Planting a Church Targeting the Brazilian Community in Houston, Focusing on Its Unique Culture

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This dissertation entitled

PLANTING A CHURCH TARGETING THE BRAZILIAN COMMUNITY IN HOUSTON, FOCUSING ON ITS UNIQUE CULTURE

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I dedicate this project to my Lord and Creator, my provider, my source of life, wisdom, and knowledge. He, who has been my source of energy, company present in the battles fought, in the very core of my soul. Kind Father, who always looks at me with tenderness and mercy in my weaknesses.

I dedicate this project to my parents, Geraldo (in memory) and Nilce (in memory), who in extreme wisdom guided my steps in the ways of the Lord.

I dedicate this project to my beloved wife, Jo, who for 37 years crosses the difficult roads of life always by my side, whether they are good or turbulent moments.

I dedicate this project to my children, Karine, Aline and Stevon who love me unconditionally, despite my limitations and weaknesses.

To these, the most relevant of my life story, I dedicate this work.
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INTRODUCTION

In June 2003, my family and I arrived in Dallas, Texas. The initial plan for my family was to spend a few months, resting and enjoying a sabbatical time, after fifteen years of pastoral ministry in Brazil. The same day we arrived in Dallas, the leader of a small group of Brazilians who met weekly for Bible study contacted me and invited us to the Bible study. My family and I promptly decided to accept the invitation to meet that group of brothers and sisters in Christ. After the meeting, they formally invited me to help them plant a church beginning with that small group. Initially I hesitated because my purpose was to relax and enjoy my sabbatical years. However, my passion for church planting was so great that the possibility of saying yes persisted in my thoughts. I started teaching the group’s Bible study, and a few months later my family and I decided to accept the challenge.

Shortly after deciding to stay to plant a church, I noticed that there was a common expression used among the Brazilians in Dallas. Within minutes of meeting a new Brazilian, I would inevitably be warned, “Everything here is different.” I realized that there was a veiled intention in those words, but I could not discern what it was. A few months later, I realized that the phrase was repeated every time a newcomer arriving from Brazil would express an intention of living in the United States. Gradually, I realized that the expression was like a welcome rite for the newcomers to the Brazilian immigrant community of Dallas. The warning seemed to indicate that there was a barrier that the newcomers would have to overcome in order to be part of that cultural group.
I was puzzled by the idea that there would be a barrier. Since we were all Brazilians and we all had common cultural characteristics, it seemed to me that acceptance should be a given. But I was wrong. The cultural characteristics of Brazilian immigrants with more than three-to-five years on American soil were quite different from those of Brazilian newcomers. The established Brazilians formed a group with some very particular characteristics. When they referred to newcomers, there were common expressions that excluded them from the group. These were expressions such as the following: “They are still learning” or “They are new here in America.” Such expressions clearly excluded the newcomers from the established cultural group. The sociologist Bernadette Becerra thus interprets this cultural phenomenon: “We have seen that whether Brazilian immigrants like it or not, their lives in the United States are quite different from their lives in Brazil. Even their survival depends entirely on the Brazilian network and they only get around through their Brazilian friends and/or relatives; the outside scene is still American.”¹ She concludes: “Indeed, being Brazilian in the United States is a situation totally different from being a Brazilian in Brazil.”²

This particular cultural characteristic of the Brazilian community in the US affects the relevance of a church-planting project that includes an appropriate strategy for this target audience. Another factor that contributes to the relevance of this project is the significant number of Brazilians with permanent residency in the city of Houston and


² Ibid., 185.
surrounding areas. Though my family originally settled in Dallas, the target area for the current church plant is in Houston.

This project focuses on the Brazilian population living in West Houston, with a goal to plant a church with special features that meet the needs of the target audience. Another factor that defines the project’s target audience is the multicultural characteristic of immigrant families. Some are Brazilian-American couples. Even when this is not the circumstance, some children will have many more American cultural characteristics than Brazilian. Therefore, the project focuses on a church model based on an American church; the church plant must include a strong interaction between the two communities.

Part One of the project is dedicated to the historical context of the Brazilian culture, demographic issues of the church planting area, and also the particularities of the Brazilian immigrant community and the implications of these in the development of the project. The Brazilian culture is a highly relevant factor in the development of this project; therefore, the first part of the project offers an analysis of cultural development in the history of Brazilian colonization. The presence of immigrants from every continent in Brazil brought to the Brazilian culture a characteristic that facilitates acculturation, which is an openness to and acceptance of new and different cultures. This Brazilian cultural ingredient is presented as an important backdrop for the development of the project. Part One also discusses the issue of religious syncretism in the history of Brazilian colonization, a matter of great relevance to understanding the religious behavior of Brazilians. The languages and customs of Brazilian immigrants in colonial Brazil are treated as important contributions to the cultural and religious distinction between the northern and southern parts of the country.
After this historical introduction, the issues related to Brazilian immigration to the US are discussed, including the determinants and implications. Another aspect to consider is the unique nature of Brazilian identity exhibited in the Brazilian immigrants of the US. Finally, Part One deals with the Brazilian community in the city of Houston, and its social, economic and cultural profile.

Part Two addresses the theological issues of the project. Initially, immigration theology is discussed, especially in relation to the Old Testament, and as God deals with the migratory movement in history. The project demonstrates the special care God had with immigrants and addresses the movement of God in history through the migration of people, especially the Jewish people. Part Two also addresses the movement of God in the history of the early Church with the shift in Jewish culture from exclusivism to inclusivism. This inclusivism opened the door of the Gospel to the Gentiles, the incarnation of Christ as an immigrant, and his disciples as citizens of heaven and foreigners to the world.

At this point, Part Two introduces a contextualization of theology in the migratory circumstance and experience of Brazilian immigrants and in the US. The light of scriptural revelations, as well as, the primary ethical and religious issues are discussed. This project identifies the need for a practical theology for a Christian community with its own particularities and questions. This part examines the main themes of the circumstances experienced by immigrants and how the local church can help in these situations. The role of the local church within the immigrant community is addressed in a practical way so that the church can be a therapeutic community, sensitive to the existential crisis of the immigrant.
Finally, Part Three addresses the strategies and plans for the planting of an immigrant church in West Houston. In this part of the project, the methodologies are defined as well as the modus operandus of the church, in the different phases of the project. As a reference, the targets and goals for each stage will be set. The challenges involved with reaching a population of Brazilian immigrants will be discussed, particularly the fact that the target audience of the project is quite spread out geographically.

Part Three also defines the relationship of the church plant with the denomination, including the role of financial support. Leadership training mechanisms are addressed as well as the preparation of the church within a denominational identity, both theologically and politically. Denominational aspects are considered; the vision embraces a flexible denominational identity that can accommodate the membership of different denominational backgrounds without compromising the broad guidelines of theology and church policy.

Part Three addresses interactive strategies between the Brazilian and US churches, developing projects aimed at the cooperation and communion between both churches. The Christian education programs designed for children of Brazilians as well as children of American couples are one component that seeks to accommodate the characteristics of multicultural families. Finally, the difficulties of an immigrant church are addressed and the church model proposed by this project is presented, including the development of tools and strategies to bring solutions to these challenges.

Thus, the project presented here aims to analyze the earliest cultural contexts of immigrant population, as well as the living context, challenges, needs and opportunities
present in such a population. It offers a pragmatic and objective response to the planting of a church in West Houston.
PART ONE

THE HISTORICAL, SOCIAL, AND DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT
CHAPTER 1

THE FORMATION OF BRAZILIAN CULTURE IN THE HISTORY OF COLONIZATION

Brazil, in the context of Latin American countries, is unique in its historic, social, and demographic characteristics. With a territorial extension of 8,515,767 square kilometers, it is the largest country in Latin America. It has a privileged geographical position with 15,179 km of border area. The country borders ten of the twelve countries in South America, with the exceptions of Chile and Ecuador. The dimension of its borders provides the country a great sociocultural exchange. In addition to demographic characteristics, Brazil is the only Portuguese-speaking country in Latin America.

The migratory diversity in the Brazilian colonial and post-colonial period produced very unique racial and cultural nuances in the country. Chapter 1 deals with these historical and social-demographic issues and how these issues should be considered in the process of planting a church in West Houston. The history of Brazilian migration to the US cannot be understood outside the global context, which involves the Second World War. The victory of the Allies and consequent hegemony expansion of the US in the world, combined with the deep economic crises faced by Brazil in the course of its history, is closely related to the Brazilian migratory movement. These historical factors of
global dimension and national proportion were directly responsible for the promotion of this migratory movement to the US.

**The First Colonizers**

The discovery of Brazil is attributed to a Portuguese maritime fleet, commanded by Pedro Alvares Cabral that anchored on firm land on April 22, 1500 in the place now known as Porto Seguro. The term “discovery” is here used in a Eurocentric approach, since Cabral’s caravan found in the new land native inhabitants. Historian Afranio Peixoto describes the meeting of the mariners with the natives of the land: “No dia 23 avistaram os navegantes sete ou oito homens, depois mais dezoito ou vinte. Nos dias seguintes muitos, que vieram às naus.”¹ There are several theories about the origin of such natives who in years to come would compose the cultural fabric of the Brazilian race. The most probable theory is that these natives were descendants of Asian hunters who crossed the Bering Strait, coming from Siberia to North America. Ted Goebel comments on this theory in article “Who Were the First Americans?”²

With the arrival of the Portuguese in 1500 and the European maritime expansion of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, immigration began. The cultures of these various immigrants would contribute to the formation of the Brazilian culture. This section

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¹ Afranio Peixoto, *História do Brasil* (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1944), 48. English translation: “On April 23, the mariners spotted seven or eight men, then eighteen or twenty more. On following days, many came to ships.” This translation and the ones to follow are provided to aid readers.

demonstrates the formation of the Brazilian cultural fabric from this migratory movement over the course of the centuries.

Contributions of the Portuguese

Brazilian culture is the result of a synthesis of several different cultural groups that have been part of Brazil’s history for centuries. The Portuguese, as colonizers, have undoubtedly participated most in the formation of the Brazilian cultural fabric. The presence of Portugal on Brazilian soil was not always peaceful. In addition to the buccaneers and English pirates found on the Brazilian coast, the Portuguese also had to face French and Dutch invasions. This will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

As a country with a relatively small population, it was a challenge to populate and establish the new continent. Peixoto estimates the population of Portugal at the time as follows: “Em 1527 um censo dá 280,528 fogos, o que a quatro habitantes por lar, daria, ao país, 1,122,112 almas. Se calcuarmos que metade eram mulheres, (deviam ser, mas não eram: sempre sobraram em Portugal, dada a emigração: além disto, 20% daqueles lares eram de viúvas . . .) metade da outra metade menores até quinze anos e maiores de sessenta, ficam apenas 280 mil homens válidos.”

Even with the reduced adult men population amidst other difficulties, Portugal imposed itself, though with great effort, as dominators of the new land. Of course, what encouraged this effort was the land’s riches; Peixoto writes, “A 22 de setembro de 1502(8) chegara a Lisboa o primeiro carregamento

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3 Ibid., 66. English translation: “In 1527, a census reported 280,528 homes. Since there were around four inhabitants per household, would give the country 1,122,112 people. If we calculate that half were women, (should be, but they were not - always there was more women in Portugal, given the emigration, besides, 20 percent of those homes were widows . . .) half of this half was under 15, and over sixty. So, there were only around 280,000 adult men.”
de pau-brasil... Também peles de animais, bugios, papagaios, algodão, pimenta da terra, começaram a ser apreciados. Talvez já alguma especiaria.”

The strong presence of Portuguese culture in Brazil is the result of a great effort on the part of Portugal to send noble members with their households, as well as farmers to establish sugar mills in Brazil. With this strong presence on Brazilian soil, the Portuguese people established the language and Roman Catholic religion as two important contributions to Brazilian culture. The homogeneity of the language in the entire colonial territory became an important cultural communication vehicle between Portugal and the colony.

Participation of the Jesuits was essential for Brazil in becoming the largest Catholic country in the world. The Society of Jesus, as Jesuit priests are called, were prepared in a deprivation regime, which in turn prepared them to serve the mandate in adversarial locations and conditions in order to spread the Catholic faith. They arrived in Brazil in 1549 to Christianize the indigenous natives of the colonial territory. The great missiological challenge of the Jesuits came later with the evangelization of the African slaves who ended up producing great Brazilian religious syncretism. This will be discussed later in this chapter. If one assumes that the spoken and written language as well as religion, are the key ingredients of culture, one can conclude that the Portuguese bequeathed the strongest cultural characteristics in Brazil.

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4 Ibid., 79. English translation: “On September 22, 1502 the first shipment of pau-brasil arrived in Lisbon... Also animal skins, howler monkeys, parrots, cotton, pepper ground, began to be appreciated. Perhaps already some spice.”
Contributions of African Slaves and their Religion

The Portuguese attempted to use natives as slave laborers in agricultural activities and sugar mills, but this was strongly opposed by the very nature of the natives, who were not accustomed to such hard work. Two primary factors hindered the original intention of the Portuguese settlers in the use of native labor. First, Old World diseases were devastating for the natives; and second, it was difficult to control natives in their service as slaves. In his book, *Race and Multiraciality in Brazil and the United States*, G. Reginald Daniel comments on these difficulties:

Old World diseases have even more devastating impact slaughtering millions of Native Americans. Also, many Native Americans resisted enslavement, as well as encroachment on their lands, by escaping into the interior. Africans were somewhat easier to control because their lack of familiarity with the American terrain made successful escape into the interior comparatively more difficult, if not less likely to be attempted.⁵

The most viable alternative was the use of African slave labor. In 1549, the international traffic of African slaves became an official and highly profitable activity authorized by the Portuguese throne due to the insistent arguments of settlers, who claimed a shortage of hand labor. The traffic and the slave market peaked in 1845, shortly before being totally abolished in 1850. Although this was forced migration and unlike the voluntary migration of others, the immigration of Africans strongly impacted Brazilian culture, particularly its beliefs and mysticism. The attempt of the Jesuits to evangelize the slaves faced strong resistance in African spiritualist mysticism. The spiritual world, based on African mystical perspective, is as real as the material world. The supernatural, the

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fear of the unknown, the veneration of the dead people and other striking elements of the African religious culture found resonance in the mysticism of the natives who possessed similar elements, thus making syncretism something almost inevitable.

Roman Catholicism, despite being the dominant religious power, was interestingly co-opted by African mysticism. African influence was so strongly incorporated into Brazilian culture that it was also imposed upon the Protestant Church, which would arrive to the country only in the second half of the nineteenth century. The strongest evidence of this accommodation is the great proliferation of neo-Pentecostal churches that emphasize mystical and supernatural experiences. The great contribution of Africans to Brazilian culture is religious mysticism, but they also, of course, influenced music, dance, food, and brought other distinctly African influences.

The Brazilian Natives and the Roman Catholic Mission

The most important mission of the Jesuits in Brazil was to catechize the natives by structuring an educational system to teach them. This would also serve as an educational system for the children of Portuguese settlers. More than just Christianizing natives, Jesuit priests sought tirelessly to establish European standards of monogamy and nuclear families. The biggest challenge, however, was structuring these changes in communities and making natives abandon their semi-nomadic lifestyle.

In 1549 the Jesuits arrived in Brazil, led by Manoel da Nobrega. Among their ideals was the mission to prevent the entry of Protestants in the colony. The good relationship of the Jesuits with the natives was based on the principles of solidarity and
cooperation, which yielded great dividends. Peixoto reports on the success of the Jesuit mission:

Esses Jesuitas foram edificadores de casas, igrejas, colégios, até cidades: Bahia, S. Paulo, Rio são fundações deles, em grande parte. Em vinte anos, vemos as palhas que eram a igreja e o colégio da Bahia reconstruídas em taipa, chegarem à pedra e cal, antes da cantaria da Catedral, no Terreiro de Jesus; Piratininga saiu de onde era, para se tornar São Paulo, em torno do Colégio dos Padres.⁶

The missions and villages that were created by Jesuits served as refuges for natives against the attempts of Portuguese settlers to enslave them. Making use of the native’s manual labor, the missions produced not only enough for their own consumption, but they also produced a surplus that was sold, generating great wealth for the religious order in Brazil. Huge tracts of land were also accumulated, making them owners of many sugar mills. This created a conflict of interest between the Jesuits and the colonists who also sought manpower, enslaving the natives. Tensions between the Jesuits and the political and economic powers were not restricted to Brazil. In Portugal there was already a concern that the power of the Society of Jesus could create problems for the policies of the Kingdom of Spain. Thus, the Jesuits were expelled from Brazil in 1759. The sale of their properties yielded great resources to the Portuguese crown.

The Transfer of the Portuguese Royal Family to Brazil

The tensions in the Old World grew between the great powers of the time. Spain distanced itself from Portugal, its ally, and approached Napoleon of France. On August

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⁶ Peixoto, História do Brasil, 99. English translation: “These Jesuits were builders of houses, churches, schools, even cities: Bahia, São Paulo, and Rio were founded for them, largely. In twenty years, we saw the the church and the college of Bahia that were made of straws, rebuilt in wood, after stone, and lime, before the stonework of Cathedral, the shrin of Jesus; Piratininga left where it was, to become Sao Paulo, around the College of Fathers.”
12, 1807, representatives of France and Spain presented Napoleon’s determinations to the Regent Portuguese Prince.

Portugal was summoned to join the continental blockade that consisted of closing their ports to British shipping, declaring war on the British and arresting the assets of British citizens residing in the country. Initially, without knowing that Napoleon’s real plan was to invade Portugal, the Portuguese were in partial agreement with the blockade. But as the movements of Napoleon’s troops made the intentions of the invasion clearer, on November 29, 1807, the Portuguese fleet left the port of Lisbon, bound for Brazil. The fleet was convoyed by four ships of the British navy, under Captain Graham Moore’s command, until they reached Brazil. The moving of the Portuguese royal family to Brazil and relations with Britain strongly influenced trade and industry in Brazil. Peixoto summarizes the main initiatives of the Portuguese Crown in Brazil:

Os portos foram abertos às nações amigas, isto é, à Inglaterra. Foi permitida a indústria fabril e manufatureira. Reduções de impostos às mercadorias carregadas em navios nacionais, a 16%; diminuíram de um terço de direito de entrada os géneros molhados. Criou-se o Erário Régio, o Conselho da Fazenda, o Tribunal de Junta de Comércio, criaram-se casas de permuta do ouro em pó por moeda ou bilhetes. Fundou-se o Banco do Brasil, com o capital de 3.000.000 de cruzados e 1.200 ações de um conto de réis cada uma, com faculdade de emitir bilhetes de curso forçado e garantido pelo Estado. Abriram-se estradas para o interior e mandaram-se investidas contra índios ferozes, para conquista e civilização do Rio Doce.⁷

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⁷ Ibid., 196. English translation: “The seaports were opened to friendly nations, that is, to England. The manufacturing and textile sector were authorized. Cuts were made to 16 percent of taxes for goods loaded in national vessels; the Crown reduced by a third the permission of entry for wet foodstuffs. The Crown created the Royal Treasury, the Council of Finance, and Commerce Board of Auditors, which were created as exchange houses of powder gold for money or vouchers. It was founded the Bank of Brazil, with a capital of 3,000,000 of cruzados and 1,200 stock of a conto [name gave to a million of réis] of réis [Portuguese current] each one, with power to issue stocks of mandatory use and guaranteed by the State. Roads were built and attacks were ordered against fierce Indians [natives], targeting conquest and civilizing of Rio Doce [Sweet River was a strategic river for the internalization of Portuguese colonization in Brazil].”
The actions of the Portuguese Crown in Brazil promoted a great increase in commercial and industrial development in the colony.

**Dutch and French Invasions**

The Portuguese hegemony in Brazil suffered many attempts of invasion by the Dutch and French, threatening the rule of the colonisers of the land. French invasions of the colony of Brazil had taken place since the beginning of Portuguese colonization, and continued through the nineteenth century. In his book, *Retrato do Brasil,*8 Paulo Prado describes this climate of tension as follows:

As lutas com os franceses ocuparam os primeiros tempos. Foram ferozes. Em 1527 as cinco caravelas e uma nau de Cristóvão Jacques percorrem as costas de Pernambuco, Bahia e talvez Rio de Janeiro, numa guerra de exterminio aos entrelopos, enforcando prisioneiros, enterrando outros até os ombros para servirem de alvo aos arcabuzes portugueses. Os fatos demonstraram que tudo era inútil, sem se povoar o país.9

The most enduring French presence on Brazilian soil was an establishment on the island of Sergipe in 1555, now called Villegagnon Island, where the French built the Coligny Fort. The expedition was commanded by Nicolas Durand Villegagnon and was comprised of about one hundred men in two ships, which established the so-called Antarctic France. This was the first Calvinist presence on Brazilian soil. In March 1560 they were expelled by the Portuguese, with the help of information from French dissidents Jean de Cointac and Jacques Le Balleur. The French still insisted on having a

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8 English translation: “Portrait of Brazil.”

9 Paulo Prado, *Retrato do Brasil, ensaio sobre a tristeza brasileira* (São Paulo: Oficinas Gráficas Duprat-Mayença, 1962), 37. English translation: “The battles with the French occupied the beginning periods and were fierce. In 1527 the five caravels and a ship of Cristóvão Jacques roamed the coastline of Pernambuco, Bahia and perhaps Rio de Janeiro, in a war of extermination to interlopers, hanging prisoners, burying others up to their shoulders, serving as target for Portuguese arcabuzes [a kind of medieval rifle]. The facts showed that all was useless, without populating the country.”
presence in Brazil with their successive invasions of the northern coast of the colony, establishing themselves there for short periods of time.

The Dutch invaded Brazil on two occasions. The interest of the Dutch in the new land was essentially commercial, mainly aimed at control of the sugar mills and riches of the region. Prado describes the prosperity of the region coveted by the Dutch as follows:

A cultura do açúcar aumentou rapidamente: criaram-se primeiro os engenhos de São Vicente e Pernambuco, mais tarde os da Bahia. Em 1581 estes últimos já exportavam 120.000 arrobas; de Pernambuco nesse mesmo ano partiam 45 navios carregados de açúcar e pau-brasil. Em 1611, dizia Pyrard, não há lugar no mundo onde se produza açúcar com tanta abundância: fala em 400 engenhos na costa do Brasil, de Itamaracá a Itanhaém. ¹⁰

In 1644, the Dutch government of Nassau came to an end amid conflicts over spending that was considered to be unaffordable. The conflicts intensified between the Dutch merchants and the lords of mills, who had trouble paying the loans they had taken to finance the plantations. Seizing the moment of weakness within Dutch rule, the Portuguese settlers, with the support of Portugal and England, expelled the Dutch from Brazil. The Dutch invasion left the country with two major achievements: the deployment of urban societies, such as the city of Recife, for example, and also a patriotic feeling that surfaced for the first time with the expulsion of the Dutch.

The Immigration Avalanches of the Nineteenth Century

Brazilian immigration can be divided into four distinct stages. The first stage, which was discussed in the first part of this chapter, ranges from the time of “discovery”

¹⁰ Ibid., 41. English translation: “The culture of sugar increased rapidly: it was created firstly the sugar mills of São Vicente e Pernambuco, later of Bahia. In 1581 these latter already exported 120,000 arrobas [unit of weight corresponding to 33 pounds]; from Pernambuco, this year, departed 45 ships loaded with sugar and pau-brasil. In 1611, said Pyrard, there is no place in the world where sugar is produced in such abundance: there is talking in terms of 400 mills on the coast of Brazil, from Itamaracá to Itanhaém.”
until the proclamation of the independence of Brazil in 1822. This first stage was basically of Portuguese and African migration, with attempts from the Dutch and French who failed to settle permanently in the colony.

The second, third and fourth stages will be discussed in this section. The second stage was the southern settlement of the country, which began in 1824 by the Germans and later in 1875 the Italians. The third stage, in the late-nineteenth century and early-twentieth century, was comprised of the migration of Spaniards, Italians, Portuguese and Japanese who were attracted by coffee production of the region of São Paulo. Finally, the fourth stage was comprised of Syrian-Lebanese immigration, as well as continued immigration of Portuguese, Spanish, Italians and several other people groups, who migrated to large urban centers, attracted by commercial activities.

The most striking stage of Brazilian immigration in terms of cultural influence was the post-independence period. This period comprises the second, third and fourth stages described above. This importance was not due to the size of the migratory movement, but by the strong influence that the country experienced from customs, languages, foods and other cultural factors brought by those who came.

Italian and German Immigration to Southern Brazil

In 1822, newly independent of Portugal, the country had before it the challenge of populating its immense territory. The linguistic unity of the Portuguese spoken throughout the territory, even if there were natives with their own languages, and the hegemony of the Portuguese crown for centuries, provided a relative stability to the new nation. However, the challenge of populating the country was urgent. The Emperor of
Brazil could not continue to rely on Portuguese immigration due to the recent proclamation of independence of Brazil from dominion of Portugal.

The Brazilian empress D. Leopoldina had family roots going back to Austria. Her Germanic roots surfaced when she encouraged her husband, the emperor of Brazil, to facilitate and welcome Germanic immigration into Brazil. As a result of this open door Germans soon became the third European immigrants into Brazil, after the Portuguese and Swiss. In 1824, two German groups arrived in Brazil. They received government support with their first seeds and livestock in order to support themselves, but they had to build their own homes. The group sent to the south of the country was accommodated in what is now the city of São Leopoldo, where all German immigration started. From there, following the course of rivers, the Germans explored the region, and in a few years, the entire region known as “Vale do Rio dos Sinos” was occupied by German immigrants. In 1826, the first tannery was built in the region, after which flour mills, soap factories, blacksmiths and stone-cutting services started appearing. The shoe industry became over time the main activity in the region, and even today stands out as one of the main centers of the footwear industry in Brazil.

The German immigrants brought with them two notable influences that were unlike anything that had happened previously in the history of Brazilian migration. The first influence was entrepreneurialism, and the second and more important, technological expertise of a developed country, thus introducing industrial activities in Brazil. The German immigrants were not only manual laborers, as previous immigrants had been. They brought to the country development that was being experienced in the Old World. The second influence was religion. The majority of Germans who migrated to the south
of country were of Lutheran origin, and as their population grew, they built numerous churches to meet the religious needs of immigrants. The predominantly Catholic country of the Jesuits had been invaded by Protestants.

After the first wave of German immigration to Brazil, there was a period of significant decline in immigration. There were rumors in Germany that immigrants experienced great hardship due to how the immigration process was done in Brazil. Because of this, the German government created barriers to hinder Germans from migrating to Brazil. Into this migration vacuum, Italians emerged as an alternative to replace the German immigration in decline. In 1875, the first Italian colonies were established in what is now Bento Gonçalves and Garibaldi. Later came numerous small colonies of Italian immigrants who were mostly peasants from northern Italy. The majority became small farmers, unlike the Germans who were more enterprising and dedicated to small industries, trades, and services. It is estimated that between 1875 and 1914, the south of Brazil received between 80,000 and 100,000 Italian immigrants. The Italians exerted great influence in Brazilian culture with their wineries, foods, and even their language. Today, the Portuguese language has incorporated many Italian terms.

Italian, Spanish, and Japanese Immigration in São Paulo

The greatest migratory diversity Brazil’s history happened in São Paulo. Three demographic factors strongly affected labor in agricultural fields of the country. The state of São Paulo concentrated most of Brazil’s coffee production, but suffered from a shortage of human resources. The new anti-slavery policy put an end to the importing of slave labor from Africa; therefore the slave population in Brazil was aging. They could
no longer bear the weight of agricultural production. Another factor was a high infant mortality rate, which strongly affected population growth. Finally, the fact that the male population far exceeded the female population decreased the possibility of population growth.

