

Christian Missions to Diaspora Groups:

A Diachronic General Overview and Synchronic Study of Contemporary USA

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of this Study

This paper is a diachronic overview of Christian missions to diaspora groups in general and a synchronic study of current efforts in contemporary USA. Definitions and explanations of several key-terms are offered below for the sake of clarity.

1.2 Definitions

“**Diachronic study**” is the methodological approach in which the time dimension is along the time line (i.e. historically studying changes through time).

“**Diaspora**” refers to scattered or dispersed people. Etymologically it is derived from the Hebrew word, **galut**, meaning exile, and the Greek word, *diaspora* or *disapeirein*, which means dispersion. Historically the word “diaspora” has referred to the Jewish dispersions and settlement outside of Palestine from the time of exile through the Greek and Roman periods, as recorded in the Old Testament. It is even suggested that the rapid spread of Christianity in the early Church was aided by the scattered placement of Jews from the earlier dispersion around the world.¹ Additional contemporary usage of the word “diaspora” refers to any people migrating and being settled far from their ancestral homeland; people who are on the move or being moved.²

“**Diaspora Groups**” refers to various groups of people considered to belong to the diaspora category. They are refugees, immigrants, migrant workers, international students, documented

¹ _____, *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962, p. 840, 854-856.

² _____, *Webster's Universal Encyclopedic Dictionary*, New York: Barnes & Noble, 2002, p. 502.

immigrants holding visa and green card³, undocumented immigrants without visa or green card, and diplomats.⁴ This contemporary usage of the word *diaspora* has an expanded meaning, from the original reference to Jewish dispersion to other groups away from homeland for every reason and in multiple formats.

“**Diaspora Missiology**” is a relatively new term for formal study on missions among diaspora peoples, or the academic discipline of the church’s mission in spreading the Christian faith among non-Christian diaspora peoples wherever they are located.⁵

“**Evangelism**” is rooted in the Greek word *euangelizo* meaning “... to spread the Good News of the Gospel with signs following, in both supernatural power and compassionate deeds, to preach, to persuade, to call to faith in Christ.”⁶ When this term is seen as the goal of missions then there is a close relationship with missiology.

“**Missiology**” is the theological and formal study of the mission of the church, the character and purpose of missionary work.⁷ It may be called the “science of missions.”⁸ Etymologically this word is derived from the French word *missiologie* which is transliterated to *missiology* in English. This word has controversy over its value due to its earlier construct from Latin, *missio or mitto*, and Greek, *apostello* and *logos* that was deemed a “clumsy construct”, a monstrous “hybrid.”⁹ However, *missio* refers to the *missio dei* or mission of God and *logos* to *logos anthropon* meaning the nature of man. So when the mission of God comes into contact with

³ Green card is a term used by immigrants in reference to the official document for “resident” in contrast distinction to that of “alien” status.

⁴ Wan, Enoch, PhD – http://www.globalmissiology.org/english/docs_html/diaspora_study/gm_diaspora_what_is.html

⁵ Moreau, A. Scott, Ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000, p. 646.

⁶ Ibid, p. 346-347.

⁷ Dictionary.com at <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/missiology>

⁸ Terry, John Mark, Ebbie Smith, and Justice Anderson, eds., *Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History, and Strategies of World Missions*, Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998, p. 4.

⁹ Ibid., p. 1

the nature of man, Mark Terry calls it a “holy collision” resulting in a new dynamic.¹⁰ Therefore, the true value of usage of the word *missiology* is seen in its theological content. It is in fact, *missionary theology* with a valuable place in theological studies and contributions to Christian theology and doctrinal statements.¹¹

“**Mission**” is a word derived from Latin, *missio or mitto*, as noted above. It means delegation or sending with a goal in sight.¹² In general it refers to a body of persons sent to perform a service or carry on an activity.¹³ The term is used by Christians in reference to the task, obligation or commission, adopted by the Church to spread the Christian faith throughout the world.¹⁴ When related to the theology of missions and a history of missions in the Christian context, it contributes to the formulation of a philosophy of missions.¹⁵

“**Synchronic Study**” is the methodological approach in which the time dimension is frozen; in contrast to “**diachronic study**” (see above).

