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**Strategic Multiplication of Churches and Discipleship Training
in the Church of the Nazarene in Africa: Case Study, the South
Kivu District in the Democratic Republic of Congo**

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The history of the Church of the Nazarene states that the church entered Africa in 1901 via Cape Verde. Eighty-three years later (1984), it was present in 11 African countries. From 1986 to 1999 the Church of the Nazarene in Africa opened work in 22 other countries¹⁹⁶. The number of churches has passed from 1 in 1901 to 729 in 1985, to 1,689 in 2000 and to 1,800 in 2003; members grew from 1 in 1901 to 41,357 in 1985, to 216,967 in 2000 and to 251,153 in 2002. According to Dr Richard F Zanner, Africa was the test region.¹⁹⁷ Nevertheless, an important question is raised: how do we explain the Church of the Nazarene galloping from one African country to another while the local churches have difficulty in growing? Careful thought on this question will help African Nazarene theologians to connect better discipleship training with church growth.

We propose in this exposé to briefly present what we mean by *multiplication* and *discipleship training*, the obstacles and the advantages for discipleship training in Africa in general and in the South Kivu District in the Democratic Republic of Congo in particular.

In order to do the best possible work in this study, we adopted several methods and techniques: documentation, observation, participation as a pastor, interviews, questionnaires, and conferences.

¹⁹⁶ “World Mission, 25th General Assembly of the Church of the Nazarene”, *Holiness Today* 3 June 2001: p 59,52.

¹⁹⁷ Zanner, Richard F. “Let’s talk about the Region”, *Trans African* XVI, 3. September 1994. p 2-3.

When it comes to the multiplication of churches and members, we need to respect a certain procedure, specifically that of Ralph Winter as cited by Dr Louie E Bustle and expressed as follows:

“Internal growth is the development of qualitative growth within the church, sometimes referred to as nurture ... Expansion growth is the numerical growth of the local church as new converts are won and incorporated into the church ... Extension growth refers to the planting of new churches in the same society as the original churches ... Bridging growth is characterized by the planting of churches across a cultural barrier...”¹⁹⁸

Unfortunately, this procedure isn't followed very often, forgetting perhaps what Donald McGavran and George G Hunter III had written:

“We are more and more convinced that our objective is to motivate leaders to support and to get involved in all aspects of church growth and not just those which favour a numeric growth in their congregations”.¹⁹⁹

These two authors have implicitly agreed with John Wesley who defined certain principles for a true multiplication, notably: trained small groups which contribute to the equipping of disciples and in which everyone exercises his gifts and experience.²⁰⁰ It is my humble opinion that there are three fundamental reasons that from time to time cause us to abandon this plan: 1) social problems which make some people think that the church is a place of refuge, 2) a policy of occupation that consists of wanting to show our presence in relationship to other denominations, and 3) a certain self esteem demonstrated when leaders work for their own personal interests resulting in division, discontent, and desertion.

Another important aspect is that of the training of disciples. The Great Commission is clear: “Go therefore to people of every nation and make

¹⁹⁸ Bustle, Louie E. *Keys For Church Growth*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1990 p 35-36.

¹⁹⁹ McGavran, Donald and George G Hunter III, *Church Growth: Strategies That Work* Nashville: Abington Press, 1986. p 42. (Note: Quotation is a translation from French to English, original English copy not available.)

²⁰⁰ Howard, Snyder A. *The Radical Wesley and Patterns of Church Renewal*. West Broadway: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1998. p 53-64.

disciples” (Matthew 28: 19 translated from French).

It is a difficult task to train disciples at a normal pace as long as our local church leaders haven’t had a thorough theological training themselves, for a disciple “ is above all a person who learns, a member, a follower. A disciple learns from or follows another person, the master.”²⁰¹

In order to accomplish this, there are several strategies to follow and all of them underscore training. Thanks to training, according to Leroy Eims, a leader leads the new convert into becoming a disciple, then a “worker” and finally a leader.²⁰² Rev Russell Frazier has outlined this training as follows:

- Children: Catechism and Bible quizzing;
- Youth: 8 months of training before becoming full members of the church; 3 months of training after admission as a member;
- Clergy: Their own special training program;
Continuing education for everyone.²⁰³

Drs Louie E Bustle and Bruno Radi have also contributed to this discussion with the following:²⁰⁴

- Each One Win One,
- Big Brother (Sister) Programme,
- Prayer Cells, potential organized churches,
- Evangelistic Campaigns, and
- Training.

Carl C Green proposes that the Church of the Nazarene organize a nine-session seminary with the following themes: Biblical theology, history of the Church of the Nazarene, the articles of faith, salvation and entire sanctification, entire sanctification and speaking in tongues, government of the church, general rules of faith, special rules of faith and Christian life,

²⁰¹ Dervey, Joanna. *Disciple of the Way: Mark on Discipleship*. Cincinnati: Global Ministries, 1976. p 48.

²⁰² Eims, Leroy. *The Lost Art of Disciple Making*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1980. p 183.

²⁰³ Frazier Russell, *Le chemin d’un disciple Nazaréen* Kigali, 2003.