In 1878 coffee farmers gathered in Rio de Janeiro to discuss labor issues in coffee production. They decided to pressure the government to facilitate the entry of European immigrants into the country. The enabling government policies for European immigration, together with the efforts of the farmers, provided the largest and most diverse immigration in the history of Brazil. Maria Stella Ferreira Levy, specializing in international migration, estimates that between 1904 and 1972, migration to Brazil included 1,240,000 Portuguese, 505,000 Spaniards, 484,000 Italians, 248,000 Japanese and 171,000 Germans.11 It is estimated that the expansion of coffee farming attracted about 70 percent of the immigrant population of the country. With this huge number of European immigrants in the State of São Paulo, the racial and cultural impact completely changed Brazilian reality. The predominantly black and Brazilian indigenous face gave way to an unusual multiculturalism that is not present in other parts of the world.

Another strong migratory impact occurred at the turn of the twentieth century with urban immigration to Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. Many immigrants, especially the Portuguese who returned to migrate to Brazil, preferred large urban centers to the seemingly inhospitable conditions of rural areas. Three groups converged to the large

urban centers: the slaves, now free but without any professional qualification; the northeastern immigrants who left their regions due to drought and the scarcity, also without great qualifications; and finally, the European immigrants, mostly Portuguese, who preferred urban centers more so than other Europeans. Of this last group, a professional qualification was expected, however most were humble people from the north and northeast of Portugal. This enormous population contingent became labor in small markets, facing long lines and disputing scarce job offers. The competition for jobs did not occur in rural areas since they suffered from a shortage of manual labor. This stage was the largest contributor to the formation of the Brazilian multicultural fabric.

The Influence of European and African Immigration in Brazilian Culture

No other country in the world has a racial formation as diversified as Brazil. This racial variety brings with it languages, customs, typical foods, clothes, habits, features of temperaments and many other ingredients that form Brazil culturally. The strongest contributions come from black Africans and Europeans, although natives and Asians also have a relevant participation. Historian José Barbosa comments on this period of the largest migratory movement in Brazil, which he calls “the denationalization of country:”

Em todo o período que vai de 1820 até 1907, diz-nos a estatística que, nos portos do Brasil, entraram 1.213.167 italianos, 634.585 portugueses, 288.646 espanhóis, 93.075 alemães, 56.892 austriacos, 54.593 russos, 19.269 franceses, 11.731 turco-árabes, 11.068 ingleses, 9.086 suíços, 3.780 suecos, 11 belgas e 165.590 de outras nacionalidades. Ao todo entraram 2.561.482 imigrantes. Tirando os portugueses, temos 1.926.897 imigrantes.12

José Barbosa, As relações luso-brasileiras a imigração e a desnacionalização do Brasil (Lisboa: Typographia do Commercio, 1909), 214-218, Kindle. English translation: “Throughout the period between 1820 and 1907, the statistics report that, into Brazilian ports entered 1,213,167 Italians, 634,585 Portuguese, 288,646 Spaniards, 93,075 Germans, 56,892 Austrians, 54,593 Russians, 19,269 French, 11,731 Turkish-Arabs, 11,068 British, 9,086 Swiss, 3,780 Swedes, 11 Belgians, and 165,590 of other

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By the numbers above, one can conclude that there is a strong European presence in the formation of the Brazilian racial and cultural fabric. One can also conclude that there is abundant racial variety among the immigrants. These two factors have contributed decisively to Brazilian multiculturalism.

Languages and Customs of Immigrant People and their Influences

The preservation of the Portuguese language spoken throughout the national territory and becoming the official language of the country is undoubtedly a result of the Portuguese crown hegemony during the centuries of colonial Brazil. The many attempts of invasion, the partial domination of areas of the country (such as the Dutch invasion of Pernambuco which lasted for more than two decades), and the immigration avalanche of post-independence were not enough to compromise the establishment of the Portuguese language in the country. However, migratory movements that led millions of immigrants to Brazil over the course of history enriched the language with foreign words that were incorporated into the Brazilian language.

The influence of languages in the Portuguese language spoken in Brazil has three idiomatic nuclei: natives, African, and European. It is estimated that there were hundreds of languages spoken among the natives at the time of Brazilian colonization. Similarly, Africans brought with them dozens of the approximately two thousand languages spoken on the African continent.

nationalities. Altogether 2,561,482 immigrants entered. Excepting the Portuguese, we have 1,926,897 immigrants.”
The relevance of the influence of language and African customs in Brazilian culture goes far beyond incorporating words within Portuguese language. The African presence in Brazilian culture invades the world of religion, music, poetry, food customs and other aspects. Alberto da Costa e Silva, in a foreword to the work of Renato Mendonça, thus highlights the importance of African participation in the Brazilian culture:

Renato Mendonça arrolava cerca de 350 palavras de proveniência africana que se haviam infiltrado no português do Brasil, um número consideravelmente superior às 47 que Antenor Nascentes identificara como tais, no seu Dicionário etimológico da língua portuguesa, que saíra um ano antes. Embora ainda muito distante dos quase 3.000 termos reconhecidos, no fim do século XX, por Yeda Pessoa de Castro em Falares africanos na Bahia—aos quais, para se formar ideia do tamanho dos aportes da África ao português do Brasil, se teria de acrescentar uma boa quantidade de palavras usadas somente em outros estados—, o vocabulário que ocupava 1/3 do livro de Renato Mendonça já servia de argumento contra os que subestimavam a contribuição dos povos negros às maneiras brasileiras de falar e escrever. Essa influência Africana—advertiu, também pioneiramente, Renato Mendonça—não se reduzia ao enriquecimento lexical: ela se estendia à fonética, à morfologia, à sintaxe, à semântica, ao ritmo das frases e à música da língua.13

A variety of African terms already incorporated into the Brazilian dictionary are part of the everyday vocabulary of people, and many are associated with lifestyle and cultural

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13 Alberto da Costa e Silva, foreword to A influência africana no português do Brasil, by Renato Mendonça (Brasilia: Fundação Alexandre de Gusmão, 2012), 8. English translation: “Renato Mendonça lists about 350 words from African origin that had infiltrated in the Portuguese of Brazil, a number considerably higher than the 47 that Antenor Nascente identified as such, in its etymological dictionary of the Portuguese language. Although still far from the nearly 3,000 terms recognized by Yeda Pessoa de Castro in “Falares africanos na Bahia” [African words spoken in Brazil] - to which, to have an idea of size of aportes of Africa to portuguese spoken in Brazil, would have to add a significant number of words used only in another states - The vocabulary that occupied one third part of Mendonça’s book already served as argument against those who underestimated the contribution of black peoples to Brazilian ways of speaking and writing. This African influence - was not restricted only to lexical enrichment; it was extended to phonetics, morphology, syntax, semantics, to the rhythm of sentences and musicality of the language.”
characteristics. Some of these words\textsuperscript{14} are as follows: cachaça, cachimbo, caçula, candango, capanga, cochilar, dengo, fubá, macumba, moleque, quitanda, quitute, xingar, banguela, babaca, bunda, cafofo, cafundó, cambada, muquirana, muvuca, and many others.

The language of the indigenous people of Brazil seems to have had less influence in the development process of the Brazilian culture, but it is no less present. Names of places, rivers and mountains are often associated with indigenous terms. Brazilian cuisine has been significantly influenced by native eating habits, with frequently used words\textsuperscript{15} like cassava and its derivatives, such as cassava flour, tapioca, and starch, in addition to fruit presence in meals, especially the cupuaçu, bacuri, graviola, caju, açai and the buriti. Popular practices of health treatments using medicinal plants are an incorporation of indigenous customs, very much present in Brazilian homes as guaraná powder, boldo, copaiba oil, catuaba and sucupira seed, among others. Many words of native origin are in the everyday vocabulary of Brazilians, such as words associated with flora and fauna, like abacaxi, cajú, mandioca and tatu.

European influence in the language and culture became more concentrated in the southern part of the country where most Europeans migrated. Italians were the main contributors. There are about three hundred Italian words that have been incorporated into Brazilian Portuguese vocabulary. The most present are culinary terms. Some words

\textsuperscript{14} The words in the next sentence are originated from African slaves’ languages and have undergone variations in spelling and meaning and are untranslatable.

\textsuperscript{15} These following words are originated from Brazilian native Indians dialects, and have undergone variations in spelling and meaning and are untranslatable.
experienced graphic change to accommodate phonetic problems of the Portuguese language. The most common that are present in the daily life of Brazilians are the following words: cantina, caricatura, fiasco, bravata, poltrona, alegro, aquarela, bandolim, camarim, serenata, confete, macarrão, mortadela, salsicha and of course “cião,” which took the form “tchau” in Portuguese.

Religious Syncretism

Brazil is a predominantly Roman Catholic country. This has been the case ever since the pre-colonial period, when the Jesuits came with the missionary purpose of making Christians of the native people. The Society of Jesus, or Jesuits, as they are known, was founded in 1534 by Ignatius of Loyola in the context of the Protestant Counter-Reformation. The guiding principle of order was absolute fidelity to the Church. To illustrate such submission, the founder of the order, Ignatius of Loyola, said, “What seems to me white, I will believe black if the hierarchical Church so defines.”

The first Jesuits arrived in Brazil in 1549, brought by the Governor General Tomé de Souza. As addressed above, they developed a cooperative relationship with indigenous natives, who were used as a productive force in the missions. Since then the Apostolic Roman Catholic Church has remained the official state religion, and this status was only lost with the end of the Empire and the beginning of the republican regime in 1888. Only

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16 These following words are originated from Italian idiom, brought by Italian immigrants. They have undergone variations in spelling and meaning and are untranslatable.

when the Constitution was promulgated in 1891 were ties officially broken between the Church and the State.

This prestigious historic position as the official Church of the State gave the Roman Catholic Church favored status to impose Catholicism, especially among the less privileged socially, such as natives and African slaves. This imposition of Christian faith by power became a determining factor in the development of Brazilian religious syncretism, while Roman Catholicism maintained its place as the dominant religion. Religious syncretism included the beliefs of African slaves and developed more in the Brazilian Northeast, where the concentration of blacks was highest, as they worked in the sugar cane plantations and sugar mills.

The south of the country was populated only later with European immigration, with the arrival of the Germans of Lutheran origin and later the Italians. The catechist mission of the Jesuits found strong resistance with black slaves because of their witchcraft practices, which they brought with them. Mendonça thus describes the Christianization process of black Africans: “A feitiçaria negra, como a que ainda hoje resiste ao aniquilamento no Brasil, é uma derivação totêmica em todos os seus aspectos. Sofreu influxo do cristianismo, o qual longe de alterar a essência passou por uma adaptação, pois o catolicismo dos nossos negros era um batismo aplicado a seus orixás, daí em diante chamados santos.”

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18 Untranslatable words – This and following words, in italic, are deities of several major religions in the African diaspora, of Yoruban influence, used also by Candomblé in Brazil.

19 Mendonça, A influência africana no português do Brasil, 91. English translation: “The black witchcraft, which still resists annihilation in Brazil, is a totemic derivation in all its aspects. It experienced an influx of Christianity, which did not change the essence of witchcraft but caused it to experience an
The Catholicism of the Jesuits and African witchcraft traced parallel paths. Over the course of time, they merged their beliefs and deities, becoming twin sisters. Such evidence can be observed in the correspondence between the Catholic saints and African entities, called Orixás. Jesus Christ of Christianity is the Oxalá; Our Lady of Conception is Yemanjá; Saint Barbara is Yansã; and Saint George is associated with Ogun. These equivalences sometimes varied in different regions of the country.

**Conclusion**

The Brazilian cultural fabric is a racial amalgamation with an incredible variety of cultural nuances. As seen in this chapter, this unique feature is the result of the colonization process and settlement of the country by various ethnic groups. This cultural texture provides very particular characteristics to the Brazilian people, which is of great relevance to understand the idiosyncrasies of Brazilianness of Brazilian immigrants on US soil. These internal circumstances associated with socioeconomic factors in the course of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries set the backdrop for the project. The next chapter discusses the global and geopolitical circumstances that impacted and influenced the migration to the US.
CHAPTER 2

BRAZILIAN IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES

The new geopolitical configuration of the world, resulting from the Second World War, strongly propelled Brazilian immigration to the US. The Allied victory gave the US supreme condition, becoming a major world power. This condition favored a US capitalist influence, giving rise to the so-called capitalist bloc or Western bloc, comprised of countries of Western Europe, parts of Asia, Central America (except Cuba), South America and Oceania.

Brazil’s position in regards to its participation with the Allied forces and as part of the postwar capitalist bloc, met strong resistance in two main circumstances. The first resistance was the strong influence of German immigrants in Brazil. On one hand, the Allied forces, represented by the US, were engaged in having Brazil in the bloc, while on the other hand, a strong German presence in the country created a major embarrassment for the Brazilian government. João Barone, in his book, 1942, confirms the German presence in the country with the following statement:

Havia mais de um milhão de descendentes de alemães no Brasil em 1940. O Brasil era o país com o maior número de membros do partido nazista fora da Alemanha, com cerca de três mil integrantes. Se esse número fosse comparado com as dezenas de milhares de integrantes da Internacional Comunista no país,
não representaria muita coisa. A maioria dos diretores de empresas e firmas alemãs no Brasil era formada por representantes do partido nazista.¹

Even though there was a Nazi presence in Brazil, the Brazilian government’s interest in maintaining business partnerships with both sides of the war kept the country in a relatively neutral position. Thus, Barone describes this attempt at neutrality: “A política pendular empreendida por Vargas procurava tirar proveito das relações comerciais com os Estados Unidos e com a Alemanha ao mesmo tempo, deixando de lado qualquer favoritismo político e contornando os perigos da dependência de apenas um parceiro comercial.”²

The government of President Getulio Vargas, who had strong socialist and totalitarian-dictatorial tendencies, brought him closer to the Axis fascist leaders, Mussolini and Adolf Hitler, than to American capitalism. However, there was some divergence of thought between President Vargas and his ministers, especially the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Osvaldo Euclides de Sousa Aranha. Neil Lochery, in his book, Brazil: The Fortunes of War, writes,

Vargas saw that Brazil’s long-term future was more contingent on its relations with the United States than with Germany, but he keenly understood the pitfalls of cozying up to Washington. A strong alliance with the United States made the most sense from a geostrategic perspective; after all, the two countries were much closer than Brazil and Germany, and President Roosevelt had made it clear that he desired a close and supportive relationship with Latin America—unlike Germany, which as far as Vargas could tell was in bed with his domestic enemies. For

¹ João Barone, 1942: O Brasil e sua guerra quase desconhecida (Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 2013), 54. English translation: “There were more than a million German descendants in Brazil in 1940. Brazil was the country with the largest number of members of the Nazi party outside Germany, with about three thousand members. If this number was compared with the tens of thousands of members of the Communist International Party in the country, it would not represent much. Most directors of German companies and firms in Brazil were formed by representatives of the Nazi party.”

² Ibid., 61. English translation: “The pendulum policy undertaken by [Brazilian President] Vargas sought to take advantage of trade relations with the United States and Germany at the same time, leaving aside any political favoritism and, circumventing the dangers of dependence on only one trading partner.”
Vargas, the crux of the problem was how best to move toward the American camp without Brazil—and his regime—becoming vulnerable to heightened levels of US influence. On this point, there was clear blue water between Vargas and Aranha. Brazil’s minister of foreign affairs did not view the issue of growing US influence with the same degree of concern, as did Vargas.\(^3\)

Finally, with successive Axis attacks on Brazilian ships, the declaration of war became urgent, which was held on August 22, 1942, placing Brazil among the Allies, under US command. Barone recounts:

Principal causa da entrada do país na Segunda Guerra Mundial, os treze ataques a navios mercantes nacionais, entre fevereiro e julho de 1942, provocaram 742 mortes. O ditador Getúlio Vargas—que não esperava receber um golpe tão duro dos países do Eixo—tinha em mãos seu maior alibi para fechar definitivamente sua aliança com o presidente dos Estados Unidos, Franklin Roosevelt. Getúlio esperou demais para reagir aos fatos, já que 21 navios brasileiros tinham sido afundados até o dia 22 de agosto, data da declaração de guerra ao Eixo.\(^4\)

These attacks, led Brazilian president Getúlio Vargas, who although was more aligned with the ideologies of the Axis, made a decision, definitively, to join with the Allies.

**The Second World War: A Confrontation of Socialism and Capitalism**

Possibly no global event has impacted the world like the Second World War.

Interestingly, the major milestone of World War II was not related to the reasons that led Nazi Germany to initiate the war. Although the USSR and Nazi Germany had signed a non-aggression agreement early in the war, the Nazi attack on Russian territory led the USSR to fight alongside the Allies, led by the US. But the capitalist ideals of the US and

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\(^4\) Barone, *1942*, 54. English translation: “The main cause of the country’s entry into the Second World War was the thirteen attacks on national merchant ships between February and July 1942 which caused 742 deaths. The dictator Getúlio Vargas, who did not expect to receive such a hard blow from the Axis countries, now had in hand his biggest alibi to permanently close an alliance with the US president, Franklin Roosevelt. Getúlio waited too long to react to the facts, since 21 Brazilian ships had been sunk by August 22, the date of declaration of war on the Axis.”
the socialist ideas of the USSR put the two on opposite sides at the end of the war, giving rise to the period of the Cold War. The world was divided into two blocs, led by the two major global powers.

The next section identifies the importance of the Second World War in the history of Brazil. It presents the ideals of both Allies and Axis contingents, as well as the reality that victory for the Allies meant victory for the US and for capitalism. Capitalism in the US led to capitalism within all of the Americas together, and the influence of US capitalist ideology radically changed the worldview of the Brazilian population. The socialist ideals of President Getúlio Vargas were stifled by the victory of the Allies and US capitalism became the ideological reference for Brazilian people. This capitalist ideology, associated with the American Dream, strongly contributed to make the US the preferred migratory destination of the Brazilians immigrants.

The Allies, the Axis and their Ideals

The ideals of the Axis were very clear, even before the war. The Nazi Germany of Adolf Hitler sought to recover from the humiliation suffered by defeat in the First World War. The Treaty of Versailles of 1919 enforced upon Germany and its allies responsibilities of reparation to some nations and the loss of part of its territory to bordering nations. In 1921, a special commission created by the Treaty of Versailles established the extent of reparations that Germany would have to pay to a certain number of nations for causing the war. The political implication within Germany, resulting from the impositions of the Versailles treaty, was the growth of the Nazi party. Bamber
Gascoigne, in his book, *A Brief History of the Second World War*, analyzes this phenomenon:

Eventually, in 1921, the commission set up for the purpose assessed Germany’s obligation at $33 billion. Of this some $21 billion was eventually paid, becoming a profound source of German grievance. The economic burden did not prove quite as crippling as is often implied. But the injury to a nation’s pride was of a different order. It was a theme which Hitler was able to use to rabble-rousing effect, and a contributory factor to the Nazis winning, in 1932, sufficient votes to become the largest party in the Reichstag—and to Hitler becoming the legitimate ruler of Germany when appointed chancellor by President Hindenburg in the following year.5

Besides these sanctions, the agreement also provided a restriction on the size of the German army. These circumstances caused a major crisis in Germany, causing shock and humiliation in the population, which led to the fall of the Weimar Republic in 1933 and the rise of Nazism. The end of the Weimar Republic and the rise to power of Hitler led to the outbreak of the Second World War only twenty years after the signing of the Versailles Treaty. Barone describes the Germanic ideals of the Axis leader:

Do outro lado do Atlântico, a virada da década de 1930 mostrava ao mundo a nova Alemanha, idealizada pelo regime nazista de Adolf Hitler: uma superpotência regida por uma “raça superior” e conseguindo o necessário “espaço vital”, pleiteado pelos alemães e negado durante tanto tempo pelas nações da Europa. Aos que ainda hoje acham que as intenções reais de Hitler para a Alemanha podem ter sido manipuladas e distorcidas para justificar a guerra, basta saber que desde os primeiros exemplares do *Mein Kampf*—sua cartilha do nazismo em dois volumes, lançada em julho de 1925—já estavam explícitas as evidências da supremacia ariana e do antisemitismo e escravização das raças inferiores, tão necessárias para a formação do III Reich.6

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6 Barone, 1942, 44. English translation: “Across the Atlantic, the turn of the 1930s showed the world the new Germany, idealized by the Nazi regime of Adolf Hitler: a superpower ruled by a ‘superior race,’ obtaining the necessary ‘living space’ claimed by the Germans, and denied for so long by the nations of Europe. To those who still believe that the real intentions of Hitler in Germany may have been manipulated and distorted to justify the war, just have to know that, from the earliest copies of *Mein Kampf*—his Nazi booklet in two volumes, launched in July 1925—it was already explicit the evidences of
The hope for peace between the Allied forces to prevent a worldwide conflict after the terrible consequences of World War I became futile before the persistent expansionist policy of Germany led by Hitler. The German attack on the Netherlands and the silence of Hitler in answering the ultimatum of France and England led the Allied forces to declare war on September 3, 1939. Gascoigne writes,

During the night of August 31, a group of German soldiers, dressed as Poles, attacked the German radio station in the border town of Gleiwitz. They had brought with them a German criminal, taken for the purpose from a concentration camp. They shot him and left his body as evidence of the night’s dark deeds. Berlin radio broadcast to the world the news of this act of Polish aggression, together with details of the necessary German response. In the early hours of the morning of September 1, Hitler’s tanks moved into Poland, and his planes took off towards Warsaw on the first bombing mission of a new European war. After a final desperate day of diplomacy, attempting even at this late stage to find a peaceful solution, Chamberlain and Daladier each sent an ultimatum to Hitler. When no answer was received, both nations declared war on September 3.7

Thus, on September 3, 1939 the world was at war, the Second World War. What was at stake with the war was global socioeconomic alignment. The victory of the allies would bring western global hegemony and capitalist supremacy in the world, which will be addressed in the next section.

The Victory of the Allies and the Supremacy of the Capitalist World

World War II was a historical event that changed the ideological economic geography of the world, among other things. With the Allied victory, the supremacy of western powers was established, significantly altering the political alignment and global social structure. The US, as the major leader of the Allied Forces, was the big winner,

7 Gascoigne, A Brief History of the Second World War, 211-217.
consequently giving a strong impulse to the capitalist economic system. From this singular moment in human history, the influence of the US as a superpower has changed the face of the world.

The great influence of the US in most of the world, coined later as American imperialism, was a significant factor in the global immigration movement. Brazil experienced and continues to experience an enormous cultural, political and economic influence that is strongly impacting the choices, preferences and desires of Brazilians.

The US film industry (Hollywood), with its protagonists and heroes, was a highly effective tool in the propagation of the capitalist system and of US ideology. The songs of North American idols invaded Brazil, as well as clothes, brands and the like. US interest in expanding its economics, politics and ideological influences boosted the promotion of US culture not only in Latin American countries, but particularly in Brazil.

Even during the Second World War when Brazil and the US were aligned, one could already notice clear signs of this influence. Ana Saggioro Garcia, a specialist in international relations, contends, “The hegemonic order established by the United States in the capitalist world in the post-World War II transcends the power of the military and has in international institutions (state organizations and private corporations) its pillars of legitimation and imposition of this order.”8 It is undeniable that the Allied victory in World War II was the great victory of capitalism in the post-war world.

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The American Ideal of the Post-war Era

Although most military clashes of World War II occurred in Europe, leaving a large trail of destruction, the great protagonist and leader of the Allies in World War II was the US. The great influence the US already had on Latin America and the world before the war became stronger and more determined after the war with the Allied victory. The US sought, using the most varied means, to spread their ideals of freedom and prosperity, as well as their democratic values and the capitalist economic policy, especially expressed in the second sentence of the Declaration of Independence of the United States: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”\(^9\) With the end of World War II and the beginning of the Cold War, foreign policy adopted by the US government was to give financial support to capitalist countries, seeking to contain the expansion of Soviet socialism. The expansion plans of US imperialism included credit to capitalist countries, thus creating an anti-Soviet colonialism. The US economy imposed certain fear in smaller countries, generating economic and political dependence, while also putting pressure on the Soviet Union.

Brazil was one of the Latin American countries that experienced the most US influence. The similarities in the histories of both countries, and the great interest of the US in Brazil as a strong candidate to political leadership in Latin America, created an environment conducive to this approach. Beserra comments on the fact that citizens of

the US have for many years referred to themselves as “Americans,” which in reality is a
name that applies to all of those living in either North, South or Central America. Yet, the
intuitive designation of “Americans” for US citizens indicates that they predicted US
hegemony on the continent. Beserra writes,

Brazil and the United States are the realizations of very different and historically
opposed ideologies and ways of life. Whereas the United States was created as an
overseas extension of a particular Anglo-Saxon dream, Brazil was created as an
extension of Portuguese overseas projects. Taking in consideration size and
history, including the experience of slavery, Brazil is among other Latin-
American countries the one that most resembles the United States. However, it is
not only because of a historical resemblance that the United States has become
one of the most important references for Brazil. As a matter of fact, since the end
of World War II the United States has become a reference for the world, and any
comparison between the two countries must take this into consideration. The
hegemony of the United States in the American hemisphere, however, precedes
by far the period of World War II. Americans must have anticipated their
dominion over the continent from when they intuitively started to designate
themselves by the same adjective that refers to any citizen of the American
Continent.10

The uncontested American hegemony transformed the continent into a big
capitalist-democratic bloc. Despite some attempts of totalitarian governments, the US,
with the support of the Roman Catholic Church, dominant in the absolute majority of
Latin countries, always guaranteed the return to democracy. The Second Vatican Council,
as the meeting became known, met on October 11, 1962, and the decisions made there
led to radical changes regarding the direction the Church would take. Some of these
decisions were extremely important for strengthening the capitalist democracy of the
American ideals. Judt asserts that these decisions of Catholic Council were a significant
support to “American” ideals, mostly in Latin America:

10 Beserra, Brazilian Immigrants in the United States, 11.
The pronouncements of the Second Vatican Council made it clear that the Church was no longer frightened by change and challenge, was not an opponent of liberal democracy, mixed economies, modern science, rational thought and even secular politics. The first—very tentative—steps were taken towards reconciliation with other Christian denominations and there was some (not much) acknowledgement of the Church’s responsibility to discourage anti-Semitism by re-casting its longstanding account of Jewish responsibility for the death of Jesus. Above all, the Catholic Church could no longer be counted upon to support authoritarian regimes—quite the contrary: in Asia, Africa, and especially Latin America, it was at least as likely to be on the side of their opponents.  

Capitalism’s Effects upon the Brazilian Concept of Well-being

The concept of well being in life has undergone a major paradigm shift in the post-war world. Especially in Brazil, industrialization was one of the factors responsible for rural depopulation and the consequent overcrowding of urban centers. The expansion of capitalism, and the “American” Empire as a reference, was the major factor in the industrial explosion of post-war Brazil. The Industrial Revolution of the late-eighteenth century that began in Britain and in a few decades spread to Western Europe and the US effectively arrived in Brazil after World War II as a result of the influence of US capitalism.

The Brazilian Industrial Revolution that happened in the second half of the twentieth century brought with it access to consumer goods never before possible to the population. However, these consumer goods were almost exclusively accessible to the urban population. This initiated a migratory movement from rural areas to major centers of development. In a way, this social transformation had its main cause in strengthening the capitalist system in Brazil because of US influence. Beserra thus concludes about this

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migratory movement, “Since capitalist development has promoted the dislocation of large numbers of people from ‘periphery’ to ‘center,’ or from ‘backward’ to ‘modern’ areas, immigration has been seen as a highly positive phenomenon for the immigrants themselves and for their hometowns because it contributes to modernization at large.”

With the growth of the Brazilian urban population, the influence of North American capitalist ideology became responsible for the new concept of well being of life in the thinking of the Brazilian population. Hollywood movies, manufactured goods, comfort technology and other byproducts of industrialization brought a new concept of life for Brazilians. The concept of personal well being has become associated with the condition of North American society.

