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A table of contents for *Canadian Journal of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_cjpc 01.php

Identity and Change: The Story of the Italian-Canadian Pentecostal Community

Michael Di Giacomo

Introduction

“Italian Canadians join the Assemblies of God” read the announcement from the Assemblies of God newsfeed.¹ Intrigued, I proceeded to read that the former *Italian Pentecostal Church of Canada* (IPPC) had changed its name to the *Canadian Assemblies of God* (CAoG) and in so doing, joined the worldwide network of Assemblies of God denominations. I was not surprised, despite the fact that Italian language services were still being offered. The ethnic character of the denomination was slowly fading and a name change represented the new reality. The normal pattern for immigrant churches is to begin as ethnic enclaves but then, as the children and grandchildren identify more with the new world majority culture, they depart from their exclusively ethnic character, undergo transformation, and meld into the wider culture?² The American counterpart of the CAoG, the *International Fellowship of*

¹ *Italian Canadians Join Assemblies of God*. Monday December 27, 2004. http://rss.ag.org/articles/detail.cfm?RSS_RSSContentID=3487&RSS_OriginatingChannelID=1184&RSS_OriginatingRSSFeedID=3359&RSS_Source=search (accessed 17 May 2011). The new Canadian Assemblies of God, at the time of the announcement comprised 20 churches with 3000 adherents.

² See Form, “Italian Protestants.”

Christian Assemblies, formerly the *Christian Church of North America*, had dropped the designation “Italian” from its name long ago.³ Whereas the recent change in the denomination’s name may well mean that the core character and identity of the movement has changed, and is changing, an examination of its history as a part of the immigrant story shows that the Italian Pentecostal community has had to undergo not one but a number of changes in identity over the course of its existence, from pre-World War I to post-World War II eras. The Italian of the pre-World War I era was different from the Italian of the post-World War I era, who in turn was different from the Italian of the post-World War II era. The name change signals a change of identity, a change in self-understanding, and a change of mission, as a result of the interplay between ethnic character, the wider cultural environment, religion, and immigration. The objective in this paper is to identify the changing identities of Italian-Canadian Pentecostals.

The Genesis of Italian Pentecostalism

Pentecostalism among Italians began not in Italy, but in Chicago. In 1907, Pastor William Durham of the North Avenue Mission in Chicago had gone to verify the claims that a spiritual awakening was taking place at the Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles. Impressed by the biblical

³ The brief history posted on the website of the IFCA does indicate that the roots of the organization lie in the Italian Pentecostal Movement. <http://www.ifcaministry.com/our-history/>.

authenticity of the spiritual atmosphere, he received the Pentecostal experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit accompanied by glossolalia. Upon returning to Chicago, he began his own Pentecostal ministry as he prayed for others to receive the same experience. The North Avenue Mission became an important and influential centre that would contribute to the growth of the Pentecostal movement worldwide. Many came to receive healing and prayer for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Among them was a group of Italian American Presbyterian converts from Catholicism. Luigi Francescon would be among the first Italians to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Through his witness other key leaders would follow, namely Giacomo Lombardi and Pietro Ottolini. These three pioneers were among the first who began spreading the Gospel and the Pentecostal message among Italians in the United States, Italy, and South America. Pentecostalism reached Italy in 1908 and grew to number tens of thousands. The largest Pentecostal group in Italy today is the *Assemblee di Dio in Italia* (Assemblies of God in Italy), also the largest Protestant church in Italy. Luigi Francescon went to Brazil where he was among the first to bring the Pentecostal message to that country. Today, Brazilian Pentecostalism includes more than 25 million people making it the biggest Pentecostal group in the world.⁴

⁴ Enrico Carlson Cumbo, “‘Your Old Men Will Dream Dreams’: The Italian Pentecostal Experience in Canada: 1912-1945,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* (Spring 2000): 39. See also Giovanni Traettino, “Italy,” in NIDPCM, 134-5; Everette A. Wilson, “Brazil,” in NIDPCM, 38.

Francescon, after having arrived in America from Italy in 1890, had converted from Catholicism through the preaching of Italian evangelist Michele Nardi. With about sixty Italian Americans, the First Italian Presbyterian Church (Waldensian) congregation in 1892 was organized with Philip Grilli as the first pastor and Luigi Francescon as one of the elders.⁵ It did not take long for this little Italian American Protestant community to fracture as Francescon felt constrained to leave the Presbyterian Church because of a disagreement regarding the mode of water baptism, believing that immersion was the biblical and correct way. Another group of Italians converted from Catholicism through the witness of Giuseppe Beretta also attended the Presbyterian Church, but were, for some unknown reason, discouraged by Beretta from becoming official members and eventually withdrew. Francescon, with a few others, also withdrew in 1904 because of his stance on the mode of baptism and joined Beretta's group. Not long afterwards another controversy arose on the subject of the Sabbath, which led to the withdrawal of a group led by Francescon, resulting in three separate groups of Italian Protestants.⁶ Francescon finally heard about the Pentecostal outpouring at the North Avenue Mission, which he and his small group subsequently began to attend. His wife and another lady named DiCicco were the first to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit,

⁵ Louis De Caro, *Our Heritage: The Christian Church in North America* (Sharon, Pa.: General Council of, Christian Church of North America, 1977), 19-20.

⁶ De Caro, *Our Heritage*, 24-25.

followed by Francescon on August 25.⁷ Then Francescon brought Pietro Ottolini and his family, who had been a part of Beretta's group, and they received the Pentecostal experience on September 9, 1907.⁸ With Francescon and Ottolini re-united, under their leadership a Pentecostal Italian-American community began to take shape, the *Assemblea Cristiana*.⁹ Unfortunately, as De Caro laments, much of the expansion of Italian Pentecostalism in the early years went unrecorded and therefore many of the details of expansion are simply not known.¹⁰

Italian Canadian Pentecostalism Genesis

The language of Traettino's article in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* suggests that Italian American Pentecostals brought the Pentecostal message to Canada also.¹¹ However, De Caro corrects this perception, insisting that "Pentecostal Italians in the United States were not directly involved in the origin of the sister movement in Canada."¹² While it is true that the Canadian Italian Pentecostal movement had already begun before the Italian American Pentecostals arrived later to encourage their Canadian counter-

⁷ De Caro, *Our Heritage*, 32.

⁸ De Caro, *Our Heritage*, 33.

⁹ De Caro, *Our Heritage*, 34-36. See also Traettino, "Italy," 134.

¹⁰ De Caro, *Our Heritage*, 52.

¹¹ "The pioneers [...] went out from Chicago as missionaries to win families and groups of Italians in the US and Canada, South America, and in their country of birth." Traettino, "Italy," 134.

¹² De Caro, *Our Heritage*, 62.

parts, Americans may have been involved in the genesis of the Canadian movement. A group of Presbyterian Italian immigrants in Hamilton, Ontario, formed the nucleus in 1909 of what would become the beginning of the Canadian-Italian Pentecostal Movement. The Presbyterian Church started a mission for the evangelization of Italian immigrants – the Presbyterian Church Italian Mission¹³ – in Hamilton that year, led by an “old evangelist” whose name has been forgotten.¹⁴ Among the group were recent immigrants, all from the town of Racalmuto, Sicily, namely Ferdinando Zaffuto, Luigi Ippolito, Carlo Pavia, and Frank Rispoli. When a new minister arrived,¹⁵ the Italian Canadians had difficulty with his preaching emphasis. Apparently, he was more concerned with socialism, the social gospel, and spending an inordinate amount of time speaking out against Catholicism instead of preaching the Gospel and helping the new converts nurture their spiritual relationship with Jesus. After having refused the group their request for use of the church build-

¹³ Daniel Ippolito, *A History of the Canadian Assemblies of God, Formerly the Italian Pentecostal Church of Canada, from 1912 to 2009*. (Canadian Assemblies of God, nd), 16.

