to move beyond church growth and to take a more difficult road in church leadership. I hear Olson also carrying a missiology that is more focused on God's unique call than on quick ways to grow churches.

Olson writes, "For me, my role as pastor involves unfolding the character of a congregation, which invites people to surrender to Jesus and to relinquish even their deepest needs to the reign of God he has made flesh. A church founded on Church-Growth principles seems contrary to that vision."²⁷ The Church-Growth movement ignores the call of God and the character of God, in Olson's opinion, and builds churches

²⁷ Mark A. Olson, *Moving Beyond Church Growth: An Alternative Vision for Congregations* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2002), 69.

that please people. A pastor's job is to invite people to something different. The job is to invite people beyond their comfort zone and to surrender to Jesus. People-pleasing churches do not invite surrender to Jesus.

Instead of "seeker-sensitive" (and people-pleasing) churches, churches that cater to people's felt needs and build homogeneous spaces, Olson suggests that the church offer a counter-cultural call. "Worship demands I encounter a God who makes a claim on me. Worship challenges my deeply held convictions that I can be in charge of my life."²⁸ In a similar vein, Olson writes, "Prayer acknowledges a dependence on God, not on oneself. . . . Instead of focusing on itself and its duties, the congregation surrenders to God in prayer."²⁹ The church, through its rituals, traditions, and worship, stands against human constructs and desires.

In the "Afterword" Olson writes, "The time has come to set aside the many modern trappings that I believe significantly inhibit the Gospel witness. . . A congregation that moves beyond church growth will find itself envisioning a life radically centered on God and graciously called to serve the world."³⁰ For Olson, the Church Growth movement is a modern movement, one trapped in time and attempting to build the biggest, fastest, most efficient church. Instead of following this modern movement, Olson suggests that the church rely on God's direction, God's counter-cultural (and sometimes counter-intuitive) call to serve the world as it is. Olson sees the church trying to look like the world when he believes the church should instead look as God has called it to look.

²⁸ Ibid., 68.

²⁹ Ibid., 53.

³⁰ Ibid., 150.

Conclusions for the Functionally Diverse Church

I believe that McManus' articulation of a diverse congregation – as an intentionally multicultural congregation -- is the way of functional diversity. McManus is self-consciously post-modern and ministers within a context of blurred boundaries. While he acknowledges that McGavran is correct, he also acknowledges that the world is complex. McManus' missiology begins with a call to reach a variety of people who may have never encountered Jesus before. His call is to build a community that reflects Los Angeles.

McGavran is correct. People do tend to seek out their own kind, and the “kind” is complicated and homogeneous, when they choose associates. He is also correct that it is easier to make a short step, culturally, to Christianity than a long step. Finally, he is correct that people tend to make a decision with Christ more easily when they make it as a group.

Wagner is a product of his time. The late 1970s were a time of racial disappointment. The promises of the civil rights movement of the 1960s were not fulfilled, in spite of radical changes in the law and in society. Wagner's argument seems to be one of “separate but equal” in regard to churches, and this argument, while it may be expedient, wears rather thin for me. This is to say, separate but equal may grow churches, but they are not churches that I want to be a part of.

For me, it comes down to call. One has to be clear on what God is calling one to do. Some people are called to build churches along the lines of sameness. This is a valid way to build a church, a valid missiology. God does move among groups of people and

God has brought nations and ethnicities into the kingdom. Yet I begin at another place and have another call. As stated in my introductory story, the multicultural world that I live in is one where families speak more than one language and belong to more than one ethnic group. The towns in which I live and minister are full of people who do not claim just one background or belong to only one cultural group. My own missiology begins with a call to serve these people, the people of many cultural lines.

Because of my starting point (one that McManus, son of an Irish mother, El Salvadoran mother, and who spent much of his childhood in South Florida shares), I believe that the call of God trumps the expedient, easy way to grow churches. It may be easy to grow a church where everyone looks and thinks the same (although I am not entirely convinced of this, either. I have experienced United Methodist Churches filled with elderly people who do not even reach out to people like them), but this is not the church God has called me into. Just as God calls for churches where people have to cross few cultural boundaries, God is also calling for new wine in new wineskins; I believe that God calls each generation to do things in new ways. This post-modern time in which we live, a time of increased globalism, diversity, and multiculturalism even in the same neighborhood, calls for churches that reflect God's variety.