The technological and industrial advancement that progressed after the Second World War did not meet the demand of the population growth in Brazilian urban centers. The large urban agglomerations have become ghettos of poverty, called “favelas” in Brazil. Thus, the US became the paradise of dreams to a large portion of the population, especially to young Brazilians. The strong appeal of cinematic glamor that Hollywood showed nurtured the dream of many people. The musical compositions of Nelson Motta and Lulu Santos translated the dream of Brazilian youth during the 1980s: “Garota, eu vou pra Califórnia. Viver a vida sobre as ondas. Vou ser artista de cinema. O meu destino

12 Beserra, Brazilian Immigrants in the United States, 11.

13 Nelson Cândido Motta, Jr. was born in São Paulo October 29, 1944. He is journalist, composer, writer, screenwriter, music producer and Brazilian lyricist.

14 Luiz Mauricio Pragana dos Santos was born in Rio de Janeiro May 4, 1953. Simply known as Lulu, he is a singer, songwriter and Brazilian guitarist.
é ser star.”15 Interestingly, the word “star”16 in the lyrics of the song is in English rather than Portuguese, reinforcing the ideological Americanization of the musical poem. Thus, US ideals of well being, comfort and materialism were imposed upon the post-war generation of the Western world.

The First Brazilian Migratory Movements to the US

Historian and writer James Truslow Adams in 1931 in his book, The Epic of America, coined for the first time the term “American Dream,” defining it as follows:

The American Dream is that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement. It is a difficult dream for the European upper classes to interpret adequately, and too many of us ourselves have grown weary and mistrustful of it. It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position.17

More than coin a phrase or create a dream, Adams realized and summarized in his work the feeling of the pilgrims, who left Europe in search of new horizons for their lives. Historian Jim Cullen finds in the Reformed convictions the fundamentals of the American Dream: “This faith in reform became the central legacy of American Protestantism and the cornerstone of what became the American Dream. Things—religious and otherwise—could be different. For the first generation of American

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16 “Estrela” is the word in Portuguese for the word “star” in English. In the lyrics of the song, the word “star” is used intentionally instead “estrela” in Portuguese.

Puritans, reform meant starting over, building a new society of believers for themselves and their children.”

The Reformed convictions that the pilgrims brought with them fed this feeling of hope and a dream of a better future in the new land. The “American Dream” was not a cognizant reality in the life experience of the pilgrims, but it was a lived reality, even if unconscious. Adams became the spokesman of the “American Dream” by being able to verbalize such a feeling built into the lives of the first immigrants that arrived on North American soil. The victory of the Allies who promoted the hegemony of the US, particularly in the western world, gave a global visibility to the American Dream. After the Allied victory, with the rise of the US as the greatest world power, the American dream of equal opportunities became the major immigration attraction for many people, especially those under the control and influence of American imperialism. Brazil, as a prime target of interest for the US in Latin America was strongly impacted. Beserra describes this phenomenon as follows:

I propose that Brazilian immigration to the United States be understood in terms of the ways American imperialist ideologies have penetrated Brazilian society. Grounded in American technological development, and in the position that the United States assumed in the international division of labor after World War II, American ideologies diffuse new standards of consumption and new ways of understanding life and happiness across the globe. This is so much the case that the dreams that brought and keep bringing Brazilians to the United States are particularly connected with the impossibility of accomplishing at home the ideals of material and cultural consumption promoted by the United States. 

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The American Dream Drives Brazilian Immigration to the US

The Brazilian migratory movement to the US is recent compared with the immigration of other ethnic groups that were driven by other factors, and preceded Brazilian immigration. The dream of an “American paradise,” propelled in the 1960s and 1970s with the first wave of Brazilian immigration, paved the way for a migratory avalanche that happened in the 1980s. The increased number of Brazilians who were living in the US and who were sharing their experience of living well with their circle of friends in Brazil added a new factor to migratory movement. This communication network became an important factor, boosting the number of Brazilians who left the country for an opportunity in the US. Brazilians living in the US offered their friends and relatives the support, orientation and safe procedures for entering the country. The support, many times, included hosting them in their own residences, placement in the labor market and sometimes even financial help. In his book, Almost Home: A Brazilian American’s Reflections, H. B. Cavalcanti describes the importance of this factor:

Given the Brazilian experience in the United States, one could make the case that the network theory explains a lot about the migration between the two countries during 1980’s and 1990’s. For example, a single Brazilian town, Governador Valadares, in the state of Minas Gerais, has created one of strongest immigrant network in the whole of Latin America. To date, an estimated 40,000 Valadarenses have resettled in places like Danbury, Connecticut; Framingham, Massachusetts; Newark, New Jersey; and Pompano Beach, Florida. For a town of about 260,00 inhabitants, this represents a considerable exodus.\textsuperscript{20}

It is extremely rare for Brazilian immigrants not to have had the help of friends or relatives in the process of migrating to the US. Despite the relevance of these latter two

factors, the determining factor in the surge of Brazilian immigration to the US was, without doubt, the spread of capitalism in the post-war era that presented the US as a paradise, becoming a dream to many people who were under its influence.

The Brazilian Economic Crisis of the 1980s

The 1980s, known as the lost decade, were marked by a strong global crisis that particularly affected developing countries. Brazil and the rest of the world experienced the so-called economic miracle of the 1970s, which later plunged into a major crisis that dropped the pace of annual average growth of Brazil from 7 percent per year in the 1970s to 2 percent per year in the 1980s. The price of oil on the world market skyrocketed due to the political crisis in Iran, which caused the fall of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, in February 1979. In the wake of the Iranian crisis came the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988). One million soldiers from the both sides were killed, and the price of oil skyrocketed due to declining production from two of the world's leading producers. The oil crisis of the 1980s, known as the “Third Shock,” strongly affected the entire world economy and, especially of developing countries, such as Brazil.

The high rate of unemployment, economic stagnation and extremely high inflation rates pushed the Brazilian population to seek countries with stronger economies that were more stable for their survival. The US has become the preferred destination for Brazilians.

On one hand, the American Dream attracted Brazilians to the US. At the same time, the economic crisis in Brazil caused many Brazilians to migrate to the US. The combination of these two factors significantly increased Brazilian immigration to the US
in the 1980s and 1990s. Brazil’s economic crisis is described by James Brooke as follows: “Since 1980, Brazil has had 4 currencies, 5 wage and price freezes, 9 economic stabilization programs, 11 inflation indexes, 12 finance ministers, and an accumulated inflation rate of 146 billion percent. Without the currency changes, a cup of coffee that sold in 1980 for 15 cruzeiros would sell today for 22 billion cruzeiros.”\(^{21}\) The country did not provide the minimum economic conditions for such goals, and the search for environments favorable to such goals pointed to countries that were more economically stable, especially the US. The number of Brazilians who entered the country with tourist visas, using these visas illegally to work temporarily, grew dramatically in the late-1980s and early-1990s. In her book, *Little Brazil*, Maxine L. Margolis identifies this trend, noting the increasing number of visas issued by the American Embassy in Brazil, and the number of passports issued by the Brazilian Federal Police:

> Between October 1988 and September 1989, nearly 96,000 visas were issued, a figure that rose to over 110,000 visas for the same period the following year. These, numbers, in turn, are reflected in the figures for Brazil as a whole. According to the INS, in 1989 a total of 272,000 tourist visas were issued to Brazilians, an increase of 17 percent over the previous year, and in 1990, 300,000 were issued, a further jump of nearly 10 percent. Finally, Brazilian Federal Police statistics reflect this unexpected upsurge in tourism. The number of passports issued going from an average of 1,000 a day in 1989 to an average of 1,500 a day in 1990.\(^{22}\)


The Brazilian Community in the US

Brazilian migration to the US is comparatively recent, and occurred in highest numbers after the Second World War. The Brazilian presence on US soil is also significantly lower than that of other nations, however, it has grown in recent decades. The Brazilian community in the US is unique among immigrant populations. This section will consider the factors that influence the culture of Brazilians in the US, including the original motivations for immigration, the acculturation they experience once they are here, and the specific challenges that this population has faced the past several years.

Migratory Motivations

The specific challenges of the Brazilian immigrant population in the US are not only a result of cultural changes that Brazilians experienced after being in contact with the dominant culture during the process of acculturation. The migratory motivations are also important factors that determine the profile of Brazilian immigrants in the US. As discussed above, the economic crisis in Brazil and the lure of the American Dream played an important motivational factor in the migration.

Many, if not most Brazilian citizens, have been exposed to these and other motivational factors. However, not all of them seek to migrate; after all, emigrating is a hard experience in life. Ana Cristina Braga Martes, in her book, *New Immigrants, New Land*, discusses emigration as a selective process of people with certain personality characteristics:

Emigration is a highly selective process from the individual’s perspective. It requires courage and a willingness to face new risks coming from an unknown situation. While Brazilian immigrants show sufficient courage to face adversity, they also experience, perhaps in equal measure, an unfamiliar personal situation: a
feeling of fragility imposed by having become a foreigner. This sense comes from the perception that they will have to face situations they have not yet deciphered and in which they see themselves as lacking, emotionally and otherwise. The Brazilians lose much of their previous ability to handle a whole set of basic information relative to daily life involving both written and oral communication—reading a simple street sign, knowing how they should do their job, or how to handle a new currency—at the same time that they experience the absence of friends, of family, of their hometowns, of a place where people are “of another sort.” Almost everything has to be learned again.23

Affection is a strong Brazilian feature. Hugs, kisses, strong ties of friendship and physical proximity are behaviors that sometimes scare and bring discomfort to other less affectionate cultures. The Latin culture, particularly Brazilian culture, is relationship oriented unlike Anglo culture, which is task oriented. This feature tends to make Brazilians strongly value relationships at the expense of duties or obligations that are assigned to them. If a Brazilian has to choose between being late on a commitment or enjoying a friendly and lively conversation with a group of friends, he or she, without blame, will choose to arrive later for the commitment. This would be inadmissible to the task-oriented Anglo culture. However, the Brazilianness of Brazilian immigrants in the US seems to have lost this characteristic, or at least it has been reduced to such a low level that it has become almost imperceptible.

These changes are not only a cultural accommodation for being immersed in a task-oriented culture. As Martes explains, the migration challenges, the difficulties and emotional breakings operate, in this case, as a type of selection mechanism for the kind of Brazilians who dare to launch themselves in an emigration adventure. This means that the Brazilians who migrate to the US most likely value their life goals more highly than their

relationships. They seem to be closer to the Anglo-Saxon culture than the Latin culture. To break bonds of friendship is not that difficult since it is more important for them to reach their life goals rather than to preserve relationships. This subtle difference associated with the acculturation process is responsible for the cultural transformation that occurs in the Brazilian immigrant community in the US.

The Social and Educational Profile of Brazilian Immigrants in the US

The particularities of the Brazilian immigrant community in the US go beyond the type of person who would choose to migrate. Unlike the majority of ethnic groups of immigrants, Brazilians are easily diluted within the dominant culture in a rapid process of acculturation. The vast majority of immigrants in the US choose to create ethnic groups in certain regions of cities, creating ghettos or ethnic enclaves where they take up their residence. These communities have restaurants that serve the food of the country of origin, shops with their national products, as well as activities, cultural characteristics and churches all similar to the ones in their home country.

Ordinarily, however, most Brazilians prefer Anglo-Saxon environments. They frequent Anglo restaurants, shops and churches; even their choice of residence is almost always in an Anglo neighborhood. This causes the Brazilian immigrant community to be diffused and distant from one another. Another aspect that contributes to the ease of acculturation for Brazilians, is that Brazilian immigrants come from a very eclectic cultural and ethnic composition formed by the Brazilian colonization process. This makes Brazilian immigrants in the US think that it is possible to be completely acculturated in
the dominant culture. Brazilian journalist and cartoonist Henrique de Souza Filho, better known as Henfil, recognized this feature when he stated,

[Brasileiros nos Estados Unidos] não formam um gueto. Todos querem se integrar pra valer, e o que mais se houve é que se deve evitar viver no meio da brasileirada. Na base de cada um tentando se integrar sozinho, virar um legítimo americano. Me parece que o fracasso é geral, mas ninguém dá a perceber. Há também uma impaciência de falar português, como se estivesse atrasando ou atrapalhando o aprendizado do legítimo inglês.²⁴

It is also the case that Brazilians, in general, are educationally more prepared than other immigrants, especially among Latinos. Being the only Portuguese-speaking group among Latinos, Brazilians feel offended when they are confused with other Latinos. The educational level of the Brazilian immigrants puts them in a prominent position among other immigrants, as seen in the chart below in Figure 1.

²⁴ Henrique de Souza Filho (Henfil), Diário de uma Cucaracha (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Record, 1983), 276. English translation: “[Brazilians in America] don’t form ghettos. All of them want to integrate for real, and what we most often hear is that we should avoid living among other Brazilians. With each one trying to integrate by himself, to become a legitime American. It seems to me that there is a general failure, but nobody notices. There is also impatience with speaking Portuguese, as if one was retarding or impeding the learning of legitimate English.”
Figure 1. Level of Education among Brazilian Immigrants in the United States in 2007.
Source: Alvaro Lima, Brasileiros na América (São Paulo: Sind. dos Editores de Livros, 2009), 35.

Lima highlights in his research that the Brazilian immigrant surpasses all other immigrant groups, as well, as the native population in virtually all educational levels.25

Challenges for Immigrants and the Inevitability of Acculturation

In my acquaintance with Brazilian immigrants in the US during the past several years, I have observed a common expression used by many. The phrase, “Here, everything is different,” seems to be an informal initiation ritual for the newcomers to the Brazilian immigrant community. It is spoken during the first few months and even years after one is in the US, until the newcomer is considered one of established members. The expression seems to indicate that one is not an “insider” until one has proven himself or herself to be sufficiently acculturated within the dominant culture. Gerald A. Arbuckle, in his book, Culture, Inculturation, and Theologians, addresses this in his discussion of the term “subculture;” he states, “The term subculture, which refer to cultural partners that make some segment of society’s population symbolically distinct, is applied very widely to social groups including immigrant, ethnic, gender, and sexual groups. The term is a particularly postmodern one, for it is a reminder that cultures are not homogenous, but highly fragmented.”26

At the same time that the acculturation process occurs, aspects of the original culture of the immigrant are reinforced as a kind of reaction against the dominant culture.

26 Gerald A. Arbuckle, Culture, Inculturation, and Theologians: A Postmodern Critique (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010), 100.
Arbuckle writes, “In every subculture there is always an element, sometimes strongly
evident, of protest against the dominant culture of which it is part. The more people of the
subculture feel threatened by the dominant group, the stronger and more vivid will be
their symbols of protest and resistance.” This dialectical tension seems to be responsible
for the emergence of a subculture with strong traits of Brazilian culture and strong traits
of the dominant culture. The statement, “Here, everything is different,” reveals to the
newcomer that this acculturation is mandatory and a condition *sine qua non* for
acceptance in this new subculture.

The second very common expression spoken by established immigrants to new
immigrants is the question, “How long have you lived here?” The question is a way of
assessing the level of acculturation of the newcomer. Bezerra explains,

Time of immigration is also another important element of distinction, as the
following dialogue suggests:

“How long have you been here?”
“About two years.”
“Only two years?!”

In principle, having been here longer confers a certain superiority over these who
are just arriving.

Although Beserra interprets this behavior slightly differently, in my experience this
questioning is clearly an assessment of the level of acculturation. Considering these two
expressions very commonly used among Brazilian immigrants, one can conclude that this
question seeks to assess whether the newcomer has already absorbed this new cultural
behavior of the Brazilian immigrant community in the US.

27 Ibid.

28 Beserra, *Brazilian Immigrants in the United States*, 149.
A Non-Brazilian “Brazilianness”

After fifteen years of pastoral ministry in Brazil, I moved to Dallas to plant a church among Brazilian immigrants in that city. It did not initially appear to be a difficult task, considering my experience in planting more than ten churches in fifteen years of ministry in Brazil. In the first year, I realized that it would not be so easy, but I did not understand why. Studies, observations and much prayer made me realize that the Brazilians with whom I was working were different. The expression I heard exhaustively that “here everything is different” was actually an assertion that they themselves were no longer the same. They were not Brazilians with the same Brazilianness of those with whom I had worked for fifteen years in Brazil. They had assimilated to the new social reality in which they were living. Arbukle discusses the process of acculturation as follows: “Acculturation is the process of culture change in which contact between two or more culturally distinct groups results in one group taking over elements of the culture of the other group or groups.”29 I was facing a Brazilianness I did not know.

Arbukle understands this process of change as a result of contact between two or more different cultures in which a cultural group assimilates elements of another group or other groups, thus altering its original cultural characteristic. “Americanization” (in this case become more “US-like) is an inevitable and irreversible process for the Brazilian immigrant. Changes occur imperceptibly and are only clearly noticeable when the immigrant returns, definitively or temporarily, to his or her country of origin. Brazilians who migrate to the US are strongly influenced by contact with the dominant culture. The

29 Arbuckle, Culture, Inculturation, and Theologians, a Postmodern Critique, 169.
fact that Brazilian culture had been formed by many different cultures seems to further facilitate this process of acculturation. The Brazilian is, by his or her very nature, extremely docile and open for cultural accommodation. Brazilian immigrants, within just a few years of living in the US, are not the same Brazilians who left their country. Bessera thus concludes the following:

In any case, after living in the United States for a while, whether eating tortillas, tacos, hamburgers, or feijoada, Brazilians are no longer what they were when they came. They have been transformed into immigrants and will forever be between two worlds. As proposed by Salman Rushdie’s Satanic Verses, and by many studies on immigrant acculturation, immigrants are a new being whether or not they remain faithful to the traditions of their nation of birth. 30

Despite their rapid acculturation, Brazilian immigrants in the US also have a deep sense of pride in their country of origin. It is common for Brazilians living in the US to be mistaken for being French because of their accents, or sometimes for being Latino because of the similarity of the language. In the first case it is often cause for certain pride, because French culture has strongly influenced Brazil, during the French invasion of the sixteenth century. This was the first great wave of French who migrated to Brazil. In the second case, Brazilians in general are offended when they are mistaken for being Latino. Most often those who are mistaken for Latinos are keen to reassert their Brazilianness, making clear their language and their origins. This tension creates an uncomfortable situation that Beserra describes well: “But this is a complicated process that involves feelings of all sorts, including the feelings of guilt when one chooses the new country.” 31

Nevertheless, the Brazilian immigrant, after some time living in the US,

30 Bessera, Brazilian Immigrants in the United States, 185.

31 Ibid.
develops a particular Brazilianness, affected by constant contact with the dominant culture.

The Effects of the Global Economic Crisis of 2008

Global changes that occurred with the economic crisis of 2008 drastically affected the community of Brazilian immigrants in the US. The geo-economic-political setting of the world was strongly affected by this crisis, reversing the direction of the migratory movement, especially in the US-Brazil axis. Some indicators explain such a reversal.

Historically, economics has always been the most important factor in migration movements around the world. In Joseph’s story in the Old Testament, for example, Joseph’s family moves to Egypt in search of food (Gn 42:1-3). Elimelek and his family move to the land of Moab in search of food (Ru 1:1-2). The reasons are no different today. The direction of migratory movement in the world is highly influenced by economic factors. Although the flow of Brazilians who moved to the US is very recent, this flow has demonstrated a process of inversion with the economic crisis of 2008. Two factors in Table 1 appear to be the main reasons for this change.

Table 1. The Depreciation of the Dollar as Compared to the Real in the Last Ten Years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Dollar x Real</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>$3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>$3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>$2.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>$2.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>$1.50</td>
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<td>2006</td>
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<td>2007</td>
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<td>2008</td>
<td>$3.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>$3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>$4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>$4.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The sharp fall of the dollar against the Real\textsuperscript{32} has not only discouraged the coming of Brazilians to the US, but also encouraged many who lived here to return to Brazil. As noted in Table 1, in 2003 the dollar reached its highest value against the real. Starting that year, the dollar has been depreciating against Brazilian currency gradually and steadily. The goal of the vast majority of Brazilians who migrate to the US is to invest in assets and businesses in Brazil for the purpose of preparing themselves to live their old age in their home country. With the weak purchasing power of the dollar, the migratory adventure has become less attractive for those who thought of moving to the US and discouraging for those already here to choose to stay. Another factor to consider in this moment of crisis is the boom that the Brazilian economy is experiencing, which is illustrated in Table 2, showing the growth of GDP (gross domestic product) in Brazil (“PIB” in Portuguese) between 1940 and 2010.

Table 2. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Brazil between 1940 and 2020 (Projected).

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|}
\hline
Year & PIB/hab  \\
\hline
1940 & 2000  \\
1950 & 4000  \\
1960 & 6000  \\
1970 & 8000  \\
1980 & 10000  \\
1990 & 12000  \\
2000 & 14000  \\
2010 & 16000  \\
2020 & 18000  \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{32} Real (R$) is Brazilian currency.
The GDP represents the sum, in money value, of all final goods and services produced domestically during a specific time period. Table 2 demonstrates good performance of the Brazilian economy in the last decade. The Brazilian GDP amounted to $553.7 million in 2001 and jumped to $2.4 billion in 2011, bringing Brazil from sixteenth to sixth in terms of global economies. This index shows that in ten years the internal wealth of the country grew more than four times, which resulted in greater wealth for Brazilians and therefore a better quality of life.

These two factors not only discouraged new immigrants from coming to the US, but also encouraged the return of those who lived here. Immigration policies of the US added to these to reduce a desire to migrate, or even to remain in the country, especially for those living here as “undocumented.” The new rules imposed by the USCIS (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services) and state laws have made the permanency of undocumented Brazilians very difficult, thus encouraging their return to Brazil.

**Conclusion**

External factors, such as the Second World War and the American dream, and internal factors, such as the Brazilian economic crisis of the 1980s, greatly contributed to the growth of migration to the US. On the other hand, the unique characteristics of Brazilian culture and the migratory motivations of movement determined the distinctive characteristics of the type of Brazilians who adventured to migrate. In the next chapter, the characteristics of the Brazilian immigrant population in the project target area, greater
Houston, will be presented. This immigrant community is strongly affected by the oil business and the close relationship the region has with Brazil in relation to oil.
CHAPTER 3
BRAZILIAN IMMIGRATION IN HOUSTON, TX

Houston is an important city not only in the State of Texas but in the US, as well. With a metropolitan population close to 7-million inhabitants, it is the fourth largest city in the US. Its importance among the great North American cities is not only its population. The Houston Metroplex brings together relevant factors that make it an attractive urban center, not only for US citizens, but also for many immigrants from varied ethnic and cultural origins. The stable job market, diversified economy and easy access between metropolitan cities make Houston an attractive choice for young people as well as immigrants for starting their professional lives with their families. Other relevant factors are a lower cost of living cost and higher than average wages. Forbes magazine evaluates this relationship, highlighting the South’s privileged position compared to other regions of the country: “We often conflate high salaries with prosperity, but that can be deceptive. Someone who lives in New York or San Francisco might make more money than a counterpart in the same profession in Houston or Dallas-Fort Worth, but when the cost of living is factored in their Southern colleagues may
actually come out ahead.”¹ In this comparison, the Houston metroplex was ranked second among North American cities by Forbes in 2017: “Houston retains its second-place rank from last year, with a cost of living 9% above the national average, but with pay that’s nearly 20% above. The nominal average pay there of $64,000 pencils out² to $58,400 when adjusted for cost of living.”³

No differently than other immigrants, Brazilian immigrants, especially the most professionally qualified, have demonstrated a special preference for the metropolitan area of Houston. Three primary factors attract Brazilians to the greater Houston area. Public safety seems to be the main reason. Brazil faces a most overwhelming crisis of public security. Robberies, assaults, murders and other urban violence are increasingly common and present in the daily lives of Brazilians, especially in large metropolises; this helps drive emigration. Cost-of-living and wages, as previously discussed, seem to come second when choosing a migration destination. Finally, the excellent professional opportunities offered by the strong Texas economy, especially in the metropolitan area of Houston, attract above all, many professionals from the oil and health industry.


² “Pencil out” is a phrasal verb, and when used in a business context, means to estimate in approximate figures whether a proposed investment is expected to be profitable. In other words, does it make economic sense or not, according to English Language Learners? https://ell.stackexchange.com/questions/115361/what-does-financials-pencil-out-mean-in-this-context (accessed August 4, 2019).

³ Kotkin, “The Cities Where a Paycheck Stretches the Furthest 2017.”
Peculiar Characteristics of Brazilian immigration in Houston

In general, Brazilian immigrants across the US are distinguished from immigrants from other parts of the world. Zong and Batalova in their article for the Migration Policy Institute states: “Most Brazilian immigrants who obtain lawful permanent residence in the United States (also known as receiving a green card) qualify as immediate relatives of U.S. citizens. Compared to the total foreign-born population, Brazilian immigrants are less likely to be Limited English Proficient (LEP), have higher educational attainment and income, and have lower poverty rates.” In particular, Brazilian immigrants in the Houston area have a higher level of education compared to immigrants from other parts of the country, due to the kinds of employment opportunities commonly in the region. As a center for large oil and gas business and also for biotechnology and life sciences, the region attracts a lot of professionals with high degree of professional qualification.

Oil - A Special Draw for Brazilian Immigration to Houston

Brazil is among the ten largest oil producers in the world with a production of just over 2,600,000 barrels in 2016. Although it is facing serious administrative problems of corruption and political interferences by having the Brazilian Government as its largest shareholder, Petrobras has remained for many years the largest Brazilian company. With over 60,000 employees, it occupies an important place in the labor market, directly and indirectly influencing the academic formation of thousands of Brazilians. Historical political friendship between the US and Brazil, especially in regard to economic

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partnerships, brings the two countries closer together, facilitating the exchange of petrochemical professionals. Houston has been the preferred destination for the most qualified professionals, as it is a major center of the petrochemical industry. The respected Greater Houston Partnership, an institution that is a hundred years old, describes on its website the importance of the activities of the oil industry of Houston:

Houston is the U.S. energy headquarters and a world center for virtually every segment of the oil and gas industry from exploration and production to marketing and technology. While Houston is recognized for its petrochemical industry technology and advancements, non-hydrocarbon-based fuels is a growing sector due in large part to the critical mass of energy talent produced by decades of research and innovation. Houston employs nearly 40,000 oil and gas extraction workers, or roughly 30 percent of the nation’s overall direct energy jobs. The area is home to more than 700 exploration and production companies and 800 oilfield services firms.5

Another factor that facilitates this migration is the close partnerships between Brazilian oil and gas companies and companies from around the world that have business in Houston and even some having their headquarters in the Houston metropolitan area. These partnerships give Brazilian professionals good visibility in this niche of market and create good recruitment opportunities. There is no clear statistic that informs the number of Brazilians who migrated due to these circumstances. However, the site “Myvisajobs” places the city of Houston in second for the H1B visa, in 2017. Oil and gas companies in Houston hired 784 immigrants, with H1B6 visas, in 2017, an average of 2.15 hires per day, according the table below:


6 The US H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ graduate-level workers in specialty occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise in specialized fields such as IT, finance, accounting, architecture, engineering, mathematics, science or medicine.
2017 H1B Report: Houston TX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>H1B Visa Sponsor</th>
<th>Number of</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Hiring per</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>143</td>
<td>$98,256</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halliburton Energy Services</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>$102,642</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
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<td>National Oilwell Varco, L.P.</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>82,827</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bechtel Oil, Gas &amp; Chemicals</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>116,387</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hcl America</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>78,976</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevron</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>142,736</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kbr</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>109,506</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bp America</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>137,223</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baker Hughes</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>105,206</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shell International Exploration &amp;</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>150,920</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sbm Offshore Usa</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>102,565</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total of Hiring</strong></td>
<td><strong>784</strong></td>
<td><strong>100,997</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.15</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data in this table was compiled from a search on: https://www.myvisajobs.com/Reports/, access on June 27, 2018.