¹⁴ Possibly Nicola Marotta, a colporteur from the US who brought Italians to the Protestant faith for the first time in Canada. Marotta eventually returned to the United States, but the record is not entirely clear if it was before or after the converted Italians became part of the Presbyterian’s Italian mission and later, after the formation of the United Church in 1925, became the Redeemer Italian United Church. Joseph J. Pizzolante, “The Growth of Italian Protestant Churches in Ontario and Quebec,” *Italian Canadiana* 13 (1996): 57-8.

¹⁵ Possibly Rev. Vincenzo Del Rosso, who pastored the Italian Presbyterian Mission from January 1910 to April 1916. Pizzolante, “The Growth of Italian Protestant Churches,” 58.

ing for prayer meetings, and actually encouraging the group to leave, eight members left the Presbyterian Church in the summer of 1912 and started their own independent store-front mission, the *Chiesa Cristiana Italiana Indipendente* (The Independent Italian Christian Church).¹⁶

In the late spring of 1913, the group was visited by a couple of Pentecostals who were inviting people to a Pentecostal evangelistic service. One of the two men, a Mr. Cohen, was an evangelist and possibly a member of William Durham's church in Chicago, while the other, a Mr. Marshal, was a Canadian from Hamilton.¹⁷ Accepting the invitation, the Italians were very impressed with the spiritual phenomena they witnessed. They kept returning to the Pentecostal services and then, on July 13, 1913, eleven Italians were baptized in the Holy Spirit with accompanying glossolalia. This group became in effect the first Italian Pentecostal group in Canada – *Assemblea Cristiana*.¹⁸ Subsequently, two leaders from Luigi Francescon's Pentecostal group in Chicago, Agostino Lencione and Massimilio Tosetto, came to help the Italian Canadians, now Pentecostal, to organize themselves.¹⁹ Luigi Zucchi writes that the new Italian Pentecostal

¹⁶ Luigi Zucchi, *The Italian Pentecostal Church of Canada: Origin and Brief History* (Montreal: The Italian Pentecostal Church of Canada, 1987), 9-10; Ippolito, *A History*, 14-15, 17.

¹⁷ Zucchi, *The Italian Pentecostal Church*, 11.

¹⁸ Zucchi, *The Italian Pentecostal Church*, 11-12. Ippolito, *A History*, 18.

¹⁹ Cumbo, "Your Old Men," 40; Zucchi, *The Italian Pentecostal Church*, 17; Ippolito does not mention Tosetto, but identifies these two men as Lencione and John Perrou. Ippolito, *A History*, 18.

church grew by “leaps and bounds” without statistical definition.²⁰

Growth and Expansion

Desirous of spreading the gospel and the Pentecostal message to their compatriots, three among the group, Carlo Pavia, Ferdinando Zaffuto and Frank Rispoli, travelled to Toronto in 1914 to preach the gospel to the 12,000 – strong Italian community in Toronto.²¹ It took several months of evangelization before the first converts, Felice Lisanti and Luca di Marco, were won, not from Catholicism but from Italian Protestant groups, mainly Methodism.²² It is also quite possible that there might have already been Italian–Canadian Pentecostals in Toronto as a few had been attending the Hebden Mission, known as the Canadian Azusa.²³ In the summer of 1915 forty Italian Canadians gathered for the first Pentecostal services in Toronto in Domenico Guglietti’s house on Gerrard

²⁰ In 1919 the group in Hamilton numbered 84 (Zucchi, *The Italian Pentecostal Church*, 18.)

²¹ Only Montreal’s Italian community was larger. Zucchi, *The Italian Pentecostal Church*, 13; Cumbo, “Your Old Men,” 40; Ippolito, e-mail message to author, March 16, 2011.

²² Ippolito states that the Methodists had three Italian missions in Toronto: The Italian Methodist Temple on 56 Elm Street, the Dufferin Street Mission, and the Claremont Street Mission. Ippolito, *A History*, 20. See also Pizzolante, “The Growth of Italian Protestant Churches,” for a brief overview of missions to Italians by various Protestant denominations.

²³ Cumbo, “Your Old Men,” 40. See also Thomas William Miller, “The Canadian ‘Azusa’: The Hebden Mission in Toronto,” *Pneuma* (1986): 5-29.

Street.²⁴ The small group adopted the Presbyterian model of church governance with a group of elders giving leadership. Luca di Marco presided over the services.

Ferdinando Zaffuto, one of the original eight Pentecostals in Hamilton, moved to Toronto in 1915 to help the fledgling congregation and was officially appointed as pastor of the Toronto church in 1917.²⁵ As the group grew they moved to larger facilities. A building on the same street was secured that had 20–30 rooms on the second floor to house church members and single men who arrived from Italy. In 1919, Luigi Ippolito was called to come help with the growing Italian Pentecostal community in Toronto.²⁶ Zaffuto and Ippolito worked together to lead the Italian Pentecostals for about a year after which Ippolito visited Italian Pentecostal communities in the US while Zaffuto returned to the pastorate in Hamilton. Upon his return to Toronto, Ippolito once again took the reins of leadership of the Toronto community, which incorporated as the *Assemblea Cristiana* in 1921,²⁷ and then in 1945, as the *Italian Pentecostal Church*.²⁸

The movement continued to grow. The church in Hamilton had 84 members by 1919. The Toronto Italian Pentecostal community numbered about 100 by 1921.

²⁴ In Zucchi, *The Italian Pentecostal*, 15 the name is Domenico Guglietti while in Cumbo, “Your Old Men,” 41, the name is Luigi Guglietti. It is Domenico Guglietti in Ippolito, *Canadian Assemblies of God*, 21. The names of the families present are listed by Zucchi.

²⁵ Zucchi, *The Italian Pentecostal Church*, 15-16.

²⁶ Cumbo, “Your Old Men,” 41.

²⁷ Ippolito, e-mail message to author, March 21, 2011.

²⁸ Zucchi, *The Italian Pentecostal Church*, 18. Pizzolante, “The Growth of Italian Protestant Churches,” 72-3.

Other Italian Pentecostal churches were started in London, North Bay, Ottawa, St. Catherines, Brantford, and Montreal.²⁹ In 1917 Luca Di Marco went to London, Ontario, and began canvassing neighborhoods door to door, winning converts that formed the nucleus of the Italian church in that city. In 1919 P. Isola went to North Bay where he won converts to start a church in that city.³⁰ In 1927 Antonio Spedaliere went to St. Catherine's and Brantford, Ontario to preach to the Italians after which converts were won and churches were started in those cities.³¹

The beginning of Italian Pentecostalism in Montreal deserves a little more space. In 1921,³² layman Eustachio D'Ercole in Toronto claimed to have received a call through a vision to go preach the gospel to the Italians in Montreal – at the time Canada's largest Italian community in its largest city. The first converts came from the Italian Protestant community – Methodists, Presbyterians, and Plymouth Brethren. Six men were converted and subsequently formed the nucleus of the Italian Pentecostal community. Among the six was Giuseppe Antonio Di Staulo, who became the first pastor of the Montreal congregation.³³ In three years the church

²⁹ Cumbo, "Your Old Men," 43.

³⁰ Zucchi, *The Italian Pentecostal Church*, 23.

³¹ Zucchi, *The Italian Pentecostal Church*, 24.

³² Manafò states that the founding of the church occurred in 1920, before Ercole's arrival in Montreal. Joseph Manafò, *The Italian Pentecostal Church of Montreal (A Brief History)*, 3.

³³ Manafò suggests that these six men had been members of the Italian Methodist Church of which Liborio Lattoni was the pastor and that Giuseppe DiStaulo was approached in 1920 by an Italian member

grew to 100 people; in ten years this small congregation grew to approximately 300 adherents organized in two churches, one on Fabre Street and the other in the Ville Emard section. Charles Baker had come to Montreal a few years previously to start a Pentecostal church and most likely reached out to the Italian community. In 1920, Aimee Semple McPherson had come to Montreal during which many were converted to Christ and to the Pentecostal message.³⁴ Quite possibly, McPherson's Montreal campaign was instrumental in introducing and possibly converting Italian-Canadians to Pentecostalism, but there is no solid documentation attesting to this.³⁵ However, the Pentecostal message was certainly striking a chord with Italians, for by 1931 the Italian-Canadian Pentecostals comprised 38% of all Pentecostals in the city of Montreal.³⁶

In 1926, the *Chiesa Cristiana Pentecostale* on Fabre Street was duly incorporated and received Letters Patent from the province of Quebec. By 1977, the Italian-Canadian Pentecostal community had 2640 members in 16 churches,³⁷ by 1986, the number of churches remained at

of the English Pentecostal Church pastored by Charles Baker. Manafò, *The Italian Pentecostal Church of Montreal*, 3.

