CELL-BASED MINISTRY: A POSITIVE FACTOR
FOR CHURCH GROWTH IN LATIN AMERICA

By

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A Dissertation Presented to the

Faculty of the School of World Mission

And Institute of Church Growth

FULLER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy In Intercultural Studies

June 1997

ABSTRACT

Comiskey, Joel Thomas
  1997 "Cell-Based Ministry as a Positive Factor for Church Growth in Latin America." Fuller Theological Seminary, School of World Mission. Ph.D. in Intercultural Studies. 297 pp.

      Many are aware that the largest church in the history of Christianity is comprised of tens of thousands of small groups, and David Yonggi Cho has demonstrated that a church can continue to grow rapidly without losing the quality care of its members. Several churches in Latin America have already experienced rapid growth through a cell-based ministry. These churches, while learning principles from Korea, have contextualized the cell-based model for Latin America.

      The purpose of this dissertation will be to examine key variables of cell-based ministry in selected growing churches in Latin America and to compare those variables in order to describe the ways in which cell-based ministry contributes to church growth. I will examine the patterns of growth in these churches, the organizational structure of the cell-based ministry, patterns of effective cell leadership, and factors connected with cell multiplication.

      Along with the interviews and participant observation in these case study churches, I prepared a questionnaire consisting of twenty-nine questions to determine which factors were significant in helping a leader multiply his or her cell group. The dependent variables were four questions related to cell multiplication. The rest of the questions were constructed as independent variables to determine what affect they might have on cell multiplication. These findings, along with the patterns and differences among the cell churches, are presented in Chapters 6 through 10.

Chapter 1 deals with the theology of the church as it relates to cell-based ministry. Chapter 2 covers the history of small groups from the Old Testament to Methodism. Chapter 3 looks at cell group strategies today, including the Pure Cell model and the Meta model. Chapter 4 focuses on Latin American cultural patterns, while Chapter 5 specifically deals with Latin American leadership patterns.

After laying the foundation for cell-based ministry in Chapters 1 through 5, Chapter 6 describes the five churches, Chapter 7 analyzes the organizational aspects of their cell ministry, Chapter 8 explores the leadership patterns of cell-based ministry in these churches, Chapter 9 examines the process of cell group multiplication in the case study churches and Chapter 10 offers a final summary and recommendations based on the research.

Mentor: C. Peter Wagner   356 words

DEDICATION

to

my wife Celyce,

my faithful partner and best friend

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MCI   *Misión Carismática Internacional*

AGV   *Comunidad Cristiana Agua Viva*

MCE   *Misión Cristiana Elim*

CCG   *Centro Cristiano de Guayaquil*

AMV   *Amor Viviente*

INTRODUCTION

As the population continues to explode in the 21st century, new and more effective models of church growth need to be found. One such model that is bearing exciting fruit is the cell-based model of church ministry. Many are aware that the largest church in the history of Christianity is comprised of tens of thousands of small groups. David Yonggi Cho has demonstrated that a church can continue to grow rapidly without losing the quality care of its members.

Latin America, with its growing centers of urban population is ripe for the harvest. One important question is, "How can the church in Latin America take better advantage of these unprecedented opportunities?" Several churches in Latin America have already experienced rapid growth through a cell-based ministry. These churches, while learning principles from Korea, have contextualized the cell-based model for Latin America. However, up to this point, very little research has been done on these model churches. It is my conviction that the information gathered from these cell-based churches would greatly benefit the rest of Latin America.

I have personally had the privilege of experiencing a portion of this Latin American harvest during my four years of ministry in Quito, Ecuador. As a missionary and church planter with the Christian and Missionary Alliance, I first became burdened with the need for a cell-based ministry while seeking to grow a middle-upper class church in the urban center of Quito. My principal ministry became the implementation and direction of the cell group ministry at the El Batán church. We saw the cell groups multiply from three in 1992 to fifty-one in 1994. During the same time period, the

church grew from 575 to 950. In July 1994, the El Batán Church gave birth to a dynamic daughter church called the Church of the Republic. As part of the pastoral team which led the church plant, I continued to be primarily involved in the organization and direction of the new cell ministry. We started the church with ten cell groups and 150 people. In just eight months the cells had multiplied to twenty and the church had grown to 340 people.[1] We saw first hand how the cell groups strengthened the body life of the church and aided in evangelism and church growth.

My previous cell ministry experience in Ecuador and burden for church growth have combined to stimulate my interest in cell-based ministry in Latin America. I believe the Holy Spirit is sending revival throughout Latin America. Yet, the Latin church must be prepared to reap the harvest and then properly care for it! By examining various churches that are effectively doing this through cell-based ministry, we can glean principles and practices that will be invaluable to the church in Latin America, as well as to the discipline of missiology and more specifically to the science of church growth.

In order to more fully understand cell-based ministry in Latin America, the central research issue of this dissertation is an analysis of the contribution of cell-based ministry as a positive factor for church growth in selected growing churches in Latin America. My research questions are:

1. What have been the patterns of church growth that these churches have experienced?

2. What has been the cell-based organizational structure of these churches?

3. What have been the patterns that characterize effective cell leadership in these churches?

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1 After nine months at the Republic church I turned the ministry over to others, and we returned to the United States for furlough and Ph.D. studies. I am excited that the church has continued to experience rapid growth with an average of 550 people in March 1997. By the end of 1997 the church plans on having seventy cell groups.

4. What have been the factors connected with cell multiplication in these churches?

For the most part, I examined these case study churches by using the methodology of participant observation as well as extensive interviewing. However, I also prepared a questionnaire consisting of twenty-nine questions for the quantitative portion of my analysis (see Appendix A). These questionnaires were only distributed to cell leaders in the case study churches. All together, I received 424 usable questionnaires from cell leaders.[2] The purpose of the questionnaire was to discover which factors were significant in helping a leader multiply his or her cell group. I will describe the questionnaire respondents and present the findings at the end of Chapter 9 on cell multiplication with a final summary in Chapter 10.

In order to begin this study, it is important to answer the question, What does the term "cell group" actually mean? The communists have their form of cell groups. Liberation Theology promotes its brand of cells. Across the land, various types of cell groups are forming to help heal physical disorders, chemical dependency, marital problems--and the list continues. In this dissertation I will refer to cell groups as groups of people, (normally between five and fifteen), who meet regularly for the purpose of evangelistic outreach and spiritual edification and are committed to participate in the functions of the local church (Ac. 2:46).

My definition makes it clear that I am referring to church-based small groups. Those who attend the cell groups are expected to attend the church. This is precisely the model that is used in Korea. In referring to Cho's model, C. Kirk Hadaway states, "These groups are not seen as secondary to church membership but, rather, integral to the effective operation and ministry of the local body. This is viewed as both an expectation

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2 Out of a total of some 445 questionnaires, approximately twenty (4.5%) were unusable due to incomplete data.

and an opportunity" (1987:99). In this dissertation, I will not be discussing the house church model which normally views the house meeting as an independent entity.

Churches will be considered cell-based if at least sixty percent of the regular adult attendees are also involved in a church related small group which regularly meets for the purpose of edification and evangelism. The cell group ministry is not considered to be just another program in the church but is viewed as the very heart of church life and the primary method of evangelism and discipleship.

In this dissertation, the first five chapters deal with the foundations of cell-based ministry. Chapters 6 through 10 cover the actual research and findings from the five Latin American cell-based churches.

Chapter 1 deals with the theology of the church. In this chapter I refer to the church's nature, functions, and marks. Throughout this discussion I describe how cell-based ministry is particularly suited to carry out the functions of the church as it combines the principles of both "cell" and "celebration."

Chapter 2 covers the history of cell-based ministry. I will review the history of small groups in both the Old and New Testaments. In the pre-reformation period, I analyze the early Monastic groups as well as those which came later, such as the Brethren of the Common Life. In the Reformation period, I examine Luther's view of small groups, Bucer's practice of small groups, and how the Anabaptist movement utilized small home groups. I review small group ministry in Pietism, Moravianism, and Methodism.

Chapter 3 analyzes cell group strategies today. It covers the Pure Cell model, the Meta model, and other important small group models of ministry. Chapter 4 begins the Latin American focus. This chapter lays the foundation for cell-based ministry in a Latin context by describing significant Latin American cultural factors such as the Latin family and the Latin worldview.

Chapter 5 continues the Latin cultural theme but from a leadership perspective. I analyze common patterns of Latin leadership and then apply them to leadership in the cell-based church. Chapter 6 is a description of the five Latin American case study churches--from Colombia, Ecuador, Perú, Honduras, and El Salvador. This chapter includes a general description of each church, its setting, history, and growth patterns.

Chapter 7 provides details about the organizational aspects of the cell system in each of these churches. This chapter highlights common organizational patterns among all of the churches. Chapter 8 focuses on characteristics of the cell leadership, including leadership requirements, leadership training models, and leadership functions in the case study churches.

Chapter 9 describes the process of cell group multiplication in each of the five churches. This chapter illuminates similarities as well as significant differences present in each church's methodology of multiplication. It is in this chapter that I present the findings from my questionnaire. I describe the 424 respondents, how the survey was administered, and the findings. Chapter 10 includes the summary, recommendations, and conclusion.

CHAPTER 1

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF CELL-BASED MINISTRY

Cell group ministry is intimately linked with the theology of the church. In order to understand cell-based ministry I believe that it is essential to understand what the church is and what it does. Throughout this chapter, I will focus on the doctrine of ecclesiology with specific reference to its relationship with cell-based ministry.

<u>The Church: What It Is</u>

Jesus told us that He would build His church (Mt. 16:18). Throughout the centuries Christ has been fulfilling that promise. In order to define Christ's church, I will be drawing from Scripture and from various historical definitions of the church. My purpose is to better understand the role of cell ministry as it relates to the church. The bedrock teaching about the church comes from the inspired Word of God. It is from this source that any other definition must be judged.

Description from the Biblical Text

To understand the New Testament church one must first examine the Hebrew background. There are two significant Hebrew words which are helpful: *qahal* and *edah.* The word *edah* is regularly used to refer to the gathered congregation of Israel as a whole (Coenen 1975:294-295). However, it is the word *qahal* which serves as the basis for the New Testament concept of the church. The word *qahal* refers to the summoning of an

assembly as well as the actual act of assembling. Millard Erickson helps clarify this meaning when he says,

> It is not so much a specification of the members of the assembly as a designation of the occurrence of assembling. A religious significance sometimes attaches to the word (e.g., Deu. 9:10; 10:4; 23:1-3). The term can also denote a more general assembly of the people. . . . Women (Jer. 44:15) and even children (Ezra 10:1; Neh. 8:2) are included. The term is also used of the gathering of troops, and in Ezekiel it refers to nations other than Israel (1984:1031).

The key concept, then, is that of the assembly. However, there is a distinct difference between the assembly that is represented by *edah* and the assembly represented by *qahal*. According to Lothar Coenen, unlike the word *edah,* which is the common term for the assembly of the ceremonial community as a whole, the word *qahal* is the expression of the assembly which results from the covenant (1975: 295). This can be seen by how the Septuagint translates these two Hebrew words.

The word *ecclesia*, which is the common word for church in the New Testament, is only used to translate *qahal* and not *edah*. It is this concept of the assembled, covenant people of God that *qahal* represents in the Old Testament. And it is this meaning which serves as the basis for the word *ecclesia* in the New Testament. David Watson provides additional background information on the implications of the word *ecclesia* in the New Testament by emphasizing that it was a "called out" community (holiness), a "called for" community (God's purpose), a "called together" community (unity), and a "called to" community (future inheritance) (1978: 67-74).

The assembled, covenant people in the New Testament, which is represented by *ecclesia,* is referred to in a variety of circumstances. For example, Paul, John, and Luke use the term to refer to the assembled believers in a specific city (1 Co. 1:2; Rev. 1-3; Ac. 5:11). The word is also commonly used to refer to all believers in a given city (Ac. 8:1; 13:1). More specifically as it touches this dissertation, the word is used to designate churches which met in particular homes (Rom. 16:5; 1 Co. 16:19; Co. 4:15).

Biblical Imagery of the Church

The Biblical text is rich with a variety of images that help clarify the theology of the church and its relationship to cell ministry. A few of these images are worth noting.

People of God

The church is made up of people who have been chosen by God (2 Co. 6:16). This New Testament concept has deep Old Testament roots. Israel, God's chosen instrument, was often depicted as the people of God (Erickson 1984:1033). The People of God motif is especially relevant to the cell-based church. Thomas Goslin rightly declares, "When the early church founders spoke of churches, *ecclesias,* they were referring to gathered communities of believers, not buildings" (1984:2).

Elmer Towns affirms, "In the early church it is clear that 'church buildings' as such did not exist until the second or third century" (1983: 257-258). According to Donald McGavran, archeologists find no hint of church buildings before the year A.D. 150 (quoted in Goslin 1984: ii).

This is not to say that the early believers did not meet in the temple (Ac. 2:46; 5:20, 25, 42) and in the portico of the temple (Ac. 5:12). However, even before persecution made frequent celebration events impossible, the primitive church grew in its self-understanding of the people of God as they met in home gatherings (Ac. 2:46; 5:42).

The church as the people of God stands in direct contrast to the view of many that the church is primarily an institution. Rather, the Bible paints a different picture. It is seen as a living, spiritual household of God's people. Howard Snyder punctuates this point by saying, "The power of seeing the church as the *community* of God's *people* has been challenging and undermining entrenched models of the church as a religious institution dedicated to a kind of technical spiritual work . . ." (1983:15).

Body of Christ

The church is also described as the Body of Christ (1 Co. 12:27). Christ is seen as head of His body (1 Co. 1:18; 2:9-10). He has chosen the members of His body and every part is of equal importance (1 Co. 12:12-26). Just as in the human body there are many different parts with various functions, so also in the body of Christ. However, the differences do not affect the fact that there is a fundamental unity (Morris 1958:173). In fact, Ladd believes that the primary emphasis of the body of Christ metaphor is the unity of all believers (1974:545).

In all three of the major passages (Eph. 4; Rom. 12; 1 Co. 12-14) in which Paul talks about the body of Christ, he defines each member's role by his or her corresponding gifts. In fact, when Paul talks about the church as the body of Christ, the implication is that the believers exercised their spiritual gifts. They had the opportunity to interact among themselves. Robert Banks reminds us, "Because God gave to each individual within the community some contribution for its welfare, there is a strong democratic tendency. Everyone participates authoritatively in its activities" (1994:148).

How did everyone participate? Along with the united celebration (Ac. 2:46a), we read that they also broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts (2:46b). Paul taught the people, not only publicly, but also from house to house (Ac. 20:20). It is with this intimate atmosphere in mind that Paul could say, "When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction . . ." (1 Co. 14:26).

I believe that the most liberating atmosphere for the exercise of spiritual gifts is within the community of a small group. Carl George reminds us that, "Because of the intimate, accountability-inviting context of an affinity-based group, participants will readily accept the call of God that accompanies the discovery of their gifts" (1993:136). Along these same lines, Ralph Neighbour asserts, "Recognizing there cannot be total participation by every member when the gatherings are only made up of large,

impersonal groups, the people of God moved from house to house in small groups"
(1990:41).

The body of Christ motif also demands that we not only exercise our gifts, but
that we also recognize other parts of the body, and that we are sensitive to meet their
needs. It is this intimate sense of community in the body of Christ which today's cell
movement has recaptured (Snyder 1975:143-148).

Family of God

The church as God's people is closely tied to the understanding that the church is
the family of God (Eph. 2:14-15). God is our Heavenly Father and we are God's chosen
people, adopted into His family, the church. Banks contends that Paul's metaphor of the
family, ". . . must be regarded as the most significant metaphorical usage of all"
(1994:49). We should primarily see each other as members of God's family. We have
been adopted into His heavenly family, and therefore can honestly call each other
"brothers and sisters." The home cell group highlights this truth by the simple fact of
meeting in houses. J. Goetzmann confirms this reality when he says,

> What could be conveyed by the idea of the family of God had, in fact, already
> come into being in the primitive Christian community through the house
> churches. The household as a community . . . formed the smallest unit and basis
> of the congregations. The house churches mentioned in the N.T. (Ac. 11:14;
> 16:15, 31, 34; 18:8; 1 Co. 1:16; Phl. 2; 1 Ti. 1:16; 4:19) no doubt came into being
> through the use of the homes as meeting places. The gospel was preached in
> them (Ac. 5:42; 20:20), and the Lord's supper was celebrated in them (Ac. 2:46)
> (1975:250).

There is nothing quite like the atmosphere of a home to confirm the fact that we
are indeed God's family. The decorations on the wall, the arrangement of furniture, and
the smell of food all add to the flavor of family living. As a result, the cell members
normally warm up to each other more quickly in the home than during a similar meeting
in the church.

Marks of the Church

The church has traditionally been defined as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. While not discounting the four traditional credal marks of the church, the Reformers emphasized the importance of Biblical preaching and properly administered sacraments.[1] Through the preaching of the Word, the Reformers hoped to bring the church back to its purity (Van Engen 1981:91). Evangelicals have largely embraced the marks set forth by the reformation to identify the presence of the true church. Donald McGavran and Arthur Glasser write,

> Evangelicals also hold a high doctrine of the church. They will, however, not limit the church to the Church of Rome. For example, the Dordrecht Confession of Faith says the church consists of those who have truly repented, and rightly believed; who are rightly baptized, united with God in heaven, and incorporated into the communion of the saints on earth (1983:186-187).

Like the Reformers, evangelicals point to the purity of Christ's church. Yet, there has been growing concern that the Reformer's definition of the church gave little attention to the church's missionary role. This missionary theme has increasingly been recognized as a vital mark of the church of Jesus Christ. Charles Van Engen writes, ". . . when a local congregation understands that it is, by its nature, a constellation of mission activities, and it intentionally lives its life as a missionary body, then it begins to emerge toward becoming the authentic Church of Jesus Christ" (1993:70). Jurgen Moltman adds, ". . . Mission does not come from the church; it is from mission and in the light of mission that the church has to be understood" (1993:10).

Cell Groups and the Marks of the Church

Can the cell group by itself be considered the church of Jesus Christ? Proponents of the cell model would propose that the true church takes place in the cell (Beckham 1995:28). It is true that in some cell groups the Word of God is preached and the

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1 To a lesser extent the Reformers also emphasized the place of discipline in the church.

sacraments are administered. However, it seems that in most cell groups this is not the case. For example, none of my cell-based case churches in Latin America allowed the cell leaders to administer the Lord's supper within the cell group and only one of them allowed the cell leaders to baptize cell members.

It is also important to remember that most cell group leaders are not called nor equipped to be full-time pastors and teachers. They are not expected to take ultimate responsibility for those under their charge. Rather, they function more as "under shepherds." As a facilitator, the cell leader focuses more on guiding the communication process, praying for cell members, visitation, and reaching the lost for Christ.

Cell Groups as an Arm of the Church

Therefore, it is probably best to view the cell group ministry as an arm of the true church, an instrument in the hands of God to enable members to experience the fullness of Christ's church. It is not a matter of choosing between the celebration time in the church or the cell in the home. Rather, it should be a both/and proposition for every believer.

Cell-based ministry allows the believer to experience Christ's church in a more dynamic way. In the cell church, it is not sufficient only to attend the Sunday morning worship service. Cell and celebration attendance is expected of every member. George Hunter echoes this thought,

> Many people are involved in the congregation, and are thus involved in its proclamational, sacramental, and liturgical life, but not in the cell; they therefore never experience half of what "church" has to offer. Only in the church's redemptive cells do we really know each other, and support each other, and pull for each other, and draw strength from each other, and weep with each other, and rejoice with each other, and hold each other accountable, and identify each others gifts, and experience what it means to "members of one another" (1996:48).

The Church: What It Does

Understanding the church of Jesus Christ requires not only reflection on its nature but also its functions. In this section I will analyze the latter, giving special attention to how cell ministry enhances what the church is called to do.

Engagement in Discipleship

An analysis of Matthew 28:18-20 demonstrates that of the four principle verbs listed in Matthew 28:19-20, only the verb "to make disciples" is used as a direct command (Bosch 1983:228-233). Since the Lord left His church with this one command, a correct understanding of it is essential for the church to function properly.

What does it mean to make disciples? Some have tended to emphasize the spiritual perfection of existing Christians (Hull 1988:135-140), while still others interpret Christ's command in terms of evangelism (McGavran 1980:123). In reality, the church is called to do both simultaneously. One should not be emphasized at the expense of the other.

The Evangelistic Emphasis of Discipleship

When the disciples received Christ's last command, there were only a handful of believers. Therefore it is necessary to interpret the command of Christ to disciple the nations as a call to evangelism. We know that a major part of the evangelism in the early church took place through the house church. Hadaway, S. Wright, and DuBose write,

> Another significant matter about evangelism in the New Testament is that much of it--if not most of the more enduring type--took place in the house churches. This was true not simply because the larger homes were able to accommodate the function. It was also true because proclamation took place as a result of the total witness of the interrelated functions of church life in the homes (1987:66).

It appears that the effectiveness of this evangelism was due to the lifestyle of those who met in these homes as well as their aggressive outreach.

Lifestyle Evangelism

Jesus declares in John 17:23, "I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." According to Jesus, the church will win the world by demonstrating its unity and love for one another. As the world beholds this type of practical love and unity in action, Christ tells us that they will be won to Himself. Several veterans of small group ministry team up to write,

> And that is the purpose of all this--of caring for one another, . . . so that the world will know that Jesus Christ is Lord. That's why the church exists in the first place. The ultimate goal of the small group is to expose people who don't know Jesus Christ to His love. We have small groups so the world can see Christ fleshed out. It is our way of taking Christ to the world (Meir, Getz, Meir, Doran 1992:180).

This "lifestyle" evangelism in the small group often takes place through friendship. Frequently a non-Christian is hesitant to immediately enter the doors of a church. It is much easier to first participate in a cell group in the warmth of a home. Dale Galloway writes, "Many people who will not attend a church because it is too threatening, will come to a home meeting" (1986:144). Later, these same non-Christians will enter the church by the side of a friend that they have met in the cell group. Richard Peace writes,

> . . . in a successful small group, love, acceptance and fellowship flow in unusual measure. This is the ideal situation in which to hear about the kingdom of God. In this context the "facts of the gospel" come through not as cold proposition but as living truths visible in the lives of others. In such an atmosphere a person is irresistibly drawn to Christ by his gracious presence (1996:36).

Pro-Active Evangelism

Although non-Christians will be attracted by the lifestyle of cell group members, the cell group outreach must also be intentionally planned. The Scriptures teach that the world is lost and on the edge of a Christless eternity (Jn. 3:36; 2 Th. 1:7-9; 1:16; Jude 23). In the parable of the wedding banquet the king told his servants to "Go to the street

corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find" (Mt. 22:9). Paul felt compelled to preach the gospel (1 Co. 9:16) because of the love of Christ which controlled him (2 Co. 5:14). Another inner compulsion to persuade people was the fact that every person would stand before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Co. 5:11). It was this same urgency that stirred Paul to say in Romans 10:14, "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" Some have labeled this type of concern "urgent evangelization."[2]

For most cell churches, this aggressive or "urgent evangelism" is graphically seen in the rapid multiplication of cell groups. The pastoral leadership encourages the cell leaders to reach the unconverted through rapid cell multiplication. In many of the most rapidly growing cell churches around the world, the time that it takes for the individual cells to multiply is six months (Neighbour 1992:32-35).

Aggressive, pro-active evangelism, must be a vital part of cell group ministry if the church is going to fulfill the great commission today. Many churches are finding this true as they reach out to their non-Christian neighbors through a cell group ministry.

The Perfecting Emphasis of Discipleship

Christ's command to disciple the nations also involves the "perfection of the saints." Christ punctuates this fact by adding the words, ". . . and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you" (Mt. 28:20). God gave gifted leaders to the church so that, ". . . the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:12-13).

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2 I first became aware of this terminology from Ian Presley, international director of the Overseas Missionary Fellowship. He used this phrase in his D.Miss. proposal to describe the church's urgent task to evangelize unreached people.

It is through the church that discipleship takes place. Yet, much of the writing about discipleship ministry comes from parachurch organizations. George Peters comments,

> One on one discipleship is not the New Testament norm. . . . Pentecost introduced a new method of making disciples. The Church of Jesus Christ . . . was born on the day of Pentecost. From then on the "making of disciples" was different. The maturing and equipping of Christians happens in the body of Christ and in the temple of God as manifested in local congregations (1980:13,14).

As an instrument of the church, cell group ministry can play an important role in the discipleship process through the care of converts, aiding the sanctification process, and providing fellowship for the believers.

The Care of Converts

Cell ministry is an important tool for individual caring. It is not uncommon for churches to name their small groups, "Kinship Groups," "Tender Loving Care Groups," "Shepherd Groups," or "Care Groups" (Logan 1989:125). These names reflect the indispensable calling to care for one another. When new people are linked with members who care, they are much more likely to continue the discipleship process. It is because of lack of care that new believers in so many churches "fall by the way side."

Cell churches around the world care for their new converts through the cell ministry. Oftentimes this care is accomplished first, through directing the new converts to a cell group in accordance with their location, age, and/or civil status; second, contacting the new convert immediately through a visit from a member of the cell group; and third, assigning the new convert to someone in the group who will help him become established in his or her Christian walk (Neighbour 1992:26).[3]

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3 The results of the follow-up process (whether or not the new convert actually attends the group) are carefully controlled, normally through a computerized system (Galloway 1986:149).

The Sanctification Process

Paul tells us that God in His sovereignty has called us ". . . to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, . ." (Rom. 8:29). Becoming like Jesus Christ requires a lifetime. This maturation is most accurately depicted in the Biblical doctrine of sanctification. The Bible tells us that sanctification is both an instantaneous action as well as a progressive experience (1 Co. 1:30; He. 10:14). While the church does not sanctify anyone, it does facilitate sanctification through the preaching of the Word, the partaking of the sacraments, and other church ministries.

The small group is particularly helpful in the sanctification process. Through worship, exhortation, ministering to one another, and vision casting a believer is helped in his spiritual growth.[4] The Bible tells us that we should encourage one another daily so that we are not hardened by sin's deceitfulness (He. 3:13). Snyder points out,

> The priority of sanctification is another reason why the church needs close-knit small groups or covenant cells to under gird its life. Such groups are just as important as the other aids toward spirituality and edification which the church provides (1983:89).

Aubrey Malphurs adds,

> There is one major, all-encompassing purpose for small groups. That purpose is the transformation of a person's life or life change through community. It is often in the small group that sins are exposed, confession is made, love is experienced, community is felt, and thus, spiritual growth and sanctification takes place (1992:213).

The Fellowship of Believers

Particularly helpful in the growth and edification of the believer is Christian fellowship. The apostle John declares, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin" (1 Jn. 1:7). John uses the word *koinonia* which literally means, "having all things in

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4 In many "charismatic" churches throughout Latin America, the sanctification process in the cell group involves prophesy, words of knowledge, praying for the sick, and other diverse miracles.

common." Jesus is the common ground for Christian fellowship, and He is the one who binds Christians together. Dietrich Bonhoeffer comments,

> . . . the Christian needs another Christian. . . . He needs him again and again when he becomes discouraged, for by himself he cannot help himself without belying the truth. He needs his brother man as a bearer and proclaimer of the divine word of salvation. He needs his brother solely because of Jesus Christ. The Christ in his own heart is weaker than the Christ in the word of his brother; his own heart is uncertain, his brother's is sure (1954:23).

Like sanctification, the need for Christian fellowship can probably best be met in the context of a small group. The cell group takes the believer from the large, impersonal church gathering, and lovingly compels him to communicate and interact with other believers on a deeper, more personal level (Hamlin 1990:52-59). It is this fundamental need for fellowship, warmth, and understanding that makes the small group ministry so attractive (Peace 1996:36).

The Use of the Laity in Ministry

I have been describing the perfecting state of the discipleship process which involves personal care, sanctification, and fellowship. We have seen how these three aspects of the Christian life are uniquely fulfilled in the context of the cell group. However, the church's discipleship role is not complete until the believer is actively involved in ministry. The role of the church, according to Ephesians 4:11,12, is to raise up the laity to do the work of the ministry. Revelation 1:6 declares that Christ has called the church to be a kingdom of priests.

As children of the Reformation, most Christians would agree that every believer is a minister. However, from a practical perspective the church has allowed only certain specially chosen people to do the work of the ministry. As David Sheppard points out, "We've settled for the priesthood of all educated believers" (1974:123). Only very "gifted" and "highly educated" people are allowed to use their gifts in the typical

teaching and preaching ministry on Sunday morning. The rest of the saints sit and listen. Hadaway writes, "The clergy-dominated Christianity of the Western world has widened the gap between clergy and laity in the body of Christ. This division of labor, authority, and prestige is common when a professional clergy exists" (Hadaway 1987:203).

One of the solutions to this division is the cell church model. Ministry is taken out of the hands of a "chosen few" and placed in the hands of the laity. No one is allowed to sit passively. Everyone must be involved. Due to the rapid multiplication of cell groups, there is a constant need for new leaders, interns, hostesses, song leaders, and evangelistic teams. The responsibility is shared among many people (Hadaway 1987:171).

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Participation in Social Activity

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The functions of the church of Jesus Christ are numerous. We have analyzed one of those functions called discipleship and tried to relate it to cell group ministry. In addition to the edification of believers and the evangelization of the lost, Jesus calls the church to practical social outreach.

<u>**The New Testament Pattern of Social Concern**</u>

Perhaps the subject of social concern can be best summed up by the words of John the apostle, "If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love in words or tongue but with actions and in truth" (1 Jn. 3:17-18). Francis Shaeffer addresses the church by using the same biting language,

> Let me say it very strongly again: there is no use talking about love if it does not relate to the stuff of life in the area of material possession and needs. If it does not mean a sharing of our material things for our brothers in Christ close at home and abroad, it means little or nothing (1985:73).

This subject of social concern is not only about feeding the hungry. It includes the condemning of unrighteousness as well as meeting physical needs. At times it involves simply alleviating the hurt, while at other times it requires changing the circumstances that have caused the problem. Jesus, the head of the church, is our example. He healed the sick and hurting (Mt. 9:35-38) and fed the hungry (Mt. 15:29-39). At the same time, he boldly condemned hypocrisy and oppression (Mt. 21:12-16; 23:13-36). Gustavo Gutiérrez reminds us that, "During all his public life, Jesus confronted the groups in power over the Jewish people" (1988:132). He expected believers to follow His example (Lk. 10:25-37).

This same emphasis on social outreach is found in the epistles. James reminds the believers to look after the orphans and widows (1:27), clothe and feed the hungry (2:15-17), as well as condemn the unjust social structures which cause poverty (5:1-6). Paul writes to the church in Galatia, "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers" (6:10).

The church of the New Testament is an excellent example of practical outreach to "those who belong to the family of believers." They demonstrated their practical social concern by helping each other in time of need. Many passages in the Bible set forth this truth (Ac. 2:43-47; 4:32-37; 5:1-11; 6:1-7). For example, in Acts 11:29 the Gentile church in Antioch sent money to help the Jewish congregation in Jerusalem. The Macedonian congregations were commended for their rich generosity in times of severe trial (2 Co. 8:2).

Jesus even helps the church carry on His social work by providing the necessary gifting. Stephen Mott comments, "Christ has given to his body, the church, gifts for carrying out the work of his reign. These spiritual gifts include a social ministry: giving to the poor (2 Co. 8:7), service, sharing, giving aid and acts of mercy (Rom. 12:7-8)" (1982:134).

This quote by Mott sheds light on the social task of the church. For what separates the social ministry of the church from the work of other secular institutions? The answer seems to lie in the area of empowering. The church is empowered by Christ through the gifting of each member. This giftedness can be harnessed on a centralized level (e.g., church offering for a particular need, church action against abortion), but to meet more specific social needs, the level of cell outreach appears to be more effective. It is upon this subject that we will now focus.

The Opportunities for Social Concern
in Cell Ministry

As was just mentioned, the church can and should carry on a program of social concern. Many churches take an offering once a month after the communion service. This offering is called a "benevolent offering." Such money is placed into a special emergency fund for the purpose of providing help to hurting members of the congregation. However, oftentimes such help is limited. First, it is normally not sufficient that a church member simply has a need. Rather, such needs must be "judged worthy" by those in authority. Second, many hurting people will never make their needs known to a board of elders, head pastor, or church board. The process is often too formal and wooden. Third, it is not always possible for a pastor or elder board to understand the person's need from an insider's perspective. The request is often judged on a more superficial basis.

Yet, the same cannot be said about a cell group. "Knowing each other" and "sharing needs" are essential aspects of the cell group. John Mallison asserts, "Small groups can play an important role in helping each other hear and respond in practical

ways to the cry of our suffering brothers and sisters in our alienated, hurting world" (1989:11).[5] Ron Nicholas gives a personal example,

> When my car failed to start once in ten-below-zero winter weather, Steve and Cathy (a couple in our Koinonia group at church) loaned me their brand new car so that I could drive to work. When my wife, Jill, returned from the hospital with our new twin girls, we enjoyed several meals brought in by members of the same small group. We cried together when one member told of a car accident and problems at work. We all feel the pain when a couple's child is in the hospital (quoted in Johnson 1985:25).

In David Yonggi Cho's cell church in Korea, it is not uncommon for the cell group to take an offering or to find some other practical way to meet a difficulty. Simply put, the leaders and members are encouraged to "find a need and meet it" (1981:59). Members intentionally seek to discover ways to show acts of kindness to the non-Christians around them. In addition, to "doing good" to those around them, the members are instructed to invite to the cell groups those who seem particularly needy (e.g., in the midst of a divorce, problems with alcohol). Oftentimes, it is the "needy people" who find the cell group the most helpful. They are the ones that are the most receptive, and it is these people that often find the answer to their dilemma in the midst of a warm, loving group of God's people (Hurtson 1995:104).

The Living Word Community Church in Philadelphia is another example of practical love in action. The church reorganized its entire structure in 1970 around the concept of home cell groups. As a result, the church began to grow both in numerical expansion and community living. The cell groups maintained their spiritual dynamic while meeting the social needs of the members. Ron Sider writes,

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5 In Ecuador, my wife led a cell group in our home. A poor, single lady named Maria began to attend. Her family lived in another province in Ecuador, and she was alone and hurting. Maria's trusted boyfriend had deserted her, and she suddenly was forced to face life alone, but worse yet, as a pregnant woman. The cell group became a family to her. They prepared and planned for the baby as if it were their own. As the birth date drew near, one of the regular cell group meetings was converted into a baby shower for Maria. When the baby finally came, one cell member drove her to the hospital, another took her home, and the cell members provided meals for her for over one week. It was a joyful Maria and baby that attended the cell group in the weeks that followed. I cannot help but think of the emotional scars that might have befallen Maria had it not been for the loving outreach of my wife's group.

Members of home meetings have dug into savings and stocks to provide interest-free loans for two families who purchased house trailers for homes. When members went to sign the papers for an interest-free mortgage for another family's house, secular folk present for the transfer were totally perplexed! (1984:185)

It must be admitted that many cell groups do not function at this level. Not all cell members are close enough to provide this type of personal care. Although I have given several examples of how social concern can be practiced in the cell group, the cell movement needs to be critiqued at this point. I would agree with Sider's commentary, "Though the numerous small groups flourishing in the churches today are useful and valuable, they seldom go far enough" (1984:188). At the same time, there is reason for hope. The potential for social outreach through cell ministry is unlimited. As cell leaders and members are instructed to reach out in practical ways, needs will be met and Christ will be glorified through His church.

Testimony to the Kingdom of God

A third function of the church is to testify to the kingdom of God. The first recorded words of Christ in Mark's gospel are, "The time has come, The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news" (Mk 1:15). Matthew reiterates this important message in 24:14, "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." Perhaps, the concept of the gospel of the Kingdom brings together the truths about discipleship and social action in the clearest, most effective manner.

Yet, it must be remembered that the church is not the Kingdom. The Kingdom is far greater than the church since it was the preaching of Christ's Kingdom message that created the church (Ladd 1974:111-119). Rather, the church is an instrument of the Kingdom. It is called to testify of the Kingdom of God through the gospel message.

Kingdom Concepts

Many believe that the central, unifying theme of the Bible is the kingdom of God (Hasel 1982:52). In both the Old and New Testaments this theme appears again and again (e.g., Dan. 2:21; 4:24-25; Mt. 13). George Ladd, an expert on this subject, defines the kingdom in terms of the "rule of God." He states, ". . . the emphasis is not upon the state of affairs or the final order of things but upon the fact that God will rule. The state of affairs to be finally introduced is but the inevitable result of the final vindication of the divine rule" (1972:46). For example, the psalmist says, "Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures through all generations" (Ps. 145:13).

Ladd believes that when Jesus says that the reign of God is near, it is used in the sense of "reaching out" without the full experience of all that the Kingdom is to involve. In other words, the Kingdom has come in the person of Jesus Christ, but will be fully experienced in the future (1959:127). René Padilla talks about Christ being the "autobasileia", the kingdom in person (1986:86). Matthew 12:28 brings this out very clearly when Jesus says to the unbelieving Pharisees, "But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you."

Kingdom Concepts and Cell Ministry

As instruments of Christ's church, cell groups must testify to the Kingdom of God. Each cell group is a community of the living King who is actively reigning here and now. For this reason, the cells should expect the intervention of God's reign in each meeting. Every time a person is set free from sin, healed of sickness, or delivered from Satan, it is a manifestation of God's Kingdom on earth. Wilbert Shenk writes,

> The context for mission is the cosmic struggle between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world. Christ is displacing Satan's rule by His own. This struggle is being carried on within history. . . . To announce the gospel of the kingdom is to side against the kingdom of this world (1983:213).

It is the "gospel of the Kingdom" that cell ministry must proclaim to the far corners of the city and ultimately to the ends of the earth. Padilla's exhortation is relevant to cell ministry, "Impelled by it [the kingdom message], Christians are able to act in response to human need--not in order to bring in the kingdom but because the kingdom has already come in Jesus of Nazareth and is yet to come in all its fullness" (1986:91).

The already/not yet reality of the kingdom message must guide the cell ministry away from a theology that promotes violence in order to establish God's kingdom. Ultimate judgment belongs to God alone. However, this distinction is not always clear in Liberation Theology. The emphasis of this theology is on practice rather than theory (Costas 1976:73). It promotes the establishment of God's rule among the poor, disfranchised, and downtrodden of Latin America (Costas 1982:128). Through the organization of thousands of small groups called "base communities" this theology has practically reached out to the poor and has been concerned for justice (Dyrness 1990:99-102). However to promote social justice, a Marxist analysis has been adopted which is not opposed to the use of violence. In fact, at times it is believed to be necessary to promote their gospel (Escobar 1987:118-119).

In contrast, Christ's kingdom message does not espouse violence as a means to establish God's reign (Yoder 1972:123-134). However, it does promote spiritual and physical liberation in the life of every person. It includes good news for the poor, freedom for the prisoners, recovery of sight for the blind, and release of the oppressed (Lk. 4:18).

Finally, the message of the God's kingdom provides great hope for cell ministry. As God's present reign is manifested in the cell through glorious moments of fellowship and spiritual refreshment, the group should be reminded of a much grander and majestic

future reign. It is the hope of Christ's future kingdom that should compel cell ministry to continue reaching out to a lost and hurting world.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to define the nature and activity of Christ's church. It has attempted to reflect on cell-based ministry as a powerful instrument of Christ's church. In order for a believer to fully experience the church of Jesus Christ, cell ministry is vital.

Cell ministry brings God's people together in a way that no other ministry can. It allows the people of God to exercise their gifts, minister to one another, participate in the body of Christ and truly be the living organism that Christ has intended for His Church. Cell ministry also empowers the Church to fulfill the Great Commission.

Social outreach is another function of Christ's church. This chapter has highlighted how small group ministry can meet deep human needs. The local church at a congregational level often does not know the intimate needs of its members'. Small groups uniquely meet this need by providing close, intimate sharing.

Finally, the church of Jesus Christ is called to proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom. Healing, miracles, power encounters, and outreach to the poor are present day signs that God reigns. The Kingdom of God paradigm reminds us that God's ultimate rule will be perfect and just. It is Christ's rule that must guide every aspect of cell ministry.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORY OF THE CELL MOVEMENT

This chapter will trace the historical foundations for small group ministry. I will trace small group ministry from early Biblical times to the Methodist small group movement. Some sections will provide more information than others as I focus on those which are more applicable today. Although in the introductory section I presented my working definition of a cell group, in this chapter I will look at small group movements which do not fit into modern day categories. Perhaps this quote by the historian Herbert Butterfield best captures the historical importance of the small group,

> The strongest organizational unit in the world's history would appear to be that which we call a cell because it is a remorseless self-multiplier; is exceptionally difficult to destroy; can preserve its intensity of local life while vast organizations quickly wither when they are weakened at the center; can defy the power of governments; is the appropriate lever of prising open any status quo. Whether we take early Christianity or sixteenth century Calvinism or modern communism, this seems the appointed way by which a mere handful of people may open up a new chapter in the history of civilization (quoted in Beckham 1993:119).

<u>Small Groups in Biblical Perspective</u>

Small groups have played an important role in Biblical history. Here, I will try to focus on clear references to small groups in the Old and New Testaments, rather than implicit principles.

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Small Groups in the Old Testament

There are many general concepts from the Old Testament that establish the core values of small group ministry. Various authors have picked up on Old Testament themes such as community (Gorman 1993:34), relationship (Icenogle 1994:22), and communion (Watson 1978: 67-74), and have applied them to small groups today.

Actually, the Old Testament says very little about small group ministry. However, one Old Testament story is applied widely in the modern cell movement (George 1991:125; Hurtson 1995:68; Neighbour 1990:195). I am referring to the organizational principle that Jethro first introduced in Exodus 18 when he gave timely counsel to Moses,

> When his father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he said, What is this you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge, while all these people stand around you from morning till evening? . . . What you are doing is not good. You and these people who come to you will only wear themselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone. . . . You must be the people's representative before God and bring their disputes to him. Teach them the decrees and laws, and show them the way to live and the duties they are to perform. But select capable men from all the people . . . and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you. If you do this and God so commands, you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied (Ex. 18:14-23).

Although God chose Moses to lead the nation of Israel out of Egypt, he lacked the delegation skills. This counsel lays out an organizational structure that extends down from leaders over thousands to those over tens. It enabled Moses to delegate and share leadership.

Small Groups in the New Testament

The New Testament, in comparison with the Old Testament, has numerous examples of small group ministry. Christ Himself gathered a small group of disciples and the early church primarily met in homes.

Christ and Small Groups

The first New Testament example of a small group is the one that Christ chose. Many have expounded on the way Christ discipled His small group (Hull 1988:225-250). Others have noted the special sense of community that Christ developed with them (Beckham 1995:118). Certainly a powerful transformation took place as Christ's followers interacted with their Master in this small group environment. Garth Icenogle comments, "Jesus modeled God's way of transforming the world. He called out a small group of people to experience their own exodus journey together, . . ." (1994:118).

The House Church in the New Testament

It is worth noting that the early church did not have its own buildings. From earliest times the believers met both in homes and in the temple. This structure of cell and celebration is first seen in the Jerusalem Church after Pentecost. Acts 2:46 states, "Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, . . ." The concept of meeting in the home and in public is substantiated by Paul when he says in Acts 20:20, "You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house." Banks points out that Paul addresses both the citywide church in Corinth (celebration) as well as small groups (cells) (1994:32).

**Necessity of Small Groups Due
to Persecution**

In the early part of the 1st century, the celebration/cell experience took place on a daily basis. However, due to persecution, as the history of Acts progresses, the celebration ceased to be a daily experience. William Barclay makes the point that primarily due to the early church persecution, the role of the house church became normative (1955:228). John Mallison writes, "It is almost certain that every mention of a local church or meeting, whether for worship or fellowship, is in actual fact a reference to a church meeting in a house" (1989:5). Hadaway, S. Wright and DuBose add, "From the beginning, homes appeared to be the place for the most enduring dimensions of early church life" (1987:40). This quote from F. F. Bruce describes the New Testament house church,

> Household churches are frequently referred to in the NT epistles. Sometimes the whole church in one city might be small enough to be accommodated in the home of one of its members; but in other places the local church was quite large, and there was no building in which all the members could conveniently congregate. This was certainly true of the early Jerusalem church; there we find one group meeting in the house of Mary, the mother of Mark (Ac. 12:12); and although Luke does not specifically call that group the church in her house, it might very well have been described thus. Priscilla and Aquila were accustomed to extend the hospitality of their home to such groups in the successive cities where they lived--e.g. in Ephesus (1 Co. 16:19) and Rome (1 Co. 16:5). At Colossae itself Philemon's house was used for this purpose (Phl. 2) (1957:309-310).

The Relationship among the House Churches

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul addresses the individual *ecclesia* which met in the home of Aquila and Priscilla (1 Co. 16:19), but he also greets the *ecclesia* as a whole (1 Co. 1:2; 2 Co. 1:1). The same can be said about the church in Thessolonica and in Rome (1 Th. 1:1; 2 Th. 1:1; Rom. 16:23). This seems to indicate that a general relationship existed (Neighbour 1990:44).

It has also been suggested that on occasion the house groups gathered for special celebration events. The Love Feast of 1 Corinthians 11 and Paul's visit to Troas in Acts 20:6-12 could be examples of joint celebration. Bruce comments, "Such house churches appear to have been smaller circles of fellowship within the larger fellowship of the city ecclesia" (1957:310). Banks also acknowledges that Paul often linked the house churches together, although not through any type of ecclesiastical polity (1994:42-43).

Small Groups in Early Christian History

In this section, I will discuss the eventual demise of the house church in early church history. I will also highlight various contextual factors that gave rise to the monastic movements.

Changes that Affected the Small
Group Movement Negatively

There were at least two historical developments that hindered small group activity before the reformation. First, a growing distinction between clergy and laity hindered lay participation and second, the legalization of Christianity took away the need for home meetings.

Distinction between Clergy and Laity

Various factors were working behind the scene to widen the gap between clergy and laity. The spontaneity that was once so present in the local house church began to come under stricter control of the elected bishops.

This distinction became increasingly important due to the need to point to the true church of Jesus Christ in the face of an increasing number of alternative religions (e.g., Gnosticism). Since the body of Scripture was still emerging, many voices were

clamoring for authority. Apostolic succession became the way to distinguish between those who had God's authority and those who did not. Kenneth Scott Latourette explains,

> He [Irenaeus] . . . was emphatic that the apostles had appointed as successors bishops to whom they had committed the churches. . . . These bishops had been followed by others in unbroken line who were also guardians and guarantors of the apostolic teaching. He hints that he could, if there were space, give the lists of the bishops of all the churches, but he singles out that of the Church of Rome, . . . (1975:131).

A number of other early church fathers went beyond Irenaeus and actually attempted to establish such a link between the original apostles and the current leadership.[1]

By the 3rd century, this line of succession along with the distinct church offices had become quite developed. In major cities, bishops began to grow in power. Their word was respected and for the most part, obeyed. William Brown writes about that time period,

> . . . the reversion to an "official" priesthood or ministry . . . cast the laity chiefly into the role of hearers of the Law and spectators of the mysterious tableau of the sacrifices. This passive role in worship became once more the normal experience of the people of God as the church developed (1992:37).

By the time of Cyprian, one notices the distinct shift from the bishop as a servant-shepherd of God's flock to an administrative ruler (Mayer 1976:296).

Legalization of Christianity

When Christianity became the state religion during the days of Constantine, large, sacred buildings became more esteemed than intimate home fellowships (Plueddemann 1990:4). Because of the incredible "conversion" of the emperor, a new chapter in the history of Christianity was opened for the persecuted church (Latourette 1975:91). Christianity was suddenly acknowledged and accepted as the state religion. Christians

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1 Many of the early church fathers (e.g., Cyprian) made extensive lists that supposedly connected the bishops at that time to Peter himself.

could now worship in public places. Clearly this change affected the house church in a negative way. David Tan writes, "The house or community church remained the normative form of church life up until the time of Constantine. . . . From that time on church buildings (e.g., basilicas, chapels) began to replace the community church" (1994:43).

