

# **A Critical Exploration of the PCCNA's Rhetorical Vision for Racial Unity: Fighting Pentecostal Racism with Saul's Armor or David's Sling?**

Russell W. West, Ph. D., Assistant Professor  
Regent University School of Divinity  
Regent University, Virginia Beach, Virginia

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And David said...“Is there not a cause?” And Saul armed David with his armour, and he put an helmet of brass upon his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail. And David girded his sword upon his armour, and he assayed to go; for he had not proved it. And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them. And David put them off him. And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd’s bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling was in his hand: and he drew near to the Philistine. (1 Samuel 16:29-40)

## **Introduction**

Almost five years has transpired since the multiethnic and transdenominational Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches of North America (to be called the "PCCNA") was constituted out of the rubble of the near-all-white Pentecostal Fellowship of North America (PFNA). At this juncture, it is customary to see a flurry of Five Years in Review-type papers. However, I believe that five years may not be yet enough time to proclaim “safe” or “out;” I base this on my understanding of organizational and social transformation theory. The PCCNA is becoming five, and age where it becomes increasingly accountable for its behaviors.

I agree with Ron Arnett in *Communication and Community*, as he forecasts that the intercultural conflict resolution task bodes as an increasingly important one in contemporary society:

[T]he major problem of the human community for the remainder of this century and into the next...[is] communication from polarized positions. Polarized communication can be summarized as the inability to believe or seriously consider one’s view as wrong and the other’s opinion as truth. Communication within the human community becomes typified by the rhetoric of “we” are right and “they” are misguided or wrong. (15, 16)

As one who makes the increase of intercultural competence my scholarly concern,[1] I am still interested in the potential and vigor of their initial rhetorical vision of racial unity. This vision, as first portrayed at the Pentecostal Partners

meeting in October 1994, forged new symbols of unity such as "the Miracle in Memphis," the now well-known "cookie tin footwashing," the "Racial Reconciliation Manifesto," even the PCCNA itself and its subsequent events (including the one in which we find ourselves presently). All of this being said, it is still critique that I bring, a question: will the PCCNA effort prove itself to be a child warrior in Saul's untried armor or one who slings David-like into warfare? In asking the question this way, I focus on the rhetorical challenge which faces those who take up words as weapons in the battle against the giant of racism.

### **Picking Fights with the Giant of Pentecostal Racism**

Giants, by their very description, loom large. Such is the nature of racism in U. S. history and social memory. Such is its nature, also, within the Pentecostal socio-historical psyche as well. According to the Pentecostal leadership gathered in Memphis in 1994, they were morally dwarfed and taunted by the giant racism in their midst for nearly 80 years. Cecil Roebeck chronicled the cheerless account in his paper "The Past: Historical Roots of Racial Unity and Division." Not until five years ago had much changed between Black and White Pentecostals. [2] In October 1994 in Memphis Tennessee, Black and White Pentecostals met at the table of rapprochement to forge a new image of Pentecostalism, one more in keeping with the socially pluralistic world of today--the image is an interracial one. With the colorline at its center--the one that W. E. B. Du Bois prophesied as the century's defining characteristic and that Frank Bartleman said was washed away by Christ's blood--the Christian Church seemed ready to jointly construct rhetorical scaffolding necessary to build new symbols of transracial community before the Twentieth century concludes (DuBois Black Folk, Bartleman Azusa Street).

In the narrative above, the Shepherd boy of Bethlehem not only picked his fights, he chose his weapons well. The giant's impious taunts paralyzed men in brass and mail, but also inflamed a boy with mere sling and stones. But why did David restrain himself so from Saul's armor, and with what did he truly fight? The analogous reply to these questions are core to the development of my critique of the Pentecostal's quest for racial unity.

### **Borrowed Rhetorical Weaponry of Cultural Relativism**

When Pentecostals set out to confront the racist giant in their midst, they chose words for weapons. The Pentecostal proposal, while laudable in its conciliatory intention, is hampered at this very point, the words which were selected. The rhetors have borrowed, perhaps unwittingly, much of their rhetorical force from a movement which preceded their efforts--cultural relativism. Cultural relativism (also called the Boasian revolution based on its emergence in the anthropological work of Franz Boas and his students) provided scientific rationale which undermined doctrines of cultural superiority for any group. Anthropologists like Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, and Edwin Sapir, all students of Boas, advanced positions that each group be viewed as equal in cultural status and as common

participants in the human species. Each culture, on this basis, was viewed on its own merits and by its own frame of reference.