II. DIACHRONIC OVERVIEW OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONS TO DIASPORA GROUPS IN GENERAL

2.1 The Very Early Church.

The face of Christianity has been in the process of change over its 21 Centuries of existence, starting as a small Jewish sect but growing to claim over 2 billion adherents today.¹⁶ On the day of Pentecost, thousands of Jews traveled to Jerusalem and received Jesus Christ as their Messiah,¹⁷

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 2 – see diagram on this page.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 4

¹² Traupman, John C., *The New College Latin & English Dictionary*, New York: Bantam Books, 1995, p.262, 576

¹³ Webster, op. cit., p. 1171.

¹⁴ Barrett, David B., George T. Kurian, and Todd M. Johnson, *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Survey of Churches and Religions in the Modern World*, Vol. 1, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 29.

¹⁵ Terry, op. cit., p. 13-15

¹⁶ Barrett, David B., and Todd M. Johnson, *World Christian Trends, AD 30-2200: Interpreting the Annual Christian Megacensus*, Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2001.

¹⁷ Acts 2.

These Jewish believers of the early Church were the first diaspora people in the Christian context and were dispersed by persecution. Being scattered, they embraced this opportunity to preach the Gospel through out the Roman empire.

Historically, an elementary principle or concept of diaspora missiology is found in the story of Ruth in the Old Testament. She renounced the god of Chemosh of the Moabites (her own people) and committed to follow her mother-in-law Naomi and her God, the God of Israel.¹⁸ She left her people and eventually left also her people's god.

2.2 The Apostolic Age

The time period following the ascension of Jesus Christ may be labeled the Apostolic Age, the initial period of Christian missions. It was characterized by both the apostles and ordinary Jewish believers spreading the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ.¹⁹ For example, according to Acts 18 and Romans 16, Priscilla and Aquila were forced to leave Rome just because the fact that they were Jews, victims of their circumstances. Yet they hosted the Apostle Paul for one and a half years then accompanied him to Ephesus in church planting. Eventually they ended up with a church at their own home back in Rome.

Christians were dispersed from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria, and other parts of the earth. They were diaspora people serving the Lord as He guided their journeys from place to place. This was the pattern of evangelism outlined by Jesus in Acts 1:8. In Antioch the first believers were gentiles, not Jewish proselytes. Therefore they were called Christians so they would be distinguished from a sect of Judaism.²⁰

¹⁸ Neill, Stephen, *A History of Christian Missions*, New York: Penguin Books, 1986, p. 13.

¹⁹ Acts 6:8-8:9ff; 13:6ff; 16:16ff.

²⁰ Moreau, p. 439-440.

The Apostle Paul and Barnabas preached the Gospel in other parts of the earth during his/their missionary journeys. Paul went to the Jew first, then to the Gentile. The Pax Romana prepared the political environment facilitating his/their travel to major commercial and government centers.²¹ The Apostolic Age saw the Gospel sent out through diaspora people to various parts of the known world.

Methods in missions that characterized this time period were focused on preaching/teaching of the apostles and through forming house-churches in homes.

2.3 First 500 Years.

The Gospel spread quickly from its original location in the Orient (including India) and the West (Europe and the British Isles), and southward to Egypt, and North Africa. Christianity became the dominant religion of the Roman Empire during this period.²²

Missiologically speaking, during this time period Christian faith was spread through out the Roman Empire by diaspora peoples away from their homelands, facilitated by local Christians, marriage, government leaders, and commercial contacts.²³

2.4 The Dark Ages, 500 – 1215 A.D.

During this period, the church continued to grow and expanded into new areas such as Russia, Moravia, Eastern Europe, Great Britain, Continental Europe, and Scandinavian. The Nestorian Church was the first to introduce Christianity to China and Asia in spite of its heretical doctrines. It did gain some temporary favor due to its monastic element that was compatible to the Buddhist monastic lifestyle in China.²⁴

²¹ Ibid, p. 440.

²² Terry, p. 183.