Small Groups among the Clergy

There are hints that small groups were implemented within the official church structure. For example, Ambrose, the bishop of Milan (339-397 AD) was involved with small groups--but only among other clergy. Mayer writes, "Ambrose and his clergy associates continued to draw much of their own Christian strength from small group associations. Assistant clergy gathered around Ambrose and this group ministered the gospel of Jesus Christ to each other" (1976:298).

Apparently, several early church fathers found a tremendous amount of strength in small community interaction. Herbert T. Mayer writes, "This was the common pattern for centuries: the real strength and vitality of the church lay in the small groups of clergy gathered around a cathedral and the bishop or in the small group of monks gathered around a strong and influential leader" (1976:298). According to Mayer, St. Augustine of Hippo was significantly influenced by these small groups under Ambrose (1976:298). However, it must be noted that these small groups were only among the clergy. Lay participation was not part of this small group structure.

Small Groups and Monasticism

Many believers, after the legalization of Christianity, felt that the church had lost its vision and succumbed to the worldliness of the age. Latourette explains,

It was partially as a reaction against this laxity and partly because of the dissatisfaction which the teachings of Jesus and the apostles aroused with anything short of perfection that monasticism arose. . . . To some degree it was a rebellion of the individual against the organization of the Catholic Church, regimented as that was under the bishops and clergy (1975:223).

Unlike Ambrose and his colleagues who applied small group principles among the clergy within the visible church, the early monastics, while using many of the same small group structures, were primarily lay persons who separated themselves from the official church structure in order to pursue purity. At first this movement was looked down upon by those in authority. Yet, by the end of the 5th century, monasticism had become so extensive that it became a major force in the Catholic Church (Latourette 1975:222).

From Isolation to Community

Many of these lay monks were drawn to a life of isolationism in order to pursue their own salvation. Scores of monasteries rose up over the dessert of Palestine. In the beginning, many of these zealous reformers were hermits. They kept entirely to themselves. However, this began to change. Brown writes,

. . . gradually some of these hermits discovered that if they grouped together in small communities they experienced spiritual as well as practical benefits. In time many of the features of the Christian community in Acts 2 were reincorporated into monastic life, and yet there was still a separation from the people (1992:37).

However, it must be remembered that these small monastic communities did not bridge the gap between the laity and the clergy. The clergy continued to have their own small groups, while the monastic lay movement met separately.

Evangelistic Bands in Monasticism

In Ireland, it appears that the entire church was organized around the monastery. One of the outstanding features of the monastic emphasis in Ireland was that as the

monks migrated to other countries, they zealously spread the Christian faith by effectively utilizing small groups called bands as evangelistic teams (Pierson 1989:10). Many of these small bands were well-disciplined and closely bound to their particular order for the purpose of receiving prayer and physical support.

Celtic Christianity flourished and grew through the efforts of the great Celtic evangelists and missionaries. The Celtic missionary movement probably began with Columba in 563 when he went to Iona with twelve helpers. Speaking of the inner drive that motivated these Celtic missionaries Hardinge writes, "Individual response to a divinely placed inner drive to spread their faith, singly or in groups, impelled Celtic missionaries to go forth" (Hardinge quoted in Pierson 1989:10).

Waves of these small bands of missionaries were sent out all over the continent. A community of monks (ten to twelve) would settle in a non-Christian area in Europe and establish a Christian church. They would preach until a number were converted, and then they would teach the new converts. Once they had established the church they would leave to go to another part of Europe, since the purpose of those evangelistic teams was to establish the monastic community throughout the land.

Small Groups of the Pre-Reformation Period

The Protestant Reformation was not an isolated event. There were many underlying factors that helped lay the foundation for reform.

Yearning for Change

Before the Protestant Reformation, an underlying yearning for change began to spread among groups such as the Lollards (followers of Wycliffe), the Hussites (followers of John Huss), the Waldensians (followers of Peter Waldo), the Friendship

Band, various womens' groups, and the Brethren of the Common Life. Although in varying degrees, these groups expressed longing to return to the priesthood of all believers, the authority of Scripture, and holy living. J. Edwin Orr comments,

> Just before the fifteenth century something started to change the church. It resulted in a progression of spiritual awakenings in which small groups either spearheaded, became strong catalysts or followed as nurturing environments to revivals (quoted in Plueddemann 1990:6).

Brethren of the Common Life

One such reform movement, which focused on small groups, was the Brethren of the Common Life. This movement originated in the Netherlands under the leadership of Gerard Groote (1340-1384). After two years in a monastery, Groote left to preach the gospel. In his preaching, he pinpointed the sins of the clergy and the need for reformation among them (Neale 1970:76). Sometime around 1380, Groote chose twelve disciples who met regularly with him in the house of Forentius Radewijns (Strand 1960:22). After his death in 1384, Forentius Radewijns became the new leader and by the year 1475, the movement had expanded to some 100 houses for women and over thirty men's homes (Strand 1960:22).

Although a branch of the Brethren of the Common Life eventually became part of the monastic order, this movement was primarily a reform movement for priests and lay people who were willing to live together for the promotion of holiness. Albert Hyma describes this movement as a ". . . protest against the formalism of the Church in the fourteenth century" (1950:7).

In fact, the movement was persecuted because it refused to become part of the monastic orders (Hyma 1930:25). In order to defend themselves from these attacks, one of the Brethren, Zerbolt, wrote The Treatise on the Common Life. In it he points out that the Brethren of the Common Life were just pious men who chose to meet together in

private homes, to share all things in common, and to exhort one another (Hyma 1950:73).
Hyma writes, "Groote advised some of them to live together in one house, where they
could . . . serve God with greater chance of success (1950:52).

Each house consisted of four or more priests, about eight clerics, and a few
laymen (Neale 1970:96). None of the brothers were bound by a vow and the gathering
was completely voluntary. Those living in these houses devoted themselves to sharing
property, copying books, praying, and meditating on Scripture (Neale 1970:97).

Thomas a Kempis, who wrote <u>The Imitation of Christ</u>, was both educated by the
Brethren of the Common Life and later joined their community (Plantinga 1994:1). It
appears that Martin Luther was instructed by them when he was at Magdeburg around
1497 (Crouch 1987:1).

Small Groups During the Time of the Reformation

The greatest accomplishment of Martin Luther was the rediscovery of the truth of
justification by faith alone and the authority of Scripture. His discovery shattered the
medieval church and opened up new possibilities for the church, especially for the laity.
Luther liberated the church from its Babylonian Captivity (Latourette 1975:712).

Yet, for the purpose of this study, we will look at Luther's philosophy of small
groups and how it underwent a radical change. To do this, however, we must first
understand the Anabaptist movement which came out of the reformation and significantly
shaped Luther's ideas about small groups.

Anabaptist Movement

There are a number of streams that form this movement, and therefore it is not
easy to define. There were also many groups during the time of the reformation that

manifested some Anabaptist characteristics. However, there were certain beliefs that set this movement apart.

Cardinal Beliefs

For the most part, the Anabaptists embraced Luther's teaching on justification by faith, the authority of Scripture, and the priesthood of all believers. However, the Anabaptists believed that Luther and the Reformers did not go far enough. They believed that only believer's baptism counted and that only baptized believers should belong to the local church.[2]   Latourette states, "They believed in 'gathered' churches, not identical with the community at large, but composed of those who had had the experience of the new birth" (1975:779). It is important to remember that the church for both Luther and Calvin consisted of the entire community. It was through infant baptism that one entered into the state church (Latourette 1975:778).[3]

It was the state church idea that the Anabaptist movement attacked most energetically, and it was for that reason that were so vigorously persecuted. In that day, to separate from the state church was akin to separating from society. Such actions were believed to threaten the very moral fabric of society. As Latourette states, ". . . they seemed to be dangerous revolutionaries, upsetting the established order" (1975:779), and the state church reacted by persecuting them severely. Latourette notes, "Late in the

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2 The name Anabaptist means "rebaptized." This name was given by their critics, since they rejected infant baptism as contrary to the Scriptures and regarded as valid only that baptism which was administered to conscious believers (Latourette 1975:779).

3 Latourette notes that Luther was not entirely in accord with the state church set up because it conflicted with his teaching on salvation through faith (1975:775). Calvin avoided it somewhat by teaching that only the elect would ultimately be saved and not because one was baptized as an infant (1975:778). Perhaps the state church paradigm was as much cultural as religious. In other words, the practice of the state church was not only a carry over from the Catholic tradition, but served as an instrument for order and cultural transmission.

1520s and early in the 1530s hundreds of Anabaptists were killed, some by drowning, some by beheading, and others by burning" (1975:782).

Anabaptists and Small Groups

It was in 1522 that those with Anabaptist tendencies gathered in homes for small, private meetings. These meetings expanded into a wave of lay reading groups, which met mainly in Zurich and the surrounding area (Latham 1993:13). These small group meetings were directed toward strengthening the faith and expanding the knowledge of eager Christians. In fact, some of these small home studies were so effective in and around Zurich that Zwingli, the most prominent Reformation leader in Zurich, commented that as a result of these meetings the lay people were better acquainted with the Scriptures than some priests (Latham 1993:15).

Small Groups as a Means of Separation

An important reason that the Anabaptists met in private in homes was to confirm their belief that the church of Jesus Christ was a gathered church of committed believers. Jane Holly Latham comments,

> The Brethren came together because they felt that the limits of the Zwinglian reforms were suppressing the truth. Meeting together in private, the Brethren hoped to discover the truth and obtain scriptural guidance for church reforms . . . (1993:17).

As a result of this separation, the reformed church in Zurich actively sought out the Anabaptists in order to put them to death. Mantz was the first Anabaptist martyr, who was put to death by drowning on the charge of conducting illegal re-baptisms (Latham 1993:27).

Circumstantial Necessity for Small Groups

Small groups played a vital part of the Anabaptist movement throughout the 16th century. However, it is hard to say whether or not the Anabaptists met in homes due to their theological convictions or because of circumstantial necessity. Most likely, it was a combination of both factors. According to Jim and Carol Plueddemann, the Anabaptists experienced persecution from Lutherans, Calvinists, and Catholics combined, which may be part of the reason they met in homes (1990:7). Latham concludes her dissertation on the Anabaptist movement by saying,

> As well as being used as an effective means of evangelism and cultivation of the Anabaptist faith, the small group was also employed out of necessity. . . . The Anabaptists sometimes met in small, scattered groups for the sole reason that there was little interest in the movement. Another reason why Anabaptists met in small groups was because all Anabaptist activity was illegal. . . . The factors of little interest, persecution, and the Anabaptist concept of the church as a gathered community combined together to produce the small group meeting as the movement's main mode of existence (1994:110-111)

Luther and Small Groups

Luther's attitude towards small group ministry underwent a radical change due to the Anabaptist movement. Initially he was concerned about a practical application of the concept of the priesthood of all believers and entertained the idea of using small groups as part of the church's reformation. However, later in the light of contextual circumstances he changed his mind.

Earlier Positive Attitude

In a number of his tracts, Luther expressed his concern about the Mass and Liturgy, and even hinted at the need for house gatherings. In his Preface to the German Mass and Order of Service, he spoke of the need for the gathering of all people in a celebration service. He then added,

> The third kind of service should be a truly evangelical order and should not be held in a public place for all sorts of people. But those who want to be Christians in earnest and who profess the gospel with hand and mouth should sign their names and meet alone in a house somewhere to pray, to read, to baptize, to receive the sacrament, and to do other Christian works. . . . Here one could set up a brief and neat order for baptism and the sacrament and center everything on the Word, prayer and love . . . (1965:63-64).

Tan notes, "Luther saw the potential of the house church and had a vision of meeting in homes for deeper expression of faith which was absent in the institutional church" (1994:45).

Later Change of Mind

It may seem strange that Luther spoke of the importance of small groups, yet never implemented them. The answer to this dilemma is found in one of his letters, discovered in 1982, that he wrote on April 14, 1529 to a fellow priest named Karl Weiss. He had taken Luther's advice seriously about forming small groups of "earnest Christians" and had begun to involve his parish in a small group ministry.

In his letter, Luther confessed that he had "changed his mind" about the formation of small groups (quoted in White 1983:274), stating that he no longer believed that "earnest Christians" should meet together in the home in order "to pray, to read, to baptize, to receive the sacrament, and to do other Christian works . . ." (quoted in White 1983:274). It seems that many of the historical events surrounding the Anabaptist movement and the church's violent reaction to it had seriously altered Luther's thinking.

Here are the reasons given in the letter for Luther's change of mind. First, Luther believed that people would fool themselves about who is an earnest Christian. Here, Luther's doctrine of justification clearly comes into play. Luther came to realize that if one thinks that he or she is an "earnest Christian" there is the danger of pride and a lack of understanding of grace. He writes, "He [Satan] would be able to get us to isolate all the strongest Christians, and keep them from the weak. Then the strong would grow

proud, the weak would give up, and all would go to hell in a handbasket" (quoted in White 1983:278).

Second, Luther believed ". . . that such self-styled 'earnest Christians' will start to think of themselves as the one, pure church" (quoted in White 1983:275). Luther warned, "If we allow small groups of Christians to separate from the rest, to read the Word, to baptize, and to receive sacraments, we will have established a new church" (quoted in White 1983:275). With the Anabaptist movement fresh on his mind, Luther feared the potential divisiveness of small groups. He wrote,

> All the elements [of the true church] would be there in these small groups and, as sure as Satan seeks to destroy our souls, some Pharisaical spirit will conclude that his little group is the church, and that everyone outside is damned. Indeed, it has already happened, if I am to believe the rumor I hear. Certain false brethren rebaptize themselves and then sneak away from God's church to meet with other misled fools in various holes and corners. They claim that they are the only true Christians, and teach that they must separate from all iniquity (quoted in White 1983:275).

Luther arrived at the conclusion that a small group atmosphere would engender more divisiveness than unity.

Third, Luther did not believe that it was Scriptural to separate from the church to set up a pure group of earnest Christians. By 1529, Luther came to the conclusion that there was no Scriptural warrant for such small groups. Rather, he quotes passages to indicate that the true church always maintained a mixture of both the pure and the impure (quoted in White 1983:276-277).

Martin Bucer

We have noted that Luther's retreat from the use of small groups was largely due to the abuses and dangers that he imagined in the Anabaptist movement. However, Luther's disciple, Martin Bucer sensed the compelling need to reform the church by the creation of small home based communities (Latourette 1975:709).

Ecclesiological Reform through Small Groups

Bucer clearly saw the carnality and superficiality in his church at Strasbourg. He stressed reform upon arriving in Strasbourg, but the apparent futility of his labors almost shattered his patience (D. Wright 1994:137). Bucer became increasingly drawn to the model of the primitive church which emphasized both cell and celebration. He felt that small groups would make the church at Strasbourg ". . . more faithful to the primitive and ancient churches" (D. Wright 1994:142). D. F. Wright comments,

> In specifying how the small communities would function, the Reformer sought ever closer conformity to the pattern of the organization and life of the apostolic communities, as described in the New Testament Acts and Epistles. . . . Not only confession of the same doctrine, but also demonstration of the same practice must attest to this apostolic faithfulness--hence, for example, the insistence on the sharing of goods on the model of the communities described in Acts 2 and 4 (1994:142-143).

When Bucer implemented his small group model, he only allowed serious believers to join. In fact a potential member had to be interviewed by the pastor and the elders of the particular group. The interview dealt with members' beliefs concerning doctrine, the sacraments, Christian behavior, and repentance.

Implementation of Groups in the Face of Criticism

Bucer faced continual pressure and criticism for his small group model. As the leading reformer of Strasbourg, he found himself at the heart of the Anabaptist debate because there were many Anabaptists in the city (D. Wright 1994:134). In the mid-1540s, Anabaptism rapidly increased in numbers and influence, and Anabaptist small groups met all around Strasbourg (D. Wright 1994:135). In light of this, it was risky for Bucer to advocate further reform and suggest the possibility of forming small groups for discipleship and spiritual growth. Wright notes,

> The more Bucer pressed the magistracy to devote all its energies to the introduction of a "true" ecclesiastical discipline, the more the Strasbourg church

seemed doomed to degeneration and criticism. Nasty tongues spread scandal about the town and its Reformers. . . (1994:135).

Wright continues,

The creation of groups and other gatherings which . . . could easily be likened to the separatist ventures of the Anabaptists and other sectarians, exposed him to insidious criticism charging him with a share of responsibility for the fragmentation of Strasbourg's church community (1994:140).

Yet, in spite of all of the criticism, Bucer's convictions compelled him to continue.

The Need for Cell and Celebration

For Bucer, it was not a matter of deciding to support the inclusive state church or the gathered church (Anabaptist). Rather, he felt the need for both. Wright concludes, "This motif of twofold ecclesiology, at once both majority-based and confessing, played an important role in the slow maturation of Bucer's plans for small communities" (1994:134). Bucer felt that he would have actually been "unfaithful" to Scripture if he did not promote the gathering of believers in small groups (D. Wright 1994:137).

Bucer explained to his critics that instead of creating divisiveness, the small groups aimed specifically at promoting unity among all Christians. The Sunday morning worship service would bring them all together. In fact, Bucer felt that the communion table on Sunday morning was the perfect time for the "true" Christian community to meet (D. Wright 1994:141).

Small Groups after the Reformation

There are several significant small group movements that arose after the reformation. Due to the limited focus of this chapter, I will concentrate on small group ministry within Pietism, Moravianism, and Methodism. However, I recommend further research of small group ministry among the Puritans, Quakers, and Baptists.

Pietism

Robert Moylan, in his dissertation "Lutheran Pietism: Paradox or Paradigm," sums up the goal of Pietism in this way,

> It was the intention of classic Pietism to recapture, as far as possible, the essence and power of the "primitive Church"--the church of the first and second centuries . . . . The Pietists seem to have concluded that it could best be achieved through what has become recognized as the theme of the Pietistic renewal movement: Change the Church by changing the individual (1992:156).

Donald Bloesch adds, "Among the salient features of Pietism is the emphasis upon the religion of the heart. . . . In the Pietist movement there is an existential emphasis, a call for personal involvement in the truth of the faith" (1973:106).

Background of the Times

Pietism was a renewal movement which took place in the wake of the tragic thirty- year war in which much of Germany was devastated. It was a time when many were searching for answers. For the most part, they were not finding those answers in the Lutheran church. Latham writes, ". . . the Lutheran Church in seventeenth century Germany consisted largely of nominal Christians who attended church services that were dull and boring. Ministers preached theological legalism that no one could, or wanted to, understand" (1993:58). There was also drunkenness and immorality among the clergy. The spiritual condition of Germany was very low (Latourette 1975:895). The church services were formal and sterile. Pietism must be understood in this context.

Philip Jacob Spener

In this dry, sterile, and immoral context, Philip Spener was born (1635). In 1666, as a Lutheran pastor in Frankfort, he sensed the need to nourish and promote a deeper life among the church members (Latourette 1975:895). Latourette notes, ". . . he gathered in his own home a group for the cultivation of the Christian life through the discussion of

the Sunday sermons, prayer, and the study of the Bible" (1975:895). This movement spread and the groups became known as *collegia pietatis*.

Small Groups in Pietism

Spener believed that change could only take place as believers met in small groups for Bible study, prayer, worship, and fellowship. The goal of these groups was discipleship and holiness. Consequently, Spener wanted only serious believers to attend (Latham 1993:63). Doyle Young writes,

> The purpose of the groups was to renew the greater ecclesia, Church. If the entire Church was to be renewed, a start must be made with those serious Christians in each congregation. These . . . little churches within the Church were not intended, however, to replace the institutional church (1989:108).

Damien Sangwoong Sohn describes the importance of the small group in Pietism when he says, "The small group meeting was the internal dynamic of Pietism for the actual practical renewal and expansion of Christian ministry beyond the clergy" (1990:102).

Various Aspects of the Groups

The following are only some of the chief characteristics that were present in Spener's small groups:

Leadership.--It was necessary for a qualified leader to be present in these meetings in order to avoid false doctrine. It appears that this person normally was a pastor or a professor who was willing to take responsibility for the group (Latham 1993:67). However, the leader was not to dominate the discussion. Rather, he was to stir up participation among those who were present. Phillip Jacob Spener writes,

> The professor, as the leader, should reinforce good observations. If he sees, however, that students are departing from the end in view, he should proceed in clear and friendly fashion to set them right on the basis of the text and show them what opportunity they have to put this or that rule of conduct into practice (1964: 113).

Participation.--As was mentioned, although the leader was always present, opportunity was given for each to participate. The Sunday sermon might be the starting point for the discussion, but then each person was to contribute according to his or her own understanding. Referring to the lesson part of the study Spener writes, "This [the study] should be done in such fashion that each student may be permitted to say what he thinks about each verse and how he finds that it applies to his own and to other's benefit" (1964:113).

Spener's emphasis on participation was the result of his theological conviction concerning the priesthood of all believers. Bloesch writes, "The priesthood of believers, though having a prominent place in the theology of the Reformers, was given concrete embodiment in Pietism" (1973:118). Spener adds,

> No damage will be done to the ministry by a proper use of this priesthood. In fact, one of the principal reasons why the ministry cannot accomplish all that it ought is that it is too weak without the help of the universal priesthood. One man is incapable of doing all that is necessary for the edification of the many persons who are generally entrusted in pastoral care (1964:95).

Balance between Cell and Celebration.--Spener was very careful to include his small group emphasis within Lutheran ecclesiology and thus avoid Anabaptism. Like Luther, Spener was part of the state church. His goal was to make the state church more holy and Christlike through the ministry of small groups. These meetings served only to supplement the Sunday morning worship service--not to replace it. He did not even allow the people to call the groups "the true church," so as to avoid doctrinal conflict (Young 1989:109). Nor did Spener allow the celebration of the sacraments at these meetings. Communion was reserved for the entire congregation only (Young 1989:108).

Criticisms of Spener's Reforms

Spener's reforms set off a wave of protests. Many accused him of being untrue to Lutheran doctrine. Latourette notes, "In this his opponents were not altogether incorrect. While he did not attack Lutheran orthodoxy, Spener held that if one had been truly converted and had a right heart, doctrinal differences were relatively unimportant" (1975:895). Some of the opposition arose at Frankfurt because there were those who went to the home meetings, but then did not attend the public worship services and did not partake in the Lord's supper (Latourette 1975:895). There were also those who used the small group fellowship as an opportunity to interpret doctrine narrowly and create a legalistic wedge between those they considered truly converted and those who were not (Mackintosh quoted in Moylan 1992:159).

The Spread of Pietism

Although the constant opposition hindered Spener's reforms, the movement spread far beyond Spener's own ministry. Many Lutheran churches began to practice his principles. Through the teaching of Francke at the university of Pietistic doctrine was spread throughout the world. Nicholas von Zinzendorf, the founder of the Moravian Church, was strongly influenced by Pietism while at Halle. John Wesley was in turn touched through the Moravians. As Sohn declares, "Missiologically speaking, it [Pietism] formed part of the launching pad of Protestant World Mission" (1990:50).

Pietism has also greatly influenced the small group movement today. The covenant groups that Roberta Hestenes and others have championed are really an offshoot of the small groups in Pietism (Moylan 1992:160-175). It can also be argued that the Bible study movement in general can be traced back to Pietism.

The Moravians

The Moravian movement began in 1722 when a few refugees from the persecutions of Protestants in Bohemia and Moravia settled on the estate of Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf (1700-1760). As was stated earlier, it strongly influenced by the Pietistic tradition.

Early History

In 1457, a group established a colony in Lititz, on the Border of Bohemia, where they followed the teachings of John Hus. In 1467, sixty years before the Protestant Reformation, they founded their own independent ministry known as the *Unitas Fratrum*, Unity of Brethren. During the Thirty Years' War, in 1620, the Brethren were forced to go underground. Their leader, Bishop John Amos Comenius fled to Poland with a small band of refugees. This group spread into Bohemia and neighboring Moravia, and eventually some went to the Zinzendorf estate where they were allowed to settle.

Nicholas von Zinzendorf

Zinzendorf had been educated at Halle, was a devout Pietist, and the godson of Spener (McCallum 1996:4). F. Ernest Stoeffler notes, "During his time at Halle the special gifts of Zinzendorf, his linguistic ability, his leadership qualities, his ability to conceive novel schemes, had become abundantly apparent. . ." (1973:134). His ardent desire for Jesus and vision to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth were fulfilled through those refugees who came to his estate. Latourette writes, "In the handful of persecuted refugees he saw the means of fulfilling that vision" (1975:897).

The Moravian Church

Zinzendorf perceived the entire world as his parish. Yet, he was not interested in establishing a denomination (Stoeffler 1973:160). Rather, his passion was to send missionaries out to the uttermost parts of the world. When it became impossible to do so without a more organized church structure, he consented and became the first bishop. It was through this new church structure that many missionaries were sent around the world (Latourette 1975:897).

Small Groups in the Moravian Church

Young writes, "Like Spener's Pietist groups, the Moravian communities were to be *ecclesiolae in ecclesia* (little churches within the Church) whose purpose was to renew the whole church" (1989:110). The Moravians offered to the church-renewal movement the techniques of society, class, and band" (Young 1989:110). In his doctoral dissertation on small group renewal, William Brown states,

> Perhaps one of the most deliberate and successful uses of the small group principle in Church history is the band system of Count Zinzendorf in the middle of the eighteenth century. The micro communities of Herrnhut combined the aspects of fellowship and sharing, mutual correction and confession, prayer and an urgent sense of mission to send the gospel to the world and bring renewal to Christians. They made use of lay leadership and literally followed the kind of meeting advised in James 5:13-16 (1992:38).

The Bands

Even before the Moravian Church was fully operational, personal bands were formed for those refugees and people who had come to live at Herrnhut (Hamilton 1967:32). Their purpose was to promote personal growth in grace and fellowship between kindred spirits and free and informal associations of those who felt drawn to each other. They met in frequent conferences for prayer and intimate discussion of personal experiences. Each member of the congregation could join the band most

congenial to him or one in whose leader he had special confidence. There were also specific groups for women that Lady Zinzendorf promoted.

The Choirs

Later in the development of the Moravian Church, the congregations were divided into choirs or groups according to age, sex and marital status.[4] Each group had its own meetings and the adult groups had their own houses where members lived and carried out their usual activities (Hamilton 1967:37). Jacob Sessler gives a clear picture of these groups,

> From the earliest years children were taught that they belonged more to the Church than to their parents. They became the property of the Church, and it was expected that when they grew up they should serve the institution which had nurtured and cared for them in their childhood and adolescence. The basis for the wide-spread mission work of the Moravians is found chiefly in their firm belief that the Church had first claim on their lives. . . . When later they were called upon to go into distant mission fields, their past training made it easier for them, since they had very few parental and home ties to break (1933: 98-99).

It appears that in time the mandatory, age-divided choirs became more important than the family. F. Taylor and K. Hamilton note, "In time the voluntary associations cultivated in the band were supplanted by compulsory membership in the choir with the subordination of family life which this institution produced in its heyday" (1967:37).

The Methodists and Small Groups

The Methodist movement was greatly influenced by the Moravians. John Wesley was led to the assurance of salvation and a deep personal relationship with God as a result of his contact with Moravians; he derived many of his small group concepts from them as well. Brown states,

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4 There were groups for widowers, widows, married people, single men, single women, older boys, older girls, younger boys, and younger girls.

Zinzendorf's band system was adapted by John Wesley as the basis for his band meetings. Wesley introduced them to give opportunity for mutual confession (according to James 5:16) and offering encouragement and support in overcoming temptation and developing a Christian lifestyle (1992:38).

He was so impacted by the Moravians that he went to Germany, met with Zinzendorf, and spent several days at Herrnhut. Although he was critical of some aspects of the movement, he adopted several of their methods in his own ministry (Latourette 1975:1025).

Many believe that it was because of small groups that Methodism was so successful. T.A. Hegre writes,

I believe that the success of Wesley was due to his habit of establishing small groups. His converts would meet regularly in groups of about a dozen people. If the group became too large, it would divide, and it might continue to divide again and again (1993:8).

Wesley's Orientation Toward Small Groups

From an early age, God in His sovereignty prepared Wesley for small group ministry. Plueddeman writes,

His own mother, Susannah, had initiated home meetings in the parsonage years before. These began with devotional times which Susannah led for her children. A few neighbors asked to attend, and eventually the group grew to over 200 people, . . . the vision for home groups would become an important dynamic in the ministry of her sons, John and Charles (1990:8).

Wesley's Talents for Small Groups

Not only did Wesley have a small group background, but he was also an excellent administrator. In fact, he felt that his primary talent lay in his ability to organize people (Latourette 1975:1026). Wesley was also very good at adapting the methodology of other people to suit his own ends. Latourette notes that he had ". . . . an unusual capacity to accept suggestions and to adopt and adapt methods from various quarters" (1975:1026). Hunter says,

He learned from exposure to the home groups (the *ecclesiolae in ecclesia*) that the Lutheran Pietist leader Philip Jacob Spener developed to fuel renewal and outreach, and Wesley learned particularly from the Moravians. Wesley also learned from Anabaptist groups and from the occasional "societies" with the church of England, so his group movement was ecletic Protestant (1996:84).

Wesley's Vision for Small Groups

Like Bucer and Spener, Wesley wanted God's people to experience the community of the King. Therefore, he became a student of the book of Acts and the New Testament model of the church. Hunter explains,

He sensed that if he drew people together in cells to challenge and encourage each other to live daily as Christians, through their protracted experiences, the contagion and power of the Apostolic church would move in human history once again (1996:84).

Wesley's Small Group Organization

Wesley believed that small groups were God's instrument to implement change. He realized that long term change required an effective organizational structure, and thus he worked hard to build an extensive small group network.

Classes

Classes were the cornerstone of the Methodist organization. Without them, the movement would not have experienced such success.

Early History.--There were at least two reasons behind the creation of the classes. First, the classes were originally organized to raise money for the Methodist work. Each member was required to give one penny each week. Second, in 1742, Wesley realized that too many Christians were falling away (Young 1989:112). For this reason the classes took on new significance as a means of correcting this problem.

Leadership.--A large part of the success of the classes was the system of leadership. These are the key principles that Wesley established.

1. The leaders were appointed (as opposed to the bands where the leaders were elected) (Pallil 1991:110).

2. Women were permitted to be lay leaders (they became a majority) (Brown 1992:39).

3. Selection of leadership was based on moral and spiritual character, as well as common sense (Brown 1992:39).

4. Leadership was "plural," that is, there was more than one leader, so that spiritual leadership was shared (Young 1989:113).

5. Groups were not started unless adequate leadership was available. Hunter notes, "He [Wesley] saw no virtue in starting new ministry or group life that dies soon after birth, or is stunted in growth" (1989:119).

6. The class leaders were in fact pastors. Snyder writes, "This was the normal system, based in part on Wesley's conviction that spiritual oversight had to be intimate and personal and that plural leadership was the norm in a congregation (1980:58).

7. The class leadership met weekly with the upper society leadership. They practiced the Jethro model.[5] David Lowes Watson says, "They met weekly with the preacher appointed by Wesley as minister of their society, both to report on their members and themselves and to receive advice and instruction" (1986:38).

Activity in Group.--The class meeting was not a highly organized event. It normally lasted for one hour, and the main event was "reporting on your soul" (Snyder

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5 I am using the term Jethro model to refer to the counsel of Jethro to Moses in Exodus 18. In this system, each cell leader has someone to whom he or she is accountable.

1980:55). The class would begin with an opening song. Then the leader would share a personal, religious experience. Afterwards, he would inquire about the spiritual life of those in the group. Each member would give a testimony about his or her spiritual condition. Before closing in prayer, there would be an offering to support the ministry.

David Lowes Watson, in <u>Accountable Discipleship</u>, writes, "It was a weekly gathering, a sub-division of the society, at which members were required to give an account to one another of their discipleship, and thereby to sustain each other in their witness" (1986:13). The meeting was built upon the sharing of personal experience of the past week (Pallil 1991:107). Mallison writes,

> The class meeting was the basis of every Methodist society; every member was expected to belong, to speak freely and plainly about every subject from their own temptations to plans for establishing a new cottage meeting or visiting the distressed (1989:127-28).

From early on, Wesley learned the importance of allowing each member of the body to use his or her gift. In the early days, various members from the classes began to preach the gospel. Wesley was concerned, yet his mother, Susannah, encouraged him to permit such preaching. Wesley yielded, and lay preachers became an outstanding feature of Methodism (Latourette 1975:1027).

Discipline.--The class meetings contributed to the overall objectives of the Methodist society primarily by keeping the Methodist societies under tight control. Snyder comments, "The class meetings were not designed merely as Christian growth groups, however, or primarily as cells for koinonia, although in fact they did serve that function. Their primary purpose was discipline" (1980:38).

Wesley did not hesitate to expel someone from the society if he or she was not following the Lord wholeheartedly. He knew the condition of each member through the class accountability structures. Cell reports were regularly received (Snyder 1980:57). Before a person could join the Methodist society, he or she had to actively participate in a

class. One was not allowed to join the large group, the society, before joining the small group or class (Young 1989:113). Hunter notes, ". . . every Methodist belonged to a class. Indeed, the class was Methodism's main point of entry for "awakened" seekers who had not yet experienced justification and new life but who desired such experience" (1996:85).

Evangelism.--One of the most exciting aspects of the class system was its evangelistic emphasis. Brown says,

> The groups also had a clear evangelistic function as people were converted during the meetings and lapsed members were enabled to renew their commitment to Christ. Wesley knew that the beginnings of faith in a person's life could be incubated into saving faith more effectively in a warm Christian environment than it could in the chill of the world (1992:39).

Hunter states, "To Wesley, evangelism . . . took place primarily in the class meetings and in people's hearts in the hours following the class meetings (1987:58).

Wesley was clearly more interested in discipleship than decision. He was not convinced that a person had made a decision for Christ until he was involved in a small group. Young writes, "The classes served as an evangelistic tool (most conversions occurred in this context) and as a discipling agent" (1989:113).

Multiplication.--According to George Hunter, Wesley was a church growth strategist. Hunter writes, "He was driven to multiplying 'classes' for these served best as recruiting groups, as ports of entry for new people, and for involving awakened people with the gospel and power" (1987:56). Wesley would preach and then invite the people to join a class. His first objective in his preaching was the starting of classes (1987:57).[6] Wesley would not start a class, if he could not effectively manage it, and he would not preach where he could not enroll people into classes (1987:56).

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6 Apparently, the multiplication of classes were primarily the result of planting new classes from scratch. William Walter Dean, in his dissertation on the Wesley class system writes, "Cell division was much less common than might have been expected. The formation of new classes was by far the most frequent approach to growth" (Dean 1985:266).

Bands

Bands represented another level in Methodist organization. The bands were started in 1738, before the classes, and followed the Moravian pattern of promoting the spiritual renewal of each member (Latourette 1975: 1026). At one time, there were several types of bands, but eventually they were dissolved and the classes took their place (Pallil 1991:105).[7] The bands were organized according to sex, age, and marital status and usually had about six people (Brown 1992:38). Unlike the classes, attendance was not required and only about twenty percent ever joined a band (Young 1989:112). In each band meeting, the members asked each other about the sins that they had committed since the last meeting, the temptations that they had to deal with, and how they were delivered from those temptations.

Societies

The society was the congregational level, as we know it. People who remained committed in their pursuit of a new life, and attended the class meeting regularly, were automatically made part of the society after three months (Hunter 1996:85). Hunter makes an important comparison,

> A Methodist Society was composed of the sum total of classes attached to it. As one's membership in early Christianity was primarily to a house church and somewhat secondarily to the whole Church within the city, so in early Methodism one's primary membership was in the class and somewhat secondarily in the society (1996:85).

Wesley's Role

Wesley kept stepping back and delegating others to higher levels of leadership. Latourette says,

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7 For example, one type of band was called, "The Penitent Band". These bands were provided for people who had fallen away and were now seeking restoration (Hunter 1996:85) .

For a time Wesley himself visited each of the societies to supervise them and enforce discipline. As they increased this became impossible and he assembled his preachers in annual conferences. . . . As societies and preachers further grew in numbers, he established "circuits" with traveling preachers and soon, as an assistant to himself, a superintendent was placed in charge of each circuit. He himself kept an autocratic control of the whole (1975:1027).

The Growth of the Movement

We are told that eventually hundreds of thousands of people participated in the small group system (Brown 1992:39). Snyder reports, "By the time Methodism had reached 100,000 members at the end of the century, the movement must have had over 10,000 class and band leaders with perhaps an equal or larger total of other leaders" (1980:63). This system of bands and classes continued for over a century (1980:62).[8]

Conclusion

Many important lessons can be learned from the historical study of small groups. In the Old Testament, leadership care is given new significance through an organizational structure. In the New Testament church, we learn about the cell/celebration model that so many have followed in succeeding generations. Largely, through a negative example, the separation between clergy and laity in early church history reinforces the necessity of emphasizing the priesthood of all believers.

The early Reformers (especially Martin Bucer) teach us how small group structures can be used to call the church back to vital Christianity. The small group structure among the Anabaptists helps us to learn more about the nature of the true church--the gathered community. In Pietism, we catch a glimpse of how small groups were used in a complimentary role within the state church. From the Moravian and

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8 From 1738 to 1798 the movement grew from zero to 149 circuits with 101,712 members.

Methodist small group structures we observe how small groups contribute to church growth by emphasizing both evangelism and discipleship.

It is important to understand that the history of Christianity has helped develop many concepts utilized in the cell group movement today. As always, we must glean principles from the past which will in turn make us more effective in future ministry.

CHAPTER 3

STRATEGIES OF CELL-BASED MINISTRY TODAY

In this chapter I will analyze current day models of small group ministry. The following chart describes five distinct small group philosophies that are being utilized in the world today.

TABLE 1

STRATEGIES OF SMALL GROUP MINISTRY TODAY

PURE CELL MODEL	• Modeled after David Yonggi Cho's church • Large following in Africa, Latin America, Singapore, and other parts of the world • Ralph Neighbour is a major promoter
META MODEL	• Modeled by several large churches in the USA • Carl George is founder and major promoter
OTHER SMALL GROUP MOVEMENTS IN THE USA	• Serendipity model (Lyman Coleman, founder) • Covenant model (Roberta Hestenes, principal spokesperson) • Small Group Resurgence (Robert Wuthnow and George Gallup, Jr., primary researchers)

I will be giving more attention to the Pure Cell Movement in this chapter because it is by far the most influential, world-wide movement today, but also because the cell-based churches in Latin America utilize this model.

Pure Cell Model

This name is not completely accurate because there are varying degrees of cell "purity" among the churches which use this model. For example, in Latin America, new cell-based patterns are emerging.[1] However, even with these new emerging structures, there is enough similarity to place them under the same model. Two observations need to be made from the beginning. First, the Pure Cell model is primarily a third world phenomena. Hadaway, S. Wright and DuBose write,

> The catalyst which transformed the many unconnected attempts at Christian house groups into a movement was the emergence of new forms of church in the Third World. For centuries the Third World has been the recipient of missions and has often seen forms of church organization created in the West imposed upon itself with little attempt at adaptation. . . . This situation is changing, however. The growth of the evangelical churches has been so great in Korea, all over Africa, and in certain parts of Latin America that the direction of the flow may be reversing (1987:15).

When referring to "new forms of church" these authors are referring primarily to the cell movement. The second important observation is that the primary catalyst behind the Pure Cell model is David Yonggi Cho, the pastor of the largest church in the history of Christianity.

The Influence of David Yonggi Cho

David Cho's influence cannot be overestimated. Hadaway makes this comment,

> The word spread that Paul Cho's church and several other huge churches in Seoul reached their massive size through home cell groups and that the technique will work anywhere. A movement began, and pastors have flocked to Korea to learn. . . . Churches all over the world are beginning to adopt the home cell group as an organizational tool. . . . In a real sense, the growth of the Yoido Full Gospel Church and the Young Nak Presbyterian Church has galvanized attention around a new idea, created a focus, and birthed a movement which is just beginning to impact mainline denominations in the United States (1987:17).

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1 *La Misión Carismática* is in the process of pioneering a new style of cell-based ministry. I will describe their system more fully in Chapter 7.

Cho's cell system has been replicated by pastors and church leaders all over the world.[2] One of the similarities among my case study churches in Latin America was the influence of Cho on their cell ministry. All of them attributed their initial vision and much of their ongoing cell philosophy to the Yoido Full Gospel Church in Korea. The pastors of the two largest cell churches, as well as the most influential in Latin America, visited Cho's church before starting their own cell ministry.[3] The influence of Cho is also seen in the writings of the top cell experts today. Ralph Neighbour, Carl George, and Dale Galloway all liberally quote Cho as the foundation for their particular model of cell ministry.[4]

It is very hard to dispute the incredible church growth that has taken place at Cho's church. With more than 625,000 members and 22,000 cell groups, Pastor Cho's church grows at a rate of 140 new members per day.[5] Cho attributes his church's rapid growth to the cell group ministry.[6]

When one thinks of aggressive evangelism and church growth in Korea, Pastor Cho's church usually comes to mind. However, it must be remembered that there are

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2 One such example is Faith Community Baptist Church in Singapore, founded by Pastor Lawrence Khong. The church started in 1986 with 600 people. On May 1, 1988, with the help of Ralph Neighbour, the church totally restructured itself to become a full-fledged cell church (Tan 1994:8). Today, the 7,000 to 8,000 people who attend this church are personally pastored by the 500 active cell groups. Khong's church has so successfully modeled the cell-based philosophy of ministry that some 6,000 people now attend their yearly cell seminar.

3 I am referring to César Castellanos, founding pastor of *La Misión Carismática Internacional*, in Bogota, Colombia, and Sergio Solórzano, founding pastor of *La Misión Cristiana Elim*, in San Salvador, El Salvador.

4 In George's Prepare Your Church For The Future, Cho or Cho's church appears on thirteen pages. In his most recent book, The Coming Church Revolution, Cho is mentioned on nine pages. A similar pattern appears in Neighbour's book, Where Do We Go From Here, and Galloway's book, 20/20 Vision.

5 This number has been disputed recently. For example, John Vaughn's most recent list of the worlds' fifty largest churches claims that there are 320,000 people attending Cho's church each week with an additional 280,000 meeting in satellite locations. However, Karen Hurtson's recent case study analysis declares that there are 720,000 members at the Yoido Full Gospel Church (1995:17).

6 During his 1984 church growth lectures at Fuller Seminary, Cho often mentioned that the cell group ministry has been the key to the amazing growth that they have experienced.

nine other churches in Korea which have more than 30,000 members. All of them, without exception, have experienced rapid growth by structuring their church around the cell group ministry (George 1991:50).[7]

Although Cho is the primary inspiration behind the Pure Cell model, the one who has written the most extensively on this model is Ralph Neighbour (1990).[8] He also seems to have done the most research on cell-based churches world-wide, thus increasing the reliability of his studies. His zeal and purity are captured in the following quote,

> . . . the cell is the church, and the church is the cell. It is the basic building block of the larger community called "local church". There must be no competition with it--none at all. Everything in the city-wide structure must exist for the cells, be operated by the cells, and must strengthen the life of the cells. As in the human body, the life of the church is in the cells. Are people to be reached for Christ? It is done through cells. Are people to be built up in Him? It is to be done through cells. Are children to be nurtured? They are to be exposed from the start to the cell as normal church life. There are no Specialists and there are no programs . . . (1990:68-69).

Although Neighbour's quote sets forth the priority of the cell, it does not describe the distinguishing features. Although the following characteristics are not exhaustive, they do describe the most common features of the Pure Cell model.

Cells Form Part of the Local Church Structure

In the Pure Cell church, the small groups are never viewed as isolated units. Rather, they are intimately linked to the life of the local church body. Those who attend the cell groups are expected to attend the church. Those who attend the church are

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7 On April 14, 1996 John Vaughn sent me a fax that listed the fifty largest churches in the world. I noticed that a large proportion of those churches were cell-based churches--mainly from Korea. It was only a few months later that Jim Egli of Touch Ministries confirmed to me that twenty-four of the world's fifty largest churches are cell-based and primarily from Korea.

8 There was a common complaint that I heard in Latin America. The cell pastors with whom I talked were inspired by Cho, but they lacked concrete instruction from Cho concerning how to run a cell ministry.

expected to attend the cell groups. This is precisely the model that is used in Korea. In referring to Cho's model, Hadaway states,

> Members of Cho's home cell groups are also expected to attend the meetings on a regular basis. Attendance is not taken lightly, and when a member is unexpectantly absent from a cell group meeting, the house church leader contacts the absentee person the following day to learn why (1987:99).

Cho's own words are helpful here,

> The local church is the strength of Christianity. Home cell groups contribute to that strength. Anything that dilutes the strength of the local church is to be avoided. That includes some of the parachurch ministries that sometimes take money and commitment away from the local church (1981:93).

This point needs to be carefully emphasized because of the growing house church movement around the world. In this movement, each house church is completely independent or only loosely connected to other house churches. Neighbour makes a helpful distinction,

> There is a distinct difference between the house church and the cell group movements. House Churches tend to collect a community of 15-25 people who meet together on a weekly basis. Usually, each House Church stands alone. While they may be in touch with nearby House Churches, they usually do not recognize any further structure beyond themselves (1990:193).

Emphasis on Components or Characteristics of the Cell

In the Pure Cell church, the cell is defined by its characteristics and not by the fact that it is small and a group.[9] The three major components of all cell groups include:

1. Seeking God (worship, prayer, lesson)

2. Developing relationships with one another (ice-breaker, ministry to one another, refreshment time)

3. Reaching out to non-Christians (friendship evangelism, special cell activity)

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9 In the Pure Cell model, all these are necessary to comprise a cell. For instance, Larry Stockstill, of Bethany World Prayer Center, stopped referring to his worship team meeting as a cell group because they were not able to effectively evangelize non-Christians.

Similarity among the Cell Groups

Perhaps the phrase "quality control" best describes this aspect of the Pure Cell system. The small group format of each meeting remains the same from group to group. Because the goal of each cell group is to multiply, there is a constant need for new leaders. If the new leadership is going to be successful, they must have an exact pattern to follow. Such "quality control" in the Pure Cell model assures that potential leaders will know exactly what to do and how to do it.

Partnership in Evangelism

Evangelism has the highest priority in the cell church. Each cell is required to aggressively evangelize the lost. However, cell-based evangelism is different from most other forms of evangelism because the team approach is used in contrast to an individual approach.

<u>Net Fishing Versus Hook Fishing</u>

What I am referring to can best be illustrated by the tools of the fisherman--the net and the fishing pole. Cell group evangelism in the church uses the net to catch fish. Larry Stockstill, the pastor of the most prominent cell church in the United States--Bethany World Prayer Center--describes it this way,

> The old paradigm of hook fishing is being replaced by teams of believers who have entered into partnership (community) for the purpose of reaching souls together. . . . Jesus used the partnership of net fishing to illustrate the greatest principle of evangelism: our productivity is far greater together than alone (1996:1-2).

Likewise, Cho highlights his methodology of cell group evangelism by saying,

> Our cell group system is a net for our Christians to cast. Instead of a pastor fishing for one fish at a time, organized believers form nets to gather hundreds and thousands of fish. A pastor should never try to fish with a single rod but should organize believers into the nets of a cell system (quoted in Hurston 1994:107).

How, specifically, does Cho do it? In a 1993 interview with Carl George, Cho explained how his cells go net fishing.

> We have 50,000 cell groups and each group will love two people to Christ within the next year. They select someone who's not a Christian, whom they can pray for, love, and serve. They bring meals, help sweep out the person's store-- whatever it takes to show they really care for them. . . . After three or four months of such love, the hardest soul softens up and surrenders to Christ (quoted in George 1994:94).

The Whole Group Participates in Evangelism

In every sense of the word, it is small *group* evangelism. Everyone participates in some small way--from the person who invites the guest, to the one who provides refreshments, to the one who leads the discussion. In addition, all participate in fervent prayer for the lost.[10]

Focus on Multiplication of Cell Group

This issue of cell multiplication seems to be the common thread that links all of the rapidly growing world-wide cell churches.[11] In the Pure Cell church, the rallying cry is "born to multiply." This genetic code of cell multiplication is instilled into every cell group. In many cell churches, if a group does not multiply within a set number of months, it is necessary to dissolve the group and let those cell members integrate into groups that are experiencing growth and multiplication.

