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**Kingdom Culture Christianity: Hispanic Evangelicals**

**The Hispanic Transformation of American Evangelicalism**

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Without a doubt, the most powerful force transforming the narrative of 21<sup>st</sup> Century American Evangelicalism rests embedded within the fabric of a critical domestic public policy debate with ramifications far reaching the corridors of Washington D. C., immigration. These immigrants, particularly Hispanic Immigrants, stand poised to change the Christian experience by broadening the Evangelical agenda, incorporating a transformational missiology, reigniting a prophetic socio/political movement, and globally serving as Ambassadors of a Kingdom culture ethos that reconciles righteousness and justice.

The recent debate succeeded in removing the grave clothes from an entire segment of our populous thus exposing an unprecedented opportunity for outreach and evangelism that will transform the face of Christianity in America. From Wall St. and Madison Ave. to Washington D.C., American corporations, politicians, and leaders understand the potential embedded within the thriving Hispanic American community. While corporate America engages Hispanic consumers, and political operatives recruit Hispanic voters, the Body of Christ stands ready to reap a Hispanic Harvest.

Historical suppositions that limited the necessity for outreach and partnership to and with the Hispanic population exclusively to ministries and churches in California, Texas, Florida, New York, and the Southwest, no longer apply. Today, Hispanics participate in communities from North Dakota to Wyoming, From Portland, Maine, to Alabama, literally, from sea to shining sea. As a result, any church or ministry committed to a viable 21<sup>st</sup> Century growth matrix must include a Hispanic Outreach strategy. In other words, to be relevant in ministry today, one must reach out to Latinos. For the American Church to continue to be viable in

the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it must equip, train, collaborate with, and engage Hispanic American leaders.

At the end of the day, demographical realities and sheer numbers demand that the church engage this community. Let us consider the statistics. The Hispanic population is the largest minority group in the country. As of July 1, 2005, the estimated Hispanic population in the U.S. was 42.7 million, constituting 14% of the nation's total population. This estimate does not include the 3.9 million residents of Puerto Rico or the entire undocumented population. In addition, Hispanics are an ethnically and racially diverse population. For example, in 2005, the Latino population on the U.S. mainland was composed of Mexican Americans (64%), Puerto Ricans (10%), Cubans (3%), Salvadorans (3%), and Dominicans (3%). The remaining (17) % are of some other Central American, South American, or other Hispanic or Latino origin.

Further, this community exemplifies future growth capacity as made evident by the fact that 75% of Hispanics are under 40 years of age and 34% are 18 years or younger. Yet the most striking piece of data demonstrates the need to contextualize a missional baseline incorporating the Latino harvest as a top tier target group. The very fact that in 2009, one of out every six Americans are of Hispanic descent and by the year 2020, the Latino population will total roughly 102.6 million people or 24% of the population, demands immediate attention. Accordingly, let us consider 10 prominent threads within the Hispanic Christian Community that will transform American Evangelicalism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century:

As a result of Hispanic Evangelical Growth,

1. American Evangelicalism will stand on a platform of multi-ethnic Kingdom culture delivery mechanisms, that will obligate the 21<sup>st</sup> century church planter and missional leader to assure that the local church reflects the entire community. In other words, **American Evangelicalism will be less segregated, more integrated, and committed to authentic community outreach.** Be advised, our young people have no interest in sitting in the pews of a church that is entirely white, black or Hispanic. They desire

diversity, not in the context of political correctness but rather in the Spirit of Pentecost. Hispanics as you know are not a race but rather a ethno cultural group of various races coalescing around a common language and shared values. We are part of a multi-ethnic church , rapidly becoming multi-lingual and committed to a Kingdom Culture presentation of the Gospel. Hispanic Evangelicals, in essence, represent the United Nations of Christianity.

2. As a result of this Hispanic Evangelical influx, American Evangelicalism will reconcile the core commitment to biblical orthodoxy with the Pentecostal/Charismatic experience, today, the fastest growing Christian movement in the Global South.

The future of Latino Christianity is Evangelical, Prophetic and primarily Pentecostal: Out of the close to 50 million Hispanics in America, 16 million identify themselves as Born Again, according to Dr. Gaston Espinosa of Claremont Mckenna while over half the 30 million Catholics identify themselves as Charismatic and in kindred fellowship with the Pentecostal community.

