

## **A Series: Critical Frontiers of Lostness Facing Evangelical Christians and Churches in the USA Today**

### **Churches: Guess Who's Not Coming To "Dinner" Three Current Frontiers of Lostness In Missouri and The USA**

In 1967 Hollywood aired in the theaters of America what has been said to be "the most controversial film production ever." The name of the movie was "Guess Who's Coming To Dinner?" Among the actors and actresses were Spencer Tracy, Sidney Poitier, Katherine Hepburn, Hilary St. George, Katherine Houghton, and other famous stars.

The plot of the story revolved around a white girl, played by Katherine Hepburn, who met a black American in a park which led to a series of meetings by them in the park and plans for marriage by the two. At that point, both became very much aware that the next step was for the young wife to be to take the young husband to be home to dinner. Thus, the title of the movie--"Guess Who's Coming To Dinner?"

The fury of the film's resultant controversy in the USA, and in Hollywood itself, was said by many insiders to have sent Spencer Tracey to an early grave. Spencer Tracy died shortly after the film was completed as the controversy continued to mount on all fronts. The controversy led to studio magnates threatening to black-list Tracy from future acting parts. Also, Spencer died before he found out that his performance in the film garnered him a serious Oscar nomination. At the same time, the film made Katherine Hepburn and Sidney Poitier even more famous and more in demand as actress and actor.

I would like to use that film title "Guess Who's Coming To Dinner?" and turn it into a negative title "Guess Who's Not Coming To "Dinner" In Our Churches?" I do so in order to introduce three frontiers of lostness that represent major segments of our American society who are not coming to our churches. This presentation is meant for in-house reflections concerning today's evangelization responsibilities and subsequent activities.

As Southern Baptists, we are a denominationally-oriented people. The way we structure our churches; the way we engage in evangelism and missions; and the way we finance our cooperative endeavors; relates directly to our denominational character and structures, while tenaciously attempting to maintain an autonomous and democratic (priesthood of the believer) local church identity.

**I want to speak of three current and critical frontiers of lostness.** I plan to speak of them from the perspective of Southern Baptist believers, churches and the Southern Baptist denomination. This was initially developed for presentation by the author during a NAMB meeting. It has been heavily rewritten for presentations before various associational and convention audiences. Do not for a minute think that there are only three major frontiers or that these three frontiers do not exist for all Christians and denominations in the USA. The frontiers exist for all, but I am choosing to speak of them as I see them impacting Southern Baptists. I do so because we want to subsequently ask, what must we do as Christians, as Southern Baptist churches, and as a denomination of Baptists to work on these frontiers such that the lost within those frontiers will come to dinner with us in our local churches as believers. Beyond the significance of the existence of the three frontiers is the fact that most of the Southern Baptist churches are not fishing on the three frontiers of lostness. This will be addressed again under the third frontier of lostness. **And, this particular frontiers of lostness presentation is prepared especially for Missouri and neighboring cities and states.**

**First, let me tell you a story from the Christian Scriptures as found in Luke 15, verses 1-7. Jesus was in downtown Jerusalem at this time going in and out of the shops where the people were and worked. Before hearing the story, it is important to know that in Jesus' day and time, a Jew could pollute himself, rendering himself unclean if he came in contact with non-Jews, with non-temple worshippers. Now, this is the story from God's word.**

**"Jesus being in Jerusalem, all of the publicans and common people came to where he was to see Him and to talk to Him. In fact, Jesus accepted invitations for Him to eat and fellowship with them.**

**Seeing Jesus mingling with the publicans and common people, the Pharisees and scribes murmured among themselves, saying: 'This man allows sinners to come to Him, and He is even eating with them.'**

**Knowing that the Pharisees were coming down from the Temple and into the city where He was, and also knowing they were murmuring, Jesus turned and told them this parable. Jesus said to Pharisees: 'Is there any one of you men, that if you had one hundred sheep, and discovered at the time of gathering them into a safe place in the evening that one of them was lost in the wilderness, would you not leave the ninety-nine in a safe place, and go after the one which is lost? And in going out into the wilderness to search for the lost lamb, would he not search until he finds it? And, when he does find it, would he not put it on his shoulders, and return home rejoicing? And, when he returns safely home, would he not call together His friends and neighbors, saying unto them, 'Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I tell you that because of**

**this joy will fill heaven over one sinner that repents, more than over ninety-nine just persons, who need no repentance. “And that is the story from the Bible in Luke 15:1-7.**

Three facts stand out in this story that Jesus told the temple leaders:

- 1) Engaging the lost was Jesus’ priority;
- 2) Even if the saved to lost ratio becomes as positive as 99% saved and 1% lost, the priority of focus still does not shift back to the saved; and
- 3) Jesus focused on people who were not a part of the traditional temple leader’s concept of appropriate people for Him to engage, even to the focus of His going after the Gentiles.

In comparison to focusing on the lost, most churches have focused most of their time, their staff, their finances, and their ministry approaches and activities that catered more to the saved than to the lost. By the time a church is organized, its ethnic or sociological segment of society that it will attract and evangelize is fairly well determined and almost set in stone. That was the pattern of some of the New Testament churches but this was not the intention or focus and emphasis of Christ and His plan for New Testament churches or ours today. It was likely the temptation of each, but was the activity of only a few. Most of the New Testament churches either focused their major attention on winning the lost, or were dispersed by God which led to the early Christian believers witnessing to the lost in the places to which they were dispersed.

Therefore, in order to inform ourselves concerning frontiers of lostness today, in this presentation, three major frontiers of lostness will be presented and explored.

## **!. The First Frontier of Lostness Is The “Ta Ethne”**

**1. The Great Commission’s “Nations,” or “ta ethne,” is the first, and more important, frontier of lostness to be addressed at this time in SBC, American, and North American history.** It is quite fitting to be talking about this frontier of lostness at a time when Southern Baptists have placed primary attention on Kingdom Growth according to Acts 1:8.

**1.1. What Saith The Scriptures?** The Great Commission mandate for every Christian and every church, local or in cooperative union with other local churches, is to engage the “panta ta ethne” (ethnolinguistic peoples) and evangelize them thoroughly within their ethnic entity. (See Matthew 28:19-20; Luke 24, Acts 1:8 and all of Acts 2 in order to interpret the Acts 1:8 revelation within its intended context.) An accurate, contextual interpretation of Acts 1:8:is that when a Christian goes out of the door of his or her home, he or she is immediately, primarily, and forever responsible for evangelizing and discipling each and every ethnic person who lives on the street, in the town, county,

country and world. That is the message of the Great Commission. (See the “ta ethne” paper by Dr. Jim Slack for a detailed look at this topic.)