²³ Ibid, p. 441.

²⁴ Ibid. and Terry, p. 184 – 188.

Challenges of this period included schism in the Eastern church and irruption of Islam²⁵ which forced many to convert from Christianity. Other influences leading to Christian apostasy were the social, economic, political, military, and religious pressures of Muslims among the Christians of North Africa. Under such pressures, many abandoned their superficial commitment to Christianity when converted to Islam with a genuine devotion to Allah.

In response to the Islamic victories, the Crusades were launched to reclaim the Holy Land from Islamic control and to regain the Eastern Church into fellowship. Christianity and missions suffered irreparable damages caused by the brutal conflict between the Crusades and Islamic forces. The Crusades left a deep and enduring rift in relationship between the Islamic world and the Christian church that continues on today. Subsequently, the church fell into a low ebb morally characterized by cruelty and savagery in its missionary strategy.²⁶

Missiologically speaking, factors contributing to church growth included the Spirit-anointed tenacity of the devout and the emerging theological foundation of the Church. The following missiological insights from this period for evangelizing the Muslim diaspora in the USA are as follows:

- praying and looking to the Lord's leadership in becoming all things to these people
- representing Christ the True Savior and God, in hopes that some would be saved.²⁷
- Becoming all things to the target people,
- Representing Christ the True Savior and God while praying that some would be saved.

²⁵ Terry, p. 187.

²⁶ Ibid, p. 187-188.

²⁷ I Corinthians 10:33.

- carefully grounding new converts well in the Lord is critically important before encouraging them to stand on their own when working cross-culturally with any diaspora person/group.
- avoid forcing/coercing anyone to convert to follow Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior; allow the Spirit of God to do His part when missionaries are to be prepared to do their part.

2.5 The Medieval World, 1215 – 1650 A.D.

By this time, the Muslims had gained such strong control over aforementioned territories that there was but a remnant of Christians in these locations, e.g. India and Ethiopia where the church was visible and functional. However, in China the work started by the Nestorians was suppressed because the time for the Gospel in Asia had not yet arrived.²⁸ The Crusades attempted to forcefully convert residents in the Holy Land from Islam to Christianity that resulted in the loss of many lives and brought in enmity that continues today between Muslims and Christians.²⁹

Some Franciscan missionaries to China responded to a report by Marco Polo. There was an increased response to the Gospel for a brief period, Through the efforts of John of Monte Corvino that 100,000 people turned to Christ in China. John of Marignolli did take 33 Friars with him from Italy to go to China to carry on the work for a short time. When he left there was no replacement. Soon after this, in 1362 the Bishop of Zaitun, James of Florence was martyred. Then in 1369 the last remnant of the Latins were expelled from Peking. Some of the insurmountable obstacles of Christian outreach were: the use of Latin language by the Catholics, the insistence of certain

²⁸ Ibid, p. 442; Neill, p. 80-83

²⁹ Moreau, p. 442.

cultural forms foreign to China, and challenging transportation problems.³⁰ The door to the Gospel had been closed in China at that point.³¹

Some missiological insights could be derived from the period. First is timing – wait when people are not ready to receive the Gospel unto salvation. Second, the Church itself might be the obstacle alongside with other natural situations. Thus it is best to wait for God’s Spirit to prepare the Church and the territory before thrusting forward. Applying this kind of understanding when reaching diaspora people in the USA today calls on us to do our share through prayer and other forms of preparation.

2.6 The Age of Discovery or the Reformation and Renaissance, 1215 - 1650 A.D.

By 1215 A.D. the Western Church, being Roman Catholic in form, had recovered from the Crusades to a great degree. During this period, the Western church was in its height in both religious and political power. All temporal and spiritual matters were under the charge of the Roman Church. Due to the challenges of Islam and the schism, the Eastern Church survived through holding to a fortress mentality. So the healthier Western Church prepared to reach out to the Eastern counterparts.³²

Martin Luther and other key leaders spawned the Reformation when he protested against the Catholic Church and so the Protestant movement was born. Catholic reaction came in the form of a counter-reformation and a new order of Catholic missionaries, the Jesuits emerged.³³

From this point on, the focus of this paper will be shifted to Protestant missions. It is considered unusual and puzzling that the reformers like Luther, Zwingli, Calvin and Knox did not show a missionary zeal. Some scholars attributed this phenomenon to the following factors:

³⁰ Terry, p. 190.