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10 For example, at Bethany World Prayer Center in Baker, Louisiana, each group is given a small white board. Names of unsaved friends and family members are written on the board, so that the entire group can pray until the person receives Christ and joins the cell group.

11 Although this characteristic was true in all of my case study churches, there were differences in how the cells reproduced (members planting cells from scratch versus the mother-daughter method)

Multiplication Maintains Intimacy

From a very practical standpoint, cell groups must multiply if they are going to maintain a state of intimacy while continuing to reach out to non-Christian people. There is common agreement among the experts that a cell group must be small enough so that all the members can freely contribute and share personal needs.

Length of Time before Multiplication

In many of the most rapidly growing cell churches around the world, the time that it takes for the individual cells to multiply is approximately six months (Neighbour 1992: 32-35). Neighbour states,

> Long years of experience with groups has verified that they stagnate after a certain period. People draw from one another for the first six months; after that, they tend to "coast" along together. For that reason, each Shepherd Group will be expected to multiply naturally after six months or be restructured (1992:113).

I recently even heard of a Baptist church in Modesto, California which is multiplying its cell groups every four months.[12] However, not all cells multiply in a matter of months. For some it is a matter of years. Carl George gives this counsel,

> The gestation period for healthy groups to grow and divide ranges from four to twenty-four months. The more frequently a group meets, the sooner it is able to divide. If a group stays together for more than two years without becoming a parent, it stagnates. Bob Orr, of the Win Arn Church Growth, Inc., reports that groups that meet for a year without birthing a daughter cell only have a 50 percent chance of doing so. But every time a cell bears a child, the clock resets. Thus a small subgroup can remain together indefinitely and remain healthy and fresh by giving birth every few months (1991:101).

Bethany World Prayer Center, a true cell-based church, has adopted the policy that their cell groups must multiply within one year or be integrated into the existing structure. This period of time seems the most realistic.

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12 This information comes from a personal conversation that I had with Ralph Neighbour in May, 1996. I do know that Neighbour works closely with this church.

Uniformity of Lesson Material

In the Pure Cell church, there is uniformity of lesson material. All of the cell leaders cover the same lesson plan. The lesson might be a summary of the Sunday message (Cho's church) or four carefully designed application questions that follow the Sunday morning message (Stockstill's church). As we will see in Chapters 7 and 8, all of the cell-based case study churches in Latin America developed their lessons based on the pastor's weekly message.

Strong Administrative Control

In the Pure Cell church, there is strong administrative accountability. Everyone is monitored, pastored, and accountable. The philosophy behind this model is Jethro's advice to Moses in Exodus, chapter 18. Most cell churches set leaders over geographical districts, zones, and areas of the city. However, the fundamental leadership role is always given to the cell leader.

Administrative control also takes place through the required reporting from each cell group. Although most cell churches require weekly reports, this is not always the case.[13] It is through tight administrative control that the Pure Cell Church is able to pastor every member.[14]

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13 Three out of the five cell-based case study churches in Latin America required weekly reports while the other two required monthly reports.

14 After Donald McGavran visited Cho's church in 1976, he called it "the best organized church in the world" (Hurston 1995:192). I heard Cho say in 1984 that even when he is in the United States, he can locate every person in his 500,000 member church through the cell system (Church Growth Lectures at Fuller Seminary, 1984).

Required Cell Leader Training

Although each cell church has their own leadership requirements and models of training, all cell churches offer both initial and ongoing training. Most cell churches around the world provide:

1. Pre-training for potential cell leaders before they begin leading their groups.

2. An apprentice system within the cell group in which potential leaders are in the process of being trained from the moment they enter the group.

3. A Jethro system in which every leader is pastored.[15]

4. Some type of on-going training (weekly, bimonthly, or monthly).

The Rapid Releasing of Leadership

The rapid multiplication of small groups in the Pure Cell church makes it imperative that new leaders be found, trained, and released. Again, David Yonggi Cho is the best example. Even in a church of 750,000, Cho has been able to maintain an average of one lay leader to every ten to sixteen church members (Hurston 1995:68). For example, in 1988 alone 10,000 new lay leaders were appointed for ministry (Hurston 1995:194).[16]

Very Few Programs Apart from Cells

Neighbour most radically defines this characteristic of the cell church. He declares,

> We must actively abandon the hope that stagnant churches can be renewed by painful restructuring and the tacking on of Cell Group Church principles. . . . The

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15 Neighbour points out that this aspect is common to all of the cell churches (1990:73-80).

16 Dale Galloway says it well, "The most important job of the pastor and the pastoral staff is leadership development, training lay leaders who will build small groups. Leadership development is essential, and it must be top priority. It cannot be left to chance" (1995:118). George adds, "Since the whole system depends on trained leaders being available, the number of groups cannot grow if you are not multiplying the number of Xs"[cell leader] (1994:61).

church cannot effectively mix traditional patterns of church life with Cell Group Patterns. There must be a deliberate transition. After devoting nearly a quarter of a century to attempt to help "renew the churches," I am totally skeptical that it can be done (1990:36-37).

He goes on to say,

I returned to the disturbing point that has been made before in this book and will be repeated again and again, The Cell Church lifestyle is too New Testament to be blended into a PBD [program based design] structure. It causes endless conflicts for those who attempt it (1990:55).

At the same time, I have discovered that most cell churches have programs, although they might call them something different.[17] Realistically, perhaps it is best to say that in the cell church very few additional programs exist.

Most of the normal "programs" are met through the cell groups. In fact, little volunteer help is needed. Normally, the various districts or zones provide the ushers, counselors, and parking lot attendants. With this format, the burdens of a church program do not weigh down a few people in the church.

Commitment of Head Pastor to Cell Ministry

The active leadership of the head pastor in the direction of the cell ministry seems to be a clear, distinguishing mark in the Pure Cell church. Cho declares,

There is only one way that the home cell group system will be successful in a church, if that system is to be used as a tool of evangelism. The pastor must be the key person involved. Without the pastor, the system will not hold together. It is a system, and a system must have a control point. The controlling factor in home cell groups is the pastor (1981:107).

In my research and experience in cell-based churches, I have discovered that the role of the senior pastor is crucial to the long term success of the cell ministry. This role

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17 For example, at Bethany World Prayer Center there is a children's Sunday School, worship team ministry, Saturday morning prayer meeting, youth ministry, and college and career ministry. At the same time, Bethany talks about "getting rid of all programs".

cannot be delegated to someone else.[18] Beyond, the head pastor's role, in the Pure Cell model, each minister on the pastoral team is fully integrated in the cell ministry.

Goal of One Hundred Percent Participation in Cell Groups

Because cells form the basic building block of life in the cell church, it is expected that everyone participates. Refusal to participate in a cell group indicates that one is not in line with the vision of the church. Although one hundred percent participation is the goal, in reality, this rarely happens. I have witnessed ninety percent participation, but seventy percent is more common.

The Meta Model

Carl George is the author and promoter of the Meta model. It is George's attempt to adapt cell group principles and church growth found in the majority world to a North American context (Coleman 1993:12). The impact of the Meta model can be noted by the successful North American churches that are using this model (Table 2).

Influences on George

I can see at least three major influences on George that helped him to establish the Meta model. First, George was impressed by the incredible growth of the cell church throughout the world. Not only has the cell church grown rapidly in terms of numbers, but there is also a built-in capability to care for new converts. Second, as a pragmatic church growth practitioner, it seems to me that George was drawn to study how to make

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18 Larry Stockstill of Bethany World Prayer Center demonstrates his leadership commitment to the cell model in three areas: First, he personally prepared the lessons for the leaders; second, he speaks to the cell leaders every Wednesday evening; third, he visits a different cell group every week; fourth, he often includes his weekly cell experiences in his Sunday morning sermon.

the world-wide cell church paradigm relevant to a North American audience. Third, George was influenced by Dale Galloway, who founded the New Hope Community in Portland, Oregon based on small groups. Before writing his book, <u>Prepare Your Church for the Future</u>, George did an in-depth case study of the New Hope Community Church.[19]

Original Version of the Meta Model

In George's first book dedicated to cell ministry, <u>Prepare Your Church for the Future</u>, the Meta model is introduced. The underlying thrust of George's thinking is that because small group ministry has worked so effectively in large, growing churches around the world, it should be adapted to work in any size church, whether in North America or overseas. His overriding emphasis throughout the book is that our current models of church ministry simply do not provide sufficient quality care to sustain a growing church (1991:57-84).

His first book comes very close to describing the Pure Cell approach used in most cell churches around the world. Throughout the book, he describes the home cell group and its contribution to both quality and quantitative growth. The book had a powerful impact on the North American church scene because George gives fresh North American terminology to cell-based concepts.

Latest Version of the Meta Model

In his most recent book, <u>The Coming Church Revolution</u>, George seems to redefine the Meta model. Instead of promoting a model, he now talks about a way of analyzing your church,

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19 When I spoke with Dale Galloway at one of his seminars in October 1995, he told me that George's book, <u>Prepare Your Church For The Future</u>, was a description of the small group ministry at New Hope Community Church. I have come to agree with Dale Galloway's conclusions.

> Meta-Church thinking examines the degree to which a church has been "cellularized," and its leadership linked. . . . It tries to discern the degree to which group leaders are in fact convening their people, and the degree to which coaches are in fact working with group leaders. The Meta-Church, then, . . . is an X ray to help you look at what you have in order to figure out what's missing (1994: 279-280).

The Meta model then is a way of discerning the degree of small group involvement in a church. George insists throughout this book that the Meta approach is simply a way of seeing what you already have.

In this latest book, George spends most of the time describing his mapping strategy called the Meta Globe. This is George's attempt to categorize all groups in the church within certain boundaries. This categorization is supposed to help a church examine their real structure.

Three other distinct differences are made clear in George's most recent book. First, small groups are defined by size rather than components. For example, George says, "Cells include Sunday-School classes, ministry teams, outreach teams, worship-production teams, sports teams, recovery groups, and more . . . any time sixteen or fewer people meet together, you have a small-group meeting" (1994:69-70). He redefines the Sunday School, as an "on premises" cell system (1994:284). Second, cell ministry should be introduced unobtrusively in the church. According to George, it is not wise to tell the board when you introduce the cell ministry (1994:259). Third, in his earlier work he recommended a bimonthly leadership gathering (1994:135-145), but now George says that it is possible not to have this meeting, if the basic structures and principles exist somewhere else in the church (1994:203).

Characteristics of the Meta Model Adopted
by Other Churches

Whether or not George has clearly defined his Meta model remains to be seen. To understand the Meta model, I have found it more helpful to analyze the churches that

are using this model. After doing case studies of all five of the Meta churches listed in Table 2, I was able to discern various patterns among them.[20] The following are the various characteristics that I discovered.

TABLE 2

NORTH AMERICAN CHURCHES USING THE META MODEL

Willow Creek Community Church	Sunday a.m. attendance: 16,000
Saddleback Community Church[21]	Sunday a.m. attendance: 11,000
New Hope Community Church[22]	Sunday a.m. attendance: 4,000
Cincinnati Vineyard	Sunday a.m. attendance: 3,500
Fairhaven Alliance Church	Sunday a.m. attendance: 1,500

Variety of Groups

The five Meta churches that I studied had a wide variety of small groups. I observed such groups as drama groups, lawn mowing groups, parking lot attendant groups, cancer groups, sports groups, and Vietnam Veteran groups. Normally the various

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20 I visited two of the five case study churches (Fairhaven Alliance and Cincinnati Vineyard). For Saddleback, Willowcreek, and New Hope Community Church, I made extensive phone calls, read their literature, and conducted interviews with those associated with the church.

21 Saddleback Community Church was the first to try the Meta model. At this time, they do not officially embrace it. However, their small group system is very similar to the Meta Model.

22 Some people believe that New Hope Community is an advocate of the Cho model in the U.S (Coleman 1993:19). However, it appears that the small group ministry at New Hope Community Church began to diversify and change. Now, I believe it is more accurate to describe the New Hope Community Church as the first prototype Meta model of small group ministry. This statement is based on three main factors: First, Carl George used this church as the primary U.S. case study before he wrote the book, Prepare Your Church for the Future; second, George's Meta model follows the structure of New Hope Community Church very closely; third, Galloway has been promoting Meta principles through his small group seminars for the past fifteen years (Galloway identifies his system with the Meta model).

groups can be categorized into specific types or purposes, although certain Meta models are so varied that they are hard to classify.[23] David Tan is correct when he states,

> For the Meta-Church any type of groups within the church constitute the cells. All these groups may have different agendas and purposes. The main principle is to involve as many members as possible in groups. Since . . . the agenda of every group cannot be identical, the goal of the Meta-Church is accommodation (1994:18).

Three common types of groups that most frequently surface in the Meta churches are task groups (focus: a particular ministry), fellowship groups (focus: personal care), and discipleship groups (focus: spiritual growth).

The emphasis on variety also extends to the life of the groups. Some groups continue indefinitely while other groups may only last a few weeks. Again, it depends on the purpose of the group or the vision of the leader.

Flexibility

As I have talked to the leadership in these Meta churches, one essential value that continued to surface was the flexibility of their system. Freedom of choice is highly esteemed and emphasized. The top leadership is careful not to assert too much pressure. This flexibility can be seen in at least three major areas.

Study Material

The leaders are free to choose their own material. Saddleback Community Church gives each leader complete freedom, while Willow Creek Community Church only requires that the leaders obtain their material from the Willow Creek bookstore.

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23 Cincinnati Vineyard is one of those. They list any and every conceivable small group on their bulletin boards.

Group Meetings

Meetings can be held any day of the week at any location. I noted that at Willow Creek Community Church many of the small groups met in the church, and oftentimes the group meeting would be scheduled 1½ hours before the normal service.[24]

Multiplication of the Groups

Multiplication seems to be a desired ideal in the Meta system, but it is not enforced. Again, the strong emphasis on freedom of choice precludes any type of pressure for the groups to multiply. One staff person at Saddleback Church told me that several groups have been meeting as long as the church has been in existence.

Leadership Training

All of the churches using the Meta model feature some kind of ongoing leadership training, but there is a great degree of flexibility. Willow Creek Community Church tried to gather the coaches (leaders of five small group leaders) every month. The Cincinnati Vineyard and Fairhaven Alliance Church held monthly leadership meetings, although they found it very difficult to train such a wide variety of small group leadership.

<u>Jethro Model</u>

All five of these churches exercised administrative control over their small groups through the Jethro structure. How many times must the upper leadership visit those under them? Again, flexibility was the key element. At Saddleback Community Church the district lay pastors are encouraged to visit the cell leaders every quarter.

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24 The "service" might be an usher's planning meeting, a prayer meeting, or the Wednesday night believer's meeting.

Variety of Additional Church Programs

Meta churches have a variety of additional church programs.[25] There does not seem to be any conflict between these additional church programs and the small groups.[26] Four of the five churches intentionally utilized their Sunday morning worship as "seeker sensitive" services with the goal of reaching more non-Christians.

Comparison of the Meta Model and the Pure Cell Model

Admittedly, there is overlap between these two models. Some churches using the Meta model embrace many Pure Cell model principles, and other churches who might see themselves in the Pure Cell model category embrace many of the Meta principles.[27] Both models place a high priority on small group ministry, find support in the ministry of David Yonggi Cho, use the Jethro system to care for each leader, and normally practice some degree of evangelism and discipleship within the small group.

At the same time there are some key differences. First, the Pure Cell model gives a higher priority to the cell than the Meta model. Second, the Meta model promotes small group variety as compared to small group similarity (Pure Cell model). Third, the small group in the Meta model is more nurture/pastoral oriented, while the small group in the Pure Cell model is more evangelistic. Finally, there is far more administrative control

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25 New Hope Community Church might be an exception here. Until Dale Galloway left the church in 1995, the primary focus of the church was its small groups. However, since the departure of Dale Galloway, the church seems to be in transition.

26 In fact, oftentimes in the Meta model there is simply a redefinition of the word program in order to include the small groups. For example, instead of calling it Children's Sunday School, it is now labeled Small Groups For Children. Instead of the music program, there are now musical small groups. One of the dangers of such a system is that the life and vision of the small group often becomes lost in the process. This danger becomes particularly acute as these Meta Churches tend to be more "temple" focused than "small group" focused. The primary event centers around the weekend services. Not surprisingly, oftentimes the small groups in the Meta system exist to support the temple program. The very atmosphere of programmed, busy ministry can easily swallow up the life in these groups.

27 In another tutorial I developed a third model called the pragmatic or church growth approach. This approach embraces much of the Pure Cell approach but rejects the exclusivity of Neighbour and even allows various programs to exist.

in the Pure Cell model than the Meta model. Table 3 represents the major differences between the Meta model and the Pure Cell model.

Other Small Group Movements in the United States

I will deal with these three movements under the same category because all three of these movements primarily focus on the small group itself (small group dynamics and content) as opposed to cell-based strategy within the church.[28]   These models are primarily having an impact within North America.

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28 I use the term "movement" and "model" interchangeably due to the fact that the word "model" best describes the Serendipity and Covenant approaches, while the word "movement" best refers to the small group resurgence in the United States.

TABLE 3

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE PURE CELL AND META MODELS

(Adapted from Egli 1993 along with personal observations)

	META MODEL	PURE CELL MODEL
TYPES OF SMALL GROUPS	• Any type of group acceptable	• The cell group is similar in purpose, vision, and format
SMALL GROUPS/ CHURCH PROGRAM	• No conflict between the small groups and church programs • Small groups are seen as another program	• Cell groups are key program of the church • Other programs generally resisted in order to prioritize the cell ministry
HEAD PASTOR	• Could possibly delegate this ministry to an associate pastor	• Must be at the very center of the cell ministry
ADMINIS-TRATIVE CONTROL	• Very loose and flexible with some light control	• Strongly organized, directed to ensure quality control
EVANGELISM	• Strong nurture focus in small groups with some evangelism • Multiplication a desired option for the small groups	• Strong evangelism focus with nurture as well • Multiplication strongly encouraged and promoted
LEADERSHIP	• Some kind of ongoing training, although flexible and loosely organized • Leaders on pastoral team oversee specific ministries	• Closely monitored, required ongoing training • Leaders on pastoral team oversee small groups in some manner
STUDY MATERIAL	• Leaders free to choose	• Material chosen for leaders and normally based on head pastor's message

The Serendipity Model

The founder of this approach is Lyman Coleman, who has been a small group leader for four decades. Lyman Coleman is founder both of Serendipity Publishing House as well as a popular small group seminar. He is truly an expert on small group dynamics and small group cycles. The variety of books that his publishing house has produced have greatly influenced the small group movement in North America.

Describing his small group approach, he says, "The heart of the Serendipity model is the broken people at the door . . . the intention is to create a small group system

where people outside the church can find a place of entry and be transformed" (1993:19). Perhaps this model is best understood by the characteristics that distinguish it from other models.

First, there is a definite beginning and end to each small group. Although his earlier model consisted of a shorter length for each group, now Coleman promotes a one-year group cycle. He says, "The end is marked by a period of releasing where everyone responds to his new calling" (1993:21). Second, there is a democracy of options. People can be in a group whether or not they are members of the church or even attend the worship services. Coleman believes that this is distinct from David Cho's model (1993:21). Third, the Serendipity model promotes a wide variety of small groups. He says, "This model can also include traditional Sunday school, where people who are already involved can find a place for sharing and caring" (1993:21). Finally, it is a collegiate system of small groups. Coleman's approach is similar to the old Sunday School system where there was a definite departure from one class and entrance into another class (Coleman 1993:21).

<p align="center">**The Covenant Model**</p>

The main spokesperson today for this model is Roberta Hestenes (1983).[29] Her definition for this model is, ". . . an intentional face-to-face gathering of 3 to 12 people on a regular time schedule with the common purpose of discovering and growing in the possibilities of the abundant life in Christ" (Coleman 1993:5). From this definition it is obvious that these groups are primarily directed to committed believers. One of the major goals of this model is to create long term community. There is a need for strong

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29 She has become very well known for her expertise in small group ministry in general and in particular for being the spokesperson for this model. She received her D.Min. from Fuller Seminary and was also a professor there. She also served as president of Eastern Seminary.

commitment and a high level of accountability (Coleman 1993:7). The word "Covenant" in this model refers to the commitments or promises that were established in the Old Testament between God and His people. One major focal point of this model is that the group makes a commitment (covenant) to fulfill particular goals, purposes, study topics, ground rules, and logistical details (Coleman 1993:5). Neither evangelism nor group multiplication is a high priority in this system.[30]

The Small Group Resurgence

Robert Wuthnow and George Gallup, Jr. have been instrumental in researching the resurgence of small groups across the United States. They estimate that 75 million out of the estimated 200 million adults in the United States participate in a small group (Wuthnow 1994:370). These small groups include both church groups (e.g., Bible studies, Sunday School, cell groups) as well as non-church groups (e.g., support groups, recovery groups). One out of six of those 75 million people are new members of the small group movement, thus disclosing that, at least in the United States, the small group movement is alive and growing (Wuthnow 1994:371).

Lyle Schaller has taken note of the explosion of small group interest in the U.S. After listing twenty new innovations in the modern American church scene Schaller says, ". . . perhaps most important of all, is the decision by tens of millions of teenagers and adults to place a high personal priority on weekly participation in serious, in-depth, lay-led, and continuing Bible study and prayer groups" (1995:14).

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30 Coleman observes, "Unchurched, non-Christians would not be interested in this type of group. There is no mechanism built into the system for the Covenant groups to multiply, or to close with honor. Frequently, Covenant groups will last until they die a horrible death" (1993:7).

<u>Conclusion</u>

The bulk of this chapter has focused on two major models today--the Pure Cell model and the Meta model. Both of these models stress the virtues of small group ministry in the church today. However, the Meta model is an adaptation of cell principles for the North American church while the Pure Cell model has a world-wide following.

This chapter pointed out that the Pure Cell model is an all-encompassing system of pastoral care, church administration, evangelism, and leadership training. On the other hand, the Meta model tends to emphasize variety and flexibility. In the Meta model, the seeker-sensitive church service is often the major tool of evangelistic outreach. Small groups are primarily the means to care for those who have already come to Christ through the church services; whereas cells in the Pure Cell model are primarily evangelistic. Although the Serendipity model, the Covenant model, and the small group resurgence have not been the focus of this study, they are having a significant impact on the church in North America and therefore aid in our understanding of present day small group ministry.

CHAPTER 4

LATIN AMERICAN CULTURE AND CELL-BASED MINISTRY

In this chapter, I will focus on those traits of Latin culture that might have a special impact on cell-based ministry. My analysis will also be more comparative in nature. That is, at times I will describe Latin American culture by comparing it to North American culture.

Although I will be emphasizing common traits among Latin Americans, it must not be imagined that all Latins will fit precisely into these categories. Actually, in order to truly understand the Latin American, one must realize that an amazing diversity exists. Galo Plaza calls Latin America a "country of contrasts" (1971:19), and Mayers begins his book by saying, "Each nation within Latin America is quite distinct" (1976).

General Cultural Traits

Although Latin American culture is diverse, there are recognizable cultural patterns. Michael Olien reminds us that, "Anthropology has divided the world into 'cultural areas' for the purposes of study. A cultural area is a geographical space within which the people share a number of traits at a given point in time" (1973:2). A culture consists of the shared perceptions that a people hold of the reality around them. It includes similar assumptions, values, and allegiances. Discovering a people's culture is the process of determining what makes them "tick." It involves discovering the core assumptions that motivate people to behave the way they do. The following represent some of those cultural traits that characterize Latin Americans.

Event Orientation

One of the outstanding characteristics of the Latin people is their orientation around the event rather than a schedule. Marvin Mayers says, "There is a greater tendency to organize so that the event can be fulfilled, than to follow the time schedule" (1976:100). The underlying assumption of the Latin people is that "when it happens it happens." Sherwood Lingenfelter and Marvin Mayers state, "For event-oriented people it is more important to complete the activity than to observe arbitrary constraints of time" (1986:42). They add,

> Event-oriented persons will often be late to time-structured meetings because the event in which they are previously engaged is not completed on time. For them, meetings begin when the last person arrives and end when the last person leaves. Participation and completion are the central goals (1986:42).

Time Flexibility

In North America, time is handled much like a material. It is earned, spent, saved, and wasted. For Latin Americans, time is much more flexible and fluid (Hall 1973:6). For the Latino, time will reoccur and not pass away (Plaza 1971:23).[1] Joseph Privitera says,

> His [the Latino] outlook on life . . . does not possess the same driving qualities, nor the same ascetic practicality of Puritanism. He can feel no compulsion to work himself to death; therefore life must be enjoyed with leisure, for Providence will bring tomorrow's crust of bread. . . . To us [North Americans] time is money; to a Latin American time is cheap. He can therefore afford to cultivate the arts and the higher things in life. He can afford, too, not having to rush, to be courteous and well mannered (1945:38).

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1 This is in contrast with our linear view of time which says that time is gone forever and the present is a fleeting moment between the past and the future. Edward Hall mentions that Latin Americans like to do two things at once, whereas the North American thinks this is practically immoral. Hall says, "In Latin America it is not uncommon for one man to have a number of simultaneous jobs which he either carries on from one desk or which he moves between, spending a small amount of time on each (1973:8).

Punctuality

Schedules and exact time commitments are not as important in Latin America as in the United States. Glen Dealy says, "Although Latin Americans might make concessions to arrive *hora inglesa* at a gringo's house, being prompt within their own social setting was neither virtuous nor useful" (1992:54). Lingenfelter and Mayers note,

> The concept of being late varies significantly from one culture to the next and from one individual to the next. . . . Most North Americans will begin to experience tension when others are fifteen minutes late; most Latin Americans will have tension when others are more than one hour late. . . (1986:38).

Yet, it must quickly be added that in Latin America, time schedules vary according to the status of the person involved. Normally the unwritten rule reads: The higher the status the narrower the range of punctuality; the lower the status the wider the range of punctuality (Mayers 1976:102). It is also important to remember that arriving "late" to an appointment is not simply a matter of forgetfulness or poor planning. Rather, the planning for Latin Americans to be late is every bit as thought out as the punctuality of the North American (Dealy 1992:54).

Time for People

For the Latin American, time is friendship. Time spent with people is never waisted. Dealy notes,

> Because the source of his strength . . . is sociability, the Latin behaves in an altogether congruent manner--for example, by spending long hours in bars and cafés talking to friends. Without passing whole afternoons in this fashion, he would, in fact, soon have fewer connecting ties (1992:108).

The Latin certainly does not prioritize work as much as the North American. For the Latin, work is often thought of as menial and for servants. Far better is it to spend leisure time with people![2]

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2 We noticed in Ecuador that so many of the people had *fincas* or *haciendas*. These *fincas* were located out in the country and were ideally designed (recreationally) for visitors. It was not unusual for

Priority of People

For the Latin American, life revolves around relationships. "Getting things done" is not nearly as important as just being with people. Lingenfelter and Mayers speak for Latin Americans when they say, "Individuals who are person-oriented find their satisfaction in interaction with others. Their highest priority is to establish and maintain personal relationships (1986:84).

Relationships are More Important than Things

In North America, efficiency, progress, and organization play an all-important role in life. However, in Latin America the human is given first priority. C. H. Garaets writes,

> . . . the way of life in Latin America is personal before it is purposeful. . . . Personal qualities and interrelationships are much more important in life than substantive achievements and contributions to society. . . . Professional competence gets things done rapidly and well, but it is all too often cold, insensitive, and indifferent to human beings. The Latin prefers to be warm, friendly, and human at the expense of efficiency and progress (1970:40-41, 54).

Persons come before both material things and personal goals and tasks. In North America, a large part of the American dream is the accumulation of wealth and adult toys. A person's status is often assigned by the things he or she possesses (Dealy 1992:55).

However, in the Latin culture, the possession of material "things" is always subservient to relationships. Dealy insists, "North Americans calculate excellence in the value of amassed assets; Latin Americans quantify merit in the value of aggregated friends" (1992:68). For example, if a close friend asks for a material item, the typical

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close friends (often among the church membership) to spend nearly every weekend together at these country homes.

response is "my house is yours." Far from being a trite, meaningless phrase, these words are backed up with action (Mayers 1982:104).

Relationships Shape All Interactions

This prioritization of persons reaches far down into every level of Latin life. Pragmatic transactions as well as issues of psychological significance are both governed by personal relationships.

Governmental Transactions

Gareats affirms that in Latin America, "Human interest is much more important than regulations, and public works receive their direction and priority according to friends and influence" (1970:48). It is a common impression that to get things accomplished in Latin America, everything depends on who you know. Georgie Geyer says, "All over Latin America, there is one way to get something done: know somebody (1970:81).

At first sight, this cultural trait seems offensive to North Americans. After all, should not law and principles govern society instead of personal relationships? Yet, without rejecting the place of law in government, Latins refuse to allow rigid procedural government to dictate life. Rather, they insist ". . . that all of life should display a human dimension" (Dealy 1992:7). It is the underlying belief that people are more important than anything else that reinforces this practice.

Personal Significance

As North Americans depend on the medium of money to grant social status and to make things happen, the Latino depends on his friends to work for him. Dealy makes the

analogy of Latin friends being earned, saved, and spent in approximately the same way as money (1992:69). These friends must be tended and cared for. They must not be allowed to fade away. Therefore, any activity that might be used to secure these friendships should be pursued by the Latino (Dealy 1992:70). As Dealy states, "Zealously laboring to acquire friends, the Latin's existence is organic rather than atomistic. Without people around, he feels not only lonely but also insignificant" (1992:75).[3]

We must not think that because Latins might not spend as much time studying, preparing, or doing other chores that they are lazy or unconcerned. Rather, they are simply more concerned about other things--the priority of making and maintaining friends (Dealy 1992:107). "The rules are different, of course," says Dealy, "but the amount of time and nervous energy these people devote to their social images and relationships is absolutely enormous" (1992:107). Even on the deathbed, Latinos are often very concerned about who has visited them and who has not (Dodd and Montalvo 1987:52).

Education

Because so much depends on friendships and relationships in Latin America, much of the educational system is based on teaching the practical skills of getting along better with people. Again we learn from Dealy that,

> Students learn those habits of appropriate conduct--interpersonal management skills and tactics--taught by Cicero, the Scholastics, Machiavelli, Castiglione, Gracián, Guevara, Rodó, Bolívar, Ingenieros, and numerous other celebrated mentors from their tradition. Here lies the reason Latins have customarily inverted the conception of "academic" and "applied" disciplines. . . . Latins study

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[3] In Ecuador, we often found that when invited to a meal in someone's home, other guests had been invited. At times, this became very irritating to us, because we wanted to be viewed as "special friends." However, as Dealy points out, amassing friends boosts the feeling of significance for a Latin, and thus one of the reasons for having a lot of people at the dinner table.

and perfect their virtuosity while still at the university and prepare themselves for lives of rewarding, that is applied--public activity (1992:104).

Those subjects that North Americans might consider significant and useful (e.g., physical sciences) are not as highly esteemed in Latin America because they do not have direct relationship with people (Dealy 1992:104-107).

Etiquette

Not only the amassing of friends is essential to the Latino, but also the etiquette displayed to other people. An outward friendliness is always appropriate--even to one's enemies. Dealy gives an illustration of two people who had previously tried to kill each other. When they were introduced to each other (on the spot and by mistake), they behaved very civilly and properly towards one another. Dealy notes that to not act as courteously as possible, they might not have been seen as gentlemen, worthy of the respect by all who witnessed the greeting. He explains that, "Well-known, well-rehearsed verbal and physical postures signaling congeniality guide the Latin American's path" (1992:98).

The Latin Family

The Latin family is unique. It is at once weak and strong. The bonds that hold it together are exceedingly strong, and yet often Biblical family values are absent.

The Importance of Family

It is safe to make the assertion that in Latin America there is nothing more important than family. The family is more important than government; it is more important than the law. Edward T. Hall states, "Law in Latin America is enforced technically (by the book), but it is mediated by family relationships" (1973:83). Gareats

echoes this by saying, "The importance of family name, numerous well-placed friends, and inherited privilege cannot be overemphasized" (1970:59).

Mayers believes that the all important status issue is derived from one's family, and therefore, it is the family's name that should be preserved at all cost and any tarnish to the family name brings disgrace (1976:27). He states, "Latin marriage is not designed so much for the pleasure of the pair or for the development of the nuclear family as for the perception of the immediate family and the extended family . . ." (1976:52).

Latins tend to prioritize their family relationships above all other relationships. If commitment to family is the reason for one not attending a particular social function or fulfilling a particular obligation, usually there are no questions asked.

The Extended Family

". . . the Latin American extended family is characteristically knit together by bonds of love and fraternity to a degree unrealized, and unrealizable, within the prototypical Anglo-American nuclear family" (Dealy 1992:11). This quote by Dealy sets the stage by suggesting a distinct difference between the North American family and the Latin extended family. It is the commitment to the extended family which makes the Latin family experience so unique. As Mayers explains,

> The family is an important element in Spanish life, not the nuclear family as in North America, but the extended family. The extended family in the totality involves the nuclear family, blood and affinal relatives, ritual relatives (the neighbors were part of the family through this extension of the family), and maids, house boys, and pets (1976:19).

Mayers believes that one cannot truly understand Latin American society apart from the extended family (1976:61). According to Mayers it is the identification with one's extended family that brings prestige and status to the Latin American (1976:27). It

is for this reason that Dealy says, "Family is the Latin American's primary means to success" (1992:178).

Yet, the importance of the family in Latin America goes beyond the prestige and status issue. The closest personal friends of nuclear family members are often those of his or her extended family (Mayers 1976:60). T.E. Weil properly discerns that one important reason why Latins stand strong in the face of economic tragedy is their emphasis on the family. In fact, it might be that the abiding strength of the family rests on the fact that there is not much strength in the competing institutions--namely politics and economics (1973:95).

The commitment to family can also be seen by the common occurrence of the mother and/or father living with their children. Mayers calls this the "three-adult household" in comparison with the two-adult household in the United States (1976:58). It has been my observation that Latin families give more personal care to their aging parents than do North Americans.

Kinship System

The kinship system comprises an important part of Latin American culture. It extends from the high to the lower classes. The underlying principle is that the nuclear family as well as the extended family are committed to care for one another. This cultural system assures that every family member will have help in times of crisis. Speaking of this kinship arrangement, Weil notes, "Kinship obligation for hospitality and other favors are morally binding, and they may involve a considerable part of a family's income" (1997:97).

The kinship principle is not limited to one's extended family. Through an arrangement called *compadrazgo*, godparents are selected (usually people considered

important) from "other" families. These godparents are selected during special occasions

(birth of a child or marriage of a child). Mayers states,

> At each occasion the parents of the child make careful selection from among their
> friends and acquaintances as to whom they would like to bring into their family
> "as if they were in reality family." They will most likely choose some person or
> couple of higher status than themselves, or someone of equal status (1976:26).

Upon acceptance, these new families become like kin. They are expected to

provide favors and help when necessary. The *compadrazgo* system permeates economic,

political, and social structures in Ecuador and throughout Latin America (Weil 1973:98).

Olien makes an interesting observation, "Throughout Latin America the most influential

persons tend to have the greatest numbers of *compadres*. A president of a country may

have as many as several thousand *compadres*" (1973:204). It is this drive to "become

surrounded" with close friendship and commitments that causes the Latino to place high

priority on the *compadrazgo* system, because the more influential close friends (new kin)

that one has the higher social standing and authority (Dealy 1992:74).

Some view the *compadrazgo* system as a security mechanism in a society where

there are few other places to turn beside the extended family. Geyer offers her opinion,

> It [*compadrazgo*] is a realistic escape from the insecurity of family life; it links
> man to man on a personal level in a society in which man fears man on a larger,
> more universal level. It exists because there is no public assurance of justice or
> security for the average, atomized man (1970:83).

The Machismo-Hembrismo Dualism

When discussing the worldview of Latin Americans, it is not long before the

subject of "machismo-hembrismo" surfaces. The word machismo is a term used to

describe particular traits common among Latin males, while hembrismo (also known as

feminismo or *marianismo*) refers to particular values and traits among Latin females.

These two aspects of Latin worldview go hand-in-hand and can only be understood in light of each other.

Machismo

Mayers defines machismo in this way, ". . . the ability to conquer, to effect a conquest. To the degree that a man is able to effect conquest, to reflect fearlessness that attends conquest, and to reflect such virility, to that degree he is a man" (1976:42). What kind of conquest is being referred to here? According to Mayers, the conquest might be sexual, choosing and obtaining a worthy godparent, or even such a mundane matter as deciding whether or not he should go to the front of the line or take his place in the back of the line (1976:40-42).

In everyday terms, this machismo is the image portrayed by the Latin male which projects manliness. Weil describes a macho man as one who is courageous, forceful, bold, and even has a readiness to retaliate instantly (1973:103). As we will see, one of the most far reaching, and perhaps, common expressions of this trait has to do with infidelity in marriage. In other words, for a man to be macho, he must maintain a number of sexual relationships outside of marriage.

Conquistadors and Machismo

How did these traits and values come into being? Actually, the Spanish conquistadors first introduced these values onto South American soil. To the Spaniard, ". . . valor became closely identified with being strongly masculine in sexual capacity and general behavior" (Nida 1974:57). It must always be remembered that the Spanish conquistadors did not bring their wives with them. This helps to explain their frequent sexual unions with the indigenous people (Plaza 1971:21).

The conquistadors sexually "conquered" the indigenous Indian women, who in turn bore their children. No doubt, these children felt resentful toward their absent, irresponsible fathers, yet wanted to be just as "macho" as they were. At the same time, these Mestizo (mixture of Spanish and Indian race) boys were emotionally attached to their mother who provided the only real security. Because their mother was part of a despised race, the males felt the need to display the "macho" characteristics to make a place for themselves in society.

<u>Modern Day Machismo</u>

Like the conquistadors of old, the Latin male ". . . looks through the eyes of conquest . . ." (Mayers 1976:45). He often demonstrates this (machismo) through sexual conquest. In fact, the wife almost expects or assumes that the man will have other mistresses.[4] It is common that a man will have his formal family, but also one, two, or three other households: that is, mistresses with children (Jensen 1983:8).

It is estimated that two out of every five children are born out of wedlock in Latin America (Rangal 1987:145). These children are cared for by their mother, much like the duty laid upon the Indian woman during the time of the conquest. Carlos Rangal says, "In Latin American society, it is almost the norm for the father to refuse responsibility for his offspring" (1987:145). One can imagine the resulting negative consequences in the Latin home.

In addition to divided loyalties with "other households," the machismo image requires the father to be somewhat "aloof" from the day-to-day functions of his own home. Someone has to fill the vacuum, and it is not hard to guess who--the mother. Evelyn Jensen perceptively states, "The children quickly learn how to get what they want

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4 From my experience as a missionary in Latin America, I was constantly confronted (through pastoral counseling) with this pattern of unfaithfulness in marriage.

through their mother, often ignoring the commands of the father. Thus in a subtle way, the mother under-cuts the authority of the father . . ."(1983:9).

Hembrismo

Hembrismo is the counterpart to machismo. It describes the role of the female in Latin cultures--specifically in the face of machismo. There is an interplay at work that accentuates these two concepts.

Moral Superiority

Hembrismo describes the moral and spiritual superiority of the woman over the man. Mayers states, "If the male is motivated by conquest, the female is motivated by honor and reputation. Her place in Latin society is defined as upholding such honor and reputation" (1976:42). She is supposed to be submissive and very patient with her husband. She is known for the kind intercession that she makes between her son and the cruel father (Jensen 1983:5). When the husband engages in extramarital affairs, this moral superiority is demonstrated when the wife looks past the moral failure of her husband.[5]

The Suffering Mother and Mariology

The significant place the mother holds in Latin culture cannot be overstated. Mayers says, "The woman is in focus in every aspect of the society. Hers is a covert, low-keyed focus around which the entire society revolves" (1976:88). She is the longsuffering one with unique, spiritual qualities. She is the one that brings stability to

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[5] As Latin America becomes more evangelical, this is one area that is changing. Christian women are not just allowing their husbands to have other affairs while they patiently accept such behavior. There is a Biblical awareness that such behavior is simply not acceptable.

upheaval in much of Latin American society (Mayers 1976:90). In fact, her place in the Latin worldview has strong religious overtones. The widespread devotion to Mary throughout Latin America is closely linked with the role of the mother throughout Latin America.

Latins tend to portray Christ as dead and dying, yet Mary is radiant and beautiful. God is viewed as very distant (just like Latin fathers), but Mary is close, caring, and always ready to intercede for God's children (just like Latin mothers). Nida reiterates this value by saying,

> . . . not only do women find in Mary a cultural type with which they may identify themselves, but many men, whether consciously or unconsciously, tend to transfer their feelings of dependency upon their mother to worship of the Virgin Mary (1974:130).

Nida feels it is useless to argue against Mariology from a doctrinal standpoint due to the deep-seated emotions which are firmly planted in Spanish culture (1974:130). Rather, it seems that a better, more effective methodology is to extol the Biblical virtues of Mary, while firmly pointing out non-Biblical excesses.

Worldview of Latin America

I use the term "worldview" here to refer to the consistent way that a culture responds to the question, "What is the meaning of life?" The two greatest influences that have affected worldview in Latin America are Roman Catholicism and Animism. However, Evangelicalism is shaping and molding Latin worldview in an increasingly more influential way.

Catholicism

Mayers states, "To be Latin is to be Catholic. As soon as a child is born, it is enrolled in the church" (1976:69). The Roman Catholic church has been and still is the

dominating influence throughout Latin America. Rangal adds, "No other institution has contributed as much as the Catholic Church to determining what Latin America has and has not become" (1987:141). Statistically, Catholicism remains the dominant religious influence on the continent.

Catholic Subjugation of Differing Beliefs

The spread of the Catholic faith after 1594 AD was total and complete. One either became a Catholic or died at the hands of the Spaniards. Hoeffner speaks of this indigenous slaughter by saying, "The New World witnessed such a horrible enslavement and extermination of its inhabitants that the blood freezes in our veins" (quoted in Rivera 1992:171). Orlando Costas calls it, ". . . one of the greatest rapes recorded in human history" (1982:34).

There was little attempt to persuasively win the indigenous people by means of effective evangelism.[6] Rather, the indigenous religions were seen as instruments of Satan that needed to be destroyed and completely eradicated. According to the convictions of the Spanish conquerors, there could be no other competing religion or philosophy. Luis N. Rivera in his book, A Violent Evangelism, writes,

> The conquerors did not heed the protests of the Aztec lords, or even less, their helpless sorrow upon seeing their gods and religious customs defiled and being unable to come to their defense. That was followed by an old missionary tradition of converting the major temple into a place for Christian worship. Political violence is also accompanied by violence against sacred traditions (1992:156).

Sadly, stories abound of how the early conquistadors even used children to spy on their parents and eventually to betray them. Rivera notes,

> None of the missionaries showed any sensitivity toward the anguish of the parents nor a full understanding of the family or of the social disruption this family-

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6 Rivera notes that in Asia the Jesuits sought to discover the divine within the religion of the indigenous people in order to win those people. However in Latin America, the Spaniards demanded total subjugation to the Catholic faith (1992:161).

destroying policy produced. It was considered a holy war, with cosmic dimensions, of the true faith against false idolatry; of God and Satan (1992:164).

Not everyone during the conquest of Latin America was in favor of forced, violent evangelism. For example, Rivera says, "There were intense debates over whether Christianization should be by peaceful or persuasive means, or if military force was legitimate" (1992:154). However in the end the sword won the day.

It is strange to read of accounts in which the Spaniards decided to kill the indigenous people because they suspected that their conversion was not genuine. We read that before they killed them, the conquerors would baptize them in order to somehow link the Christian sacrament with their conquering violence (Rivera 1992:207). Costas writes, "They [Spaniards] enslaved the indigenous and African populations while announcing the message of salvation. They whipped people with their structures of exploitation and at the same time anointed them with the balsam of the gospel" (1982:35). Rivera adds,

> In the entire process of conquest and evangelization of the Americas the relationship between the cross and the sword was problematic and complex. The sword, superior military technology, determined the outcome. The cross represented the final objective that the Spanish protagonists accepted, at least in juridical and theological theory. Paradoxically, the sword had religious and spiritual objectives, while the cross was invested with political and temporal characteristics (1992:207).

This dualism between the temporal power of the sword and spiritual authority continues to confront Catholicism in Latin America today (Rangal 1987:144). Wayne Weld notes that the people have never forgotten that oftentimes they were forced to convert at the point of a sword (1968:22).

Yet, in reflecting on the conquest and the religious subjugation of the people, it is not always clear that forceful subjugation of the indigenous people was because of God or gold. For the most part, those who subjugated the inhabitants were probably more interested in the riches of the new land than the Christian faith. Rivera quotes Las Casas

(Dominican theologian who sided with the oppressed Indians) saying, "Who is the true god of the conquerors: God or gold? The conquistadors make war against the Indians and enslave them 'to reach the goal that is their god: gold' " (1992:259). The greed of the Spaniards and their double standards gave a bad name to the Christian faith.

Monastic Preaching

To their credit, some of the monks who accompanied the Spanish soldiers to the new world were diligent evangelists. They came in full force to preach and establish communities (Weld 1968:21). Quito, Ecuador might serve as an example of the effectiveness of these monastic missionaries. By the 18th century ". . . it was estimated that there were forty convents in the royal Audencia, and a thousand monks, nuns, and priests in the capital alone" (Weld 1968:21).

Yet it must not be imagined that the monks were completely separate from military dealings. Acosta, an early missionary, was one who while preaching love for the natives also insisted that force be used to subjugate them. He considered them subhuman and having only the intelligence of a child (Rivera 1992:222). It is important to remember that at the time of the conquest, Christianity was a militarized faith, totally committed to a war of reconquest against the Muslim infidels (Rangal 1987:150). This mentality affected both soldier and missionary. Rivera clearly documents the relationship between the monasteries and the occupation of the land. Frequently, the monasteries served not only a religious purpose but a military one as well (1992:209). Samuel Escobar documents how the Catholic faith served as an ideology of justification for the conquest (1986:154).

Spanish Catholicism

The Spanish "brand" of Roman Catholicism that impacted Latin America was rigid, dogmatic, and extremely zealous for the faith.[7] William Lytle Schurz tells us that:

> The Spanish Church was like no other in Europe, nor is it now. . . . The popular faith was sustained by some inner fire and did not have to be fortified by any ratiocination. . . . The average Spaniard accepted the official version of the faith and asked no questions (1954:241).

Spain, during the time of Christopher Columbus, was considered the defender of the Catholic faith. It was Spain that introduced the dreaded inquisition, and personally took the lead in stamping out heretical groups. Spain did not encourage open expression of thought or speech in the slightest (Schurz 1954:247). This brand of Catholicism sought to defend Catholic tradition in the face of all other competing religious expressions. The Spaniards rejected compromise, flexibility, and change. Dogmas such as purgatory, the veneration of Mary, prayers for the dead, the priority of the saints, and salvation through the Catholic church were taught as basic doctrine. In spite of the zealous adherence to Catholic tradition and belief, the Spaniards permitted their Catholicism to overlay the belief systems of those who originally inhabited the land.

Animistic Catholicism

The Roman Catholicism that came to dominate Latin America was simply added on to the indigenous worldview instead of transforming it. Olien states, "The Catholicism that the Indian accepted was really a syncretism. Native beliefs and practices fused with a veneer of Spanish-Catholic beliefs and practices" (1973:79).

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7 I remember eating with a professor from our Christian and Missionary Alliance seminary in Canada. He had earned his doctorate from a Catholic seminary in the Philippines. When I questioned him about his degree from a Catholic seminary, he clearly explained to me the different shades and colors of Catholicism. In his mind, the Spanish variety was the most rigid and less Biblical type of Catholicism. I must also add that my critique of Catholicism is more negative, having spent four years of my life in Ecuador.