It is important to note that Latinos embrace a Global and Transformative missiology: The current demographic drama is happening against a historic backdrop of change in Latin American Christianity. The Latino church is still in the midst of its own Protestant Reformation. The first serious Protestant impact in largely Roman Catholic Latin America came via the evangelical wing of the church—particularly the Pentecostal movement during its twentieth-century surge. The trajectory of this new reformation is anything but predictable, and its effects on church mission could have global ramifications.

3. As a result of this Hispanic Evangelical growth, American Evangelicalism will increase its prophetic platform in order to address issues from both the vertical and horizontal elements of the Cross. Hispanics stand committed to

the Cross. A Cross that is both vertical and horizontal; redemption and relationship, salvation and transformation, covenant and community, ethos and pathos, internalized and transactional values, kingdom and society, faith and public policy, Billy Graham and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (Side note, my elevator speech describing a typical Hispanic Evangelical is a hybrid of Billy Graham and Martin Luther King with salsa sauce on top. ) reconcile both the righteousness and Justice elements of the Gospel Narrative.

Historically, White Evangelicals focused on two major issues, Life and Marriage. For the record, according to Pew Research, Hispanics are more pro life and pro traditional marriage than even white evangelicals are ( Case in point, Proposition 8 in California).

Meanwhile, African American Christians focused on the Social Justice elements of the Gospel message: Luke 4 and Matthew 25. Black Evangelical leaders addressed issues of poverty, education, racism, and justice.

Hispanic Evangelicals stand committed to contextualize a narrative that reconciles both the vertical and horizontal elements of the cross, a platform of righteousness and justice , in other words, the evangelical nexus of a kingdom culture ethos and a transformational missional directive that is not either or but both and. Hence, marrying John 3:16 with Luke 4 and Matthew 25. 100% Pro Life and 100% committed to the alleviation of poverty. 100% in Defense of Traditional Marriage and 100% committed to biblical stewardship of God's Creation.

4. Finally, as a result of this Hispanic Evangelical emerging community, American Evangelicalism will reaffirm its commitment to the following:
  - Biblical Orthodoxy
  - A Holiness movement presenting a clear picture of a Loving God who repudiates sin while loving the sinner. Without a doubt, a fresh

Holiness movement needs to take place without the vestiges of legalism but with a commitment to addressing a sin tolerant culture and church incorporating the eternal truth “Be Holy for I am Holy saith the Lord.

- Justice
- Latinos resonate with a Kingdom movement that embraces cultural reformation not just cultural engagement. Latino Evangelicals desire to offer a counter culture narrative where Biblical truth confronts moral relativism on multiple platforms: digital, relational and cross cultural.
- Hispanic Christians believe that a multi ethnic, Trans generational Christian community committed to biblical orthodoxy and incorporating both the vertical and horizontal elements of the Cross can function as the proverbial firewall against moral relativism and a complacent brand of Christianity doomed to duplicate the Western European church, here in America.

To Latinos, Christianity is not just a religion but also rather a worldview and a lifestyle. While some White Evangelicals embrace and identify themselves as Americans first and Christians second, Hispanics align more with the following declaration, “I am a Christian who happens to be Hispanic American rather than I am a Hispanic American who happens to be a Christian”.

American Christian Leadership must incorporate and equip these prophetic voices to emerge articulating a message that is prophetic and practical, relevant and renewal, seeker and spirit friendly.

At the end of the day, Hispanic Christians will be to the American Evangelical movement what High Definition Technology is to television. Churches that upgrade and modernize the tools of transmission will be relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup>

century American religious scene. Our nation needs an “ecclesia” that embodies “Habitus Christi” the life and habits of Christ with a clear signal that transmits an image of God who still saves, delivers, heals, and will return. Our prayer is the Hispanic Evangelicals will enrich the American church so that it can be seeker and spirit friendly, prophetic and practical, relevant and revival, righteousness and justice.

We are, according to Dr. Jesse Miranda, the Peter and John’s of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. I agree. I believe that once again we stand before the Gate called Beautiful. Once again, our nation and segments of church lie crippled and paralyzed. We, Hispanics, do not have Gold or Silver, but what we have we give unto thee, in the Name of Jesus Christ, we say to the American Church and our blessed Nation, rise up, and walk.

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