These findings assumed political clothing when Gunnar Myrdal's United Nations report on the "Negro Problem in the U.S." announced that America had a dilemma based on its dominant power relationship to the Negro. Myrdal advanced a definition of prejudice and discrimination which made those in power culpable, supposed ethnic Whites guilty, and deemed victims of such abuse due entitlements. This study informed the conscience of the public policy which eventually would surface as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (D'Sousa 151, 159-161; Yehudi 157-162). Prior to the advent of comparative cultural anthropological study in the early 1900s, differences did exert a role in public race relations. But a contemporary mood of cultural relativism in society has constrained the process and product of race relations in general and racial reconciliation in particular. The Pentecostal rhetorical vision for racial reconciliation appears to be strangely tied to cultural relativism at its worst end: the multiculturalist paradigm. The current societal program of multiculturalism brings with it a blessing and a bane. While advocating the promotion of historically subordinated peoples and cultures (a blessing), it often does so inimically at the expense of historically dominant ones (a bane). That which it loathes, it often also becomes. The tools with which it seeks to help one culture injures another. According to others, it sets people within the statistical minority under a pall of self-doubt, psychological crippling even betrayal. [3] The program, as touted by secularists, is derived from an altruist humanism instinct rather than a one biblical one. Insisting on the value of every person, ethnicity, culture and gender is a well-grounded value for the person who believes that all these are derived from one people, of one blood, from one Father as the Scriptures teach (Malachi 2:10; Acts 17:25-26 and Ephesians 2:14-17). Multiculturalism, with its roots in humanist anthropology, reaches the same conclusion without a while rejecting the creational origins of human culture, the theistic and absolutist foundations from which it is derived. One cannot easily accept multiculturalist ends without becoming complicit with their means.

While my assertion may appear to unravel the conciliatory efforts of those who have labored to effect racial unity--in fact the opposite is true--this is not the question. Rather it is this: is the Pentecostals leadership rhetorical strategy the right one for Christians? Does it not mitigate the very goals that it seeks to attain? In other words, will this untried armor do in a warfare which is real and vital? Should it proceed against the laws, objectives and tools of our warfare (1 Corinthians 10: 3-6)? And should it do when Christian social reformers have better weaponry at their disposal? The Pentecostal rhetorical proposal for racial reconciliation, while noble in what it portends, inherits some of the flaws of multicultural relativism. The epistemology of this culture-promoting paradigm competes with the biblically-inspired goals of Pentecostal rapprochement. The Christian's unity is not dependent upon cultural, ethnic, gender nor even denominational hegemony. These differences underscore and make significant the source of the Christian's unity: Christ's redemptive work. By this redemption, He

has been made Head, and we, the Church, His body. When Scripture speaks of reconciliation, unity, walls of division being torn down, it is always referring to the Christ's glorious work. From this position the Scriptures speak: "you have a ministry of reconciliation" which refers, not to racial unity (for this is too small a goal) but to unity with God through Christ. Reconciliation (Katalasso) refers to the exchange needed adjustment that precedes proper fit. To cross the Tri-borough bridge in New York City, you must first purchase a token; your money will not fit into the token machine. It must be reconciled through and exchange process. God adjusted us for himself. Secondary to these aims, is human community able to enjoy community without walls (and this, even, with much intentionality and persistence). As for disunity, quarrelling, human preeminence-taking, and anything which would break the bond of peace, these always are labeled: carnality, selfishness, and petty. Racial unity efforts which are ungrounded in this initial reconciliation, are at best symbolic and temporary. Cultural relativism, which is not grounded in a biblical theology of Christ's creational and redemptive work, infects and narrows Pentecostals' rhetorical strategies by convoluting the ground on which true reconciliation can rest. These grounds are in the biblical and transcendence-oriented social reality of the Christian faith, not in statistical parities. Efforts to build a community of diversity on the shifting sands of failed race relations rhetoric using cheap symbolic materials foreign to the Christian (or Pentecostal) rhetorical system are guaranteed to fail before the multicultural edifice has been sufficiently conceived or constructed. Reconcilers, after this relativistic fashion, who assume a new ambassadorship other than one Christ left, have managed to find employment in a temporary agency. What can be done? If Pentecostals set their aims on identifying the negative weight of multiculturalism's rhetorical vision within their proposal, they may be able to introduce original, positive, and vigorous contributions to race relations discourse which are consistent with the Christian faith and could contribute so much to current ailing race relations efforts. Echoing David the shepherd when faced with a true enemy, "Is there not a cause?" Should not such giants be faced with tried and reliable tools?