³⁴ See Michael Di Giacomo, "Aimee Semple McPherson: 'Shot in the Arm' for French-Canadian Protestantism," in *Winds from the North: Canadian Contributions to the Pentecostal Movement*, edited by Michael Wilkinson and Peter Althouse (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2010), 151-168.

³⁵ Cumbo, "Your Old Men," 43. Zucchi, *The Italian Pentecostal Church*, 23. Ippolito *A History*, 26-28, 47.)

³⁶ Cumbo, "Your Old Men," 37.

³⁷ De Caro, *Our Heritage*, 72.

16 but the membership grew to about 4000, in congregations all across Canada, including Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver.³⁸

In September 1944, a conference was held in Toronto to seek further coordination of the common activities of the various churches, insure a common doctrine, establish a missionary program, and to seek legal status through incorporation. In July of the following year, seven churches were represented at a conference convened in Montreal during which the name *The Christian Church of North America* was adopted in anticipation of joining their Italian-American counterpart's organization of the same name.³⁹ Disappointingly, the request to use the adopted name was denied by the Canadian government after which the body simply referred to itself as *The Italian Pentecostal Church of Canada*, the same name under which the local Toronto congregation had been duly incorporated.⁴⁰ Whereas local congregations received Let-

³⁸ Zucchi, *The Italian Pentecostal Church*, 20-21. See footnote no. 1 for more recent statistics.

³⁹ Ippolito, e-mail message to author, March 21, 2011; In 1954, the Italian-American Pentecostal body in the US, the *Christian Church of North America* (now called the *International Fellowship of Christian Assemblies*), expressed a desire for the Canadian body to join it as a district. Ippolito, *A History*, 41.

⁴⁰ In a follow-up e-mail message Ippolito clarifies that in 1954 Secretary of CCNA, A. Palma proposed that that the IPCC become a District of the CCNA This was accepted [...] "...but ran into problems:

- (a) For Incorporation with the Name CCNA, Government did not accept the name. [sic]
- (b) We needed our own Canadian leadership.
- (c) With Headquarters in Canada to function as a recognized church body. [sic]

ters Patent, the entire body of Italian–Canadian Pentecostal churches did not incorporate until 1959 when they received Letters Patent from the Quebec provincial legislature amending the original 1926 incorporation of the local congregation, *Chiesa Cristiana Pentecostale*, so that it might apply to the organization that oversaw all the churches affiliated with it.⁴¹

The post-war era was a period of greater expansion – “...a time of revival...” – coinciding with the influx of immigrants following World War II.⁴² That the Fabre Street Church in Montreal is specifically mentioned as a congregation that had to enlarge its building in the 1950s seems to confirm the growing numbers.⁴³ In the 1970s and 1980s the congregation continued to enlarge its facilities as the congregation grew,⁴⁴ although during this period the growth was more likely due to a new openness to evangelicalism in the province of Quebec. Brief histories of other congregations included in Ippolito’s *A History* indicate that as the Fabre Street church in Montreal grew and expanded, other congregations more or less kept up.⁴⁵ As the movement expanded, ministries multiplied.

[...] A church body in Canada needed leadership residence in Canada plus headquarters in Canada – plus the accepted name by the government. Ippolito, e-mail message to author, March 21, 2011.

⁴¹ Ippolito, *A History*, 42. Zucchi, *The Italian Pentecostal Church*, 19-20.

⁴² Ippolito, *A History* 23. Pentecostal as well as other Italian Protestants churches grew due to the influx of post-war immigrants. See also Pizzolante, “The Growth of Italian Protestant Churches,” 73.

⁴³ Ippolito, *A History*, 47-8.

⁴⁴ Ippolito, *A History*, 48.

⁴⁵ Ippolito, *A History*, 47-62.

La Voce Evangelica/Evangel Voice became the official publication. A radio program begun in the 1950s – *Radio Risveglio*, later named *La Voce Della Speranza* and yet later re-named *La Voce del Vangelo*, was finally discontinued in 2000.⁴⁶ Ministry in the Italian Pentecostal community went beyond the ministry of evangelism. For example, Toronto businessman Elio Madonia, the only Italian non-Catholic in the Toronto community to deserve a mention in Bagnell's *Canadese*, with a particular reference to the fact that he was not Catholic,⁴⁷ founded the Samaritan Foundation, a humanitarian organization that built villages in the Dominican Republic that included schools, churches, clinics, and the accompanying infrastructure necessary for the efficient functioning of each village.⁴⁸ Rev. Onofrio Miccolis, a minister of the Italian Pentecostal Church of Canada, hosted the gospel television program *Vivere al Cento Per Cento* for twenty-five years and later started a ministry offering assistance and humanitarian aid to the poor of India, building homes, churches, and schools.⁴⁹ In terms of the growth in number of adherents, by 1977 Italian-Canadian Pentecostal community had 2640 members in 16 churches.⁵⁰ By 1986, the number of churches remained at 16 but the membership grew to about 4000, spread across Canada, including

⁴⁶ Ippolito, *A History*, 29.

⁴⁷ Kenneth Bagnell, *Canadese: A Portrait of the Italian Canadians* (Toronto: MacMillan, 1989), 208.

⁴⁸ Ippolito, *A History*, 29. See <http://www.thesamaritanfoundationdr.com>.

⁴⁹ Ippolito, *A History*, 29.

⁵⁰ De Caro, *Our Heritage*, 72.

Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver.⁵¹ When Ippolito's *A History* was printed in 2009, he listed 23 churches affiliated with the Canadian Assemblies of God, three of which were Latino churches.⁵² The website of the Canadian Assemblies of God lists 19 churches at the time of this writing.⁵³

Controversies

One of the controversial issues that needed addressing was the Oneness doctrine, according to which a person must be baptized ritually in Jesus' name to be saved. The structuring of the movement also caused concern with the founder of the Italian Pentecostal movement. Luigi Francescon vigorously opposed, as did other Pentecostals, any move to further structure and organize the movement, fearing any development towards creating a denomination. Consistent with this fear but realizing that some degree of cooperation among churches was desirable, the Italian-American Pentecostals founded in 1927 the *Unorganized Italian Christian Churches of the United States*.⁵⁴ However, a push to further structure the movement in 1938 led Luigi Francescon and a few others to finally leave the organization.⁵⁵ Doctrinally, the most serious

⁵¹ Zucchi, *The Italian Pentecostal Church*, 20-21.

⁵² Ippolito, *A History*, 38-40.

⁵³ See <http://www.caogonline.org>.

⁵⁴ De Caro, *Our Heritage*, 65.