Similar Beliefs

There were many characteristics of Spanish Catholicism in the 16th century that correspond to the Animistic philosophy of that day (e.g., veneration of the saints, prayers for the dead, the sacrifice of communion). Nida points out that the medieval Roman Catholicism which was introduced in the 16th century was actually quite close to the beliefs and practices of the indigenous people (1974:119). It is even known that some of the early priests believed in black magic and practiced it (Nida 1974:112). For this reason many of the indigenous people could add Catholicism to their traditional belief without a dramatic clash.

Outward Acceptance

Before the Spanish arrived on the scene, Indian religion revolved around the worship of nature, which included evil spirits. Shamans acted as representatives between the priests and their gods. Richly colored totem poles were erected and stood as high as forty feet. Cannibalism, human sacrifice, and worship of idols were also part of the indigenous religion at the time of the conquest (Rivera 1992:155-165).

The Spanish conquerors often destroyed the ancient temples of the indigenous people and built their own churches in the same spots. Yet, those spots remained sacred to the indigenous people. To appease the early Spaniards and to avoid a violent death, the Indians simply changed the names of their personal deities to the saints of the Catholic religion. Olien says, "While the Indians of central Mexico accepted the Christian God as the creator, the Catholic saints were equated with Aztec deities. Even the attributes of the saints were changed to make them more human, the same as their Aztec predecessors. . ." (1973:79).

By making these name changes, the indigenous people were able to maintain a semblance of their religion. As a result, the saints have always played a significant role

in the religion of Latin America. Today, the saints are the central powers of Latin American Catholicism. Some of these saints are protectors of certain occupations or guardians of various groups (Olien 1973:199).

Because of such syncretism, even though the official rate of conversion to Catholicism was rapid, the quality of that conversion left much to be desired. J. H. Elliott, writing about the history of the conquest, notes, "There were alarming indications that Indians who had adopted the new faith with apparent enthusiasm still venerated their old idols in secret" (1984:198). He goes on to say:

> The Indians, forbidden to train as priests, naturally tended to look on Christianity as an alien faith imposed on them by their conquerors. They took from it those elements which suited their own spiritual and ritualistic needs and blended them with elements of their ancestral faith to produce beneath a simulated Christianity an often vital syncretistic religion (1984:199).

Yes, it is true that some of the more obvious indigenous practices like cannibalism and human sacrifice have ceased to exist. However, the control and appeasement of the spirit world is still very much adhered to today.

Degrees of Animistic Mixture

When one talks about the mixture of animism with Roman Catholicism, it is important to distinguish the varying degrees of Catholic influence among the major classes and people groups. For the most part the upper White/Spanish class still holds to a purer form of Spanish Catholicism. Among the Mestizo class there appears to be a greater blend of animistic Catholicism.

However, among the indigenous people of Latin America there is a wide range of variety. Some indigenous people are very syncretic. They will accept certain aspects of the Catholic faith, but when it comes to the natural forces that govern their lives here on earth, they do not look to Catholicism. Rather, these people pay homage to the variety of

spirits that control health, weather, and success of their crops. Appeasement of these spirits, through sacrifice and other means, is absolutely essential to the Indian's prosperity (Weil 1973:73).

On the other hand, some indigenous groups have successfully resisted any mixture altogether. For example, in the jungle regions of Ecuador many of the indigenous people continue to practice their ancient religions (Ecuador in Pictures 1987:38). This is partly due to the priority given to the cities when the Spaniards invaded the land. Many of these indigenous people were left untouched.[8]

Popular Catholic Beliefs

As was mentioned earlier, those who call themselves Catholic in Latin America usually accept a mixture of Spanish Catholicism and Animism. There is great emphasis placed on the saints, the virgin Mary, prayers for the dead, salvation through the church, and other like doctrines.[9] Due to the purpose and length of this paper, I will not spend time analyzing each of these traditions and doctrines. I will, however, look at two of the most popular traits that distinguish Roman Catholicism in Latin America.

The Suffering Christ

The suffering, bloody Christ pervades most of Latin America. This devotion has been passed on by the early Spaniards. Schurz says,

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8 The belief system of the Jivaro serves as an example. Their religion focuses on a supernatural force embodied in deities, which include the rain god and the earth mother. These deities give rise to various objects, spirits and power. These gods and spirits are feared, and therefore placated through ritual. Their beliefs have almost no connection with Christianity (Weil 1973:78)

9 When I first arrived in Ecuador, I had to complete a course, for my M.Div. equivalence from Columbia International University on the Reformation. I was amazed to discover that the Medieval church that Martin Luther and the other Reformers confronted at the time of the reformation was very similar to the present day Catholic church in Ecuador. Many of the same Medieval doctrines and traditions are taught and believed.

> The crucifixion made a specially strong appeal to the religious imagination of Spaniards, even sometimes to the macabre and morbid. To Spaniards in such an ecstasy of devotion, the adoration of the agonizing Christ on the Cross might be a spiritual self-flagellation (1954:242).

Today, it is not uncommon to enter a Roman Catholic cathedral and witness a host of pale, bloody Christs, hung on cruel crosses in every corner of the temple. To the Latino, Good Friday, not resurrection morning, is the high point of Easter (Nida 1974:40).

There is a definite interplay between the way that most Latins view Christ and a general pessimistic worldview. Their preoccupation with death causes them to see Jesus as the "bloody Christ." This bloody Christ offers little hope to the Latino people--only pity. However, as Latins discover the power of the gospel and the resurrection hope in Jesus Christ, many exciting changes are taking place.

The Major Life Cycles

The Catholic Church is closely tied to the four major life cycle crises--birth, puberty, marriage, and death (Mayers 1976:96-97). I mention this point because it is through this door that Roman Catholicism holds such a powerful socio-cultural influence over Latin America. Indeed, I have discovered that the greatest hindrance to conversion in Latin America is not religious, but rather cultural. One is reminded of the famous words of the late Donald McGavran, the founder of the church growth movement, "Men like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic, or class barriers" (1990:163).

In Latin America, the great barrier is the perceived notion that "to leave the Catholic Church is to leave one's heritage, tradition, and family." Due to the intervention and integration of the Catholic Church in each of a person's major life cycle crises, it is very hard to then sever those ties to the Catholic Church.

Catholicism and Personal Holiness

I believe that it can be argued successfully that the Catholic Church has had little impact in changing the ungodly value structures in Latin America. The dualistic system of private religion versus public actions has led to little progress in true, personal holiness (Dealy 1992:14).

The machismo culture which promotes unfaithfulness in marriage has never been successfully challenged by the Catholic Church. Rangal writes, "This perversion of love and sexuality seems to have flawed Latin American society from the Conquest to the present day, without Catholic morality having been able or much inclined to do anything about it" (1987:145).

Much of this lack of penetration into the personal sphere has to do with Catholic duality between the temporal and spiritual realm. The Roman Catholic Church has maintained that the public, governmental spheres are separate entities--the temporal sword versus the spiritual realm. Referring to this dualism in Catholic Latin America, Dealy states, "Great fidelity and great barbarism are possible, and indeed likely, within national arenas where dual standards permeate" (1992:28).

It is also true to some extent that the Catholic Church in general became more concerned with land, money, and power than with the spiritual souls of those under its care. Rangal notes that by the end of the 17th century,

> The priests had become sedentary lovers of the good life, . . . and the spiritual arm was less interested in saving souls of its flock than in reinforcing its moral dominion over society and increasing its patrimony. Tithes, legacies, and donations from the Crown or from individuals flowed into its coffers, till the Spanish colonial Church became the foremost owner of land and slaves (1987:154).

During the colonial period, not only was the church exceedingly wealthy, but it also had the greatest land holdings in Latin America (Olien 1973:74).

Thus, the Roman Catholicism practiced in Latin America, in many ways, simply covered over an animistic worldview. It never dealt with the sins of the people and their need for a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Decline of Catholicism

Patrick Johnstone, a leading authority on the church world-wide says, "The growth of Catholics has been slower than that of the world's population, so their percentage of the world's population is steadily falling" (1993:65). It is estimated that the Catholic Church in Latin America is losing 8,000 people per day (Sywulka 1996:94). In fact, out of the five major religions of the world, only Catholicism is declining (Johnstone 1993:159). Rangal notes, "Catholicism finds itself pushed into a marginal existence, and faith, once a living force, has largely given way to meaningless, formalistic assent" (1987:144).

Perhaps the Catholic Church is taking a beating at this point in time, but there are indications that it is beginning to fight back. Stephen R. Sywulka recently reviewed the Roman Pontiff's 1996 tour of Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Venezuela. This article in Christianity Today describes a pope who is trying his best to reduce defections from the Catholic Church (1996:94).

One of the ways the Catholic Church is attempting to reduce losses is by speaking out against the "sects" and returning to its traditional roots. Sywulka notes, ". . . he [the pope] complained that Indians and peasants, in particular, are being led astray by 'sects and religious groups,' who sow confusion and uncertainty among Catholics" (1996:94). These comments have caused an uproar among Protestant leaders because they were being included among the "sects." On that tour the Pope desperately cried out for all those who have strayed from the mother Catholic Church to return to the fold. He said,

All those who have at some time prayed to the Most Holy Virgin, even though they may have strayed from the Catholic church, conserve in their hearts an ember of faith which can be revived . . . the Virgin awaits them with maternal arms wide open (quoted in Sywulka 1996:94).

Evangelicalism

In comparison with Catholicism and Animism, Evangelicalism is a newcomer on the block. The first Protestant missionaries arrived in Latin America in the mid 19th century, thus giving Catholicism a 400 year advantage. Yet, that advantage has been slowly eroding, due to changes in politics, religious freedom, and above all, a hunger in the hearts of the people for a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Amazing Growth

Patrick Johnstone, in his invaluable work Operation World, describes Latin America as "one of the great evangelical successes of the 20th century" (1993:65). He notes that evangelicals have grown from between 200-300,000 in 1900 to forty-six million in 1990, which means that now more than eleven percent of Latin America is evangelical (1993:65).

The lead article in the June 1996 edition of the magazine Charisma captures this incredible growth. It is entitled, "Latin America's Sweeping Revival." The subheading of this article declares, "Researchers say 400 people are converted to Christianity in Latin America every hour" (Miller 1996:32). Pablo Deiros and Carlos Mraida do an excellent job of documenting the amazing growth that is taking place in Latin America--noting that a large portion of the growth is coming from the Pentecostals (1994:59-64). Latin America is in the midst of great evangelical growth.

Infusion of Biblical Values

Although it might be questioned whether or not Pentecostalism is transforming the moral fabric of society through the infusion of Biblical values (Deiros and Mraida 1994:70-71), I do believe that positive changes are taking place as a result of the growth in the Evangelical Church. Biblical values are beginning to take root in popular Latin American culture. Evangelicalism, deeply rooted in 7th century Pietism, teaches that the Christian faith must go deeper than theology--it must produce personal holiness.

The Family

Biblical preaching about the sanctity of marriage, the relationship between husband and wife, and the place of the children in the home is having a profound impact on Latin American culture. It is my experience that messages on the family are the most needful and helpful in Latin America today.

The Morality of the Society

Evangelicalism has always taught that one's inward relationship with God must be lived out in his outward relationship with others. It is in the area of the political, social arena in Latin America that the Evangelical faith is having its greatest impact. For example, bribery is so common in Latin America that it is practically accepted as part of the society. In many parts of Latin America, in order to get and keep a job, one has to be willing to bribe. Yet, the Biblical testimony is abundantly clear concerning the sin of bribery (Pro. 17:23, Amos 5:12, 1 Sa. 8:3, Ps. 26:10, Isa. 33:15, Job 15:34). It is only as the church of Jesus Christ takes a stand against this corruption that there will be a change of worldview and thus a change of values in the greater society.

Cultural Factors that Affect Cell Ministry

There are a number of Latin cultural factors that have a direct affect on cell ministry. Some of these cultural factors are negative, but for the most part they contribute to the success of cell-based ministry in Latin culture.

People Orientation

For the most part, the priority given to people in the Latin culture is a very positive factor. However, this cultural trait can also have negative tendencies in cell group ministry.

Positive Factors

Small group ministry is face-to-face ministry. It primarily involves interaction with people rather than engagement in personal meditation or study. For this reason, the strong emphasis on relationships in Latin culture adds strength to the cell concept. Lingenfelter and Mayers make this clear from a small group standpoint,

> People who have interaction as a goal need the acceptance and stimulus of their group associates. They must spend a significant amount of time and energy fulfilling the obligations of group membership and maintaining personal ties. They work hard to promote group interests and interaction, often sacrificing their own personal goals for the interests of others. Failure to accomplish a task is less critical to them than a gain in the quality of personal relationships (1986:84).

Unlike the North American who might need to be prodded to join a small group, the Latin person does not need to be convinced of its importance.

It is wise for the Latin American pastor or leader to promote the virtues of the small group as a key means of establishing relationships with other people. It does not take long for Latin people to realize that meeting regularly in a small group is something that comes naturally, due to their cultural norms.

Because of the priority placed upon people, it is oftentimes very attractive for groups to meet together in social settings outside the actual cell meeting.[10] This not only promotes fellowship among the members but is also a great way to invite non-Christians. Latins like to be around a lot of people, and on these occasions, "the more the merrier."

Negative Factors

The Latin's emphasis on people is the greatest strength of cell ministry, but at the same time, this cultural priority can also be a potential danger. I have found that there are at least two potential negative factors.

Big Groups Versus Small Groups

We have noted that a Latin likes to encircle himself with lots of friends. This makes him feel significant. In the cell group, this can be a problem. A leader might feel the need to have a large cell (more than fifteen) because he feels more significant. However, the cell group is specifically designed to be small enough in order to promote intimate, open sharing and must be kept below fifteen through the process of constant reproduction.[11]

Ingrown Groups Versus Outreach Groups

In a cell group, the members often become comfortable with each other and cling tightly to their newly formed relationships. For this reason, they are not willing to establish a new group in order to win more people for the Kingdom of God There is no

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10 Some of the groups would spend a weekend at a hacienda in the country; other groups would plan a sports day or other special outings.

11 I remember one Latin pastor in another province of Ecuador who spoke against small groups because they were too small. He insisted that his church only liked large small groups. Perhaps it was because of the above mentioned reasons.

easy answer to this dilemma. It is helpful to remember that members who participate in the daughter cell group can still contact former friends and acquaintances. In fact, both the mother and the daughter cell might want to reunite on occasion to celebrate their common links.

Priority of Family

We have seen the primary role that the family plays in Latin America. We have noted that it is the most important social unit. As indicated earlier, Mayers points out that the Latin extended family includes nuclear family, relatives, ritual relatives, neighbors, and maids (1976:19). These natural webs of relationships in the Latin context raise exciting possibilities for outreach. Ralph Neighbour writes about the importance of web relationships in cell ministry. He uses the Greek New Testament word *oikos* as his starting point,

> The word [*oikos*] is found repeatedly in the New Testament, and is usually translated "household." However, it doesn't just refer to family members. Everyone of us have a "primary group" of friends who relate directly to us through family, work, recreation, hobbies, and neighbors. . . . Newcomers feel very much "outside" when they visit your group for the first time, unless they have established an *oikos* connection with one of them. If they are not "kinned" by the members, they will not stay very long or try very hard to be included before they return to their old friends (1992:61).

The webs of relationship embodied in the extended family offer exciting opportunities for cell-based ministry in Latin America. Cell leadership in Latin America would be wise to exploit this natural link. This could be done in the initial cell pre-training, the ongoing training, and from the pulpit.

As we have seen in Chapter 2, the family imagery of the church is perhaps most fully experienced through the cell group ministry. The cell is an attractive drawing card for Latin Americans who are accustomed to viewing the church through lenses of the

impersonal cathedral. Because cell groups meet in the home, they provide a more natural link to the extended family members.

Openness to the Gospel

Latin America is ripe for the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Catholic faith has not satisfied the deep longings of the people. It is my conviction that the cell church is in a unique position to not only to reap the Latin harvest, but also to conserve it through the discipleship process that takes place within the cell group. In fact, there is abundant proof that this harvest is taking place already in the cell church in Latin America.

Conclusion

While portraying the bright sides of the Latin American culture (e.g., people orientation, family), I have also tried to speak truthfully about some of its darker sides (e.g., machismo, conquest). The Catholic conquest and ultimate subjugation of the people in the 16th century which displayed both terror and zeal was motivated as much by a quest for gold as for souls. Those characteristics that made up the Spanish conqueror so long ago remain present in the Latin American today.

Although Catholic in name, we have discovered that syncretism has played a dominant role in the Latin worldview, and that the Spanish religious system has yet to touch the deeper moral issues of Latin American life. The good news is that the evangelical faith is making powerful inroads into Latin American culture today.

One vital methodology in this mighty harvest is cell-based ministry. This type of ministry seems uniquely positioned to work effectively in Latin culture. The family orientation of Latin Americans and their commitment to personal relationships add life

and vigor to small group ministry. The web of family relationships holds special potential for outreach in Latin America.

CHAPTER 5

ISSUES OF LEADERSHIP AND CELL-BASED MINISTRY

One of the key factors behind successful cell-based ministry is the issue of leadership. In this chapter I will limit myself to those issues that distinguish leadership in the Latin American context. Again, this study will seek to understand Latin American leadership as compared to other cultural styles of leadership, mainly North American.

Distinctiveness of Latin American Leadership

Robert T. Moran and Philip R. Harris have concluded that, "Leadership is learned and is based on assumptions about one's place in the world" (1982:62). Although by no means exhaustive, the following topics portray various distinguishing characteristics of Latin American leadership.

Authoritarianism

Authoritarian leadership among Latins is quite common. Usually, there is a clear distinction between leader and follower. In fact, this characteristic has been passed down from the days of the Spanish conquistadors.

Emphasis on Control and Power

There seems to be built into the Spanish psyche a desire to control, to be in charge. Dealy feels that it is this goal that drives the Latin American (1992:62). Dealy says, "Only a vigorous public power stance fully satiates the Latin's desire for acclaim,

just as the economic category 'millionaire' uniquely approaches gratification of the capitalist's sense of total success" (1992:62-63). He goes on to say, "In North American eyes good government would make the Post Office turn a profit; in Latin American eyes a good firm would, like a strong political movement, establish a monopoly of power over every competitor" (1992:107). Geyer confirms this,

> In Latin American politics, it has been not the man who seeks to unite and to compromise and to heal wounds who was admired but rather the man who wielded total power--that classic Spanish type, the caudillo or strongman. Power could not be shared . . . (1970:96).

Caudillo Style Leadership

The *caudillo* in Latin America's history refers to the self-proclaimed military officer who was supported by a nonprofessional army (Silvert 1977:25). However, in a general sense, *caudillismo* has popularly come to refer to any highly personalistic regime which is under the control of a charismatic leader (Silvert 1977:25). Gereats describes this term with the words, "daring," "aggressive," and "strong" (1970:47).

The spirit of the conquistador is seen in the Latin American *caudillo*. It is this spirit that guides much of the leadership in Latin America. There is a tendency to exercise control and domination instead of leading by example and servanthood. Gareats says, "Most Latin American leaders, whether in the political sphere or in ordinary life, give the appearance of being strong men" (1970:48).[1]

For the most part, Christian leadership follows the same pattern of authoritarianism in Latin America. It is not uncommon to find strong, *caudillo* type leaders in pastoral positions. C. Peter Wagner says, "Speaking of Latin America, a culturally-relevant leadership pattern which has evolved there is that of the *caudillo* . . .

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[1] This is especially true in cell-based ministry. The issue of authority, both from the pastoral leadership perspective as well as how it relates to cell leadership, seems to come up on a repeated basis.

in a Christian way, their leadership system follows the pattern of the secular *caudillo*" (1984:90-91). Mike Berg and Paul Pretiz have observed the same phenomena in the grass roots churches that they have analyzed throughout Latin America. They conclude, ". . . the authoritarianism of the GR [grass roots] pastor is comfortable for people accustomed to their country's power-wielding President, or even perhaps dictatorships" (1996:144).

However, the rigid, controlling, and negative element of the secular *caudillo* pattern has been largely transformed by Christian virtues. Wagner calls it a transformed "servant" pattern (1984:91) and others call it "charismatic *caudillismo*" (Deiros quoted in Berg and Pretiz 1996:215).

Another way of describing the pastoral role in Latin America is that of the "godfather" or the benevolent patron (Berg and Pretiz 1996:215). In the days when haciendas were much more common, the owner-boss was the ultimate authority. At the same time, he protected his workers, defended them in legal problems, and stood as their "godfather" at family occasions. For the most part, Latin American pastors are looked up to, respected, and obeyed. Berg and Pretiz write, "In the lower-socio-economic levels, people trust the pastor who may even hold all church properties in his name. They are 'used to authority,' said a Peruvian pastor" (1996:215). Like almost everything, there is a negative side to an absolutist, controlling pastoral image and caution is needed on the side of both laity and clergy.

Gap between Leader and Follower

In 1980 Geert Hofstede completed a significant study on cross-cultural leadership patterns. One of the research issues was to discern distance levels between leaders and followers-which he calls power distance (Table 4). High power distance refers to a large

gap between the leader and follower (generally true in Latin America); whereas low power distance suggests close relationship (nearness) between leader and follower (generally true of the United States). The research done by Hofstede in this area suggests that the level of power distance is more culturally determined than anything else. Different societies place different values on such areas as prestige, wealth, and power (1980:92).

TABLE 4

POWER DISTANCE VALUES

(Adapted from Hofstede 1980:119)

Countries with High Power Distance (e.g., Mexico, Perú, Venezuela, Colombia)	Countries With Low Power Distance (e.g., U.S., Netherlands, Sweden)
Managers show less consideration	Managers show more consideration
Employees fear to disagree with their boss	Employees less afraid of disagreeing with their boss
Managers see themselves as benevolent decision-makers	Managers see themselves as practical and systematic; they admit a need for support
Subordinates favor a manager's decision-making style to be more autocratic-paternalistic	Subordinates favor a manager's decision making style to be more consultative, democratic, and give and take
Close supervision positively evaluated by Subordinates	Close supervision negatively evaluated by subordinates
Higher and lower educated employees show similar values about authority	Higher educated employees hold much less authoritarian values than lower-educated ones
Students place high value on conformity	Students place high value on independence

Hofstede discovered that places like Mexico and Venezuela have double the power distance than places like the U.S. or most European countries (1980:104).[2] Table

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2 For example, the Power Distance scores for Mexico were 81, Venezuela 81, Colombia, 67, and Perú, 64; whereas the USA had a power distance level of 40, Great Britian, 35, Denmark, 18.

4 shows some of the authoritarian--democratic values between countries with a high power distance level versus those with a lower level.[3]

Assigned Status

Latins respond to leadership in a much different way than North Americans do. In Latin America, there is greater respect for position and status than competency. The Latins propensity toward assigned status can be seen in at least four ways: first, personal identity is determined by formal credentials of birth and rank; second, the amount of respect one receives is permanently fixed; attention focuses on those with high social status in spite of any personal failings they have; third, the individual is expected to play his or her role and to sacrifice to attain higher rank; and fourth, people associate only with their social equals (Lingenfelter and Mayers 1986).

Climbing the Ladder

Perhaps the ladder concept can shed light on the Latin American's concept of social status. In North America, people aspire to climb the ladder of success. Employees are encouraged to dream and rise rapidly in the company. North Americans often say that if anyone, regardless of race or social status, will simply be dedicated and hard working, there are unlimited possibilities. The upward ladder is there for any worker to become the president of the company, or even president of the United States. However, in Latin America, one's assigned status often prevents such upward mobility from occurring.

The concept of social status in Latin American means that each person is placed on a particular rung of the ladder in relationship to everyone else (Mayers 1976:23).

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3 Hofstede lists eighteen characteristics. Here I have only listed those values that relate most significantly to my present study on leadership.

There is no "climbing the ladder" because each person receives an assigned social status at birth. Geyer states, perhaps judgmentally, ". . . Latin America has far fewer racial attitudes; but it does suffer from a closed and inviolate class system" (1970:7).[4]

Spanish Supremacy

In most Latin American countries, there is a tiny minority of pure Spanish descent who are often referred to as the "white" race. These "whites" wield tremendous leadership power in Latin American countries. They are the ones who steer the major centers of power in Latin America, politically, economically, and socially (Ecuador in Pictures 1987:38).

This disparity did not develop overnight. The process began years ago when the Spanish conquered the Indian population. For almost four hundred years the strong, soldierly Spaniards lived alongside their conquered Indian slaves. An inevitable attitude of superiority began to develop (Weil 1973:101-102). D. Schodt writes, "The grafting of Spanish rule onto the conquered Inca society established a colonial system with a large Indian underclass and a small Hispanic elite . . ." (1987: 17). The idea that a person's "pure white" blood line positions him or her for power is still widespread throughout Latin America. Many of these creoles or pure-bloods are vocal about their pure blood and resulting privileged status (Urbanski 1978:170). Even though binding ties have been severed with Spain, the spirit of elitism still remains strong through the descendants.

Conversely, though the Indians were not exterminated, they were clearly given their assigned role in society. Dealy states,

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4 This has been confirmed in my own personal experience. We ministered in a middle to upper class church in Quito, Ecuador. We soon discovered that the higher class people of the church struggled with accepting and submitting to the national pastors who came from a lower class. In fact, the only pastor that the upper class of the church has ever accepted was an educated Argentine who came from the upper class.

> . . . while our forefathers [North Americans] alternately ignored the Indian, stole his land, or drove him out, Spanish settlers inducted them into a social hierarchy: They became a personal work force to till the soil and were brought into homes as mistresses and table servants (1992:62).

Because the Indian population became the workforce for the Spaniards, they were indispensable to the functioning of the society. This social hierarchy remains very important in Latin America today. Rangal calls this social structuring the cancer of Latin American society today (1987:16).

The Underclass

I use this terminology simply to describe those under the ruling white class. Although these could be divided into middle and lower classes, those distinctions do not always hold true in Latin America.

Underneath the umbrella of this small elite upper class is a large underclass consisting of Mestizos, pure Indians, and Negroes. Mestizo status falls somewhere between the White/Spanish higher class and the Indian lower class. Although they are below the white race, they are mixing with it (Weil 1973:66). The Mestizo race emerged as more and more children were born to the Indian woman and the Spanish conquistador. It is probably more accurate to say that most of the offspring were less the result of formal marriage as the result of rape and concubinage (Elliott 1984:201).

The pure Indians are at the bottom of the rung when it comes to authority and power. Governments have tended to disregard their distinct differences and customs and lump them together as a "depressed group" (Weil 1973:67). This attitude of powerlessness can clearly be seen in their behavior towards whites. Indians, while talking with whites remove their hats, lower their heads and speak in soft tones. They assume a passive, submissive role which has been instilled in them from childhood.

However, in their own communities, the whites and Mestizos are the butt of their jokes (Weil 1973:67).

Group Orientation

In Latin America there is a definite "we" consciousness. Group consensus is favored over a more individualistic style of decision-making. It is not surprising that when Hofstede researched this particular trait, he found that the Latin American countries were among the least individualistic while the United States rated the highest on individualism.[5] Table 5 clarify these distinctions.

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[5] Here are some of the scores most relevant to who I am as an American and a missionary to Latin America: US-91; Great Britain-89; Canada-80; Italy-76 versus Venezuela-12 (the lowest); Colombia-13; Perú-16; Mexico-30.

TABLE 5

INDIVIDUALISM WITHIN CULTURES

(Adapted from Hofstede 1980:230-231)

HIGH INDIVIDUALISM *(e.g., US, Great Britain, Canada, Australia)*	LOW INDIVIDUALISM *(e.g., Venezuela, Perú, Colombia, Mexico)*
Need to make specific friendships	Social relationships predetermined in terms of "in groups"
Individual initiative is socially encouraged	Individual initiative is socially frowned upon; fatalism
Managers endorse "modern" points of view on stimulating employee initiative and group activity	Managers endorse "traditional" points of view, not supporting employee initiative and group activity
Emotional independence from company	Emotional dependence from company
Managers aspire to leadership and variety	Managers aspire to conformity and orderliness
Students consider it socially acceptable to claim pursuing their own ends without minding others	Students consider it less socially acceptable to claim pursuing their own ends without minding others

Resistance to Change

Those in the United States have learned to live with change while in Latin America there is the tendency to avoid it. Hofstede investigated how cultures react to change from a leadership perspective. He has labeled this dynamic "uncertainty-avoidance" (1980:164). Latin American countries scored very high in the uncertainty/avoidance continuum, while the industrialized nations scored very low.[6] Table 6 gives a summary of the values in high uncertainty/avoidance countries versus the low ones:

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6 Some scores: US-46; Great Britain-35; Sweden-29; Australia-51; In contrast to Perú-87; Colombia-80; Venezuela-76. At the same time, this study was not so easy to label because of countries like Belgium-94; Greece-112; Japan-92.

TABLE 6

UNCERTAINTY/AVOIDANCE CULTURAL VALUES

(Adapted from Hofstede 1980:176-175)

HIGH UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE COUNTIRES (e.g., Perú, Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela	LOW UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE COUNTRIES (e.g., US, Sweden, Denmark, India)
Pessimism about people's amount of initiative, ambition, and leadership skills	Optimism about people's amount of initiative, ambition, and leadership skills
Initiative of subordinates should be kept under control	Delegation to subordinates can be complete
Competition between employees is emotionally disapproved of	Competition between employees can be fair and right
Conflict in organization is undesirable	Conflict in organization is natural
Preference for clear requirements and Instructions	Preference for broad guidelines
Less risk taking; fear of failure	More risk taking; hope of success
Lower ambition for individual Advancement	Higher ambition for individual advancement
Managers should be selected on the basis of seniority	Managers should not be selected on the basis of seniority
Loyalty to employer is seen as a virtue	Loyalty to employer is not seen as a virtue
More emotional resistance to change	Less emotional resistance to change
More worry about the future	Less worry about the future

TABLE 7

BUSINESS PATTERNS IN THE AMERICAS

(Adapted from Moran and Harris 1982:299)

ASPECTS OF NORTH AMERICAN CULTURE	ALTERNATIVE ASPECTS OF LATIN CULTURE	EXAMPLES OF BUSINESS FUNCTIONS AFFECTED
The individual can influence the future (where there is a will there is a way)	Life follows a preordained course and human action is determined by the will of God	Planning, scheduling
An individual should be realistic in his aspirations	Ideals are to be pursued regardless of what is reasonable	Goal setting
We must work hard to accomplish our objectives (Puritan ethic)	Hard work is not the only prerequisite for success; wisdom, luck, and time are also required	Motivation and bargaining
Commitments should be honored (people will do what they say they will do)	A commitment may be superseded by a conflicting request, or an agreement may only signify intention, and have little or no relationship to the capacity of performance	Negotiating and bargaining
One should effectively use his time (time is money which can be saved or wasted)	Schedules are important but only in relation to other priorities [people and family are often the priorities]	Long- and short-range planning
A primary obligation of an employee is to the organization	The individual employee has a primary obligation to his family and friends	Loyalty, commitment, and motivation
The employer or employee can terminate their relationship	Employment is for a lifetime	Motivation and commitment to the company
The best qualified persons should be given the position available	Family considerations, friendship, and other considerations partially determine employment practices	Employment promotions; recruiting; selection; reward
A person can be removed if he does not perform well	The removal of a person from a position involves a great loss of prestige and may only rarely be done	Promotion
All levels of management are open to qualified individuals (an office boy can rise to become company president)	Education or family ties are the primary vehicles for mobility	Employment practices and promotions
Competition stimulates high performance	Competition leads to imbalances and to disharmony	Promotion
Change is considered an improvement	Tradition is revered and the power of the ruling group is founded on the continuation of a stable structure	Planning
Persons and systems are to be evaluated	Persons are evaluated but in such a way that individuals not highly evaluated will not be embarrassed or caused to "lose face"	Rewards Promotion

Additional Latin Leadership Patterns

Robert T. Moran and Philip R. Harris, two experts in the field of international management, offer an excellent synthesis of the differences between North American business patterns versus Latin American business patterns (1982:298). Table 7 represents some of the cultural patterns presented in their analysis. These comparisons further add to and confirm what has been said thus far about Latin authority patterns, change dynamics, group consciousness, and the priority of people and family over work and prosperity.

<u>Latin Leadership Factors that Affect Cell Ministry</u>

There are various leadership patterns in Latin America that apply to cell ministry. A few of these major factors are listed below.

Authoritarianism

From my perspective, successful cell ministry takes place when all are allowed to express themselves freely, when the gifts of the Spirit are developed in each person, and when individual needs are met. The cell group itself is specifically designed to bring out total participation. We have noted that Latins tend to be authoritarian leaders. There is a clear distinction between leader and follower.

Because of this characteristic, there is a tendency among Latin cell leadership to exercise control over a small group gathering. Instead of stimulating others to talk and participate, the Latin cell leader often dominates the entire meeting. It is a very subtle cultural tendency that is not easily broken.[7] It seems that the only way to effectively deal

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7 More than any other area, I have had to repeatedly deal with this problem. As director of the cell ministry in Ecuador I would rotate from cell to cell on a weekly basis. I discovered that it was quite difficult for a cell leader to guide his or her cell into dynamic, participatory communication.

with this problem is constant teaching and modeling that stresses the importance of participation in the cell group.

The cell group is designed so that people can share what is really happening in their lives--good and bad. Yet, in order to move from sharing about more superficial, safer topics, it requires that the cell leader initiate and model a transparent openness about his own weaknesses and trials. Because of the deeply rooted "macho facade" inherent in Latin males, such vulnerability is not always easy. There is the tendency to want to be "in control." In order to overcome such reticence, much teaching and modeling may be required in the Latin context.

Assigned Status

We have noted that in Latin America, a person's ascribed status affects how he or she acts, thinks, and responds. When the status level is compatible, there is usually exuberant, expressive conversation and communication, but when it is not, the flow of group interaction is negatively affected. It is important that a cell leader or assistant be placed over a group that is basically made up of members from his or her social grouping.

These status considerations must also be taken into account in the birth of a new group. It would be a fatal mistake to force a group to give birth against natural cultural lines. Rather, the new cell groups should be formed according to natural group/class affinities. When determining which members will go with the new group and which ones will stay, it is important to discover the natural "clicks" within the group (e.g., status, friendship). Perhaps, the reflection of a district pastor in Cho's church is helpful.

> As much as possible, we divide groups based on natural networks. For example, if the assistant in that group brought two other cell members to the Lord, then that individual will split off with those members to start a new group (Hurtson 1994:93).

Bob Logan's advice is very helpful for a Latin American context,

> A group ripped asunder without regard for the naturally occurring segments or affinity clusters within the group will make a big mess. If you split a group by arbitrarily counting off, or in this culture, even by using geographical boundaries or some means other than affinity clusters, you may end up with many injured group members (1989:138).

The wise cell leader will be continually analyzing those natural friendship links. When the time comes to give birth, the leader's discernment will prove to be very helpful.

Resistance to Change

One of the important dynamics of cell ministry is the constant change which occurs as cells multiply. This aspect may be difficult for the Latin leader who tends to resist change. It is important in the training and preparation of these leaders that they understand the necessity of this type of change in order to maintain the life of the group and to continue reaching out to the unbeliever. The leaders of the newly formed daughter cells often require additional time and training in order to successfully make the transition.

Group Consciousness

Latin leadership tends to be more group oriented than individual oriented. Studies show that Latin culture is one of the least individualistic cultures in the world (Hofstede 1980:230-231). For this reason, it seems that the team approach to cell leadership works best in Latin America.

Conclusion

Careful attention must be given to areas such as authoritarianism, assigned status, resistance to change, and group orientation in the Latin American cell-based church. Too often there is a wholesale application of North American principles to Latin culture. To assure maximum effectiveness in the cell ministry, an attempt must be made to model

Biblical principles of leadership (not necessarily North American) in a culturally relevant

manner.

CHAPTER 6

DESCRIPTION OF THE CASE STUDY CHURCHES

This chapter presents a description and discussion of five Latin American churches which were chosen for their cell-based ministry (Appendix B discusses selection of these case study churches and methodology employed). I will also be using the abbreviations listed in Table 8 throughout the following chapters.

TABLE 8

LATIN AMERICAN CASE STUDY CHURCHES

Abbreviation	Name of Church	Country	Head Pastor
MCI	La Misión Carismática Internacional	Bogotá, Colombia	César Castellanos
AGV	El Agua Viva	Lima, Perú	Juan Capuro
MCE	La Misión Cristiana Elim	San Salvador, El Salvador	Jorge Galindo
CCG	El Centro Cristiano de Guayaquil	Guayaquil, Ecuador	Jerry Smith
AMV	El Amor Viviente	Tegucigalpa, Honduras	René Peñalba

La Misión Carismática Internacional

Located in Bogota, Colombia, *La Misión Carismática Internacional* (MCI) is a dynamic, indigenous church which came into being apart from the help of any denomination or missionary agency. It is one of Latin America's grass roots churches.

Context

To understand this church better, it is important to understand something about Colombia. Colombia's history has been characterized by periods of widespread, violent conflict. The War of a Thousand Days (1899-1902) cost an estimated 100,000 lives, and during the 1940s and 1950s up to 300,000 people perished during the period called "*La Violencia*." In July 1957, the National Front (a compromise between the Conservative and Liberal government) ended "*La Violencia*." Since that time, subsequent governments have included opposition parties.

Administrations in Colombia are forced to contend with both guerrillas and narcotic traffickers who freely operated within the country. Patrick Johnstone writes,

> Colombia has a reputation for being possibly one of the most violent countries in the world. Leftist guerrilla movements and the drug-trafficking "barons" dominate many areas of the country. Corruption, blackmail, kidnapping, assassination and revenge murders have brutalized society (1993:174).

The 1996 State Department report states,

> Based on Colombian Government statistics, Colombia's per capita murder rate of 77.5 murders per 100,000 inhabitants is more than eight times higher than that of the United States. While narcotics and guerrilla related violence account for part of this, common criminals are responsible for an estimated 75 percent of the reported murders ("Colombia" 1996).

With such continual upheaval confronting the inhabitants of Colombia, there seems to be a new spiritual openness among the people.

Ninety-five percent of the country is Roman Catholic, whereas Evangelicals comprise only 3.1 percent (Protestant 3.8%). However, Johnstone notes that seventy percent of the Roman Catholics never attend mass and that the Evangelical presence is growing (1993:174).

History of the Church (MCI)

In 1983, after struggling as a pastor for nine years and at the point of giving up, the Lord gave Pastor César Castellanos a vision that changed his life. The Lord spoke to him that the number of his converts would be more than the stars of the sky and the sand by the seashore. Within months of that vision, his new church, the *Misión Carismática Internacional,* had grown to over 200 people.
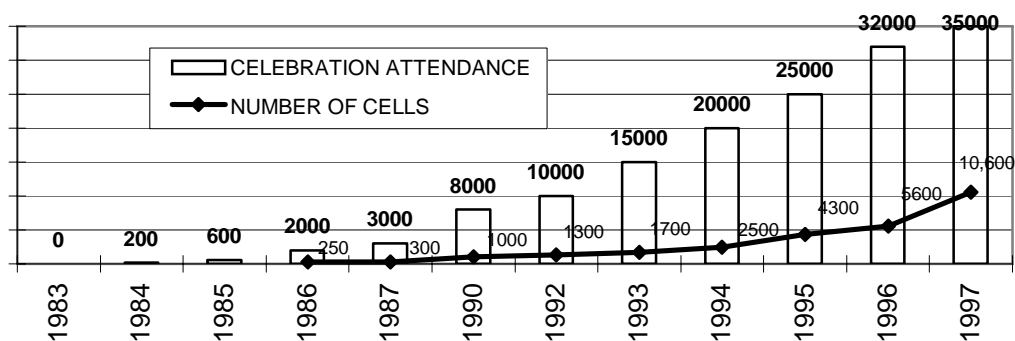
FIGURE 1

MCI: CELEBRATION ATTENDANCE AND NUMBER OF CELLS

Growth of the Church (MCI)

Pastor Castellanos has led this church from eight members in his home thirteen years ago to the present 35,000 (Guell 1996:42). The yearly statistical breakdown of celebration attendance and number of cell groups was very difficult to obtain.[1] I

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1 MCI does not keep clear, readily available statistical information. Even the reporter/writer of the church, David Javier Torres, could not give me exact statistics, even though he searched the records on my behalf.

basically had to do my own calculation based on a multitude of interviews.[2]   After arriving at the following figures, I then checked them with various long standing leaders at MCI to determine their accuracy. Figure 1 depicts the historical growth at MCI and includes the eleven satellites, while Table 9 includes only the statistics from the mother church. These statistics are accurate as of March 1997.

TABLE 9

MCI: STATISTICS AT THE MOTHER CHURCH

DAILY MORNING PRAYER (5:00-9:00 a.m.)	500
SEVEN MINISTERIAL DEPARTMENT SERVICES THROUGHOUT THE WEEK	300 to 3,000 (*in each service*)
FRIDAY ALL NIGHT PRAYER MEETING	400
MONTHLY NUMBER BAPTIZED	160
SATURDAY NIGHT YOUTH	1st service: 5,000 2nd service: 3,000 TOTAL: 8,000
SUNDAY AM WORSHIP	1st service: 4,000 2nd service: 4,000 3rd service: 4,000 4th service: 3,500 5th service: 1,500 TOTAL: 17,000
CHILDREN ON SUNDAY AM	3,000[3]

It is very difficult to discern what proportion of the youth on Saturday night attend a Sunday service at MCI. Since the expectation is for all youth to attend a Sunday worship service, I have chosen only to include 4,000 of the estimated 8,000 in the total

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2 I interviewed about ten leaders, including César and Claudia Castellanos, to come up with these statistics.

3 This is just a broad estimate--I only attended one of the children's gatherings.

worship attendance at the mother church.[4] Between 1991 and 1992 MCI established eighteen satellite churches (later reduced to eleven) around Bogota which are connected to the mother church.[5] These churches were established upon the cell groups that already existed in those outlying zones, thus maintaining the cell-based focus. After talking to several leaders and attending one of the satellite churches, I believe that it is correct to say that the church has approximately 11,000 attending the eleven satellite churches and 24,000 in the mother church for a total of 35,000. Table 10 is a breakdown of cell group distribution between the young people, the mother church, and the daughter churches.

TABLE 10

MCI: CELL GROUP STATISTICAL BREAKDOWN

Cells Among Young People[6]	3,600 cell groups
Homogeneous Cells In Mother Church	4,317 cell groups
Cells in Satellite Churches	2,683 cell groups
Total Cell Groups	10,600 cell groups

It was very hard to determine what percentage of the congregation attends a cell group during the week. I arrived at an estimate of some sixty-five percent.[7] Nor were there exact figures concerning the average cell attendance. From the statistics that I did

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4 I estimated that approximately 4,000 of the young people also attend a Sunday morning service, either in the mother church or in one of the satellite churches.

5 Pastor César Castellanos meets with the pastors of each of these satellite churches during a Monday morning staff meeting. Often, Pastor Castellanos will give them a theme for the week.

6 The cell groups among the young people have become a separate category because they organize their own statistics and program.

7 Pastor César Fajardo thought that it might be as high as eighty percent, but the majority gave me more conservative figures.

obtain, my visitation in the cell groups, and many interviews, I believe that there are approximately five to six people per group.

General Characteristics

These are various aspects of the church that are neither strong points or weak points. They simply help to describe the church better.

Church Government

As in many post-denominational churches, there is very little church government at MCI. Rather, Pastor Castellanos, the founder of the church is the unchallenged leader. Leadership under Pastor Castellanos is based on the concept of Christ and His disciples. Originally, Pastor Castellanos picked twelve disciples who were in charge of the various zones around Bogota.

Although, he still meets with his twelve senior pastors weekly, because of the growth of the church, the pastoral/leadership staff has now expanded to seventy. These leaders are in charge of the satellite churches, the various departments, leadership training, and administrative functions.[8] I also noticed that at least half of the leadership staff are women.[9]

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8 Interestingly enough, several of Pastor Castellano's family members also fill staff positions. I personally talked with two sisters, two brothers, and the mother of Pastor Castellanos before talking with him personally. The family of Claudia Castellanos (pastor's wife) also hold key positions in the church.

9 Claudia Castellanos has modeled a strong leadership influence as she formed part of the Colombia senate in 1989 and even gave me the impression that she was open to run for the presidency at a future time.

Diversity of Ministries

There are a number of ministries at this ever-expanding church. The radio and television ministries are expanding quickly.[10] Others include Spiritual Warfare, Men's ministry, Women's ministry, and Counseling.

Doctrine

The doctrine of the church is evangelical, with a strong Pentecostal persuasion. There are many messages about dreams and visions. The new Christians participate in a spiritual retreat called Encounter. It is at these retreats that the new ones are baptized in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues.[11] At the same time, I did not see the need to speak in tongues clearly spelled out in their literature (Varón 1995:62).

Continuous Ministry

Church never stops at MCI. From the early prayer meeting at 5:15 a.m. to late into the evening, services continue in the main sanctuary. There was rarely a moment when one of the pastors or lay people was not preaching the Word of God, worshipping, or praying.

Areas of Strength in the Church

There are several key elements of this church that stand out. I have chosen these characteristics based on numerous interviews with leaders and members, as well what I personally observed.

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10 The California based Christian television network, Trinity Broadcasting, is planning on helping the church obtain a television station in Bogota.

11 Pastor César Fajardo, the head youth pastor, told me that speaking in tongues is a requirement for leadership because only those speaking in tongues would truly be effective

Cell Groups

Cell groups form the very base of this church. Tessie Guell writes, ". . . the Castellanos attribute the church's growth to their emphasis on home cell-groups--a focus they believe the Lord gave them after they visited David Yonggi Cho's Yoido Full Gospel Church in South Korea . . ." (1996:44). It was in 1986 that Pastor Catellanos visited Korea; yet even before that time, the group ministry had begun.

However, this church has taken cell groups one step beyond most cell-based churches. They are not content with slow, natural multiplication of individual cell groups. Rather, each cell leader is constantly looking for potential cell leaders among the cell members. For this reason, new cell groups are constantly springing up.

Leadership Training

Every day of the week there are an average of fifteen cell leadership training courses taking place with some 3,000 potential leaders in preparation. From the pulpit, the pastor calls the people to join one of the leadership training courses, and then gives an altar call to confirm their decision.

Young People

Out of all the departments (ministries) of the church, the young people's is the most successful. The Saturday night services for the youth now reach some 8,000 in attendance due to the 3,600 youth cell groups. Pastor Fajardo has his twelve disciples; those disciples have twelve more and the process continues down to the new young people who enter each week. The key to the growth is that each disciple must also lead a cell group.

When I was present, some 500 young people went forward to receive Christ. Each name is written down and delivered to specifically chosen cell groups who rotate on

a monthly basis.[12] Another crowning event is the weekly spiritual retreat which is called an *Encuentro* (Encounter). This event lasts an entire weekend and serves to draw people to salvation as well as sanctification.[13] The vision of the young people is contagious. Their goal is to reach 100,000 young people by the year 2000.

Prayer

Every morning from 5:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m., there is prayer in the church. A different pastor or leader is in charge of each hourly segment. Some 300-500 people are present in the four sessions every morning. Every Friday night, the church has an all-night prayer meeting. On special occasions (as conditions in the country worsen due to drug trafficking and guerrilla warfare), the church dedicates one twenty-four hour, non-stop period to pray for the country.[14]

Worship

One of the members at MCI told me, "The worship in our church is explosive." I believe this is a good way to describe the worship at MCI. The first time I attended a Saturday night worship at MCI, I jotted down the following words,

> Here is the future of Colombia--young people touched by the gospel. Here is life! This is Your sovereign work! The young people dance in unison, in a single line using the same hand and feet motions. The entire congregation is led by two girls on the stage who model the motions. This is a clean, dynamic expression of God's love. The shouts of joy spread like wildfire across the auditorium. This is not just wild, charismatic individualism. There is order everywhere. Each jerk and hand motion is in unity. This is Colombian style. Only Latin Americans could express themselves so well with so little hesitation.

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12 Each one of the twelve disciples under Pastor Fajardo has developed cell groups under him or her. The follow-up cards are given to one of the twelve each month, so that follow-up is evenly distributed.