However, most Southern Baptists have an inaccurate understanding and interpretation of the Great Commission and Acts 1:8. This is primarily due to the use of “nations” in English translations for “panta ta ethne” that is found in the Greek text of the Great Commission and related passages. And, this is also due to the use of “nations” in the Old Testament as a translation of “am” and “goi” (or, more specifically “goyeme”) in the Hebrew Scriptures. Most Southern Baptists, other evangelicals, and Protestants, inaccurately understand the meaning of “nations” as contained in the Scriptures. Most understand “nations” in the Great Commission to mean going to or focusing their evangelization efforts on “nation states” or cities or other geographic entities rather than ethnolinguistic peoples as the Scriptural words show. As a result of the use of “nations,” and not “ethne,” most Southern Baptists hold a geographic understanding and interpretation of Acts 1:8 which leads to seeing Christians and churches as free, even Scripturally mandated, to focus on their kind of people in their Jerusalem and Judea, and only later in the geographic progression of witness in Samaria and the uttermost to focus on the “ta ethne”--ethnolinguistic peoples.

Until the English Bible translations update their 1611 use of “nations” and “Gentiles” to use instead “ethnic and ethnics” in the Old and the New Testament places where they appear, American Christians will likely retain their poor understanding of their personal responsibility to engage and evangelize the ethnic peoples around them. And, until that translation change occurs, Christians in the USA will continue to gravitate to a geographic, “my kind of people first,” interpretation for Acts 1:8. They will also fail to place a priority of engaging the lost primarily through engaging each “ta ethne” in light of the ethne’s heart **language, culture and worldview**. Over 2,000 Old and New Testament references are behind and consistent in providing this translation picture. (See John Piper’s *Let The Nations Be Glad* for one of a number of presentations that provide this same perspective on the Scriptures.)

**1.2. What Saith The Demographics and Societal Trends?** When one moves from Scriptural teachings to demographics, the “ta ethne,” the increased arrival in the USA of ethnic peoples are front and center when it comes to major contributors to social changes within the USA. The USA has long been known for the theme engraved on the Statute of Liberty--“Give me your tired, your huddled masses.” Even though over the past few decades some restrictions have been placed on the volume of mass immigration into the USA, the annual and decadal migration percentages are very high, and increasing annually. That slogan is still being fulfilled. **It is very accurate to say that the immigration of peoples into the USA over the past half century has literally changed the face and social fabric of America.** Recent immigration numbers, percentages and upward trends show that the upward increases will continue unabated. (For a more in-depth picture of ethnic migration into the megacities of the USA see

the Brookings tracking of ethnic immigration into USA Gateway cities since 1900 and the textual interpretations from the US Census Bureau on the 2000 Census.)

Beyond the Biblical “panta ta ethne” focus, the current demographic scene points clearly to a need for a focus on the ethnolinguistic peoples who are coming to and settling in the USA. Consequent to the Statue of Liberty’s inscription of “Give me your tired, your huddled masses,” another famous sociological statement has been oft-quoted over the past century, which is **“America is the great melting pot of peoples.”** Though many who understand the tenacity of a person’s original culture and worldview don’t accept the statement, even if the USA was a melting pot of peoples in the past, **the USA is no longer a melting pot of peoples.**

Most of the ethnolinguistic people groups who are migrating to the USA today plan to and are migrating into communities of their own ethnic people group. Few ethnic groups migrate into the USA with the intention of melding or melting into the general American social landscape. A few of the people within each of the ethnic people groups do meld into the general population, but a large majority of them tend not to do so today.

The USA only need look at Europe for examples of this trend. Ethnics have been moving into communities where their own ethnic people group already live. Ethnic groups learned decades ago that they could gain major benefits for themselves as a people group by migrating into major European cities and settling among their own ethnic people group who speak their heart language, possess their same cultural traits and worldview beliefs. As a result various people groups in various European cities own for themselves whole communities and sections of those cities. Along with this geographic coverage comes ownership of the real estate in those communities, the political positions at the city and national level that goes with those geographic entities. Each of the ethnic peoples are able to use their own language in those sections of the city, wear their own cultural dress, eat their own cultural food and have their own religious institutions.

Moving back to consider ethnics in the USA, the reason behind the decision of multiple ethnic peoples to not to meld into the general American population is that they have learned that they can have in the USA what their ethnic people groups has attained in Europe and consequently in Canada. They now know, by experience that there is power and great ethnic advantages through consciously seeking out and moving into communities among their own ethnic people group. **Ethnics moving into America today want to live in community among their fellow ethnics, speak their heart language, wear their cultural dress, eat their own cultural food and maintain their own religious ties and worship styles and institutions.** These ethnic migrants now coming into the USA want the freedom America offers them, but do not want to become culturally and religiously American. Some of the contents of the following bulleted items are

based upon a publication by Audrey Singer under the title of *The Rise of New Immigrant Gateways*. A publication of The Brookings Institute of Washington, D.C. as part of the *Living Cities Census Series*, February 2004. Where this is true, they will be so noted.

- The Brookings Institute formats and studies cities according to six (6) categories: **Former Gateway; Continuous; Post World War II; Emerging; Re-Emerging; and Pre-Emerging.**
- St. Louis is part of the Former Gateway cities group. There are eight cities in this category—St. Louis, Baltimore, Buffalo, Cleveland, Detroit, Milwaukee, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh.
- A Former Gateway City is defined as: A city that is above the national average in foreign born 1900-1930, followed by percentages below the national average in every decade from 1930 to 2000 A.D.
- St. Louis in 1900 had a population of 575,238 with a foreign-born population of 111,356 which was 19.4% of the total population. St. Louis was 7<sup>th</sup> in the USA in relation to the number of foreign-born residents in the 1900 list.
- St. Louis (MSA with East St. Louis included) had in the 2000 Census a population of 2,626,411, with a 9.8% gain in the total population from 1980 to 2000 and **54.2% gain in the foreign-born population from 1980-2000.**
- Residents within the official city limits of two US cities are composed of more than 50% ethnics, mostly Islamic background ethnics--Detroit and Washington, D.C.
- Other US megacities, due to migration and reproduction, are fast becoming composed of a majority of ethnics from various ethnolinguistic people groups
- It is already true that America's 200 largest cities are composed of a majority of minority peoples as sociology in the US defines minority peoples
- Hispanics have, for some years now, composed the majority of the population in a number of US cities and counties
- The largest contemporary immigrant-receiving metropolitan areas are: New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, and Miami. (Brookings).
- Houston, in 2000 A.D. had a population of 1,953,631 with a foreign-born population of 516,105 which was 26.4% of Houston's total population. (Brookings)
- Atlanta surged in foreign-born from 1980-2000 by 817% (Brookings').
- Portland, Oregon and Seattle, Washington are two of the "Re-Emerging" group of Gateway Cities who are defined by a: "similar pattern to continuous gateways: Foreign-born percentage exceeds national average 1900-1930, lags it after 1930, then increases rapidly after 1980. Cities in the re-emerging category are: Denver, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Oakland, Phoenix, Portland, OR, Sacramento, San Jose, Seattle, and Tampa (Brookings). It is interesting that the majority of the re-emerging cities are on the west coast.