⁵⁵ De Caro, *Our Heritage*, 67. The name of the American organization was also changed in this period to the *Italian Christian Church of North America*.

issue that the Italian Pentecostal movement worldwide had to face was the issue over whether it was biblically permissible to eat blood products. The root of this controversy lies in the interpretation of the injunction in the Book of Acts (15:28–29) “to abstain from what is sacrificed to idols, from blood–meat, and meat which has been strangled.” The *astinenza* (abstainers) faction refused to eat any blood products while the *libertà* (freedom) faction left the eating of blood products to conscience. This controversy proved to be very disruptive and an attempt to settle the issue at a general convention in Niagara Falls, New York in 1927 increased tensions within the movement, resulting in the rewriting of hymnals and doctrinal statements entrenching the view of the abstainers as well as divisions among the churches. In Toronto, the freedom faction rallied around Zaffuto while the abstainers founded another church with Luigi Ippolito as their pastor. This rift in the movement lasted twenty years when a move was made to reunify the churches under a new corporate body called the Christian Church of Canada and which would be a district of the Christian Church of North America. Apparently union with the American body did not work out because of undefined “legal impediments” and subsequently the Canadians incorporated as the Italian Pentecostal Church of Canada (IPCC) while maintaining fraternal ties and common activities with their American counterparts.⁵⁶

Interestingly enough, the failure to achieve a common corporate structure with the American sister or-

⁵⁶ Cumbo, “Your Old Men,” 49-52.

ganization revealed that the two Pentecostal bodies did not always see eye to eye. One example is the dropping of the ethnic appellative “Italian” from the American denomination’s name during the Second World War to demonstrate loyalty to America.⁵⁷ The Canadian government also considered Italy an enemy state, and in spite of the assertions by Italian-Canadians of their loyalty to Canada many were interned.⁵⁸ Throughout the war, the Italian-Canadian Pentecostals continued to maintain their ethnic distinctive in the denomination’s name. While the American body, by the time of America’s entry in the war, diversified its mission in reaching out to non-Italians, the Canadian body continued to reach out primarily to Italians and thereby maintained its ethnic character.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ When Italy was declared an enemy state great pressure was brought to bear on the Italian-American community to suppress its Italianness. Even speaking the language of the enemy, i.e., Italian, German, and Japanese, was associated with disloyalty, as US government posters suggested. Lawrence DiStasi, *Una Storia Segreta: The Secret History of Italian American Evacuation and Internment during World War II* (Berkeley, California: Heyday Books, 306-7. The Italian Christian Church of North America consequently dropped “Italian” from the name of the organization. Three reasons have been officially stated as the basis of the name change: 1) Italy being an enemy state, the Italian American Pentecostals wanted to underscore their loyalty to the American government, 2) though Italian was still being used in the denomination, it was diminishing significantly with successive generations, 3) a conscious decision was made to welcome and reach out to all people, not exclusively Italians. De Caro, *Our Heritage*, 68-9.

⁵⁸ See Bagnell’s fourth chapter, “Days of Darkness, Days of Despair.”

⁵⁹ Cumbo, “Your Old Men,” 52.

Socio-religious Culture

With respect to their religious culture the Italian-Canadian Pentecostals believed that they were the inheritors of authentic New Testament Christianity. Their hermeneutic of sanctification or “separation from the world,” resulted in the formation of a self-contained, tightly-knit community. Their view of separation from the world meant that not only should they abstain from the many activities indulged in by wider culture as well as their Catholic fellow countrymen, such as smoking, alcohol consumption, card playing, theatre- or cinema-going, but should also refrain from participation in the life of other non-Pentecostal churches deemed “liberal.” Their strong sense of community with their ethnic brethren also precluded much interaction with their fellow Pentecostals who were not of Italian heritage. Right up until the Second World War, Italian-Canadian Pentecostals favoured a closer association with their ethnic Italian-American brethren than with their non-Italian co-religionists in Canada.⁶⁰ Even marriage associations between members of the Italian Pentecostal community, regardless of whether the members were in the US or Canada, were encouraged over mar-

⁶⁰ The interaction with the American brethren was limited to the leaders as they convened for periodic conferences. As for the laity, whereas the language barrier would have precluded any significant interaction between the first generation immigrants and their non-Italian co-religionists, this was not the case with subsequent generations. The language barrier no longer an issue, celebrations and rallies between Italian Pentecostals and their non-Italian counterparts in Canada were common. Ippolito, e-mail message to author, March 16, 2011.

riage ties with non-Italian Pentecostals.⁶¹ Still today, common conferences are held between the Canadian Assemblies of God and the International Fellowship of Christian Assemblies, not with their co-religionist bodies in Canada such as the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada or the Assemblies of God in the US.⁶² The argument, then, that the frequency of contact with other Italians, within Canada as well as across the border actually slowed down the assimilation process since networking with their non-Italian religious counterparts was not pro-actively sought, seems plausible.⁶³

Enrico Cumbo explored the pre-World War II relationship between Pentecostal spirituality and Italian-Canadian cultural identity, arguing that each shaped the other in the context of Italian-Canadian double minority status – religiously in relation to the majority Catholic Italian-Canadian community and socio-culturally in relation to the majority Anglo-Saxon or French majorities. Italian Pentecostals rejected the Catholicism of the cultural counterparts without rejecting their “Italianness.” Conversely, Italian-Canadians lived their Pentecostal spirituality in the framework of their Mediterranean roots.⁶⁴ Within this framework there seems to be evidence of religious ambiguity as certain cultural practices rooted in Italian Catholic culture such as the baking of culinary items

⁶¹ Cumbo, “Your Old Men,” 47.

⁶² This type of interaction is usually limited to the leadership of each body. There were no common conferences between the membership of each body. Ippolito, e-mail message to author, 16 March 2011.

⁶³ See Cumbo, “Your Old Men,” 47.

⁶⁴ Cumbo, “Your Old Men,” 35-81.

associated with devotion to a certain saint have been embraced. Italian Pentecostals were selective in the Catholic-rooted traditions they would reject or accept, ascribing a different meaning to the practice in the case of the latter. There were of course practices that Italian Pentecostals would simply stop once converted from Catholicism, such as prayer to the Catholic saints or to the Virgin Mary, or prayer for the dead, at least officially. There was no guarantee, however, that an Italian Pentecostal might not cry out to Mary or a favorite saint in a moment of grief or anguish even though in a more rational moment, the Pentecostal believer would know that it was inconsistent with Pentecostal theology.⁶⁵

The Maintenance of the Italian Ethnic Distinctive

In the post-Second World War era, Italian immigration to Canada escalated and while Italian immigration to the United States never reached the massive scale that it had in the pre-First World War era, it still registered a slightly greater net immigration number than in Canada. In spite of the thousands of new immigrants that came to both countries, the Canadian-Italian Pentecostals were able to maintain their Italian distinctive much longer than their counterparts in the US. Whereas even today with the Italian distinctive in the name of the organization having been dropped, Canadian churches continue to offer services and ministry in the Italian language, the American body phased out Italian services long ago. Another way

⁶⁵ Cumbo, "Your Old Men," 61-62.

the Italian churches attempted to maintain their cultural and linguistic distinctive was to offer Italian lessons to the second and succeeding generations.⁶⁶ This was done at the same time as English services and Sunday school were introduced, in an attempt to hold on to the second and third generations, although not without a complete absence of opposition, for there were those who had difficulty accepting the introduction of English language services. Notwithstanding, fearing the loss of the younger people, English language services were finally introduced in the 1930s.⁶⁷ Intergenerational tension flared up as the children and grandchildren of immigrants, born and raised in Canada, were more interested in identifying with the host culture than the culture of the first generation. The maintenance of the Italian character of the Pentecostal community could not depend on the children of the immigrants. If adherence to a few cultural distinctives were desirable for the children born and raised in Canada, such as love for good Italian food, or specific Italian traditions like wine-making, other distinctive old world customs may not have been as important to them as they were to their parents. If the first generation, for example, was ready to return to Italy to find spouses, the second and

⁶⁶ Ippolito remembers one attempt in the late 1940s or early 1950s that lasted a few months. Ippolito, email, 16 March 2011. There was at least another attempt as the author was present at a church in Montreal in the mid-1990s when Italian lessons for the children were announced.

⁶⁷ Cumbo, "Your Old Men," 54-55. There were occasions when bilingual services would be held and then later, with the great influx of post-war immigrants, two services, one in English, the other in Italian were held. Ippolito, e-mail message to author, March 16, 2011.

third generation did not think twice before marrying non-Italians. If the use of the Italian language was highly valued among first generation immigrants, successive generations naturally favoured the use of English and held the use of the Italian language as merely optional, or restricted to communicating with relatives who could understand only Italian.