13 When I revisited MCI in March 1997 there were nine Encounters taking during one weekend with approximately 500 young people attending.

14 Days before I arrived in Colombia, the guerrillas had kidnapped seventy people. The church responded by praying for twenty-four hours straight over their own national radio station.

There is an entire department dedicated to this ministry. A full band, complete with precision dancing, livens the sanctuary.

Vision

Pastor Castellanos considers himself an apostle with an apostolic vision. He has been very successful in passing down his vision to his top leadership. Several of his key leaders believe that their vision and success comes from the visionary leadership of César Castellanos. Pastor Castellanos is known for his time spent in prayer and communion with the Holy Spirit. In those times, he receives his world-wide vision for the church.

He is also a firm believer in goal setting--both short and long term. When I first visited MCI in October 1996 there were 5,600 cell groups. The clearly stated cell group goal was 10,000 cell groups by December 31, 1996. At that time I wrote,

> . . . . the goals of the church were not adjusted to conform to reality. For example, the clearly stated goal of the church is to have 10,000 cell groups by the end of 1996. Two staff pastors told me they were sure that they were going to meet the goal even though it was only two months away. This would mean going from the present 5,600 cell groups to 10,000 cells in just two months. Practically speaking, this is humanly impossible (Comiskey 1996).

Yet, by January, 1997 the church had reached the goal of 10,000 cell groups! From now on I will be more careful to criticize the goals at MCI.

One of the church's future goals is to build their own coliseum that will minister each weekend to 100,000 people. In 1997, they hope to launch out on faith and rent a 20,000 seat coliseum every Sunday. Another goal is to construct their own university to train young people in theology, missions, and other disciplines.[15]

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15 The construction of the university is well under way. When the university is functioning, they even hope to offer doctorate degrees.

<u>Christian Community Agua Viva</u>

Christian Community *Agua Viva* (AGV) is located in the heart of downtown Miraflores, a suburb of Lima, Perú. It is a church that has great plans for the future.

Context

During the 1980s, rural terrorism by the *Sendero Luminoso* and the *Tupac Amaru* killed 26,000 people and inflicted ten billion dollars in damage to the country (Johnstone 1993:444). In 1992, President Fujimori suspended the constitution and took control of the country. His radical moves, along with the capture of the key leader of the Sendero Luminoso, has greatly reduced terrorism. Perú is once again prospering economically and the approval of Fujimori could be seen by his overwhelming presidential reelection in 1995.

Eighty-nine percent of the country is Roman Catholic, but they are only growing at a rate of 1.5 percent. Johnstone writes, "The Catholic church is in a crisis. Over 80% of its clergy are foreign. It is polarized between the traditionalists and those who espouse Liberation Theology" ("Perú" 1994). On the other hand, Evangelicals have been growing and are now a significant source of leadership. As of 1993, 5.7 percent of the population Evangelical with an annual growth rate of 7.7 percent (Johnstone 1993:445).

History of the Church

In 1980 as a university student and committed atheist, Juan Capuro was miraculously converted while reading the gospel of John. The Full Gospel Businessmen Association played an important role in Capuro's conversion and early Christian growth. Five years after his conversion, Capuro started AGV with twenty people. He continued working as general director of a computer company until 1987 when the church was able to fully support him financially.

Growth of the Church

AGV is a grass roots, independent Peruvian church with no official connections to the United States or any other outside body. Perhaps this has contributed to its effectiveness. Figure 2 explains the history of growth at AGV.
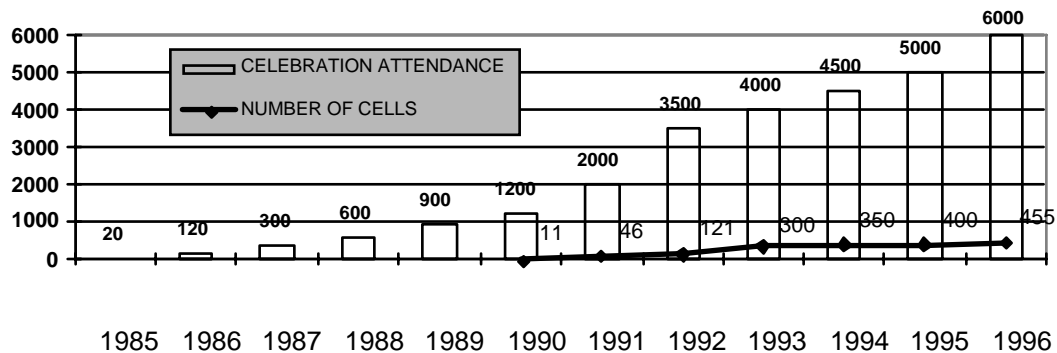

FIGURE 2

AGV: CELEBRATION ATTENDANCE AND NUMBER OF CELLS

Table 11 gives a breakdown of attendance at AGV. These statistics are accurate as of October, 1996.

TABLE 11

AGV: STATISTICS AT THE MOTHER CHURCH

THURSDAY GENERAL SERVICE	1,000
SUNDAY AM WORSHIP	1st service: 1,000 2nd service: 1,500 3rd service: 900 4th service: 1,500
ATTENDANCE AT SATELLITE CHURCHES	1,000
TOTAL	6,000
MONTHLY BAPTISM	50
CHURCH MEMBERSHIP	3,000[16]

The church can seat about 1,000 people, but there are often people standing. In order to be seated at AGV one must arrive early. It is normal to see huge lines forming outside and around the church building (a converted theater) waiting for the next service. Presently, the church is constructing a sanctuary that will seat 2,500 people. This piece of property is located on one of the main streets in Lima and is now the present site of AGV's administrative offices. Until the sanctuary is completed, AGV will continue to meet in the three rented theaters around the city.[17]

At the mother church there are about 5,000 people attending, yet another 1,000 in the two satellite churches in northern and southern Lima. These two satellite churches are intimately connected with the mother church. However, there are also between seven hundred and eight hundred more attending the five independent AGV churches that have their services in various provinces throughout Perú.

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16 This was a close estimate that I obtained from two of the key leaders

17 I only attended the theater in central Lima, where Capuro preaches each Sunday. From what I understand, this theater is the largest and the most well attended. The other two theaters serve the needs of northern and southern Lima.

General Characteristics

To better describe AGV, other key characteristics should be taken into account. There were at least three descriptive aspects that stood out.

Doctrine

The church is very conscious of the need for correct doctrine. Bible teaching through systematic classroom instruction is a high priority in this church. The doctrine is clearly Biblical with a Pentecostal slant. It appears that the early influence of Lince Alliance Church, and the general system of Bible training in Perú has had a strong impact on Pastor Capuro and the church.[18]

Church Government

Pastor Juan Capuro and his wife Alicia are the unchallenged leaders. Like many independent charismatic churches, the people submit to and obey them. There is no elected board. Pastor Capuro meets with five elders who formed part of the initial church. At times, before he is about to make an important decision, Pastor Capuro will meet with the elders and the zone pastors to talk about the future direction of the church.

Relationship with Other Churches

Although the church is an independent charismatic church, it is part of a larger fellowship of charismatic churches in the city. One of the training manuals says,

> Christian Community Agua Viva is a Peruvian congregation. It is not a mission, nor does it depend on outside finances to support it. It is a non-denominational church and forms part of the Union of Christian Communities of Perú (Capuro Libro III:21).

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18 The main AGV sanctuary is located very close to the Lince Alliance Church (Christian and Missionary Alliance) which has spawned more than thirty large congregations since the early 1970s. Lince Alliance is known for its intense Bible training through a program called Bible Academy. The material that Juan Capuro uses follows the same format as the Alliance.

Key Areas of Strength in the Church

Pastor Capuro told me that God had led the church to emphasis six major areas. They are: training, worship, cell groups, communication (radio, TV), prayer, and social action. From my observation and analysis, some seemed to be more prominent than others, namely cell groups, training, and worship.

Cell Groups

In 1997 Perú will celebrate one hundred years of Protestantism. The Evangelical Fraternity in Perú is planning special celebrations for this important event. Juan Capuro was asked to address the conference on the topic of reaching out through cell ministry. AGV's commitment to cell ministry can be seen by the huge forty foot by thirty foot sign that hangs down next to the platform saying, "Family Cell Communities: The Strategy that God has given us to evangelize Perú. Join one." Phone numbers are then given. It is well known throughout Perú that AGV is a cell-based church.

There is a certain healthiness about the cell ministry at AGV. More than sixty-five percent of those who attend AGV also attend a cell group.[19] Great emphasis is placed on cell leader preparation. Juan Capuro confessed to me that at times they have had to slow down the cell growth due to the lack of quality leadership.

Leadership Training

I use the term "leadership training" loosely here because the Bible training at AGV is for everyone. There is a clear four year plan of Bible training at AGV that could enable a brand new Christian to become a pastor or missionary. For most future leaders,

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19 These figures are my personal estimates that were derived from reviewing weekly cell reports, the results of a 1992 survey, and through conversing with various leaders at AGV.

the Bible training prepares them to become cell leaders. At any one time there are some 1,000 people studying at the four different levels.

Spiritual Vitality

There is a certain spiritual vitality that one notes immediately at AGV. The worship is dynamic with at least thirteen musicians on stage playing various instruments. All of them are immaculately dressed with matching clothes, and they sway in unity to the beat. The worship is truly Peruvian without any North American restrictions. The source of this vitality comes from their commitment to prayer and fasting. During the holidays, the entire church spends a day in fasting and prayer together.[20] I was told that 1,000 people gather for these events. Three days during the week, various women gather in the administrative building to pray and fast. I was also told that most cell groups have their own prayer chains.

La Misión Cristiana Elim

La Misión Cristiana Elim (MCE) is the most recognized cell church in Latin America. Hundreds of people each year flock to this church in San Salvador, El Salvador to learn about their powerful cell ministry. Several churches have followed the MCE model and now have large, dynamic cell churches.[21]

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20 In a normal calendar year, they use seven out of the ten holidays to fast and pray.

21 *La Cosecha* in Honduras (10,000 members), *El Centro Cristiano* in Guayquil (5,000 members), and *Fe Esperanza y Amor* in Mexico (10,000 members) have all structured their system after *La Misión Elim*. Bethany World Prayer Center in Lousiana also sends their pastors and workers to Elim to learn about cell ministry.

Context

El Salvador has the reputation of being the smallest and most densely populated mainland Spanish-speaking state in the Americas (Johnstone 1993:207). Of the six million inhabitants in El Salvador, less than six percent would be considered indigenous. Mestizos make up niney-two percent of the population with Whites (pure Spanish blood) comprising 1.7 percent of the population. The mother church is located in San Salvador, El Salvador, which has a population of approximately two million inhabitants.[22]

One cannot understand the present situation in El Salvador without being aware of the civil war that has only recently come to an end. Patrick Johnstone writes, "A long series of corrupt dictatorships and gross inequalities between the rich and poor provoked armed leftist insurrection in 1981. Over 75,000 were killed in fighting, cross-fire or through right-wing death squads" (1993:207). Although a peace accord was signed in 1992, many wounds and bitter feelings still exist among the people. The healing process will take a long time.

Evangelicals now comprise 19.8 percent of the population (Johnstone 1993:207). The bitter civil war has brought new openness and harvest (in 1960 Evangelicals comprised only 2.3 percent of the population). Growth among the Pentecostal groups has been especially dramatic. Although the official Roman Catholic figure for El Salvador is 88.4 percent of the population, Johnstone notes that in reality only 75.1 percent of the population would be considered Roman Catholic (1993:207).

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[22] The fact that the population is so densely populated has probably contributed to the rapid growth through cell groups.

History of the Church

Sergio Solórzano, born in Guatemala, came to El Salvador to start an Elim Church, a grass roots Evangelical denomination which started in Guatemala.[23] Solórzano started the church in 1977 in a rented house with nine persons. The church grew rapidly and by 1981 there were 3,000 people attending the mother church. By 1985, the church had planted some seventy daughter churches around the country, but the attendance at the mother church had stagnated.

Due to this stagnation, in 1985 Pastor Solórzano visited David Yonggi Cho's church in Korea. He came back convinced that cell group ministry would revolutionize MCE. He called together the pastors of the twenty-five daughter churches around San Salvador and asked them to close down their churches and join with him to form one huge cell church in San Salvador. By 1991, six years later, the cell group attendance had grown to 57,000 with a large proportion attending the Sunday celebration services.[24]

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23 Sergio no longer recognizes the mother church in Guatemala. Various sources at MCE claim that the mother church in Guatemala no longer believes in the Trinity and teaches other errant doctrines. Interestingly enough, Sergio's Elim Church in El Salvador now sends missionaries to Guatemala to plant a new brand of Elim Churches. It should also be noted that Sergio Solórzano is no longer head pastor at MCE. The official word is that he is experiencing "family problems." Jorge Galindo has replaced him as senior pastor.

24 The present facility is located less than one kilometer from the original 1977 meeting place, which is about ten miles from downtown San Salvador.
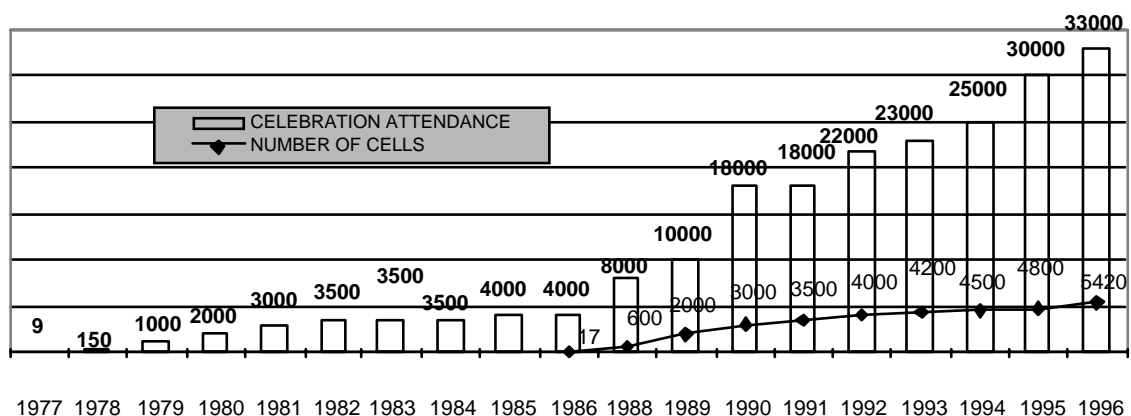
CELEBRATION ATTENDANCE
NUMBER OF CELLS

33000
30000
25000
23000
22000
18000
18000
10000
8000
3500 3500
3000 3500 3500 4000 4000 600 2000 3000 3500 4000 4200 4500 4800 5420
9 150 1000 2000 17 2000

1977 1978 1979 1980 1981 1982 1983 1984 1985 1986 1988 1989 1990 1991 1992 1993 1994 1995 1996

FIGURE 3

MCE: CELEBRATION ATTENDANCE AND NUMBER OF CELLS

Growth of the Church

Figure 3 describes the historical growth of MCE until October 1996. The mother church attendance statistics (Table 12) since 1986 are estimates.[25] In 1996 there were thirty MCE churches in El Salvador and some fifty-one MCE churches around the world.[26] These churches are under the covering of the mother church in San Salvador, but they operate independently.[27] As of October 1996 MCE was considering the possibility of either moving the church to a larger piece of land or adding on to the present sanctuary. In the present building MCE can hold 45,000 people in six

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25 MCE does not keep accurate Sunday celebration statistics. Therefore, although I asked several people, they simply did not know, nor did they have any objective data available. Therefore, the historical attendance figures for the celebration service after 1985 were subjectively obtained by taking the current ratio between celebration attendance and cell attendance and maintaining that ratio for each year.

26 Elim churches are found in many countries of Latin America, Canada, United States, Australia, and Sweden.

27 The mother church in San Salvador is by far the largest of the MCE Churches and continues to be the main model of church growth. I was told that the mother church grows at an annual rate of twenty-five percent.

consecutive services.[28]   At this time, they plan to continue to add new services. Each of

the eight districts attend a designated service on Sunday morning.

TABLE 12

MCE: STATISTICS AT THE MOTHER CHURCH

SUNDAY WORSHIP	1st service: 5,750 2nd service: 4,000 3rd service: 5,500 4th service: 5,000 5th service: 4,500 6th service: 5,250
ADULTS ON SUNDAY CELEBRATION	30,000
CHILDREN ON SUNDAY	3,000
TOTAL SUNDAY ATTENDANCE	33,000
MONTHLY BAPTISM	540
FULL TIME PASTORAL STAFF	67
TOTAL OF THE TWO WEEK NIGHT SERVICES[29]	11,000
WEEKLY ALL NIGHT PRAYER MEETING	3,000

Table 12 describes the statistical activity at the mother church as of October 1996.

Table 13 demonstrates the high level of attendance in the cell ministry at MCE.

Less than one-third of the total number of people who attend the cell groups also

attend the Sunday morning worship. Some of the reasons given were: distance of mother

church, Sunday jobs, and the fact that each service is broadcast on live radio.

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28 After diligently inquiring about the seating capacity at Elim and receiving a number of different answers, I arrived at the conclusion that there were 6,000 seats in the main sanctuary and 1,000 seats in adjacent building for young people. The young people of each district hold a separate worship service at the same time that the adults are meeting. I was present in all of the Sunday services with the exception of the first one. I took into consideration that the Sunday in which I was present was low time for celebration attendance. With this in mind, I added 3,000 adults to my estimate.

29 Each district attends one of these services at designated times during the week. Zone pastors and district pastors preach through the Word of God on a rotating basis. The preaching is a verse by verse expository analysis.

TABLE 13

MCE: CELL GROUP STATISTICAL BREAKDOWN

(October 1996)

NUMBER OF CELL GROUPS	5,420
ADULT CELL GROUP ATTENDANCE	60,200
CHILD CELL GROUP ATTENDANCE	56,300
TOTAL CELL GROUP ATTENDANCE	116,500
MONTHLY CONVERSIONS IN CELL GROUPS	2,000
WEEKLY TOTAL CELL OFFERING	$4,465.00

General Characteristics

MCE is a very unique church. Unlike any other church that I have experienced, MCE maintains a distinct church culture.

Church Culture

One senses a distinct flavor at MCE by the commonly used expressions of MCE members,[30] the fact that everyone preaches in the same loud style as Sergio Solórzano,[31] the distinctive dress of the members,[32] and the strict emphasis on order.[33]

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30 Words such as "hermano" (brother), "varón" (man), or "siervo" (servant) are frequently used. I was constantly called one of those names during my stay.

31 There is literal screaming and loud shouting from the pulpit. Interestingly enough, the young men and young women also shout while teaching the Sunday School class. Cell leaders teach their lessons in a similar manner.

32 Cell leaders wear ties to all of the services, as well as in the cell group; all of the workers (e.g., ushers, parking lot attendants) wear special uniforms; women wear long head coverings (shawls) that practically cover their entire face.

33 The women sit on one side of the auditorium while the men sit on the other. Women ushers greet only other women and the men and women do not talk to each other in the service. Ushers stand like soldiers throughout the church to make sure that nothing is done erratically. When time is given for the supernatural (e.g., prophesy, tongues), the ushers line up in a single file row to assure that no one is out of order. Even during the most upbeat worship songs, everyone remains seated. Again, the reason is to maintain order and to prevent emotions from running wild. I talked with a man named Giovani on the way

Literal Interpretation of Scripture

Like most evangelical churches, MCE believes the Bible is the inspired Word of God. The major difference with MCE is their interpretation of Scripture.[34] This can be seen in several areas. First, MCE takes the Bible literally when it says that women should remain silent (1 Co. 14:34). Women are not permitted to speak in the services.[35] Second, Paul required that the Corinthian women wear a head covering as a sign of their submission and protection (1 Co. 11:1-14). This advice is literally followed at MCE. Third, Paul's advice to Timothy about Christian women (1 Ti. 2:9) find concrete expression at MCE.[36] Again, based on Paul's advice to Timothy (1 Ti. 2:12), women are not allowed to teach men at MCE.[37]

Doctrinal Emphasis

The church strongly emphasizes the importance of pure doctrine. It was the first church that handed me a doctrinal statement, complete with all of the major Christian doctrines. The primary distinction is that MCE holds very closely to a Calvinistic interpretation of Scripture.[38]

Interestingly enough, MCE is a Calvinistic, Pentecostal church. They believe that only those who speak in tongues have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. They will

home from El Salvador. He said that the first time he visited MCE, he raised his head during the prayer time (to look around) and an usher immediately lowered it by placing a firm hand on the back of his head.

34 I noticed that there was a lack of higher level training at MCE. There were no adult Sunday school classes, TEE training, or Bible School curriculum. Pastoral staff are not encouraged to attend Bible School.

35 Even in the cell meetings, for the most part, the women remain silent. When I spoke at one of the women's cell groups, I noticed that several of the women would not look at me. A certain humble subjugation seems to be the norm.

36 The Christian women wear dresses at all times (no pants) and do not wear make-up.

37 Women cell leaders do not lead mixed groups. Nor are any of the paid pastoral staff female. It is interesting that in any given church service probably sixty-five percent of those attending are women, yet these same women have very little overt leadership influence.

38 MCE strongly believes and preaches the five point of Calvinism. During my first night in the church, I was treated to a dynamic message on sovereign election, the depravity of man, and the unmerited grace of God. Calvins' books, translated into Spanish, were stocked in their bookstore.

not allow an assistant cell leader become the main cell leader without the evidence of speaking in tongues.

The Organization

The church is in the process of changing its name to MCE International, because there are now over eighty MCE churches around the world. At the pinnacle of authority over all of these churches is a board of six members who are elected at the annual assembly. At the church level, the head pastor and his elders have the ultimate authority.[39]

Areas of Strength in the Church

Although there are many strong points in this church, I selected those which seemed to be the most evident. These points have attracted many leaders from around the world to visit MCE.

The Cell System

The cell group ministry at MCE is the key to their success. Since starting the cell ministry in 1986, they have added nearly 30,000 people to their Sunday morning worship service.[40] The current statistic of 116,500 represents the impact and penetration that this church is having in practically every neighborhood in San Salvador. Jorge Galindo told me that he does not just view the cells as an instrument of the church but rather as the

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39 The senior pastor, Jorge Galindo, is accompanied by two other elders at the highest level of decision making at La Misión Elim.

40 Taking just the attendance figures for the Sunday morning services (apart from satellite congregations), this could very well be the largest church in Latin America.

church itself. Cell members need the church to round out their Christian faith, but those who only attend a cell group are still considered part of the MCE church.

A Well-Run Organization

This is a highly organized church. Although Latin Americans are normally portrayed as lacking organizational abilities, this is certainly not true of MCE.[41] The church uses statistics, graphics, and percentages to determine exactly where they stand at any given moment. Goals are made and followed on every level. Through the organization of the cell system every single person is touched. Each district coordinator, zone pastor, supervisor, and cell leader knows exactly what to do to make the system work effectively.

El Centro Cristiano de Guayaquil

El Centro Cristiano (CCG) is located in Guayaquil, Ecuador. It is a cell-based church which is known throughout Ecuador, and is making an important contribution to cell ministry in Latin America as a whole.

Context

This church is located in the heart of Guayaquil, which boasts a population of two million. It is the largest coastal city in Ecuador, a country which continues to be one of the most underdeveloped nations in South America (Ecuador in Pictures 1987:5). According to 1993 statistics, the average yearly income per household is $1,040.00 US dollars (4.9 percent of United States income).

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41 This church has stretched my understanding of the organizational capabilities of Latin Americans. It must be noted that the organizational genius of MCE is not the result of North American influence. I did not detect any such influence on Pastor Sergio or the church in general. Rather, the church has reconditioned the Latin people to see the benefit of such tight informational control.

Roman Catholics comprise ninety-four percent of the population, while Protestants make up 3.8 percent (Johnstone 1993:201). Johnstone informs us,

> Ecuador had Latin America's smallest percentage of evangelicals in 1960. Praise God for major breakthroughs and people movements that have brought rapid church growth since then, notably among: Spanish speaking urbanites. . . . Quichuas in Chimborazo Province (1993:202).

It appears that Ecuador is entering a time of harvest. The hard, often fruitless labor of former missionaries is now paying rich dividends.

History of the Church

In 1984, the Wilkes, an Assembly of God missionary couple, started a church in Guayaquil, Ecuador. With 150 people attending in 1985, the Wilkes suddenly had to leave. Along comes Jerry Smith, a North American missionary, who not only filled vacated pastoral position but began to instill into this small flock of believers a vision for something far greater. With a large donation from the Jimmy Swaggart foundation property was purchased provided space for both a church as well as a Christian school (first through twelfth grade).

Growth of the Church

The initial growth of the church came primarily from the Christian school as well as a campaign ministry. Although there were a few small groups operating in the church, they were only another program until 1992 when Smith decided to transform CCG into a cell church. The growth that has taken place since the implementation of cell groups in 1992 is significant. As of October 1997 approximately seventy percent of those who attend the church also attend a cell group, although some three times as many people

attend a weekly cell group than attend the weekly Sunday celebration service.[42] Figure 4 provides estimates of the historical annual church attendance.

As of October 1996, the total attendance figure for CCG was about 3,800. This figure includes the three satellite congregations (500 total). Because their cell system extends so far and wide, they have extension congregations in such areas as Milagro (seventy miles away), Babahoyo (forty miles away), and Durán (fifteen miles away). The figure of 3,800 also includes the Saturday night attendance which is mandatory for those parents whose children go to the CCG school in the afternoon.[43] The sanctuary at CCG can comfortably fit about 750 people.
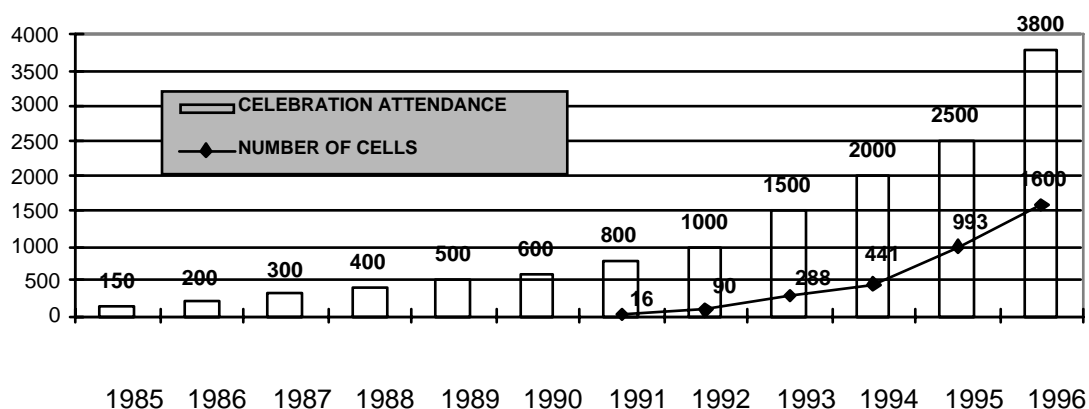
FIGURE 4

CCG: CELEBRATION ATTENDANCE AND NUMBER OF CELLS

Table 14 describes the statistics in the mother church. Table 15 provides a breakdown of cell groups and cell group attendance.

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42 I arrived at this conclusion through talking with leadership and examining the general statistics at CCG.

43 These children have received a scholarship to attend the CCG school. If they want to receive the scholarship the following year, they must attend one CCG celebration church service every week.

TABLE 14

CCG: STATISTICS AT THE MOTHER CHURCH

(October 1996)

BI-MONTHLY ALL NIGHT PRAYER MEETING	175
MONTHLY BAPTISM TOTAL	50
TOTAL BAPTIZED MEMBERS[44]	2,100
SATURDAY NIGHT SERVICE	750
CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL	500
SUNDAY AM WORSHIP	1st service: 400 2nd service: 600 3rd service: 500 4th service: 550
SATELLITE CHURCHES	500

TABLE 15

CCG: CELL GROUP STATISTICAL BREAKDOWN

(October 1996)

DISTRICTS	CELL GROUPS	ATTENDANCE
District One	602	3,892
District Two	442	3,331
District Three	543	3,530

With almost 1,600 cell groups and 11,000 people attending, the cell system has been very successful.[45] At the same time, the total number of people attending the

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44 The stated goal for the end of 1996 is 9,000 baptized church members. However, as of October, 1996 there are only 2,100 baptized members at CCG. There is an obvious disparity between goal and reality.

45 It should be noted that on any given week about twenty percent of the cell groups do not take place for one reason or another.

mother church was merely one-third of those attending the cell groups.[46] I was given several reasons for this situation: the church is reaching out to the non-Christians, non-Christians attending the cell groups are in the process of being discipled and will eventually attend the church, many of the cell groups are very far away and cannot attend Sunday morning worship, Catholics will attend mid-week Bible studies but will not make the commitment to attend an Evangelical church, and the sanctuary is very small and is already at eighty percent capacity.

Denominational Affiliation

This church forms part of the Assemblies of God denomination.[47] The doctrine of the church is very evangelical. Although Assembly of God teaching states that the evidence of being filled with the Spirit of God is the gift of tongues, CCG does not require that all its leaders speak in tongues.[48]

Areas of Strength in the Church

I have chosen to highlight several key elements of the church. These characteristics stood out in the numerous interviews with leaders and members, as well as in my personal observations.

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46 CCG has not been able to convert cell growth into church growth. In other words, the cell groups continue to grow at an exciting rate, but those very same people who are being reached by the cell group are not attending the church. As of October, 1996, there were nearly three times as many people attending the cell groups as were attending the church services. I was concerned that there were clear attendance goals for the cell group but not clear attendance goals for the church.

47 The move to become a cell church has not been entirely supported by the Assembly of God denomination in Ecuador.

48 The baptism of the Spirit with the accompanying evidence of speaking in tongues is encouraged, but is not a leadership requirement.

Cell Groups

CCG is a cell-based church. There is no doubt concerning this most vital and important ministry in the church. A large sign next to the pulpit reads: "A Church Solidified and Edified By Cell Groups." Everything is run by and through the cells. For example, the pastoral staff is organized by districts and zones, cell districts rotate to provide pastoral attention and counseling, cell districts rotate to provide the ushering and other basic services, cell districts rotate to run the all-night prayer meetings, and cell districts rotate each month to baptize members from their cell groups.[49]

There are no weekly youth services at CCG. The adolescents have their cell groups and those over eighteen years operate within the adult cell groups. However, every three months the young people do meet together for congregational worship.

Goal Orientation

CCG is a church with eyes on the future. Its goals are posted everywhere. Each district pastor, zone pastor, and secretary receives a plaque listing the goals for the upcoming year. Normally these goals hang on the wall next to his or her desk. Table 16 is a replica of the huge ten by five- foot wall hanging that everyone sees when they walk into the sanctuary.

Beyond the yearly goals, Jerry Smith believes that CCG will eventually become a church of 100,000. With this in mind, one of the important long term goals for the church is to find property large enough to fulfill this future vision. The hope is to buy a piece of property large enough to construct a sanctuary for 25,000, a Christian high

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[49] Baptismal forms are filled out by the cell leader and a person cannot be baptized unless he or she is attending a cell group. Baptisms at CCG take place in the church. As of October 1996 approximately fifty people were baptized each month and total baptized membership was 2,100.

school and university, and various sport facilities.[50] In order to fulfill these dreams, the

church presently saves twenty-five percent of all income.[51]

TABLE 16

GOAL ORIENTATION AT CCG

GOALS TO REACH BY DECEMBER 1996		
AS A CHURCH	BY DISTRICT	BY ZONE
2,250 Cells	750 Cells	125 Cells
300 Supervisors	100 Supervisors	17 Supervisors
9,000 Members	3,000 members	500 members

Diligent planning precedes goal setting at CCG. At the beginning of each year,

the pastoral staff sets aside five days for fasting and praying. Immediately following is

the yearly congress in which the staff sets goals for the upcoming year. Again in May,

the pastors go on a retreat for several days where they refine detailed annual plans. Very

little takes this church by surprise.

Administration

It is well known that Pastor Smith is a gifted administrator. Largely due to his

gifts and talents, the church runs like a well-oiled machine.

Christian School

Perhaps CCG is best known for its Christian school. The school serves some

3,500 children from first grade to twelfth grade. The school grants scholarships to poorer

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50 José Medina, the head pastor while Jerry was on his missionary furlough, shared with me this vision.

51 I sensed that the major concern at this time is whether or not the church should construct a new sanctuary on its present property as a medium range goal.

students who cannot pay their own way. The funds generated in the morning sessions are sufficient to grant scholarships to almost all of the students who come in the afternoon.

El Amor Viviente

El Amor Viviente (AMV) is one of God's sovereign works. Located in the relatively "unknown" country of Honduras, this church in Tegulcigalpa has become a model for all of Latin America. Thus far, it is the most viable model of cell ministry that I have seen.

Context

Honduras is a small, mountainous land located in Central America. There are six million inhabitants with the largest concentration residing in Tegucigalpa (800,000). Since independence in 1821, Honduras has been plagued with nearly 300 internal rebellions, civil wars, and changes of government, more than half occurring during this century. The country traditionally lacked both an economic infrastructure and social and political integration, and thus is one of the poorest and least developed countries in Latin America. Johnstone writes, "The broken terrain and unequal distribution of land and wealth have hindered development. Insensitive exploitation by multinationals and corruption of politicians have helped to keep Honduras poor" (1993:263).

Evangelicals comprise 10.4 percent of the population, and the annual Evangelical growth rate is six percent. Response to the gospel over the past twenty years has been dramatic. Johnstone believes that a large part of the receptivity is due to the country's economic upheaval (1993:264). Roman Catholics make up 85.5 percent of the population, but they have been declining because eighty percent of the leadership is

foreign and there is widespread nominalism, pagan practices, and immorality (Johnstone 1993:264).

History of the Church

AMV started in 1974 when Edward King, a missionary with the Mennonite denomination, received a vision to reach Honduran young people. King received special permission to do a "new thing" in Honduras, and thus AMV has never been officially connected with the Mennonite denomination.

A large number of young people were delivered from drugs and alcohol (including the present head pastor, René Peñalba) and began to proclaim their new found freedom to their friends and relatives (Urbina 1996:8-9). Edward King called certain ones to enter an in-depth discipleship relationship with him. The newly formed church was soon divided into small groups and King's disciples were each assigned to one of them.[52] Although King left Honduras in 1982, the fruit of his labor continues today through his disciples.

Growth of the Church

Honduras as a country might lack a national identity, but this certainly is not true in AMV. The mother church in Tegucigalpa owns some seven and one half acres of property, and has now become a "mini-denomination." This present study will be limited to the mother church in Tegucigalpa. Figure 5 gives a history of the attendance and cell group growth in the mother church as of November 1996.

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52 Those early groups have little resemblance to the growth groups today. Rather, they were large congregational type groups that did not focus on multiplication. Yet, from the beginning, the strength of the church was squarely fixed on the small group meetings. In fact, at times the church was forced to go several weeks without a celebration service.

Including children, I estimated that some 6,500 people attend the six services at the mother church in Tegucigalpa each weekend.[53] The main sanctuary seats about 1,400 people, but it is already too small. Therefore, the church has made bold plans to begin building an 8,000 seat sanctuary in January 1997. Since the church is divided into four cell districts, each district occupies one of the four services.

After each celebration service, the cell team leadership (leader, intern, treasurer, and two members at large) meet with their supervisors and zone leaders to plan the following week's activity. I was impressed to know that eighty-nine percent of those who attend a cell group also attend the weekend celebration service. Table 18 attempts to describe the cell situation.
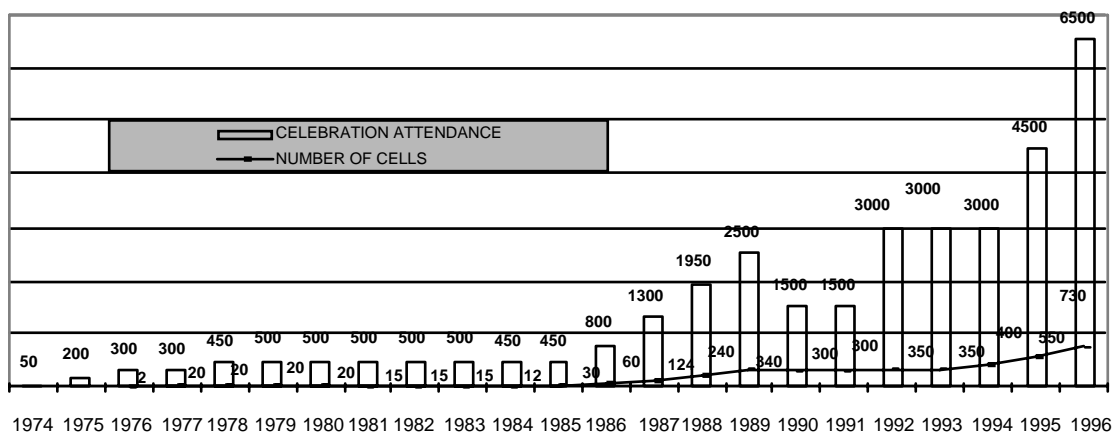
FIGURE 5

AMV: CELEBRATION ATTENDANCE AND NUMBER OF CELLS

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53 Sunday worship services were only recently added to fill a need for those who are not able to attend a cell group. However, the main celebration services take place on Saturday night.

TABLE 17

AMV: STATISTICS AT THE MOTHER CHURCH IN TEGUCIGALPA

(November 1996)

SATURDAY WORSHIP	1st service: 900 2nd service: 1,300 3rd service: 1,000 4th service: 1,300
SUNDAY WORSHIP	1st service: 300 2nd service: 500
TOTAL WEEKEND WORSHIP ATTENDANCE[54]	6,500
AVERAGE MONTHLY BAPTISM	50
NUMBER OF BAPTIZED MEMBERS	4,750
BAPTIZED IN THE SPIRIT	3,785

Table 17 describes the statistics of the mother church are accurate as of November 1996.

TABLE 18

AMV: CELL GROUP STATISTICAL BREAKDOWN

NUMBER OF CELL GROUPS	730
ADULT CELL ATTENDANCE	4,500
CHILDREN CELL ATTENDANCE	500

General Characteristics

To better understand AMV, it is helpful to understand its structure and philosophy. I noticed at least two descriptive characteristics that are worth noting.

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54 This includes 1,200 children.

The Organization

The AMV movement began in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, but now there are twenty-five different AMV churches throughout Latin America and the United States. There is an annual AMV assembly in which delegates attend from each church (number of delegates is determined by size of congregation).[55] It is at the assembly that an eight-member junta is elected (comprised only of AMV pastors). This junta has the ultimate authority over every AMV church, although within each congregation, the head pastor has the final authority.

Doctrine

The doctrine at AMV is very evangelical. It is not officially affiliated with the Mennonite denomination and would best be characterized as "independent charismatic." Actually, I was refreshed by the balanced Biblical teaching that I encountered at AMV.[56]

Areas of Strength in the Church

AMV has many strengths. I believe it is one of Latin American's "hidden treasures." However, here I will only mention three characteristics.

Cell Groups

The cell groups make up the heart of this church. Among the five case study churches AMV has the highest ratio of attendance between cell and celebration attendance. This is largely due to the accountability structure that AMV has perfected.

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55 More recently, the Amor Viviente church in the United States became a separate entity with its own decision- making power.

56 They have a section on the baptism of the Spirit, but not once do they mention the evidence of speaking in tongues. When I asked about this, I was told that Pastor René, knowing the variety of beliefs around that point, has chosen not to emphasize it.

The mother-daughter multiplication process at AMV was healthiest among the case study churches. Cells not only multiply rapidly, but they maintain a high quality. I also noticed a high degree of creativity in the cell ministry at AMV. While they are not opposed to gleaning from others, they have pragmatically perfected a cell system which works best for them. AMV has been honing their own system for the past twenty years. I was amazed at the practicality of many of their ideas.

Discipleship

Although Edward King has not been in the church for fourteen years, he left the church with a strong discipleship emphasis. The church has developed a creative discipleship training structure that prepares people socially, spiritually, and intellectually. Discipleship training at AMV is not Sunday School, although it meets during the normal Sunday School hour. It is not a classroom lecture although discipleship takes place in the classroom. Rather, it includes a close relationship between mentor and disciple that lasts for one to three years.[57]

Helping Ministries

Although AMV is a cell church, it does not exclusively focused on cell ministry. Rather, the cells have created new opportunities for a variety of ministries. For example, special counseling needs arise in the cell groups that the average cell leader is not

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57 Actually, the entire discipleship process last three years, but it is divided into yearly segments (each year the student receives a new mentor). Each discipleship instructor has between ten and fifteen students. The mentor personally visits and cares for each disciple. During the first year, the students take some thirteen modular type courses with the same instructor. All of the discipleship groups follow the same material and requirements. In November 1996 more than 800 people were enrolled in the discipleship groups with over ninety discipleship trainers.

equipped to handle. For this reason, AMV developed a full time counseling center is located on the church property.[58]

Other important ministries at AMV include an AM and FM radio station, children's department, and a worship ministry. All of these have their own director and function as separate ministries in the church. The common thread that binds all of them together is the fact that each worker is required to participate in a weekly Wednesday cell group. Thus, the ministries do not detract but rather add strength to the cell focus.

Summary of the Five Churches

I discovered patterns of similarities and differences among the five case study churches. In this chapter I will highlight general descriptive features of these churches, while in later chapters I will analyze more specific areas.

General Patterns among the Case Study Churches

The following list represents some of the descriptive patterns that I found in the case study churches:

1. Strongly influenced by David Yonggi Cho

2. New apostolic flavor

3. Focus on entire city

4. Congregation made up of working class

5. Emphasis on charismatic experience

6. Strong prayer emphasis

7. Lively worship

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58 The counseling staff ministers to almost one hundred people each week. Prayer teams organized by the counseling ministry intercede for the petitions of the church members. Interestingly enough, some eighty percent of those who go for counseling have been referred by the cell groups.

The Influence of Cho

I noticed the widespread influence of David Yonggi Cho and the cell model exemplified at the Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul, Korea. Three of the churches had sent delegations to Cho's church in Korea before starting their own cell group ministry. All of them attribute their present cell structure in some way to David Yonggi Cho.[59]

New Apostolic Flavor

These churches behave like New Apostolic networks.[60] Four of the churches had grown into "mini-denominations" while only CCG formed part of an established denomination (Assemblies of God). MCI, MCE, and AMV are planting cell churches all over the world. God has given each one of these churches a vision for something greater than themselves, and the cell philosophy has been the chosen method to fulfill that vision.

Although César Castellanos was the only one identified as "apostle," all of these leaders functioned in an apostolic, authoritative role. Supernatural occurrences in these churches were a natural part of church life. Leadership as well as membership received direct guidance from the Spirit of God. Prophecies, tongues, interpretation, words of knowledge and miracles were expected as a normal part of church life.

City Churches

All of these churches ministered in urban, and their goal was to reach the entire city for Jesus Christ. None of them planned to start independent daughter churches within the same city. Their mandate from God was to reach the entire city through the

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59 Interestingly enough, the pastors of the two largest cell churches, MCI and MCE, both visited Korea between 1985 and 1986 and respectively started their cell ministry immediately afterwards.

60 This term has been coined by C. Peter Wagner to describe a new breed of non-denominational churches which manifest similar characteristics and often network among themselves (also called "post-denominational" churches).

cell ministry, and their cells extended to the farthest corners. MCI and AGV eventually created satellite churches to more effectively reap the harvest.

Congregation Comprised of Working Class

All of these churches were primarily reaching the working class (lower-middle class). My statistical analysis of the cell leaders confirmed this fact. [61]

Emphasis on Charismatic Experience

All of the churches were Pentecostal/Charismatic in flavor. Three of the five churches required that each cell leader and assistant speak in tongues, as the evidence of being baptized in the Spirit.

Strong Prayer Emphasis

All of these churches were deeply committed to prayer. Prayer was not just talked about but regularly practiced. Each church held regular all-night prayer meetings. The two largest churches (MCI and MCE) held weekly all-night prayer meetings. AGV utilized national holidays to gather the church for fasting and prayer. I sensed a total dependence on God in each of these churches.

Lively Worship

Without exception, these churches engaged in lively charismatic worship. At MCI, the worship was explosive with well-planned body motions by those directing the

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[61] MCE seemed to attract even a lower class of people, but since these churches were city- wide, the majority of the people could be classified as lower-middle. Although initially AGV attracted the middle-upper sectors of Perú, it now draws from the lower-middle classes.

worship. At AGV the worship team resembled a top notch orchestra with some thirteen instruments and uniformly dressed worship leaders.[62]

General Differences among the Case Study Churches

There were also some distinct differences among the case study churches that deserve special attention:

1. Cell emphasis versus celebration emphasis

2. Traditional cell structure verses new models

3. Participation of women verses domination of men

4. Satellite strategy versus one city church strategy

5. Authority structure among churches

Cell Emphasis Versus Celebration Emphasis

This difference was dramatic among the case study churches.[63] MCE and CCG made a great effort to be "cell churches." However, in both of these churches, there were three times as many people (including children) attending their weekly cell groups than their celebration service. There was a tendency to count church attendance in terms of how many people were in their weekly cell groups.[64] Because cell group goals are easier to make and measure, the cell group attendance was closely monitored while celebration

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62 All of them used at least some worship songs from Marcos Witt, a well-known Latin American worship leader.

63 This struggle touches on a very important ecclesiastic question. Are the cells the church or are they an instrument to bring people to the church? Ralph Neighbour and others would strongly suggest that the cells are the church although in most of my case study churches it seemed that the cells were simply an arm or instrument of the local church (for the purpose of evangelism and edification). MCE was the only cell church moving in the direction of declaring that the cells are the church.

64 When publicly declaring how many people are in these churches, the cell attendance figure was always given. In fact, CCG did not have a celebration attendance goal and MCE did not even know how many were attending their celebration service on a weekly basis.

attendance seemed less important. At times in these two churches it seemed that the cell ministry was an end in itself.

On the other hand, MCI and AGV had impressive, well attended worship services, but it seemed that other variables strongly contributed to the high attendance (e.g., dynamic leadership, lively worship). AMV maintained the highest percentage of both cell and celebration attendance (those who attended the cell also attended the celebration services), and thus seemed to be the most balanced cell church in this important category.

Traditional Cell Structures Versus New Models

There was a great deal of difference between the churches which followed the Pure cell model and those who had initiated new, creative structures.[65] At one end of the spectrum, MCE and CCG could be described as Pure cell churches. On the other hand, MCI and AGV were in the process of creating new models and adapting their cell system to meet their own needs. Again, AMV seemed to strike a healthy balance between the traditional cell structure and its own creativity.[66]

Participation of Women Verses Domination of Men

In four of the cell churches, women played a vital part of the cell system. At MCI approximately half of the top leadership was female and at CCG and AMV women were placed in top leadership roles.[67] On the other hand, at MCE women were only allowed to teach other women and never could rise above the position of supervisor.

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65 I am thinking here of the Pure Cell model handed down from Cho's church in Korea and later generalized by Ralph Neighbour as being the "Pure Cell model".

66 They used a Pure Cell model (geographical districts with top leadership over these areas), but also demonstrated a great deal of creativity in leadership training, cell multiplication, and team ministry.

67 At MCI and AGV the pastor's wives are vice president and co-senior pastor respectively.

Satellite Strategy Verses One City Church Strategy

One distinct difference among the churches was their strategy to reach the city. MCE, CCG, and AMV believed that there should be one cell church per city. The cell system was used to penetrate every corner of the city, while buses were utilized (more than six hundred buses at MCE) to transport the cell members to the mother church. On the other hand, MCI and AGV chose to create satellite churches in order to provide closer worship sites for the members.

Conclusion

These five cell-based churches were chosen because of their prominent status throughout Latin America. They serve as examples of effective cell-based ministry to other congregations throughout Latin America. In this chapter, I have both described these churches as well as examined common patterns and differences among them. In the following chapters, we will analyze more comprehensively the cell-based organization, the leadership patterns, and the multiplication factors of these case study churches.