### **Our Weapons are Not Carnal: Finding "Smooth Stones" in the Proposal**

I have so far offered critique and description of the Pentecostal leadership's rhetorical vision. I have yet to offer a constructive portrayal of the rhetorical power within this vision. I turn to this task now. Like the shepherd of Bethlehem who perfected the offensive art of the sling as a child, only to one day realize that God was training him for enemies of his state and kingdom, even so Pentecostals bring well-won instincts which must be called upon to address the giant of racial malady. As David found comfortable weaponry at his time of crisis, so must the Pentecostals find proven weaponry from their own preparation and heritage. We look at "five smooth stones" within the Pentecostal rhetorical vision as I see them.

### **First Stone: the Cultivated Memory of an Interracial Infancy at Azusa Street**

In the opening plenary session, Bishop Underwood, began with these words:

This will be a time of repentance for the sins of the past . . . this will be a time of forgiveness as we rely upon the wonderful grace of our loving Heavenly Father and mirror that grace in our relationships with one another. The time has come for reconciliation! The time has come to recapture our heritage. (Underwood Introductory Remarks)

The lost heritage to which the co-chair of the racial reconciliation dialogue, Bishop B. E. Underwood, referred was that of Pentecostalism's interracial beginnings during the Azusa Street Revival in 1906 through 1909. The memory of the interracial birth has not always been celebrated in Pentecostal histories, [4] but this oral narrative was repeated throughout the Memphis dialogue. In a former mule livery in a poor Black neighborhood in Los Angeles, William J. Seymour, an African-American former-Baptist minister, led a series of prayer meetings which erupted into a movement of spiritual blessing which erupted into a movement of spiritual blessing which could be described by its transracial, transethnic, transcultural, international, transgender, and transdenominational qualities. So vivid and inclusive was its sociology that one of its chroniclers, Bartleman, said "The color line was washed away by the blood" (Bartleman 54). While some dispute the cultivated memory of the Azusa Street Revival as it relates to just how integrated it may have been (Blumhoffer 444), the rhetorical power and effect of Azusa's memory to forge alliances cannot be underestimated. Few denominational, educational, governmental, or business groups can point to such egalitarian imagery as a mandate to find, or return to, a shared life. This is a key feature of the Pentecostal rhetorical vision for racial unity.

### **Second Stone: Forging New Monuments to Racial Unity**

The power of symbol is very important in community-building. The Pentecostal memory has been marred by its self-imposed segregationist practices of the last 80 years. However, after enjoying what Iain MacRobert [5] calls a Black birth and an interracial infancy, Pentecostalism would spend the remainder of this century working out its own version of separate but equal. White Pentecostal leaders at Azusa, pressured by racist taunting, [6] capitulated to the racist demands of society and kept the miraculous spiritual gifts of tongues and healing but rejected the spiritual gift of race-transcending unity (Evans Personal Interview). After such a torn history, their desire to construct new memories, new symbols and new communities to their own liking is within their organizational prerogative, as well as needed for society at large. The formation of the PCCNA (as a response to the dissolution of the PFNA), could be characterized as the response to the exigence of racism within society on an inexact symbolic level.

The Pentecostal leadership has modeled the best of the Christian faith's tradition of self-criticism, subsequent repentance (and even an attempt at "eye for an eye" restitution). Their example may have initiated a nation-wide domino effect in large-scale racial reconciliation efforts. The National Association of Evangelicals

(NAE) and the National Black Evangelical Association (NBAE), anticipated the initiation of a successful model; they sent a delegate to Memphis in October 1994, and later invited the co-chair, Bishop Underwood, to their January 1995 meeting to render a report and exhortation (NAE Tapes). [7]

The persuasive power resident in their symbolic gathering is like a figure stone erected in the public square, declaring at once celebration, sorrow, and aspiration regarding the Pentecostal inclusionary vision. Pentecostals can point to such a stone as a defense against outside critics or as a reminder to members within that a serious self-critique has taken place and that a new era was begun at Memphis. However, some may still chide that such a stone could merely represent a public relations ploy to exonerate the corporate psyche from the responsibility of having to dig deeper or effect real change in institutions and individuals. Only time will tell if this accusation is true, but the power that racial reconciliation (and most any social construction) events have for the building of new rhetorical communities cannot be denied. Furthermore, the concrete nature of the task they set before themselves is markedly different from that of other racial reconciliation efforts. Many efforts, characterized by corporate identification rituals wherein they seek to repair the past by having “spiritual stand-ins” act out the confession/repentance/ forgiveness process, lack believability because of the logical gap created by role playing through very serious social and historical causes and present-day effects. However, the dissolution of the PFNA, and its reconstitution as the PCCNA, is costly and concrete. Pentecostals, though they may differ on the meaning of such an event, will not be able to deny that “something” was attempted at Memphis in 1994, and this will be their legitimate momentum.