The younger generations' assimilationist tendencies did not preclude resistance to assimilate on the part of the older generation. Refusal to affiliate with predominantly Anglo-Saxon Pentecostal denominations underscores this resistance to assimilation. Interestingly enough, although the larger Pentecostal denomination, the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, had various linguistic groups affiliates –Ukrainian, Finnish, Slavic, French, German - the Italians never joined.⁶⁸ The Italians' strong desire for autonomy and high degree of resistance to any move to further structuring of the movement beyond the local congregation, and a strong sense of mission to Italians precluded any affiliation with a larger non-Italian denomination. Affiliation with the larger body, it was believed, would have resulted in undesired compromise and misunderstandings.⁶⁹ While there probably would not have been any issue on the doctrinal level, cultural practices such as the making and consumption of wine, a well-ingrained Italian practice, would certainly have been a

⁶⁸ There were two attempts arising from within the Italian body that sought affiliation with the PAOC but support never proved sufficient to warrant such a move. Ippolito, e-mail message to author, March 17, 2011.

⁶⁹ Cumbo, "Your Old Men," 59.

bone of contention with the larger Anglo-Saxon-dominated Pentecostal body that insisted on total abstinence from alcohol. Consequently, while maintaining relatively close fraternal relationships with the larger Canadian body, the Italian Pentecostals refused to affiliate on the denominational level.

Italian Pentecostal missiology, in the practical sense, also differed from that of other denominations. Whereas other denominations created linguistic missions to reach out to new Canadians, these missions were deemed temporary, necessary in order to connect with newcomers, but whose goal was to help them assimilate to the host culture; in other words, make the immigrants “Canadian,” that is, the Anglo-Saxon’s view of what it was to be Canadian. The Italians’ objectives were, however, different for as they reached out to their ethnic kin in Italian communities all over the world, the result of their missionizing was the maintenance of Italian cultural distinctives.⁷⁰ Whereas, theologically and rhetorically, the Italian Pentecostal believed and preached that the gospel was for *all* in the absolute sense, their missiological praxis limited outreach to the Italian community, primarily.

Reverend Daniel Ippolito, former overseer and long-time pastor in the Canadian Assemblies of God, admits in his brief historical survey of the Italian-Canadian Pentecostal movement that its mission was to reach out to the immigrant community. After 1969, a revised missions strategy was inevitable as the conditions in Italy that had formerly resulted in the emigration of millions began to

⁷⁰ Cumbo, “Your Old Men,” 59.

change. The reformation of the land tenure system in Italy as well as the establishment of social and welfare programs, in conjunction with the loss of population due to large-scale emigration, all contributed to improving conditions that eliminated the need to emigrate. Beginning in the 1970s, the rate of Italian emigration slowed considerably and hence, fewer Italians emigrated to Canada.⁷¹ Since immigration from Italy had virtually ended, survival as a denomination required that the mission no longer be limited to the Italian-Canadian community; their praxis, in effect, caught up with their theology, i.e., to reach out to “all men everywhere.”⁷² As a result, the new reality is that the Italian distinctive is no longer as pronounced as it once was. Even though church services are still conducted in Italian, English has become the predominant language of the organization.⁷³ Just as their American counterparts had realized some sixty years earlier, the leaders decided that it was time to change the name of the denomination to the Canadian Assemblies of God, and thereby delete the “Italian” from the name.⁷⁴

What does this name change signify? A change in the character of the denomination, from an exclusively ethnic Italian denomination to a more inclusive one; a

⁷¹ Franca Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People: Italian Immigrants in Postwar Toronto* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens, 1992), 51.

⁷² Ippolito, *A History*, 45.

⁷³ The phasing out of Italian ministry was not equal across the country. The Italian distinctive lasted much longer in the churches of Quebec than in the English churches of Ontario and British Columbia. Ippolito, e-mail message to author, March 16, 2011.

⁷⁴ Ippolito, *A History*, 45.

change in the practical mission, i.e., whereas previously the outreach was almost exclusively to members of the Italian community, now the outreach targets all peoples around the world; a survival strategy of an organization that insists on its autonomy, i.e., since immigration fuelled the Italian distinctive and the life of the Italian Pentecostal churches, the end of Italian immigration signalled that the Italian ethnic character could no longer be maintained. Without the influx of their ethnic brethren from Italy, it would be just a matter of time before the Italian-Canadian Pentecostal churches would shrivel up and close down. By changing the name and the mission, survival as a denomination if not the survival of the Italian distinctive, is assured. This name change has not been processed without difficulty, as not all leaders in the denomination are happy with the implications of the change of identity. It is not easy to embrace the reality that what you have known and what you are is coming to an end.⁷⁵ However, by grounding the Italian Pentecostal story in the context of the immigration story, we may observe that the name change of the Italian Pentecostal denomination was not the only time in their history as an immigrant community that they were forced to go through an identity metamorphosis, and at times, experience the trauma that accompanied that transformation.

⁷⁵ Digitally-recorded interview with Tomasso De Domencis, pastor of *Chiesa Cristiana Evangelica*, Ottawa, Canada, July 16, 2010.

The Immigrant Story: Four Waves of Italian Immigration to Canada

Framing Italian-Canadian Pentecostalism in the Italian immigrant experience gives us insight into its character and successive identity changes. The stories of Italians as immigrants and Italians as Pentecostals hold much in common. Both contain the narrative of a departure from a homeland to the discovery of a new country. The Italian was introduced to a new world, a foreign Anglo-Saxon environment, while the Italian Pentecostal, in many cases, was introduced to a new religious world, Protestantism, a religion foreign to most Italians.⁷⁶ In both cases, existence was on the periphery. The Italian Pentecostals found themselves in a minority status, both ethnically and religiously. Italians came to Canada in the true pioneering spirit, to a country foreign in every sense of the word, and made a life for themselves. They staked out a claim and made the “rose blossom in the wilderness” as they built a life for themselves and their children. Many who came to Canada literally penniless, now, because of hard work and thrift, live in palatial homes. Those who came to Canada, with little, if any, formal education, have raised children

⁷⁶ I remember the reaction of one Italian lady when I mentioned that there was such a thing as a Protestant Italian. “There are Italians who are not Catholic?” she asked in stunned amazement. Italy being an overwhelmingly Catholic country, and being the seat of Roman Catholicism, one can be forgiven for not being aware of the Protestant community among Italians, whether in Italy or in the diaspora around the world. And within the Protestant Italian community, we find a number of denominations. By WWII, Protestants comprised about 8% of the Italian Canadian population. Cumbo, “Your Old Men,” 35.

who can be found in almost every sector of the Canadian economy, many of whom have obtained the highest degrees, have gone on to influential positions and high-paying professions, contributing immensely to the construction of Canada. The Italian Pentecostals were also pioneers, usually with little or no education, with little or no financial support, venturing into uncharted religious waters and in the process building a vast worldwide network of Italian Pentecostal communities. However, in both cases, the Italian identity of these overlapping communities underwent a number of changes.

The story of Italians discovering the new world, we must admit, is an old one, one learned in public school. The first group of Italians to arrive, Cristoforo Colombo, Giovanni Caboto, and Giovanni da Verrazzano, the first Europeans after the Vikings some 500 years previously, contributed to the discovery and colonization of the Western hemisphere. More Italians would arrive later, and make major contributions to Canadian society as skilled workers, professionals, clergy, military, etc.⁷⁷ A second phase of migration followed the rebellions of 1837 as hundreds of skilled workers from northern Italy migrated to Canada. Two more major migrations of Italians were to follow, between 1900 and World War I, and the last, from 1950 to 1970. Between 1896 and 1915, "rising population levels, lack of industry, unproductive land,

⁷⁷ Franc Sturino, "Italians," in *The Encyclopedia of Canada's Peoples*, 5. <http://www.multiculturalcanada.ca/print/book/export/html/3503>.

scarcity of resources, and high taxes,” etc,⁷⁸ drove 16 million Italians to leave their homes in search of a better life. One third to one half of those who emigrated eventually returned to Italy.⁷⁹ The US received 1,454,347 Italian immigrants in the period 1876- 1904,⁸⁰ hardly a generation after the unification of the peninsula.⁸¹ Between 1900 and 1913, about 119,770 Italians came to Canada with the peak year being in 1913 when 27,704 Italians arrived in Canada. The fourth wave of Italian immigrants, following the Second World War until 1970, saw 514,000 arrive in Canada, with the peak year being 1956 when 29,806 came to Canada. The total number of Italians who migrated to Canada between 1861 and 1981 has been estimated at about 700,000.⁸² After World War II, Italian migration to Canada approximated the numbers that settled in the United States and Argentina⁸³ with net Italian migration to the US exceeding migration to Canada by only a slight margin.⁸⁴ Whereas most Italian migrants made South America, especially Brazil and Argentina, their destination of choice before 1900, after 1900 most of the migra-

⁷⁸ John E. Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto: Development of a National Identity, 1875-1935* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1988), 13.