²⁰⁴ Bustle, Louie E and Bruno Radi. *New Solutions: A Model of Aggressive Evangelism* Quinto: n.p. 1993. p 46-47, 60, 65, 79-80, 87

and finally, the need to produce ministers.²⁰⁵ From this programme, our attention is drawn to a fourth theme which Green explains as follows:

“Clarify the doctrine of salvation comprehensively and the doctrine of entire sanctification which not everyone has mastered.”²⁰⁶

This concern moves us directly into a brief analysis of certain obstacles and advantages that are encountered in Africa in the process of discipleship training.

- *Conflict among leaders*: because of management problems and the race for power, misunderstandings abound openly and publicly before the members of the church.
- *Recruitment of members*: referring to large numbers of people joining the church not as a result of evangelism, but as a circle of friends. In this case, the idea of a community of faith loses all sense of meaning.
- *Instability of members*: tied to the preceding problem, especially when the church does not respond to the social needs of the individuals.
- *Coexistence of African customs with Christianity*: like that which was discussed during the Regional Conference of 1992.²⁰⁷
- *False understanding and use of the **Manual***: certain local leaders do not understand that this very important document *accompanies* but does not *replace* the Bible and that its application, especially in the creation of certain local structures, must depend on the human and material resources available.
- *Weak financial commitment in the local churches*.
- *Selective theological training*: this must be extended in a permanent way outside the major cities and in every country.
- *Doctrinal conflict in the local churches*: in the sense that many leaders and members come from other denominations.
- *Insufficient financial assistance for pastors and for district*

²⁰⁵ Green, Carl C. “Prepared Members As Better Members”, *The Preacher’s Magazine* June-August, 1984, p 44-46.

²⁰⁶ Ibid p 44. (Note: The quotation is a translation from French to English, original English copy not available.)

²⁰⁷ Regional Conference, “Steps Toward Holy Living in Africa”, *Trans African* November-December 1992, p 1-7.

superintendents: given the poverty in Africa and the situation of churches spread out over large territories sometimes larger than some countries.

- *Ignorance of the process of organizing local churches*: this is the source of several “anaemic” churches.
- *Misleading statistical language*: In reality, most of our pastors do not have sufficient training to analyse statistical reports.
- *Difficulty of admission into the missionary circle*.²⁰⁸
- *Confusion between being enrolled in Sunday School and being an active member*: our experience demonstrates that, for local churches of Africa, this distinction just does not exist, both must participate in the worship service and in the programme of instruction.

In South Kivu, the same concerns appear. However, it is necessary to add certain comments. The district is situated in the east and southeast of the country, bordering Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, and Zambia. The Church of the Nazarene in Burundi depended until now on the South Kivu district. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the district covers 695,552 km², from 1,460-1,850 m altitude, with 9,420,892 habitants before the wars (1996).²⁰⁹ The climate is equatorial with its dense rain forest, mountains, plains, savannahs, rivers, lakes, and parks. The district has existed since 1994 but it has never had a permanent superintendent of its own, from which stem the chronic problems of leadership and endless conflicts. To this, one must add:

- The absence of official documents which authorize the Church of the Nazarene to function in the country. Local churches are regularly threatened of being closed and we appear to be a sect.
- The Church of the Nazarene does not build anything in South Kivu.
- As to pastoral training, we find it unusual for Nazarenes of South Kivu to have to go to Rwanda for their training, and we are therefore looking forward to the possibility of creating a network of

²⁰⁸ Selon *Missionnaires de la Région Afrique LIENS 2002-2004* du 24 juillet 2002, 5
Missionnaires Africains sont retraités et 5 en activité.

²⁰⁹ Institut Supérieur Pédagogique de Bukavu, *Projet-Conversion de l'I.S.P./Bukavu en Université du Kivu* (Bukavu 1998), 18-19.
Administration du Territoire, Province du Sud-Kivu, *Rapports 2000 et 2001*.

integrated theological training. Dr Robert Woodruff describes this network as: a Bible college as a hub, and ecclesiastical zones like a circle tied to the hub for the purpose of extension education.²¹⁰ Such a school would permit better discipleship training and the preparation of candidates for the upcoming Francophone Nazarene Faculté.

- Finally, the wars which began in 1996 are an obstacle which seriously inhibits church growth.

It would be unjust not to recognize the efforts of the Church of the Nazarene; certain internal and external factors can be cited and need to be underscored. Without hinting at any order of importance, and conscious that we are not making a full inventory of services provided by the Church of the Nazarene in Africa, we cite the following: an African solidarity, education, Nazarene Compassionate Ministries, the JESUS Film Partnership, dedication on the part of pastors, aviation, Nazarenes In Volunteer Services, radio, literature, and a dynamic youth programme.

In conclusion, to make disciples is a divine order for every Christian. Jesus did not call everyone who followed him a disciple; that title was reserved for those who were well known and well trained by him. In the same way, we hope that by the closure of this conference we will institute a system that will permit the fields to establish statistical reports recording the number of disciples formed each year and to broaden our training to include the general populace of the church. The result can be, then, the multiplication of churches on the basis of the multiplication of disciples.

²¹⁰ Woodruff, Robert L. *Education on Purpose: Models of Education in World Areas* QUT Publications 2001. p19.