### **Third Stone: A Pendulum Swing to Immanence.**

Throughout history, theological emphasis has shifted between two poles: transcendence and immanence. [8] The prevailing formulation of the gospel within Pentecostalism has, in the past, been culturally more Eurocentric in form than universal. The effect has been a style of Christianity which is highly rational in notion, propositional in expression, formal in affect, and vertical in direction. [1] Not a few Pentecostals expressed frustration with the process of racial reconciliation as being too formal or irrelevant to deal with the deep issues of fractured community (Clemmons 5; Blake’s Synan Response; Evans Personal Interview). This is the meaning of Lovett's assertion:

Ghosts from the past continue to haunt many Euro-American classical Pentecostals. Having appropriated their social consciousness from conservative White evangelicals, classical Pentecostals to the present are mute on the issue of racism. Its ethos and social consciousness is dominated by a personal ethic. While strongly condemning sins of the flesh, such as alcohol, smoking, prohibitions, gambling, adultery, homosexuality, etc., classical Pentecostals have been virtually silent on sins of the spirit such as racism whose locus is pride. Consequently, African-American classical

Pentecostals have been uneasy in forming alliances with their Euro-American counterparts whose social vision did not focus on the enemy of us all, racism. (Lovett "The Present")

Pentecostalism has not always known such a compartmentalized spirituality. The racial reconciliation proposal of the Pentecostals may indicate unwillingness within Pentecostalism to remain captive to its propositionalized structure; racial reconciliation may reflect a yearning for a more holistic witness. An oral richness rather than a propositional one, hailing from the Azusa Street revival, characterized Pentecostal religion in its origins (MacRobert 3). Walter Hollenweger, renowned British scholar in Pentecostal studies, suggests the worldwide growth of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movement may be the soulful and holistic ethic of its "black root" influences. Hollenweger summarizes these as being:

1. orality of liturgy; 2. narrativity of theology and witness; 3. maximum participation at the levels of reflection, prayer and decision-making and therefore a form of community which is reconciliatory; 4. inclusion of dreams and visions into personal and public forms of worship; they function as kinds of icons for the individual and the community; 5. an understanding of the body/mind relationship which is informed by experiences of correspondence between body and mind; the most striking application of this insight is the ministry of healing by prayer. (qtd. in MacRobert 3) [9]

The social spirituality which sprang from this root was earthy, urban, informal and joyful. It was close to the marginal person everywhere it went. It offered dignity to the least of these by making them see themselves as the clay vessels wherein the Spirit of God dwelt.[10] Harvey Cox intimates in *Fire From Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* that Pentecostal spirituality, because of its immanent, oral, communal-relational ethos, Pentecostalism comprises a religious expression which captures the religious impulse sought after by all religious seekers in the twentieth century. He frames it in these words:

The signs and wonders that appeared at Azusa Street and in the global movement it loosed included far more than speaking in tongues. People danced, leaped, and laughed in the Spirit, received healings, fell into trances, and felt themselves caught up into a transcendent sphere. In retrospect we can also describe the revival as the principal point in western history at which the pulsating energy of African-American spirituality, wedded by years of suffering to the Christian promise of the Kingdom of God, leaped across the racial barrier and became fused with similar motifs in the spirituality of poor White people. It marked the breaking of the barrier that western civilization had so carefully erected between rationality and symbol, between the conscious and unconscious strata of the mind. In this context, the mixing of the races was not just an early equal opportunity program. It had powerful archetypal significance as well. It presaged a new world in which both the outer and the inner divisions of humankind would be abolished, and it was the harbinger of one of the

greatest surprises of the twentieth century, the massive and unanticipated resurgence of religion in a century many had thought would witness its withering away . . . . There is an irony in all this. The very features that Parham and Durham had anathematized at Azusa Street--were precisely what enabled pentecostalism to speak with such power to the twentieth century. (99-100, 101)

#### **Fourth Stone: A Dialogical Method.**

However, analysis of the discourse reveals that racial reconciliation rhetorical discourse is not a conceptual totality but rather a diffusion. Each Pentecostal rhetor saw the exigence [11] from a different angle. These are classified as the anticipationist, atonementist and antagonist voices within the proposal.<sup>5</sup> The respect interplay between these voices allowed the Pentecostals to engage the issues of their reconciliation. The dialogical approach--grounded in scholarly presentations, formal respondents, mass participation by pastors and observers, followed by prayers, exhortations, tongues and prophetic utterances--was original to the Pentecostals. This complementary method of corporate message-making is unique in the thirty-five racial reconciliation events I witnessed in the ten years prior to, and the five years since, Memphis.