Another factor that drives migration is the wage level offered by oil companies in Houston. The average salary of a petrochemical engineer in Brazil in 2017 was $51,000. As seen in the table above, the average salary at this same time in Houston was $100,997. Such factors have been a strong stimulus to the immigration of Brazilians to the metropolitan area of Houston.

Transience of the Immigrant Population Created by Provisional Work Visas

Transience is a unique feature of the Brazilian population in Greater Houston due to the type of visas that many companies use in hiring foreign professionals. A significant number of Brazilians residing in Houston migrated under legal conditions, unlike other regions such as Florida, California, Massachusetts or New York, where there are large
numbers of undocumented Brazilians. However, the vast majority came to the Houston region with an H1B visa, the gateway to professional opportunities. Strictly, one cannot classify such professionals as immigrants, since by law they can stay in the country for only three years, with the possibility of extending another three years. According to US Immigration policies, “As an H-1B nonimmigrant, you may be admitted for a period of up to three years. Your time period may be extended, but generally cannot go beyond a total of six years.”

This guides the DHS on this type of visa. Another feature of H1B visas, is the exclusivity bond that professionals have with their sponsor employers. The professional is authorized to carry out his or her activities in the country, providing services only to the company that sponsored them.

In January 2017 USCIS published the Final Rule that became possible to change a sponsor in case of unemployment, during the tenure of the H1B visa: “Establish a grace period of up to 60 consecutive days during each authorized validity period for certain high-skilled nonimmigrant workers when their employment ends before the end of their authorized validity period, so they may more readily pursue new employment and an extension of their nonimmigrant status.”

These visas, most frequently used by oil and gas companies, create transience in the Brazilian immigrant population in Houston, which cannot be ignored in the conception of a project of planting a church among Brazilians in the region. In fifteen years of ministry with Brazilian immigrants in Texas, I

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8 Department of Homeland Security.

have observed that it is very common in just five years to have the membership of a
congregation almost completely turn over. This clearly demonstrates that the
transitoriness of Brazilians must be carefully considered in a church-planting project
among Brazilian immigrants in this target audience.

Economic and Political Importance Justify the Brazilian Embassy in Houston

The criteria used by the Brazilian government to define a city for the installation
of a Brazilian Embassy considers above all the economic and political importance of the
city in the region. Such criteria are in a way linked to the function of a Brazilian embassy
in foreign territory, as defined by the website of the Brazilian government:

A embaixada é a presença oficial de uma nação, instalada dentro do território de
outra nação. É seu dever proteger os interesses do País que representa e de seus
cidadãos. Além disso, é a primeira instância de negociação com o governo local.
Cabe ao embaixador informar o governo sobre os acontecimentos no país
estrangeiro e, promover relações amistosas e desenvolver as relações econômicas,
culturais e científicas entre as duas nações. Entre as funções de uma embaixada
está a autorizar o visto de entrada, expedir passaporte, procurações, testamentos,
registros de nascimento, casamento e óbito, e legalizar documentos nacionais para
cidadãos do país que representa.¹⁰

Brazilian embassies serving Texas and neighboring states have existed since
1941, and settled in different locations during this period, based on the economic and
political relevance of such cities at different times. Initially there were three Embassies:

¹⁰ Governo do Brasil, Cidadania e Justiça. “A embaixada é a presença oficial de uma nação”
hadade-e-a-presenca-oficial-de-uma-nacao/#conteudo. English translation: “The embassy is the official presence of a nation,
established within the territory of another nation. It is its duty to protect the interests of the country that it
represents and of their citizens. In addition, it is the first instance of negotiation with the local government.
It is up to the ambassador to inform the government about the events in the foreign country and to promote
friendly relations and to develop the economic, cultural and scientific relations between the two nations.
Among the duties of an embassy is to authorize entry visas, issue passports, proxies, wills, birth certificates,
marrige certificates and death registers, and legalize national documents for citizens of the country it
represents.”
New Orleans, LA, Dallas, TX and Houston. In 1988, the Brazilian government decided to terminate the activities of the New Orleans Embassy, transferring the jurisdiction area from the New Orleans embassy to Dallas. Subsequently, in 1997 the activities of the Dallas Embassy were also closed and the entire region became under jurisdiction of the Embassy of Houston. Currently, Houston’s consular jurisdiction serves the states of Texas, New Mexico, Louisiana, Arkansas, Kansas, Oklahoma and Colorado, serving daily around 100-to-120 Brazilians, and 50-to-60 foreigners.

In order to provide a better political-economic interaction between Brazil and the region under its jurisdiction, the embassy maintains important departments of international exchange as a Cultural Department, Educational Department and SECOM (Foreign Trade Sector) with which it fosters investments for foreigners in Brazil and Brazilian investments in the region. The historical trajectory of the Houston Embassy clearly demonstrates the region's political-economic relevance to the interests of the Brazilian government. The Brazilian government’s option to concentrate its diplomatic relations in the metropolitan area of Houston, hosting its embassy in the city, clearly shows the importance of this metropolis to the interests of Brazil. This specificity of the region makes very unique to Brazilian immigration in Houston and its surroundings.

**Brazilian Community in Houston and their Uniqueness**

The decision of a Brazilian to venture into a migratory process for the US is almost always linked to relationships with people who already live here, whether in cases of legal or illegal immigration. Connectivity with people who already live in the country frequently facilitates the immigration process, either by a transfer of know-how or by the
initial support on arrival in the country for housing, transportation and other accommodations such as schools or jobs. These relationships create an interesting phenomenon in relationship to migration - concentrations of immigrants from the same region in determined US areas. Atlanta is the favorite destination of the goianos (from State of Goiás); Boston is the destination of the mineiros (from State of Minas Gerais), more specifically the city of Governador Valadares; Dallas is the preference of Brazilians northeasterners, originating from the city of Recife. These concentrations are clearly perceived in the accents from regions of origin, at parties and celebrations that show customs e tradições from different Brazilian regions, and even in foods typical of these same regions, that are sold in Brazilian stores in American cities.

The Houston Metro area differs from other regions in this peculiarity. Unlike other cities, the Brazilian immigrant population of Houston is very heterogenic. There are Brazilians from most parts of Brazil. This is precisely the result of the positive economic possibilities in Houston combined with the job market. Distinct from other regions, the Houston metroplex area receives, for the most part, skilled immigrants attracted by the labor market and not by existing personal relationships with Brazilians that already live in the region, as happens in other parts of the US.

Population Density and Social Traits

The Brazilian community in Houston is not as large as in other American metropolises. As can be seen in the table below, of the six metropolises surveyed, Houston has the smallest population of Portuguese speaking, in both percentage and in absolute numbers. However, it is close to the national average of 0.2 percent of the
American population. This low Brazilian population density is already in itself, a challenging factor for planting a Portuguese-speaking congregation. There is yet another factor that makes this challenge even greater.

Brazilian immigrants, for the most part, and throughout the country tend to disperse. Unlike other immigrants such as Indians, Pakistanis, Koreans, Japanese and others who form ghettos around their businesses, restaurants and leisure places, Brazilians do not. The explanation for this phenomenon lies in the singularities of Brazilian immigration. Bernadette Bezzera in her study of Brazilian immigration in Los Angeles concludes:

But Brazilians neither comprise an ethnic enclave nor a geographically based community, such as many ethnic communities in Los Angeles. First, Brazilians are not as numerous as the mentioned groups; second, they are not as physically distinguishable, and third, they have a very recent immigrant history, and have therefore not yet built an immigrant “know-how” the way many of these communities have.11

Added to these factors is the great ability of Brazilians to acculturate fast. This is associated with the incredible ethnic amalgam that is the Brazilian cultural fabric, as already discussed in Chapter 1. This positive, very peculiar factor found in Brazilians of Greater Houston is exactly what makes this project of planting a Portuguese-speaking church extremely exciting. Due to the low population density of Brazilians in the Houston metroplex there is not find too much statistical data about those who speak Portuguese in the area. However, data from the US Census Bureau, which appears in the

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table below, leads to an interesting socio-educational profile of the Brazilian population in Houston.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Population %</th>
<th>Speak English Very Well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Houston</td>
<td>6,063,540</td>
<td>7,527</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>73.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Francisco</td>
<td>4,402,729</td>
<td>15,200</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlanta</td>
<td>5,379,176</td>
<td>10,500</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>65.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orlando</td>
<td>2,183,363</td>
<td>14,100</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>60.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>19,716,880</td>
<td>120,000</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston</td>
<td>4,604,278</td>
<td>98,000</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>50.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>311,536,594</td>
<td>693,000</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>61.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The percentage of Brazilians in Houston who speak English very well is much higher than the national average and well above the percentage of San Francisco, which ranks second among the six metropolis surveyed. Houston, where 73.1 percent of Brazilians speak English very well, is 12 percentage points above the national average and 7.1 points above San Francisco, second in ranking. These figures corroborate with the conclusions presented at the beginning of this chapter on the influence that the oil and gas industry has on Brazilian immigration, attracting Brazilians with high professional qualifications. These factors make the Brazilian population in the Houston Metroplex, singular and distinct from other metropolises.

In general, the Brazilian immigrants who make up the Brazilian community of Houston Metroplex are middle-class families with a high level of schooling. As the above statistics indicate, the vast majority is fluent in English. Such a socioeconomic and
cultural profile is perfect for the blended church model that this project proposes, which will be addressed in the following chapters.

Social Networks and the Connectivity of the Brazilian Community in Houston

The world has experienced and continues to experience the unpredictable impact of the advent of the internet. The internet’s impact on the world at political junctures, on the economy and in social relationships could never have been accurately predicted, and still continues to surprise. In the wake of the internet came social media that consolidated, once and for all, this unpredictability. The incredible connectivity and synchronicity that social networks have brought to the world is unprecedented in human history. The speed with which people interact with others in any part of the world is something fantastic. In particular Facebook seems to have spearheaded global connectivity. Jesse Rice, comments on the great relevance of Facebook as a means of connectivity and synchronicity in the modern world:

    Facebook was fast becoming the multimedia platform on the Web, the preferred means by which tens of millions of people were sharing their lives with one another through pictures and video of travel, parties, weddings, births, you name it. As the ability to easily share media with the friends in our personal networks grew, so did the time we spent on Facebook. In March 2009, Facebookers around the world were using the site up to three billion minutes a day.\(^\text{12}\)

With different features, platforms such as Skype, WhatsApp, Messenger and others became popular as a means of communication, in addition to the development of mobile telephones that have become fast and effective communication tools.

\(^{12}\) Jesse Rice, *The Church of Facebook: How the Hyperconnected are Redefining Community* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2009), 74.
The reality of a world so connected and synchronized creates an interesting phenomenon in the community of Brazilian immigrants. Although it is characterized as a geographically dispersed and diluted community in American society, as previously discussed, the Brazilian immigrant community uses social media platforms to create strong and efficient communication networks. Groups of the most varied topics of interest are created on Facebook bringing together hundreds and even thousands of people. The “Next Brazilian Productions” Facebook group, focused on the promotion and dissemination of Brazilian events in the Houston Metroplex, brought together 2415 members; “Brazilians in Houston” focused on exchange of experiences and disclosures in general, gathered 4804 members; the group “Classifieds: Brazilians in Houston” a group focused on shopping, sales, rent, job opportunities, products and services offered by Brazilians, brought together 2944 members. Many other small groups that bring together people with common interests approximate these geographically distant and dispersed Brazilians. The role of these groups is of extreme relevance in the cohesion of an immigrant group whose characteristic is not to develop ethnic ghettos. WhatsApp groups are less stable than Facebook groups, and serve many times for a particular event or moment and the few begin to disintegrate. If it were not for these social media platforms the integration of Brazilians would certainly be much more difficult. Just as commerce, projects, events and many others use these connections, church planting finds social media an efficient tool to present itself to Brazilians.
Longings and Needs of the Brazilian Community in Houston

Knowing the yearnings and needs of the target audience is of fundamental importance in a church-planting project. The results of the survey\textsuperscript{13} “Brazilian Immigrants in the USA” that I concluded in February 2016, reveal interesting indicatives for this project. When asked: “In general, how do you feel about living in the USA?” 35 percent of those interviewed said that they missed their family. If also considering those who answered “miss family and friends,” this percentage rises to 60 percent. Other discontents are linked to professional issues and other reasons that represent a smaller number of interviewed. This finding indicates that distance from the family creates a gap that a Christian community cannot completely replace, but can minimize perfectly.

Another interesting indication comes when the interviewed answered the question “Do you consider important Brazilian churches in the USA to serve immigrants?” To this question, 57.1 percent answered that “it is very important” and 31.7 percent answered that it is “useful, but not so important.” Combined, 88.8 percent understand that an ethnic church would be at least beneficial to Brazilians who are distant from relatives and friends who stayed in Brazil. Once again, research indicates that the vast majority of interviewed see in the Church an opportunity to find an environment that can help them overcome their difficulties as immigrants. This can be an excellent bridge to present the Gospel of Jesus, His love and His saving work to Brazilian community.

\textsuperscript{13} I conducted this survey with 262 Brazilians, from September 2015 to February 2016, using the website "www.constantcontact.com." The most relevant results for this dissertation are presented in Appendix A.
Conclusion

The Houston metropolitan area is a fertile field, and combines unique characteristics for the planting of a Brazilian Community. The Brazilian population of Houston with its singularity that distinguishes it from other communities of Brazilian immigrants from other metropolises, however, requires a planting project that contemplates characteristics proper to a population of immigrants with special singularities like those seen in this chapter. A population of Brazilian immigrants, mostly with legal immigration status, with a higher socioeconomic level and a high level of proficiency in English, seems to be better suited for a blended project developed in partnership with an American church. However, such a project cannot fall into common practices that have been used in the PCUSA, where an American church only shares its dependencies with the project of planting a Brazilian congregation. It must go deeper, developing a fraternal relationship of mutual cooperation. A good understanding of what might be called immigration theology must guide this relationship. The next chapter will address the challenge of understanding the theological principles on migratory movements in the course of human history.
PART TWO

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION - THE THEOLOGY OF IMMIGRANT
CHAPTER 4
BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF IMMIGRATION

Migratory movements are as old as the very existence of humanity. From the beginning, social groups were nomadic and constantly moving in search of better living conditions. Hunger, scarcity and the threats of enemies spurred and encouraged the migration of peoples. Looking to Holy Scripture, a creative God who is not oblivious to these movements can be seen. On the contrary, He is participatory and often the protagonist of these movements. Early in human history, the Creator celebrated His work, crowning it with the creation of man and woman.

In chapter 1, verse 28 of Genesis, God guides His people with three basic commands. The first is associated with population growth (to multiply); the second, geographical expansion upon the face of the earth (to fill the earth); and the third is related to the rest of His creation (to subdue). The second order, the focus of this project, is composed of a verb and a noun that express quite clearly the intentions of God the Creator. His desire was for His creatures to spread out over the face of the earth. The verb used here is the verb “mala” in Hebrew (אלא), which appears in the accusative of material. An accusative of material states the substance with which the action of the verb
is performed. What precedes the verb is the imperative “be fruitful, and multiply.” In this way, it can be inferred that God’s purpose was for the descendants of Eve and Adam to spread throughout the face of the earth. The verb “to fill” is used here, figuratively for the idea of “spreading” or “dispersing.” Thus, a better translation would be: “Be fruitful and increase in number; spread out on the earth and subdue it.” The accusative of material indicates the substance of the action of the verb, that is, to fill the earth with the fruit of multiplication. It is clear that the divine purpose is for the earth to be a free space, without barriers, where people can come and go, in search of a better condition of life.

**Reflections in Old Testament**

Almost the totality of the Old Testament focuses on the people of Israel, their history, their relationship with Yahweh and their relationships with other peoples. Only the first eleven chapters of Genesis are dedicated to the history of creation and development of humanity. Starting with the twelfth chapter of Genesis, with the call of Abraham, the focus turns to the people of Israel. The first part of Genesis contains three main subjects. First, the account of creation; second, disobedience and fall of humanity being followed by divine providences; and third, God’s “effort” to encourage his people to move on the face of the earth. From chapter twelve onward, and throughout the rest of the Old Testament these three emphases, now, are focused exclusively on God’s relationship with Israel, His chosen people. In both parts this “effort” of God is present so that his creatures understand that the earth was created by Him and that human beings, the crown of His creation, should explore it, moving freely on it.
God, The Lord of the Earth, Gave to Humanity Dominion Over It

The Old Testament presents God as the absolute Lord of all the earth by right of creation and maintenance. Thus, at the beginning of the creation narrative in Genesis, two verbs that appear in the first three verses are of extreme importance for this understanding. In the first verse of chapter one the Hebrew verb הבאר (bara’) appears and in verse three the verb אמר (amar) is found. Bara’, which is translated as “to create” appears about fifty times in the Old Testament and is always connected with divine activity, either active or passively. John Walton, in his article on “Zondervan Academic” states: “The verb bara’ occurs about fifty times in the Old Testament. As often noted, deity is always either the subject or the implied subject (in passive constructions) of the verb. It can therefore be confidently asserted that the activity is inherently a divine activity and not one that humans can perform or participate in.”

The more restricted sense of the verb, which indicates that such creative activity is inherent and very peculiar to the person of God, can be perceived when considering the meaning of the verb in the specific audience in which it is used. In this sense, Walton continues:

In cases like this one we not only have to ask what English word we should use to translate it, but also what the Israelite audience, who used these words, would have meant by using this word. That is, does the concept of “creation” have the same meaning to an Israelite as it would to us? If we are interested in the face value meaning (sometimes referred to as the literal meaning) of a word for interpretation, we cannot be content with studying the English word “create” - we must study the face value meaning of the Hebrew word bara’.

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1 John Walton, “Hebrew Corner 3: ‘create (bara’),’” Zondervan Academic (September 12, 2008), https://zondervanacademic.com/blog/we-have-been-di/.

2 Ibid.
Thus, it can be concluded that within the linguistic environment in which *bara* is used in the Old Testament, it incorporates a sense of exclusivity. It seems that such exclusivity demonstrates that only God can create, in the sense of the verb *bara*, used in this narrative. The second verb, *amar*, appears in verse 3 and addresses the special *modus operandi* of this divine creative process. *Amar*, which is translated as “to say or to pronounce,” reveals the divine creative power which through His word made existence out of nothing, all that exists. Obviously, the verb is used here figuratively. Sound propagation could not exist at this point of creation. This verb, therefore, is used in the metaphorical sense and means that God promulgated by His word, laws that govern the whole universe. The word was repeated ten times in the creation narrative, and the power of the divine word appears not only creative, but it is as if echoing forever as the sustaining power of all creation.

The New Testament revelatory richness about creation from John 1:1-3 cannot be ignored, bringing greater clarity to the Word of God: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.”

John uses the noun Λόγος (logos), translated into English in most versions as “word” in the sense of “reasoning expressed by words.” It appears in the nominative case, masculine, singular. The nominative indicates the syntactic function of the subject as the agent that performs the action of the sentence. The noun appears three times in John’s book prologue, and in verse 3 the apostle John states: “Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made” (NIV). In the first part of the verse the pronoun appears in the genitive preceded by the Greek preposition ὅτι, which is
translated as “through,” to English. The preposition clarifies “through whom” all things were made. Thus, John makes it clear that the subject of the verb “amar,” in Genesis 1:3 is Christ himself, the second person of the Holy Trinity, the Word of God, who is God, Creator and Sustainer of all creation. The apostle Paul in his letter to the Colossians corroborates in the same direction: “The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”

Since God is the creator and maintainer of all that exists, He grants humanity the right to enjoy His creation, managing it for their welfare and endeavoring for harmony in all divine work. The divine order is recorded in Genesis 1:28 and is accompanied by the command to fill the earth. Such a command makes clear the Creator’s intent that his people would explore without limit and without restriction the whole face of the earth.

After the fall and the consequent corruption of human beings, two historical accounts in these first eleven chapters of Genesis focus on the history of mankind’s development and reveal God’s effort by encouraging his people to spread on the face of the earth.

The genealogy of chapter 5 presents the descendants of Adam and Eve, who “had sons and daughters.” The generations succeeded one another, multiplied and in the time

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3 In the pericope contained in John 1:1-3, the Evangelist affirms the full deity of Christ and his participation in creation. John affirms Him as the verb “amar” in Hebrew, the creative power of God that appears in the creation account in Genesis 1.
of Noah, the tenth generation after Adam, saw the population become overgrown.

Concomitantly, the growth of the population and the perversity grown among human beings can be seen in Genesis 6:5-7:

The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled. So the Lord said, “I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created - and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground - for I regret that I have made them” (NIV).

Divine intervention in human history, including the destruction of the earth with the flood includes God’s initiative of preserving the human race, as well as all living beings created by God. Noah and his family attained the goodness of the Lord and were saved through the ark. In Genesis 9:1, God blesses Noah and establishes a covenant with him, promising that there would never again be a flood to destroy the earth. When they came out of the ark after 40 days and 40 nights of heavy rain, God reaffirmed the same command given to Adam recorded in Genesis 1:28: “Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth’” (Gn 9:1). In both texts, the verb translated into English as “fill” is “אלם” (mala) from Hebrew, which is also used in chapter 1:22, referring to the divine command for the aquatic beings to fill the waters of the sea. It can be concluded that the figurative meaning of the verb in these texts does not refer to “fill” in the sense of having space taken, but rather to be spread.

The question that arises at this point is what moves the living beings created by God to move on the face of the earth? Undoubtedly, God created them with a migratory instinct, and this migratory instinct is guided by the search for better conditions of life. Not unlike humans, animals constantly migrate in search of better climatic conditions and
food. God is absolute Lord of the land by right of creation and maintenance, has a great purpose for his creatures, according to Soerens: “When we read the Bible as a sacred narrative of God’s interaction with humanity, we find that immigrants and refugees play many of most important roles in the story. Throughout Scripture God has used the movement of people to accomplish his greater purpose.”

Abraham, an Outsider Guided by God, and Under His Blessing

Starting in Genesis 12, with the call of Abraham, the first divine providences for the creation of the people of Israel—the only nation in the world intentionally created by God—appear. In the story of Abraham God interacts with Abraham in his journey guiding him through distant lands and sometimes leading him to live as a foreigner, among other people. His life journey, from his call in Ur of the Chaldeans to the plains of the Hebron where he died and was buried, was a trajectory of occupations of territories and sometimes living as a foreigner under the blessed hand of God who called him from among the Chaldeans. The migratory movement of Abraham and his households, although fundamentally in obedience to divine command, also reflects motivations commonly present in all migratory movements. The search for better living conditions, tribal conflicts and hunger, all commonly found in all migratory movements, were also present in Abraham's journey.

The Hittite Empire was experiencing its apogee and its macro regional market influenced much of the route for the journey taken by Abraham, the father of our faith.

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The Hittites had an extremely important role among regional markets, interconnecting them, Burns says: “The Hittites are important primarily as intermediaries between East and West. They were one of the main connecting links between the civilizations of Egypt, the Tigris-Euphrates valley, and the region of the Aegean Sea. It appears certain also that they were the original discoverers of iron.”

Observing Abraham’s journey to the Promised Land, he initially went toward the Hittite macro-regional center. Comparing the maps below, it can be clear it was his intention to reach this important shopping center at the time.

Illustration 1. Abraham’s Migratory Route

Without ignoring divine guidance, a more sociologic reading of his journey demonstrates his search for better conditions of life for himself and his own. Certainly, journeying towards the Hittite Empire, a large commercial center of that time, demonstrated a motivation that determined his migratory route, not unlike the motivation of the immense majority of migratory movements of all time - the pursuit for better

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conditions of life. He and his brother Lot married women of Haram and settled there for a while. Haran was an important point of passage for the caravans of merchants from the near east and; persuaded by his brother, Abraham settled there. Some time later, he continued his journey, attracted by the West Bank route that connected the Egyptian economy to the Hittite economic macro-regional center. Famine in the region of Canaã took him to Egypt, from where he went, establishing himself in the plains of the Hebron, where he died and was buried.

The Abrahamic historical narrative is a clear demonstration of God’s interactivity in the history of migratory movements. God realizes His great purposes not only by intervening in human history through these movements but also by using them. On this, says Soerens: “When we read the Bible as a sacred narrative of God’s interaction with humanity, we find that immigrants and refugees play many of the most important roles in the story: Throughout Scripture God has used the movement of people to accomplish his greater purpose. Like immigrants and refugees today, the protagonists of the Old Testament left their homelands and migrated to other lands for a variety of reasons.”

Exiles and Divine Law for Foreigners

After the division of kingdoms, the people of Israel suffered through four exiles in which the Jews were under control of the Babylonian, Persian, Greek and Roman empires. Egyptian exile, although considered the principal and most important regarding laws concerning foreigners, is not considered by some historians to be a proper exile, as the people went to Egypt by their own will. However, when considering that hunger was

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8 Soerens and Yang, *Welcoming the Stranger*, 83.
the factor that led them to Egypt and that most of the 430 years they were there, they lived as slaves, this period became a special reference to divine laws regarding immigrants and refugees.

The first three exiles were sequential, with dominators practically being replaced one after the other, consecutively. Initially Babylon (423 BC - 372 BC) conquered Israel. Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the Temple and most Jews were deported. Later the Persian domain (371 BC - 348 BC) conquered Babylon and Cyrus the Great gave Jews permission to rebuild the Temple; some returned to Israel but remained under control of the Persians. The final dominion, the Greeks (333 BC - 165 BC), conquered the ancient world and dominated Israel until the Maccabean revolt, when Israel gained independence.

The Jews gained independence, but interminable internal conflicts allowed little more than half a century of national sovereignty. In an attempt to bring an end to these conflicts, representatives of the people went to seek clemency from the Roman emperor, to put order to the nation. However, when the Romans began to restore order, the hatred of the people also turned against the Roman Empire. They concluded that they could not calm the people. In 69 AD the temple was closed and the Jews scattered throughout the empire. Historians believe that this exile has not yet ended, since many Jews still live scattered all over the world.

The first three exiles (Babylonian, Persian and Greek), and especially the 430 years of slavery in Egypt are thus the backdrop to divine laws on how to treat foreigners, immigrants and refugees. The institution of the law concerning foreigners always comes accompanied by an appeal to the memory of the people, reminding them that they had lived as foreigners in a foreign land. Soerens states:
God reminds the Israelites early on of their own history as aliens in a foreign land, commanding them that, given their experience, they should welcome the immigrant among them. In Leviticus 19:33-34, God commands the Israelites, “When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.” In fact, Israel’s very identity was tied to how they treated the foreign born, as it reflected Israel’s trust in God to provide and their willingness to follow his commandments.9

Even before leaving Egypt, in establishing ceremonial laws for the celebration of Passover, God sets parameters for foreign participation in the feast. The only requirement is that they should be circumcised. The institution of laws begins with the prologue: “The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, ‘These are the regulations for the Passover meal: No foreigner may eat it’” (Ex 12:43), and verse 48 explicitly states: “A foreigner residing among you who wants to celebrate the Lord’s Passover must have all the males in his household circumcised; then he may take part like one born in the land. No uncircumcised male may eat it.” In this way, God establishes that foreigners would be welcome in the most important celebration of the people, once circumcised. From that point God will deal with this subject many times with his people. The theme will appear numerous times in the Old Testament and most often is associated with the experiences of exile and slavery experienced by the people. Heyer concludes:

The story of the Jewish and Christian pilgrim communities is one of migration, diáspora, and the call to live accordingly. The formative liberation of Israel by God from enslavement by the Egyptians led to commandments regarding hospitality to strangers (Ex 23:9; Lv 19:33-35; 24:22; Deut 14:28-29; 16:14; Num 15:15-16; 35:15. Indeed, after the commandments to worship one God, no moral imperative is repeated more frequently in the Old Testament than command to care for the stranger.10

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9 Ibid., 86, 87.

