

Overflow

The Institute for the Theology of Culture: New Wine, New Wineskins

A Diverse Celebration by Kelsi Johns

In the March newsletter for New Wine, New Wineskins, I explored the profundity of two different cultural art forms (Bach and African music) being brought together to produce something entirely different: ballet. I would like to explore this theme further, specifically in terms of how it speaks to our dire need for cultural diversity and multi-ethnic representation in the church. That ballet performance involved the creation of something beautiful out of two or more different and separate cultural expressions. It inspired in me a longing and sense of need: I long for the church to be a community where we truly sense our need for one another in the diversity

of our cultural expressions, involving rather than negating cultural and ethnic tension. “Tension” in the sense that I do not believe that diversity in the church “just happens,” or is necessarily comfortable (especially considering the unequal footing from which we are currently working in America in regards to race relations and divisions). We must intentionally work to understand, engage and respect one another—accounting for our different backgrounds and ethnicities. These differences must not be undermined, but rather engaged and celebrated. When this happens, something beautiful and new emerges.

It frustrates me that the phrase “celebrate diversity”

is often labeled as taboo in Christian circles. I believe that the call to “celebrate diversity” is one of the most profound and significant aspects of our spiritual lives as Christians! The way I see it, the lack of appreciation for diversity fosters passive racism and homogeneous units in our social, educational and churchly spheres as believers. True, we are not to herald religious and spiritual “relativism” as such, but this is not what I am addressing. It perplexes me that diversity is often dubbed as synonymous with spiritual and religious relativism. But diversity—different colors, voices, perspectives, thinkers, feelers, cultures in the body of Christ? This is something

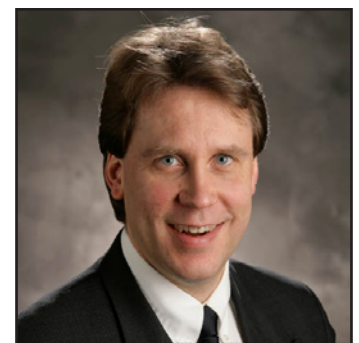
continued on page 2

Native Glory by Paul Louis Metzger

A Native American Christian woman who attended New Wine, New Wineskins’ conference “Created to Create” said that it was encouraging that we made space for a Native perspective; the dominant Christian culture rarely includes indigenous people in such discussions. This is so painfully and sadly true, and it is to the dominant Christian culture’s severe detriment. Billy Graham once said something to the effect that the Native American Christian community was the sleeping giant in the church’s outreach to American culture.

I heartily agree, though with one qualification: the dominant church culture has also been asleep to the Native American Christian’s strategic ecclesial and missional role. As we move beyond a rationalistic and modernistic approach to the faith in North America, we will find that the Native Christian’s unique engagement and expression of biblical orthodoxy in its worship and art will impact a post-modern culture for the gospel. I am thankful that Native American Christians with their unique prophetic and artistic calling made space

for the rest of us at “Created to Create” this past month. ■



Dr. Paul Louis Metzger is Professor of Christian Theology and Theology of Culture at Multnomah Biblical Seminary and Director of The Institute for the Theology of Culture: New Wine, New Wineskins.

Upcoming Event

June 15th

An Uncommon God and the Common Good: A Collapse-Proof Evangelical Church
7:00-9:00 PM

Beaverton Foursquare Church

Evangelicals have a rich heritage of outreach to hurting people around the world, and we are reaching out compassionately in increasing measure in our surrounding communities. Come and join New Wine and friends as we fan the flame of this year’s Season of Service with the Luis Palau Association, and as we celebrate what Portland area churches are doing to reach out beyond their walls.

For more details, contact:
newwine@multnomah.edu



Hungry for dialogue? Check out consumingjesus.org!

For more event information, please visit new-wineskins.org!

The Wine Press: The Line

by Rachel O'Brien

We gathered around a large table covered with cheap butcher paper. A group of Multnomah students came together over a collaborative art project, chattering and connecting in the dimly lit A-frame. I handed a brush to the person to my right. I handed a brush to the person to my left. The blank paper glared back at us as we asked, "What next?"