**1.3. Learning From Europe and Canada.** The USA now needs to "go to school" on England, Germany, France and other European nations concerning the mass immigration of ethnic people groups. Western European countries are thought to be some ten to fifteen years farther into a broader and deeper "Ta

ethne” presence than is the USA at this time. The International Mission Board, SBC is engaging the major unreached ethnic people groups in Europe, which includes those whose origin is Europe and those ethnics who have migrated to Europe. Southern Baptists in the USA should “go to school” off evangelizers in Europe.

In August of 2002, *The Economist* magazine (British Edition) carried a headline article entitled “Europe’s Muslims”. The following are excerpts from that article that relate to the issues being discussed in this presentation.

“September 11<sup>th</sup> and Osama bin Laden’s justification of violence in the name of Islam were enough to arouse all sorts of worries about the Muslim world, where theocracies flourish, women tend to be downtrodden, zealots chop off limbs for breaches of the law and adulterers may be stoned to death. That several of the perpetrators of the attacks on the twin towers had apparently lived for years in western countries raised further worries about the enclosed societies that seemed to exist within the West, societies in which hate could be preached and treachery plotted while all around non-Muslims remained utterly unaware.” (*The Economist*, p. 21)...In 2002, with only 11% of the population being Islamic, they elected an Islamic mayor in Oldham, England, a decaying cotton town just outside of Manchester...Beyond Islam, some schools in Oldham are now composed of 90% Asians,” mostly Hindus with some Muslims, from India. (Ibid, p. 21) Moreover, in Oldham, several of the families from Asia, mainly from Bangladesh and Pakistan, “brought their feudalism with them, and also the loyalty to the clan associated with it. This means that an extended family of up to 500 people may vote as one.” (Ibid, p. 22) ..”Many bring girls and boys to Britain to marry their sons and daughters in arranged (and occasionally forced) marriages and thus help to constitute the ‘parallel society’ --the term is used in an official report about last year’s riots in Oldham “ (Ibid, p. 22) Such habits obviously make it harder for these communities to fit into British society as a whole--and Britain has been quicker than, say, France or Germany to come to terms with the idea of integration, whereby immigrants may keep the culture and religion of their homeland, rather than assimilation, whereby they are indistinguishable, except perhaps by colour, from the natives...Yet some aspects of Islam do reinforce the isolation of Muslims in Western Europe. (Ibid, p. 22)...”Abroad at home, by satellite. The position of women is a case in point...The television beamed into the homes of French Muslims comes from the Middle East or North Africa, with programmes that constantly dwell on the tribulations of the Palestinians and the ‘victimhood’ of the Arabs in general.”...”Certainly, some Islamic practices seem jarring to Europeans. The ritual slaughter of tens of thousands of sheep at the annual feast known as Aid Al-Adha draws a shocked response each year in France.”...”Europe’s imams are usually sent and paid for by the governments of Muslim countries...Why do governments believe it their duty to provide mosques and imams in a foreign country? Perhaps to stop their expatriates falling prey to radicalism; perhaps because the distinction between church and state is never clear for theocratic

Muslims.”...”But integration is hindered both by cultural and, to some extent, by religious factors. The critical mass of the Muslim immigrant communities, which makes it easier for individuals to survive unintegrated, is a serious impediment, just as it is for Latinos in the United States. “(Ibid, p. 24)

In Birmingham, England and Paris it is not uncommon to see Christians selling their churches and church property as Muslims and Hindus move in and become the majority people. In Birmingham, England, Muslims and Hindus now own the property and dominate on the famous Shakespearean Stratford street that runs from deep inside Birmingham to and across the river to Shakespeare’s home site. A number of Anglican and other Protestant churches have sold their property and moved out of the area, giving way to at least four new Mosques. (See the unpublished “Learning From Pictures” module of Jim Slack or contact Butch Ogelsby of the IMB who is a mobilizer for Western Europe, now living and working in the USA)

**1.4. The Future Of US Megacities Is A Mosaic of Ethnics.** Those migrating into the USA want the same for themselves as their ethnic people groups have come to enjoy in Europe and Canada. They are getting the same in the US, and are also, due to their concentrations in whole sections of megacities in the USA, beginning to “own” the economic and political influence and control for the sections of the city or county and parish where they are settling. One of a number of older, historic, cases in the USA has been that of the Cajuns in Louisiana who defined South Louisiana and now represents the dominant culture.

America’s megacities, and now even smaller cities, as well as counties, are composed of ethnic blocks, with Anglos being the minority population. As a result, Islam and Hinduism have and are continuing to become growing religious entities in more and more cities. (See the USA Today article on Dearborn, Michigan)

Islamic peoples now know that they can locate in American cities, move into the neighborhoods where their own ethnic group lives, and soon become the dominant business, political and religious entity in those precincts. And, they come intending to invite Americans, especially African Americans, into Islam as converts. The next step is prominence, like they already have in many cities in Europe--increasing dominance in local business, politics and religion. And, they have oil Euro’s or U.S. dollars in the Middle Eastern Islamic countries available to back them up with capital. Mosques appear in their new settings as soon as they get settled, whether in Europe, Canada or the USA.

**1.5. A Note On Perspective Related To This Ethnic Frontier of Lostness.** The inclusion of this frontier does not represent an anti-immigrant position at all. This emphasis is quite the opposite. It represents a call to recognize that God has brought the lost to the shores of the USA and that the

Biblical and logical implementation of the Great Commission should already have served to focus Southern Baptists, evangelicals and all Christians in the USA on the “ta ethne,” migrating to the USA. What is said here is not to suggest that no one or only a few are attempting to engaging and evangelize the “ta ethne” in the USA. Some Christians are attempting to reach the ethnics as they migrate in, and that is the time to engage and evangelize them. Once they dominate, even former Anglos who once lived there will be treated as strangers who are bringing a “foreign religion” into their midst.