The book of Leviticus (19:33-34) gives very clear instructions as to how hospitality would be practiced: “When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.” These instructions end with a well-known expression of great significance to the Jews: “I am the Lord your God.” Any Israelite reading this phrase would remember Exodus 20:2: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.” This reveals God’s disapproval of the oppression of immigrants, foreigners and refugees. Since this is the desire of God, He expects that his children thus act toward foreigners, full of mercy and brotherly love. He advocates the cause of immigrants and exhorts His people to love them too: “He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt” (Dt 10:18-19).

**Reflections in the New Testament**

The New Testament is no different regarding the treatment of foreigners, where foreigners receive special attention in the Gospels and throughout the New Testament. Metaphors and symbolism bring up the subject quite frequently and reinforce the theological principles of the Old Testament. In the New Testament Christians are called “strangers and pilgrims” (1 Pt 2:11), and regarded as immigrants. So, Paul concludes the letter to the Philippians at chapter 3:20: “But our citizenship is in heaven.” The most important episode of the early church was Pentecost (Acts 2), a large gathering of immigrants, who spoke different languages, something not very common, in the Jewish
separatist culture. In fact, most impressive of all is that the Lord Jesus Christ himself is, in a way, the most important immigrant of all universal history. He left his “heavenly homeland” and came to dwell among humankind, becoming like one of them, as John states: “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (Jn 1:14).

Jesus, A Rejected Immigrant Treated like a Stranger on Earth

Jesus’ empathy, with the vicissitudes lived by immigrants and refugees, is not only conceptual theory and values. His life experience brings him closer to the subject and creates ties of affinity with the difficulties faced by foreigners living in strange lands. The motivations of migratory movements, especially of His family in the period of His childhood, are the same motivations of all migratory movements, in all times of human history. Carrol comments as follows: “The joy of nativity scene and the wonder of the visit of the magi are overshadowed by the unhappy account of the senseless death of innocent children and the flight of refugees. The migration of this Family locates the Jesus story within a movement that spans history, of people desiring a better life or escaping the threat of death.”¹¹

About two years or more of His earliest years of life, Jesus lived with his family as a refugee in Egypt, fleeing from the murderous order of Herod. His parents returned to Israel, however, not to Judea, for they feared Archelaus who reigned there, instead of his

¹¹ M. Daniel Carroll, Christians at the Border: Immigration, the Church, and the Bible (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2013), 106.
late father. The destination was Galilee, to the city of Nazareth, according to Matthew 2:21-23. The risks and threats, at least during this stage of Jesus’ life, influenced the changes of His family, in search of a better and safer life.

Jesus limited His ministry and his preaching most of the time to the territory of Israel. However, the Gospels record foreigners ever present among the multitudes who sought Jesus from the beginning of His ministry, according to Matthew 4:25. If, on the one hand, there were foreigners who heard Jesus coming, mainly from the Decapolis and the area around Tire and Sidon, there were no strangers in the group of twelve. The encounter with the centurion of Capernaum, recorded in Matthew 8:5-13, presents the difficulty of Jesus, as a Jew, entering the house of a pagan and a stranger. In Luke’s account everything happens through Jewish mediators and the centurion is characterized as a worshiper of God who loves the people of Israel (Lk 7:1-10). The foreigners who tried to see Jesus in Jerusalem are probably Greeks by birth who approached Judaism through contacts with the Jews of the Diaspora as recorded in John 12:20-21.

The interest of these foreigners in being with Jesus creates an opportunity for Him to show them that God’s plan of salvation and His mission was to lead the sheep that are from another sheep pen (Jn 10:16). If historically, His childhood was lived in conditions of a refugee and His ministry sought to create bridges that provided welcome to foreigners, theologically, Jesus in a certain sense, did not stop being a foreigner on earth. Finally, Jesus, an immigrant who left his “homeland” (heaven), came down to earth and was rejected by people (earth’s citizens), left the Great Commission saying: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy
Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Mt 28:18-20).

With the Great Commission Jesus announces the inauguration of the heavenly citizenship for His disciples who live in this world, but are not of this world, as He is not.

Inclusivist Theology of the Early Church Concerning Gentiles

Christianity was born with a focus of universality. The basic founding documents of the Church make clear that the Christian message, the Gospel, should be distinctly proclaimed to all peoples and nations. However, Jewish xenophobia and the strong resistance of Judaizers became a huge challenge for the ministry of Jesus and the early years of the early Church. Two moments are important for opening the Gospel to foreigners who lived in and beyond Jerusalem. First was the Great Commission of Jesus, who commanded that the Gospel be preached to every nation. The other was Pentecost, when the visitation of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples in Jerusalem brought together people with different tongues in the same Spirit. Openly sharing the salvation message of Jesus to foreigners only occurred, therefore, after these remarkable events. However, even after Pentecost, the early disciples were slow to understand this. The exclusivist Judaic concept, common among the messianic community of disciples, was seen in the reaction of Peter before gentile Cornelius: “You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile” (Acts 10:28).

Although the Law given through Moses did not establish such a restriction, the concept was rooted among the Jews and especially among their religious leaders. The expansion of the faith between the Gentiles and the conflict with the Judaizers who understood that converts would have to submit to Mosaic laws provoked the council of
Jerusalem, in order to end the debate. This council was of great relevance for the development of the inclusivist character of the Church of Christ. Hunter states:

The Jerusalem Council’s decision was momentous. Without that decision, Christianity might have remained a sect of “fulfilled Jews” within Judaism. The decision extended the principle of Incarnation; as Jesus had adapted to Galilean Aramaic-speaking peasant culture, so the Church, his Body, could now become “indigenous all the cultures of the Earth. Now that Gentiles did not have to become Jews to become Christians, the Faith was unleashed to spread and adapt within three centuries to most of the major culture in the Roman Empire, and to later become world’s most universal Faith.”

The apostolic ministry of Paul undoubtedly also made an enormous contribution to Christian inclusivism. Paul called himself “an apostle to the Gentiles:” “I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I take pride in my ministry” (Rom 11:13). The Greek word ἀπόστολος, translated into English as “apostle,” brings a peculiar meaning of the word: being sent to a specific task strongly connected with the one who sent it. Moulton, in The Analytical Greek Lexicon, clarifies the meaning of the title, emphasizing this connectivity with the sender: “One sent as a messenger or agent, the bearer of a commission.”

Inclusiveness in the Kingdom of God, and the Christian practice of inclusion is fundamental and indispensable in today’s pluralistic and multicultural American society. As the Kingdom of God, the Church must provide a welcoming environment for thousands of immigrants; and cannot ignore the greater value of the Christian faith that is love. True Christian love opens the doors of churches through healthy ethnic inclusivism, without barriers, without discrimination. In this direction Soerens concludes:

12 George Hunter, III, Church for the Unchurched (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 60, 61.

Furthermore, we do well to note that by bringing Jews and Gentiles together as one person—though not, the apostle Paul makes clear, by requiring Gentiles to become as the Jews in every way—God creates a single body, his church (Acts 15:10; Cor 12:27). Each part of Christ’s body—Jew and Gentile, Asian, African, Hispanic, Native American, Caucasian and every other group of people—must be reconciled to one another and to God to effectively be the unified body that God has called us to be, doing his work in the world.¹⁴

**Conclusion**

The death of Stephen and the strong persecution of Christians in Jerusalem by the radical Judaizers provoked a dispersal of the disciples throughout Judea and Samaria, preaching to the Jews of good news and salvation. Some of them, Cypriots and Cyrenians, came to Antioch and there also preached to the Greeks about the good news of salvation. Acts 11:21 confirms the inclusivist purposes of God through the action of the Holy Spirit: “The Lord’s hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.” This provoked a redirection in the vision of the early Church, bringing it closer to God’s desire. Branson comments on this wonderful move of God:

> Among numerous stories, these episodes indicate that God wants shalom to be known across cultural boundaries. The eschatological images of the book of Revelation reinforce this trajectory: “There was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne the Lamb” (Rev 7:9). Does this help us know the shape of any gathering called “church”? What did Jesus envision when he taught the disciples to pray, “Your kingdom come. Your will be done on Earth as it is in heaven” (Mt 6:10)? Are these mere ideals, while circumstances and reason tell us that homogeneous congregations have too many advantages to forgo?²⁵

There are no shortcuts for the Church to fulfill the “go” of Jesus. Inclusivity is the most powerful testimony that we, the Church, are one in Christ Jesus. It was in this spirit

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¹⁴ Soerens and Yang, *Welcoming the Stranger*, 90.

that Jesus prayed to the Father: “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (Jn 17:20-21).
CHAPTER 5

BIBLICAL ANSWERS FOR THE CHURCH FACING IMMIGRANT ISSUES

Coping with immigration issues within a local church is not a simple, much less an easy task. Most traditional denominations adopt protectionist and separatist ecclesiastical politics, and therefore, are not inclusivist. Protectionist, in the sense that immigrants are often treated as “poor creatures” that only need to be aided, that isolates them in ethnic congregation projects. Separatist politics are sometimes functional, but clash with God’s vision for His Church.

The PCUSA, for example, maintains an excellent policy focused on immigrants planting churches. It has a clear position in defense of the rights of immigrants regardless of their immigratory legality condition, however, the great majority of projects aimed at immigrants are ethnic churches, creating only ecclesiastical ghettos. Such initiatives seem to be the choice of an easier way, to the detriment of the right way, according to the heart of God. In this sense Mark Deymaz comments:

If the kingdom of heaven is not segregated, why on earth is the Church? Surely, it must break the heart of God to see so many churches throughout this country segregated ethnically and economically from one another and that little has changed since it was first observed eleven oclock on Sunday morning is the most segregated hour in the land. In an increasingly connected yet stubbornly sectarian world, it is time to recognize that there is no greater tool for evangelism than the
witness of diverse believers walking, working, and worshiping God together as one in and through the local church.¹

Faced with the growth of migratory movements around the world, the US has been a preferred destination for many thousands of immigrants in search of a better life for their families. This phenomenon challenges the Church to build an effective immigration policy that is consistent with biblical principles. Guder evaluates this current moment: “Globalization and expanded immigration have brought increased ethnic and cultural diversity to both the United States and Canada. This diversity challenges the church to be a social community that creates true unity among different people, even as it affirms particular identity.”²

A Church for All

What most local churches and denominations determined concerning immigrants and refugees in the US seems to be a somewhat divorced path from the theological principles emanating from the teachings of Jesus and the practices of the early Church. The inclusivist vocation of the Church of Christ, inspired by Jesus’ own teaching and practice, leads the Church to pursue cultural diversity, moving away from the ecclesiastical monoculture that characterizes the vast majority of churches. Mark Deymaz, pastor of one of the most successful US multi-ethnic churches comments:

According to research conducted by sociologists Curtiss Paul Deyoung, Michael O. Emerson, George Yancey, and Karen Chai Kim, 92.5 percent of Catholic and Protestant churches throughout the United States can be classified as “monoracial.” This describes a church in which 80 percent or more of the individuals who attend are of the same ethnicity or race. The remaining churches

¹ Mark Deymaz, Building a Healthy Multi-ethnic Church (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 4.

(7.5 percent) can be described as multiracial - churches in which there are a non-majority, collective population of at least 20 percent. By this definition, approximately 12 percent of Catholic churches, just less than 5 percent of Evangelical churches, and about 2.5 percent of mainline Protestant churches can be described as multiracial.³

This demonstrates that churches, both Catholic and Protestant, especially Mainline churches, are ethnic ghettos, and that racial issues are more compelling than Christian values in determining the membership profile of a congregation. The principle of the Gospel is that the Church is for all, regardless of socio-economic position, cultural level or racial origin. All are brothers and sisters in Christ, member of the same body - Christ’s Church. Separatist reactions by the disciples were severely condemned by the Master and were akin to the resistances of the Judaizers in the Early Church.

The natural and organic flow is that the similar people associate. To get together people who are different is always very challenging, and sometimes uncomfortable. For this reason, developing a multiracial environment requires effort and energy from those who lead a church. Deymaz states: “To create a harmonious mixture from different-colored ingredients requires intentionality; likewise, a multi-ethnic church does not just happen. Planters and reformers alike must first identify and then take intentional steps to turn their vision into reality.”⁴ Having said this, it is clear that the construction of a theology based on the purest Gospel will inexorably contribute to the development of a community open to people different than themselves. This, however, in a multicultural society such as the US, demands theological reflection that answers migratory questions in the light of the Gospel.

³ Deymaz, Building a Healthy Multi-ethnic Church, 4.
⁴ Ibid., 56.
Developing an Inclusive Theology for an Immigrant Church

Development of a theology that answers migratory questions is basic to the success of a multiracial church project. A project that defies the status quo, as this current project does, cannot be based in values purely of social interest or that meet the separatist bias of a ruling class. It is necessary to evoke the revelation of God and His desire for His Church, which should serve as “north” for a daring project that intends to rescue inclusivist values of the Church of Christ. A nationalism that does not consider justice, mercy and love distances itself from the vision of God and the purpose of His Kingdom on earth. The issue becomes even more complex when it comes to undocumented immigrants who push the discussion into the realm of ethic and law. On this, Kristin Heyer comments:

As the discussion of nativism and more subtle forms of nationalism highlights, many US citizens, Christians included, remain ambivalent about—if not resistant to—an ethic that urges hospitality and mercy for those who cross or remain within their borders through extralegal avenues. Without dismissing concerns about the complex relationship between law and morality or the political involvement of churches, fierce resistance to an ethic of hospitality and justice may suggest Christian citizens, susceptibility to secular disvalues.  

The main point to consider for the development of a theology concerning migration is to differentiate the role of the State and the Church in approaching the subject. The confusion at this point may lead the Church to fail in its function of being the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Border issues, immigration regulations, as well as the monitoring of migratory status are functions of the State, not of the Church. Pina, commenting on the reality of the churches of Brazilian immigrants within PCUSA,

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states: “The legal problem creates an ethical problem. More than 50% of the members of our immigrant groups are undocumented/illegal. To solve this impasse the church, at least in that area, we took two attitudes: the first one is what I call the Good Samaritan Attitude. With that attitude the church will help the immigrant without asking their legal status.”

The attitude of the Church in such a situation must be to maintain the purpose for which the Lord Jesus established it - there are neither Greek nor Jew: “So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:26-28).

The doors of the church should be open to all who love God and want to serve Christ. The Church is the incarnation of God’s love among men, where there is no place for ethnic separatism. Thus, concludes Pina: “The church needs to operate in a new theological frame. For that to happen we need to help our people to understand the incarnation of Christ and His ministry among the people.”

Identifying and Articulating Biblical Answers to the Traumas and Crises of Immigrants

It is extremely rare for people to emigrate from their country just for the pleasure of living in strange land. The vast majority of people emigrate from their countries out of necessity, seeking a solution for their problems and seeking a better life. Immigrants constantly face an endless list of traumas and crises. Those most affected by deep trauma

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6 Lucas Pina, Ministering with the New Immigrants: The Challenges That Mainline Churches Face (Self Published, 2015, Kindle Edition), Locations 321-324.

7 Ibid., Locations 464-467.
are, in general, those who risk crossing borders illegally. Traumas experienced by immigrants at these crossings include sexual abuse, financial exploitation, coyotes, fear, hunger, cold, and other innumerable life-threatening difficulties. Currently, in the US “illegal” immigrants face separation of the family, prison and exploitation by employers.

Even those who migrate legally or in more favorable conditions face many emotionally inhospitable and difficult situations. In fifteen years of ministry among Brazilian immigrants in the US, I found a frightening number of people suffering from depression, anguish and many in psychiatric treatment. Some psychologists classify the traumas of immigrants, as something very close to the experience of the death of relatives. The Church, as the Body of Christ, has the therapeutic function of knowing deeply this complexity and treating such wounds that were opened by the painful migratory adventure. The great challenge, however, is to break the barriers that distance churches from the reality lived by immigrants. This disruption is possible only through the exercise of brotherly love and Christian behaviors that stimulate empathy from the church’s membership toward the needs of the immigrant population. Soerens suggests working the matter as follows:

We can begin by bringing the immigration situation before God in prayer. From there, we move to action: we can serve our immigrant neighbors through volunteering, allowing us to know them personally and learn from them as well as financially supporting ministries that facilitate such service. As we better understand the immigration issue through interaction with immigrant neighbors, we can help to educate others in our churches and communities. From there, we can advocate together on behalf of immigrants and refugees.8

8 Soerens and Yang, Welcoming the Stranger, 176.
With this church-immigrant integration, traumas and crises will be more exposed and easily understood for all in the congregation, becoming part of the challenges of the congregation as a whole and no longer a personal and solitary challenge of immigrants and their families. This process of church-immigrant integration requires a conscious and intentional strategy, especially from church leadership.

Another important factor in this process is the inclusion of immigrant leaders with good Christian maturity and competent skills in the governing body of church. These leaders serve as a bridge between the dominant culture and an immigrant group. Understanding the specificities of life and the ethical issues surrounding immigrants is a huge challenge, as Hunter concludes: “The immigrant leaders also face the ethical challenges, because they have to deal with undocumented/illegal issues on a daily basis. It is very hard for them to define a clear line between right and wrong, which often makes the situation worse.” Leaders are opinion formers in the congregation and therefore need to be zealous in thoroughly knowing immigration issues and seeking fair and effective responses in a robust theology, that reflects the heart of God.

Forgiveness and the Grace of God in the Immigrant Context

A feeling of guilt is very common among immigrants, and can have diverse origins. At the beginning of my ministry, two situations brought me a great sense of guilt. The first was shepherding immigrants living illegally in the US. Second, was realizing the adversities that my teenage children were facing, as a result of my decision to immigrate to the US. This made me feel extremely guilty. They faced cultural clashes,

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language barriers and discriminatory attitudes of colleagues and even from teachers. Many feel guilty for depriving themselves, and also their spouses and children of being acquainted with the familiar and missing the friends that they left in Brazil. Others blame themselves for living in conditions of immigration illegally, in the country.

Addressing this situation requires two attitudes from the local church to help encourage immigrants to overcome their feelings of guilt. First, the church cannot stigmatize people by their immigratory status, labeling them criminals. The vast majority of immigrants who enter the US, even if they have broken some migratory laws, are workers, living honest and disciplined lives, and contributing to the country’s growth and development. It is not fair to label them “illegal,” much less criminals, dangerous or evildoers. Secondly, it cannot be ignored that all citizens, in a certain way, commit crimes, break laws, and are not labeled “illegal” or criminals. On this Hunter argues:

> We prefer to refer to people as “undocumented” rather than “illegal”. We do not deny that it is illegal to enter United States without a valid visa and inspection, nor do we condone any illegal activity. However, while entry without inspection (or overstaying a temporary visa) is illegal, this does not define the person’s identity. Many of us have broken a law at one time or another (we can both confess to having sped down the highway on more than one occasion), but if a single (or even, in the case of our speeding, repeated) act were to define our identity, we would probably all be “illegals”. Such terminology, in common usage, lumps immigrants - whose entering or overstaying unlawfully does not require any malicious intent - with criminals like murderers, rapists, and kidnappers. It is too easy to dehumanize such immigrants when we lump them with such unsavory characters.\(^{10}\)

> It is critical to remove this oppressive behavior toward undocumented immigrants who live honestly and contribute to the well being of the country, and work toward the emotional health of them and also of their families. One cannot ignore that the same

\(^{10}\) George G. Hunter, III, *Church for the Unchurched* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 60, 61.
society that labels them as “illegal and criminals” benefits from their work. Most lawnscape workers, housekeepers, construction workers and a significant percentage of blue-collar workers are undocumented workers who work hard and honestly to support their families.

Another important approach the local church needs to make in dealing with this guilty feeling is to teach on the immeasurable grace of God. The lingering guilt of immigrants, especially the undocumented, drives them away from God and consequently from the local church. Teaching on a theology of grace that reaches sinners, freeing them from the oppression of guilt must be lived deeply and intensely in a congregation that intends to welcome immigrants.

Paul, concerning Adam’s disobedience, and commenting on salvation found in obedience to Christ, concludes: “The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 5:20, 21). Thus, grace reaches all, bringing peace to the heart afflicted by the guilt.

The Prophetic Voice of the Church

The prophetic voice from God has always echoed over the earth through his people. In the Old Testament God used his prophets to speak to His people and the world. A message reproaching all sorts of exploitation and oppression has always occupied a large portion of the prophetic word of God’s men and women, throughout history. Other themes, such as condemnation of sin, rebellion, contempt for God’s people and for His
House and other subjects were also present in the prophetic word that God placed in the
mouths of His servant’s prophets. However, whenever the rights of the weak were
violated, God always raised a strong prophetic voice in defense of the oppressed. The
New Testament is no different.

The Church of Christ never coexisted peacefully with the oppression and
exploitation of the weak. The Church’s prophetic voice has always risen against
oppression of the rights of orphans, widows, foreigners and of all who are marginalized
by the dominant society. In a society as pluralistic as the US, in which economic, social
and ethnic inequality dominate strongly, the Church must hear cries of suffering from the
excluded, and assume its prophetic vocation, as the mouth of God. The immigrant
population has been constantly discussed not only in ecclesial circles but also in politics.

The prophetic voice of the Church takes place in two ways: first, by the official
positions of denominations or associations and local churches seeking to be the voice of
the Church before society. Secondly, it speaks through the common sense of its
membership, whether it be in a local church or the denomination. These interact with
each other, determining the position of one another in a certain way. Regarding the social
injustice suffered by immigrants, PCUSA, as a denomination, has clearly defended the
rights of immigrants and condemned oppression:

This concern with immigration lays at the heart of who Presbyterians are as a
people of faith. We believe in a God who migrated to the human condition in the
person Jesus and we adhere to the Judeo-Christian tradition of providing
hospitality and doing justice. Further, the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church
(U.S.A.) has several provisions that address specific needs of immigrant
fellowships/congregations.11

However, the high rate of monoethnic local churches and the policy of “segregating” immigrants with monocultural church projects seems to open an incoherence between what is theologically defined in the denomination and what is experienced in local churches.

The “Apartheid” Society Confronted by the law of the Love of God

American society lives in apartheid, even if veiled. This is not about Apartheid as it was experienced in South Africa. American racial segregation was officially ended with the 14th Amendment of the Constitution, adopted July 9, 1868, which guaranteed and protected the equality of citizens before the law. Two years later, on February 3, the 15th Amendment clearly prohibited discrimination based on race or color. “Apartheid” here refers to the veiled separatist practices of American society, that are not very different from what is seen in the great majority of churches, as discussed earlier. If it is sad for society to treat humans differently based on color, race, ethnicity or any other factor, it is unthinkable that the Church of Christ do so by rebelling against the Master’s deepest desire expressed in the priestly prayer. Deymaz comments on verses 21 through 23 of John 17, when Jesus prayed for those who would believe:

In others words, Christ prayed specifically that future generations of believers would be one so that the world would know God’s love and believe. In this way and by this means, Christ stated that his mission would be accomplished though others and, ultimately, his Father glorified. What Jesus intends for us (the local church), then is clear: we have been called to be one for the sake of the Gospel. It may not be easy, but it is biblical, and it is right.\textsuperscript{12}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{12} Deymaz, \textit{Building a Healthy Multi-ethnic Church}, 9, 10.}
Churches that opt for church-planting projects that create cultural ghettos do not harmonize with the principles taught by Jesus, much less please the heart of God. Such projects tend to follow the inclination of secular society, affronting God’s will for His Church. The Church’s choice for a project based on ethnic criteria certainly brings solutions to some issues such as language, culture and liturgical style. However, while relevant, these concerns cannot work against the unity of the Body of Christ. This is the great miracle of faith, the unity in diversity.

Social Injustice to those who Live in the Shadow of Illegal Immigration

The Department of Homeland Security estimated in 2014 an unauthorized immigrant population of 12.1-million. It is also estimated that the unauthorized immigrant population of the Houston metropolitan area is close to 600,000. According to The Washington Post this figure represents 8.7 percent of the metroplex population:

“Unauthorized immigrants made up 8.7 percent of the metro area’s population as of 2014, more than double the national average.”13 This percentage should make people pause to consider that in each group of nine people, one probably lives in the shadow of illegality. Thousands are working construction, taking care of lawns, cleaning houses and doing several other heavy jobs essential for people’s well being. It is very unlikely that there is anyone who does not benefit from the work of an undocumented immigrant, directly or indirectly, on a daily basis. They are everywhere; society constantly depends on their services, without, however, recognizing their basic rights.

The proximity of the Mexican border and the large number of undocumented immigrants makes the State of Texas a little bit more tolerant with migratory issues. However, this does not help undocumented immigrants avoid living under tension and fear. They are forced, in the face of their undocumented status to drive their cars without a driver’s license. They subject themselves to pay high insurance premiums for their cars, offered by the few companies that are willing to take the risk.

These immigrants work ten-to-twelve hours per day to aid their families to have a better life in their home countries. They often live with high numbers of people in the same house to reduce expenses. They are essential in the economic drive of greater Houston, forming a labor force on which the metropolis depends fundamentally. Despite playing such an important role in society, they live in oppressive silence, in the shadow of illegality. They have no voice to cry out for their rights and spaces. Society, in general, lives as if they do not exist and as if they do not need them. However, it is totally dependent on this workforce, and without it, would surely collapse.

The Church, whether as denominations or local congregations, cannot align itself with a secular posture that ignores the oppression of the undocumented, exploiting their work without recognizing their rights. On the contrary, the Church must advocate and stand up against this social injustice. In this direction Soerens concludes:

Advocacy is crucial because transformation should be about the whole of society, by meeting immediate needs but also changing the structures in which society operates. Advocacy can be defined as being a voice for the voiceless standing in the gap to present the realities of injustice around the world to those in positions of influence who can help change the situation. Scripture specifically calls us to this task. Proverbs 31:8 commands us: “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves.” It is a biblical imperative to advocate for justice, and most
immigrants, who are not naturalized citizens, cannot vote and so speak up for themselves in our country.\textsuperscript{14}

The silence and omission of the Church only increases the shadow of illegality over this suffered people, making the shadow denser and darker. The omission of the Church is, at the very least, conniving with a society that benefits daily from the work of thousands of undocumented people and, even so, not sensitive to their sufferings.

The Church as God’s Ear to the Cries of the Excluded Ones

The social tension created by the indispensability of the labor force of thousands of undocumented immigrants and the discomfort their presence creates to the dominant population opens a gap of opportunity for the Church, while making its reconciling role extremely delicate. Guder, commenting on the similarity of the situation in the US and Canada, states:

Many U.S. citizens often view the increase in ethnic minority population as a threat to the once dominant Anglo culture. At the same time that national policy continues to shift away from race as a basis for guaranteeing social rights, many whites exhibit a rising racist militancy. In both countries, violence associated with immigration policies and ethnic relations continues to grow. This situation makes it even more critical for the church to demonstrate the reconciling power of the gospel in multicultural communities.\textsuperscript{15}

The challenge of reconciliation makes the role of the Church even more relevant and urgent. Hearing the cry of the oppressed is, undoubtedly, in tune with divine mercy. God is a God who inclines his ear to hear the cry of his people, and hastens to help him. When the people of Israel suffered the oppression of slavery in Egypt, God called Moses and gave him the mission of delivering His people from oppression, saying:

\begin{footnotes}
\item[14] Soerens and Yang, \textit{Welcoming the Stranger}, 181.
\end{footnotes}
I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites (Ex 3:7-8).

When the Church cover its ears, ignores and refuses to listen to the cry of the oppressed, it loses its function of connecting the oppressed and wounded with reconciliation, for which it is called. Bevans defines this mission: “Mission is the church preaching Christ for the first time; it is the act of Christians struggling against injustice and oppression; it is the binding of wounds in reconciliation; it is the church learning from other religious ways and being challenged by the world’s cultures.”