⁷⁹ Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 14.

⁸⁰ Clifford J. Jansen, *Fact-Book on Italians in Canada*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: York University Institute for Social Research, 1987), 72. Table 3.2.

⁸¹ Roberto Perin and Franc Sturino, *Arrangiarsi: The Italian Immigration Experience of Canada* (Toronto: Guernica, 2007), 17.

⁸² Sturino, “Italians,” 6.

⁸³ Sturino, “Italians,” 6.

⁸⁴ See Jansen, 72. Table 3.2.

tion flow - 68% - went to North America, mainly to the United States.⁸⁵ Every region of Italy has produced a certain number of emigrants, but the major source of Italian immigration has been southern Italy, most of these peasants.⁸⁶ Whereas in the pre-World War II era, most Italian immigrants tended to originate from the North, usually more educated, cultured, and more welcome, the postwar influx was mainly from Southern Italy, more particularly Abruzzo, Molise, Basilicata, Campagna, Puglia, Calabria, and Sicily, which together accounted for nearly 60% of the total Italian immigration to Canada in the period 1951-1961.⁸⁷ The Southern Italians, contrary to their

⁸⁵ Sturino, "Italians," 7

⁸⁶ Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People*, xviii.

⁸⁷ Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People*, xix-xxii. Jansen breaks down the numbers for us. From 1955-1980, 68.4% of Italian immigrants to Canada originated from the South (Abruzzo, Molise, Campania, Puglia, Basilicata, Calabria, Sicily; 12.6% from Central Italy (Toscana, Le Marche, Umbria, Lazio); 18.9% from the North (Val d'Aosta, Piemonte, Lombardia, Alto Adige, Veneto, Friuli, Emilia-Romagna, Liguria). These numbers are further broken down per region as follows: Calabria 17.7%; Sicily 13%; Abruzzo 10.8%; Molise 10.1%; Puglia 8.3%; Campania 6.7%; Lazio 9.3%; Friuli 7%; Veneto 6.8%. The major provinces of origin are as follows: Campobasso 9.9%; Cosenza 7.4%; Catanzaro 6.9%; Frosinone 6.4%; Udine 5.2%; Treviso 4%. It is interesting to contrast the origins of Italians who went to Canada with those who emigrated to the US. The percentages from the South, Central, and North that went to the US were respectively, 72.6%, 11.8%, and 15.6%. These numbers are further broken down per region as follows: Sicily 27.4%; Campania 14.5%; Calabria 10.2%; Puglia 9.6%; Abruzzo 6.4%; Lazio 7.3%. The major provinces of origin, all from the south, except for Frosinone in Lazio: Palermo 9.6%; Bari 8%; Catanzaro 4%; Naples 3.9%; Trapani 3.7%; Avellino 3.5%; Agrigento 3.4%; Cosenza 3.3%; Frosinone 3.3%. Jansen, *Fact-Book*, 9.

Northern brethren, were usually less educated, less wanted by Canadians, and an embarrassment to Italian officials.⁸⁸ The portrait of the Italian immigrant is reflected in the Italian-Canadian Pentecostal community. Daniel Ippolito testifies to the fact that the pioneers of the Italian Pentecostal movement in Canada were recently arrived young immigrants, and as most immigrants from Italy in the early years of the 20th century, not wealthy or highly educated.⁸⁹

Although Canada was not the first choice of most Italian immigrants before the Second World War, little Italies did spring up in various places, especially Toronto and Montreal, as early as the beginning of the 20th century. By 1941 Toronto's Italian community numbered around 18,000. Between 1951 and 1961, 40% of the 240,000 plus Italians that immigrated to Canada settled in Toronto and they kept coming by the tens of thousands. By 1961 Toronto's Italian community became the largest when it surpassed Montreal's.⁹⁰

In post-World War II-Canada, when Italy was taken off the enemy country list in 1947, the doors opened to Italian immigration, not because Italians were considered desirable as immigrants – the preferred immigrants were the British, white Americans, and other northern Europeans who, it was felt, were better able to assimilate and not fundamentally change the ethnic character of Canada, as

⁸⁸ Even the Italian elite were known to have disowned the Italian immigrants, so embarrassed they were by them. Perin and Sturino, *Arrangiarsi*, 19.

⁸⁹ Ippolito, *A History*, 14.

⁹⁰ Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People*, xxi.

McKenzie King suggested in 1947 – but because there was a labour shortage due to the expanding economy, and because immigrant labourers were needed for Canada to maintain its high levels of prosperity.⁹¹ Canada liberalized its immigration policies to include more southern Europeans in the postwar era. Tens of thousands took advantage of these policies to emigrate to Canada, more so than to the U.S. where immigration was more restrictive because of a national quota system, and more so than to Argentina where high unemployment and political instability eliminated that country as one of the preferred destinations of Italian emigration; and more so than to Australia, which became more restrictive in the early 1950s due to an economic recession. In fact, Canada came to see Italian immigration as positive and desirable and consequently became very proactive in recruiting Italians to fill its labour requirements.⁹²

Labour needs in Canada were not the only reason for a positive change in attitude towards southern Italian immigration. Commitment to the reconstruction of Western Europe and Italy through Canada's participation in the Marshall Plan and the positive image that would give Canada was also a factor. Pressure was also felt from the United Nations, which went on record to say that emigration from Italy would be helpful to Europe's economic recovery and therefore it was felt that Canada had a moral obligation to be more open to Italian immigration. And of course, because both Canada and Italy joined the post-war

⁹¹ Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People*, 22-24.

⁹² Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People*, 26.

NATO alliance, it was expected that a large, sparsely populated country like Canada with a labour shortage, would naturally help an ally with an unemployment and overpopulation problem. Fear of communism was another factor in encouraging Italian emigration, as the quick reconstruction of Italy's war-torn economy would undermine any support for the communists in Italy.⁹³

Discrimination

The story of Italian immigration to Canada has not always been a positive one. Since most immigrants were poor and uneducated, they were easy victims of exploitation, not just by the non-Italian population, but also by their own compatriots. Bagnell brings out the discrimination towards Italians in the press.⁹⁴ "...a horde of ignorant and low-down mongrel swashbucklers and peanut vendors" said the editorial in the Port Arthur Daily news in the early years of the 20th century, referring to Italian workers.⁹⁵ Reflecting the assimilationist attitudes of the era that looked down upon Italians and other Southern Europeans, "There is a danger and it is national," wrote the Reverend J.W. Sparling, Principal of the Methodist Church's Wesley College of Winnipeg, "either we must educate and elevate the incoming multitudes, or they will drag us and our children down to the lowest level. We must see to it that the civilization and ideals of Southeastern Europe are

⁹³ Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People*, 27.

⁹⁴ Bagnell, *Canadese*, 9.

⁹⁵ Bagnell, *Canadese*, 26.

not transplanted to and perpetuated on our virgin soil.”⁹⁶ In his book *The Stranger Within Our Gates* Reverend J.S. Woodsworth wrote, “We need more of our own blood, to assist us to maintain in Canada our British traditions and to mould the incoming armies of foreigners into loyal British subjects.”⁹⁷ Thankfully, there were those who treated the immigrants with dignity, such as Reverend James Shaver who wrote, “Among them are many of God’s first gentlemen, seeking, groping, longing for their place in this first democracy which will never be perfect until they have found that place.”⁹⁸

Internment of Italians During WWII

Internment during the Second World War was a dark chapter for Italian immigrants in Canada. In the fourth chapter of his book entitled “Days of Darkness, Days of Despair” Bagnell examines the circumstances of the internment of several hundred Italian men during the Second World War, on the suspicion that they were threats to the national security of Canada because of the state of war between Canada and Italy. Bagnell describes the injustice of the internment and the despondency of the internees, many of whom lost jobs, businesses, and even became suspect by their friends once having been released. One example was Reverend Libero Sauro, minister of Toronto’s Italian United Church. After his release,

⁹⁶ Quoted in Bagnell, *Canadese*, 42.