We each tentatively dipped, drew, smudged, talked and laughed. I edged my way in and out of others' work space and then made everyone move two spaces over. Soon the page was covered. Thick black paint, figures, symbols, words and other unknowns speckled the paper. As conversation and art began to flow there was less and less disclaimer. While at first we all asked about what we were doing, or prefaced our work with anecdotes about not being artists or even excusing ourselves entirely by saying we did not wish to ruin someone's art project, in the end we all began to believe we were artists, maybe not individually, but what we had created together was in fact art.

The phenomenon caused me to ask the group: Are you artists? Everyone said "No."

continued in next column

Contact New Wine!

New Wine, New Wineskins
8435 NE Glisan Street
Portland, OR 97220
e newwine@multnomah.edu
p 503-251-6767

The Institute for the Theology of Culture: New Wine, New Wineskins, directed by Dr. Paul Louis Metzger, is an official program of Multnomah Biblical Seminary and is dedicated to bearing witness to Christ in contemporary culture.

"Diverse" continued from page 1

to be celebrated. Rather than stopping at celebrating diversity, my desire is that we celebrate the one Christ in diverse ways in the church.

I am convicted that to move forward, we must be brutally honest with ourselves about our faith. We, as believers, have been part of a movement that throughout its history has at times celebrated cultural diversity and yet at other times has shamefully oppressed diversity, including minority and non-Western cultural expressions of the faith. If we as the church are to move forward as the embodied presence of the liberating and compassionate Christ whose glory is revealed in manifold and diverse ways, then we must come to celebrate diverse cultural expressions as central to our worship gatherings and

continued from lefthand column

I asked, "What is before us? What do we call this massive piece of butcher paper covered in paint?" Everyone said "Art." "Well, if you are not artists, if you are not creative, how did you make this?" We decided we made it together. Our individual creativity, while masked or unperfected, gave rise to a collaborative artistry that was incomprehensible outside the group.

I found out through this project that though at times we might not believe yet in our talent as individuals, the joy of collaboration shakes off the entanglements of fear that keep us from one another. I began to see the power of the body and community through this group event, as we formed and created life and love together; such creative life and love would have been

daily Christian existence.

It is my desire that we make beautiful music out of the prism of differences in the world, music that inspires and liberates the church to be a diverse people centered in Christ. Just as Albert Schweitzer combined his Bach performances with the lively and colorful sounds of Africa surrounding him (which eventually inspired a beautiful ballet performance by the Oregon Ballet Theatre in Portland), I believe we too are designed to combine, to harmonize, so to speak, with different communities and peoples. What would that eventually produce? Who thought Africa and Bach would inspire a ballet? I believe we, too, could produce something unexpected, unique and utterly beautiful. Something that resonates with and echoes the symphonic

unimaginable alone. I realized that Christ in His communion draws us into communion with one another, despite our fears, disclaimers and forms of disengagement, so that we can make something beautiful together. ■

Send comments and questions to newwine@multnomah.edu



Rachel O'Brien is a student in the Master of Arts in Teaching Secondary English Program at Multnomah University. She reads, writes and believes in poetry. She currently tutors and mentors Hispanic youth in her North Portland community and lives in a garage. She can be contacted at robrien@multnomah.edu.

melodies of the kingdom of God. I desire to see something of a ballet emerge from the body of Christ: a collision of diverse expressions creating something entirely new and profound, accompanying the divine drama of the reconciling Christ. ■

Please respond to this article and join the discussion at consumingjesus.org.



Kelsi Johns is a student at Multnomah Biblical Seminary. She spends much of her time exploring the beautiful city of Portland and writing for New Wine and its affiliated blog, consumingjesus.org. She can be contacted at kjohns1@multnomah.edu.

Cultural Encounters:
A Journal for the
Theology of Culture



Volume 5 is available!

Featuring articles by Grant Macaskill, Brent Laytham, Eric G. Flett, Jim Harries, Amon Munyaneza, Charlotte Graham and Daniel Fan!

Subscribe online at www.culturalencounters.org today!