The Church must face Anglo purism and open itself to different cultural nuances to fulfill its mission of being the ear of God to the excluded. The marginalized in secular society need to be included in the Body Christ, without which the Church will never become God’s ears so as to sensibly hear the cry of the oppressed. The effort to break diverse barriers must be motivated by the love and awareness of the mission conferred by the Lord of the Church on all His servants. This experience of cross-cultural interactivity is thus affirmed by Deymas:

The understanding we need to be effective in a cross-cultural environment is gained through experience and interaction with diverse people, especially with those who are one in the Lord. To build a healthy multi-ethnic church, then, we must commit ourselves to the pursuit of cross-cultural competence, whether that means becoming proficient in the idiosyncrasies of language or the ins and outs of customs and traditions different from our own.

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Having overcome this stage in the cross-cultural process, the Church will be able and ready to face the problems of the immigrant population, focused on a theology appropriate for ethnic diversity, thus responding to her vocation to be the ear of God for the oppressed.
CHAPTER 6

CONTEXTUALIZATION OF THEOLOGY FACING IMMIGRATION ISSUES

Re-theologizing in the Brazilian Immigration Context

When engaging in a multicultural project driving a community to develop a peculiar theology of mission, a local church must attend to the needs of the local immigrant population. Branson and Martinez, in chapter two of Churches, Cultures and Leadership, address “Missional Ecclesiology and Church Context,” drawing attention to a major misconception of mission that seems to permeate the minds of most church members: “When the word mission is used in a U.S. church, the hearers will likely think of foreign nations or distressed U.S. urban or rural locations.”¹ This mistaken theological concept of mission leads church members to limit themselves, simply in involving themselves in missionary committees, making donations, distributing missionary funds and, at the most, participating in small mission trips. The breadth of the term “mission” goes far beyond this and requires church engagement, immersing itself in the social context of the population in which it is rooted. This immersion process shapes the local

¹ Branson and Martinez, Churches, Cultures and Leadership, 59.
church, calibrating it to be a relevant community to the social reality around it. Branson and Martinez state:

Every congregation is both called and sent; the call gathers us to hear, understand and accept our vocation, which is that we are sent into the world for the sake of the gospel. As agents of God’s reign, churches engage the people and powers of their context. This engagement is one of mutual shaping—any changed by its context (in appropriate ways and often in ways that counter the gospel)—and a church embodies and initiates the grace of God in love, justice, healing, peace, witness, invitation and proclamation.\(^2\)

Greater Houston is extremely diverse. For a multicultural project this creates numerous opportunities for cross-cultural experience. The cultural plurality of Houston imposes on local churches a peculiar missionary conception and, therefore a re-theologization of the missionary concepts.

**Unexpected Situations Raised by Immigration Issues**

A local church that welcomes immigrants, whether legal or undocumented, will daily face unexpected situations, peculiar to the common problems of other churches. A local church will never understand the problems faced by immigrants if there are no intentional initiatives, creating relational ties to the Body of Christ with the world around it. The church must seek to know deeply the issues that affect immigrants. Guder thus defines this relationship:

The church relates constantly and dynamically both to the gospel and to its contextual reality. It is important, then for the church to study its context carefully and to understand it. The technical term for this continuing discipline is contextualization. Since everyone lives in culture, the church’s careful study of its context will help the church to translate the truth of the gospel as good news for the society to which it is sent. Moreover, because culture is not neutral, this discipline will assist the church to discern how it might be compromising gospel truth as it lives out its obedience to Christ the Lord. In order to contextualize

\(^2\) Ibid., 63.
responsibly, the church must assess its culture critically, discerning and unmasking its philosophical foundations and values.\(^3\)

What Guder defines as contextualization, one facet of a missional church, is exactly this interactivity that leads local churches to face the issues of the immigrants in their midst. Such exposure leads a church inexorably to know and engage in questions that would never be raised in a monocultural local church. It is not uncommon, for example, that a local church be involved in issues such as the arrest of one of its members, deportations, court cases and other matters that force the community to seek answers in light of the Word of God. Delicate topics such as how to care for children of immigrants who are American citizens being separated from parents by deportation may be on the agenda of the church.

The “Sanctuary Movement” website cites the vertiginous growth of local churches participating in “Sanctuary Immigration.” These congregations stand against the social injustices suffered by immigrants, and even house immigrant families who suffer injustice with the risk of deportation, that violate the most basic humanitarian principles. The same site relates the story of a family threatened with having their children separated from their parents by the deportation process:

Rene “Alex” Garcia entered Sanctuary on September 21, 2017 after he was denied a stay of removal even though he had been receiving one for several years. Alex is the father of five U.S. citizen children and has been residing in Missouri for over ten years. Alex came to the U.S. from Honduras thirteen years ago seeking safety and a better life. Since then, he has become a respected member of his community and a pillar of support for his family. His oldest son was diagnosed with Asperger’s syndrome in 2014 and depends on his strong relationship with his father to calm his stress and anxiety. Alex and his family are

\(^3\) Guder, *Missional Church*, 18.
petitioning the government to grant him a stay of removal so he can return home to his family, until then, he will remain in Sanctuary.⁴

Undocumented immigrants are not the only challenge pushing local churches to an inevitable need to revise ecclesiology. Situations with people who have entered into the country with a student visa and then start to work illegally, families in crisis, cultural conflicts and other situations call for a theological response, constantly challenging multicultural churches.

The Intersection of Real Life with Academic Theology

The daily reality of a multicultural church seems far removed from the theological academicism taught in seminaries. Professors very rarely devote themselves to thinking and theologizing about issues commonly faced by multicultural churches, and more rarely present answers to the questions that arise from them. The divergence of academic theory with reality reveals a theological lapse that needs to be worked on and filled with pragmatic and, of course, biblical answers.

After fifteen years serving indigenous churches in Brazil, the beginning of ministry in Dallas was strongly marked by discomfort and persistent questions in my theological consciousness. New situations arose in the daily life of the immigrant church, for which I had no answer. The first time I returned to Brazil, a year later, a very close friend, and fellow pastor, surprised me with a question, which I consider the kickoff of my retheologization process. Among many questions he asked: “How do you feel pastoring illegal immigrants, in the USA?” I paused for a moment to reflect and said, “I

think I feel the same way about pastoring people who evaded taxes, betrayed their spouses, lied, or disobeyed transit laws or made other mistakes they should not have made. This does not seem very different from shepherding the undocumented.” The question seemed to contain the prevailing prejudice in in the US toward the undocumented. The mistakes of people who in one way or another seek to live in the US, even in conditions of illegality, do not make them criminals. Thousands of American citizens break laws on a daily basis, but nonetheless are not considered criminals. In both situations, the vast majority are good citizens, hardworking, honest people who by adverse circumstances are involved in some type of law breaking.

This understanding of the multicultural reality of the US inexorably surrounds the church and forces it, as immigrant church planters, to rethink theology according to the circumstances that it has to face. Pina concludes:

The church needs to operate in a new theological frame. For that to happen we need to help our people to understand the incarnation of Christ and His ministry among the people. Van Engen emphasizes this idea stating, “We have found that the most effective missionary congregations are incarnational - that is, they reflect the presence of Jesus Christ and embody the Holy Spirit within their communities.” Instead of being an agency of God in the world the church has become a place for Christians to take refuge from the world. Van Engen asks for a new ecclesiological paradigm when he writes, “A new missiological paradigm in ecclesiology is needed so that we might see the missionary Church as an ‘emerging’ reality which, as it is built up in the world, becomes in fact what it is in faith.” The work of the church is not finished until we see people from the world—that means, from different social classes, different races and ages—coming to Christ and becoming members of His church.5

5 Pina, Ministering with the New Immigrants, Kindle Locations 460-471.
A church will not be relevant and will never fulfill its mission as salt of the earth and light of the world if it is not able to build a theology that meets the reality around it, understanding its idiosyncrasies and propitiating clear biblical answers to its uniqueness.

Building a Domestic Theology from House-to-house

A domestic environment and the informality of small groups meeting with regularity in homes is the perfect environment for the local church to promote encounters of reality-based theology. The formality of large Sunday gatherings certainly does not provide the spontaneity necessary for people to feel at ease in sharing their problems, their pains and their questions. Dominical services and large gatherings are of a celebratory nature, a collective expression and therefore are not appropriate spaces to promote this theology-reality encounter. Obviously, such gatherings are of great significance and are part of the dynamics of a local church, responding to the divine call for their people to gather in worship.

However, small groups gathered in homes propitiate a suitable environment for souls to relax, sharing sufferings and the anxieties, particularly from immigrants. The sharing of pains, problems, afflictions and anxieties becomes much easier in small groups. Deymaz thus affirms the relevance of small groups in their ministry experience:

It is clear the early church was characterized not only by beliefs but also by behaviors (Acts 2:42047; 4:32-17). Their authentic fellowship (Greek, koinonia) required participation together in faith, as well as partnership together in friendship. For any church to experience such community, members must strive to develop a corporate identity, as well as an individual affinity for one another. They must share a commitment to God and commitment to each other, and organizational programming must take this into consideration. With this mind, the
first members of Mosaic made the decision early on to gather monthly in small groups known as Acts 2 Fellowship (A2f). 

As immigration concerns come to the surface, especially in interactions created by small groups, the church is in a way forced to think through such questions in the light of the Bible. Congregations must formulate a theology that responds to the tensions generated by the intersection of academic theology with the pragmatism of the daily realities of the church and its membership. This re-theologizing is a direct result of informal environments of the local church, especially small groups that meet in homes. From the beginnings of the Church it can be observed that small groups, alongside the Holy Spirit empowering the Church, enables her to understand cultural realities, making the correct translation of Gospel, for such a reality. On this, Guder states:

From the outset, the church of Christ was mandated to be multicultural: to witness in the distinctive contexts of Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the world. The Spirit was given to empower the apostolic community to translate the gospel into particular cultures as it expanded across the world. The formation of mission communities in Jerusalem, Samaria, Antioch, Philippi, Ephesus, and ultimately Rome represents a continuing witness to the translatability of the gospel.

Thus, theology developed that contributes to a contextualized theological framework for the very unique questions experienced by a multicultural church that intentionally involves itself with the immigrant population.

**Ecclesiology in the Context of an Immigrant Community**

Ecclesiology is the part of theology that concerns the doctrine of the Church, its role in the salvation of the humans, its origin, its discipline, its way of relating to the

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6 Deymaz, *Building a Healthy Multi-ethnic Church*, 86.

7 Guder, *Missional Church*, 231.
world, its role in society and its ecclesiastical form of government. As such, ecclesiology in a context of a multicultural community has singularities that need to be considered. Multicultural circumstances greatly affect relevant areas of local church dynamics and need to be addressed in the light of God’s Word to effectively fulfill the Lord’s “sending.” David Bosch approaches “paradigm changes in missiology,” affirming recent conceptual changes regarding the factors that determine personal understanding of the revelation of God:

Any individual Christian’s understanding of God’s revelation is conditioned by a great variety of factors. These include the person’s ecclesiastical tradition, personal context (sex, age, marital status, educations), social position (social “class”, profession, wealth, environment), personality, and culture (worldview, language, etc). Traditionally we have recognized the existence (even if not validity) of only the first factor, that is, the differences caused by ecclesiastical traditions. In more recent years we have begun to accept the role of culture in religion and religious experience. The other factors are, however, equally (if not more) important. A black migrant worker in Johannesburg for instance, may have a perception of the Christian faith very different from that of a white civil servant in the same city, even if both are members of the Dutch Reformed Church.8

These different forms of individualized understanding of the revelation of God, with multicultural characteristics are interesting challenges for the construction of a suitable ecclesiology for a church-planting project among immigrants. The proper function of a local church is intrinsically linked to harmonious adjustments of these individual conceptions in constructing an ecclesiology that meets the singularities of the congregation. Such harmony is not the result of a vertical process that comes from the top of the organizational pyramid of the church, but from the base, which, shares its idiosyncrasies, building the ecclesial identity of the congregation.

Bosch, in his chapter on “Mission in Many Modes,” mentions three salvific events present in a missional church. Among these he cites the cross as the theme of reconciliation, in the experience of a church in mission:

Between oppressor and oppressed. Reconciliation does not, of course, mean a mere sentimental harmonizing of conflicting groups. It demands sacrifice, in very different but also in very real ways, from both oppressor and oppressed. It demands the end to oppression and injustice and commitment to a new life of mutuality, justice, and peace. And yet, without taking away anything from this assertion, it has to be added that there may be wrongs that cannot be repaired by human means, that we should not allow ourselves to be trapped in “helpless, desperate guilt feeling” or in the idea “that justice must be our justice, that we can and must cancel our guilt by restitution, or . . . overcome our frustration by mere action.”

Undoubtedly, the work of reconciliation is the basis of effective ecclesiology. It results not merely from human effort, but above all from a supernatural action of God, by the Holy Spirit. The challenge of an ecclesiology capable of fostering harmonic coexistence of different cultures in a local church is not only the result of intentionality by its members and leaders, but primarily the action of the Holy Spirit, working through conflicts and differences. Thus, the building of effective ecclesiology that promotes a harmonious acquaintanceship of different is not only the result of study and definitions for consensual functionality of a congregation, but remains the fruit of prayer and dependence on the Holy Spirit in leading the process.

Church as a Point of Cultural Convergence

Brazilian immigrants in the US, cited in Chapter 3, provide interesting data that reveals the Brazilian immigrant’s need for social coexistence with people of the same

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9 Ibid., 514.
language and similar culture, as well as the relevant role of the local church as a point of convergence for the immigrant population. When asked, “You consider important to have Brazilian churches in the USA to serve immigrants,” 57.1 percent of those interviewed said it was very important, and 31.7 percent said it was “useful, but not as important.” Combined, 88.8 percent consider that a local church open to Brazilian immigrants plays a significant role in meeting the social needs of this group. Likewise, when asked, “What would lead you to attend a Brazilian church,” 34.1 percent answered that it would be “The social and cultural environment” and 30.1 percent “For feeling better, expressing their faith in the mother tongue.” Added, the two percentages show that 64.2 percent would choose to attend a church that offers an environment where they can express themselves in their mother tongue and live with culturally similar people.

No other organization, institution or initiative that promotes ethnic activity focused on Brazilians combines factors so favorably as the Church. Only the Church provides regular activities, gratuity, informality and universality, in ways no other initiative or social organization does. However, the local church needs to be proactive, facilitating engagement of this social group as an integral and active part of the local congregation. In this sense, Pina says: “The biggest question that our churches have to answer is, do we accept the new immigrants only as part of the universal family of God, or do we really want them to become members and come to follow Jesus with us?”10

Pina’s questioning leads to reflection on the importance of integrating immigrants effectively into the membership of churches, in an active and participatory manner.

10 Pina, Ministering with the New Immigrants, Kindle Locations 506-508.
Immigrants’ questioning, needs and opinions should be treated with the same relevance as members of the dominant culture by the local church. Most often, and especially in Mainline churches, immigrants are treated as “constant visitors,” who repeatedly visit the church in a “come and go” sequence for months and years without actually being involved. This misguided style will never respond to the social-emotional needs of immigrants revealed in the research cited. The local church needs to be in tune with the Holy Spirit, discerning the will of God for all nations and cultures. Social homogeneity in the local church hurts the heart of God and saddens the Holy Spirit. Branson emphasizes the direct and forceful way in which the Holy Spirit led the first steps of the Early Church, breaking the barriers of Judaizing exclusivism and creating an inclusivist and supportive environment, for cultural diversity:

There are numerous ways that congregations shape their relationships and activities to care for strangers, migrants and those who are excluded by a dominant culture. Pentecost made this obvious: the poorer immigrants living around Jerusalem and Hellenists from throughout the Mediterranean and further east were the focus of the Holy Spirit, who ministered through their languages and social networks. The Holy Spirit guides and empowers the church to break out of the homogeneous social units of that era. The narratives and writings of the New Testament show an attentiveness to these social realities, including languages, oppression, access to recourses, and how leaders are identified, called and commissioned.¹¹

The way a local church shapes its relationships and connectivity between the dominant culture and minority groups is critical to making it a magnetic attraction point, where certain cultures in particular find an attractive environment and a converging point. Thus, of course, Brazilians around such a community choose it as their favorite church.

¹¹ Branson and Martinez, Churches, Cultures and Leadership, 38.
This format needs to give immigrant groups the clear feeling of really being a part of the congregation, not just welcomed visitors.

Church as Encouraging Community

The call of the Church includes its role as a safe haven for marginalized and the excluded and an environment of healing and encouragement victims of trauma and injury, resulting from perverse and selfish human relationships. The migratory process, in any circumstance, is a difficult experience involving change that profoundly marks people and families. The challenge of the Church is to embody the example and teaching of Christ, who, being part of the dominant Jewish culture, broke barriers, creating bridges between different ones. Carrol, treating this theme, says:

There is much to be gleaned for immigration discussions from the way Jesus deals with Samaritans, both in his personal ministry and in his teaching. The Samaritans were culturally different from the Jews; they were despised and discriminated against. Jesus turns these attitudes on their heads by having direct contact with Samaritans (one a woman and the other a leper) and using a Samaritan in a parable. In these passages, Samaritans are models of genuine relationship with God. Jesus does and says these things as a member of the majority culture of his time.\textsuperscript{12}

The crucial issue facing the US is a rapid population growth of immigrants, in some cities reaching over 50 percent. This growth generates strong social tension in which the dominant population seems threatened by the cultural identity of the nation and reacts, seeking to preserve its cultural identity. Carrol continues: “A key issue today

\textsuperscript{12} R.M. Daniel Carrol, \textit{Christians at the Border: Immigration, the Church, and the Bible} (Grand Rapids, MI, Brazos Press, 2013), 114.
concerns how the majority culture in the US perceives national identity and its maintenance in light of the growing presence of Hispanics.”13

The Church as part of society is not exempt from such conflict and does not always react within the standards of the Gospel. Often the Church echoes the same discriminatory and condemning cries of society in general, which reacts against the growing threat to dominant culture.

A local church that proposes to be a community of reconciliation and fellowship is to live in the love of Christ, creating an environment of encouragement for those bearing the deep and painful marks of history and the plights of immigrants. Traumas do not originate only in the immigration process. In fact, migration is already the upshot of a difficult life in many countries of origin, which drives the migratory adventure, in searching for a better life. Soerens, analyzing the roots of migratory issues affirming:

We believe very strongly, guided by Scripture, that immigrants and refugees should be welcomed into our society and treated with dignity and respect. Nevertheless, immigration is a difficult, often traumatic event, and people ought to be able to live in dignity in their home country, without being forced to migrate. Many Americans are only vaguely aware of the situations of poverty, conflict and environmental degradation that threaten the lives of billions of human beings around the world, particularly in Latin America, Africa and Asia. In a globalizing society, though, we no longer have the excuse of ignorance to keep us from action.14

The Church will become a community of encouragement, as it understands issues around immigration. Immigrants will be encouraged when they are received with respect and dignity in a congregation, participating in the dynamics of a church, playing their parts within a ecclesiastical structure contributing in the life of the Church. This will

13 Ibid.

14 Soerens and Yang, *Welcoming the Stranger*, 83.
build their self-esteem and greatly contribute to the process of restoring and healing the wounds and traumas of the migratory experience.

However, immigrants are treated, in most cases, as foreign to the local church, as people in need and unable to exercise leadership in the church’s structure. Rescuing the dignity of these suffering people by encouraging them to overcome trauma and the complexities resulting from the migratory experience is undoubtedly the great mission of the local church, called by God to welcome people from all the nations.

Adapting the Dynamics of the Church to the Context of Immigrant Lives

The great challenge of a local church with a multicultural vocation is to develop ecclesiastical dynamics that harmonize activities, adjusting to the cultures that comprise the congregation. Immigrants, for the most part, have a longer workday, and usually work more days a week than Anglos. These factors need to be considered in planning activities, especially on days and times of these activities. Weekday activities such as committee meetings, rehearsals, prayer meetings, small groups that would work well for Anglo members around 5pm or 6pm, would hardly work for immigrants. Such activities, in order to fit immigrants’ work routines, would need to be at 7pm, or even 8pm. In most cases, such hours would be unthinkable for Anglos, but would be the preference of the vast majority of immigrants who have a long day’s work.

Another aspect that must be observed is where each culture places priority as Pina affirms in his work. He writes, “Americans are time-oriented and most of our immigrant people are event-oriented. Important for them is the event itself and not the time. This creates many problems in events that require the participation of the American church
and the immigrant group.”\textsuperscript{15} Very often this cultural peculiarity breeds conflicts with excessive delays by Latinos in meetings. Because they are event-oriented, Latinos in general are not very disciplined in their schedules for closing meetings and encounters, stretching long into their activities, which brings great discomfort to Anglos. In order to harmonize such differences, some of these activities, such as small groups and prayer meetings, can be planned, creating ethnic groups. Thus, issues such as delay and cultural peculiarities can be harmonized more easily in the church.

The issue of language must also be addressed by churches that intend to involve different ethnic groups. The language barrier makes communing and relationships tremendously difficult, as Pina affirms:

The first challenge that the church faces is the cultural. With so many people from so many places it is very hard to handle the differences that we have. First among the cultural challenges is language. Most of our new immigrants do not speak English very well or at all. Communication is very complicated between the hosting churches and the immigrant groups. Fellowship and relationships become almost impossible.\textsuperscript{16}

This is one of the most important challenges, possibly the most difficult to work on in the dynamic of church. Language creates a huge obstacle in relationships, hampers communion and promotes immigrant alienation as a result of misinformation.

A service using radio translation systems can be very helpful in meeting this challenge. It is very common to have a bilingual immigrant in the congregation that can serve in this ministry, facilitating the integration of immigrants who are not able to understand English. Another tactic is to encourage members of the congregation to use

\textsuperscript{15} Pina, \textit{Ministering with the New Immigrants}, Kindle Locations 278-280.

\textsuperscript{16} Pina, \textit{Ministering with the New Immigrants}, Kindle Locations 243-247.
simpler forms of English. This helps those that understand, but are not fluent in English to feel more comfortable.

Deymaz addresses the experience of transforming a homogeneous church into a multicultural church. He suggests translating key documents of the church so that immigrants have easy access to them: “In addition to providing simultaneous translation, we translate all our key documents into the first languages of our ethnic fellowships. Being able to read core documents of our church in one’s own original language is essential for inspiring others to embrace the vision and mission of Village.”

Our congregation also translates newsletters, projections on the screen, bulletin boards and any other major form of communication. These intentional initiatives seek to adapt an ecclesiastical environment that favors the integration of the immigrant minority group into the dynamics of the church, which is of fundamental importance for this project to succeed.

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17 Deymaz, Building a Healthy Multi-ethnic Church, 176.
PART THREE

STRATEGY OF IMMIGRANT CHURCH PLANTING AND DEVELOPMENT
CHAPTER 7  
THE CHALLENGES OF THE EARLY YEARS

The early years of implementing this project are of fundamental importance for good development of the dynamics of the church. Previous chapters focused attention on delineating the vision of the project, giving a conceptual form and defining theological principles, sociological and humanistic values. These fundamentals are of utmost importance because they are the foundation stone that will guide church planting.

Once this is done the final part of the project, which is consolidating these ideas into a pragmatic execution program, begins. Regele, in *Robust Church Development*, highlights the relevance of this part of the project, especially the importance of distinguishing between wishful thinking and vision, which in fact leads to visionary exercises for the field of pragmatic reality:

The true test of whether it is a captivating vision or just wishful thinking is in what you do with the vision. Therefore, the primary question for Part II is this: How do you turn this vision into reality in your setting? How do you become the vision? Or, how do you realize the vision in your regional body? How might you go about making the dream real? This is quite a challenge and one that needs careful consideration.\(^1\)

\(^1\) Regele, *Robust Church Development*, 93.
This is the challenge of this final part of the work. This chapter explains the first steps to making vision a reality.

**The First Steps to Developing a Start-up Group**

The starting point in executing a project is perhaps the biggest and most difficult challenge in implementing of a church-planting project. It is something akin to overcoming the inertia of a stationary body, to put it into motion. The energy needed to overcome the stationary force of a body’s inertia, according to physics, must come from an external source, which applies energy to this body, moving it as a result of the transfer of energy. The same principle applies to the inertia of a moving body, which tends to keep moving, unless an external energy is applied in the opposite direction.

There is great similarity between this law of physics and the first planting movements of a Brazilian community immersed in a multicultural church. The first moves are difficult and require a lot of effort from the planter. The vast majority of people want to be part of successful initiatives that offer wellness or good services. Brazilians, in particular, seek well-structured churches that offer programs for their children and teenagers.

I remember a phone call I received when we were on the first steps of planting the Brazilian Church in Dallas. A woman, just arriving in the US with her family, said that she was looking for a Brazilian church to attend with her family. After a short presentation she began a series of questions: how many members the church had, what it offered as a program for couples, young children and teenagers. I explained that we were starting this project. I invited her to build a dream church together that could offer
everything she wanted in the future to her and other people. She did not hesitate to respond firmly, that she wanted a church that offered all that, and that she was not interested in being part of a project. Of course, there are enterprising people who like to be part of the challenges of these first steps. But the vast majority of people are unwilling to do so. To overcome the challenges of this first phase, the planter leader needs determination and good strategy. These strategies will be discussed below.

The previous chapters have exhaustively discussed that this project does not deal with the planting of a Brazilian church, but rather with a Brazilian ethnic group immersed in a Church open to ethnic diversity and with a multicultural vision. Wood emphasizes the importance of the initiative of churches with such characteristics, facing a society increasingly rich in cultural diversity, such as the US:

These new churches demonstrate the fundamental translatability of the gospel that is an essential aspect of contemporary missional thought. In many denominations, these new churches represent the most vital form of new congregational formation, reflecting the demographics and the growing numbers of immigrant communities. On the one hand, these churches are responsible for the need of such constituencies to worship in their own language and to function as communities of mutual cultural support. On the other hand, they are also frequently a pioneering form of outreach to unevangelized populations, in which Christians in a particular ethnicity reach out to non-Christian in their communities and invite them to become followers of Jesus Christ.2

Thus, this chapter addresses the first strategic steps of planting a Brazilian community immersed and merged into a multicultural church.

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Informal Gatherings at Homes and Importance of Friendship Ties

The starting point of the project needs to consider the characteristics of the target audience, its peculiarities and focus on the specific needs of immigrants who live in the US. The first way of interaction has to be fine tuned with the expectations of the target population and adjusted to its sociological-cultural profile. Informal gatherings at homes are surely the best strategy to start the core group of this project. As mentioned earlier, Brazilians are relationship oriented and social coexistence in an informal environment is extremely attractive. Also, already mentioned in Chapter 3 are the results of the survey “Brazilian Immigrants in the USA,” which shows how Brazilian immigrants feel a lack of friends and family after leaving Brazil.

Informal gatherings in homes are the perfect strategy to meet these characteristics peculiar to the Brazilian immigrant population. The relaxed and cozy atmosphere of a home is appropriate to respond to the relationship-oriented characteristics of Brazilians. The meeting agenda, which will be discussed below, needs to offer flexibility of schedule. For a relationship-oriented culture, social coexistence is much more important than meeting schedules, especially the closing of a meeting. Such meetings, often, extend for hours after the “official” end of programming.

