

**“WE ARE A MISSIONAL PEOPLE”: MISSION IN THE CONTEXT  
OF THE WESLEYAN TRADITION**

*(Reaction to the paper by Christian Sarmiento)*

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## **I. FOUNDATIONS OF THE MISSION**

Before beginning speaking and describing what the mission is for the Church of the Nazarene, it is important to describe first from whom it came, why it came and to whom mission goes to, that is the platform of part of Dr. Sarmiento's paper that personally I find acceptable, because to speak of the mission we must start from its foundation, and this foundation is God himself. The mission is born in the heart of God (*Missio Dei*), comes from his love for humanity. As David Bosch affirms:

Mission is, primarily and ultimately, the work of the Triune God, Creator Redeemer, and Sanctifier, for the sake of the world. Mission is born in the heart of God; it is a fountain of love that He sends. This is the deepest sense of the mission... The mission exists simply because God loves people.<sup>1</sup>

Starting from the fact that the mission comes from God, we find ourselves with a second question, why does the mission come? I feel personally that this is the central reason of this topic. Chapters 3 to 6 in Genesis are fundamental for this point. The disobedience (Gen. 3:6) brought fratricide (4:8), bigamy (4:19), murder (4:12ff.) and thus, the multiplication of evil (6:5).

From the previous story we find in the Scriptures that God started to reveal to us his mission. God seeking to reestablish the communion and relationship with his creation, the human being, who becomes the object of God's mission. As Dr. Bergsma shows, "The objective of God's mission is the salvation and restoration of mankind."<sup>2</sup>

From what has been expressed above one can deduce two important things to know: In first place, God is Creator, Redeemer and Savior, He is the proactive person in the history of salvation of humanity, He is the one who takes the initiative in the history and is the one who we hear every time saying, "Return to me". In second place, the human being will be the object of God's mission

## **II. HOLINESS AND LOVE, FUNDAMENTAL ELEMENTS WITHIN THE MISSION**

In Scripture we find that there is a common ingredient in all those who form part of the people of God and that are an active part in his mission, in his life of holiness; it is his love towards God and his identification with God's mission and his love for those who need to be

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<sup>1</sup> David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1991), 392.

<sup>2</sup> Pablo Bergsma, "Misionología básica", Academic Convocation of IMDELA (San José, Costa Rica, 1993), 479.

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redeemed by Him. Everyone who has been reached by Him lives a different live from everyone else (Dt. 6:4-6; Lev. 19:11-2).

I think that Dr. Sarmiento makes a good point when he says, “God’s love and his holiness are the structure of the mission (Dt. 7:6-8; 26:19; 28:9; Isaiah 62:12)” (p. 1). It appears to be an important element in the lived context within the mission of the God of holiness and love that his children profess him as Lord, as this is what in the end we can do to model to world that needs to be redeemed and restored to the original state as it was created. I would also like to highlight what Dr. Sarmiento said, “The presence of a holy and loving people that presents the character of God attracts others to Him. This is being missional!”

### **III. AGENTS OF CHANGE IN MISSION**

We are clear that it is God that invites us to participate in his mission and that this calling comes primarily from inside the heart where we reflect the fullness of his presence and the great desire to witness to others what we live and feel; as Dr. Sarmiento says, “God in us...filling us, his love and his holiness touching each aspect of our being...demands and gives us the impulse to be missional.”

But from this point there is also a responsibility that we can never forget, all those who make up his people, to involve ourselves externally and to be continuously involved in this mission: this is and must always be the perspective of our Church of the Nazarene. David Bosch affirms: “The church...is called in its mission to give witness to what God has done once for all, absolutely new, unrepeatable and finally in Jesus Christ for the sake of the salvation of the world.”<sup>3</sup>

It is worthwhile to point out also that the church with its witness and message must be an agent of influence and change in the world, always taking as its model our Lord Jesus Christ to do the task. It is also important to remember that the church exists to give continuity to the mission that Christ began (John 17:18; 20:21). As John Stott shows referring to the mandate and task that the church has received from Christ:

The mission of the church comes from the mission of God and must be molded to the image of His mission... therefore, if we are to comprehend the mission of the church, we must comprehend the nature of the mission of the Son.<sup>4</sup>

We can not be deaf and ignore what Jesus Christ has entrusted a task to his church and therefore we must fulfill it, how?, by witnessing to fallen humanity what Jesus has done in the life of his people.

### **IV. THE MISSIONAL TASK OF THE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE**

It is of great importance to remember the first words that are at the beginning of the pamphlet outlining the core values of our denomination which states, “Every organization that endures over time

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<sup>3</sup> David Bosch, op. cit., 398.

<sup>4</sup> John Stott, “La Biblia y la Misión Integral” in *Al servicio del Reino en América Latina* (San José, Costa Rica: Visión Mundial Internacional, 1991), 49.

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is based on a deeply shared combination of purpose, belief and values.”<sup>5</sup> This pamphlet makes us remember the commitment the Church of the Nazarene has with God’s mission, it makes us highlight its responsibility and its surrender to fulfill Christ’s plan of redemption for humanity.

I identify and share what the General Superintendents express in respect to the missional value of our church: “We are a ‘sent people’, responding to the call of Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit to go into all the world, witnessing to the Lordship of Christ and participating with God in the building of the Church and the extension of His kingdom.”<sup>6</sup> The Biblical passages that support this call are Matthew 28:19-20 and Acts 1:8.

I believe that our church has clearly developed the parameters of what is the mission to which God has called us, we are conscious that this task must serve the human being in his totality (worship, compassion, evangelism, discipleship and higher education), called in evangelical circles “holistic mission”. As Luciano Jaramillo Cárdenas says regarding this, “We must speak of a holistic message of salvation that does not recognize a border of any kind and that is directed to every human being and considers the entire reality of the person: the physical, the spiritual, the intellectual, the social...”<sup>7</sup>

I am in agreement with Dr. Sarmiento when he says, “...our mission is holistic and circular” where the four pillars of our mission (worship, evangelism-compassion, discipleship and education) are repeated by our churches until our Great Teacher comes again.

May the mission be the reason and the existence of the Church of the Nazarene, that we never lose sight of our call; the fields are ready to be harvested and as Dr. Bresee said, “The sun never sets in the morning.”<sup>8</sup> We are still in the course of a beautiful day in our denomination; let us take advantage of this day to bring the message of God around the world and in this way make disciples that live in holiness, that love their neighbor, and that worship their Lord.

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<sup>5</sup> *Christian, Holiness, Missional: What Nazarenes Believe*, (Kansas City: Church of the Nazarene, n.d.), 1.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

<sup>7</sup> Luciano Jaramillo Cárdenas, “La Biblia y la Misión Integral”, in Valdir Steuernagel, *La misión de la Iglesia: Una visión panorámica* (San José, Costa Rica: Visión Mundial Internacional, 1992), 45.

<sup>8</sup> *Christian, Holiness, Missional: What Nazarenes Believe*, (Kansas City: Church of the Nazarene, n.d.), 16.