#### **The Anticipationist Voice**

The dominant voice of the Pentecostal dialogue is the anticipatory voice. Anticipationist rhetors view the critical defect as racial division, just like each of the other views. However, the implication for them is different. The condition of racial disunity is an aggravation to high and holy purposes like the evangelization of the world, the reputation of the Church before a beholding society, or the displeasure of God (in its most a negative form). In this view, racial division is a detraction from, even an irritant to, the loveliness of the church. The opposite is true also: racial diversity achieved by racial reconciliation (and all other kinds of diversity) is cause for celebration, even cause for worshipful wonderment; it is the received work of God. Reconciliation is a means to an end, not just unity, but evangelistic witness.

Anticipatory appeals within the racial reconciliation proposal are illustrated by such themes as: glorification of the interracial era (this phrase is attributed to Dr. David Daniels) of the Azusa Revival, "The Miracle in Memphis," public use of glossalalia and interpretations of blessing/judgment, realization of visibly integrated church fellowships, portrayal of these fellowships as "one family" or "one people," and the notion that such unity is an answer to Jesus' prayer for unity in John 17:21, "that they might be one." Their objectives are other-wordly, or transcendent. The anticipationists are the romantics of the racial reconciliation participants.[12]

#### **The Atonementist Voice**

Racial reconciliation is synonymous with guilt and repentance rituals [13] for a group I call the atonementist rhetors; they emphasize propitiation themes. Relying



heavily upon levitical motifs, the atonementist views the exigence in terms of an exposed fault, or sin, within the community of the faithful. God may bring the fault into clear view through inspiration of the Spirit, through the Scriptures, or through an authorized member of the community, a preacher/prophet. The effect is the same: the spiritual work of righting moral wrongs is in view.

Derived from an allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures, reconcilers who approach the matter from the atonementist perspective also demonstrate a dramatic approach to life. They are the spiritual pragmatists of the racial reconciliation participants. It requires an understanding of the biblical narrative as a script or plan of action. It requires the perception of oneself as a player; reconcilers assume priestly roles in such dramas. And racial reconciliation translates into a concatenation of corporate guilt, confession, expiation, forgiveness, and (when needed) restitution. [14]

For those who focus on the atonementist theme, racial reconciliation is about enabling the future by fixing the past. The accuracy of a matter's historiography is not as important as the way that historical interpretation functions within the minds of those who share the fundamental principles of the ritual process of atonement (Blumhofer 444). In the atonementist version of history, these rhetors conceive that the Azusa Street Revival was God's post-Civil War plan to avert the racial polarization which exists in society today (Synan Address; Underwood Introductory Remarks). Thus, they link Pentecostal racial division to contemporary societal racial division in a fundamental way. The reasoning follows thus: only through their racial reconciliation efforts can healing virtues be released and society find its way back to a more inclusive way of relating. These themes are suggested in the ritual. [15]

### **The Antagonist Voice**

The antagonist theme is not antagonistic in the sense that its proponents are opposed to racial reconciliation. Rather, they insist that true racial unity be achieved through prophetic engagement of the issues. Racial reconciliation for this group of rhetors, then, is an act of critique. The antagonist rhetors find a dual exigence: (1) the Pentecostal church must make changes to address the contradictory state of racial division which has characterized it for nearly a century and (2) that it approach the racial reconciliation task with a mind to delve into the deep socio-theological differences between Blacks and Whites. Two levels of change are necessary: first order and second order change. [17] These levels supply culturally informed definitions of the gospel or kingdom witness. These levels also supply culturally determined task maps that affect how the groups conduct negotiation, conflict resolution, and friend-making (tasks which are consonant with the broader reconciliation task). It is at this level of meaning that the antagonists insist on reconciliation. And it is through a prophetic engagement that change can be facilitated. Honest dialectic on the deeper issues achieves unity. Truth is at the

center of the encounter (Lovett 2). Racial reconciliation is an opportunity for “cautious hope” and vigilant realism (Clemmons “What Price” 2).