⁹⁷ Quoted in Bagnell, *Canadese*, 42.

⁹⁸ Bagnell, *Canadese*, 44.

the United Church of Canada rejected his congregation.⁹⁹ One of the most poignant stories was of physician Luigi Pancaro, who had been interned at Petawawa for two years. In time, after his release, he restored his practice and began to help other physicians with complicated cases. While he was helping one morning at the hospital at Little Current, Ontario, a patient was brought in with a severe case of peritonitis. The patient was the officer who had taken him into custody four years previously, not before having removed and torn a picture of the Virgin Mary hanging on the wall of Dr. Pancaro's office. Dr. Pancaro recognized him and proceeded to operate on the officer as he prayed the physician's prayer, "Dear Lord, Thou Great Physician, I kneel before Thee. Since every good and perfect gift must come from Thee, I pray, give skill to my hand, clear vision to my mind, kindness and sympathy to my heart."¹⁰⁰

At war's end in May 1945, fewer than 100,000 Italians lived in about twenty communities across the country.¹⁰¹ However, because of the embarrassment to the Italian community caused by the internment during the war, Italian-Canadians in general tended to downplay their Italianness. It seemed like the generation that lived through the war years wanted to forget that they were Italian.¹⁰² There were those who even anglicized their names

⁹⁹ Bagnell, *Canadese*, 97.

¹⁰⁰ Bagnell, *Canadese*, 97.

¹⁰¹ Bagnell, *Canadese*, 100.

¹⁰² In the United States, similar experiences contributed to the suppression of the Italian language and culture among Italian Americans. DiStasi writes: "With [the] designation [of enemy alien] came a series

because their shame, embarrassment, and fear was so strong. Rossini became Ross, Riccioni became Richards, Giacomo became Jackman, etc. The younger Italians even blamed their elders – not the politicians and the police – for getting the Italian community into trouble and stigmatizing the community as disloyal.¹⁰³ The shame and trauma of the internment made the Italian community, who had thought Canada was their “salvation”, feel unwanted. Is it a coincidence then that of 71,000 immigrants who came to Canada in 1946, only 146 were Italian?¹⁰⁴ Italy was taken off the list of enemy states when Prime Minister MacKenzie King signed a peace treaty with Italy on February 10, 1947. Subsequently, Canada opened up an immigration office in Rome and actively encouraged Italian immigration. Thousands of Italians emigrated to Canada as a result.¹⁰⁵ The numbers were so great that Ken Bagnell calls the post-war Italian migration to Canada as “the most dramatic influx of newcomers in the history of Canada.” In Montreal the Italian community would come

of blows in 1941 and early 1942 that frightened, fractured, dispersed, and silenced much of Italian America for a generation.” DiStasi, *Una Storia Segreta*, 304. Had it not been for the cultural mosaic ideology supported by the Canadian government policy of multiculturalism in the 1970s that encouraged ethnic communities to celebrate their heritage, it is reasonable to believe that the phasing out of Italian services in the Pentecostal community in Canada might have occurred at a much earlier period.

¹⁰³ Bagnell, *Canadese*, 101-2.

¹⁰⁴ Bagnell, *Canadese*, 102.

¹⁰⁵ Bagnell, *Canadese*, 105-6.

to number about 160,000, while in Toronto the Italian community would form about 10% of its population.¹⁰⁶

Post-War Immigration

Post-war Italian immigrants were coming into a different environment than those who had come to Canada earlier. Whereas the pre-war immigrants were pioneers in a completely new and foreign environment, often the victims of discrimination and abuse, and possessing little or no schooling, the post-war immigrants arrived to a more welcoming environment in established Italian communities. Furthermore the government of Canada stood ready to support the new immigrants with various programs ranging from the offering of English lessons to “occupational development.”¹⁰⁷ Culturally, the post-war immigrants were also distinct from the older immigrants, especially with respect to the desire of maintaining their Italian culture. The newer generation felt that the older generation was not sufficiently zealous in maintaining their Italian heritage and distinctiveness.¹⁰⁸

However, government policies and programs that encouraged immigration were not necessarily indicative of a more welcoming public. Describing the prejudice in Canada towards the Italian immigrants, Bagnell points to public opinion polls such as the one in 1946 that “a full quarter of the [Canadian] population wanted Italians kept

¹⁰⁶ Bagnell, *Canadese*, 129.

¹⁰⁷ Bagnell, *Canadese*, 130.

¹⁰⁸ Bagnell, *Canadese*, 134.

out of the country, but a 1955 poll revealed it was worse – only 4.4 percent of Canadians would welcome immigrants from the Mediterranean countries (Italy and Greece mainly) as opposed to a full 30 percent who welcomed immigrants from northern European countries (Britain, Germany, France, and so on.)”¹⁰⁹

In the last chapter of his book, “Home is Where the Heart Is – But Where is the Heart?” Kenneth Bagnell uncovers the cost of immigration in emotional and psychological terms. As Italian immigrants were acquiring ever more material and social success in Canada, living in two worlds was taking its toll on Italian-Canadian families as they had to reconcile old world values with a new and foreign social environment, accompanied especially by concerns about the children. Many families did return to Italy. In 1982, 2455 Italians arrived in Canada but almost the same number left - 2145; in 1983, 1785 arrived and 2299 left; in 1984, 1432 arrived and 1715 left. [...] By the end of the decade, according to the Italian Embassy in Ottawa, over 10,000 Italians had gone home.¹¹⁰ This move back to Italy was called variously “reimmigration” or “repatriation.” This is a trend that would continue for twenty years in the 1970s and 1980s. The return to Italy was not always a happy one, though. Many found out that the Italy that they had left and probably expected to return to had disappeared. The fact of the matter was that the immigrants themselves were changing while they imag-

¹⁰⁹ Bagnell, *Canadese*, 178.

¹¹⁰ Bagnell, *Canadese*, 258.

ined that their homeland was not, whereas in actuality the homeland they had left also was also undergoing change.

Cultural Identity Change

The immigrants had to adapt to a new environment in the new world. Family, friends, government agencies, churches, all were part of a network of support services that helped the new Canadians adjust to their new environment. The churches, whether Catholic or Pentecostal, offered much welcomed assistance for the new Canadians. In one respect, the Italian Pentecostals continued to be a religious minority as they were in Italy since the majority of their fellow immigrants were Catholic. However, in Canada they had to embrace the reality that they would be a cultural minority in an overwhelmingly Anglo-Saxon country or francophone majority. The Pentecostals' Italian identity in Canada would not be the same as it was in Italy. In Italy, they were a minority only once, in Canada they became a double minority. This new status could only reinforce the ties with the Pentecostal community.

The Pentecostal community served as an extended family for the Italian-Canadian Pentecostals and to a large extent, replaced their loyalty to and identification with their *paese*, or town or village, described by the concept of *campanilismo*, the notion of life in the shadow of the village church belfry. It supported and comforted those who were a minority, not just relative to the wider Anglo-Saxon culture but also within their own ethnic group, since the majority of their compatriots were Catholic.

With this double minority status, often accompanied by strained relations with their own kin who were Catholic, the value of the extended Pentecostal community in helping new immigrants adjust to a foreign environment was obvious. In their church, members benefitted from moral support, assistance in finding jobs, spiritual meaning, and even spouses as members with the Pentecostal community tended to marry within their community. And if no one was found in Canada, travel to the Old World was not excluded as an option to find potential spouses of like faith. Marrying someone of like faith was even more important than marrying someone who was born in the same town, the usual and primary source of potential spouses. As a result, families within Italian Pentecostalism transcended hometown loyalties to break through the *campanilismo*.¹¹¹ Ordinarily, *campanilismo* led to marriage with someone who was born in the same town. The Italian Pentecostal community in Canada, the members of which, in many cases, originated from various towns in Italy, transferred their sense of *campanilismo* to the church community, or in other words, from their physical birth community to their spiritual birth community, a *campanilismo* that transcended and superseded their bond and loyalty to their *paese*.