³¹ Moreau, p. 442; Neill, p. 107-109.

³² Terry, p. 188-189.

³³ Ibid.

- 1) They believed the Great Commission was fulfilled by the Apostles in the Early Church. It became the Great Omission.
- 2) There was a life-and-death struggle in establishing the Reformation and there was no spared energy to consider missions.
- 3) There were religious wars contributing to the omission of missions.
- 4) Contact with other religions was limited by the Reformers and Catholics were considered as enemies.
- 5) There were no effective missionary organizations emerging in the horizon. Monasticism was considered the primary missionary arm for the Catholic Church but had not emerged among the Protestant.
- 6) The Reformers were faulty in their provincial ecclesiology, otherwise known to us as “territorialism” that curtailed the broad view of universal mission.
- 7) The Protestant Reformers held to a faulty eschatology with the strong conviction that they were the last generation before the return of Christ. As a result they believed any missionary efforts at that point would be meaningless and futile.³⁴

The points mentioned above remain important considerations in the Church today. It is valuable to keep this in view for the development of an effective diaspora missiology that will reach all who come to us. They have traveled under the guidance of God even if they do not yet know Him. Our responsibility from a diaspora missiological view is to be preoccupied in prayer, keeping unity among the brethren, and studying to show ourselves prepared to reach our new neighbors next door.

2.7 Protestant Precursors to Missions, 1650 – 1792 A.D.

³⁴ Ibid, p. 194-195.

Spiritual depth was lacking in the Protestant Church right after the Reformation as a result of dead orthodoxy and the Reformers who were distracted from thoughts of mission. However, renewal was started with Philip Spener who initiated pietistic practices in small group prayer meetings and Bible study. This began to grow and spread to others. In addition to this came the Moravian mission and from there the Wesleyan Revival and William Carey Baptist Missionary Society were birthed. This took place along with the birth of three Anglican societies that rose up in North America to reach the Native Americans. In fact the work of these organizations became the model for the William Carey Baptist Society. By now the stage was set for the next period - the Great Century of Christian Missions.

The missiological principle derived from this period of history is that timing and preparation of the soil are critically important. The Lord prepares the fields and laborers. The farmer who sowed seed on dry, rocky, and thorny soil did not glean a good harvest for his labors; when he planted on good soil the harvest was multiplied and plentiful.³⁵ When the soil of the hearts are tilled and prepared for the seeds of God's Word we can call on the Lord to send laborers into the harvest field. The harvest will be plentiful but there will likely be few laborers.³⁶

2.8 The Great Century and Beyond, 1792-1910³⁷

This period of time was characterized by the expansion of Christianity around the world. Missions societies and organizations were formed in Europe and in America. The mission work of these societies was missionary directed, paternalistic, and financially subsidized. Colonialism was prominent as well.³⁸

³⁵ Matthew 13:3-9; 13:18-23; Mark 4:1-9; 4:13-20; Luke 8:4-8; 8: 8:11-15.

³⁶ Matthew 9:37.

³⁷ Terry, p. 199. *The Great Century* was coined by Kenneth Scott Latourette.

³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 208.

By the late 19th Century Christian mission was typified by evangelism, individual conversion, church planting, social transformation and outreach through education and medicine.³⁹ Colonialism continued as a dominant force even into the 20th Century. Regardless of criticism against the 19th Century and the 20th Century missions movements, admittedly there were brave heroes of the faith whom God used to extend the Gospel worldwide.⁴⁰

III. DIACHRONIC OVERVIEW OF IMMIGRATION TO THE USA

It is important to have some perspective of the history of immigration to the USA if we are to propose mission outreach to the diaspora people in our contemporary setting.