**1.6. A Major Barrier To Engaging for Evangelization The “Ta Ethne” In The USA.** To this point in time, no entity, social, religious, business, academic, government, or any other entity has taken it upon themselves to identify each and every ethnolinguistic people group in the USA. The U.S. Census has never engaged in identifying people at their ethnolinguistic level. The U.S. Census has identified people at a much broader level such as Hispanics and Asians, neither of which are ethnolinguistic entities.

Effective engagement with a view to evangelizing ethnic peoples anywhere in the world depends upon identifying each ethnolinguistic people group, and the gathering of necessary linguistic, cultural, worldview and demographic information on each of those EPGs.

The International Mission Board of the SBC, has developed a global ethnolinguistic people group database of all the known people groups in the world. This identification of people groups has been through IMB missionaries and in cooperation with the Lausanne Movement, A.D. 2000 and Beyond, SIL/Wycliffe, Campus Crusades (especially its Jesus Film division) and multiple other global, evangelical, para-church and missionary sending agencies. With an estimated 96% of the globe’s ethnolinguistic peoples identified, due to the IMB being a global missions agency and not a USA missions agency, the ethnic people groups in the USA have never been identified. That task awaits Christian evangelizers in the USA who feel spiritually obligated to fulfill God’s Great Commission “ta ethne” mandate in the USA.

At this time, the North American Mission Board of the SBC is working toward keying on the IMB’s global people group database and drawing on the IMB’s people group experience in identifying and housing the global people group data related to EPGs in the USA and Canada. As the USA and Canadian EPGs are identified

**1.7. A New Awakening and Focus On The Ta Ethne In The USA Megacities.** The Ethnic America consortium of Christians is one of a number of entities who are attempting to call American Christians to the task of evangelizing the “ta ethne” in America. Within Southern Baptist ranks In the past three years, an increasing number of megacity Directors of Missions in USA have each realized their Biblical responsibilities toward ethnic presence in their cities and

have covenanted together within a Great Commission Initiatives grouping to find ways to fulfill those responsibilities. They have also considered the future of the cities where they serve Southern Baptist churches. They have come to realize that the cities where their associations exist are fast becoming predominantly ethnic. Many of them are becoming Islamic and Hindu on their watch, a legacy that none of them want to have after retirement. When considering the social and religious demographics of non-Christian ethnic enclaves on one hand and the Anglo Baptist churches on the other hand selling their inner city properties and moving to the county beyond the city. They then came to the realization that their legacy, and thus the legacy of Southern Baptists will soon be that of a city going Islamic and Hindu during their tenure as a pastor or Director of Missions. Many are waking up to Great Commission realities when they consider the demographic shift among ethnic peoples. Once Islam or Hinduism is fairly dominant in a megacity, engaging and evangelizing them at that point in time becomes increasingly more difficult than engaging and evangelizing them now.

It will be very interesting to see how traditional, Anglo Christians interpret the Great Commission and Acts 1:8 after a megacity is either dominated or heavily influenced by Islamic and Hindu peoples. Will their Jerusalem then shift from focusing on Anglos to focusing on Islamic and Hindu peoples?

## **II. The Second Frontier of Lostness Is Orality and Oral Preference People**

**2. The Second Major Frontier of Lostness Is That of Oral Preference People.** Oral preference people could be the least recognized and least engaged pool or frontier of lostness in the USA. Oral preference peoples are those whose poor reading and writing skills leave them preferring narratives and stories when learning and communicating. Many oral preference people are illiterates or functional illiterates. It is wrongfully assumed and published in most demographic publications that Americans are very literate and that America is one of the most literate nations in the world. As shocking as this might be, neither of these two assumptions is correct.

Tom Brokaw, a famous, and now retired news commentator, produced and aired in August of 2003 a documentary showing that one-fourth of all adult Americans can't read these words, and for sure they can't read them with understanding. In one sense, that is not new news, but in another sense, for most Americans it is startling news. In the 1980s Jonathan Kozol, a newsman, a journalist and a professor at the time at Harvard University wrote a book--*Illiterate America*. In the book Kozol said:

"It was autumn 1964, fresh from Harvard College, from a term at Oxford, and from the indulgence of three years as an expatriate and social dropout on the fringes of the literary life on the Left Bank of Paris, that I returned to the United States and chose, for reasons which I do not wholly understand, to find a job within a fourth grade classroom of the Boston

Public Schools. **I had never read the works of Gunnar Myrdal, Michael Harrington, or Robert Coles.** But it was in that year in Boston that I saw before my eyes a world of suffering, of hopelessness and fear, that I could never have imagined in the privileged and insulated decades of my childhood and schooling. (p. xv)... These are some reasons why I have the obligation to create this book. (pp. Xv-xvii) **A Third of the nation Cannot Read These Words** (page 3)... Twenty-five million American adults cannot read the poison warnings on a can of pesticide, a letter from their child's teacher, or the front page of a daily paper. An additional 35 million read only at a level which is less than equal to the full survival needs of our society. (p. 4) {These statistical findings are astoundingly accurate to have been researched in the early 1980s before the NALS were conducted.} Together, these 60 million people represent more than one third of the entire adult population...The largest numbers of illiterate adults are white, native-born Americans. In proportion to population, however, the figures are higher for blacks and Hispanics than for whites. Sixteen percent of white adults, 44 percent of blacks, and 56 percent of Hispanic citizens **are functional or marginal illiterates.** Figures for the younger generation of black adults are increasing. Forty-seven percent of all black seventeen-year-olds are functionally illiterate. That figure is expected to climb to 50 percent by 1990. Quotes taken from Jonathan Kozol's *Illiterate America*.

The NALS studies that were initiated by the late 1980s U.S. Department of Education through the instructions of the former President Bush, and conducted by Princeton University, confirmed the accuracy of Jonathan Kozol's statistics and also underlined the lack of change since Kozol wrote his lines in the early 1980s. Thus, in 2003, Tom Brokaw, another newsman addressed the issue of illiteracy in the USA, saying that the numbers have increased and the percentages have at best remained low and poor. Recent studies since Brokaw reveal the situation has become worse rather than better. Today, we anxiously await the publication of the 2000 edition of the NALS (National Adult Literacy Studies) from Princeton's testing center through the current U.S. Department of Education.

Without going deep into the background of orality and literacy and all of the technical categories and definitions that define the field, only the following will be given:

- An illiterate is one who cannot read and write, meaning that most who are so classified have not attended school. An illiterate is an oral communicator, surviving in society by means of oral communication such as narratives and stories rather than through reading and writing.
- A functional illiterate is one who is often able to sound words thus giving the appearance that the person can read, but who is not able to understand well the words or sentences that he or she just correctly sounded. So, the functional illiterate functions as does an illiterate through oral means.