Because of their insistence on a kind of unity defined by explicit and negotiated meanings and coupled with encounter rather than representational unity based of racially balanced symbols, the antagonists may suspect the sentimentality of the anticipationist as being disingenuous to the deep realities of the racial division problem. They may see the atonementists as mere performers of reconciliation rituals which fade with the passing of each performance. Truth (as the antagonists see it) must be at the center of the racial reconciliation proceeding before they can admit satisfaction. Concrete solutions linked to concrete problems are the only appropriate response for these rhetors. They are the realists of the racial reconciliation participants.

### **Fifth Stone: A 'Prophetic Community.'**

I view the Pentecostal racial reconciliation proposal as a by-product of the Pentecostal self-identity: they view themselves as a prophetic community. Their mission requires them to inaugurate the presence and purposes of God to bear in society.

How does one establish a claim that Pentecostals see themselves as a prophetic community? This first necessitates a definition of what is meant by this term. The emphasis in prophetic community is on being a corporate message, rather than having a corporate message. Put simply, if we listen long enough to Pentecostals speaking about Pentecostalism, we would find that they seem preoccupied with a sort of manifest destiny that they are, not have, a message from God for their generation. [18] In form, they do not communicate to society as the prophets of the Old Testament did who traversed land and sea, telling forth God’s mind on present and future events. But more importantly for the Pentecostal, the community, rather than the particular prophetic ministries of individuals, is the message that God is sending to the world. The message it evinces as a prophetic community is not merely a linear propositional pronouncement coming from a papal or geographical or denominational center but rather a message from the entire community to its entire generation. The defining characteristics of Pentecostals, both in the New Testament (from their perspective) and at Azusa, were a representative ethnic universality, an initiatory enduement of spiritual fervor called “the Baptism of the Holy Spirit,” an accompanying principle of social engagement and missionary expansion, and an experiential faith marked or confirmed by demonstrations of signs and wonders. This convergence of experiential spiritual interest, transcendent expectation, and universal appeal at Azusa Street patterned a distinctive rhetorical community of spirituality then known as apostolic faith, Fire-Baptized Believers, but now called Pentecostals. They reason that God, through His Holy Spirit, has come to indwell them experientially and actually for the sake of spreading a message to all peoples of the earth. Their warrant for this manifest destiny theme is derived from an allegorical interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles. Racism, at the time of the

Memphis meeting, seemed to be the most urgent issue around which to mobilize. For eighty years prior to the Memphis event, Pentecostals had failed in the area of race relations. However, with society's pluralistic mood, diversified workplaces, globalization of government and commerce, (and not to mention the incoming of the 21st century) organizations like the PFNA were becoming intolerably out of style. The formation of a new "ethnically balanced" fellowship structure became a prophetic symbol of what the Church should be and what the culture should emulate. However, in the five years since the first PCCNA meeting in Memphis, the prophetic challenge of racism as receded as a practical affair (much to the chagrin of PCCNA watchers interested in this ongoing issue). Unity celebrations continue (see Anticipationist Voice) but little restitutionary work is reported (see Atonementist View), and even less societal engagement (see Antagonist Voice). The focus of women in the Pentecostal church has become a dominant theme in the PCCNA, with few substantive societal engagement proposals emerging. This issue is: women's rights is a relevant social issue in a pluralistic society. Giving symbolic attention to it, or racism, or whatever the next issue may surface will give the PCCNA some relevant role in society, hopefully, from their perspective, it will be a prophetic one.

### **Conclusion:**

How Not to Kill a Giant David of Bethlehem was a child, youngest and shortest of his brothers it seems from the biblical narrative. He had natural disadvantages. However, when faced with a tall man with a big mouth, he summoned resources which more than leveled the battlefield; his dependence upon God and the warring skills learned in the sheepcotes, tipped the scales into his favor. He refused to use armor which did not belong to him. Mere stones were enough for him.

The PCCNA, is now five years old, a child. It has entered the contemporary culture wars of political correctness through a symbolic community-building approach, one fraught with menace. The danger for Pentecostals is this: they may seek to be relevant rather than authentic. Relevance may often be defined by the whims of an ill-educated audience. Furthermore, they may seek to take on these social issues using the same weaponry (rhetoric in this case) as the world. This course is fated for a course of self-destruction before the battle begins. This is not the way to kill a giant.