3.1 Waves of Immigration

The United States has always encouraged immigration. In the beginning the goal of favorable immigration policy was largely to increase the population to help settle a vast country. Later by the 1880's, certain individuals were barred from immigration introducing the first qualitative restrictions. Those who were restricted were prostitutes, low-skilled labor, and the Chinese.⁴¹ In 1906 the Gentleman Agreement excluded immigrants from Japan.

Nevertheless, the first three waves of immigration to the US were fairly close together as can be seen in the following chart:

³⁹ Ibid, p., 213.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 217-218.

⁴¹ Philip Martin and Elizabeth Midgley, *Immigration: Shaping and Reshaping America*, Population Bulletin, June, 2003, p. 5.

Figure 1 - Three early great waves of immigration

YEAR OF IMMIGRATION	NUMBER OF IMMIGRANTS	COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN
1815 – 1860	5 million	England, Ireland, Germany, Scandinavian, and others from Northwestern Europe
1865 – 1890	10 million	Mainly Northwestern Europe and Syria, Lebanon, Jordan
1890 – 1914	15 million	Austro-Hungary, Turkey, Lithuania, Russia, Jewish, Greece, Italy, Romania
Total	30 million	

Source:⁴²

By the 1920's, our current qualitative and quantitative restrictions on immigration were set into place. This omitted Asians including Arabs.⁴³ There was a significant policy change in 1965. This policy shifted the priority for entry from people with certain national origins to those who either had relatives in the United States or were foreigners hired by US employers. This policy change has resulted in a shift from European to mostly Asian and Latino immigrants.⁴⁴

⁴² Schultz, Stephen, Professor of History, University of Wisconsin. <http://us.history.wisc.edu/hist102/lectures/lecture08.html>

⁴³ Gahazali, Abdus Sattar, American Muslim Perspective, http://amp.ghazali.net/html/four_waves.html

⁴⁴ Martin, op. cit., p. 6

Figure 2 - Fourth Wave of Immigration

YEAR OF IMMIGRATION	NUMBER OF IMMIGRANTS	COUNTRY OF ORIGIN
1965 – 1990	55.5 million ⁴⁵	Asia, Latin America, Middle East, Europe, Africa
1990 – 2000	32.7 million ⁴⁶	Asia, Latin America, Middle East, Europe, Africa
2000 – 2007	1 million/year ⁴⁷	Asia, Latin America, Middle East, Europe, Africa
Total	89.2 million (approximately)	

3.2 Present Immigration/Diaspora Situation in the USA

Since the beginning of the Fourth Wave of Immigration to the United States another phenomenon has occurred. It is natural and expected to see immigrants bring their religion and beliefs along with other socio-cultural practices with them. The First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States of America assures freedom of religion. The USA has always provided and still defends the right of individuals to worship the religion of their choice. Nevertheless, the large immigration since 1965 has introduced the quantitative growth of many foreign religions, many from the East. They are as follows:

⁴⁵ Numbers, USA - <http://www.numbersusa.com/overpopulation/decadegraph.html> (my listed number on this chart approximate)

⁴⁶ Numbers, USA - <http://www.numbersusa.com/overpopulation/census.html>

⁴⁷ Numbers, USA - <http://www.numbersusa.com/PDFs/TraditionalLevelsofUSImmigration.pdf>

Figure 3 – Phenomenal Increase of Foreign Religions

Documented Religious Centers of Immigrant Diaspora People in the USA	Number of facilities in the USA by 2007
Afro-Caribbean	30
Baha'i	93
Brahma Kamaris	25
Buddhism	2194
Cao Daiism*	1
Falun Gong (Falun Dafa)*	1
Hinduism	714
Islam**	1619
Jainism	67
Shinto	5
Siddha Yoga Centers	48
Sikhism	253
Taoism	40
Zoroastrianism	34
Total	6106

Source: Pluralism Project and Adherents.com

*There are likely more of these centers but they are not all documented yet. Research continues and is being updated regularly.