- It is usually in the eight grade or early in the ninth grade level of schooling before a student, or any person who is attempting to become literate, has developed the kinds of literate competencies to begin functioning as a literate in society. At that grade level, the ninth grade, a person is a semi-literate and is potentially in reach of becoming fully literate.
- Twelve grades does a literate make, but many students in the USA drop out before then, and numerous others barely get by in school, thus graduating, but without full literate competencies.
- In the USA today, between 45 and 55% of all Americans 16 years of age and older function within the illiterate or functional illiterate levels.
- It is very important to understand that an illiterate and a functional illiterate cannot yet handle--understand, apply and thus use--expositionally presented information. That level of literacy and thus understanding and competency comes between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades of educational performance.
- Therefore, an oral communicator--an illiterate or a functional illiterate--learns and communicates through narrative, story methods, not expositional ones.

Many teachers in the educational community in the USA and around the world have known this for decades. However, among religious leaders, talking in these terms is almost like speaking a foreign language to them.

Concerning the issue of at least 45-55% of all US citizens above 16 years of age being oral preference--illiterate or functionally illiterate--individuals that is not just the situation in the USA. The NAL's performance tests have been run in 30 Western and educationally advanced nations and the same is true among them. The 45-55% illiterate or functionally illiterate status is true in Canada, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Germany and France, as does Mexico, Chile and a host of other nations. Nations beyond those have illiteracy-functional illiteracy levels that are between the 70-85% range, with some nations such as Afghanistan being as high as 90% illiteracy-functional illiteracy. At least 6,000 ethnolinguistic peoples in the world still do not have a written version of their language. But, enough of the world. This presentation is about frontiers of lostness in the USA, and orality is a major issue in the USA. A few examples of literacy levels 1 & 2 (illiteracy and functional illiteracy percentages) in randomly selected places are as follows:

**Data On Selected States (Levels 1 & 2 Combined)**

- California.....46% of the population
- Wash. D.C.....61%
- Georgia.....54%
- Illinois.....44%
- Kentucky.....54%
- Michigan.....44%
- Missouri.....46%
- North Carolina.....52%

**Data On Selected States (Levels 1 & 2 Combined. Continued...**

- Oregon.....38%
- Pennsylvania.....48%
- Texas.....51%
- Washington.....35%
- West Virginia.....56%

**Data On Selected Cities**

- East St. Louis.....92%
- East Los Angel...87%
- Miami.....86%
- Detroit.....80%
- Baltimore.....73%
- Hartford, Conn....73%
- N. Las Vegas.....71%
- Atlanta.....67%
- Pontiac, Mi.....67%
- Richmond, Va.....62%
- Flint, Michigan.....64%
- Saginaw, Mi.....64%
- Louisville.....59%
- Boston.....53%
- Wyandotte City...49%
- Wayne, Mi.....48%
- East Detroit City...47%

**Missouri Cities & Towns (Selections)**

City	NALS Level 1	NALS Level 2	Level 1 & 2
St. Louis City	35	31	66
St. Peters City	6	18	24
Jefferson City	17	24	41
Springfield City	13	25	38
Cape Girardeau City	15	35	40
Kansas City (Mo.)	23	25	48
Hannibal City	19	31	50
O'Fallon City	6	28	34
Poplar Bluff City	26	35	61
Joplin City	16	28	44
Columbia City	13	17	30
Independence City	12	27	39
Kansas City (Mo)	26	38	64
Kirksville City	12	24	36
St. Joseph's City	16	31	47
Bellefontaine Neighbors	21	33	54
Berkeley City	33	32	65

<b>City</b>	<b>NALS Level 1</b>	<b>NALS Level 2</b>	<b>Level 1 &amp; 2</b>
Clayton City	8	10	18
Farmington City	26	31	57
Jennings City	31	33	64
Marshall City	19	33	52
Mexico City	20	31	51
Moberly City	20	30	50
Sedalia City	19	31	50
Sikeston City	22	34	56
University City	25	17	42
Chesterfield City	10	9	19

**Missouri Counties (Selections)**

<b>County</b>	<b>Level 1</b>	<b>Level 2</b>	<b>Levels 1 &amp; 2</b>
Adair	12	27	39
Barry	19	34	53
Bates	18	35	53
Benton	23	35	58
Boone	11	18	29
Butler	23	37	60
Cape Girardeau	13	29	42
Cass	10	28	38
Clark	17	34	51
DeKalb	22	32	54
Dunklin	27	40	67
Greene	11	26	37
Howell	19	36	55
Jefferson	11	30	41
Lincoln	15	35	50
Macon	18	34	52
McDonald	19	35	54
Mississippi	28	41	69
Moniteau	16	34	50
Monroe	17	32	49
Morgan	20	37	57
Oregon	24	37	61
Ozark	22	38	60
Pemiscot	32	42	74
Perry	17	40	57
Platte	9	19	28
Ripley	26	41	67
St. Clair	22	35	57
St. Louis County	16	21	37
St. Louis City	35	31	66
Stone	18	32	50

Texas	19	38	57
Washington	23	41	64
Webster	16	35	51
<b>County</b>	<b>Level 1</b>	<b>Level 2</b>	<b>Levels 1 &amp; 2</b>

Consequently, to function on the frontiers of lostness in the USA, Christian evangelizers and disciplers need two tools. First, Christian witnesses, teachers and disciplers need expository, inductive, logical style witnessing, preaching and teaching tools for use among illiterates. At the same time, they need oral, not expository, communication--narrative, storying style skills--for witnessing and discipling among oral communicators. If a witness and discipler only have expository type skills, he or she has the tool needed for about half of the US population. Thus, Christian educators have a serious frontier to learn about and develop the skills needed to minister.

### **III. The Third Frontier of Lostness Is Unchurched and “Unclaimed” Americans**

**3. The Third Major Frontier--Unchurched Americans.** From a time in the 1950s when most Americans considered themselves as belonging in some way to some Christian church and denomination to now, church affiliation percentages have gradually decreased. This pool of unchurched Americans is increasing yearly while the pool of traditional church and denominationally affiliated decreases. Documentation of this fact and trend comes from many secular and religious sources such as: Barna’s continuing research, various Gallup Polls, McKinney and Roof’s studies of Christianity in the USA, Dr. Ray Dalton’s doctoral dissertation under the graduate sociology department of the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, the 2000 United States Congregational Study, and others.