CHAPTER 7

CELL-BASED ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the way these five cell-based churches are organized. After analyzing their cell structure, I will attempt to set forth principles derived from both the patterns of similarity as well as the distinct differences.

La Misión Carismática Internacional

Explosive growth is taking place in this church. Although many reasons for this growth could be listed, the one reason that was mentioned most often at MCI was the cell system.

Development of the Cell System

The cell group structure has been developing since the church began in 1983. The initial cell groups were much larger and at times became mini-congregations. In the mid-1980s the cell groups were divided into the twenty zones around Bogotá. Around 1990, three major changes took place. First, the church began to emphasize cell multiplication; second, the cell grouping changed from geographical to homogenous; third, the Lord gave César Castellanos the vision that each cell leader needed to raise up twelve more cell leaders.[1]

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1 The official name for the cells at MCI is "C.A.F.E." (Family Cells for Training and Evangelism).

Cell Administration

As has been mentioned earlier, MCI is organized around the concept of the twelve. This is a new, creative version of the Jethro concept (Ex. 18; cf. Chapter 3). Even those higher level leaders over the thousands are still responsible for twelve. Figure 6 helps us understand the administrative structure:
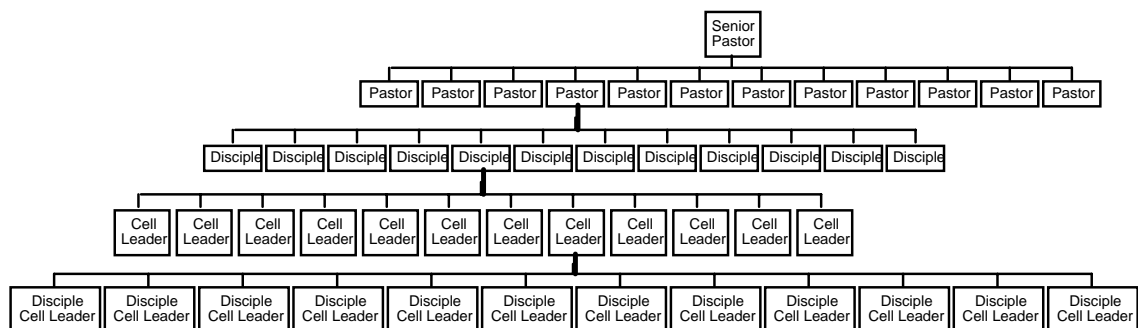
FIGURE 6

MCI: CELL ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

In this model, the normal titles "district pastor", "zone pastor", and "supervisor" are not used. However, the principle of pastoral care for every leadership level is still very evident. In the above chart, the fifth level of leadership is called "disciple/cell leader". The dual name represents the fact that the person meets with his discipler (in a group of twelve) as well as leads a cell group. Until a person finds his or her twelve disciples, that person continues to lead a normal cell group. After finding twelve disciples (who must be active cell leaders), the discipler primarily concentrates on supervising the twelve, although he or she might continue leading a normal cell group.[2]

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2 When I revisited MCI in March 1997 the new thrust was for each discipler of twelve to also maintain a normal evangelistic cell group.

Similarities to the Pure Cell Model

There are many aspects of the cell system at MCI that are similar to Pastor Cho's cell model. In fact, Pastor Cho's philosophy is regularly mentioned in the sermons and messages.[3] I noticed three aspects that were perhaps the most similar: first, the cell group focuses on discipleship and evangelism, although the major emphasis seems to be evangelism; second, the order of meeting is very similar to that used in Cho's church;[4] and third, the cell lessons are based on the Sunday morning message.

Like Cho's church, cell ministry at MCI is not an end in itself. Rather, the cells serve the purpose of pastoring the congregation, raising up new leadership, and evangelizing non-Christians. However, the goal is always to bring the person to the celebration service and to integrate that person into the life of the church.

Unique Characteristics of the Cell System

I noticed various aspects of the cell system that were unique to MCI. Table 19 helps clarify the differences between the cell system at MCI and the traditional organizational structure of the Pure Cell model.

The Concept of the Twelve

Pastor Caesar Castellanos received a vision from God that the cell system should be based on the concept of Christ and His disciples. Modeling Christ's example, Pastor Castellanos hand picked twelve pastors, with whom he continues to meet every week. These twelve pastors have twelve under them and the process continues down to each member of the church. Each person remains with the twelve from which he or she began

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3 Between Sunday and Monday, I must have heard Cho's name mentioned twenty times.

4 Preliminary activity (five minutes); Introduction (ten minutes); Mini-sermon (thirty minutes); Application (five minutes); Final activity (five minutes);Offering; Fill out the report

discipleship process. This relationship might last for years, unless there are unusual circumstances and permission is granted to change to a different group of twelve.[5]

TABLE 19

MCI: DISTINCTIONS OF THE CELL STRUCTURE

FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES	PURE CELL MODEL	MCI
LEADERSHIP TRAINING	Potential leaders are trained within the cell and through seminars before beginning cell leadership.	Potential leaders are trained in ongoing training classes that take place within the various homogenous ministerial departments.
GEOGRAPHICAL DIVISION	Cell groups are divided into geographical areas under district pastors, zone leaders, and section leaders.	Cell groups are primarily divided by ministerial departments under which each leader has his or her twelve disciples.
JETHRO SYSTEM	Top leadership is raised up to pastor cell leaders under them. There are normally cell leaders, section leaders, zone pastors, and district pastors.	Every leader has twelve under his or her care--from the head pastor to individual cell leaders. The leader meets weekly with his or her twelve.
MULTIPLICATION	Mother-daughter cell multiplication is the norm. The cell gives birth to another cell and the process continues.	Cell planting is the norm. Mother-daughter multiplication is possible, but by far the majority of the new groups start by cell plants (i.e., new leadership forming their own groups).
EVANGELISM	Evangelism is more of a group activity.	Evangelism is more individual. The leader seeks to gather his own group.
CENTRAL PLANNING	Cell group planning takes place on a centralized level in district offices.	Cell group planning is primarily handled through the different departments.
CELL LEADER CARE	Cell Leaders are cared for by district pastors, zone pastors, and supervisors.	Leaders are cared for by leaders of twelve-from the lower levels all the way up to the twelve disciples of Pastor Castellanos.

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5 Pastor Alfonzo Ortiz, ex-secretary to César Castellanos, told me that this can become a problem, since a member of one group might feel attracted to another, but might find it difficult to change groups.

It must be remembered that these are not static, ingrown disciples. Rather, to be called a disciple one must lead a cell group. The concept of the twelve is really a way to multiply groups more rapidly. Instead of waiting for an entire cell group to naturally give birth, this concept compels cell leaders to actively look for lay people to lead new cell groups, and thus become disciples in the process.

In this system, every cell member is a potential cell leader, but even more importantly, every cell member is a potential leader of cell leaders. The leader of a cell group that has raised up another leader immediately becomes an overseer. After raising up twelve disciples (leaders of cell groups), the discipler or mentor spends most of the time caring for that group of twelve (e.g., visiting, praying). This system does not require a lot of top level organization and seems to work well on a grass roots level.

Cells within the Departments

The cell groups are organized almost completely by ministerial departments at MCI.[6] Depending on the size and specificity of the ministry, there might be many cell groups or very few.[7] The larger ministries meet as a separate congregation at different times during the week.[8] The major departments always have an evangelistic emphasis in

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6 The departments include: young people, professionals, worship, spiritual warfare, men's ministry, women's ministry, counseling, ushers, counseling, follow-up, social action, pastoral care, accounting, video, sound, bookstore, etc.

7 A ministerial department like sound, social action, or accounting would have fewer cell groups than the larger ministries such as young people, worship, men's ministry, or women's ministry. However, the leaders of these smaller ministries must have their twelve disciples who in turn have cell groups.

8 In the main sanctuary, the larger departments hold their weekly congregational meetings. In October 1996 the departments that met in the sanctuary were: Men, Spiritual Warfare, Healing and Miracles, Worship, Couples, Women, and Young People. I was encouraged to see cells for adolescents and small children. Both of these departments use the same cell structure. For example, in October 1996 the junior high department had 171 cell groups that met during the week in various homes. They also had their congregational meeting and met again on Sunday morning.

The cell groups for children might be best described as home Bible clubs which are led by adults. However, the goal is to encourage the children to make their own disciples and to take more individual responsibility in leading the group. The children also have their congregational meeting during the week.

their congregational meeting, and altar calls are given.[9] The cell leaders under each of these ministries receive these newcomers, personally counsel them, call them within forty-eight hours, and make sure that they are involved in a cell group. Each ministry department has plenty of ministry openings and the natural link between cell group and ministry helps the newcomer to become involved with the church. One important distinction is that the cell group always meets in the home, whereas the large department meeting always takes place in the church.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Cell System

Probably the best way to discover effectiveness within a cell system is to analyze the strengths and weaknesses. Table 20 presents these strengths and weaknesses. Although one should not expect that Latin American churches enter into the debate that makes a clear distinction between cell-based churches and churches with cells, it would be helpful if MCI distinguished its position more clearly from an organizational standpoint.[10]

Christian Community Agua Viva

The pastor and founder of this church, Juan Capuro, told me that when AGV began the cell group ministry in 1990, there were few of its kind in Latin America. Now many churches in Perú are following the cell ministry at AGV. Cell groups are called "Christian Communities" at AGV.

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9 Normally, between twenty and 500 people respond to the invitation.

10 During my visit in October 1996 I noticed that "Cell Ministry" was listed in the church directory simply as one of the thirty plus ministries (including ushers, social action, worship, etc.). Out of one office most of the cell administration takes place. Since all of the ministries are based in home cell groups, it seems reasonable to expect an organizational diagram to reflect that structure. From the organizational chart, it appears that MCI is a church with cells, but from a practical standpoint, it is my conviction that the cell group ministry at MCI is the very heart or motor of the church

TABLE 20

MCI: STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE CELL SYSTEM

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
• There is less hierarchy in this system. • There is a willingness to use each member in the church in cell leadership--including new Christians. • The head pastor and pastoral staff participate in the system in that each of them have their own group of twelve. • The leadership training reaches more potential leaders because it is going on all the time and more leaders are enabled to teach it.	• Leaders tend to have heavy schedules (multiple weekly meetings) and may be overloaded.[11] • Raising up a new group happens through personal evangelism-not group evangelism. • The groups are usually small in size.[12] • There is a lack of body life and participation.[13] • The quality control can falter as cell groups multiply at lower levels. • There is a lack of organizational structure and statistical information within the cell ministry.

Early Development of the Cell Structure

Pastor Capuro has been heavily influenced by David Yonggi Cho, both as an inspiration for church growth as well as a model for his own cell ministry. Upon initiating the cell ministry in 1990, the cells spread rapidly without much need to organize them. However, as the growth continued, zone leaders, and supervisors were raised up to care for the various zones around the city.[14] The initial leaders were top quality and the cell groups grew from 121 in 1992 to 300 in 1993.

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11 The leaders under the worship department were encouraged to lead three cell groups per week, attend the Thursday worship time, the Sunday service, etc. I attended one cell leadership training class in which it was announced that only those who were leading three cell groups would have the privilege to attend a special retreat. Although one might lead three cell groups per week, the goal is always to train others to take your place (and then supervise according to the concept of the twelve).

12 Oftentimes, groups seem to be simple visitation times in someone's home between the leader, the person who lives at the house, and maybe one or two more.

13 The cell leader is trained to preach or teach a message and then take an offering. Since the group time is limited to one hour, there does not seem to be a lot of participation from other members. Nor were the group leaders specifically trained in how to draw out more participation in the group.

14 The zone leaders and supervisors at AGV are not part of the paid staff. Only the three main pastors and administrative help are on salary.

In the beginning, each cell group held two meetings. The first meeting focused on planning, and only believers were present. The second one was evangelistic. There were also various training meetings throughout the week, and each leader was required to hand in weekly statistical reports. Pastor Capuro confessed to me that the administrative concerns and requirements to run a traditional cell system became more of a burden than a blessing.[15] He felt that it was unnatural to require that a person find a cell group according to strict geographical areas.[16]

Transition From a Pure Cell Model to the MCI Model

For these reasons, AGV has reorganized itself according to the cell system that is used at MCI (concept of the twelve). Since there is a close affinity between the two churches, the transition has been natural. The process of transition had begun only several months previous to my visit in October 1996. Figure 7 outlines the new administrative structure (note the twelve leaders under each level).
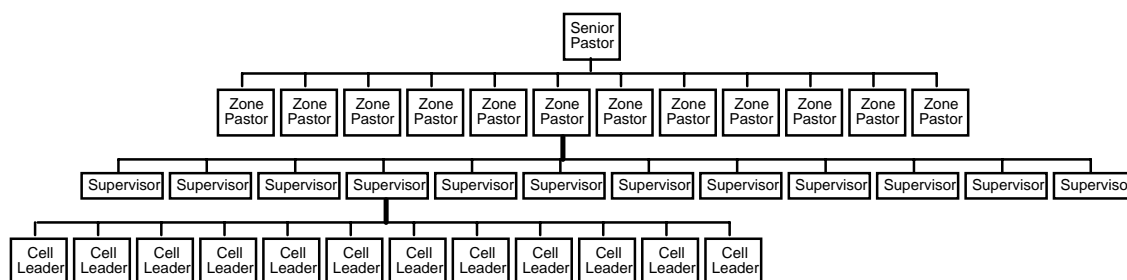
FIGURE 7

AGV: CELL ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

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15 He and his pastors were constantly pressuring others to fulfill the requirements. They discovered that it was simply not worth all of the effort.

Pastor Capuro is using his existing zone leaders as his initial "twelve disciples."[17] Each zone leader also meets with his twelve, formed mainly from the existing supervisors under the old system. The twelve under each supervisor are now forming their communities, made up of both past cell leaders and new cell leaders. As of this writing, the new system had not reached down to the cell leaders. However, in the future, when someone starts a new cell group, he or she will remain under the supervision of the original cell leader.[18] Like the cell system at MCI, each cell leader will look for his or her twelve.

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16 For example, if a group was ready to give birth and a new leader lived in a different zone, he or she would be forced to come under the supervision of another zone leader. He also told me that the process of multiplication often left one cell group languishing while giving birth to another. He discovered that multiplication seem to work against the grain of the people.

17 Actually, Pastor Capuro presently has fourteen zone leaders (in the chart I represent thirteen of those fourteen) which form part of this "twelve." Pastor Capuro told me that the number "twelve" was not as important as the actual concept. Rather, the goal is that each leader seeks to become a leader of leaders

18 There seemed to be some confusion concerning how the cell leader would supervise his new leaders. Daniel, a successful cell leader, told me that the new leader would continue to meet with the mother cell group in order to receive supervision. He explained that in this way there would not be any pain of separation.

TABLE 21

AGV: PRESENT CELL STRUCTURE

FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES	AGV
GEOGRAPHICAL DIVISION	Cell groups are no longer divided by geography so people can freely attend any group, regardless of where it is located.
LESS LEADERSHIP MEETINGS	Pastor Capuro meets with all of the leaders only once per month. It is during this monthly meeting that the cell lessons are distributed and the statistics are reviewed. Each leader (zone, supervisor) meets weekly with those under his care, but the meetings are less pressurized
MULTIPLICATION	New groups start by new leadership forming their own groups from among friends and family. Mother-daughter multiplication is not a priority. Rather every member of the cell should seek to plant a brand new group.
DECENTRALIZED PLANNING	Leaders of twelve only require monthly statistical forms, instead of weekly forms. These statistics are categorized by the administrative staff.[19]

Principal Features of the New Organization

It is important to remember that AGV is "under construction." They are in the

initial stages of their restructuring, and therefore the present cell organization and

features are a mixture of the old and new. Table 21 describes the new direction of the

cell structure at AGV.

Follow-Up through the Cell Ministry

The follow-up at AGV is systematic and seems to be effective. Although this

system was developed under the old cell model, and it will clearly undergo change

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[19] AGV has delegated the reporting and statistical gathering to the secretaries. The top leadership structure only knows once per month about the cell statistics.

through the restructuring, at present, it still functions in this manner and is worth noting.

Perhaps, it can best be described in table format (Table 22).

TABLE 22

AGV: FOLLOW-UP OF NEW CONVERTS THROUGH THE CELLS

INITIAL FOLLOW-UP	• Counselors help new converts in the church. • Cards are filled out with addresses.
DISTRIBUTION OF CARDS	• Between Sunday and Tuesday the information is placed in the computer. • Cards are sorted by zones and categorized under the various zone leader.
ZONE LEADERS TO SUPERVISORS	• On Tuesday, Pastor Capuro gives the cards to the zone leaders. • Zone leaders distribute cards to supervisors in their weekly meeting.
SUPERVISORS TO CELL LEADERS	• Supervisors give the cards to the cell leaders in their weekly meeting. • The cell leaders call or visit the new convert, inviting him or her to the cell group.
CELL LEADERS TO SUPERVISORS	• The cell leaders report to the supervisors whether or not the person has begun attending the cell meeting.
SUPERVISORS TO CHURCH	• The supervisors fill out a bimonthly report to the church concerning whether or not the person is attending the cell group.

Cell Groups

The change of the cell system at AGV has not drastically affected the cell groups themselves. The "Christian Communities" at AGV have maintained the same structure and social mixture during this transitional period.

Cell Characteristics

Because cell groups have not been organized by departments, there is normally a variety of social dynamics in each group (e.g., age and social status distinctions). I was told that the average size of the cell group is ten people. The required cell reports that are turned in each month reveal some interesting facts about the cell characteristics.

First, there are no children's cell groups. Only those who are over thirteen years of age are counted as cell members, although younger children may be present. They believe that home cell groups are for adults and that the Sunday School is for children. Second, the cell leaders are authorized to baptize and the cell group often goes on a baptismal retreat.[20] Third, every group has a treasurer who, along with the cell leader signs the weekly report when the offering is taken. Fourth, cell groups are free to rotate among houses.

Cell Meetings

The cell meeting consists of initial greetings and prayer, worship, application, prayer for individual needs (e.g., baptism of the spirit, healing), offering, refreshment, announcements and final prayer. The meeting follows a "Cho" model with the emphasis on the leader teaching the Bible study. The study is based on the pastor's sermon. During each sermon, Pastor Juan has designated a person to take notes and to give his sermon a different angle or slant. Usually, two cell lessons can be derived from one Sunday morning sermon. The atmosphere of the groups vary, seemingly according to the leader's style. Some are very traditional with little member participation, while others can be quite emotional and filled with ministry the Spirit (e.g., tongues, interpretation, prayer for healing).

I did not include a section on the strengths and weaknesses, since the present system is not yet in place and therefore difficult to evaluate. The old system obviously had many weaknesses, and for this reason AGV has reorganized its cell system.

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20 At the same time, the cell leaders are not authorized to administer the Lord's supper.

La Misión Cristiana Elim

After traveling to Korea to analyze David Yonggi Cho's church, Pastor Sergio Solórzano transformed his church into a Pure Cell church. Although MCE generally follows the organizational structure of David Cho's church in Korea, it has also adapted its structure according to the Latin American context.

Development of the Cell Structure

When the system first began in 1985, the mother MCE church immediately closed twenty-five affiliated MCE churches in order to create one cell church in San Salvador. Since that time the organizational structure has been developing according to the needs.

Cell Administration

The system of cell administration at Elim is patterned after the Jethro model used in most "Pure Cell churches" around the world. It is geographically based on districts and zones. The cell groups must multiply within those areas and newcomers are assigned groups according to where they live rather than homogeneity (Figure 8).

FIGURE 8

MCE: CELL ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

As of November 1996, there were eight district pastors and fifty-seven zone pastors at MCE. Each district pastor had approximately 675 groups under his care (about 14,500 people). The zone pastor oversees the fifteen to thirty supervisors under his care. It is not uncommon for a zone pastor to be responsible for one hundred groups and between 1,000 to 1,500 people. It is truly a full time job.

Unique Characteristics of the Cell System

MCE has practically set the standard for the Pure Cell model in Latin America.[21] The organization of every aspect of church life is accomplished through the cells. The only way for a person to be involved in any type of service ministry is to faithfully be involved in a cell group.[22] Some of the key organizational points are discussed below:

Penetration Strategy

One of the major purposes of their cell groups is to penetrate non-Christian territory and prepare the ground for non-Christians to belong to the church. The goal is always to have a number of people in the "pipeline" that are potential church members.[23]

One Hundred Percent Growth Goal

MCE has maintained the goal of doubling the cell groups and cell membership each year. One of the reasons all cell groups have the same goal is so that the leadership

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21 I have noticed many aspects that other cell churches have copied from MCE.

22 For example, all ushers were first recommended through the cell groups at MCE.

23 For this reason, there are over 60,000 adults and 56,000 children in the cell groups as compared to 30,000 adults and 3,000 children in the church on Sunday morning.

is on the same statistical level. The other reason is to provide an ambitious goal which motivates the cell leadership.[24]

Competition among Cell Leadership

All leaders (e.g., cell leaders, supervisors, zone leaders, and district leaders) are ranked according to how close they came to annually doubling the number of cell groups, cell attendance, cell conversions, and cell baptisms.[25] Each leader is placed on a list that compares his percentage growth to that of his co-leaders.[26] The purpose of these comparisons is to stimulate growth and create a "healthy competition."[27]

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24 Although in the past few years, this goal has not even come close to being fulfilled, I was told that Latin leadership will normally only reach for what is expected. To lower the goal to fifty percent would cause them to reach for less.

25 A certain weight is given to each category: new cell group growth is given thirty percent; cell adult attendance growth--twenty-five percent; cell children attendance growth--five percent; cell conversion growth--twenty percent; cell baptismal growth--twenty percent. It should be noted that there are not percentage points given for success in bringing the group to church. In my opinion, this lowers the priority of promoting celebration attendance in the cell group.

26 District pastors are compared to district pastors, zone pastors are compared within each district and also among all fifty-seven. Supervisors are compared within their zone. It must be remembered that all of these lists are updated on a weekly basis!

27 No one wants to be at the bottom of the list. I was told that in this way, everything is out in the open and no one can hide.

TABLE 23

MCE: STATISTICAL PROCESS

CELL LEADER FORM	• Cell leaders or cell secretaries must complete this form after each meeting on Saturday night and give it to the secretary by Sunday morning. • The form consists of cell code, place and hour of meeting, attendance in cell, attendance in church, conversions, reconciliations, baptism in water and Spirit, offering (church and bus), and place for two signatures (leader and host).
SUPERVISOR FORM	• On Sunday, the supervisors must complete one general form that synthesizes the information from the cell forms and present it to the zone pastor.
ZONE PASTOR FORM	• On Monday, the zone pastors must synthesize the information from each supervisor's form and put it into the computer (one computer in each district office).
DISTRICT PASTOR FORM	• On Monday, the district pastor gives a synthesis of the results of his zone pastors. He hands those results to the administration. • The administration hands a summary of all of the weekly statistics to the head pastor by Tuesday morning.

Orderly Statistical Administration

Latin Americans are often labeled as not being particularly organized or statistically oriented. This is certainly not true at MCE. They have developed a highly efficient system of statistical tracking that is entirely indigenous.[28] Table 23 illustrates the process of tracking statistical data.

Emphasis on Team Leadership

This is a very positive point about the cell system at MCE. The church strongly emphasizes team leadership in the cell group. Besides the leader, each group is encouraged to have an assistant, host, treasurer, secretary, instructor of children, and members at large. It is the goal of the cell leader to form the core team, so that there can successful multiplication.

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28 This reveals to me that Latin Americans can indeed work effectively in a highly organized statistical environment, without being overly pressured.

Planning Meetings on Different Night

Perhaps this aspect of having two separate cell meetings (one for planning and one for outreach) is the major distinction between the system at MCE and other cell systems. MCE requires that the cell teams meet on Thursday night for edification and planning. The purpose of the Thursday night planning meeting is to set the goals and receive the vision for Saturday night.[29]

Rotation among Hosts

Although there is an official host of the group in whose house the group will start, people are encouraged to rotate the meeting place of the cell group. The specific goal of this strategy is to provide better opportunities for each member to invite relatives and non-Christians to their own home.[30]

Bus Ministry

MCE is a city-wide church. Their goal is to reach the two million inhabitants of San Salvador. Because most people do not have cars and the church is on the outskirts of the city, transportation is a major factor. MCE deals with this problem by hiring over 600 buses to transport the 30,000 plus people to the celebration service. The cell groups themselves take offerings to charter these city buses.[31]

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29 One important function of the Thursday meeting is to encourage team members to visit those who were not present at the previous Saturday night cell group meeting. Core team members are assigned to visit these absent members.

30 The host must belong to the church and be converted. It is also required that the meeting take place in the same area, zone, and district in which the group is located. If a member who lives in another district wants to have the meeting in his home, that meeting would come under the jurisdiction of another district, and therefore this type of changing is not recommended.

31 The buses wait at church until the service is over and transport the people home again.

<u>Study Guides</u>

I was very impressed with the prepared cell lessons that MCE produces. These guides provide three months of cell material. These lessons follow the expository preaching schedule of the midweek service at MCE in order to provide continuity.[32]

<u>Effective Children's Ministry</u>

MCE ministers to over 55,000 children every week in cell groups. The children's groups meet at the same time as the adult cells, in another room of the house. Normally, either one member of the planning team will sense a calling to teach the children or there might be a rotation among the planning team members. No set curriculum is used. Rather, the instructor is free to choose.

<center>**Cell Group Structure**</center>

The foundation of the cell system is the small group itself, which is simply called a "cell" at MCE. There are several unique aspects of the cell group at MCE.

<u>Preaching</u>

The atmosphere of a cell group at MCE is like a "mini-service." The leader preaches the weekly message with all of the fervor of a Sunday morning sermon. I heard "amens" and fervent pleas to accept the message.[33] The cell leader often gives an altar call at the end of his message for those who want to receive Jesus Christ or receive

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32 The guides reminded me of a devotional guide such as <u>Daily Bread</u>. Each lesson covers three pages. There is a Scriptural passage, a central theme, an introduction, body of message, and application. On Tuesday night the zone pastor meets with the supervisors, cell leaders, and cell assistants to teach them how to communicate the following lessons. In my opinion, the greatest weakness of these study guides is that there are no questions provided. In other words, it is a non-participative Bible study.

33 One immediately senses the fire and zeal of these leaders. This was true in all five of the Saturday night cell groups that I visited.

reconciliation. Prayer is offered for those who respond. The service closes with an offering.

Order

The cell group normally lasts for one hour. Although there is some flexibility, it is normally conducted according to Table 24.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Cell System

MCE is an example of success in cell evangelism, statistical control, team ministry, and pastoral care through the cell ministry. Although the cell system at MCE is truly exemplary, I felt that there were some points of weakness. I was concerned about the lack of cell participation for the members, the low percentage of celebration attendance from the cells, and the lack of female participation in cell ministry. Table 25 highlights some of those strengths and weaknesses.

TABLE 24

MCE: CELL GROUP ORDER

1	Greetings	Host
2	Opening Prayer	Leader
3	Songs (two or three) from song sheets	Leader of Member of Team
4	Study	Leader
5	Invitation	Leader
6	Pray for the various needs	Leader and designated persons
7	Offering	Member of team
8	Refreshments	Member of team
9	Questions about the study	Anyone
10	Take the statistical data	Secretary
11	Announcements	Leader
12	Final prayer	Leader

TABLE 25

MCE: STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF CELL SYSTEM

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
• Very well organized and administered system • Excellent statistical control • Excellent planning through the Thursday night system • Great effort to get the people to church through the bus ministry • All of the pastors are personally involved in visiting cell groups	• Huge time requirement for both leaders and supervisors (five meetings per week) • Little member participation in the cell groups • The role of women is extremely limited • Half of the adults in the cell groups do not attend the Sunday celebration • The distance to the mother church is very far for many people

El Centro Cristiano de Guayaquil

The cell system that is used at CCG looks very much like other cell churches around the world. In particular, it looks like the cell system of MCE.

Development of the Cell Structure

Pastor Jerry Smith caught the cell vision in 1992. Since that time, the church has been learning and experimenting with cell strategy. This cell structure is a mixture of concepts from Carl George (the terms "Ls" and "Xs"), Ralph Neighbour (cell order), David Yonggi Cho (inspiration), and MCE (statistical/organizational control). Every ministry of the church is funneled through the cell structure.[34]

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34 The exception might possibly be the Sunday School. From what I understand, there is no district rotation with regard to teaching the children's Sunday school. This seems to be a ministry for anyone in the church.

Cell Administration

The system of cell administration is exactly like MCE although not as large (Figure 9). Districts, zones, and neighborhoods are divided up throughout the city of Guayaquil and cell leadership is placed over these geographical areas.

FIGURE 9

CCG: CELL ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

As of October 1996, there were an average of eight zone pastors in each of the three districts. Six of these twenty-three zone pastors were women. On an average, each zone leader oversees some ten supervisors, while each supervisor had an average of four cell groups.

Various Characteristics of the Organizational Structure

Following the pattern of the Pure Cell model, there are no competing programs at CCG. The church might be described by the following characteristics.

Cell/Celebration Distinction

The CCG manual defines a cell group in this way, "Small groups consist of members and friends of the church that meet in different places in the city for personal edification and growth and with the goal of practicing Christian discipleship" (1995:43). The manual makes it clear that cell groups are not: mini-churches, Bible studies, prayer groups, or family reunions (1995:42). Pastor Jerry Smith says, "A cell group leader is permitted to do the same things that a normal pastor does except administer the sacraments (baptism and Lord's supper), dedicate children, and preach in the Sunday celebration services" (Smith 1995:21). The cell group, therefore, at CCG does not perform all of the regular functions of the church and is not complete without the celebration element.

Statistical Administration of Cell Structure

The cell structure at CCG runs like a highly organized business. This system requires a great deal of statistical reporting from all levels of leadership.[35] After the pattern of MCE, there is statistical information generated every three months which reveals how close, percentage-wise, each zone leader is to reaching his goal for number of cell groups, attendance in each cell group, conversions, and baptisms.[36] Table 26 illustrates some of the administrative facets that I noticed.

Unique Aspects of CCG Cell Organization

Although the zone structure is carefully followed at CCG, within each zone there are specific types of ministry. I found these distinctions to be creative and helpful.

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35 I did an in-depth case study of Bethany World Prayer Center in June 1996. In my opinion, the statistical flow of information at CCG is far more developed than Bethany World Prayer Center, the premier cell church in the US. I did an in-depth case study of Bethany World Prayer Center in June, 1996.

36 These percentage points are based on the leaders' own personal goals; not a general one hundred percent doubling goal (like MCE).

TABLE 26

CCG: SIGNS OF ADMINISTRATION

PASTORAL STAFF	- Pastor Smith oversees district pastors - District pastors oversee zone pastors - Zone pastors oversee supervisors - Supervisors oversee cell leaders
OFFICE FACILITIES	- Three large district offices - Each zone pastor has his or her own office - Separate offices for information processing
STATISTICS	- Weekly statistics made available in bulletin every Sunday - Bulletin statistics include: total attendance for each Sunday service, Sunday school, cell group attendance, weekly baptisms, weekly salvation, new cell groups, visitors, and prayer meeting attendance.
FORMS	- Required weekly forms for cell leaders, zone pastors, district pastors - Totals and averages are prepared weekly
MAPS	- Huge maps of Guayaquil in each district office - Sections of Guayaquil are broken down into map size for zone pastors and district pastors. These maps are colored and decorated to show cell groups
COMPUTERS	- All of the information is computerized and broken down into tables and averages - Pastors receive these weekly reports

Children's Ministries

Each district has a pastor for children. These pastors report directly to their district pastor like other zone pastors. Although each children's pastor ministers within one of the three districts, they are not limited by zones, but rather by the children's cell groups within each zone.[37]

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37 These children's cell groups follow the adult cell format with the exception of directing the lesson to the needs of children. The order of a children's group might have the following pattern: singing, lesson, games and coloring, prayer, offering, and refreshment.

Youth Ministries

Within each district there is one pastor for youth.[38] This pastor focuses upon the adolescents from twelve years to eighteen years of age within the district. Young people over eighteen are considered adults and attend the adult cells. For the most part, the youth cells constitute the youth program for CCG. However, every three months the adolescent cell groups meet together for a celebration event.

Educational Ministry

One of the requirements for parents who attend the school (grades one through twelve) at CCG is that they also attend a cell group on Friday night (as well as the CCG celebration service on Saturday night).[39] On Friday night, about eight hundred adults gather in more than one hundred of these required small groups.[40]

Cell Group Meeting

Small groups at CCG are simply called "cells." The cell focus at CCG is very participatory. The leaders have been trained to draw out the other cell members and not to preach. The cell group material is based on the previous Sunday morning sermon. The cell focus, therefore, is the application of what was preached the previous Sunday. The lessons are question oriented with the goal of stimulating participation.[41] The cell

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38 In the future, there might be a need for more than one.

39 If the parent does not attend these sessions the child will not be able to attend the school the following year. Several people commented that the obligatory nature of these meetings has caused resistance and even resentment in some parents.

40 They meet in the same classroom in which their children meet and are directed by the same teacher that instructs their children. For each teacher who leads these groups, it is part of his or her job description. It is just as obligatory for the teacher as it is for the parents who attend. The teacher uses the cell group material that all of the other cell leaders receive.

41 Each month the cell leaders receive four or five cell lessons which serve as a preview of the upcoming Sunday sermons. Each Tuesday night, during the leader training session, the cell lessons are reviewed.

group order at CCG follows the pattern established by Ralph Neighbour. Table 27 illustrates those dynamics.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Cell System

One great need at CCG is to raise up strong leadership more rapidly. As of October 1996, there was a ratio of one leader for two cell groups. It seems to me that CCG needs to place more emphasis on leadership emergence, development, and empowerment. Table 28 sums up some of the key areas of strength and weakness.

TABLE 27

CCG: CELL GROUP ORDER

No	Activity	Time	Description of Activity
1.	Icebreaker	15-30 minutes	• Light time of sharing • Based on interesting questions
2.	Worship	15-30 minutes	• Worship choruses • With or without guitar
3.	Ministry Time	20 minutes	• Based on application questions • Participation is encouraged
4.	Vision Casting	10 minutes	• How to invite more non-Christians • When to multiply the cell group
5.	Offering[42]		• Taken and counted before the cell members

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42 According to my calculations, each cell group contributes approximately one dollar in the weekly offering. With some 1,600 cell groups, this amount adds up. However, it should also be noted that on an average, three hundred of the 1,600 groups do not have their meeting for one reason or another. Fifty percent of the offerings generated by the cell groups go directly to the church budget. The other fifty percent are used in the cell district from which they were received.

El Amor Viviente

The structure at *Amor Viviente* has been developing since 1974 when Edward King first initiated the church in a home. Since then, the structure has gone through some significant changes.

TABLE 28

CCG: STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF CELL SYSTEM

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
• A clear vision that CCG is a cell church • Very well organized and administered system. • All ministry takes place through the cell structure which provides strength to the church. • Excellent program of visitation through the zone pastors.	• Large gap between attendance in the cell group and attendance in the mother church. • Few groups seemed to experience a mother-daughter multiplication. Most start from scratch. • Not enough cell leaders raised up; On an average each leader directs two cell groups.

Development of the Cell Structure

In the early days, the cell leaders were called "pastors." The head pastor, René Pañalba, would gather these leaders together every week and teach them a message that they in turn would be imparted to each group. Some groups grew as large as one hundred people. In the mid 1980s two major changes took place. First, the cell multiplication was given a new focus, and second, there was a reorganization of the cell system to include geographical zones and the Jethro hierarchy.[43] More recently, the cell structure

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43 From that time until the present, the cell system has been taking on more of an administrative structure.

has begun to multiply more rapidly. By early 1997, the goal is to have 1,000 cell groups. The official name for the cell groups at CCG are "growth groups."

Cell Administration

Cell administration at AMV has been progressing according to need. In 1992, the ministry was organized into eleven zones with leaders over each zone. However, they soon realized that some zones were far too large with some fifty-five cell groups per zone. Therefore, the role of area supervisor was created. In 1995, AMV organized the cell ministry into districts with a pastor over each district. The following figure gives an accurate picture of their present system.
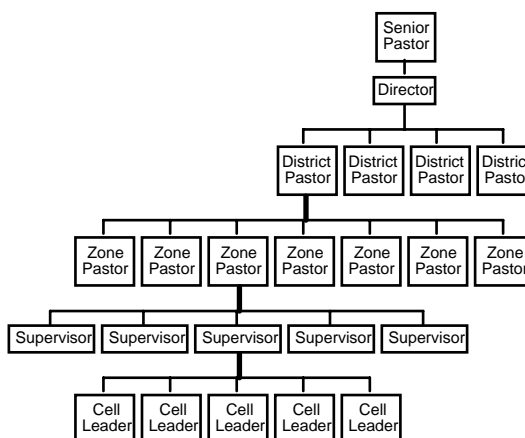
FIGURE 10

AMV: CELL ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

As of November 1996 there were four districts. In each district there was an average of seven zone leaders overseeing the approximately 200 groups. Each zone is further broken down into areas overseen by area supervisors. All of the cell activity (e.g., multiplication, follow-up) takes place within geographical parameters.

Common Pure Cell Features

The cell structure at AMV follows many characteristics that are common in the cell church. These include: cell group evangelism with the goal of giving birth to daughter groups and cell group planning on a centralized level in district offices. Monthly forms are also required of the cell leaders.[44]

Unique Characteristics of Organizational Structure

All twenty-five of the AMV churches follow identical structures. Their methodology comes from over twenty years of experience in cell ministry.[45]

Required Attendance in Cell Ministry

One cannot serve in the ministry of worship, counseling, discipleship, children's ministry, or any other ministry without regularly attending a cell group. This is the connecting point that binds all of the various ministries to the cell emphasis. Nor is there formal membership at AMV. Rather, membership is defined by those who regularly attend a cell group.

Intimate Link Between Cell and Celebration

Each of the four districts is given a designated hour to attend the celebration service. Members are discouraged from going to the celebration service at random times. It is not uncommon to hear a zone or district leader refer to a particular celebration meeting as the hour when "his congregation" meets. After each celebration service in the

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44 The cell ministry at AMV used to require weekly forms from all cell leadership. However, they sensed that this requirement brought on too much pressure. Now only monthly forms are required.

45 I am referring to the basic principles concerning how the ministry functions (e.g., meetings on Wednesday evening, same discipleship program). Obviously, not every city would need to contract buses in exactly the same way. However, for the most part the structure is surprisingly similar in all the churches.

church, the supervisors and cell teams (leader, assistant, treasurer, and members at large)
meet together in designated locations to pray, plan, and dream together.[46]

Buses Transport Cell Members to Church

AMV believes in the concept of one cell church per city. It does not establish
satellite churches around the city. Rather, like MCE, the cell ministry penetrates the
distant areas. Buses are rented to transport cell members to the celebration service. I was
told that some cell groups are so far away that it takes one and one half hours to reach the
mother church. In a poor country like Honduras, many cannot afford the cost of trans-
portation.[47]

Team Structure

A very refreshing and innovative requirement at AMV is that each cell group has
a team consisting of leader, assistant, treasurer, and two members at large. Ninety
percent of the growth groups have an assistant leader and treasurer. The team meets at
least once per month on Monday night to plan and strategize for the rest of the week.

Programmed Meeting Times

AMV is very systematic in its cell ministry. The growth groups meet only on
Wednesday night. They are not allowed to meet any other night of the week. This

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46 The supervisor takes attendance of his or her leadership team, the zone leader takes attendance
of the supervisors present, and the district pastor takes attendance of those zone leaders who are at each
service. A great deal of accountability takes place through the cell ministry. Yet, I did not sense that this
accountability system was overdone. Individual freedom and concerns are also respected.

47 For this reason, the cells bind together to provide public transportation. For example, a group
of cells in a particular area will pool their resources to contract a bus for the Saturday worship. The bus
not only picks up the group but also waits at church and takes them home again. The church allows those
cell groups living far away to take the first and third week offerings (in the cell group) to provide for
transportation.

prevents the supervisors, zone pastors, and district pastors from having to be available every night of the week.[48]

One Ministry at a Time

At AMV, one cannot hold more than a single ministry at a time. If one is on the leadership team in a cell group, he or she cannot be involved in such ministries as discipleship, leading worship, or teaching children. Conversely, if one is a children's teacher, he or she cannot be involved in cell leadership. In this way, there is no conflict of interest regarding ministry time and commitment. Yet, even if a person has another ministry, the one binding link to the cell group is the required cell attendance.

Cell-Based Church or Church with Cells?

I found myself constantly probing key cell leaders and persons with whom I talked as to whether or not AMV was truly a cell-based church. There were four reasons for this doubt (Table 29).

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48 This is very important since all of the district, zone, and area leadership positions are voluntary (non-paid).

TABLE 29

AMV: SIGNS THAT IT IS NOT A CELL CHURCH

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART	• The organizational chart at AMV places the head pastor at the top, the two co-pastors underneath, and the various directors on the same level underneath the pastors. In other words, the cell director is on the same level as the director of worship, counseling, and children's ministry.
LACK OF OFFICE SPACE	• One could not tell from the office space that AMV is a cell church. Until recently, all of the cell activities were carried out in one large office. • In the early months of 1996, the four district pastors were each assigned an office. However, when I was there in November, 1996 the cell offices did not compare to the offices of the counseling ministry, the radio ministry, nor the printing ministry.
PAID STAFF	• As of November 1996 there was only one full-time director for the cell ministry. • The district pastors and the zone pastors all have full-time jobs.
ROLE OF SENIOR PASTOR	• Pastor René, the senior pastor, is not directly involved in the cell ministry. Although René, like all of the other workers at one time, led a cell group, at this point he has tried to remove himself from the cell ministry. • He supports the cell ministry though approving the goals and encouraging growth, but he does not have direct weekly involvement.

René Peñalba told me that AMV was a cell church with specific programs.[49] Pastor Peñalba is not in agreement with those who say cell groups must be the only program of the church. He believes that cell churches that do away with all of these ministries run the risk of not meeting the needs of the people. For that reason, AMV has tried to walk the fine line of being a cell-based church with certain programs. Practically speaking, there are many signs that point to this fact (Table 30).

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49 Peñalba believes that a church needs some specific programs to meet the needs of the people (e.g., counseling, radio, children's ministry, and discipleship).

TABLE 30

AMV: SIGNS THAT POINT TO CELL-BASED ORIENTATION

HIGH RATIO OF PEOPLE IN CELLS AND IN CHURCH	• AMV has the highest ratio of cell attendance to church attendance that I have witnessed. Eighty-six percent of those who attend the cell groups also attend the church. A recent statistical study confirmed that 4,300 cell members attended the worship services in September 1996. Since 5,000 total adults attended the celebration service during that same period, it means only 700 adults out of the 5,000 adults were not consistently attending a growth group.
EVANGELISTIC GROWTH THROUGH CELL GROUPS	• AMV has the most highly developed system of cell group multiplication that I have witnessed. • Cells multiply rapidly and with strong quality. One thousand cell groups are projected for early 1997.
MINISTRY THROUGH CELL GROUP	• Cell groups are the primary place where one receives practical teaching, ministry training, development of ministry skills, and fellowship.
REQUIRED ATTENDANCE IN CELL GROUPS	• Attendance at a cell group is the only requirement that is foundational to all other ministries.
HIGHLY DEVELOPED CELL STRUCTURE	• The cell structure is highly developed and extends all over the city. • There is constant interaction between the various levels of leadership, and the Jethro system functions very well.
CELEBRATION ATTENDANCE BY DISTRICT	• The fact that each district occupies an entire service points out that cells are indeed the base of the church. • The fact that all cell leadership unite after each celebration service speaks of the high accountability required in this cell system.

Cell Groups

AMV defines a cell group in this manner,

Cell groups are small groups of members of the church that meet in different places of the city for the fundamental purpose of promoting the growth of each member through the fulfillment of three objectives: first, the Christian edification of the members; second, reaching the lost for Jesus Christ; third, the financial strengthening of the work (Peñalba and Bernhard 1995:7).

With this definition in mind, it is not surprising that AMV does not consider children's groups to be part of the cell structure. The main ministry for children is a highly developed Sunday School class that takes place every Sunday.[50]

Order

A growth group at AMV will include the following elements: welcome, announcements, worship, testimonies, prayer, teaching of the Word, offering, and refreshments. The meeting lasts for two hours (including refreshments and fellowship). The order of the meeting is supposed to be flexible. The manual says, "The order of the meeting can vary so that the group does not fall into a routine" (Peñalba and Bernhard 1995:24). At the same time, the leadership team plans each meeting very carefully beforehand.

Material

The lessons follow the pastor's sermon on a monthly basis. The director of the cell ministry receives outlines of the pastor' sermons for the following month. He develops those themes into a participatory, small group format. After receiving corrections from the pastoral staff, copies are made for the entire cell group and distributed at the monthly leadership meeting.

Various Aspects of Cell Meeting

There were various aspects to the cell meeting that were distinct at AMV. First, everyone in the meeting receives a copy of the lesson. Second, there is flexibility in the

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50 However, the groups can ask the children's ministry department to help them develop a group for children at the same time as the cell meeting (or a different time). As of November, 1996, there were some twenty-two children's groups working alongside the cell groups. However, they are still not considered official cell groups.

order of the meeting. Third, anyone of the five team members can lead the lesson. Fourth, the house is fixed and does not change from week to week.

Follow-up

For a person visiting the church for the first time, a four-week training course is offered.[51] A member of the cell group, normally the person geographically closest to the newcomer, disciples the newcomer using this training course. After the newcomer begins to attend the cell group on a regular basis, the cell leader (as opposed to the cell member) takes responsibility to disciple the new convert for the first year.[52]

TABLE 31

AMV: STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF CELL SYSTEM

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
• Successful multiplication. Each new group has a leadership team ready to reproduce. • Excellent organization within the cell group. • Perfect implementation of the Jethro system. • Very high percentage between those who attend the church and those who attend the cells.	• The organizational chart does not give sufficient place to the cell ministry. • The cell offices are not sufficient for such an important ministry. • There are not enough full time pastors involved in the cell ministry (only one). • There is not enough personal involvement of the head pastor. • Upper level leadership do not visit cell groups.

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51 Since 1994 more than 4,000 new people have visited the church. Of these 4,000 only fifteen percent actually completed the four lessons. However, from January 1996 to September 1996 the rate of lesson completion was fifty-two percent

52 This follow-up within the cell is not highly organized. Rather, it is more of a watchfulness and pastoral care that each cell leader offers to the newcomers.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Cell System

AMV has developed a strong, innovative cell structure. Their success in multiplication, the high ratio between cell and celebration attendance, and the cell structure itself are exemplary. However, as noted there are several areas of weakness that should be noted (Table 31).

<u>Summary of the Five Churches</u>

There are various organizational similarities and differences among these five churches. After analyzing their cell structure several key issues stood out.

Cell Organizational Patterns

The points common among all five of the case study churches included the following characteristics:

1. Dependence on Jethro System

2. Cell Ministry viewed as the backbone of the church

3. Cell attendance expected of everyone in the church

4. Cells in homes; training in church

5. Sacraments administered in the celebration service

6. Cell lessons based on pastor's message

7. Offering taken in cell meeting

8. Follow-up through cell ministry

<u>Dependence on Jethro System</u>

These churches would not have grown so large had it not been for the intimate care of each leader. All of these churches relied on a pastoral leadership plan to care for everyone in cell leadership. These churches relieved the burden of the head pastor by

providing a hierarchical structure of leadership that cared for the people groupings of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens (Ex. 18).

Cell Ministry Viewed as the Backbone of the Church

The one phrase that I heard over and over again in these churches was that the cell ministry was the *columna vertebral* (backbone) of the church. The vision passed down from leaders to members was that in order to receive any type of pastoral care, one must belong to a cell group.

Cell Attendance Expected of Everyone in the Church

The one thread that knit all of these churches together was the expectation cell attendance. Membership in the church meant participation in a cell group. The rock bottom requirement for ministry in these churches was regular attendance in a cell. These churches believed that celebration and cell attendance were two sides of the same coins--one was not sufficient without the other. In each church, at least sixty-five percent of those who attended the celebration service also attended a cell group.