**An unofficial report states that there are now 6000 Muslim mosques in the USA. See: www.kamalsaleem.org

3.3 World Population and the United States Ratings

The United States is rated, on a worldwide scale, as the third largest country in the world with a population of 302,200,000 by mid-2007.⁴⁸ The world is estimated to have a population of 6,679,830,000 as of December, 2007.⁴⁹ The largest country, China, has an estimated population of 1,318,000,000 as of mid-2007.⁵⁰ Finally, the second largest country, India, has an estimated population of 1,131,900,000 as of mid-2007.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Population Reference Bureau Bulletin 2007, World Population Data Sheet, <http://www.prb.org/DataFind/prjprbdata/wcprbdata7.asp?DW=DR&SL=&SA=1>; Population Media Center, <http://www.populationmedia.org/index.html>

⁴⁸ Ibid., <http://www.prb.org/DataFind/prjprbdata/wcprbdata7.asp?DW=DR&SL=&SA=1>

⁴⁹ Ibid., <http://www.prb.org/DataFind/prjprbdata/wcprbdata7.asp?DW=DR&SL=&SA=1>

⁵⁰ Ibid., <http://www.prb.org/DataFind/prjprbdata/wcprbdata7.asp?DW=DR&SL=&SA=1>

⁵¹ Ibid., <http://www.prb.org/Source/54.3AmerRacialEthnicMinor.pdf>

During the 20th Century the United States was transformed from a predominantly white population to a large scale diversity of racial and ethnic “minorities.” These minorities are primarily comprised of Hispanics and Blacks, followed by Asians and a growing number of Indians (also called South Asians).⁵²

IV. SYNCHRONIC OVERVIEW OF THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH OF 2007 IN THE USA

The USA has long been characterized by individualism and pragmatism and is still swaying under the influence of positivism and naturalism particularly from the 1950’s and 1960’s.⁵³ At the beginning of the 21st Century witnessed the addition of postmodernism and pluralism. Absolutes have been replaced by non-descriptive elements of relativism. This resulted in a new ideological landscape that impacted negatively both the society at large and the Christian church.

The country of USA has shifted from being a melting pot to a salad bowl which means newcomers no longer have to shake off their cultural heritage and identity by adapting to the new “American” way. The new ethos among new immigrants is characterized by cross-cultural differences, language barriers, and religious preferences. How then should the Church prepare to cope with the new scenario?

The following report and graph from George Barna illustrates what has been taking place in the Church at this time in 2007.⁵⁴

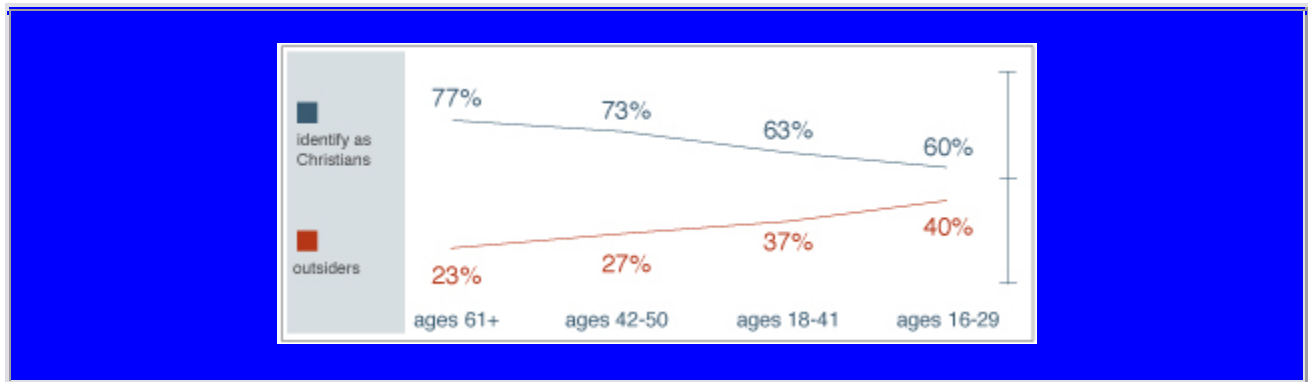
One reason that Christianity’s image is changing is due to the shifting faith allegiances of Americans. Simply put, each new generation has a larger share of people who are not Christians (that is, atheists, agnostics, people associated

