

**PENTECOSTAL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**

**AN ASSIGNMENT**

**PRESENTED TO JACKIE DAVID JOHNS, PH.D.**

**IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS**

**FOR CF 721/ML 727**

**FORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP**

**BY**

**REGIMON DANIEL**

**CLEVELAND, TENNESSEE**

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## **THE RELATION OF CHURCH AND CULTURE**

The relation of church and culture have always been in a complex relationship. In other words we can say that, The church of today is faced with the influence of the current religious culture of directness to anything transcendent and even mythological. In every era, church and culture have had a specific relationship that determined the scope and intensity of the church's strength and mission as well as its limits of contextualization. There are many issues in society and culture that are totally contrary to the spirit of the gospel and the word of God, such as violence, pornography, discrimination, and pollution of the environment. The proper gesture towards these violations of the spirit of Christian faith would be total rejection or condemnation.

We know that, there are some cultural goods that we as a Christians just consume, such as bakery products or clothes of a certain mode, without thinking about their specific value in the spiritual sense. We know that food is one of the most important and persistent aspects of tradition and culture. Throughout the world, food is used to celebrate holidays, rituals, and family gatherings. For special occasions and even for daily meals our culture often determines what, when, and how we eat. These traditions connect us to our history, our locale, and to one another. Food cultures also represent the wisdom gained and shared through thousands of years of experimentation and observation. For example, the grains and beans found in many food traditions have been determined to provide the perfect combination of amino acids our bodies need. Although it may seem that kids today only eat pizza or hamburgers, your students are likely to represent a tremendous diversity of food traditions.

Some Christian worship places or even music, borrowed from a particular culture, and infused with Christian content, represent some examples of copying the specific culture in which Christians live and communicate. Throughout its long and difficult history, the church assumed one or more of these gestures toward culture; but it seems that, for the most part, it adopted some kind of combination of all four types of relationship relating. The church always struggles with the limits of its appropriation of specific cultural trends, namely contextualization. The church had a tendency to condemn, or at least criticize, various cultural issues that were situated in direct opposition to the spirit of the gospel as revealed by the totality of the Bible. We, as pastors, teachers, and administrators, first need to educate ourselves and our members, especially young people, not just to pursue their careers in order to achieve personal financial gain but to be actively involved in spreading the values of the kingdom of God. This method of shaping today's culture will be much more effective than any based on the power assumed through the combination of religious tradition and human wisdom or philosophy. We not only need to be spiritual beings, but political or relational beings as well, actively involved in shaping the structure of society with talents and gifts that are colored by the traditional values we have.

If we are reluctant to participate and contribute to today's culture by our vocations, we will be far behind those who advance in this spiritualistic and ecumenical age. The Lord calls us to go outside of our churches and comfort zones and use every gift we have received for His influence in the specific culture in which we live. May God open our eyes to see that our whole being, with our professions, needs to be put on His altar and to indeed follow Christ in His course of distinction with engagement.

According to Robert K. Martin - Yale University Divinity School, “If the church is, as the apostle Paul claims, the Body of Christ in the world, then the church is always and everywhere a historical and social manifestation. Its particular social forms are of infinite variety: from the spontaneous gathering of two or three in Christ's name to ecclesiastical bodies that endure the passing of millennia and extend to the far reaches of the globe. Of these, congregations are one of the most common and recognizable manifestations of the church. It is exceedingly important for scholars, clergy, and congregants to take this form seriously in its personal, social, and cultural aspects; only when these aspects are examined in their particularity can they be intentionally reformed to be more truly the theological reality that the church is”<sup>1</sup>.

According to James Hopewell, would resonate: The local church is a microcosm of human culture, an immediate instance of the world's symbolic imagination...the worldwide toil to knit a human community out of disparate motives and symbols occurs in specific instance in the local church; the congregation...is an immediate microcosm of all society's attempts to associate.<sup>2</sup>

According to Carl S. Dudley, The mind of the church is diffuse. It's reflected in the continuing negotiation between leaders and members. It's carried in the words of official documents and by trust that's vested in particular leaders. It's rehearsed by the congregation in the music and prayers of worship, and articulated in Scripture and preaching. The mind of the church is reflected in members' official activities and informal conversations, in their responses to the felt presence of God, in their capacity to make decisions, and in their compassion for the world beyond their members.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup><http://courses.ptseminary.edu/files/805986>

<sup>2</sup> <http://courses.ptseminary.edu/files/805986/Congregations>

<sup>3</sup> <http://courses.ptseminary.edu/files/805986/Giving>

## **A Congregational Studies: Reading a Congregation**

*Before this session...*

Required Readings: Dudley, "Giving Voice to Local Churches," Martin, "Congregational Studies and Critical Pedagogy in Theological Perspective," Chaffee, "Claiming the Light."