Cells in the Home, Training in the Church

All of these churches used the home as the primary meeting place for the cell groups. On the other hand, training took place in the temple. The church building was utilized its maximum potential in order to prepare leadership to minister in the home.[53]

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53 MCI, MCE, and CCG even used the home to hold cell groups for children and all of the churches held youth and adolescent ministries within the home.

Sacraments Administered in the Celebration Service

None of the case study churches permitted their leaders to administer the Lord's supper within the cell. Baptism also took place within the celebration service, with the sole exception of AGV.[54] The fact that sacraments took place within the celebration meeting served to clarify that cell groups were not to function as "mini-churches." Rather, the cells fulfilled a complimentary role to the celebration service by allowing the members to experience the body of Christ and to become the people of God.

Cell Lessons Based on Pastor's Message

The five churches based their cell group lesson on the Biblical message that the pastor covered during the week.[55] Although each church used a different style or format for creating the lesson, without exception, the pastor's message was always the foundation.

Offerings Taken in Every Cell Meeting

Each cell group had a treasurer and collected a weekly offering. The common features included: two signatures for the counted money, church envelopes for the money, and delivery of money to the church on the following Sunday. All of the churches considered that the cell offering belonged to the church, although in the two cell churches special offerings were taken for bus expenses.

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54 AGV permitted the cell leaders to baptize those in the cell group.

55 In four of the cell churches, the lesson was based on the Sunday morning message, while at MCE the cell lesson was based on the mid-week teaching.

Follow-Up through Cell Groups

In all of these churches the cells discipled the visitors and new converts. New visitor cards were collected in the church and then distributed to the various cell groups who in turn discipled the newcomers. These churches provided some kind of organizational system through which results of the cell visits could be checked to discover whether or not the new person was actually attending the cell group.

**Organizational Differences
among the Case Study Churches**

These five cell churches followed many of the same general organizational patterns, but I also noticed some key differences:

1. Degree of cell administration

2. Same night cell meeting verses varied meeting times

3. Degree of statistical reporting

4. Place of children's ministry

5. Place of participation in cell meeting

Degree of Cell Administration

There was a great deal of difference with regard to the level of cell-based administration. MCI was the least organized and the most confusing to follow, while MCE and CCG were extremely organized according to the traditional Pure Cell format.[56] Although AMV followed the same Pure Cell model, their organizational chart parted from that model.

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56 Every leader had his place in the organizational chart and the system was very easy to follow due to the clear role of each person.

Degree of Statistical Reporting

Although all the churches required statistical reporting, there was a huge gap in the amount required. Although CCG was very organized and statistically up to date, MCE is the premier example of statistical control within a Latin church. Approximately 120,000 people are tracked with precision every week.[57] On the other hand, the other three cell churches expressed concern and doubt about burdening the membership with weekly statistical reporting.

Same Night Cell Meeting Verses Varied Meeting Times

Certain case study churches allowed the cells more flexibility concerning the time of meeting. For example, at AMV and MCE all cell activities are on the same days of the week (including cell meetings, cell team planning meetings, and zone leadership meetings). For these churches the uniformity brings clarity and makes the job easier for the top leadership. On the other hand, MCI emphasizes flexibility and decentralization. At CCG and AGV the cells meet at various times during the week, but the training sessions are held on the same evening.

Place of Children's Ministry

In this area, I discovered great differences. MCE promotes separate children's groups in the same house and on the same night that the cell meets. The children are never present in the adult meeting (with over 56,000 children attending their cell groups every week, MCE speaks the most authoritatively about cell ministry to children). On

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57 When MCE declares that over 116,000 people attended their cell groups "last week" they have counted every one of them. The leadership seems to respond without complaining. However, the leadership at CCG did verbalize some resistance.

the other hand, both AMV and AGV lacked an effective children's ministry through the cell groups.

At MCI, an entirely separate ministry department encompasses the weekly children's cell groups (similar to Bible clubs) along with the children's congregational meeting. CCG has planted hundreds of children's cell groups all over Guayaquil, Ecuador, but also has a separate children's Sunday School program.

Place of Participation in Cell Meeting

The amount of participation in the cell meeting is a key area of difference. MCI, MCE, and AGV all follow Cho's example of Bible study/preaching in the cell group. The cell leader teaches or in the case of MCE, preaches the lesson. AMV tries to find a balance between leadership direction in the study, while at the same time allowing greater participation among the cell members. CCG was the only case study cell church that encouraged complete cell member participation during the cell meeting.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have described the cell-based organizational structure of the five case study churches. I have noted that some more closely followed a Pure Cell model, while others exercised more flexibility and creativity. I also tried to point out the key organizational similarities and differences in these churches. In the next two chapters I will focus more specifically on leadership patterns (Chapter 8) and multiplication factors (Chapter 9) of cell-based ministry.

CHAPTER 8

LEADERSHIP PATTERNS

From the study of these five case study churches, I have become increasingly aware of the importance of effective leadership in cell ministry. In this chapter, I will describe the process of leadership selection, training, and ongoing care that are present in these case study churches.

La Misión Carismática Internacional

The goal of this church is to make every person that enters the church a leader of a cell group. Unlike Cho, who believes that only those with the gift of evangelism can be leaders (Cho 1984a), Pastor Castellanos encourages everyone to be a leader.[1]

Leadership Requirements

To be a cell leader, one needs to be baptized in water and the Holy Spirit (with the evidence of speaking in tongues) and fulfill the duties of church membership (e.g. attending the main church services, tithing, and demonstrating faithfulness to the church). Holy living is repeatedly emphasized as well as maintaining a godly family life. The top leadership does not hesitate to remove people who are not living godly lives.[2]

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[1] I was told that Pastor Castellanos often gives invitations for people to become cell leaders.

[2] I repeatedly heard stories of leaders being removed because they were living in sin, had a "spirit of pride," or were in ministry because of their talent instead of their commitment to Christ. The young people require that a leader is fruitful in multiplying cell groups if he or she wants to remain in leadership. The story is told of the drummer who was given one month to multiply ten cell groups or resign. Supposedly, he was in leadership because of his talent and not his heart for ministry. He resigned.

Leadership Training

César Fajardo, the overseer of 3,600 cell groups (March 1997), told me that the key to cell success is raising up quality leadership. He believes that MCI is experiencing such amazing church growth due to quality leadership.[3] In order to become a cell leader one must overcome at least three hurdles.

Step One: First Encounter Retreat

These are regular spiritual retreats that take place every weekend at designated retreat centers (e.g., ranch home, farm house). The purpose is to make sure that the person who receives Christ during an altar call has truly experienced the Christian life. During the Encounter, each person receives concentrated teaching about liberation from sin, the sanctified life, and the baptism of the Spirit.[4] Attending an Encounter Retreat is the first step required for leadership.

Step Two: First Semester of Leadership School

After the Encounter Retreat, the person attends a course designed to train new cell leaders. They call it C.A.F.E. 2000, which basically means, "Cells of Family Training and Evangelism." The training material gives the potential leader the basic foundational principles for leading a small group. The material is very basic and straightforward.[5] These leadership training meetings take place throughout the week within the church.

I am reminded of how John Wesley did not hesitate to remove "class" leaders if they were not living in holiness. At the same time, it seemed to me that some of the reasons for removal were very subjective. I heard of several leaders being removed or strongly warned about having a "spirit of pride." This surely has to do with not being submissive to those in charge. There seemed to be very little room to criticize the system.

3 This church estimates that they are able to keep eighty-five percent of their new converts due to their follow-up and training program.

4 It is my understanding that almost everyone comes back with the gift of tongues.

5 There are primarily two books used for the leader training time. The first is called, _El Lider En Los Grupos,_ The second manual is called _Encuentro_ (Encounter). This book was written by César Castellanos (1996).

When I was at MCI in October 1996, it was estimated that there were some fifteen leadership training schools in session every day with a total of approximately 3,000 students.

Step Three: Second Encounter Retreat

In October 1996, attendance at a second Encounter Retreat was only a requirement for the youth cells group leaders.[6] This second retreat is designed to reinforce the commitments made at the first retreat and to instill final principles in the potential leader before he or she launches the cell group.

Second and Third Semester of Leadership School

The core cell leadership training lasts three months, but the deeper levels of training extends to nine months. During this second and third semester, there is deeper level teaching about false cults, false philosophies, and the core values at MCI. By the time the student enters the second semester, he or she should be leading a cell group which forces the student to learn both theoretically as well as practically.[7]

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6 It is common knowledge at MCI that the ministry of the young people is the most effective in the entire church. I heard from several leaders that ideas and methods are first proven among the young people and if they work they are implemented in the entire church. I would not be surprised if the "Second Encounter Retreat" concept would soon be a requirement for all of the cell groups.

7 Oftentimes, there are more people in the first trimester than in the second and third. It is normal that the first three-month session begins with forty students, the second trimester starts with thirty-five, and by the last trimester there might be only twenty-two students.

Theological Education by Extension

If a leader desires deeper levels of training beyond the nine month courses, an excellent, proven extension course of theological education is offered.[8] Although this extension level course is not a required course at MCI, it does provide the opportunity for deeper level leadership training.

Leadership Trainers

At first, Pastor Castellanos and his original twelve disciples taught the leadership training courses. However, the demand brought on by the huge number of potential cell leaders required that Pastor Castellanos hand this ministry over to the staff of seventy. The seventy are also allowed to raise up exceptionally fruitful disciples (one with successful multiplication) to teach the leadership training course.

Training through the Twelve

As has been mentioned previously, the goal of cell leadership is not to merely lead a cell group, but rather to raise up twelve more cell leaders (disciples). Because every cell leader is in a discipleship group of twelve, there is no need for a large, ongoing training courses. The ongoing, personal care of cell leadership takes place within the weekly discipleship meeting.

Christian Community Agua Viva

AGV requires a rigorous training program for future cell leadership. Those who pass through the first year of training normally become cell leaders. They have also

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8 These "Theological Education by Extension" courses (called F.L.E.T.-Faculty of Latin American Theological Training) are developed by conservative Episcopalians in Argentina and are used throughout Latin America.

proven their commitment to the church. Approximately one half of the cell leadership is women, but of the fourteen current zones leaders, twelve of them are male.

Leadership Requirements

Along with the general leadership characteristics mentioned in the New Testament, potential cell leaders at AGV must: be baptized in water and the Holy Spirit (with the evidence of speaking in tongues), complete the first year of training, be a member of the church (as explained in the following section), and complete the four-week leadership training course. The future challenge for AGV will be to have enough trained people to meet the needs of their emphasis on rapid expansion.

Leadership Training

The total leadership training program at AGV lasts three years, but only one year is required for cell leadership. The first year provides teaching on the basic doctrines while subsequent years focus on more specific areas.

One Year Bible School

Of the three full years of Bible training at AGV, every potential leader must complete the first one.[9] Some 1,000 people are enrolled in doctrinal training every week. Table 32 illustrates their training system.

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9 Pastor Capuro told me that at times they have been extreme. For example, at one time, they required that only those who were interested in being leaders could go on to the next level of Bible Training. They later realized that they were cutting off a large number people who needed the Word of God.

Advanced Leadership Training

This is a required course for every potential cell leader and is taught by Pastor Juan or his wife Alicia. It lasts for two months and prepares a member to be a cell leader. Before taking this particular course, a person must have completed the first year training requirements.

TABLE 32

AGV: FIRST YEAR CELL TRAINING

COURSE I: BAPTISM CLASS	Members are encouraged to be baptized immediately after conversion. However, membership does not take place until the completion of the following courses.
COURSE II: BASIC DOCTRINE	Members are taught the doctrines of: God's love, salvation, forgiveness, and the Bible.
COURSE III: FOUNDATIONAL CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE I	Members are taught the doctrines of: Faith, knowing God, sin, the Holy Spirit, the gift of the Spirit, prayer, Bible meditation.
COURSE IV: FOUNDATIONAL CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE II	Members are taught the doctrines of: blood covenant, future things, stewardship, divine healing, spiritual battle, liberation, more about Bible meditation.
MEMBERSHIP	It is at this time that one can be a member of AGV.

Second Year Ministerial Training

This second year training is not a requirement for cell leadership. Rather, it is designed to give advanced training for those who desire to go deeper. This course is normally taught by Pastor Alicia Capuro in the evening. It covers such topics as counseling, false cults, spiritual battle issues, and other fundamental doctrines. Only those who have passed through the first year of Bible training can take this course.

<u>Third Year Ministerial Training</u>

Juan Capuro teaches this third year of training. The goal is to cover the whole Old Testament. Only those who have taken the second year of ministerial training can take this course, and it is only offered once per year. It is complete with exams and homework. I was told that there are quite a few who begin the course but the number decreases as exam time approaches.

<u>Seminars</u>

Just about every 1½ months, AGV sponsors a seminar for the whole church. The seminar lasts for three days and the theme varies according to the guest speaker.[10]

Leadership Emergence

A poll was taken in 1992 for the purpose of discovering cell group effectiveness.[11] As a result of this poll it was discovered that sixty-four percent of the people converted in the cell group were led to Christ by cell leaders who had also been converted at AGV. This fact seems to confirm the fact that leadership raised up from within is most effective. This emphasis on homegrown leadership is evident at AGV. In the past no one could be a cell leader without having multiplied his or her group three times. Although now there is more openness to giftedness, talent, and calling, leadership at AGV continues to emerge naturally from within the existing structure.

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10 When I was there 1,500 people crammed into the auditorium every night to hear César Castellanos from Colombia. Earlier that year (1996) Peter Wagner taught a seminar at AGV.

11 I went over the results of this poll with Pastor Capuro. He repeatedly told me that it was an accurate poll with a representative sample.

La Misión Cristiana Elim

Leadership training at the *Misión Cristiana Elim* is very basic and much like that of other Pure Cell churches. However, because of the enormous success of this church, it is important to understand how leaders emerge at MCE and how they are trained.

Leadership Requirements

The leadership requirements are minimal at MCE. They include six months of being a Christian, membership in a cell group, baptism in the Holy Spirit (as evidenced by speaking in tongues), baptism in water, and completion of the four-week leadership training.

The heaviest requirement is the time commitment. According to this schedule, the supervisor and cell leader must attend five meetings per week.[12] Of course there are other commitments such as visitation, all night prayer meetings, fasting days, and the weekly statistical reporting.[13]

Leadership Training

The cell training at MCE is very simple. There are very few initial requirements. This is partly due to the diligent ongoing care that each cell leader receives. For example, MCE prepares the lessons in written form for the cell leader, and then diligently trains the leader on lesson delivery every week. Little is left for chance.

Training in the Group

The separate planning meeting (in homes on Thursday night) for all cell teams adds an important element of on-the-job training. A potential leader might begin as an

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12 Monday, expository teaching service; Tuesday, zone pastor meeting with supervisors and cell leaders; Thursday, cell planning meeting; Saturday, cell meeting, and Sunday, normal services.

13 Time-wise, it seems much easier to be a zone or district pastor than a cell leader or supervisor.

assistant, music leader, treasurer, secretary, or children's Bible leader. Through this methodology leadership is primarily "caught" as opposed to being "taught."

Bible Training in the Church

The mid-week expository Bible teaching service is designed to provide foundational Bible training. The Calvinistic emphasis and strict interpretation of the Bible is often highlighted during these meetings. This is the main (and practically only) channel for a future leader to receive Bible training.[14]

Four-Week Cell Group Training

A four-week training course is a prerequisite to cell leadership. Normally, the district pastor teaches this course, with the help of a zone pastor. Each district offers this course repeatedly throughout the year. The following table explains the content of this leadership training course:

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14 There are no outside Bible classes, TEE, or Bible institute training. Membership is taught a certain interpretation of Scripture without much further exposure. Although each cell leader preaches with loud fervor, theres is not a lot of "in-depth" Biblical preparation.

TABLE 33

MCE: NEW LEADER TRAINING COURSE

FIRST WEEK	The Calling to Lead The Vision of the Cell Group The Reason for Cell Groups
SECOND WEEK	Requirements and Characteristics of Leadership Lesson Preparation
THIRD WEEK	How the Cell Groups Operate How the Cell Group Multiply
FOURTH WEEK	Administration and Organization of Cell Groups Final Exam

Ongoing Pastoral Help

This is the strong point of leadership training at MCE. The Jethro system at MCE is highly developed. Zone pastors meet weekly with supervisors and cell leaders to teach the weekly lesson, so that they in turn can teach it to their groups. Encouragement, motivation, and vision are transmitted during these meetings.

Another area in which MCE excels is the "high touch" supervision of top leadership. Each week, the supervisors, zone pastors, district pastors, and even senior pastor visit a different planning meeting on a rotating basis. In this way, the top leadership can offer practical help to those in cell leadership.

Further Training

They do not encourage their leadership to study beyond the training that they receive in the church. Partly, this is due to the fact that they are very concerned that no

one strays from pure doctrine. Although they do not criticize further study, they also do not encourage it.[15]

Leadership Functions

The major leadership principle at MCE is that all leadership must be in the battle. No one is exempted. For example, Jorge Galindo, the head pastor at MCE, attends a different cell group every Saturday.[16] It is worth repeating that each week, every district pastor and zone pastor must attend both a Thursday team cell group as well as the normal Saturday cell meeting. MCE wants to make sure that top leadership stays in tune with what is practically happening in cell ministry.

The district pastor, a salaried staff person, is responsible for his entire district. Each district pastor has approximately 675 groups under his care and some 14,500 people. The district pastor principally works with his twelve zone pastors to care for the district. He is regularly involved in preaching (including Sunday morning) and administering the sacraments for his particular district.

The zone pastor, a salaried staff person, oversees the supervisors under his care. He might have from fifteen to thirty supervisors under his care. For this reason it is not uncommon for a zone pastor to be responsible for one hundred groups and between 1,000 to 1,500 people. The pastor visits his supervisors and cell leaders, preaches during the mid-week service, and administers the sacraments to his zone.[17]

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15 I was told that no one in present leadership is promoted because of higher level Bible training. It is simply not a factor in upper leadership training.

16 I was very impressed by the commitment of Jorge Galindo to the cell ministry. He realizes that the head pastor is the key to the success of the cell ministry, and he is involved in weekly planning meetings with the district pastors, weekly encouragement of the zone pastors, and weekly attendance in a cell.

17 Unlike some cell churches, the zone pastors at MCE are not encouraged to visit a set number of people.

The role of supervisor is not a paid position at MCE, but it can be a full-time job.[18] I was happy to know that supervisors are not supposed to lead cell groups at MCE, so that they can freely rotate among their five groups. Women can be supervisors but only over women's groups.

At MCE each leader only has one group. The goal of the cell leader is to multiply the group, and he does this by first developing his cell team. The cell leader tries to delegate tasks to every member on the team, so that they in turn will eventually be prepared for cell leadership.

El Centro Cristiano de Guayaquil

The strongest facet of this church's leadership development is the ongoing training that takes place every Tuesday night. CCG has been successful in assuring that a large part of their cell leadership attends this ongoing training session. CCG also has an excellent program for those who desire to receive more in-depth preparation. There are many opportunities, from Bible classes in the church to Bible Institute Training.

Leadership Requirements

Leadership requirements at CCG include salvation, baptism in water, attendance at a cell group, and completion of the four week cell leader training course. Although an Assembly Of God church, it was the only case study church that did not require that the cell leader speak in tongues.

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18 The supervisor has five required meetings that he or she must attend each week.

Leadership Training

As of October 1996 there were 1590 groups, yet only 810 leaders. It appears that CCG has not been able to train leaders quickly enough to meet the burgeoning needs of a growing cell ministry. In general, CCG excels at providing ongoing training for existing cell leaders, but lacks the capacity to rapidly raise up new cell leadership.

In the Cell

The cell leader at CCG is encouraged to raise up new people in his group. However, I did not notice a clear leadership training program within the cell group at CCG. In fact, after talking with many leaders, I arrived at the conclusion that proportionately few of the 1,600 cell groups have interns or assistant leaders. Their goals to open new groups seem to have outweighed their capacity to provide sufficient leadership.

Initial Four-Week Training

Once a person has received baptism, is attending the cell group, and wants to be a leader, he or she must attend a four-week training class that takes place on Sunday evening. The four-week course covers the main points of the CCG manual. After attending that four-week course, the person can officially lead a cell group, although further training is encouraged. When I was present in October 1996, between twenty and thirty potential cell leaders passed through the four-week course each month.

Required Tuesday Night Training

Every Tuesday night, the cell leaders gather in the sanctuary at CCG to receive training. The training is divided into three parts. During the first part, all of the leaders meet in the sanctuary to receive skill training about how to be a more effective cell leader

(e.g., listening and counseling). This portion of the training lasts about forty-five minutes.[19] During the second part, the head pastor reviews the lesson for the upcoming week.[20] The lesson is based on the pastor's weekly sermon. Finally, all of the cell leaders break up into smaller groups with their zone pastors and supervisors in order to review statistics, set goals, and plan for the future.

Sunday Morning Training

On Sunday morning there are several Bible classes offered. These courses are open to all members of CCG and not just potential cell leaders. On any given Sunday, there is normally an average of five hundred adults who take these courses. The core courses can be completed in one year and are designed to give the student a deeper understanding of the Christian faith. There are three courses offered the first year (Christian Growth I, II, III) that teach basic Christian doctrine. After completing these three courses the person goes on to complete Discipleship I, II, and III. It was difficult to determine the percentage of cell leadership that had completed all of the courses offered on Sunday.[21]

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19 As of October 1996, there were approximately four hundred leaders present each Tuesday evening. When I was present, a professional counselor taught on how to counsel those in the cell groups. Each cell leader received a handout. It was very practical and informative.

20 For the lesson training, the adult leaders meet in the sanctuary and the those who lead groups for children or youth meet in different rooms due the different slant of the material. However, it is my understanding that all lessons are based on the pastor's weekly message.

21 I talked with two district pastors and several zone pastors about the percentage of leaders who have taken all of these courses. They told me that a large percentage have not. At this time, there is a new attempt among the pastoral staff to stir up leaders to take this training.

Cell Congress

Every six months there is a cell congress at CCG. I was told that some 800 people were present at the 1996 congress.[22] The congress begins on a Friday night and continues through Saturday. There are two major emphases: first, to train and teach new cell leaders, and second, to instruct those cell leaders already leading a group in a variety of skill training.

Bible Institute

CCG has their own Bible Institute that meets four nights a week within their own church facilities. It is a four-year Assemblies of God Bible Institute for the purpose of training Christian workers. All district leaders and zone pastors must have previously graduated from the institute or be enrolled in the institute with the goal of graduating.

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Leadership Functions

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The leadership functions at CCG are well organized and clearly distinguished. Pastor Jerry Smith is responsible for the overall vision and direction of the church.[23] He takes this responsibility seriously and stays in close contact with the cell ministry.

Each of the three district leaders at CCG have distinguished themselves as responsible, successful, and called to the ministry. All of them have a Bible degree from a recognized institute. The district leader is directly responsible for the growth of his particular district and is an overseer to the zone leaders. One of the three district pastors was female.

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22 Of the 800 people present at the 1996 congress, I was told that almost half were from other churches.

23 In Smith's absence, Pastor José Medina has taken on the responsibilities of the head pastor. José Medina has been with Smith from the very beginning. He told me that due to his long acquaintance with Jerry, he is able to know what decision Jerry would make at any given time.

The zone leader is normally selected because of his or her prior success in the cell ministry. Before such rapid growth occurred in the cell ministry, Smith required that a zone pastor also have a Bible degree. Now, it is permissible to study while ministering as a zone pastor. As of October 1996, there were an average of eight zone pastors in each district. Six of these twenty-three zone pastors were women. From my conversations with zone leadership, I gathered that they spend the majority of their time in prayer, planning, and visitation. Zone pastors are required to make forty visits each week and thousands each year (Smith 1995:32). They must report a variety of statistical information every week--including how they spend their time each day.

Supervisors are lay people who oversee several cell groups (approximately four cell groups per supervisor). At CCG, they often lead their own cell group as well. The supervisor spends most of his time visiting, administrating, and meeting with cell leaders.

The leader of the cell group is at the very heart of the cell system at CCG. According to the manual, every cell leader makes it his goal to win two friends to Christ, make sure those friends are baptized in the church, develop an assistant cell leader, and multiply the group in six months (1995:24). Overall, I estimated that more than half of the cell leaders are women.[24]

The host of the cell group opens their house for the cell group to meet, serves the refreshment to the cell members, and tries to create an atmosphere of love. This person plays an important role at CCG.[25]

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[24] This conclusion is based on my observations at the leadership training where all leaders were supposed to be present, looking at the lists of cell leaders, and talking with several leaders.

[25] Pastor Johnny, one of the three district pastors, told me that the difference between the success and failure of a cell group is often the change of host.

El Amor Viviente

Cell leader training at AMV is both practical and theoretical. The first part is "caught" while participating on the cell team and the second part is "taught" in the seminar format as well as a special type of training that AMV calls "Discipleship."

Leadership Requirements

If one decides to be involved in cell ministry, he or she must be a Christian for two years, be a regular member of a cell group for one year, be the assistant cell leader first, be baptized in water and in the Spirit, pass the interview with the district supervisor, enroll in the discipleship training, and have the proper disposition (e.g., correct attitudes, good testimony, submission to authority).

Nothing is done hurriedly or whimsically at AMV. Possibly, it is for this reason that the cell groups have experienced consistent growth. Unlike other cell ministries in which leaders often have two or more groups, at AMV each leader can only direct one growth group.[26]

Leadership Training

Leadership training at AMV is a very straightforward process with a strong emphasis on practical training. Although some theoretical training is provided, the majority of training is practical and learned on-the-job.

On-the-Job Training for Potential Cell Leadership

The fact that a cell leader must first be a cell assistant assures that all those who eventually are cell leaders have passed through the normal progression of ministry

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26 This same principle applies to the cell members, who are allowed to attend only one cell group.

experience. Because cell multiplication is a vital part of the cell groups, the cell assistant is aware that eventually he or she will become the cell leader in the new group.

Seminar Training

The seminar system is used quite frequently at AMV. Before starting the cell group, new leaders are trained in a one-day seminar. There is also a yearly three-day cell congress in which cell leaders are trained in the fundamentals of cell ministry. Other specialized seminar training is offered at AMV throughout the year.

Discipleship Training

One of the requirements for anyone entering cell leadership is to be enrolled in discipleship training. Although discipleship training meets for one hour before the two major services on Saturday evening, it cannot be compared to a Sunday School program. Discipleship at AMV is a creative balance of both personal training and classroom instruction. It touches both the heart and the head (Table 34).

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Leadership Functions

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The leadership functions are many and varied at AMV. Following are some of the most important responsibilities of the key cell leadership.

The head pastor oversees the entire cell ministry. He works with the cell director to confirm goals and to plan for the future. He is also available to speak to the cell leaders when called upon. However, for the most part he is not directly involved with the cell ministry on a weekly basis.

Although the senior pastor is the official head of the cell ministry, the director of the cell ministry is the one who does is most responsible. This person pastors the district

superintendents, oversees the direction of each district, and coordinates all of the cell ministry activities. As of November 1996 he was the only one on full-time salary.

TABLE 34

AMV: DISCIPLESHIP CONCEPTS AND REQUIREMENTS

INITIAL REQUIREMENTS	· Potential disciples must initially apply before being accepted into discipleship. Next, an interview is conducted. · Unless the student is involved in a cell group, he or she cannot enter the discipleship program; The person must also be converted for two years.
LEVELS OF TRAINING	· Discipleship is taught in three, one year segments (lasts three years). One cannot enter the following year without graduating.
PERSONAL TRAINING	· Personal interaction is valued. Discipleship groups are divided into units of ten to fifteen people; Each group has its own discipleship trainer who stays with that group throughout the year. · The mentor/discipler visits with the student outside the class, contacts the person's cell leader, and observes the disciple's behavior.
EMPHASIS ON PERSONAL HOLINESS	· Knowledge of Bible doctrine is part of the training. Disciples are also encouraged to have their devotions each week, probed on their attitude toward authority, and conduct in marriage. · If a person persists in sin and does not change, he or she is asked to leave the program. · Each group has at least three annual all night prayer meetings each year.
EMPHASIS ON HOMEWORK AND GRADING SYSTEM	· There is a highly developed point system for completion of homework (the homework is often very practical such as witnessing to your neighbor, or having your devotional time). · A student cannot graduate if absent ten or more times.
BIBLICAL TRAINING	· The discipleship groups use text books such as More Than A Carpenter by Josh McDowell. · The first year of discipleship training consists of fourteen courses (five to fourteen weeks) which cover topics such as spiritual authority, false cults, administration, Bible doctrine, and the gifts of the Spirit.

The district superintendent oversees one of the eight geographical districts. As of November 1996 each superintendent had close to 200 cell groups under his care. He oversees the zone leaders within his district (average of seven zones per district), makes sure that each zone is participating in the activities of the church, and that the goals of the church are being fulfilled. The district superintendent does not visit the cell groups.

As of November 1996 there were twenty-seven zones and zone leaders at AMV. Each zone is broken down into areas which are cared for by supervisors. Therefore, the main job of the zone leader is to make sure that the area supervisors are growing in the Lord, strengthening the groups under their care, and fulfilling the cell ministry goals.[27]

It appears that the position of area supervisor is one of the most vital at AMV. It is this person who works individually with the cell leadership teams as well as regularly visits the five cell groups under his or her care. The area supervisor must assure that each cell group has a functioning leadership team and that each group is participating in the various activities of the church.

The cell leader is responsible for the care of the cell group. However, in this system, he is not alone. The leadership team accompanies him. Therefore, the cell leader must direct both the leadership team and the cell group.

The leadership team is the most fundamental unit at AMV. It is made up of three principle members and two members at large. The team members include the leader, the assistant (preparing to lead the next cell group), the treasurer (counts the money and delivers it to the church each week),[28] and two members at large (who take part in the planning process, serve as replacements, and prepare to fill one of the positions in the new cell group). At AMV, any member of the leadership team is allowed to fulfill any role in the growth group (e.g., lead the lesson, lead worship).

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27 More recently at AMV it was determined that the zone leader needs to have more contact with the cell groups. It appears that this role had become more administrative. The zone leaders were not supposed to visit the cell groups, and thus it seems that their effectiveness was diminished. AMV is trying to correct this problem.

28 At times the administration might have a meeting of all the treasurers to share a pressing financial need in the church. All of the money received in the group goes directly to the church, with the exception of those groups who need to contract buses for the Saturday service. In that case, every other offering is for the church. Treasurers are entrusted to receive the tithes and offerings of the people.

<u>**Summary of the Five Churches**</u>

As a result of the research on these five case study churches, various leadership patterns have emerged. I have also noticed distinct differences which need to be analyzed.

Similar Cell Leadership Patterns

Various leadership patterns emerged from this study which will be helpful for those conducting cell-based ministry. These patterns can be seen in the following list:

1. Strong leadership of head pastor

2. Leadership governed by vision

3. Clear leadership requirements

4. Required new leader training course

5. Heavy time commitment for cell leadership

6. Elevation in ministry based on past success

7. Leadership raised up from within the church

<u>**Strong Pastoral Leadership**</u>

These churches were led by strong pastors. The cell system flowed from the authority of the senior pastor. I detected a great respect and willingness to follow among the members of these churches. All of these senior pastors held unchallenged authority. I noticed a certain pattern of Christian *caudillo* leadership (discussed in chapter 5).

<u>**Leadership Governed by Vision**</u>

Without exception these pastors were men of vision and dreams. Their ultimate church growth goals envisioned hundreds of thousands of people. They were out to conquer a city for Christ--not just grow a church. Two of the pastors openly talked about

the importance of dreaming big dreams and used Cho as their example. Because of the pastoral vision, the congregation in turn sensed that they were part of a work greater than themselves and that God Himself had spoken to their pastor.

Clear Leadership Requirements

All of the cell churches had clearly defined cell leadership and training requirements. Although these requirements varied from church to church, the core requirements included: salvation, water baptism, cell attendance, and completion of cell training.

Leadership Training Course for New Leaders

Even if a potential cell leader met the basic leadership requirements, in each of these churches there was still the need to complete a leadership training course. Although the length and demands of the course varied, two characteristics were similar: this course was taught by pastoral staff and the course always covered cell organization, cell vision, and New Testament leadership requirements.

Heavy Time Commitment

All of these churches expected a large time commitment from their leaders. CCG and AGV required the least--only two cell meetings per week besides the normal church services. MCI encouraged their cell leaders to attend at least three cell related meetings per week as well as the weekly congregational and celebration meetings. MCE and AMV required three cell related meetings for all those in leadership.

Elevation in Ministry Based on Past Success

Elevation in ministry to higher positions of leadership was primarily the result of previous success in cell multiplication. Although calling and personal qualities were taken into account, the ultimate test was past success as a cell leader. Bible school training was not a major factor in elevation to top leadership.

Home Grown Leadership

These churches did not look beyond themselves to fill their top leadership positions.[29] Without exception, all leadership had to go through the normal channels of ministerial experience, ministerial success, and leadership training within the church before being lifted up to higher positions.

Cell Leadership Differences

Along with the patterns of cell leadership, there were some distinct differences. The following list highlights those differences:

1. Active involvement of top leadership

2. Statistical comparison among cell leadership

3. Amount of leadership training requirements

4. Success in raising up new leadership

5. Degree of focus on team structure

6. Higher levels of cell leader training

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29 I am referring here to pastors, district leaders, zone leaders, supervisors, cell leaders, and administration.

Active Involvement of Top Leadership

In four of the churches, all of the top leadership were personally involved in cell ministry. MCE required that district pastors, zone pastors, and supervisors visit both the planning meeting on Thursday night and a cell meeting on Saturday night.

Three of the head pastors in the case study churches were very much involved in the cell ministry. These pastors realized that they could not simply delegate this ministry to someone else.[30] The one exception was the top leadership at AMV. The head pastor chose to delegate the cell ministry to another director and only became involved when petitioned.

Statistical Comparison of Cell Leadership

Two of the churches statistically compared leadership effectiveness by cell group multiplication, adult cell attendance growth, children's cell attendance growth, conversion and baptism. The purpose of such comparisons was to stimulate healthy competition, and so that everyone would know exactly where they stood. At the same time, three of the churches did not practice such leadership comparisons.

Amount of Leadership Training Requirements

As mentioned, all of these churches required that a leader fulfill certain requirements and basic training. However, the amount and content of the training varied greatly from church to church. CCG and MCE provided the easiest training course. In these churches, if the potential leader fulfilled the simple, basic leadership requirements, he took a four-week training course that prepared him to lead the cell group. AGV, on the other hand, had the heaviest requirements with at least one year of Bible training.

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30 Here I do not include César Castellanos because he is presently traveling outside of Colombia for six months out of the year. I am not sure about the amount of involvement that he has with the cell ministry at this time.

Success in Raising up New Leadership

The number of potential leaders available for future cell ministry greatly varied among these case study churches. MCI exhibited the greatest success in this area. With fifteen daily training groups and 3,000 potential leaders enrolled in any given week, this church is on the cutting edge of new cell leader training. CCG, on the other hand, seemed to have a scarcity of prepared leadership ready. Their multiplication of new cells had greatly exceeded their capacity to properly staff each cell group.

Both MCE and AMV relied on the team concept of cell multiplication which proved to be very effective. New potential leadership was initially placed on a leadership team which prepared to serve the future cell groups.

Degree of Focus on Team Structure

Three of the churches had little or no focus on team ministry in the cell group. In these three churches, many of the groups did not even have an assistant. On the other hand, MCE and AMV made team ministry a high priority. I believe that it is safe to say that these two churches were highly successful in mother-daughter cell multiplication because they focused on transforming the nucleus of each cell into a leadership team.

Higher Levels of Cell Leader Training

Most of the ongoing cell leadership training took place through the Jethro system and weekly or monthly training sessions. However, there were varying levels of emphasis on higher training among these churches. On one end of the spectrum, MCE did not provide any further Biblical training beyond the weekly expository teaching. On the other hand, CCG offered everything from adult Sunday school training to Bible Institute training where one could earn a degree. Somewhere in the middle of these two extremes were the other case study churches.

<u>Conclusion</u>

There seems to be a relationship in these cell churches between the ability to raise up strong leadership and cell group effectiveness which results in multiplication. I also noticed a qualitative edge in those cell groups who emphasized team ministry. Although all of the cell churches provided both pre-training for potential cell leaders and various types of ongoing training for actual leaders, not all of them utilized the team concept of ministry to train new cell leaders. In the next chapter we will look at how these churches multiplied their cell groups. We will also see how that leadership development plays an important role in cell group multiplication.

CHAPTER 9

CELL GROUP MULTIPLICATION

This chapter will examine the phenomenon of cell group multiplication and how it occurs in the case study churches. In these churches I noticed two distinct types of cell multiplication. I will call the first type "cell planting." This methodology takes place when a cell leader starts a new group from scratch (likened to pioneer church planting). This was the primary style of group multiplication at MCI and AGV.

I will call the second type of cell multiplication the "mother-daughter approach." This is when an existing cell group oversees the creation of a daughter group by providing people, leadership, and a measure of personal care (this is likened to mother-daughter church planting). This was the primary style of cell multiplication at AMV and MCE.[1]

La Misión Carismática Internacional

I do not believe that one can understand the cell system at MCI apart from cell group multiplication (cell planting). One only has to look at two huge banners that hang down the front part of the church. In October 1996, when I first visited MCI the two huge banners said, "10,000 groups by December 31, 1996." Since they surpassed the 10,000 cell group mark in January, 1997, there are two new banners which now say,

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1 CCG practiced both mother-daughter cell multiplication and cell planting, although it appears that their primary method is to plant cells from scratch.

"30,000 groups by December 31, 1997." The vision for cell group multiplication in this church is contagious.

Everyone is a Potential Cell Leader

César Castellanos told me that the goal of the church is to make every member at MCI a cell leader. As mentioned previously, the goal of every cell leader is to find his or her twelve disciples (to be a disciple one must also lead a cell group). Because each cell member is supposed to plant a cell group, there is not a long waiting process required to raise up new leadership.[2]

Leadership Rewards for Multiplication

Successful leadership is clearly measured in this church. In other words, successful leaders are those who have planted a number of new groups, have raised up new leaders to lead other groups, and are now leaders of leaders. If one has been successful in doing this, and is now training leaders, that person receives a promotion in the church. Most likely he or she will be asked to come on the pastoral staff. If that does not happen right away, at least there will be clear, positive recognition from within the church.

Examples of Successful Cell Leadership

To illustrate how this process takes place, I have chosen two examples of successful cell group multiplication at MCI. Both of these people have both multiplied their own groups as well as successfully raised up new leadership.

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2 I was amazed to see almost three-fourths of the 6,000 young people raise their hands to indicate that they were receiving training to be small group leaders.

Luis (Lucho) Salas

In June, 1994, Luis (Lucho) Salas started his first cell group. That cell group grew to thirty persons. In September 1994 his cell gave birth to a daughter group. However, beyond simply multiplying the group, Salas also made disciples among those thirty and raised them up to lead their own groups. By February 1995, less than nine months later, Salas was overseeing fourteen groups whose leadership he had discipled and developed. These groups were all developed under the department of worship. Pastor César Castellanos saw his progress and asked him to become part of the pastoral team. Therefore in October 1995 he left his groups under the care of others while he began his ministry directly under César Castellanos.

In January 1996 Salas started from scratch once again (since he was no longer under the ministerial department of worship). He began a new cell group which, in just one month, grew from ten to sixty people. That large group gave birth to several daughter cells and just three months later there were four groups with a total of eighty people. By August 1996, the small groups had increased to forty-six, an average of more than two per week over a five-month period!

While these groups were multiplying, Salas was busy training his twelve.[3] From among the eighty people and with the help of his twelve disciples, new potential leadership begin the required training training course (see Chapter 8). During my first visit to MCI in October 1996 Salas had 144 leaders in training with firm plans to open dozens and dozens of new cell groups.

What is the secret of his success? I ate dinner in his house, and he showed me list after list of possible contacts hanging on his bulletin board. He told me that he literally meditates on those lists of names and dreams of new contacts from both within the

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3 Salas allowed more than just his twelve to meet with him on a weekly basis for in-depth discipleship.

church and without. He eventually invites the people from his lists to become cell members and eventual cell leaders.[4]

However, there is a price for such great success. In October 1996, Salas personally was leading two cell groups, teaching his weekly leadership training school on one night and his discipleship group on another night, leading the morning prayer service, practicing with the worship group, and leading worship on Sunday morning. He, like many others at MCI, has meetings just about every night of the week.

Freddy Rodríguez

Freddy Rodriguez is another example of someone who has captured the vision for cell multiplication. In 1987, he became a convert and disciple of César Fajardo, the head youth pastor at MCI. Within three years he had found his twelve disciples. Those twelve sought and found twelve more and the process continued. As of March 1997, he was responsible for more than nine hundred cell groups. He continues to meet with his original twelve every week, as well as with about five hundred of his leaders on a weekly basis.

Successful Leaders are Able to Teach

For the most part, the seventy leaders under the direct care of Pastor César Castellanos teach the cell training classes. However, cell leaders who have been very successful in leading their own groups and raising up new cell leadership are often given opportunities to teach the leadership training classes. With over one hundred of these classes taking place during the week, new trainers are always needed.

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4 I also noticed a list of specific goals that Salas had made for each month of 1996/1997. It is no wonder that Pastor Castellanos often uses Salas as an example of amazing cell group multiplication.

The Key to Cell Multiplication: Leadership

At MCI, if a cell group does not multiply, the responsibility is placed on the leader. Pastor César Fajardo told me that if the group does not multiply rapidly, they often change the leadership.[5] They believe that the key to successful cell multiplication is leadership. I was told that the leadership at MCI do everything possible to keep the groups open. Only under unusual circumstances will they close a group. Again, it seemed clear to me that cell proliferation was more a result of raising up new leaders to lead brand new groups than a result of one cell giving birth to another cell.

Encouragement to Lead Several Groups

There is plenty of room at MCI for zealous leaders to serve. Leaders are encouraged to take on as many groups as possible. Ricardo, a youth cell leader, leads four cell groups and oversees five more. While working towards making his twelve disciples, he still has to lead most of the groups. However, his goal is to eventually delegate leadership of those cells to others.[6]

<u>Christian Community Agua Viva</u>

AGV serves as an example of a church that has been frustrated with their present system and has thus readily accepted another system which seems to offer more success. Because the church has only recently restructured their system, only time will tell whether or not this new methodology is the right choice.

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5 There is no set time for a group to multiply at MCI, but according to my questionnaire, it takes an average of $4^1/_2$ months.

6 Ricardo's example is very common at MCI. I could not believe it when one of the budding leaders among the professionals told me that he planned to personally lead twelve groups, while he slowly delegated them to his disciples. Although many of the cells are weak and small, the emphasis on multiplication helps the leader to develop important skills, evangelize friends and family, and care for the church at large.

Struggles with Multiplication

Pastor Capuro confessed to me that it has been difficult to give birth to new groups. He found that the Latin people like to stay together. Although they were obviously successful in using the mother-daughter approach (from eleven to 450), Pastor Capuro feels that the new methodology will be less painful and more fruitful.[7]

Emphasis on Planting New Cells

The new emphasis is on planting brand new cells rather than practicing mother-daughter cell multiplication. From now on the majority of new cells will be pioneered. However, the one who plants the new cell group will remain under the care of his original cell leader. The process is supposed to continue on down the line. Pastor Capuro is convinced that this will take away unneeded layers of administration and will speed up the proliferation of new groups.

Emphasis on Lower Level Supervision

Juan Capuro now meets weekly with his key zone leaders in order to disciple them. These leaders do the same thing with those cell leaders who are under their charge. Eventually, the goal is that the cell leaders will encourage those in the group to plant new cell groups while at the same time remaining within the mother cell group. Those who plant new cell groups will continue the same process.[8]

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7 Although Juan Capuro was more negative about past multiplication, one of the other key strategists and zone leaders at AGV spoke very positively to me about past multiplication.

8 The restructuring process has not yet reached down beyond the cell leaders. For this reason, everything is still theoretical. Because no one could yet speak from experience, I received some conflicting explanations about how the system will work. One person told me that those who plant the new cell groups will stay with their original cell group. Another person seemed to say that the cell leader will meet separately with the disciples in more of a leadership meeting atmosphere.

La Misión Cristiana Elim

MCE is the premier example of cell growth through multiplication. In just ten years, they have grown to over 5,400 cell groups (average of twenty-one people in each cell group) with a cell group attendance of over 115,000 people. The key to cell growth and multiplication at Elim seems to be a combination of clear goal setting, team planning, and excellent leadership follow-up (both through statistical control and the Jethro System).

Mother-Daughter Multiplication and New Plants

The goal of this church is to penetrate the entire city with the gospel. MCE does this through a combination of mother-daughter cell multiplication as well as cell plants to penetrate new areas.[9] Pastor Jorge Galindo told me that out of the 5,400 cell groups probably about 1,000 were cell plants, while the other 4,400 were the result of mother-daughter cell group multiplication. MCE is willing to start new cell groups by any means possible. In fact, when Elim first started their cell ministry, they opened new groups extremely rapidly, without as much concern for the qualitative aspects of the cells. They now are also interested in assuring that the groups are strong in quality.

Unique Aspects of Cell Multiplication

The remarkable cell growth at MCE has a lot to do with the rapid spread of the cell groups. There were at least two aspects of this system that are worth noting. First, there are no closures at MCE. They do everything possible to keep groups alive.[10] Second, MCE waits until there are twenty adults attending a given cell group before

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9 The main reason to plant new cell groups is when a new neighborhood is targeted. Because there are no other cell groups that could easily multiply in that area, it is often better to look for those who would be willing to open their homes and then provide a trained leader to start a new group.

10 I was told by one of the zone pastors that it was a "sin" to close a group.

multiplying. They strictly follow this rule unless the house is too small or the new daughter team is at a particularly high state of high readiness. Third, MCE multiplies the nucleus before multiplying the cell. Expansion of the leadership team is one of the major goals of the Thursday night planning meeting. Great care is given to prepare the new nucleus that will guide the daughter cell group.

Reasons for Success

Throughout Latin Ameica MCE is known for is success of multiplying strong cell groups. From my observations, there are at least four reasons for the multiplication success at MCE.

Goal Setting

Cell multiplication goals are made each year for each zone. The goals are simple. Each zone should double the number of groups, the number of attendance, and the number of conversions and baptisms. These goals are then divided by four to arrive at a trimester goal. Due to the "healthy competition" that exists between the pastors with regard to reaching those goals, there is a high degree of motivation to grow.

Team Planning

The Thursday night planning meeting for the team leadership seems to be a key factor behind the growth of the cell groups and the eventual multiplication. On Thursday night, strategies are developed to reach new people, visitation is planned, and the multiplication of the cell group is envisioned. It is during this planning session that the new team begins to take shape.

Organization

      The statistical follow-up of every meeting provides the pastors and supervisors the opportunity to analyze the progress of each cell group. It also motivates the leaders to continue to reach out. Beyond the statistical data is the smooth functioning Jethro system which provides help and training for the cell leaders. These two aspects of the cell system help the cells maintain a growth rhythm.

Evangelism

      The most effective form of cell outreach at MCE is through friendship evangelism. Leaders instruct their groups to make friends. After winning their confidence, they invite the person to the meeting. The goal is for the person to receive Christ and eventually become a member of the church. Other forms of cell evangelism are also practiced (e.g., door-to-door visitation, movies, dinners), but MCE has discovered that the most effective form of cell group evangelism takes place among family, neighbors, and friends.

El Centro Cristiano de Guayaquil

      CCG should be commended for their rapid growth. In 1992 to 1996 CCG grew from sixteen cells to the present 1,600, an average of 396 new groups per year!