⁵² Smart, Ninian, *World Philosophies*, New York: Routledge, 2000, p. 274-288

⁵⁴ The Barna Group, *The Barna Update*, September 24, 2007 - According to website guidelines permission is not needed to utilize this material. It is not being used for sale, is not being distributed, and is used only in this paper.
<http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=280>

with another faith, or those who have essentially no faith orientation). The new book refers to this group as "outsiders" because they are describing what Christianity looks like from an outsider's perspective. Among adults over the age of 40, only about one-quarter qualify as outsiders, while among the 16 to 29 segment, two-fifths are outsiders. This represents a significant migration away from the dominant role that Christianity has had in America.

Figure 4 - The Proportion of those "Outside" Christianity is Growing with Each Generation



Source: The Barna Group, Ltd. 2007

As pointed out in the Barna Update related to [atheists and agnostics](#), this is not a passing fad wherein young people will become "more Christian" as they grow up. While Christianity remains the typical experience and most common faith in America, a fundamental recalibration is occurring within the spiritual allegiance of America's upcoming generations.

Yet, the research shows that millions of young outsiders have significant experience with Christians and Christian churches. The typical young outsider says they have five friends who are Christians; more than four out of five have attended a Christian church for a period of at least six months in the past; and half have previously considered becoming a Christian.

V. SYNCHRONIC STUDY OF CURRENT EFFORTS IN CONTEMPORARY USA

It is a fact that America came under strong Christian influence during its founding period through immigration from England and Europe with so many of the first immigrants being Christians. So the mission that started to take place among diaspora people in the USA was through the immigrants themselves to the Native Americans and divergent groups in to this country.

Early immigrants founded the USA, evangelized and started churches extensively in many places. Mission efforts were directed to Native Americans and outreach abroad. Missions among diaspora groups emerged only recently in response to massive influx of the new kind of unassimilated immigrants. Home missions remain largely unfocused and splintered⁵⁵ and only recently some of the major denominations began reach the diaspora peoples in their home missions.

The political environments engaging in war in various countries have produced refugees. Many refugees took refuge in the USA, especially since 1965. Other countries have a political atmosphere that limits religious, economic, and social freedoms. Citizens of these countries desire freedom and have left their homeland in pursuit of life, liberty happiness, education, prosperity, and religious freedom. Many have come to the USA and some among them are Christians.

For a long time, religious freedom and good will towards Christianity were favorable to church growth. However, the political environment in the USA at present is showing signs of growing restrictions on the Christian church; yet more freedom to foreign religions. The spiritual condition of the church in the USA is showing signs of decline; except diaspora churches.

VI. IMPLICATIONS FOR CONTEMPORARY MISSIONS IN THE USA

As shown by the Barna report, Christians in the USA are showing signs of increased skepticism of validity of the church and confused identity. The importation of foreign religions and the explosive growth of adherents of non-Christian faiths have significant missiological implications as follows:

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 243

- 1) Renewal is needed in the church to rekindle the missionary to outreach in foreign lands and “in-reach” to the diaspora groups in home mission.
- 2) Ruth of the OT remains a good model to reach new diaspora groups, encouraging them to turn from their foreign gods to follow the one true and living God - Jesus Christ.
- 3) It is very essential to carefully, prayerfully, and faithfully ground new believers in spiritual discipline (i.e. personal devotion: Word and prayers) to withstand future tests and trials.
- 4) Pray that we may follow Paul’s example in I Corinthians 9:23; 10:31-33, being humble and flexible to win many of the lost souls for Christ.
- 5) Take caution against coercion of non-believers to follow Jesus Christ. Allow the Spirit of God to do His work while we actively engage in evangelizing the newcomers among us.
- 6) Upon meeting diaspora people, we are to promptly discern if they are Christians or not. Then lovingly embrace immigrant converts, disciple them diligently to become soul winners among their own.
- 7) Be encouraged that the threat of militant and radical Muslim of today is not new. May God daily alert us in prayer to develop spiritual tenacity, improve our missionary competence to reach our new neighbors in the diaspora.
- 8) Prayerfully identify obstacles of outreach among diaspora groups and carefully formulate mission strategy to change their lives with the Gospel and discipleship.
- 9) Pray that God will prepare the hearts of the target group to become receptive soil for the seed of the Gospel for fruitful outcome.