Due to the huge amount of research that is continually being conducted concerning unchurched Americans, data from numerous similar and different perspectives have been developed and are being tracked. This makes it very important to be certain that the data that is used is from similar research categories. Categories commonly used are: spiritual interest and beliefs; attendance of individuals of church and worship; affiliation with a local church or congregation; and identification with and loyalty to a denomination or particular stream of Christianity. Because this presentation is designed for use by Southern Baptists in looking at their responsibilities for the lost, of special interest are the categories of affiliation and loyalty to a particular church or denomination.

**3.1. A Definition of Unchurched Used In This Presentation.** In order to speak in this presentation of the unchurched population or percent of the population in the USA, a definition of church is necessary. Churched individuals in this presentation is understood to mean individuals who are active, dutiful members of a local church, **who would, upon moving to another location,**

**likely find another local church of the same kind, and affiliate with that church as an official, participating member.** Churched in this presentation does not mean occasional or even a somewhat regular attendee who is not affiliated with a local church. By way of illustration, the Southern Baptist Convention published recently a report saying that the churches in the denomination during the 2003 church year passed the 16,000,000 member mark for the first time in SBC history. However, at the same time, studies of SBC life and member activity on a given Sunday cannot account for more than 7,000,000 regular, active, attending local church members.

**3.2. A Milepost From The Past--Use of The 1950s As A Base For Comparison Of Affiliation Then and Today.** Perhaps the most insightful commentator during the 1950s which provides us with a comparative base was Will Herberg, whose *Protestant—Catholic---Jew* captured the generalized religious mood of the period. ‘The outstanding feature of the religious situation in America today,’ wrote Herberg in 1955, ‘is **the pervasiveness of religious self-identification along the tripartite scheme of Protestant, Catholic, Jew.**’ He pointed to the close ties between religion and the American way of life and **the cultural forces urging Americans to belong to one or another of the three great religious communities.** Group differences seemed to be on the decline in a more homogenized and integrated culture. The central theme was religious conformity, which was more pronounced, as he saw it, among younger, ‘modern-minded’ suburban dwellers. **As Herberg said: ‘Not to be—that is, not to be a Protestant, a Catholic, or a Jew is somehow not to be an American. It may imply being foreign...it may imply being obscurely ‘un-American,’ as is the case with those who declare themselves atheists, agnostics, or even ‘humanists.’”** (pp. 13-14)

**A Herberg Table. Trends in Religious Preference, 1952-1985**

Faith Category	1985	1952	Percentage Change
Protestant	57	67	-15
Catholic	28	25	+12
Jewish	2	4	-50
Other	4	1	+300
None	9	2	+350

(Table 1-1 on page 16)

In the 1950s, it was common just prior to any election from the city, parish or county level to the senatorial and presidential level, for each candidate to be seen prior to the election by the public going to the church of his or her choice. Church affiliation in the 1950s was necessary for most candidates in most places for them to be trusted and elected to most any office. Religion was very important as seen during the time when John Fitzgerald Kennedy, a Roman Catholic, ran for President. His religious affiliation was a major consideration and concern during that Presidential election.

Sydney E. Ahlstrom saw what Herberg saw and said “A Great Puritan Epoch can be seen beginning in 1558 with the death of Mary Tudor, the last monarch to rule over an officially Roman Catholic England, and as ending in 1960 with the election of John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the first Roman Catholic president of the United States.” (p. 11) **“The 1960s marks a turning point in American religious life...The decade brought a shift of mood and widespread social and institutional dislocations.** For young Americans especially it was a turbulent and at times traumatic period; the culture was deeply shaken—with repercussions felt in the mores and ethos, in life-styles and world views, and even at the profoundest ethical and spiritual levels. It was as if the old synthesis of religion and culture fell apart.” As historian Sydney E. Ahlstrom went on to say, it was a time when “old foundations of national confidence, patriotic idealism, moral traditionalism, and even historic Judaeo-Christian theism, were awash. Presumptions that had held firm for centuries—even millennia—were being widely questioned.” (Ahlstrom’s quotes were in Roof and McKinney’s book on P. 11)

This is not to argue for a moment that all of those running for office during the 1950s were dutiful, upstanding Christian individuals, but they sure had to appear that way in order to be elected.

**3.3. Church Affiliation and The Unchurched Today.** Many of those who were not yet born in the 1950s, and who did not live during those religious affiliation days, find Herberg’s description of 1950s religious attitudes as being incredulous. Whether true or not, many today cannot imagine that such a view was ever held by a majority of Americans. This is only one of many indicators that things have changed.

However, in many settings today it could be political suicide for a political candidate to place a lot of emphasis during his or her campaign on their religious affiliation and beliefs. The separation of Church and State has become a sensitive issue for many in the body politic. Also, the percentage of traditional evangelical affiliates to a denominational church has declined to 30-35% of the total American population. Dr. Ray Dalton, in his PhD dissertation at the University of Tennessee of Knoxville, found this percentage to be quite accurate.

George Barna’s A.D. 2002 report on the *The State Of The Church* in 2002 is a study that can be referenced. In Barna’s report, he found through in-the-field research that 43% (four of every ten adult Americans “were present at a church service during a typical week in 2002.” (Barna, p. 13) In this case Barna was measuring attendance, not affiliation or devotion to a church or denomination. “The range during the 1997-2002 period has been only three percentage points (from a low of 40% to a high of 43%.” (Ibid) Barna comments that the September 11 attacks buoyed the percentage to a degree, but only for a very short time. He then comments that “Although Americans do not attend church as frequently as they did in the Sixties and before, nearly two-thirds of all adults attend at least

once during any given 12-month period.” (Barna, 14) **As part of the same series of time-studies, Barna observed “less than one out of three adults attend church with such consistency.” (Ibid) This is a statistic that is more in line with what we are considering in order to determine the unchurched percentage of the population in the USA today.** Of non-born again individuals no more than 31% of them attended church, which was about the same as that of generational Busters. (Barna, pages 14 & 15) Church membership is lower than attendance. **Therefore, using Barna’s research findings, it is very safe to say that church membership has now dropped below that of the 33% attendance level of adult Americans.** This percentage of 33% is comparable to Dr. Ray Dalton’s findings.