To the degree that Pentecostals borrow language, definitions, and themes from antecedent race relations rhetoric without sufficiently adapting these to their own assumptive system, communication styles, and rhetorical purpose, they weaken their proposal. Thus, they inherit the same self-negating problems that plague most race relations proposal. Contrarily, to the degree they allow transcendence appeals (exhortative words and acts derived from a Christian assumptive system) to emerge, they seem to more closely achieve their community-building aims. Like David of old, they will testify that in God's name (and not through borrowed armor), and through faith and action, they have routed their enemies. May the PCCNA be increasingly known for its authentic and prophetic engagement of societal giants.

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- 1) See my Ph. D. dissertation entitled *The They May Be One: An Interpretive Critique of the Pentecostal Leadership's Quest for Racial Unity* (1997) and my Society for Pentecostal Studies Paper "Fighting Racism's Giant with Saul's Armor: An Interpretive Critique of the Pentecostal Leadership's Quest for Racial Unity"(1999).
- 2) Let me pause long enough to acknowledge the presence of other Pentecostal voices that are not sufficiently described by Black or White. In the last five years I have recorded a variety of negative reactions to the initial event. Other Pentecostals--Hispanics, Asians, Women, Oneness--have registered complaints against their non-inclusion in the early PCCNA events in the same way African American's first protested their non-inclusion in the PFNA in the mid-forties (See Barbara Amos' "Response to Turner Paper" in my dissertation; see Gaxiola, Manuel J. "Reverberations from Memphis" Society of Pentecostal Studies Conf. Wycliffe College, Toronto. 7-9 March 1996.; Macchia, Frank D. "From Azusa to Memphis: Where Do We Go From Here? Society of Pentecostal Studies Conf. Wycliffe College, Toronto. 7-9 March 1996. See Oneness question raised during final business meeting of PFNA meeting October 19, 1994). Solivan, Samuel. "The Reconciliation Dialogue of October 17-19, 1994, Memphis, Tennessee: A

Hispanic/Latino Response.” Society of Pentecostal Studies Conf. Wycliffe College, Toronto. 7-9 March 1996.

- 3) See Shelby Steele’s recent *A Dream Deferred: The Second Betrayal of Black Freedom in America*. New York: Harper Collins Publishing, 1998.
- 4) For an example of one denomination's perspective read: Menzies, William W. *Anointed to Serve: The Story of the Assemblies of God*. Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1971.
- 5) Iain MacRobert, in *The Black Roots and White Racism of Early Pentecostalism in the USA*, labels one of his culminating chapters “Black Birth, Interracial Infancy, Segregated Childhood” (viii).
- 6) The reporters of the popular press are accused of using racist sensationalism to sell papers and of selling out the authenticity of the Azusa revival. Reporters rushed from Azusa Street daily with headlines such as: “distrusting scenes,” “Blacks Mix in a Religious Frenzy,” “Holy Kickers Carry On Mad Orgies,” “Negroes and Whites Give Themselves Over to Strange Outbursts of Zeal” (Robeck “The Past”).
- 7) Other similar examples of this include: denominational-specific rhetorical responses to the Memphis meeting from the Assemblies of God, Pentecostal Holiness, Four Square and Church of God and Christ groups. Although causal relationships cannot be ascribed to the Pentecostals, it is clear that other non-Pentecostal denominational groups benefitted from the “rhetorical movement” atmosphere that the successful Memphis meeting created. Examples of this include: interracial merger discussions between the largest Methodist denominations, including the United Methodist Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, and the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (Christian Century 19 Nov. 1995); the Southern Baptist Convention’s formal apology for institutional racism to African Americans in 1995; and the Episcopal House of Bishops Pastoral Letter on the Sin of Racism, (crafted in March 1994).
- 8) Historically, the Anglo-American and Afro-American branches of the North American church have gravitated toward separate socio-theological poles in respect to the doctrine of God’s involvement in the created order (Grenz and Olsen 200-210). The formal designation for this doctrinal discussion refers to God’s transcendence and immanence. Transcendence refers to emphases which stress God’s dimensional beyondness from the created order, (differentiation from that which is created) (Erickson 312-319). Immanence refers to God’s dimensional nearness (involvement and incorporation with that which is created) (Erickson 302-312). Anglo-Americans have historically and preponderantly tended toward transcendental, conceptual and propositionalistic theological formulations, and Afro-Americans have contrariwise tended toward immanental, relational and narrative theological formulae. These distinctions have roots in the separate exposures of each cultural group to literacy training. Early African Americans, disadvantaged by slavery conditions, generally were not trained to read. The positive corollary to this was that African Americans retained a residual orality which bequeaths



advantages in human and relational perception, creative oral dexterity, and holistic approaches to community (Ong 37, 47; Asante 181-82).