As Italian Pentecostalism expanded, the composition of the members diversified. In Francescon's Italian mission in Chicago, for example, the members were mainly northern Italians in origin, mainly Friulans and Tuscans, whereas the Hamilton Italian Pentecostals were

¹¹¹ Cumbo, "Your Old Men," 55.

mainly Sicilian, while the group in Toronto was comprised of Italians from various regions of Italy, mainly from the South: Sicily, Basilicata, Molise, Lazio, Puglia, and Calabria.¹¹² The Italian Pentecostals transcended their regional and class differences in the interests of unity.¹¹³

Membership in the church community of Italians from different regions of Italy served to forge a common identity. When members originating from a given Italian *paese* rose in Church to give a testimony of God's goodness in their own dialect, other members who came from another region of Italy did not always understand them. Together, though, they forged a new identity, an Italian identity, as they were forced to speak Italian more than dialect, as they all read and referenced the Diodati translation of the Bible, and as they all sang hymns in standard Italian.¹¹⁴ Because Italian Pentecostals "proselytized only among Italians" they consciously tried to "transcend class and ethnic regional (North-South) and sub-regional (*paese*) differences."¹¹⁵

Furthermore, the new Canadian-Italian community would be further changed by the influx of a new genera-

¹¹² Cumbo, footnotes 17 and 18. Most of the Italian immigrants that settled in pre-World War I Toronto were mainly from Laurenzana and Pisticci from the Basilicata region; Lanciano, Rocca San Giovanni, and Fossacesia from the Abruzzi region; Boiano, Cascalenda, and Montorio nei Frentani in the Molise region; Vita, Termini Imerese, and Pachino in Sicily; Monteleone di Puglia and Modugno di Bari from the Puglia region; Gravere and Meana di Susa from Piedmont; Terracina and Sora in Lazio. Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 11.

¹¹³ Cumbo, "Your Old Men," 42.

¹¹⁴ Cumbo, "Your Old Men," 54.

¹¹⁵ Cumbo, "Your Old Men," 47.

tion of Italians in the post-Second World War era. These new Italian immigrants were different, culturally and religiously, from their earlier brethren. In Canada, the new immigrants were more assertive in maintaining their ethnic distinctiveness. Religiously, the more recent immigrants, having grown up under Fascism, were stricter in their “holiness” lifestyle, and more likely to shun the broader culture.¹¹⁶

The fact that this new identity was being forged in a foreign environment, in Canada, needs to be underscored. As the immigrant members of the Pentecostal community were transcending their cultural and sectional differences, and settling into a new spiritual “*paese*”, they were, in effect, becoming *more* Italian. In Canada, they were indeed becoming more Italian than they were in Italy. Zucchi discovered in his study that they became more conscious of their *Italianità* (Italianness) in Canada than they had been in Italy.¹¹⁷ Caroline Ware attests to this when she writes in her book *Greenwich Village, 1920-1930* “it was only the experience of being in a foreign land which made many of the immigrants feel themselves to be Italians at all rather than citizens of the particular town or province.”¹¹⁸ This new *Italianness*, it must be remembered however, had a foreign component – *Canadianness*. A new Italian was emerging – different from the one emerging in Italy – shaped by the Canadian environment. The new identity was unique – *Canadian Italian*.

¹¹⁶Cumbo, “Your Old Men,” 52.

¹¹⁷Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 193.

¹¹⁸Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 6.

And for the Italian Pentecostal, the added dimension of being a part of a minority religious culture not normally fundamentally associated with Italian culture as Catholicism is, we see three interlocking and intertwining components that forge his or her identity: Italian culture (albeit with a deeper sub-identification with his home town), Canada, and the Pentecostal faith. The weakest component, destined in a foreign land to die back further with each successive generation, was Italian culture.

Conclusion

Clues to understanding and appreciating the significance of the name change from the Italian Pentecostal Church of Canada to the Canadian Assemblies of God lie in the history of immigration, for the story of the Italian-Canadian Pentecostal movement is essentially grounded in the Italian immigrant story. The ethnic immigration story has much in common with the Italian Pentecostal story. In many cases they converge into one and the same story. Italian-Canadian Pentecostalism was extremely dependant on Italian immigration, for it was the lifeline and the lifeblood of the Italian Pentecostal Church. Without immigration, there would be no Italian Pentecostal movement to speak of. And this is the reality that the Italian Pentecostal movement in Canada has certified by the name change. No longer is immigration from Italy adequate to maintain the *Italianità* of the Italian Pentecostal community. As the Italian-Canadian Pentecostal movement grows older, its *Italianità* shrivels due to the absence of the immigrant

lifeline. The Italian Pentecostal community now realizes that it is no longer what it once was, an ethnic community with its particular ethnic characteristics and its particular ethnic mission. Its character and hence its identity has changed and is changing. However, this change in character and identity is not new, for throughout the century of mass immigration, beginning with those who had come within a few years of Italian unification when a conscious Italian identity had barely begun to form, to the great numbers that came in the aftermath of World War II, the character and identity of Italian-Canadians went through a number of changes.

Beginning with the third wave of immigration in the 19th century we see two types of Italians, one that arrived before Unification and the one that arrived after Unification. Obviously, there was no Italian citizenship until the creation of the Italian state in 1861, therefore any Italian identity would have been geographical or historical, whereas after Unification true Italian citizenship would have been part of the immigrant's identity, but only in the legal sense, since emotionally and culturally the immigrant has always seen his home town as his primary basis of identity, with the region (i.e., Sicilian, Calabrian, etc.) a close second.

The composition of the Italian immigrant community changed again as we progress from pre-World War II to the post-war era as the earliest immigrants were primarily, but not exclusively, from the North whereas the post-WWII immigrants were primarily from the South. The latter were more assertive of their *Italianità* since

those who had settled in Canada before the Second World War were more low-key about their Italian identity, whereas the post-war immigrants, having lived through the Fascist era, were more assertive about their Italian identity and their desire to maintain their community's ethnic character.

The fact of living in Canada forced a change in the self-understanding of the immigrants. They found themselves in the company of other Italians from other towns and regions and thereby forced to transcend regional differences, and to communicate in standard Italian with others who could not understand their regional dialects. In a very real sense living in Canada contributed to a greater Italian consciousness, albeit a *Canadian-Italian* identity. Italians living in Canada would have a different consciousness of their *Italianità* than did their brethren who remained in Italy.

To this constantly changing identity of the Italian community in Canada we must add, finally, the religious component. Italian Pentecostals found themselves in a double minority status in Canada, relative to the wider culture and relative to their compatriots, most of whom were Catholic. Many of the Italian Pentecostals were converted from Catholicism thereby undergoing another change in identity. The Italian Pentecostal immigrants that had lived in Fascist Italy changed the character of the Pentecostal community, as they tended to be more legalistic.¹¹⁹ Italian Pentecostalism also enhanced an Italian con-

¹¹⁹ See Cumbo, "Your Old Men," footnote 71. This was also confirmed by CAoG Pastor Tommaso De Domenicis, phone conversation

sciousness and identity as Pentecostal Italians transcended their regional differences in church through the shared language of the Italian Bible and the hymnal. And of course, the identity of the Italian Pentecostal community continues its transformation with each successive generation. The children and grandchildren of Italian immigrants, who wish to identify more with the wider culture than with the original culture of the first generation, these offspring who marry non-Italians, who have children that do not speak Italian in the home, if at all, blend into the broader Canadian identity. Their identity and self-understanding continue to change, their *Italianness* decreases as their *Canadianness* increases. It is therefore inevitable, that *Italianità* will die a slow death and all that will remain is a memory of a world that is no longer.

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