Starting New Groups Versus Multiplication

      The cell groups at CCG are supposed to give birth within six months (Smith 1995:24). This is the goal of every cell leader. However, in reality, the vast majority of new groups are formed from scratch rather than from multiplying existing groups.[11]

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11 One leader gave me the figure of eighty percent (starting from scratch) versus twenty percent (multiplication). However, exact figures were not available. Although some cell groups do close at CCG,

Lack of Cell Leaders

On an average, every leader directs two groups at CCG (approximately 1,600 cell groups and 800 leaders). CCG does not always wait for the leadership to naturally emerge from the mother-daughter cell multiplication. Rather, if someone is willing to open his or her home for a cell group, frequently, the zone pastor will ask one of the existing cell leaders to direct the new group or will seek leadership from an existing cell group.

Reasons for Rapid Spread of Cell Groups

The spread of these small groups is truly amazing. There are several important reasons for the extension of these small groups.

Goal Setting

Each zone leader makes specific goals concerning the number of new cells, attendance in the cells, conversions, and baptisms. Each year new goals are made in conjunction with district pastors and are submitted to Pastor Smith for final approval. Every trimester there is a statistical analysis made (based on percentages) to demonstrate to the leader how close he is to reaching the goal.[12]

Evangelism through the Cell Group

More decisions are made for Christ in the cell groups than in the church services. I was told that those who receive Christ in the church service normally have already been prepared by the cell groups. Before starting the cell ministry, CCG administered a

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there is not a strict timeline for closure of the group if there has not been a multiplication. I was told that everything possible is done to keep the group going.

12 Each week the district pastor analyzes the progress of each zone pastor based on the zone pastors' yearly goals. The zone pastor does the same with the superintendents and the superintendents encourage the cell leaders.

complete Evangelism Explosion program. Although CCG still hosts an Evangelism Explosion clinic each year, the church has now adapted Evangelism Explosion to its present cell ministry. All of the cell leaders are encouraged to take Evangelism Explosion and the Evangelism Explosion visits are delegated according to the zones in each district.

It is important, I think, to note that leading someone to Christ is not the ultimate goal of the cell leader. Rather, the goal is to lead that person to baptism. In fact, no one in the church can be baptized unless he or she is part of a cell group. Baptismal applications are brought to the church by the cell leader and not by the applicant.

Visitation

Zone pastors make approximately forty visits each week. This amounts to about 920 weekly visits by the zone leaders to cell members, new converts, and visitors. The zone pastor is always alert to the possibility of opening a new home for a cell plant, multiplying an existing cell group, or recognizing emerging leaders. Many of the new groups start as a result of the diligent visits by zone pastors.[13]

Elevation in Ministry

Elevation in ministry at CCG is largely based on success at starting and leading cell groups. Most of the zone pastors and district pastors at CCG have their present position due to past success. Thus, the hope of many present superintendents and cell leaders is to one day reach the position of zone pastor or district pastor.

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13 I had the privilege of going on one of these whirlwind visitation tours in four, very poor neighborhoods in Guayaquil. I was very impressed by the dedication of this particular zone pastor.

El Amor Viviente

AMV is an exciting example of the effectiveness of cell group multiplication. In September 1996 they opened 200 new groups simultaneously. The new goal is to reach the 1,000 cell groups by 1997.

Unique Aspects of Cell Multiplication

Among the case study churches, AMV is an example of creativity and effectiveness with regard to mother-daughter cell multiplication. There are several aspects of their cell multiplication methodology that are unique to this church.

Simultaneous Multiplication

Cell groups at AMV multiply at the same time and normally on a pre-determined date each year.[14] There are various reasons for focusing on one date to multiply. First, the top leadership is able to think and plan together more concretely concerning future goals. Second, the training of new leadership teams can take place at the same time in the church. Third, leaders of sectors, zones, and districts are able to consolidate their time and energy by focusing on one particular time period of multiplication. Fourth, there is great support for the new cell groups when they open together, so that weaker groups will not fall through the cracks. Fifth, the church can better focus its attention on prayer and support when there is simultaneous multiplication.

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14 This is not to say a group cannot multiply beforehand if it is ready to give birth. However, these new births are the exceptions. I was told that only about ten percent of the new groups open at various times during the year. They purposely wait for one year because they believe that the cells need a period of solidification. There have been entire years when the focus is nurture as opposed to multiplication and thus, no groups multiply.

Multiplication at Ten People

For a long time, AMV waited until the group had fifteen people before multiplication. However, experience has taught them that it is difficult for a group to maintain an average of fifteen people over a long period of time. Therefore, a few years ago the leadership decided to change the number to ten.[15] If the group only has seven to nine people attending regularly, the supervisor will often ask the leader to make specific evangelistic goals to reach new people.

Team Concept

It is not sufficient simply to have ten people attending regularly. In order to multiply, the mother cell group must have a new team in place that is ready to form the nucleus of the new group. This team consists of at least three people: the leader, assistant leader, and treasurer. Without these three people in place, it is not possible to give birth at AMV. Another requirement is that a new home is found where the new cell can meet-- within the particular zone and area.

Relationship with Mother Church for Two Months

The mother-daughter concept of cell group multiplication is prioritized at AMV. The director of the cell ministry, Dixie Rosales, said that the mother-daughter concept of cell multiplication is the reason why the cell groups have maintained such high quality. He believes that one group must take responsibility for the health of the new group if the new group is going to succeed.[16]

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15 Some groups might have more than ten. The point is that when there is an average of ten people, that particular group is a prime candidate to multiply.

16 When new cells are planted from scratch, frequently no one takes responsibility for the new group.

At AMV, when a massive multiplication takes place, the newly formed cells meet on Tuesday night for the first three months. For these three months, the leadership team in the mother cell group which meets on Wednesday night also attend the meeting of the new cell group in order to offer support and encouragement.[17] After three months, the new cell groups switch their regular meeting time from Tuesday to Wednesday night and thus become official cell groups.

Counseling and Assessment for Two Months

When there is a massive multiplication, continual counseling and assessment takes place for the first two months. Every other Thursday night, the entire team (leader, assistant, and treasurer) meets with its immediate supervisor to receive edification from the Scripture, prayer, and counseling.[18] Along with the section supervisor, the district pastor and the zone pastor must also attend these assessment meetings.[19]

The Multiplication Process

At AMV there is an entire process for starting new groups, and it is not taken lightly. Normally, the process of cell multiplication begins at least five months in advance. Thus, the cell leader must work hard to raise up new leadership from within his or her group. He must encourage them to be baptized, take classes of discipleship, and participate in the life of the cell group. The following points illustrate the step-by-step process of multiplication.

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17 Obviously, this is quite a commitment for the mother cell group to commit to two meetings for three months. However, the leadership team is encouraged to meet on a rotating basis. For example, if there are five members on the leadership team, perhaps three will attend one Tuesday evening and two the next Tuesday evening.

18 A strict order which is found in their manual is followed during these counseling/assessment times.

19 I was told that the reason why the district pastor and the zone pastors must be present is to serve as examples.

Step One: Goals for Multiplication

The process of planning for new groups begins with the cell leader. First, he or she communicates the goal for multiplication with the area supervisor. Second, the area supervisor reports to the zone pastor who in turn reports to the district pastor. Third, the district pastor meets with the director of cell ministry to assess the number of groups that can multiply. The head pastor ultimately gives the final approval concerning how many cell groups will open.

**Step Two: Finding the House and New
Leadership Team**

One of the main goals for the leader is to find a house in the same area which will provide an acceptable environment. However, the cell leader is not alone in this process. First, his leadership team, which consists of at least three to five members, all work together in the multiplication process. Second, the supervisor meets personally with each leadership team on a monthly basis. One of the main objectives for these meetings is to discover, stimulate, and prepare the cell team to give birth to a new group.

Step Three: Selection of the Leadership Team

It is important to remember that a new group cannot start unless there is a leadership team consisting of leader, assistant leader, and treasurer.[20] Therefore, it is the constant goal of every group to form a new leadership team that will in effect serve as missionaries to open up a new growth group.[21]

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20 The director of the cell groups told me that he might allow a group to start if there is a combination of leader and assistant or leader and treasurer. However, he told me that there needs to be at least three members present to start the new group.

21 Actually the name "missionaries" is often given to the new leadership team.

Step Four: Interviews

About the third month before the mass multiplication, each new leader is interviewed by the district pastor. A series of questions are asked about the person's devotional life, marriage, available time for the church, and personal attitudes. The reason for the interview is to assure that the leader will remain strong under pressure and that the cell group has a good chance of surviving.[22]

Step Five: Training and Presentation

During the fourth month, there is a special training session for the new leadership team. This training session is specifically designed to meet the needs of the new leadership. The training covers such topics as: how to lead the lesson,[23] how to evangelize, how to develop the worship, and how to confront problems in the group. Before the cell groups multiply, the leadership teams are presented before the church. The whole church prays and fasts for the success of the new cell groups.

Step Six: Cell Group Evangelism

In the fifth and final month, there is an intense effort to evangelize in the area in which the new growth group will open. The new leadership team, members from the mother group, and oftentimes the area supervisor evangelize the neighborhood together.[24]

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22 Because of this in-depth process of leadership preparation before multiplication, I was told that only one of every ten cell groups fail. That is excellent.

23 For those initial three months, the new groups follow specific material called, "The Victorious Christian Life." These lessons are planned for twelve weeks and cover topics designed to teach faith, obedience, confession, trials, prayer, and the Word of God.

24 Cell groups at AMV are taught to reach out to their neighborhoods and communities. There are several ways that this evangelism takes place. First, the entire zone might plan an evangelistic activity (e.g., movie, special speaker) Second, the cell group might reach out to the neighborhood through some special type of outreach (e.g., invitation to Mother's Day celebration or a special dinner). However, these special group events must take place on another night other than Wednesday night. On Wednesday night, the group must follow the normal cell group format.

Finally, the day comes for the groups to open. The stage has been set and great care has been taken to assure the success of the new group.

Step Seven: Assessment

For the first three months after the birth of the new cell groups, the new cell teams meet with their new supervisors and zone pastors for prayer, encouragement, and counseling. This is an essential time for the leadership to receive vision and help.

Elevation in Ministry

Elevation up the leadership ladder in cell group ministry depends on several factors.[25]   However, one factor that is clearly distinguishable is that personal success leads to greater responsibility.[26]   Every person with whom I talked who now occupies a position of top leadership in the cell ministry is there because of past success in multiplication and leadership.[27]

Summary of the Five Churches

The cell-based case study churches manifested various patterns concerning cell group multiplication. It is important to remember that unless all five churches manifested the same characteristic, I did not include it in my own analysis.

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[25] Such factors might include the person's time commitment, spiritual commitment, or calling of God.

[26] For example, I spent most of my time at AMV with Dixie Rosales, the present director of the entire cell group ministry at AMV in Tegucigalpa. He started as a member of a cell group in 1986. He soon became assistant cell leader and then was asked to lead a new cell group. Eventually that new cell group gave birth to four more cell groups. Soon Dixie was asked to be the pastor of an entire zone, which had twenty-five cell groups. Because of his success as a zone leader he was eventually asked to direct the entire cell ministry.

[27] I was amazed that all of the district and zone pastors held full time jobs! They are not paid by the church, although they have incredible authority in the church. They truly are the church pastors.

Similar Cell Multiplication Patterns

There are several similarities that are helpful in understanding how cell-based churches proliferate their cell groups:

1. Rapid reproduction of cell groups

2. Emphasis on quantity

3. Non-closure of all groups

Emphasis on Rapid Reproduction of Cell Groups

Although different in their method of multiplication, all of these churches were primarily concerned about cell group evangelism. This was the clear focus of the cell ministry in each church. The cell vision was outward focused. Group fellowship was always present, but it was more of a by-product than the major goal. Evangelism that resulted in conversion and group membership was always the primary goal. Static, non-growing cell groups were simply unacceptable (at MCI, rapid multiplication of cell groups was a leadership requirement). In each church, the new cell leader immediately knew his mission--cell reproduction.

Emphasis on Quantity

All of these churches were unashamed to promote numerical church growth and the numerical cell growth. There was no hidden agenda or attempt to mince words. These churches proclaimed their growth goals before the congregation. Both CCG and MCI used highly visible banners or signs on the inside front wall of the church.

All of these churches made clear goals at the church level and at the cell level. They were unashamed about setting bold goals for growth and keeping their members informed about those goals.

Non-Closure of all Groups

None of the churches intentionally closed their cell groups. Although I had read about cell churches around the world which close groups that fail to multiply, this certainly was not true of these five Latin American cell churches. Rather, these churches went to great lengths to keep all of the cells functioning.

Differences in the Cell Multiplication Process

While all of the churches were highly committed to the proliferation of their cell groups, their methodology varied. The three major differences involved:

1. Cell planting verses cell multiplication

2. Mass multiplication verses spontaneous multiplication

3. Degree of Emphasis on cell health before multiplication

Cell Planting Verses Cell Multiplication

Perhaps, it is in this area that multiplication philosophy differed the most among the case study churches. MCI was almost entirely committed to planting new cells from scratch. Although there still is some mother-daughter cell multiplication, it is not a major emphasis at this time. AGV is now following the pattern at MCI, partly due to the struggles with mother-daughter multiplication in a Latin context.

On the other hand, AMV exclusively multiplied their cell groups through the mother-daughter method. They have discovered that cell groups fare much better when there is a responsible mother present.[28] Although MCE plants new cells and practices mother-daughter birthing, the vast majority are brought about by the latter method.[29]

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28 This church seemed to produce the healthiest cell groups of all those studied.

29 I was also very impressed with the cell groups at MCE. Since they require an attendance of twenty people before multiplying, I discovered that MCE normally produced strong daughter groups. CCG is a hard church to classify since its cell manual emphasizes mother-daughter cell multiplication, but in reality, the vast majority of their groups are planted from scratch.

Mass Multiplication Verses Spontaneous Multiplication

Four of the cell churches multiplied their cell groups at any time and on any day of the week. Interestingly, AMV set a particular multiplication date (usually once a year), and then would perform a mass mother-daughter multiplication.

Degree of Emphasis on Cell Health Before Multiplication

Some of the churches were far more concerned about creating strong, healthy cell groups, while other churches seemed to focus primarily on rapid multiplication. CCG and MCI fell into the latter category. The cell groups were produced rapidly, without a lot of thought concerning how many were in the cell, whether or not there was a cell team, or whether the cell was properly mothered. In these two churches, the goal of rapid proliferation seemed to outstrip quality care.[30]

On the other hand, MCE and AMV multiplied cells rapidly, but did a better job at maintaining excellent quality. This is partly due to their high degree of team emphasis.[31] At AMV a cell group cannot multiply unless there is a new leadership team. It was also the only church that set a distinct time period for the groups to solidify before multiplying.

Questionnaire: Cell Multiplication Factors

The primary motivation for this questionnaire was to discover key variables associated with cell group multiplication. Because the questionnaire was administered specifically to cell leaders, most of the findings relate to leadership patterns (Chapter 8). However, the questionnaire also revealed other associations such as homogeneity, social

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30 At the present time, the cell quality at AGV seems to be healthy, but they have now transitioned to follow the MCI model which emphasizes the "cell plant" philosophy.

31 MCE the cell teams meet weekly to plan and strategize, while at AMV they meet monthly.

status, and gender issues as they relate to cell multiplication. For this reason, the questionnaire in its entirety will be covered in this chapter.

Administration of the Questionnaire

Before administering the questionnaires, I obtained permission from those in authority. Normally, the cell leaders would fill out the questionnaires while I was present (e.g., in a cell leadership training meeting).[32] I tried to make the anonymity issue very clear to the respondents, telling them that there was no place for them to write their name. I urged them to answer the questions as honestly as possible. I tried to make the questionnaire clear and easy to follow, knowing the educational level of some of my respondents. While they were filling out the questionnaires, I made myself available to answer their questions.

Limitations of the Questionnaire

I purposely tried to disguise the dependent variables (cell multiplication questions) by placing them at the end of the questionnaire and by not announcing the importance of these questions. However, this proved to be a limitation for two reasons. First, those respondents who took more time felt pressured at the end, due to lack of time, and thus some respondents skipped over the last questions.[33] Another reason for the missing data was that these questions were harder and required more thinking, and thus some decided to leave them blank. If I were to do it over again, I would explain these

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32The exception was Perú, where the head pastor distributed the questionnaires to those cell leaders who were present at one of the Sunday morning worship services.

33 Three hundred thirteen people (seventy-three percent) filled out question twenty-five (length of cell) and 111 did not; 397 people (ninety-three percent) responded to question twenty-seven (multiplication-yes/no) and twenty-seven did not; 336 people (seventy-nine percent) responded to question twenty-eight (length of time for group multiplication) and eighty-eight did not; 356 people (eighty-four percent) responded to question twenty-nine (number of times of multiplication) while sixty-eight did not.

dependent variables more clearly and placed them near the beginning of the questionnaire.

Description of the Questionnaire Respondents

A total of 424 cell leaders filled out a questionnaire. Table 35 gives some descriptive background of these leaders.

Results of the Questionnaire

The key questions (dependent variables) are questions twenty-seven (whether the group had multiplied), twenty-eight (length of time for a cell to multiply) and twenty-nine (number of times the cell had multiplied). All of the other questions (independent variables) will be analyzed according to their correlation with these three questions. I did not consider a correlation significant unless the probability level was .05 or lower.

TABLE 35

DESCRIPTIVE DATA FROM QUESTIONNAIRE

COUNTRY RESPONSE	Colombia-60 Ecuador-139 Perú-58 Honduras-75 El Salvador-92
GENDER	54% male (228) 44% female (187)
CIVIL STATUS	46.7% married 43.6% single
SOCIAL CLASS	11.8 % identified themselves as poor 33.0% identified themselves as middle lower class 41.7% identified themselves as middle class 8.5% identified themselves as middle upper class
AGE	33 years old (average age)
EDUCATION	12.5% elementary 50% high school 30.3% university 2.6% graduate level
LENGTH OF TIME AS BELIEVER	4.5% six months 8.5% one year 13.4% two years 11% three years 62% over three years
DEVOTIONAL TIME	63% spent between one half hour and one hour in daily devotions 16% (68 leaders) spent more than $1^1/_2$ hours in daily devotions
PRAYER FOR GROUP	70% prayed daily for their cell group
PREPARATION	39% (164) leaders prepare 0-1 hours each week for their lesson 42% (178) spend 1-3 hours
CONTACT	22% (94 leaders) contacted members of their group eight or more times per month
ASSISTANTS	20% did not have an assistant 32% had one assistant 27% had three or more assistants

**Question Twenty-seven: Whether the Group
Had Multiplied**

This was a very straightforward question, "Has your group multiplied yet?"
There were only two responses, yes or no. Out of the 424 respondents, 269 said yes

(sixty-three percent), 128 said no (thirty percent), and twenty-seven left the question blank (6.4%).

The next step was to try to determine the significant patterns related to those who said yes versus those who said no. First, there was no significant relation between country, gender, social class, age, civil status, education, salvation, number of outside meetings, gifting, personality, or homogeneity and whether the leader had multiplied the cell group.

On the other hand, the statistics did show that there was significant correlation between cell multiplication and the number of assistants in the group, number of visitors in the group, and the cell leader's devotional life, prayer life, visitation, and goal orientation. Table 36 outlines those relationships.

TABLE 36

FACTORS CORRELATED WITH CELL MULTIPLICATION

ASSISTANTS No. 8	More assistant leaders, higher rate of multiplication, r = -.11, p< .036
DEVOTIONAL LIFE No. 11	More devotional life, higher rate of multiplication, r = -.16, p< .001
PRAYER No. 12	More prayer, higher rate of multiplication, r = .11, p< .019
LESSON PREPARATION No. 13	More lesson preparation, higher rate of multiplication, r = -.13, p< .009
CONTACTING MEMBERS No. 14	More contact with members of cell group, higher rate of multiplication, r = -.13, p< .007
VISITATION OF NEW PEOPLE No. 16	More visitation of new people, higher rate of multiplication, r = -.19, p< .001
EXHORTATION TO INVITE PEOPLE No. 17	More exhortation to invite new people, higher rate of multiplication, r = .16, p< .001
NEW VISITORS IN GROUP No. 18	More new visitors in the group, higher rate of multiplication, r = -.18, p< .001
MULTIPLICATION GOALS No. 19	More clear multiplication goals, higher rate of multiplication, r = .23, p< .001

According to these findings, it is imperative that cell leaders prepare themselves spiritually and intellectually, engage in visitation, instill an outreach orientation in the group, and have specific goals for cell multiplication. It is not possible to say that one of these aspects is more important than the other. However, taken together, they provide the cell leader with needed information about how to successfully multiply the group.

Question Twenty-eight: Length of Time
to Multiply

This correlation is based on question twenty-eight which asked the cell leaders how long it took to multiply their cell group. There was a significant relationship between the length of multiplication time and the particular country, F (4,203) = 4.33, p< .0001. For example, in Honduras it took an average of thirty-nine weeks to multiply the group (mean = 39.5 ± 22.0), whereas in El Salvador it only took an average of twenty-two (mean = 22.4 ± 26.5) and Colombia only took an average of eighteen weeks (mean = 18.1 ± 18.3). Table 37 adds clarity.

TABLE 37

CELL GROUP LENGTH AND MULTIPLICATION TIME

AVERAGE LENGTH OF CELL GROUP IN EACH COUNTRY	Ecuador	44 weeks
	Colombia	48 weeks
	El Salvador	62 weeks
	Perú	75 weeks
	Honduras	116 weeks
AVERAGE LENGTH OF CELL GROUP AMONG ALL FIVE COUNTRIES: 68 weeks (1 year and 3 months)		
AVERAGE TIME TO MULTIPLY CELL GROUP IN EACH COUNTRY	Colombia	18 weeks
	El Salvador	22 weeks
	Ecuador	24 weeks
	Peru	28 weeks
	Honduras	39 weeks
AVERAGE LENGTH OF TIME TO MULTIPLY CELL GROUP: 26 weeks (6 months)		

Just as important as what this question did say was what it did not say. For example, the statistics showed no correlation between time that it took to multiply a group and gender, civil status, age, occupation, personality, or gifting.

The statistics did indicate that educational levels were significantly related to multiplication length, F (4,199) = 3.03, p< .0187. An elementary educated leader took

forty weeks to multiply his group (mean = 40.3 ± 43.8) versus twenty-two weeks for a high school educated leader (mean = 22.3 ± 19.0).

The study showed multiplication length was significantly related to the number of times the group met outside the normal cell meeting, $F_{(4,197)} = 3.58$, p<.007. Those leaders who did not meet with their group outside the regular meeting took significantly longer to multiply than those who gathered their group occasionally for outside activity. It is interesting that Colombia rated significantly higher than any of the other countries with regard to number of outside meetings, $F_{(4, 14.2)} = 21.5$, p< 0.000.

Homogeneity was also significantly related to the time it took to multiply a cell group, $F_{(4,162)} = 7.67$ p< .0001. Those leaders who said that there was a medium level of homogeneity in the group (mean = 24.4 ± 24.1) took significantly longer to multiply their group that those who indicated a high level (mean = 11.0 ± 11.6).

The study also indicated that newer Christians tended to multiply their groups faster than those who had been believers for a longer period, $F_{(4,201)} = 1.99$, p< .094. Those who were believers for more than three years (mean = 29.3 ± 28.9) took an average of twenty-nine weeks to multiply the group versus those who were believers six months (mean = 5.8 ± 2.8) and took an average of only six weeks (Figure 11).

SALVATION AND CELL MULTIPLICATION
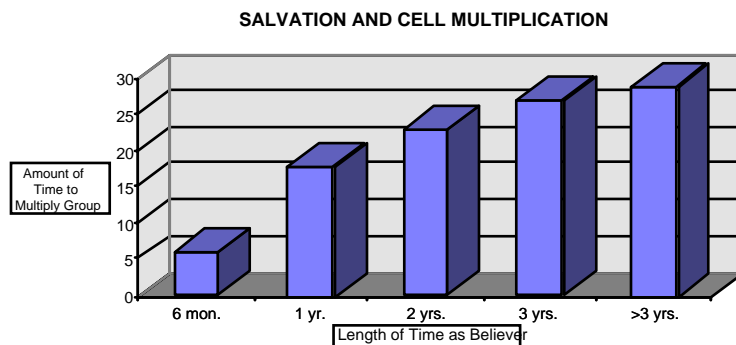
FIGURE 11

SALVATION AND MULTIPLICATION LENGTH

TABLE 38

FACTORS CORRELATED WITH MULTIPLICATION FREQUENCY

ASSISTANTS No. 8	More assistants, higher the frequency of multiplication, r = .28, p< .001
TRAINING No. 10	More knowledge/training, higher the frequency of multiplication, r = .21, p< .001.
DEVOTIONAL LIFE No. 11	More time spent by a leader in devotions, higher the frequency of multiplication, r = .25, p< .001.
LESSON PREPARATION No. 13	More time spent in lesson preparation, higher the frequency of multiplication, r = .11, p< ..038.
CONTACTING MEMBERS No. 14	More times the leader contacted the members of the group, higher the frequency of multiplication, r = .21, p< .001.
OUTSIDE MEETINGS No. 15	More times that the leader met with the group outside the regular cell meeting, higher the frequency of multiplication, r = .17, p< .001.
VISITATION OF NEW PEOPLE No. 16	More that the cell leader visited new people, higher the frequency of multiplication, r = .24, p< .001.
EXHORTATION TO INVITE PEOPLE No. 17	More the leaders exhorted the group to invite new people, higher the frequency of multiplication, r = -.14, p < .007.
NEW VISITORS IN GROUP No. 18	More visitors in the cell group, higher the frequency of multiplication, r = .21, p< .000.
MULTIPLICATION GOALS No. 19	More clarity about multiplication goal, higher the frequency of multiplication, r = .-17, p< .001.

Question Twenty-nine: Number of Times That
Group Multiplied

Question twenty-nine asked the cell leaders how many times that they had multiplied their group since becoming the leader. Twenty-five percent (107) said that they had not multiplied their group, twenty-three percent indicated that the group had multiplied one time (100), twelve percent indicated they had multiplied two times (fifty), eleven percent indicated that had multiplied three times (forty-six), while twelve percent (fifty-three) said that their group had multiplied four or more times. This question is important because it goes beyond whether or not the group had multiplied to determine what factors were significant for those leaders who continually multiplied their group. Table 38 highlights these multiplication factors.

The correlations coincide exactly with what was discovered under question twenty-seven in the following areas: number of assistants, training, devotional life, lesson preparation, contacting members and newcomers, exhorting group to invite friends, number of visitors in the cell group, and goals for cell multiplication. This question did show a positive correlation between salvation and cell multiplication and the number of outside meetings and cell multiplication while question twenty-seven did not.

Conclusion

This statistical study has demonstrated a consistent statistical relationship between a cell leader's success in multiplying his or her group and the time spent in training, devotions, preparation, and visitation (members and newcomers). It also clearly showed that the number of assistants, the goal orientation of the leader, and the number of visitors that the leader is able to attract to his cell group, all play a significant role in whether or not that leader will successfully multiply the group.

In all of the case study churches, the primary focus of the cell group is evangelism and outreach. The cell ministry in these churches were unashamedly church growth oriented and were not hesitant to set clear numerical goals. At the same time, certain cell ministries seemed to do a better job in producing qualitative, long term cell growth. We discovered that focusing on the cell team was the key way to assure cell health, while giving birth to dynamic daughter cells.

CHAPTER 10

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This final chapter will bring to a conclusion the various factors that have been examined in this study. My goal is to offer concrete recommendations for those attempting cell-based ministry in Latin America.

<u>Summary</u>

In this dissertation, we have looked at a number of key factors in cell-based ministry. First, we examined the theology of the church and analyzed how cell-based ministry relates to Christ's church, both in what it is as well as in what it does. Studying the history of cell-based ministry also helped trace patterns of small group ministry in a wide variety of contextual settings. Although small groups in various forms have been part of the church's life from its inception, it was not until after the reformation, and more specifically during the Pietistic, the Moravian, and the Methodist movements that small group ministry became the powerful tool for evangelism, discipleship, and ultimately church growth that it had been in the early church.

David Cho has given new meaning to the effectiveness of cell-based ministry today. With the largest church in the history of Christianity, he has set the standard for the rest to follow. Many cell churches are springing up around the world, which are able to both effectively evangelize as well as pastor each individual member. We also noticed several small group models that are having an impact, in a more limited way, in North America.

As a missionary to Latin America, my special interest has been cell-based ministry from a Latin perspective. With this in mind, a whole chapter was dedicated to Latin culture and worldview. We analyzed important principles and patterns that might help us to understand how to more effectively implement cell-based ministry in a Latin setting. Again focused on Latin America, I looked at leadership patterns that are specific to Latin Americans and how those patterns might be utilized in cell-based ministry and leadership.

The first five chapters served as a backdrop to more effectively understand and evaluate the five case study churches. These churches were chosen because of their prominence and success in implementing a cell-based philosophy. As I spent time in these churches, I noticed various patterns of similarity in the descriptive make-up of these churches. The most prominent descriptive aspects were that all of these churches were influenced greatly by David Yonggi Cho, that they are committed to evangelizing the entire city for God, that they had a strong, visionary head pastor, and that they were totally dependent on the Spirit of God (highly charismatic).

Many other important patterns of cell-based ministry emerged during my analysis of their cell-based structure, leadership patterns, and multiplication factors. The patterns of similarity are significant in that, first, these patterns were present in each of the five case study churches; second, these churches are the most prominent cell churches in Latin America; and third, these churches represent various streams of cell church philosophies. In other words, their differences are great enough to make their similarities significant.

Recommendations

Following is a summary of the seventeen patterns that I discovered in these churches, and my recommendation would be that any church in Latin American doing cell-based ministry should incorporate these principles into their cell structure.[1]

1. The primary motivation for cell ministry should be evangelism and church growth (as opposed to edification of the saints, or even pastoral care).

2. Reproduction (multiplication) should be the major goal of each cell group.

3. There should be a clear emphasis on quantifiable church growth through the cell ministry. Quantifiable goals should be made for every aspect of cell ministry and clearly proclaimed to the entire church.

4. Cell ministry should be promoted as the backbone of the church.

5. Cell attendance should be expected of everyone attending the church.

6. The head pastor should give strong, visionary leadership to the cell ministry.

7. There should be clearly established leadership requirements for those entering cell ministry.

8. A cell leadership training course should be required for all potential cell leaders.

9. Cell leadership should be raised up from within the church itself, at all levels.

10. A "Jethro model" care structure for each level of leadership should be developed.

11. Cell leadership should be promoted to higher leadership positions based on past success.

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1 I tried to choose those principles which were most directly related to cell ministry. Therefore, I did not include such factors as prayer, dynamic worship, or a city-wide focus, even though these principles were present in all of the case study churches.

12. It is essential to understand that effective cell ministry demands a high time commitment on behalf of all cell leadership, and the church should prepare accordingly.

13. Cell groups should meet in the home (at least outside the church).

14. The follow-up system of visitors and new converts should be administered through the cell groups.

15. Cell lessons should be based on the pastor's sermon to promote continuity between cell and celebration.

16. Offerings should be taken within each cell meeting.

The questionnaires suggested some consistent correlations between cell group multiplication and leadership activity. According to the data, a cell leader should be more successful in multiplying his cell group if he incorporates:

1. Make sure that there is a cell team in place;

2. Receive as much training as possible;

3. Have a consistent devotional life;

4. Spend sufficient time preparing the cell lesson;

5. Visit the members of the cell group regularly;

6. Meet with the group outside the normal cell meeting;

7. Visit the new people that come to the group;

8. Exhort others in the group to invite their friends;

9. Seek to constantly have new people in the group;

10. Know when the group is going to multiply.

It should be remembered that those who practiced the above principles in increasing measures, were able to multiply their groups more rapidly. If a cell leader wants to see significant improvement in his cell group, these activities should be done simultaneously. One area should not be overemphasized to the exclusion of another

equally important area. Cell leaders who want to be more effective in multiplying their group should practice as many of the above principles as possible.

<u>Conclusion</u>

In conclusion, we are reminded that Latin America, at this time in history is ripe for the harvest. The church of Latin America needs culturally relevant tools to assist it in reaching the masses of its ever growing urban centers with the gospel of Jesus Christ. We have seen that cell-based ministry is, in fact, producing exciting results throughout various parts of Latin America. This study has sought to analyze cell-based methodology with the hope of placing in the hands of Christian workers important tools and information for the furtherance and growth of Christ's church, especially His church in Latin America.

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE: ENGLISH AND SPANISH

PERSONAL INFORMATION
Important: Only choose one box under each question

1. Country identification
   - ■ Colombia (1)
   - ■ Ecuador (2)
   - ■ Perú (3)
   - ■ Honduras (4)
   - ■ El Salvador (5)

2. Gender of the leader
   - ■ Masculine (1)
   - ■ Feminine (2)

3. Social level
   - ■ Poor (1)
   - ■ Middle lower class (2)
   - ■ Middle class (3)
   - ■ Middle upper class (4)

4. What is your age? _____

5. What is your civil status?
   - ■ Married (1)
   - ■ Single (2)
   - ■ Divorced (3)
   - ■ Separated (4)
   - ■ Living together (5)

6. What is your occupation?
   - ■ Blue collar (1)
   - ■ White collar (2)
   - ■ Professional (3)
   - ■ Teacher (4)
   - ■ Other (5)

7. What is your level of education?
   - ■ Elementary (1)
   - ■ High School (2)
   - ■ University (3)
   - ■ Graduate level (4)
   - ■ Other (5)

8. How many assistant leaders do you have in your group?
   - ■ 0 assistant leaders (1)
   - ■ 1 assistant leaders (2)
   - ■ 2 assistant leaders (3)
   - ■ 3 or more assistant leaders (4)

9. How long have you known Jesus Christ?
   - ■ Six months (1)
   - ■ One year (2)
   - ■ Two years (3)
   - ■ Three years (4)
   - ■ More than three years (5)

10. How much Bible training have you received?
    - ■ Less than the average cell member (1)
    - ■ Same as the average cell member (2)
    - ■ A little more than the average cell member (3)
    - ■ Much more than the average cell member (4)

11. How much time do you spend in daily devotions? (e.g., prayer, Bible reading)
    - ■ 0-$1/2$ hours (1)
    - ■ $1/2$ hour (2)
    - ■ 1 hour (3)
    - ■ $1 1/2$ hours (4)
    - ■ More than $1 1/2$ hours (5)

12. How much time do you spend praying for the members of your group?
    - ■ Daily (1)
    - ■ Every other day (2)
    - ■ Once a week (3)
    - ■ Sometimes (4)

13. How much time do you spend each week preparing for your cell group lesson?
    - ■ 0-1 hours (1)
    - ■ 1-3 hours (2)
    - ■ 3-5 hours (3)
    - ■ 5-7 hours (4)
    - ■ More (5)

INFORMATION ABOUT CELL GROUP LEADERSHIP

14. As the leader of the cell group, how many times per month do you contact the members of your group?
    - ■ 1-2 times per month (1)
    - ■ 3-4 times per month (2)
    - ■ 5-7 times per month (3)
    - ■ 8 or more times per month (4)

15. How many times per month does your group meet for social occasions outside of the regular cell group meeting?
    - ■ 0 (1)
    - ■ 1 (2)
    - ■ 2, 3 (3)
    - ■ 4, 5 (4)
    - ■ 6 or more (5)

16. As the leader of the cell group, how many times per month do you contact new people?
    - ■ 1-2 times per month (1)
    - ■ 3-4 times per month (2)
    - ■ 5-7 times per month (3)
    - ■ 8 or more times per month (4)

17. How many times each month do you encourage the cell members to invite their friends to the cell group?
    - ■ Each cell meeting (1)
    - ■ Every other cell meeting (2)
    - ■ Sometimes (3)
    - ■ Not very much (4)

18. In the last month, how many visitors did you have in your cell group?
    - ■ 0 visitors (1)
    - ■ 1 visitor (2)
    - ■ 2-3 visitors (3)
    - ■ 4-5 visitors (4)
    - ■ 6 visitors (5)

19. Do you know when your group is going to multiply?
    - ■ Yes (1)
    - ■ No (2)
    - ■ Not sure (3)

20. In your opinion, which of the following areas helps you most in the your cell ministry?
    - ■ Personality (1)
    - ■ Biblical Training (2)
    - ■ Spiritual commitment (3)
    - ■ The gifts of the Holy Spirit (4)
    - ■ Pastoral care (5)

21. What is your primary spiritual gift?
    - ■ Gift of evangelism (1)
    - ■ Gift of leadership (2)
    - ■ Gift of pastoral care (3)
    - ■ Gift of mercy (4)
    - ■ Gift of teaching (5)
    - ■ Other (6)

22. In your opinion, what is the most important reason why some cell groups are able to multiply?
    - ■ Effectiveness of leader (1)
    - ■ Hard work of the group members (2)
    - ■ The location where the group meets (3)
    - ■ The material that the group uses (4)
    - ■ The spirituality of the group (5)

23. With regard to your personality, which of the following is your tendency?
    - ■ Introverted (1)
    - ■ Extroverted (2)
    - ■ Neither (3)

24. With regard to your personality, which of the following is your tendency?
    - ■ Relaxed (1)
    - ■ Anxious (2)
    - ■ Neither (3)

25. How long has your cell group been functioning? (weeks that it has been in existence) _____

26. What is the level of homogeneity in your group? (e.g., similar race, social class)
    - ■ Very high (1)
    - ■ High (2)
    - ■ Medium (3)
    - ■ Low (4)
    - ■ Very low (5)

27. Has your group multiplied yet?
    - ■ Yes (1)
    - ■ No (2)

28. How much time did it take for you to multiply your group? _____

29. How many times has your group multiplied since you've become the leader?
    - ■ 0 times (1)
    - ■ 1 time (2)
    - ■ 2 times (3)
    - ■ 3 times (4)
    - ■ 4 or more times (5)

ENCUESTA PARA LOS LIDERES DE LAS CELULAS

INFORMACION PERSONAL
Importante: Sólo selecciona uno bajo cada pregunta

1. Identificación del país
   - ■ Colombia (1)
   - ■ Ecuador (2)
   - ■ Perú (3)
   - ■ Honduras (4)
   - ■ El Salvador (5)

2. Sexo del líder
   - ■ Masculino (1)
   - ■ Feminino (2)

3. Nivel social
   - ■ Pobre (1)
   - ■ Clase media baja (2)
   - ■ Clase media media (3)
   - ■ Clase media alta (4)

4. ¿Cuál es tu edad? _____

5. ¿Cuál es tu estado civil?
   - ■ Casado (1)
   - ■ Soltero (2)
   - ■ Divorciado (3)
   - ■ Separado (4)
   - ■ Juntado (5)

6. ¿Cuál es tu ocupación?
   - ■ Obrero (1)
   - ■ Empleado (2)
   - ■ Profesional (3)
   - ■ Docente (maestro) (4)
   - ■ Otros (5)

7. ¿Cuál es tu nivel de educación?
   - ■ Primario (1)
   - ■ Secundario (2)
   - ■ Universidad (3)
   - ■ Postgraduado (4)
   - ■ Otro (5)

8. ¿Cuántos líderes asistentes tienes en tu grupo?
   - ■ 0 líderes asistentes (1)
   - ■ 1 líder asistente (2)
   - ■ 2 líderes asistentes (3)
   - ■ 3 o más líderes asistentes (4)

9. ¿Cuánto tiempo hace que conoces a Jesucristo? (selecciona uno)
   - ■ Seis meses (1)
   - ■ Un año (2)
   - ■ Dos años (3)
   - ■ Tres años (4)
   - ■ Más de tres años (5)

10. ¿Cuánto tiempo de entrenamiento Bíblico has recibido? (selecciona uno)
    - ■ Menos del promedio de los miembros de mi grupo (1)
    - ■ Igual del promedio de los miembros de mi célula (2)
    - ■ Un poco más del promedio de los miembros de mi célula (3)
    - ■ Mucho más del promedio de los miembros de mi célula (4)

11. ¿Cuánto tiempo pasas diariamente en tu tiempo devocional (e.g., oración, lectura)?
    - ■ 0-$\frac{1}{2}$ hora (1)
    - ■ $\frac{1}{2}$ hora (2)
    - ■ 1 hora (3)
    - ■ 1$\frac{1}{2}$ horas (4)
    - ■ Mas de 1$\frac{1}{2}$ horas (5)

12. ¿Cuánto tiempo oras por los miembros de tu grupo? (selecciona uno)
    - ■ Diariamente (1)
    - ■ Día por medio (2)
    - ■ Una vez por semana (3)
    - ■ De vez en cuando (4)

13. Normalmente, ¿Cuánto tiempo pasas cada semana en la preparación del material para tu grupo?
    - ■ 0-1 hora (1)
    - ■ 1-3 horas (2)
    - ■ 3-5 horas (3)
    - ■ 5-7 horas (4)
    - ■ Más (5)

14. Como líder de la célula, ¿cuántas veces por mes contactas a los miembros de tu grupo?
    - ■ 1-2 veces por mes (1)
    - ■ 3-4 veces por mes (2)
    - ■ 5-7 veces por mes (3)
    - ■ 8 o más veces por mes (4)

15. ¿Cuántas veces por mes se reúne tu grupo aparte de la reunión oficial? (selecciona uno)
    - ■ 0 veces por mes (1)
    - ■ 1 vez por mes (2)
    - ■ 2-3 veces por mes (3)
    - ■ 4-5 veces por mes (4)
    - ■ 6 o más veces por mes (5)
    - ■ Otro (6)

16. Como líder de la célula, ¿cuántas veces por mes contacta a las personas nuevas?
    - ■ 1-2 veces por mes (1)
    - ■ 3-4 veces por mes (2)
    - ■ 5-7 veces por mes (3)
    - ■ 8 o más veces por mes (4)

17. ¿Cuántas veces por mes animas a los miembros para invitar a nuevas personas a la célula?
    - ■ Cada reunión (1)
    - ■ Reunión de por medio (2)
    - ■ De vez en cuando (3)
    - ■ No mucho (4)

18. En el mes pasado, ¿cuántas visitas estuvieron en tu grupo? (selecciona uno)
    - ■ 0 (1)
    - ■ 1 (2)
    - ■ 2-3 (3)
    - ■ 4-5 (4)
    - ■ 6 o más (5)

19. ¿Sabes cuando vas a multiplicar tu grupo?
    - ■ Sí (1)
    - ■ No (2)
    - ■ No estoy seguro (3)

20. En tu opinión ¿Cuál el área que te ayuda más en el ministerio de la célula? (selecciona uno)
    - ■ Personalidad (1)
    - ■ Entrenamiento (2)
    - ■ Compromiso espiritual (3)
    - ■ Los dones del Espíritu Santo (4)
    - ■ Cuidado pastoral (5)

21. ¿Cuál es tu don principal? (selecciona uno)
    - ■ Don de evangelismo (1)
    - ■ Don de liderazgo (2)
    - ■ Don de cuidado pastoral (3)
    - ■ Don de misericordia (4)
    - ■ Don de enseñanza (5)
    - ■ Otro (6)

22. En tu opinión, ¿cuál es la razón más importante para que una célula pueda multiplicarse? (selecciona uno)
    - ■ Efectividad del líder (1)
    - ■ El trabajo de los miembros del grupo (2)
    - ■ Donde se reúne el grupo (3)
    - ■ El material que se utiliza (4)
    - ■ La espiritualidad del grupo (5)

23. ¿En cuanto a tu personalidad, ¿cual es tu tendencia?
    - ■ Introvertido (1)
    - ■ Extrovertido (2)
    - ■ No puedo decir (3)

24. ¿En cuanto a tu personalidad, ¿cual es tu tendencia?
    - ■ Tranquilo (1)
    - ■ Ansioso (2)
    - ■ No puedo decir (3)

25 ¿Cuánto tiempo hace que funciona tu grupo semanas ha estado en existencia tu grupo? _____

26. En cuanto la homogeneidad (e.g., misma raza, clase social), ¿Cuál es el nivel de homogeneidad de tu grupo?
    - ■ Muy alto (1)
    - ■ Alto (2)
    - ■ Medio (3)
    - ■ Bajo (4)
    - ■ Muy bajo (5)

27. ¿Se ha multiplicado tu grupo?
    - ■ Sí (1)
    - ■ No (2)

28. ¿Cuánto tiempo pasó antes que se multiplicara a tu grupo? _____

29. ¿Cuántas veces se ha multiplicado tu grupo desde que tu has sido el líder?
    - ■ 0 veces (1)
    - ■ 1 vez (2)
    - ■ 2 veces (3)
    - ■ 3 veces (4)
    - ■ 4 o más veces (5)

APPENDIX B

CHURCH SELECTION AND METHODOLOGY

Instead of including case study selection and research methodology in the text of my dissertation, my doctoral committee felt that it was best to include these details in a separate appendix. Although I have implicitly mentioned some aspects of my methodology in other places, here I will go into more detail.

Selection of Case Study Churches

The following criteria served as the basis for choosing the case study churches. The following list helps clarify some of the criteria.

1. Located in Spanish speaking Latin America, however, specific geographical location not to be a factor

2. Denominational affiliation not to be a factor

3. Attendance greater than 350 people

4. Characterized by rapid church growth

5. Cell-based ministry (considered cell-based if at least 60% of the adults who regularly attend the church were also involved in a small group during the week)

6. Cell group ministry perceived to be the principal method of evangelism and pastoral care

7. Characterized by rapid multiplication of cell groups

Based on the above criteria, we (the doctoral committee and myself) selected five cell-based churches in Latin America. These five churches were:

1. *La Misión Carismática Internacional* in Bogota, Colombia

2. *El Centro Cristiano* in Guayaquil, Ecuador

3. *El Agua Viva* in Lima, Perú

4. *El Amor Viviente* in Tegucigalpa, Honduras

5. *La Misión Cristiana Elim* in San Salvador, El Salvador

Methodology

In attempting to accurately describe these case study churches, my principal research methodology was the case study approach. Within the general framework of case study methodology, I utilized several supporting research methods including, participant observation, extensive interviewing and a questionnaire. The questionnaire methodology was fully presented in Chapter 9.

With the exception of MCI (stayed more than two weeks), the average length of time in each of the case study churches was eight days. Within that time period, I tried to participate and observe as much as possible. I attended various cell meetings, leadership meetings, attended services, ate with people, and simply tried to be a part of the activity at each church. As I established relationships with various people, I was able to pick up on new data that helped me in my study.

Because my stay in each case study church was limited, I depended heavily on the interview methodology. Most of my interviewing was unstructured. I tried to follow the threads of my four research questions. Normally, I started the process by gathering as much statistical information as possible about the church. After analyzing the data, new categories and questions surfaced which required further interviews and data gathering.

This process continued for the full eight days until an accurate picture of the church emerged.

<u>Delimitations</u>

Since this is a descriptive study and not an experimental one, my goal was not to try to prove that the cell ministry was the principal means of church growth in these churches. In keeping with the aim of descriptive research, my goal was to build theory and discover relationships rather than to try and prove a casual relationship between cell-based ministry and church growth.

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VITA

Joel Thomas Comiskey was born toTom and Phyllis Comiskey on May 6, 1956 in Los Angeles, California. His early childhood days were spent in Long Beach, California, where both of his parents were teachers at Long Beach City College. He attended elementary school through high school in Long Beach.

He was transformed by Jesus Christ in 1974 at the age of seventeen, after searching in many directions for the meaning of life. In 1978, he felt a definite call to be a missionary and went on a short term mission to Canada with Youth With A Mission. In further preparation for missionary service, he attended Prairie Bible Institute in 1978 and four years later graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Theology. After further liberal arts training at Long Beach City College between 1982-1983, he went to Alliance Theological Seminary in New York to continue his preparation.

After graduating in 1984 from ATS with a Masters of Professional Studies, he pioneered an inner city church plant in downtown Long Beach. During this time period, he met his wife Celyce Hahn of Mariposa, California, and they were married in February 1988. They now have three daughters: Sarah, Nicole, and Chelsea.

In 1989, after pastoring the church in Long Beach for almost five years, he attended Fuller School of World Mission and obtained a Masters degree in Intercultural Studies. He began his missionary service in 1990 with the Christian and Missionary Alliance. After studying Spanish for one year in Costa Rica, he served as a church planting missionary in Ecuador from 1991 to 1995. In 1995, Joel entered the Ph.D. program at Fuller Seminary and plans on returning to Ecuador in July 1997.