Dr. Jerry Falwell of Liberty University is comfortable with George Barna’s research findings since in the June/July 2004 edition of the *National Liberty Journal*, published by Liberty University, George Barna’ findings were cited as seen in the following quote. “Unchurched people totals have ‘risen from 21 percent in 1991 to 34 percent today.’” (p. 8 of the *National Liberty Journal*) The article went on to say that from previous to present surveys Barna’s research group found that in a given week unchurched people are less likely than all adults to read the Bible, pray and embrace Jesus Christ as their savior. (p. 8) Barna, in sharing information concerning his research findings said: “Unchurched people are not just lazy or uninformed. **They are wholly disinterested in church life-- often passionately so. Stirring worship music won’t attract them because worship isn’t even on their radar screen. More comfortable pews cannot compete with the easy chair or the bed that already serve the unchurched person well. Church events cannot effectively compete with what the world has to offer...Until...a life-changing, practical encounter...is made; focusing on features, programs and benefits other than such life-shaping encounter is more likely to lose ground than to gain it.**” (p. 8)

This is not to be seen as a contradiction of other Barna studies and the studies of the Gallup Polling group when they find a high percentage of Americans who believe in God and who are interested in spiritual matters. Those studies measured spiritual sensitivity, concern and interest, not dutiful affiliation.

One might find a quote in “*The Decline of Religious Identify In The United States*”, a 2004 document that speaks to the difference in the data between individuals’ statements concerning personal identity with a religion, a local congregation, and their attendance of a local church within the past week or two. A quote on page 10 says “Ever since Will Hererg’s well-known *Catholic-Protestant-Jew*, written in the mid-1950s, Americans have been singled out for their high levels of religious identification, even if they are religiously indifferent in other respects. People might have a shallow level of faith and weak institutional commitments, yet maintain loyalty to a religious community as a means of affirming both a religious identify and the American Way of Life...In a dynamic society, the scope and direction of such preferences are an important index of

what is happening religiously and culturally at any given time. (Footnote 19 in the research document)”

The issue is that Gallup and other polls have found individual Americans saying since the 1950s that they consider themselves to be personally religious. That percentage has slowly declined from near 75% in the early 1950s to 65% in 2004. At the same time Gallup found that local church attendance has hovered between 40 and 45% from 1950 to 2004. This is from 5 to 10% higher than recent Barna and Glenmary research findings. Given these research findings, it is very safe and accurate for one to say that about one-third of individual American’s see themselves as active members of a local religious group in the USA. And, this percent is dwindling according to every one of the researchers.

Roof and McKinney have also been seriously involved in researching the spiritual, religious habits of Americans. The following are excerpts from one of their publications.

Roof and McKinney said: “Our purpose in writing this book was to try to understand how and why the religious scene is changing and its likely future. One of us is a sociology professor in a state university; the other is a seminary professor and administrator. (Page xiii of *American Mainline Religion: Its Changing Shape and Future* by Wade Clark Roof and William McKinney as published by Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick and London, 1987.)

Roof and McKinney presented data in their 1980s study in an attempt to state why the religious scene was changing. Based upon their research, they stated six major causes or characteristics of the change: 1) Pluralism is paramount; 2) Secular humanism is spreading, runs counter to religion and equals the religious in power and prestige wherein confrontation is common and will intensify; 3) A shift has occurred in the religious scene itself characterized by mainline denominations losing members and prestige while at the same time Protestant-evangelicals are growing and gaining some respect; 4) Privatism and individualism have become prominent American values with a view that religion is personal and should be kept private and out of public view and discussion; 5) Volunteerism is occurring as an expected result of being religious which is replacing previous views that service is obligatory or one’s duty; while 6) The moral base in America has eroded significantly over the past 25 years.

Roof and McKinney also said: “Early on (in the 1960s), theologians on talk shows and the lecture circuit began proclaiming the ‘death of God’ and mounting a movement to reconceptualize faith in radical, de-mythologized terms. Yet at the same time, ironically, new gods were being born in the most unexpected of places—the secular college campuses. At colleges and universities across the country, many new sects and cults emerged, with their members wearing strange garb, practicing ancient rituals, and speaking in esoteric tongues: Hare Krishnas, Zen Buddhists, Vedantists, Sufis, and scores of other ‘new religions.’ And the

converts were disaffected middle-class youth who were looking for alternatives to the more established faiths. The spiritual ferment took many forms, including mystical cults, religious communes, the occult, the 'Jesus people,' Eastern spiritualists, and the human potential movement. There were many signs of cultural change. Countercultural youth experimented not just with new religions but with alternative political, economic, family, and sexual styles. It was the Age of Aquarius and a time for 'getting into' a range of experiential frames—from astrology to Zen." (Roof and McKinney, pp. 11-12)

**3.4. Current Data Related To Church Affiliation In The USA In 2000.**

The data in this section comes from *Religious Congregations & Membership in the United States: 2000* by Jones, Doty, Grammich, Horsch, Houseal, Lynn, Marcum, Sanchagrin, and Taylor. Glenmary Research Center/Nashville, Tennessee. 2002 Copyright. It is difficult, even in an era when the American public is used to surveys and statistical studies; getting comprehensive data is still difficult. This is the most recent and most accurate comprehensive study of every religious congregation in the USA, including Buddhist, Christian, Islamic and any other religious groups that congregate in a way such that they can be identified and measured. Even then, some groups were not as comprehensively covered as others, such as the Black African churches that did not respond to the study as well as did most of the other religious groups.

Using this data, which does give the congregational data on multiple groups from the same perspective and according to the same categories, provide the best and most current data that exists to date. Therefore, the following are selected data items from that study that are relative to one of the groups for whom this document was prepared.

**Affiliations Statistics Among Congregations In 2000 A.D.  
These Percentages Represent Those Affiliated With Some Kind  
Of A Religion**

- California.....46.1%
- Georgia.....44.8%
- Kentucky.....53.4%
- Michigan.....41.8%
- Missouri.....51.7%
- North Carolina.....45.4%
- Oregon.....31.3%
- Pennsylvania.....57.9%
- Washington.....33.0%
- West Virginia.....35.9%

**Selected Missouri Affiliation Statistics Among Congregations In 2000  
These Percentages Represent The Unaffiliated In Any Religion**

<b>State Or City Or County</b>	<b>Unclaimed/Unchurched</b>
Missouri – State	48.3%
Barry County	38.7%
Butler County	65.5%
Cass County	59.0%
Clay County	49.7%
Cole County	29.1%
Dunklin County	46.3%
<b>State Or City Or County</b>	<b>Unclaimed/Unchurched</b>
Greene County	43.8%
Howard County	47.8%
Jasper County	15.7%
Jefferson County	59.4%
Lawrence County	43.9%
Lewis County	36.7%
Lincoln County	58.3%
Macon County	30.0%
Madison County	41.6%
McDonald County	63.4%
Mississippi County	52.9%
Montineau County	30.8%
Monroe County	38.3%
Morgan County	46.0%
Newton County	55.4%
Nodaway County	46.0%
Oregon County	41.6%
Ozark County	77.0%
Pemiscot County	38.35
Platte County	58.5%
Pulaski County	56.5%
St. Charles County	48.8%
St. Louis County	58.8%
St. Louis City (MSA)	48.8%
Stone County	63.7%
Taney County	67.8%
Texas County	34.6%
Webster County	48.9%
Chicago City	44.1%
Kansas City (MSA)	51.8%

Note: Remember that this data includes all religions of all kinds.