Distance from their relatives and friends makes these immigrants open to new friendships. They often create informal “adoption” bonds, becoming parents or “adoptive” children of one another, as a way to make up for the absence of family members. This type of meeting, and also its agenda, needs to meet this demand. At the starting point the goal is to create a well-connected core group, to develop strong bonds of friendship and to engage immigrants to become involved in the expansion of the
Kingdom of God. However, it is necessary to consider that most often these people bring conflicts, trauma and problems as part of their lives, resulting from their migratory experiences, or even difficult circumstances in their lives that led them to decide to migrate in search of a better life. The Informal Gatherings at Homes (IGH) must be instruments in the hands of God to work in the lives of these people, so that through the Holy Spirit, through the Word of God and the communion of saints, they can become powerful instruments in the service of the Lord. David W. Shenk, describing the experience of Charles and Donna Arnold, planting a church in Atlantic City, states:

As with the apostle Paul, it took some time until the Arnolds began to discover effective entry points into the city. Their first house fellowship did not meet in a synagogue as in Corinth, or with women at prayer by a river as in Philippi, but in a small living room with about a half-dozen persons present. Two of them were cocktail waitresses. One of these women was distressed because her teenage daughter had recently been abducted by evil men to make pornographic films. The other was devastated because her teenage son was a demented drug addict. These broken people reaching out for help, among others, comprised the first house fellowship. Planting a church in Atlantic City confronts us profoundly with the nature of the gospel as it relates to culture.³

The reality discovered by the Arnolds in their target audience in Atlantic City is no different from the reality of Brazilian immigrants in Houston. Thus, the main purpose of the IGHs is to work on issues resulting from the vicissitudes experienced in the immigration process. These groups can help make them fit and healthy to serve the Kingdom of God, helping other immigrants.

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For this, the IGHs need at least four modules of study. They will hold weekly to
the following proposed agenda, maintaining the principle of flexibility typical of
Brazilian culture:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greeting by leader</td>
<td>8:00pm</td>
<td>20 min</td>
<td>During this time the leader will encourage participants to share something relevant in their life experience that week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible Study</td>
<td>8:20pm</td>
<td>30 min</td>
<td>The Bible study will be directed, but the leader will encourage the group to participate with their opinions and conclusions on the subject.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer time</td>
<td>8:50</td>
<td>20 min</td>
<td>Prayer time will be groups of two people who will share joy and concern before praying.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snack and Fellowship</td>
<td>9:10</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>This will be an important time when people will feel freer to share their lives and deepen relationships.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The four Bible study modules will follow a sequence to prepare the core group to be the center of the first two years of this project. The first module concerns crises and traumas resulting from migratory vicissitudes. The second module aims at strengthening faith and trust in God, showing His special care for immigrants and foreigners in the course of history. The third module focuses on the preparation and spiritual strengthening of the group, prayer and a life committed to the Word of God in daily practice. The fourth module presents the main doctrines of the denomination, as well as the system of government, preparing people for leadership in the church.

There will only be one group until it reaches twelve-to-fourteen members. It then will be subdivided, creating a second group. This facilitates a more informal environment and closer and deeper relationships.
The Profile and the Role of the Church Planter

The ideal profile pastor and his/her role in a multicultural missionary project are closely related. These two aspects cannot be considered independent of one another. In order to deal with both, it is necessary first to define the correct concept of the role of the pastor in the congregation, which has been lost in recent times. Regele comments on this conceptual distortion by proposing a reconceptualization:

Christendom understood the role of pastor as chaplain to the congregation. He or she is called to the congregation to care for them. That is the primary job of the pastor. But in a missionary context, the role of pastor must be imaged differently. She or he must not be the chaplain to the congregation. The pastor must equip and lead the congregation in its engagement of the community. The missionary pastor builds a missionary community that engages its community missionally.⁴

The real understanding of the role of the pastor in the congregation—equipping and leading her/his sheep—is of great importance for the development of this project. This correct understanding is necessary for the project to fulfill its missionary role in the community in which it is being planted, thus fulfilling the “go” of the Master. The core group needs to be well aware of the pastor’s role. Thus, the group will grow and develop with correct expectations regarding the functions of its pastor, reproducing the same vision in other people, who will arrive later. This and other principles will be addressed in Sunday School classes that will be held at the same time as the Anglo-American classes, which will be addressed later.

The correct and biblical understanding of the pastor’s role is fundamental to the healthy development of daily life in church planting. This concept will be the result of good biblical indoctrination on the subject, of development of a missionary passion, and a

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⁴ Regele, Robust Church Development, 30.
life of prayer and submission to the Holy Spirit. Choosing a planter with the appropriate profile precedes the implementation process, and this is a function of the governing body of the denomination or local church. Each institution has its own assessment criteria; however, the present project has peculiarities that requests special requirements for the planter’s profile. First, the pastor must be a fluent Portuguese speaker. In the case of a Portuguese language cultural group, it is imperative that the planter be fluent in the language, ideally having Portuguese as his/her mother language.

The planter must also understand Brazilian culture. It is extremely important to understand the idiosyncrasies of the culture with which one works. It is not enough just to study and to know, but it is important to be part of that culture. It is also preferred that the pastor be bilingual. Since the project proposes a multicultural congregation, it is necessary that the pastor communicate in English, helping bridge different cultures. Otherwise the project runs a serious risk of isolation of the Portuguese-speaking group.

The specificity of the project requires a very peculiar profile. The challenge of working with a group of Brazilian immigrants seeking a multicultural congregation requires the planter to have a very special profile described below. They must have experience of ministry in other Brazilian churches, ideally in congregations of different sizes and types including the planting of new churches. They must also have familiarity with Brazilian culture and customs. The planter needs to be a Brazilian native, fluent in Portuguese and capable in English. He or she should also understand and have the ability to articulate the challenges of new immigrant life and cultural behavior with the multiple changes that happen in daily life.
They should have effectiveness as a preacher and worship leader, and be able to encourage people to grow in the Christian life. She or he should be to be able to encourage people to have commitment to the church and its goals. The pastor must also have the ability to help create an open and welcoming attitude in the church so as to attract new people to be part of the congregation. In addition, they need to be able to relate to a variety of people with different backgrounds and cultures helping them to grow into a community of faith that includes positive fellowship and social connections.

Particular to this project, the pastor needs a solid foundation of Reformed theology and Presbyterian polity and practice, and has a vital and active faith in Jesus Christ. The position requires at least five years of congregational experience, preferably with some new church development background. They must also be able to lead and to motivate a variety of people – including skills to plan and develop organizational structure, moderating the Steering Committee or session, participating in denominational activities, especially in Presbytery. She or he needs to be able to supervise staff, motivating them to work according the goals of NCD. Finally, this job is a part-time position. The pastor’s field of work will go beyond the congregational people.

Finances and the Steps of Church Planting

The financial support of the denomination through the Presbytery is of fundamental importance for the development of the project, especially in the first five years in which the financial resources coming from the group of Brazilians will not be enough to defray expenses. However, two factors, especially, have discouraged presbyters from investing in planting immigrant churches. The first is a shortage of
financial resources that the denomination has faced in recent years as a result of the persistent loss of membership since the mid-1960s. Jerry Van Marter of the Office of the General Assembly Communications, comments on this subject:

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) continued to lose members in 2017, extending a pattern that has persisted since the mid-1960s. At the end of the year, church membership totaled 1,415,053, a decline of 67,714 members from 2016. At the same time, a five-year period of unprecedented losses neared an end as net membership losses returned to previous levels over the last 50-plus years. The larger losses between 2012 and 2016 were brought on by the dismissal of about 100 churches (and their members) each year to splinter denominations after the 2010 General Assembly voted to allow the ordination of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people as church officers and the 2014 Assembly voted to allow same-gender marriage.5

This persistent loss of members is extremely worrying. Considering an average loss of 60,000 members each year, this would amount to closing 200 churches of 300 members per year, almost one church per day. This is concerning, because if this loss continues, in just over twenty years, PCUSA will no longer exist as a Protestant denomination in the US. It is not easy to diagnose the reasons for such a crisis; obviously there is not a single cause. However, the persistence of denominational policies that prioritize monocultural churches in an increasingly multicultural society is certainly one factor behind the stagnation of the PCUSA.

Deymaz comments on the research conducted by sociologists Curtis Paul Deyoung et al, concluding that only 2.5 percent of Mainline Protestant churches can be described as multicultural. In a society in which cultural pluralism grows, this reality is a missiological anachronism, in addition to being out of step with the heart of Christ, the

Lord of the Church. Wood states the need for a re-evaluation in the predominantly Euro-American Church:

Our predominantly Euro-American church needs to evaluate her neighborliness to those who are culturally different than ourselves. I believe we need to question our assumptions, such as our style and day of worship when we contextualize mission to specific cultures. Indeed, many Christians who have experienced cross-cultural ministries near by or abroad end up with a multicultural appreciation for how the church express the Gospel in a different culture. With other Christians “we are called to make a joyous witness to persons of other faiths in a spirit of respect and openness, and honesty.”6

Undoubtedly, a strong investment in multicultural congregations could be a great contribution to reversing such trends of declining of members in PCUSA.

Another factor that has discouraged presbyters from investing in immigrant churches are failed projects. As has been discussed, the vast majority of initiatives aimed at immigrants in PCUSA are ethnic projects that create cultural ghettos. These initiatives address only the G.1 generation of immigrants, creating a conflicting environment for families. Subsequent generations (G1.5, G.2 and G.2.5) do not feel comfortable in a Brazilian monocultural environment. As children, children of Brazilian immigrants, remain in these congregations, even facing linguistic and cultural difficulties. However, when they reach adolescence, they pressure their parents to move to an Anglo church, where they feel better, thus provoking the emptying of these Brazilian ethnic churches.

The project presented here proposes a model that provides solutions to these issues of different generations of immigrants, as well as, proposes great advantages when compared to the models traditionally used by PCUSA. As Wood states, a clear vision and a motivating vision are important factors to determine the funding efforts for the project:

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“The ability to fund efforts in NCD is directly linked to the clarity of a presbytery’s vision and the track record of effective NCDs. A motivating vision, driving an NCD plan, is of primary importance to funding considerations, for willingness to give normally follows one’s vision.”

A community of Brazilians, inserted in a congregation open to experiencing multiculturalism creates the perfect environment of cross-culture to serve the G.1 generation and the other generations with linguistic and cultural characteristics more identified with the Anglo culture.

Another highly positive aspect of the project is the low investment cost, as it shares existing Anglo group facilities and other operating costs. The growth of the group will concomitantly promote growth for the Congregation as a whole. In the medium term, the group of Brazilians will give a significant financial contribution to the budget of the Church, as can be seen in the budget presented, which defines the threefold participation: Brazilian group, local Church and Presbytery.

Setting Goals with Measurable and Achievable Targets

Establishing measurable and challenging targets is of great importance to the project. They help focus and chart ministry direction in the project, optimizing results. Wood suggests a Presbytery five-years plan, and affirms the importance of each project having its own plan, with its specificities: “Developing a Presbytery 5-Year Plan is

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7 Ibid.
essential for keeping the vision focused and on track. Such a plan delineates the general structure from which particular NCD plans may be developed.”

This section presents the Brazilian Ministry, which is an integral part of the multicultural Church. The plan will present the vision for the project, the biblical foundation, the attendance target, and sources of funds.

Vision

The Brazilian ministry is initially a Portuguese-speaking community, open to sharing its experiences of faith with people of other languages and other cultures, principally Spanish speaking. The vision is based in reformed theology and embraces a contemporary worship celebration style, committed to a disciplined Christian life based on the Word of God. It seeks to share a life of victorious faith, testimony and joy in the Holy Spirit. It is a community that lives the practice of sincere love in a family-oriented environment, reaching out to new people and seeking to serve others with special needs. It is a faith community committed to supporting the local church host, seeking to involve its members in dynamic hospitality, to be a bridge facilitating involvement of the second generation with the hosting church.

Biblical Foundation

The Brazilian Ministry bases its faith on a single and eternal God, omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, invisible and immutable in His being, who subsists in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The three persons of the Holy Trinity are equal in

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8 Ibid.
power, honor and glory. To the Father belongs the creation of all things, to the Son belongs the work of redemption and to the Holy Spirit belongs regeneration work. The ministry supports its principles of faith on the supernatural revelation of God, which are the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, recognizing all Scripture as necessary revelation regarding God and His will. The ministry believes and proclaims that the Church of God is universal and invisible, made up of the elect of all races, languages and nations. The ministry believes that sacraments are means of grace delivered by Jesus for development of the faith of the elect. Finally, the ministry believes that in the Reformed tradition is found the pure and faithful exposition of the doctrines of the Holy Scriptures taught by the apostles that were established by first councils of the Church.

Measurable Goals and Objectives for the First Years

Attendance targets for the first year are listed in the table below. The expectation is for regular growth that is achievable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Y1</th>
<th>Y2</th>
<th>Y3</th>
<th>Y4</th>
<th>Y5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Worship Attendance</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday School Attendance</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer Meeting</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal Gathering at Home</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The project funding is a tripartite partnership, of the Brazilian Ministry, the Presbytery and the local host church. The goal is that within five years the Brazilian ministry will assume all costs and contribute to the expenses of the host church. See the budget page for income projections for five years’ income figures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Funding</th>
<th>Y1</th>
<th>Y2</th>
<th>Y3</th>
<th>Y4</th>
<th>Y5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Titles (Project)</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>75,000</td>
<td>95,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offering (Project)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>24,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>65,000</td>
<td>55,000</td>
<td>39,000</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>11,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbytery</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Church</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Total</td>
<td>95,000</td>
<td>95,000</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>130,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The financial investment of the Presbytery and the local church is $220,000 over a five-year period, decreasing each year, with the expectation that as of the sixth year, the Brazilian ministry will assume the full cost of the church plant.

**Growth Strategies**

Growth is a crucial point of the project where the challenge of transforming vision into reality must be carefully planned, developing a clear, simple and workable strategy. As Shenk says, this is the stage in which strategies are created to reach the target audience by presenting to them the love of God in Christ Jesus:

Often the first step toward planting a church begins with a general vision of the need to share the gospel with people who do not know Jesus Christ. Then as the congregation and individuals pray, the vision becomes more focused and a particular people or community become the center of the vision. The specific steps must happen as plans are developed and implemented for vision to become reality.9

Brazilian immigrants and their descendants living in the Houston area have been presented the details of this project. The Gospel has also been shared with them. At this point, the focus is now to develop strategies to reach this population and thus promote the growth of the church through disciple making.

**The Challenge of Reaching a Dispersed Population**

As previously discussed, the Brazilian immigrant population is peculiar regarding their places of residence. Most immigrant groups opt for the formation of ethnic ghettos

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9 Shenk and Stutzman, *Creating Communities of the Kingdom*, 57.
in a particular region of the city, concentrating their residences, churches, trades and leisure options. Brazilians do not form such ethnic ghettos, and instead spread throughout the city. For this reason trades, churches and all kinds of characteristically Brazilian activities settle in distinct points of the city. Brazilians are always willing to drive many miles to go to a Brazilian restaurant, church, shop or attend an event.

Language barriers and cultural differences make it difficult for Brazilians to socialize in their neighborhoods, and most of the time they have only formal relationships in these neighborhoods. For that reason, they miss connections that are essential in human relationships. Rice says: “Connection is the very core of what makes us human and the very means by which we express our humanity.” Thus, Brazilian immigrants seek social networks to establish connections. Social networks therefore are the best way to reach Brazilians and thus present to them the salvation and love of God in Christ Jesus.

Virtual environments where Brazilian immigrants interact intensely are perfect environment to promote the project. It is also from virtual relationships that Brazilians create networks, build friendships and create a nucleus of friends.

The most popular of these platforms is without doubt Facebook. Rice, commenting on Jesse Rice, citing Narinder Singh, concludes:

“If there are 150 million people in a room, you should probably go to that room.” said Narinder Singh, chief product officer for Appirio, a consulting firm that helps big companies like Dell and Starbucks find ways to connect with consumers via Facebook. “It’s too attractive a set of people and too large a community for businesses to ignore.” In other words, it was the consolidating effect of Facebook

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that was making it so revolutionary for marketers, allowing advertisers to effectively shoot fish in a barrel.\textsuperscript{11}

Rice’s words “shoot fish in a barrel” indicates how easy it is to find one’s target audience using Facebook as a connection tool. The project will work on three different approaches on Facebook. The first is having its own page. The ministry will have its own web page, promoting information on its activities, encouraging followers of every Houston immigrant community in the Houston metroplex to seek a spiritual experience with the Gospel of Christ that helps them overcome their challenges as immigrants.

The project will also host thematic service groups. The ministry will create and administer as many groups as may be necessary to provide a certain type of assistance to Brazilian immigrants. For example, groups for job offers, buying and selling, mutual help, mothers and other social groups such as teenagers. In these thematic groups the ministry has the opportunity to become known.

The ministry will also participate in other groups. There are Facebook groups for Brazilians residing in Houston geared to many diverse topics. Announcing routine schedules and special events of the ministry in these groups whose rules allow, will be an important initiative to reach Brazilians living in the Houston Metroplex.

Another important tool is the official website of the ministry. It will include information about who we are, what we offer and what our activities include. An interactive area for comments by Internet users about their experience with the ministry will be part of the dialogue with the Brazilian community.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 67.
The Immigrant Community is Like a Small Town within a Large City

Although they are geographically distant from each other, there are strong connections among Brazilians around Houston. Relationships through social networks like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and others are intense, promoting good connection. In addition to virtual relationships, there are professional and commercial networks that connect the community. Many Brazilian entrepreneurs prefer to employ other Brazilians because of cultural identity and other advantages. Trades like restaurants and grocery stores that offer Brazilian products are strategic meeting points and create great opportunities for new friendships.

The presence of the Brazilian Embassy in Houston is another important point of convergence for Brazilians who seek diplomatic services. The close relationship of Brazilians creates an interesting and peculiar phenomenon. Even geographically distant, they live as if living in a small town, with all its quirks. News spreads quickly through these networks - both good and bad. Gossip and novelties dissipate with impressive speed. Thus, these thousands of Brazilians live in a great metroplex as if it were a small village, as if they lived in a small provincial town, in the interior of the country. This peculiarity brings on the one-hand benefits, but on the other hand problems. Intrigue and discord are not uncommon because of this socio-affective closeness, creating a conflicting and problematic community. In a certain way, this situation affects the ministry, which often needs to manage these conflicts. The reputation of the ministry is sometimes scratched when conflicts involve members of the ministry and outside people. These issues need to be managed wisely and patiently.
On the other hand, this proximity in the immigrant community brings benefits. Such as, the ease of communication for the dissemination of events and programs, as well as, utilizing the friendship network for the group’s growth. Initiatives for a humanitarian nature quickly reach every immigrant community, thanks to this peculiarity, even if they live geographically distant. Thus, the ministry needs to understand this peculiarity by minimizing the negative factors and maximizing the positive aspects.
CHAPTER 8

CONGREGATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ISSUES RELATED TO PLANTING AN IMMIGRANT CONGREGATION

This chapter explains the plan for growth of the ministry as part of a local church, focusing on meeting the peculiarities and idiosyncrasies of Brazilian culture, which is the focus for this project. Thus, this chapter proposes ministry activities that parallel the activities of the local church. However, it maintains strong bonds of relationship with other groups from different cultures in the congregation.

It is fundamental to the success of this project to have a clear and well-elaborated plan for this phase, which can be compared to the hatching of the seed in germination. Proper planning also helps optimize the use of funds from partners, since at the outset the ministry’s own resources will be scarce. Most often the denomination focuses on large projects that require long-term investments, are expensive and take a long time to become self-sufficient. A small project on the other hand, demands little investment for a short time and can result in a healthy and stable community, producing much fruit for the Kingdom of God. Wood corroborates this view when state:

“Planting” pictures putting something into the ground, waiting for a tender shoot to break through on the other hand, creates the picture of something that has been well designed: all the parts are in place, and when it ignited it uses 80% of its fuel
in the take-off phase. This would change the old denominational funding paradigm of multi-year funding and load the resources into the first critical years of start-up. Some will jump to the assumption that this implies that each new start must be “big”. That is not the point. Each NCD start needs to be so carefully designed and prepared as to empower it to maintain a trajectory that is appropriate to the cultural context and size of the unchurched population. The character of the of the starting moments, driven by missional vision, will set the characteristics of the congregational outreach potential for years to come.¹

There can be no successful project without leadership committed to the vision of the ministry. The following section discusses plans for the leadership of the ministry.

**Training of Leaders**

Leaders effectively begin training in the second year of the project. House meetings in the first year create a period of observation and research, seeking to discern what key people can compose a Planter Team. These emerging leaders will walk side-by-side with the planter. A planting project must have a team that is passionate for the vision and well trained. The planting pastor is the moderator who leads the Planter Team.

However, Jesus’ model shows that it is of the utmost importance to meet one-on-one as he did with his disciples. Informal meetings anytime, anywhere are the best way to build strong bonds of friendship and trust between the Planting Pastor and the Planter Team. Jesus usually withdrew with one or a few disciples for moments of this more personal approach to strengthen bonds of friendship and trust.

In the Gospel of Mark, chapter 6, it is clear that Jesus valued private moments with his disciples. At least twice, after being among a large crowd, Jesus called his disciples to retire, for a moment alone with them.

After healing the daughter of Jairus, leader of the Synagogue, He retired with His disciples: “Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples” (Mk 6:1). In another moment, after the miracle of the multiplication of bread, Jesus again ordered His disciples to take the boat and cross the lake, in the direction to Bethsaida: “Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd” (Mk 6:45). After a time of prayer, He went, walking over the waters, to rescue His disciples, who were facing a storm. This and other moments demonstrate how much Jesus valued private moments with His disciples.

The kick-off of the project should be planned for the second year, when a Planter Team has already been well defined. The early years of Jesus’ ministry were primarily marked by Him walking one-on-one with his disciples, deepening relationships and committing to one another. From this point, the expansion of the Gospel and later the planting of churches happened with the sending of planter teams. Shenk comments: “Nevertheless, it is also true that when the believers reached out through church planting, the Acts record suggests that the ministry was always carried forward by a team. They apparently never commissioned a missionary to go alone into a new region to plant churches. A noteworthy example is the commissioning of Paul and Barnabas accompanied by John Mark, as missionaries to the Gentiles.”

The next section will focus on the issues involved in Planter Teams.

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2 Shenk and Stutzman, Creating Communities of the Kingdom, 43.
Investing in Developing a Planter Team

Immigration concerns always gravitate among the main issues in the daily life of a multicultural church. Although, immigration status is not something the Church should be involved in, it is inevitable that it is always present, bringing great challenges and sometimes embarrassment that needs to be overcome. An immigrant church lives in constant tension. There is a risk of losing members and leaders because of immigration issues, including key people in the process of church planting. If the loss of members because of immigration status brings major problems for the church plant, then leadership development becomes more complex and takes more time.

Another aspect that generates transience in the immigrant population is job availability. Those who already have permanent residence status and are already naturalized US citizens bring congregational cohesion. Immigrants who lack permanent residence create an unstable, uncertain congregational culture. In addition to the temporality of visas, the job market itself is unpredictable. When there is a need to transfer employees, companies see immigrants as the most likely to relocate to positions in other cities or states. Undocumented immigrants, on the other hand, are more stable because they are self-employed or in blue-collar jobs and are therefore less affected by professional transfers. Having no possibility of receiving documents from the US government, there are some limitations in being involved in the official leadership of a church. One young lady was appointed as treasurer of the church. She was competent and dedicated to God and the church. When invited, she asked for time to think about the invitation. A few days later, she, very embarrassed, was thankful for the invitation, saying
she would like to serve the Lord with her gifts, but, because she was undocumented, could not be a signer of a bank account.

It is not an easy task to discern who will be on a leadership team, having the best profiles and being best suited to compose a Planter Team. Choosing such leaders requires time, a lot of prayer and harmony with the heart of God. This choice is not a one-off act, but rather a long process in the course of first year of the project.

Shenk, in *Creating Communities of Kingdom*, lists five reasons why the Planter Team is essential. His analysis is a very useful tool in the process of training the Planter Team. He writes, “First, the team in ministry is already a church, even though it is a small one. The team working together in repentance and harmony reveal to people the nature of the church which it desires to create.”

3 The Planter Team cannot be a body foreign to the project; it is part of it. The Planter Team is the nucleus that preserves the DNA of the project, who will lead the ministry in the planned direction.

Secondly, Shenk says: “A second reason for a team is that culturally dissimilar persons can help when planting churches cross-culturally.”

4 Although, a Brazilian group can be defined as monocultural, there are significant differences between Brazilians from different regions. Brazil is a geographically and ethnically diverse country, not only because of its cultural diversity between regions. It is extremely important that the formation of the Planter Team represents the different Brazilian regions with their peculiarities.

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3 Ibid., 44.

4 Ibid., 46.
Shenk states: “The third reason team leadership is important is that it provides a way in which power can be shared. When church planting takes place in a cross-cultural community and the church plant reflects the variety present in the developing church, authority in the new congregation will be immediately diffused among the various communities.”5 Although the project is focused on Brazilians, being part of a multicultural congregation is interesting as there are other cultures involved. At least one member of the Planter Team must be from the dominant culture, to function as a “liaison” with other cultures, and especially with governing body of the church.

Shenk writes, “A fourth reason why a team is important is that it brings together a number of laborers who can assist each other in ministry.”6 The structure of an immigrant ministry most often uses volunteers in a majority of positions. Such as in positions for preparation of the Sunday bulletin, musicians and sometimes even the cleaning of the facilities. A Planter Team unified in commitment to the vision of the project is critical to sparking involvement of other members in the ministry, serving as volunteers.

Finally, Shenk states, “A fifth reason why a team is important is that synergy is produced by persons who work together. As referenced by pharmacists, the concept of synergy is that simultaneous action of separate chemicals working together has greater total effect than the individual ingredients.”7 Without doubt the synergy of a group of leaders passionate about the vision of the project will give a significant boost in its implementation. Mutual encouragement will help break through major obstacles. Church

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5 Ibid., 48.
6 Ibid., 49.
7 Ibid.
plants will surely face great spiritual resistance. However, the Lord promises to His Church: “And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it” (Mt 16:18). The promise of the Lord to the Church is victory, but His children must follow in His footsteps to achieve it. Shenk concludes:

Jesus, of course, is the supreme example of kingdom extension through team ministry. At the very beginning of his public ministry he called around him twelve men whom he commissioned to be his apostles. They ministered with Jesus. Even when he commissioned them to go out and preach the gospel, he never sent them out one by one, but two by two. In the list of Christ’s apostles in the Matthew account, they are even named in pairs. They were to travel together and preach together as a team, then return to him to share what had happened. Sometime after Christ had appointed and trained the twelve apostles, he sent 72 others in pairs. Could it be that each of the six pairs of apostles had each trained six teams of two persons? This would have been quite consistent with Jesus method of disciple making.8

It is imperative, and of fundamental importance for the development of the ministry, that the Planting Team be trained and coached in planting. The Planter Team should strive to walk together, grow together and adjust the values that should drive the project. Thus, the Team will be a harmonic point of convergence for the ministry.

Forming Informal Opinion Influencers

Leaders are not always the true influencers of a group. Sometimes people who, because of different circumstances, do not want, or cannot for some reason, assume formal leadership, are in fact the true influencers. These informal leaders or opinion influencers strongly impact the groups over which they have influence, determining in a certain way the rhythm and trends of the group. Such leaders have an extraordinary

8 Ibid., 51.
ability to lead people around them to discover their personal values and to be fruitful.

Covey, thus comments on the influence of these type of leaders:

Simply put—at its most elemental and practical level—leadership is communicating to people their worth and potential so clearly that they come to see it in themselves. Think about this definition. Isn’t this the essence of the kind of leadership that influences and truly endures? To communicate the worth and potential of others so clearly, so powerfully and so consistently that they really come to see it in themselves is to set in motion the process of seeing, doing and becoming.⁹

In a church planting process, influence people are of great relevance and need to be considered in the formation and configuration of the Planter Team. Sometimes these influence leaders are averse to formality, and prefer to act away from the spotlight.