- 10) Learn about diaspora groups culturally, love them genuinely, reach them compassionately and save them winsomely.

VII. CONCLUSION

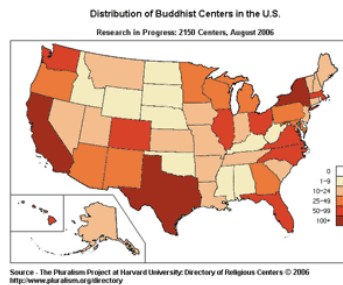
In this brief study, a diachronic overview of Christian missions to diaspora groups in general and a synchronic survey of current efforts in contemporary USA have been conducted to glean missiological insights for the evangelization and discipleship of the target diaspora groups.

This is a meager attempt to contribute to the sparse literature on diaspora missiology in the USA

APPENDIX

The following maps show the distribution of several categories of non-Christian religious centers across the USA. This is valuable information for planning mission and evangelistic strategies in our contemporary setting. This information is acquired from the Pluralism Project at the following website: <http://www.pluralism.org/resources/statistics/distribution.php>⁵⁶

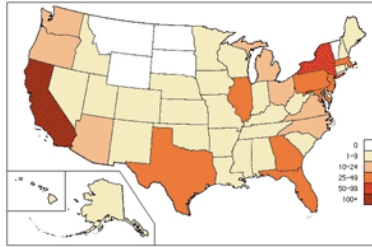
Buddhism: 2194 Centers in mid-2007*



Hinduism: 714 Centers in mid-2007*

⁵⁶ Maps were copied from the Pluralism website and figures changed to match current statistics for mid-2007.

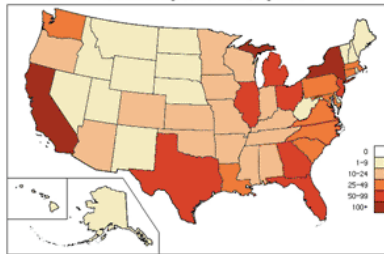
Distribution of Hindu Centers in the U.S.
Research in Progress: 714 Centers, August 2006



Source - The Pluralism Project at Harvard University; Directory of Religious Centers © 2006
<http://www.pluralism.org/directory>

Islam: 1619 Centers in mid-2007*

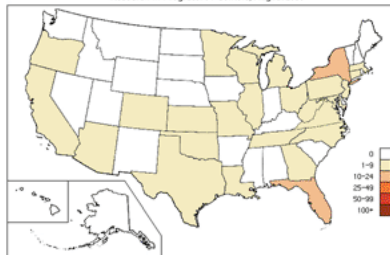
Distribution of Muslim Centers in the U.S.
Research in Progress: 1583 Centers, August 2006



Source - The Pluralism Project at Harvard University; Directory of Religious Centers © 2006
<http://www.pluralism.org/directory>

Jainism: 67 Centers in mid-2007*⁵⁷

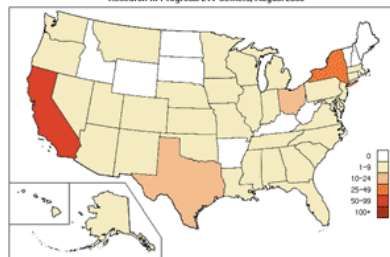
Distribution of Jain Centers in the U.S.
Research in Progress: 94 Centers, August 2006



Source - The Pluralism Project at Harvard University; Directory of Religious Centers © 2006
<http://www.pluralism.org/directory>

Sikhism: 253 Centers in mid-2007*

Distribution of Sikh Centers in the U.S.
Research in Progress: 244 Centers, August 2006



Source - The Pluralism Project at Harvard University; Directory of Religious Centers © 2006
<http://www.pluralism.org/directory>

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