These particular selections show that a significant percentage of Americans are still affiliating with some religious group, even though a number

are not Christian groups. And, many of the Christian groups are not mainstream Protestant or evangelical which further places the data into perspective.

The research recorded in *“The Vanishing Protestant Majority”* by Smith and Kim says: “Protestant identification has been monotonically declining across birth cohorts from at least 1910 through the 1980+ cohort; falling from 73% to 41% (Table 3A).(8) Similarly, the proportion raised as Protestant decreased from 75% for the pre-1910 cohort to 49% for the 1980+ cohort (Table 3B).” (p. 6) This same research document ventured an assumption based on their research that “The loss of Protestants could represent marginal Protestants who ceased their tenuous Protestant affiliation and slipped into the growing no religion group and/or into the Christian and inter-/non-denominational groups. It is likely that many of the lost Protestants are showing up among the no religion group which (is) expanding notably just as the Protestant share was shrinking (Hout and Fischer, 2002)...Also, if the lost Protestants were slipping into nones, it would be likely that they were largely token Protestants who did not strongly identify with a Protestant denomination and attended church infrequently.” (pp. 7 & 8 of Smith and Kim) Smith and Kim also found that “church attendance among Protestants was down slightly 28.5% weekly in the 1970s to 31.1% in the 1980s, and then 32.1% in 1990-1993.” (p. 8 of Smith and Kim)

Taking into consideration these various perspectives on religious and Christian congregational affiliation, the common level of commitment that can be classified as church and denominational affiliation in the USA to mainline Christian Protestant or Evangelical groups is in the low 30s. Further, the trend points to a steady decline that will soon drop into the twenty percent range, if it has not already dropped to that point.

It is very safe and accurate to say that about 70% of Americans are unchurched as far as evangelical and mainline Protestant churches are concerned. **This significant pool of lost Americans underlines and highlights this third frontier of lostness.**

**Implications of This Information on The Three Frontiers of Lostness in America.** The previously included quote of Barna in the Liberty Journal makes the point as well as it can be made when Barna is paraphrased to say: **“They (meaning this generation of unchurched Americans) are wholly disinterested in church life--often passionately so. Stirring worship music won’t attract them because worship isn’t even on their radar screen. More comfortable pews cannot compete with the easy chair or the bed that already serve the unchurched person well. Church events cannot effectively compete with what the world has to offer...Until...a life-changing, practical encounter...is made; focusing on features, programs and benefits other than such life-shaping encounter is more likely to lose ground than to gain it.”**

It would be better if the unchurched were simply “disinterested in church life” as Barna says some of the unchurched are, but it is worse when we find that more and more of the unchurched are “passionately disinterested” even to the point of being personally, socially, judgmentally and politically against Christianity.

Put these three high percentage frontiers of lostness along side each other and evangelical Christianity has a serious task of evangelism and church planting facing it during this era of American life. Christianity is under siege.

For the author of this document, the more serious issues are that: 1) many Christians are not even aware of the current state of affairs such as the ethnic onslaught, and the orality issue, while many are aware of the unchurched percentage in America; 2) as high as ninety percent of the Southern Baptist churches, and most of the common programs those churches are using, put them into competition with each other over the dwindling percentage of Americans who are friendly toward the traditional church and denominational life; and 3) are not preparing themselves and offering the Gospel to the unchurched, the oral preference people and each of the ethnic people groups Christ in ways that will get their attention and engage them in considering Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Perhaps the more serious issue among all of them is that an overwhelming majority of Evangelical and Southern Baptist churches are so traditional in their worship and witnessing styles and approaches that they won't consider more New Testament church planting approaches. Most churches persist in their primarily appeal to the traditional 33% or less of the church population. Just as Barna found and the Liberty Journal cited, the typical programs and approaches of the established churches do not appeal to the 67% unchurched population in the USA.

The issue is, like the Frog in the Kettle, that the attitude and habits of a majority of Americans have lost their interest, their desire and their former habit of going to a local church. Likely because there never was a point in time when public awareness realized openly that the unchurched population passed from a minority of Americans to a majority of Americans. Over this period of time, only a few local churches had a wake-up call and answered that call. Others had a wake up call but found themselves in a situation where leaders or members, or both, could not think of engaging in programs and approaches that were and are different from their historic ones.

The real issue today is not that of asking 42,000 Southern Baptist churches to change the way they have worship or “do church.” The issue is that many of these traditional churches will not go out into the unchurched, the ethnic and oral sectors of society and plant churches in ways that will accommodate the gathering of the lost for evangelism to occur.

It is difficult for this author to believe that a day would arrive when a Baptist, much less a Southern Baptist, would look with disdain upon a “house” church and say they prefer a “real” church instead that has land, a traditional building, and traditional programs that cater to the churched and not the unchurched; The need is not as much for established churches to reconfigure themselves as it is for the established churches to bless those members among them who will go out into the highways and the hedges to plant house churches on the frontiers of lostness. It is very interesting that from Virginia to the Mississippi River and on to California that Southern Baptists grew from the seventh position in denominational size in 1775 to number two in size behind the Methodists in 1850, and then to number one in size by 1950, primarily through farmers and business pioneers on the American frontiers who planted “house” churches on those American frontiers. Now that we face three other non-geographic frontiers, house church born and bred Baptists have come to despise and put down the New Testament method out of which it grew to prominence.

**If Southern Baptists can’t shift to bless the use of New Testament methods on these frontiers of lostness, Southern Baptists won’t have to worry about any strange new believers “who are coming to dinner.”**

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Fuller bibliographic source information not given in the presentation are:

- *“The Vanishing Protestant Majority”*, a paper written in July of 2004 by Tom W. Smith and Seokho Kim of NORC/University of Chicago as the continuing GSS Social Change Report No. 49 is an excellent resource.
- *“The Decline of Religious Identity in the United States”* is another source. This publication was researched by Sid Groeneman, PH.D. and Gary Tobin, PH.D. of the Institute For Jewish & Community Research in San Francisco in 2004.
- See *“Business Week”* and its cover article *“Evangelical America,”* pages 78-88 for discussion and authentication of many of the emphases in this paper. This article came out a week after this paper was written and printed.

**A Series: Critical Frontiers of Lostness Facing  
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**Prepared by: Dr. James B. Slack  
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