Historically, social influencers used traditional media such as television, radio, newspapers and magazines to influence their followers. With the advent of the internet there has been a great migration from traditional media influencers to social media, as it is cheaper and more immediate, reaching the public quickly and efficiently.

Strong evidence of this migration can be seen in political electoral processes around the world, which have been highly impacted by social media in recent decades.

The internet has brought great changes in institutional relationships. Brafman comments on the paradigm shifts that the world has undergone in the modus operandi of institutions with the advent of the internet and especially social media. He writes:

At first glance, a starfish is similar to a spider in appearance. Like the spider, the starfish appears to have a bunch of legs coming out of a central body. But that’s where the similarities end. See, the starfish is Tom Nevins’s kind of animal – it’s decentralized.

With a spider, what you see is pretty much what you get. A body’s a body, a head’s a head, and a leg’s a leg. But starfish are very different. The starfish

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⁹ Stephen R. Covey, *The 8th Habit from Effectiveness to Greatness* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 98.
doesn’t have a head. Its central body isn’t out each and every arm. If you cut the starfish in half, you’ll be in for a surprise: the animal won’t die, and pretty soon you’ll have two starfish to deal with.

Starfish have an incredible quality to them: If you cut an arm off, most of these animals grow a new arm. And with some varieties, such as the Linckia, or long-armed starfish, the animal can replicate itself from just a single piece of an arm.\(^{10}\)

In planting a church one cannot ignore paradigm shifts like the popularization of social media. Another aspect that cannot be ignored is that in an institution such as the local church, influence takes place very strongly in personal face-to-face relationships as well. Thus, it can be concluded that in the development of the project two groups of influencers need to be considered with different approaches traditional and social media.

Traditional Influencers - Traditional influencers are people who have a great ability to influence, especially through personal contact. The Gospel of John records an event that illustrates how well they carry out this vocation. In Chapter 1 is Jesus’ encounter with Philip and the call to follow Him:

The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, “Follow me.” Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” “Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” Nathanael asked. “Come and see,” said Philip” (Jn 1:43-46 NIV).

Philip, shortly after meeting Jesus tells his circle of influence, which in this case is Nathanael, that he had found the Christ, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. He takes Nathanael to Jesus who also becomes a follower of Christ. These influencers are important leaders in planting a church, especially communicating to those who already

are part of the new church, the vision of the project. They can also be great co-workers, involving people in activities, encouraging them to serve God’s work.

Social Media Influencers - Social media influencers are usually young and active in the virtual world, having a significant circle of followers on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or other media circles. Unlike traditional influencers, their niches of influence are not face-to-face. This actually makes them, just as Philip, great communicators for this project. These influencers are strategic in spreading the image of the church, its activities, its services and creating networks of communication within the immigrant community that the project focuses on. Therefore, parallel to the Planter Team’s formation process, the planter should create networks of both traditional and social media influencers that will help keep focus and achieve the church plant goals.

**Preparing a Visible Church in the Immigrant Community**

The new church cannot remain dark in the community where it is planted. It needs to work to be visible, attractive and dependable. What makes a church visible are good works that make it relevant in its socio-cultural context. Jesus, shortly after uttering the “Beatitudes,” illustrates what His disciples are to become, even in the midst of persecution. Initially He encourages them for being persecuted for His name’s sake. Then He affirms: “You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven” (Mt 5:13-16).
The penetrating metaphors of salt and light indicate how visible the church needs to be to accomplish its mission. The light metaphor uses two specific figures to illustrate what Jesus wanted to teach his disciples: the city built on the hill and the lamp that must be placed in an elevated place so that it illuminates all. The first illustrates the inevitability of the visibility of the Church of Christ: it “cannot be hidden.” The second communicates the effort and work the church is called upon to do, should be seen by all. The purpose of the good work illustrated by the second metaphor is very clear: “that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” Thus, the next section discusses aspects of the visibility of the ministry in the community of Brazilian immigrants in Greater Houston.

Developing Denominational Theological Identity with Flexibility

This project engages with a community of Brazilian immigrants of Reformed tradition, inserted and then becoming an integral part of a multicultural church. Reformed theology, also known as Calvinism, is a Protestant religious movement of the sixteenth century. The term “Reformed” also defines a biblical theological system originated in the Protestant Reformation, initiated by John Calvin. Several other theologians have made important contributions in the development of the reformed tradition such as Martin Bucer, Heinrich Bullinger, Pietro Martire Vermigli and Ulrico Zuinglio. However, it is known as Calvinism, as Calvin laid the foundation. The PCUSA, the Presbyterian denomination that pioneered work in North America, thus summarizes, on its website, the Reformed tradition:

Central to this tradition is the affirmation of the majesty, holiness, and providence of God who creates, sustains, rules, and redeems the world in the freedom of
sovereign righteousness and love. Related to this central affirmation of God’s sovereignty are other great themes of the Reformed tradition:
1. The election of the people of God for service as well as for salvation;
2. Covenant life marked by a disciplined concern for order in the church according to the Word of God;
3. A faithful stewardship that shuns ostentation and seeks proper use of the gifts of God’s creation;
4. The recognition of the human tendency to idolatry and tyranny, which calls the people of God to work for the transformation of society by seeking justice and living in obedience to the Word of God.¹¹

This summary of Calvinist theology presented by the denomination is very clear and a perfect abstract of reformed principles. When it comes to Brazilian immigrants, the project faces two major challenges. First, are different theological and denominational backgrounds of those who have Protestant origins in Brazil. Denomination is not a decisive factor for immigrants in choosing a church in the US. One’s circle of friendship is much more important. A significant majority of Brazilian immigrants come from the Neo-Pentecostalism of Arminian theology. This creates a constant tension and discomfort when they are confronted with Calvinist theology. To work out such a conflict, the project will have two lines of action. First, it will maintain a Sunday School class for doctrine, with biblical and historical foundations that can support the fundamental principles of Calvinism. These classes will start in the second year of the project, will be one year long and restart each year, with new students.

Another initiative to manage possible theological conflicts is called the “pact of peace.”¹² The purpose of such a pact is to neutralize conflicts of divergent theological


¹² This “pact of peace,” is an informal commitment that each new member is invited to make, especially new members from another theological formation, who have difficulties adjusting to Calvinist
opinions that may create an environment of animosity, which is detrimental to the ministry, draining the energy of the group that could be applied for growth of the Kingdom of God. The “pact of peace” seeks to avoid doctrinal proselytism. Every new member upon being received will be invited, for the good of all, to adhere to it and respect it. It is an informal agreement that must be always reinforced in preaching, Bible studies and other opportunities, so that it becomes common sense of the ministry.

Another aspect of Reformed theology that needs to be worked on and made more flexible is the liturgical tradition of services. This flexibility concerns liturgical form rather than the theological content of the service. Pina thus comments on the differences between liturgical practice in Brazilian culture and American worship traditions:

“Another aspect of the theological challenge is worship. Immigrants have different styles that sometimes diverge from the American worship traditions. They are more contemporary, often with different instruments and more upbeat music. The services are longer - sometimes over two hours. There is also an intense participation in the service which makes it noisier.”

There is a big difference between the worship traditions of Brazilians and American. Pina continues and concludes:

Sometimes this creates tension between the American Reformed Tradition and the new immigrant worship tradition. For instance, many rituals and accessories used in a mainline traditional service such as candles, robes, reading prayers, processional, crosses, etc. are viewed as Catholic practices. I remember the first time that I wore a robe to preach, I had a discomfiting feeling. These make the theology. In this pact new members undertake to avoid doctrinal proselytism, while respecting the doctrinal convictions of the ministry, contributing so, to the peace of ministry.

13 Pina, Ministering with the New Immigrants, Kindle Locations 392.
immigrant feel uncomfortable in the service, perhaps in the same way that the American would feel uncomfortable in an immigrant service.\textsuperscript{14}

It is almost impossible to develop a church project with Brazilian immigrants, within an “American” liturgical practice. For this reason, starting the third year the ministry must have a service in Portuguese, with its own liturgical traditions.

Ministry by Interest Groups

The survey “Immigrants Brazilians in the USA,” mentioned earlier in this study, concluded that 80 percent of the population interviewed is between the ages of 21 and 50, 79.3 percent are married and 53.8 percent have between one and three children. The survey points to a population of immigrants who are mostly young couples, children and adolescents. These percentages will likely reflect the membership of the ministry.

In order to meet the interests of different groups, the ministry must develop two different types of activities: Sunday School classes and activity leagues by age group and interests. Sunday School classes for children and teenagers will follow the kids’ program of the Anglo church. Children are able to adjust to the Anglo environment, and usually have no difficulty communicating in English. In the same way adolescents follow the programs developed by the Anglo church for their age group. In general, they socialize with relative ease with adolescents from other cultures.

For adult G.1 generation immigrants, the ministry must develop two Sunday School classes. One is for the indoctrination of new converts and people from other

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., Kindle Locations 405-408.
denominations with different theological principles. The other class will focus on Christian maturation and knowledge of the Holy Scriptures.

The ministry must also create age-based groups to meet the expectations of each group, as well as to meet their socio-affective needs. The children’s cohort must promote meetings, picnics, walks, civic and special celebrations and other socio-educational activities. The youth group must implement social-cultural activities such as camping, sports, exchange with other groups of adolescents, leisure and other activities that promote the physical and socio-emotional well being of adolescents.

To meet the needs of couples, the ministry must implement a group for young couples that aims to exchange experiences and promote mutual encouragement. It must promote meetings, travel, lectures, trainings, dinners and other activities toward this end.

Programs of Support to Meet Immigrant Community Needs

In any part of the world, wherever it may be, the Church of Jesus must be operant, expressing love, mercy, goodness and compassion towards the disadvantaged. The Gospel holds as its major pillar love for God and neighbor. When the Pharisees asked Jesus about the Greatest Commandment, trying to embarrass Him, Jesus firmly replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (Mt 22:30-39). Loving one’s neighbor as oneself implies a sincere solidarity, feeling the pain of others, and being sensitive to their needs. Maxine Margolis cites in her work the conclusion of research done by sociologist Ana Cristina Braga Martes, in Christian churches in Boston. She writes,
The sociologist Ana Cristina Braga Martes studied three churches—Catholic, Baptist and Presbyterian—in the Boston area and her analysis is telling. Aside from religious services, all provide a variety of aid to immigrants: church employees serve as interpreters in hospitals and schools, and in the judicial system and sources of information on jobs and housing; they also distribute food and clothes, especially cold-weather items. She found, however, that, while the three churches offer similar assistance to immigrants, their ideological orientations are very distinct. The Catholic Church is “collectively orientated”, a collective identity that is built around consciousness of the “immigrant conditions”. The “immigrant worker” replaces the poor as the focus of compassion in local Catholic discourse.\footnote{Maxine L. Margolis, \textit{Little Brazil: An Ethnography of Brazilian Immigrants in New York City} (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 169.}

While the Catholic Church focuses on the effort to meet the basic needs of the immigrant population, Protestant churches seem to have a slightly different focus.

Margolis continues to comment on Martes’ conclusions:

For Protestants, on the other hand, identity is based on common religious faith, not on their shared condition as immigrants. Evangelical rhetoric is attractive to Brazilian immigrants because it suggests that worshiping God can bring financial and social benefits. Illness, addiction, and problems at work or at home can be “cured” through faith in God. This discourse also glorifies work and encourages social and economic mobility; personal success is applauded.\footnote{Ibid., 170.}

The Protestant orientation seems somewhat simplistic and misleading. In fact, obedience to the Word of God and faithfulness to the Lord result in a successful and victorious life. Obviously, this does not imply an absence of battles and ordeals, but obedience will surely bring victories and achievements in all areas of life.

Thus, both the Catholic and Protestant orientations appear to be incomplete and slightly distorted. Martez concludes Catholic orientation is broader, aimed at the immigrant population in general, but does not offer a more transformative proposal of the social status quo in which the immigrant population lives. On the other hand, the
Protestant orientation seems to be more focused on social transformation, but the motivation seems to be a bit distorted, simplistic and superficial, when suggesting that simply worshiping God is enough to succeed.

The program of support to immigrants will have three areas of action, all guided by a holistic view: seeking the physical, emotional and spiritual well being of its target public. The first is legal assistance. Legal assistance must provide guidance and consulting on immigration issues such as visas, deportation processes and other matters. It will also offer assistance in court proceedings, fines and tax issues. It must involve Christian volunteer lawyers who understand the church’s mission to help the needy, moved by Christian love.

The ministry will also provide material assistance. Most often immigrants in the greater Houston area work, and with their salary manage, without problems, to keep basic necessities. Brazilian immigrants have a better economic situation, due to better professional formation. However, there are cases of elderly people, the sick, or other troubles that prevent them from working for their own livelihood. In these cases, the ministry will provide material assistance for clothing, food and even financial support, when necessary.

Finally, the ministry will provide educational experience. To communicate fluently in English is a great challenge for Brazilian immigrants. Fluency in English gives immigrants better job opportunities, and consequently better living conditions. The ministry must offer an English as a Second Language (ESL) program, through church volunteers, especially retired teachers who can teach at the church’s facilities. It must also promote courses for citizenship exams and other needs such as family financial
administration. With such initiatives, the ministry will contribute to a better living condition for immigrants.
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

A monocultural church is only admissible if it is planted in a monocultural community context, otherwise it will be an anomaly in the Kingdom of God. Guder affirms: “To summarize, the biblical definition of the church’s mission makes plain that the church is essentially multicultural, because God’s people are formed in distinctive ways in each context, interacting with every culture in order to form itself visibly as a community of witness.”¹

The Protestant Church in America has developed in a relatively culturally homogeneous society, reflecting the same profile in its local churches. In recent decades, with an immigratory avalanche, especially after World War II, American society has grown in cultural diversity and today is a great multicultural nation. Despite these changes, Protestant churches, especially Mainline churches, have become anachronistic, resisting this historical transformation, preserving characteristically monocultural congregations.

The project aims to awaken PCUSA to a new reality around its local churches and the inevitability of changing paradigms in church-planting processes. In addition, the country’s new cultural fabric meets the divine call for being a place where “there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28).

Initially, the development of the project seeks its foundations in the historical, social and demographic context of the Brazilian people, since its origins in the period of

¹ Guder, Missional Church, 233.
colonization. The plurality of the Brazilian cultural fabric formed by European, African and Asian influences is treated in the first part of the work, as a facilitating aspect of the process of acculturation of Brazilian immigrants on US soil. Also, in this first part, the project deals with religious syncretism resulting from the accommodation of Roman Catholicism to the animism of the natives, and to the religions of African slaves. This religious background helps in understanding Brazilian religiosity.

In Chapter 2, the project addresses the events that led Brazil to become involved in World War II, its ideological position, and the facts that affected Brazilian migratory movement. Concluding the first part, the project deals with the peculiar characteristics of the Brazilian immigrant population in the city of Houston, which differs from other American cities. It analyzes the socio-economic-cultural traits of Brazilians living in Greater Houston, and the influence of the oil industry on Brazilian immigration.

This project then moves into Brazilian migratory movements, especially those toward the US. It also addresses the main causes of migratory movements such as the Allied victory of WWII, and Western capitalist supremacy that resulted in the popularization of the America Dream, attractive factors that propelled Brazilians toward the US. On the other hand, the work addresses the internal socio-economic factors that drove Brazilian emigration. To substantiate the project, the work gives special attention to the singularities of the Brazilian immigrant population in Houston, analyzing their profile and considering the specificity of this migratory group.

Thus, the work proposes the creation of a ministry of Brazilian immigrants as part of a multicultural church. It presents the peculiarities of Brazilian culture in particular in the Greater Houston area, working to integrate the G.1, G1.5, G.2 and G.2.5 immigrant
generations into the church, minimizing generational conflicts within the immigrant family. This is a huge challenge for projects focused on the immigrant population. The project features a ministry model that provides an appropriate environment for each generation of immigrants. Since the ministry is part of a local multicultural church, different generations of immigrants will find environments and groups of people closer to their socio-linguistic-cultural identity. In addition, the project will develop varied activities, considering linguistic and cultural aspects of the members of the ministry.

In the second part of the work, the project addresses the biblical foundations on migratory issues, demonstrating God’s will on the issue and His protagonism in migratory movements in biblical history. The biblical foundation of the project draws an analytical line from the creation of the world, toward the formation of the people of Israel with the call of Abraham, onto pilgrimages, slavery, laws and norms given by God to His people, with special attention to the God’s commandments regarding strangers, who lived among the Jews. The line follows the inclusivist teachings of Jesus and the Primitive Church, and finally deals with Brazilian immigration to the US in the light of the divine laws and the principles of the Gospel. The controversial questions about illegal immigration, the Church’s role in defending the excluded, and the “apartheid” that segregates immigrants, are dealt with in the light of the Holy Scriptures, without preconception. At the end of Part Two, a re-reading of the Gospel that faces the suffering migratory experience challenges the Church to break its paradigms and outline new methods of planting Church for immigrants.

In order to accomplish this, the engagement of the local church and the Presbytery is fundamental in rethinking the *modus operandi* of church planting. This project presents
arguments that demonstrate the viability as well as advantages of a multicultural environment in churches, for the expansion of the Kingdom of God. Particularly, as this project is for Brazilian immigrants, the work presents a historical analysis of Brazilian colonization, bringing to light the composition of the ethnic fabric that form Brazilian culture. It deals also with religious syncretism resulting from the confrontation of Catholic catechesis with superstitions of native Indians and especially of African religions brought by the slaves at the time of Portuguese colonization to Brazil.

Next, this project avers the practical and developmental strategies to be used in planting the church. This section includes the criteria for the selection of the pastor-planter. Selection of the church planter is critical to an effective church plant. Robert S. Hoyt affirms this in his twenty-four characteristics of effective mission developers. Among these characteristics, he comments on what he calls “Passion for this work:” “These leaders have a passion for new-church development. If they were not doing mission development at this location, they would be doing it somewhere else. . . . They believe that it does make a difference what you believe, and that difference will transform your life.”2 The project describes the fundamental characteristics of planter pastor, as well as the Planter Team based on their skills, vocation and above all, passion.

The implementation of projects like the one presented here bring great benefit to local churches and denomination. Cultural diversity enriches religious experience as it opens up new perspectives through different readings of the Gospel.

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The project has proposed partnerships of mutual cooperation between the different cultural groups found within Brazilian immigrants. Initiatives such as humanitarian campaigns, cultural events, educational projects and ESL can be developed in partnership with the Brazilian immigrant community, as well with other cultural groups. These partnerships, besides bringing benefits to the immigrant community, promote greater visibility to the ministry. This mutual cooperation develops the practice of Christian service in love, a fundamental characteristic of the Body of Christ. With the development of an environment open to the “different” and especially of other cultures, the church begins to experience the integrality of the “go” of Jesus, reaching different peoples and nations with the Gospel of Christ, without ethnic or social barriers. This project encourages the local church and denomination to seek new experiences, open borders and rescue the sublime inclusive principle of the Church of Christ.

Relearning plurality and diversity from the Early Church is a key point of the project. This work presents God’s revelatory line from primitive biblical times, tracing God’s move in the history of humanity in favor of the marginalized and excluded. It presents a protective God who loves the stranger and teaches his people, the people of Israel, to love and protect the rights of strangers. And finally, without a doubt, initiatives of this nature can be decisive factors for the reversal of decline in the denomination, since statistically this model of church is the one that grows the most in the US.

It is undeniable that this a huge challenge, especially amid dealing with changes in the Reformed tradition. Presbyterian tradition often inhibits the simplest of changes, even if it is only in form, even though the content is untouchable. Change is almost unknown in the Reformed tradition; however, it is urgent that new ways be opened to
rescue the Gospel of the early Church. It is necessary to leave new traces for the future
generations that will coming after us, as in the words often associated with Ralph Waldo
Emerson: “Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and
leave a trail.”
APPENDIX A

SURVEY

Survey - Brazilian Immigrants at USA
Period of survey: November, 2015 to February, 2016

1. What age group do you belong to?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Number of response(s)</th>
<th>Response ratio</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 to 20 years old</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 to 30 years old</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 to 40 years old</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>38.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 to 50 years old</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>51 to 60 years old</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over de 61 years old</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Responses</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>100%</td>
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2. Sex?

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<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number of Response(s)</th>
<th>Response ratio</th>
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<td>65.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Responses</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>100%</td>
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3. Marital Status?

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<th>Marital Status</th>
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<th>Response ratio</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Single</td>
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<td>10.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Married</td>
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<td>79.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widower</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Responses</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Schooling?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Response ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary School</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>57.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Responses</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Religion?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Response ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>52.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritism</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without religion</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atheist</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Responses</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. How many children?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Children</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Response ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>42.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One child</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two children</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three children</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four children</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five children or more</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Responses</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
07. You are originally from which region of Brazil?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Response Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>52.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Responses</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

08. Which of the reasons that led you to move to the USA?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Response Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Insecurity</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic difficulties</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family problems</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer of employment</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A good job offers in the USA</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking for a better living condition</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I married an American</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary work, returning to Brazil after</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studies</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

09. How many are you living in the USA??

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Response Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up 5 year</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>34.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 10 year</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 15 year</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 to 20 year</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 year or more</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Responses</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10. What is your level of English proficiency??

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Number of Response(s)</th>
<th>Response ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I'm perfectly fluent</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>37.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'm fluent</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>30.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am fluent enough to communicate with</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I communicate, but with some difficulty</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not speak English</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Responses</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. In general terms, how do you feel about living in the USA??

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Number of Response(s)</th>
<th>Response ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completely happy and fulfilled</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>37.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy in part, with some dissatisfaction</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>51.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indifferent</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a sense, a little unhappy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very unhappy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Responses</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. How would you define your circle of friends??

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Number of Response(s)</th>
<th>Response ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Only Brazilian friends</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of my friends are Brazilian</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Brazilian and part of other nationalities</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Brazilian and some are American</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of my friends are American</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of my friends are from other nationalities</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most American and of other nationalities</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Responses</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
13. Where were your children born?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Response(s)</th>
<th>Response ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have no children</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All were born in the USA</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All were born in the Brazil</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some were born in Brazil and others in the USA</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Responses</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14. What language do your children speak on a daily basis??

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Response(s)</th>
<th>Response ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have no children</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferably English</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferably Portuguese</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both, with no discernible preference</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Responses</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15. What language do your children prefer to express emotions such as affection, anger, outburst, etc.??

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Response(s)</th>
<th>Response ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have no children</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always Portuguese</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always English</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without a discernible preference</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Responses</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
16. Do you think that is important to strive to maintain the Portuguese language and Brazilian culture with your children?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Response(s)</th>
<th>Response ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have no children, but I think it's important</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have no children, but I think it's not important</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very importance for their present and future</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It would help them a little in the future.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It's not so important to them</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't want my children to maintain the language and Brazilian culture</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Responses</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17. What language is most preferred in the routine conversations of your family or people with whom you live?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Response(s)</th>
<th>Response ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always Portuguese</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always English</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They use both languages, with no discernible preference</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Responses</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18. How would you define the eating habits of your family or people with whom you live??

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Response(s)</th>
<th>Response ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We maintain the Brazilian tradition meals</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We use more of the American style of meals</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We alternate, more often the style of Brazilian meals</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We alternate, more often the style of American meals</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Responses</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
19. In the social gatherings of going out to eat away from home, what style of restaurant they prefer?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Response(s)</th>
<th>Response ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We always prefer a Brazilian restaurant</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of the time we prefer Brazilian restaurants</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We always prefer American or other restaurants</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of the time we prefer</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American or other restaurants</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Responses</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20. I always act within the law, rules and rules:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Response(s)</th>
<th>Response ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Responses</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21. When I make a decision, I worry more about what they will think of me than what I really know and feel it is correct:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Response(s)</th>
<th>Response ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Responses</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
22. In doubt, I let myself be guided by what my heart says is right:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Number of Response(s)</th>
<th>Response ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Responses</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

23. Before making a decision, I worry first if I will be unfair or I will harm someone, before evaluating the benefits that I will have:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Number of Response(s)</th>
<th>Response ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>38.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Responses</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24. I postpone immediate gains, and I accept immediate losses in favor of solutions that bring benefits to more people:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Number of Response(s)</th>
<th>Response ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Responses</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
25. I concern first with my safety and well-being, and only later with the people I do not know:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of Response(s)</th>
<th>Response ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>34.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Responses</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

26. When someone I like or depend on in some way, does something wrong and will unfairly affect the lives of several other people, I prefer to stay by her/his side and support her/him in her/his wrong act, rather than make she/he redeem yourself from your decision, paying for her/his mistake:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of Response(s)</th>
<th>Response ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Responses</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

27. I stop make punishing or appointing an error for pity or empathy for some people:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of Response(s)</th>
<th>Response ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>38.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Responses</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
28. I worry about fulfilling what is my obligation, what goes beyond this is not my problem, if I will not gain anything from it:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Response(s)</th>
<th>Response ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Responses</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

29. I feel guilty about living as an "undocumented" person in the US (If you have legal immigration status in the USA, DO NOT ANSWER THIS QUESTION, go directly to question 30).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Response(s)</th>
<th>Response ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel guilty</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely I feel guilty</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes, I feel guilty</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently, I feel guilty</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always, I feel guilty</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Responses</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

30. I think it's wrong for people to live "undocumented" in the USA (Answering only is you live as an immigrant legal in the USA)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Response(s)</th>
<th>Response ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wrong under any circumstances</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrong, depending on circumstances</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't think it is wrong</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Responses</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
31. I feel discriminated against because I am an immigrant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Response(s)</th>
<th>Response ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I never feel discriminated against</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I rarely feel discriminated against</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes I feel discriminated against</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I often feel discriminated against</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always feel discriminated against</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Responses</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

32. I have already suffered some form of abuse, aggression or discriminatory act for being an immigrant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Response(s)</th>
<th>Response ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I never suffered</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very few times I suffered</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes I suffered</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several times I suffered</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have often suffered</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Responses</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

33. Do you consider important Brazilian churches in the USA to serve immigrants?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Response(s)</th>
<th>Response ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It's very important</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful, but not so important</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without any importance</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should not exist, Brazilians could attend American churches</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Responses</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
34. Do you think that in Brazilian churches, written and spoken messages should...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Response(s)</th>
<th>Response ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>...be only a Portuguese language</td>
<td>32 25.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...be in Portuguese and English, simultaneously</td>
<td>86 68.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... be only in English</td>
<td>1 &lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4 3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Responses</td>
<td>3 2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

35. Considering children and/or spouses who speak English as their first language, do you think churches should...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Response(s)</th>
<th>Response ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I do not have children and I do not have a spouse</td>
<td>15 11.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use only Portuguese, encouraging them to speak and understand Portuguese</td>
<td>18 14.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer simultaneous translation into English</td>
<td>80 63.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer separate environments for Portuguese and English speakers</td>
<td>6 4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6 4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Responses</td>
<td>1 &lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
36. What model of church do you think would work best to serve the Brazilian immigrant population?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Response(s)</th>
<th>Response ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A church only of Brazilians, with all communication in Portuguese</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Brazilian church offering a translation into English for Americans</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An American church offering a translation into Portuguese for Brazilians</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An American church offering activities for groups of Brazilians, in Portuguese</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An American church, with all communication in English, encouraging Brazilians to speak and understand English.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Responses</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

37. What would lead you to attend a Brazilian church?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Response(s)</th>
<th>Response ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I do not attend and would not attend a Brazilian church</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Brazilian social and cultural environment</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ease of language</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The need to make friends</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For feeling better expressing my faith in my mother tongue</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Responses</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Barbosa José. *As relações luso-brasileiras a imigração e a desnacionalização do Brasil*. Lisboa: Typographia do Commercio, Kindle.


Walton, John. “Hebrew Corner 3: ‘create (bara’)” Zondervan Academic (September 12, 2008), https://zondervanacademic.com/blog/we-have-been-di/..