*After this session...*

Essay Topics: *The Relation of Church and Culture.*

Church Assessment: *Select a Congregation for Assessment. Gather data on the church's history and culture. Begin reading the congregation. Make preliminary observations on the culture (core values) and context of the congregation. Using the "Community vs. Society Questionnaire," interview four regular attendees and assess the dominant mode of congregational identity.*

Web Development: Focus on identifying web-based resources for your assigned topic and post links to them on your section of the class web site; continue adding throughout the semester.

### Community vs. Society Interview

How long have you attended this church?

**21 years**

How often do you attend the services/activities of this church?

**Every week 2-3 times**

Three or Four times per week?

Once or twice per week?

Three or four times per month?

Once or twice per month?

Thinking metaphorically, if this church was an Olympic Team, in what sport would it be competing? Please be specific.

**In the front**

What is it about that sport that reminds you of this congregation?

**There is lot of them are competing but only one will be crowned**

What role would you see yourself playing in that sport?

**As a winner**

How did you come to be a part of this church?

**New building. Not much internal politics**

What are the strengths of this congregation?

**Worshiping in Holy Spirit, using my mother tongue and English, Indian friends and community, my kids are getting a Christian friend ship.**

What makes this church special to you personally?

**Worshiping in mother tongue and English**

Would you consider looking for another congregation to attend if ...

There was a change in who serves as Senior Pastor?

**No**

There was a change in any other specific staff members?

No

There was a change in style of worship music?

May be

The congregation attempted to leave the denomination?

Yes

Your parents, children, or other significant relation changed churches?

May be

[Based on the responses, do the interviewees see the church as a community (gemeinschaft) or a society (gesellschaft)? Do they see the whole as greater than its parts (gemeinschaft)? How rigid or open is the boundary that defines the congregation? (Gemeinschaft has a more clearly defined boundary and gesellschaft is more porous/open.) Do they belong to a community or participate in a society for personal benefit?] Covenantal or contractual? Organism or Organization?

Seems to be community, yes, it is open, community than personal, it is Covenantal organization

Submitted by : Mr.V.M.Simon  
Chattanooga Christian Assembly  
TN, USA

## Community vs. Society Interview

How long have you attended this church?

17 years

How often do you attend the services/activities of this church?

Every Sunday

Three or Four times per week?

Once or twice per week?

Three or four times per month?

Once or twice per month?

Thinking metaphorically, if this church was an Olympic Team, in what sport would it be competing? Please be specific.

In the front

What is it about that sport that reminds you of this congregation?

A competition

What role would you see yourself playing in that sport?

As a winner

How did you come to be a part of this church?

As a believer

What are the strengths of this congregation?

A spirit filled church and good community

What makes this church special to you personally?

Worshiping in spirit and truth, A loving people

Would you consider looking for another congregation to attend if ...

There was a change in who serves as Senior Pastor?

No

There was a change in any other specific staff members?

No

There was a change in style of worship music?

May be

The congregation attempted to leave the denomination?

No

Your parents, children, or other significant relation changed churches?

Yes. Each member having their own participation in the church

[Based on the responses, do the interviewees see the church as a community (gemeinschaft) or a society (gesellschaft)? Do they see the whole as greater than its parts (gemeinschaft)? How rigid or open is the boundary that defines the congregation? (Gemeinschaft has a more clearly defined boundary and gesellschaft is more porous/open.) Do they belong to a community or participate in a society for personal benefit?] Covenantal or contractual? Organism or Organization?

Yes a good community, yes it is open, community than personal, it is convenantal organization. Gathering not for personal benefit,

Submitted by : Mr.Thomson Chacko  
Chattanooga Christian Assembly  
TN, USA



## Community vs. Society Interview

How long have you attended this church?

35 years

How often do you attend the services/activities of this church?

Every Sunday and Wednesday

Three or Four times per week?

Once or twice per week?

Three or four times per month?

Once or twice per month?

Thinking metaphorically, if this church was an Olympic Team, in what sport would it be competing? Please be specific.

In the middle

What is it about that sport that reminds you of this congregation?

A battle field

What role would you see yourself playing in that sport?

As a winner

How did you come to be a part of this church?

As a believer

What are the strengths of this congregation?

A good church and good community

What makes this church special to you personally?

Worshiping in spirit and truth, A loving community

Would you consider looking for another congregation to attend if ...

There was a change in who serves as Senior Pastor?

No

There was a change in any other specific staff members?

No

There was a change in style of worship music?

May be

The congregation attempted to leave the denomination?

No

Your parents, children, or other significant relation changed churches?

Yes. Each member having their own part in the church

[Based on the responses, do the interviewees see the church as a community (gemeinschaft) or a society (gesellschaft)? Do they see the whole as greater than its parts (gemeinschaft)? How rigid or open is the boundary that defines the congregation? (Gemeinschaft has a more clearly defined boundary and gesellschaft is more porous/open.) Do they belong to a community or participate in a society for personal benefit?] Covenantal or contractual? Organism or Organization?

Yes a wonderful community, yes it is open minded people, community than personal, it is Covenantal organization. Gathering not for personal benefit but of the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Submitted by : Mr.Siby Jacob  
New Testament Church  
Sharjah, UAE,