- 9) MacRobert's primary source is Hollenweger's "After Twenty Years' Research on Pentecostalism."
- 10) This certain dialectical texture may indicate the presence of a true social movement (rather than a mere trend in the Christian sub-culture). Robert Cathcart argues for dialectical enjoinder as necessary evidence of a social movement: "I contended that it is a mistake to assume that a social movement could come into being or be recognized apart from the response of an establishment which completes the dialectical enjoinder" (Cathcart 262). The antagonistic themes within the racial reconciliation proposal may indicate that such enjoinder is occurring within Pentecostalism.
- 11) Lloyd F. Bitzer, in his *Rhetorical Situation* (1968), teaches discourse analysts to identify the exigence (the leading defect that the speaker sought to correct), the constraints (factors which influenced the strategy for persuasion) and the audience (the group who could be mobilized against the exigence and execute the bidding of the rhetor).
- 12) The narrative of anticipation regarding revival is not restricted to the racial reconciliation movement occurring in the Christian sub-culture. Revival is a circumstance indicating God's revitalizing blessing and presence for a group or community. It is a state of being which is sought after and cherished if awarded. Although the definitions of revival are often existential, emotionally-laden, and theologically weak, the expectation that it is on the horizon and always coming typifies this kind of communication.
- 13) Not all of the racial reconciliation proposal could be surveyed on a propositional level. The rich ground of ritual assisted the Pentecostals and its role in community-building. I believe that Pentecostals pursue the ritual course out of a corporate intuitive reflex rather than a conscientious exercise of cognition and will. The introduction of ritual episodes in the racial reconciliation proposal achieves for the group a degree of community which is markedly different from "secular" race relations efforts which may lack an understanding of transcendental or numinous social reality. The ritual sensibility of Pentecostals makes possible this experiment in new social arrangements. Also, distinctly Pentecostal ritual introduces sanctioning episodes into the fabric of the racial reconciliation proposal through glossolalia, prophecy, exhortation, and the symbolic acts of footwashing and holy communion/Lord's Supper. Another wonderful example is of course the tongues and interpretation offered by Dr. Jack Hayford, which was followed by a spontaneous footwashing and rhetorical turn-around--the many principals I interviewed pointed to this chiroic moment as the reconciliation, The Miracle in Memphis--in the event (See Appendices A and B of my dissertation).
- 14) After examining more than 35 reconciliation events over a ten-year period, I have generalized the atonementist pragmatic and processual features in this way: first, a statement establishing the guilt of parties along ethnically defined lines occurs; next, an appeal for transcending unity ensues (this may imply a kind of unity which transcends ethnicity, culture, nationality, gender, class, etc.);

then, symbolic ritual acts of unity tend to take place (these are usually corporate calls for and responses of guilt and repentance); these ritual acts are often accompanied by spontaneous and intensifying acts of atonement/expiation symbolism; the final feature of the atonement motif is usually promissorial and future-directed.

- 15) The pattern follows the Scripture narratives which instruct worshipers in the processes of spiritual reconciliation with an offended God and/or interpersonal reconciliation with an aggrieved human party.
- 16) See Appendices A and B in my dissertation.
- 17) I first learned of this concept from Linda Mintle's presentation, "Racial Reconciliation and its Pathological Implications," at Regent University's African-American Heritage Celebration in February 1997. As a clinical psychotherapist, Mintle indicated that relational systems, such as families, churches, organizations, and racial affinity groups must observe a tendency of transformational dynamics. Groups tend to find it relatively easy to make surface-level changes; these would be considered first order. At this level, change is behavioral. It may be modified by promise of reward or threat of discomfort. Its effects may be more cosmetic in nature. However, the problems within systems are usually more significant than aesthetics. Change must occur at the core level of values, beliefs, assumptions, preferences, etc.; these would be second order concerns. Conveners of racial reconciliation efforts, if they are to be successful, must examine their efforts, motives, and methods to determine whether they seek change on surface levels or substantial levels, and this must be considered from the perspective of all participants.
- 18) For an example of this corporate vision, review the content of the "Two Stream Become One" prophetic utterance of Dr. Jack Hayford found in my dissertation.