I resonate with Olson's call to do the hard thing and encounter the God who is counter-cultural, counter-intuitive, and has a will entirely different from that of humanity. Olson invites the church not to follow the outside pressure to look exactly like the rest of the world but to instead look unique. We are created in the image of God; churches can also reflect God's image, God's desire, and God's will.

We can, however, use McGavran's observations on "people movement" in the functionally diverse church. Functional diversity means that everyone has an equal seat at the table. It means that no one group dominates the direction of the church. In choosing leadership, McGavran's wisdom points to the need to look carefully at the "people" within the church. It points to the need to invite groups into the ministry of the church as groups. People are going to more comfortable in the ministry when their "people" are in leadership and in the fellowship.

The functionally diverse church is an organism that chooses to invite all to the table and chooses to be diverse. It recognizes that the easy way to grow a church may be to act in a monocultural way but it chooses multiculturalism, as this is the world in which it lives. The functionally diverse church may not be the biggest church in town, it may not grow fastest, but it is faithful to God's particular call.

CHAPTER 7

THE FUNCTIONALLY DIVERSE CHURCH: CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation began with the problem: I want something different. There is a population of people in the Oregon-Idaho United Methodist Church (and I count myself as one of them) who want to see something different in the way church is done. The United Methodist Churches in Oregon and Idaho tend to be places of sameness. One United Methodist Church looks largely like the next United Methodist Church. The architecture is similar and so are the faces that fill the pews. The people are, in general, Anglos who grew up United Methodist. They listen to the same music, eat the same food, and hear the gospel message the same way, Sunday after Sunday, year after year.

The neighbors and the neighborhoods of these United Methodist Churches have experienced radical change over the past 10 years. Once upon a time, the people in the pews looked like the people in the neighborhoods. Once upon a time, the food inside the church was the same food that was served on every table on the block. That time has passed. Today, the neighbors of the churches eat foods, enjoy desserts, and drink beverages that most people in the church cannot even imagine. The churches, which once reflected their communities, no longer reflect their neighborhoods. They are islands of sameness in seas of diversity. Times have changed but these churches have not. I long for something different. I long for churches that reflect their diverse communities.

Above, I proposed a different way of doing things. This different way of doing things I call functional diversity. Functional diversity begins with diversity (more than one ethnicity or language in the church) and continues deeper. It begins with the bible's

call to welcome and care for strangers and aliens, and then it continues. Functional diversity is a profound diversity, a diversity of many kinds of people, many languages and many ways of organization. Functional diversity includes everyone in the conversation, reaches out to all kinds of people, and is the product of a church that genuinely respects all people. Functional diversity works hard to stretch to the margins of society and straddle borders between groups.

One can contrast functional diversity to non-functional diversity. Non-functional diversity is diversity that is merely a façade. A non-functionally diverse church may have people of more than one background in their fellowship but these people are not empowered to make decisions nor included in the conversations. The non-functionally diverse church may have Africans in their fellowship but never worship in any language other than English; there may be Latinos in the congregation but the worship only uses organ music, never a guitar, conga drums or brass instruments; there may be newly-immigrated Russians in the congregation but the Easter calendar looks the same as it has for the past 50 years. These churches have diversity but the structure of the church does not allow this diversity to function or act in any way.

Functional diversity includes people of all backgrounds in leadership. The functionally diverse church translates the church proceedings (including, if necessary, worship) into the languages of everyone. This is not the illusion of diversity but a diversity that everyone feels and tastes; this is a diversity that is sometimes inconvenient. This diversity looks to the margins for new ideas, for energy and for leadership.

From the Wesleyan Quadrilateral

Each of the four pieces of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral teaches, informs and provides shape for the functionally diverse church. Following the United Methodist theological tradition, this dissertation has explored the topic of diversity through the lenses of scripture, reason, tradition and experience. The conclusions that I draw from the scriptures, from theological reflection, from history and from my own experience is that God loves diversity, God works through diversity, history has shown a time of diversity, and that diversity is present in Oregon and Idaho. Together, these conclusions point the church towards a more varied expression of faith. The conclusions also argue that the diversity needs to be profound, not simply an illusion.

From the scriptures we learn that God loves diversity. This is expressed most clearly in God's concern for the stranger and the aliens that live in the midst of the people of Israel. We learn this in the story of Abraham, in the teachings of the law, and in the life and teachings of Jesus. We acknowledge that sometimes God did command the people of Israel to treat their neighbors with callousness (and sometimes murder), but these stories are not the majority opinion of the bible. God expects that the people of Israel take special concern for the strangers and aliens in their midst. Christians are called to the same responsibility. The functionally diverse church hears this call as its missiology; the functionally diverse church is formed of people who are strangers and aliens.

As we did the work of theological reflection, we learned of the Theology of Marginality from Jung. Jung's theology reminds us that the margins are the places where the Holy Spirit is most visible and working. The healthy church, the functionally diverse church, listens to the margins. From the margins come all the possibility and the creativity of the "creative core," a genuine newness, freshness and movement of the Spirit. Jung asserted that Jesus Christ is found at the margins as a marginal, hyphenated (read Jesus-Christ) person. The hyphenated people – people like African-Americans, Asian-Americans and the like – are people with one foot in each world. Having one foot in each world makes these people marginalized. Jesus-Christ is the greatest and most marginalized of all the marginalized and the heart of the creative core. The church that joins this marginalization and realizes that it, too, is hyphenated is the functionally diverse church. The functionally diverse church stands with the marginalized and lives with a foot in each world, just like its diverse membership.

As we studied history, we discovered a time and place where several communities lived in diversity. This time was the third and fourth centuries of the Common Era and the place was in the Pachomian monastic communities of Egypt. In response to radical social change people formed deliberate communities. In these communities, the members lived regimented lives with clear rules and, because of the structure of the community, were able to maintain a diversity of views. The functionally diverse church is an echo of these monasteries. While the functionally diverse church members do not live cloistered lives, they have chosen to form a deliberate community and, because the rules of interaction are clear, are able to maintain diversity.

As we reflected on experience, I shared my own experience of increasing diversity and the experience of the United Methodists in Oregon and Idaho. We discovered that the Oregon and Idaho United Methodist Church has become a place of diversity. No one can claim that United Methodists in Oregon and Idaho live in places of homogeneity; my generation has experienced first-hand the shift in population. We then explored the successes and failures of United Methodist outreach to diverse population, specifically the Latino population. We found the successful ministries are ones that intentionally reach out to people, intentionally recruit Spanish-speaking leadership, and intentionally include the whole body in the ministry's leadership. We discovered that the ministries that did not involve the community in the ministry were the ministries that failed. The functionally diverse church heeds the experience of United Methodists in Oregon and Idaho to build a different kind of church.

Acknowledging the Church Growth Movement

Once we had concluded the reflection of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral, we explored the idea of missiology and the writings of the Church Growth movement. What we learned is that every church is motivated by a call and that the shape of the response to the call is a missiology. We learned from the Church Growth movement that a functionally diverse church may not be the most expedient way to grow a church because people do not like to cross cultural boundaries to convert to Christianity. A church will grow faster and easier when the church leadership focuses on building the churches within the one cultural boundary. The way of the functional church, however, is another

way of organizing a church. We heard of Erwin McManus' church, Mosaic, which has decided to grow following some ideas similar to that of the functionally diverse church. This church, which considers itself an organism and has chosen to reach out to a diverse population, is growing more slowly and with more complications, but the Mosaic church believes that this is what God is calling them to do. The Church Growth way is the easiest way to grow churches but not the only way; functional diversity is another valid way to grow a church.

Final Conclusion

We conclude with this idea: functional diversity is another way to imagine and structure a church; it is not the only way a church may be structured and grow. Functional diversity is the way of including everyone and valuing their whole experience. Functional diversity has a strong biblical basis located in God's love of the immigrant and the stranger. Functional diversity looks to the margins for the Holy Spirit and God's creativity. Functional diversity looks to the experience of the Pachomian monks who formed deliberate communities and then focused orthopraxis rather than orthodoxy. Functional diversity acknowledges that the neighborhoods in which our churches are located have changed and that there are good ways to reach these communities.

In my own ministry, I intend to build functionally diverse communities. I realize that these might not be the fastest growing and most harmonious communities. They are, however, communities that reflect God's desire.

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