

ECCLESIOLOGY IN LIGHT OF THE RISE OF PENTECOSTALISM,
THE CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT AND INDEPENDENT MOVEMENTS
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The objective of this essay is to explore the ecclesiology developed by the Church of the Nazarene and how it can currently be experiencing changes which may be essential, structural, methodological or functional. Based on the premise that we are a Christian church, we believe that Jesus Christ alone is the way for salvation. We are a church called to proclaim the Gospel by a godly walk and vital piety¹. We are a missional church, which enables not only receive but also sends its members to proclaim the good news in their Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth. With this in mind the church is in constant tension, especially with the rise of Pentecostalism, Charismatic and other independent movements. Given this tension, is the church currently making substantive or merely superficial changes? Are these changes of essence or just methodological, structural or functional changes?

To do this, let's briefly review the ideas and religious practices called "Pentecostal" or "charismatic", which are largely a twentieth century phenomenon. However, its history can be traced to the three great spiritual movements of the eighteenth century; Wesleyanism, the Calvinist revival, and the German Pietists.² Their central teaching was that the saving power of the Holy Spirit, was given at Pentecost to all who repented, believed and were baptized, and was available at all times and places.

John Wesley makes a clear distinction between "extraordinary" and "ordinary" gifts of the Spirit at Pentecost. The three movements taught that the "ordinary" gift, defined as the gift of "sanctifying grace", was available permanently. They stated that the "extraordinary" gifts such as speaking in tongues, miraculous healings or other charismas were limited largely, not entirely, to the apostolic generation.³

A very small minority insisted on the radical notion that the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit would extend broadly to "the last days." This spark is what led to the Pentecostal Movement that emphasizes speaking in tongues and the gifts of healing.

¹ Introducción a la Membresía de la iglesia del Nazareno, Casa Nazarena de Publicaciones, Kansas City, MO. 2000, p. 229.

² Taylor S., Richard, et al., Diccionario Teológico Beacon. CNP. Kansas City, MO. 1995. p.509

³ *Ibíd.*, p. 510

It was in 1906, that an African American pastor, Charles Seymour, appeared in an interracial mission of holiness in Azusa Street in Los Angeles, California and began to proclaim the promise of the gift of tongues. A revival followed, amidst torrents of emotion and numerous cases of people who spoke in tongues. The theological corollary soon emerged, namely, that this experience was the "indispensable" sign that a believer had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit.⁴

The central question is whether the statements and the emphasis of modern Pentecostalism rely on a sound exegesis of Scripture. Many careful scholars agree that there is disparity between Pentecostal practices and biblical teachings, particularly as to whether the "tongues" spoken at Pentecost were unknown or were known languages. Others perceive an emphasis on the miraculous and emotional experiences as being sometimes more important than a commitment to ethics.⁵

From the Biblical evidence, the Nazarenes put more emphasis on the ethical and moral side, but clarify that we are not saints because we have attained a high level of morality or live blameless lives. But rather we are accountable to God for our way of life, our behavior and even our idle words. Some say: "But if God saved me, whether I wanted to or not, he decided, and if he decides, then I have to accept that I am saved without having to answer to God for my lifestyle. That is, I have no moral quality; what matters more is my standing before God and not my condition." The Nazarenes object to this, we put more emphasis on the ethical part because we believe that God chooses us for salvation in Christ Jesus, but through prevenient grace He awakens our consciousness enough so that with our wills we will choose God and be saved.⁶

If the gifts are given by God to whom He wills; "the Spirit distributes as He wills" and to whom he wishes, then, the gifts are not for salvation but as a charge from a Holy God to a certain person. So the Apostle Paul asks these questions in I Corinthians 12:29-30: Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Does everyone interpret? The answer could not be yes to

⁴ If you want to read a little more about this history information can be found in several theological and historical sources such as *The Age of New Horizons*, by Justo Gonzalez. The historical part is very important to understand the beginnings of Pentecostalism.

⁵ Diccionario Teológico Beacon, p. 511. You can see an aspect of this subject in the *Introduction to Christian Theology*, Wiley-Culbertson, p. 410-416.

⁶ Ruiz, Accel. Doctoral Dissertation: Spiritual Formation, Nazarene Theological Seminary. Kansas City, MO. 2000. p. 127.

all these questions. A correct exegesis must accept that the answer to all questions is NO. Not everyone will speak in tongues. However, for the Pentecostal, speaking in tongues is a necessary sign of receiving the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Nazarenes continue with John Wesley's biblical interpretation that whoever accepts that the "ordinary gift" is receiving the gift of "sanctifying grace", and that the extraordinary gifts of languages, healings and other miraculous powers were limited large, not completely, because as Nazarenes believe in the gift of healing, to the apostolic generation.

Following with the historical development we can see that from 1900 to around 1960, the teachings and Pentecostal practices were confined to Pentecostal Movement. But this would change later.

Between late 1950 and early 1960s the doctrines and practices of Pentecostalism expanded within all established denominations: Baptists, Lutherans, Presbyterians, and even the Roman Catholic Church. This means that the Charismatic Movement is simply the introduction of Pentecostalism within the established churches. This is the name that the established churches prefer to use rather than the term "Pentecostal". And the inference is that in these churches special gifts are emphasized, called "charismata". These charismatic groups are known as neo- Pentecostalism.⁷

At this point in the discussion it will be convenient to ask the question: How charismatic are Nazarenes? To guide our discussion, let's look at a definition, from the Beacon Theological Dictionary: "the church is a living organism, created by Christ on the day of Pentecost. It is the community of redemption, and is a new and unique race, united by the Spirit in the bonds of the blood of Calvary. Its internal role is to be an example of worship, teaching, fellowship and service. Its mission is to represent God in Christ to the world, for the holiness of life and the proclamation of the gospel to every creature. "

For our comparative study with the rise of Pentecostalism, the Charismatic Movement and independent movements, it is important to discuss the function of the church, largely because the first part of this definition is clearly accepted in most of these movements. What is the function of the church? It is pertaining to this question that we find that there are different ways of understanding it. Ecclesiology is really about the developments, practices and experiences of all kinds of functions of the church. The internal function is to be an example of worship, teaching, fellowship and service.

⁷ Velázquez, José M., Artículo: "La Historia del Pentecostalismo", Pastor y Decano de la Universidad Juan Calvino

Let us look at the way they understand the function of worship. The Charismatic and Neo-charismatic movements understand that the worship service ought not to be coldly rational but aesthetic and artistic, so that people can feel the real presence of God. In a worship service, God's presence is not transmitted through a well-planned theologically rational discourse, but via aesthetics and the senses. People express their feelings almost unimpeded. The expressions of happiness, joy and appreciation are highly variable with laughter as well as trembling. For them, the emotional worship serves as a channel by which believers gain direct access to God. All meetings are scheduled to realize an alleged presence of God.⁸

Taking into account that the internal function of the church is to be an example of worship, teaching, fellowship and service, I think it's in the part of worship where there have been charismatic developments permeating the Nazarene church and other churches. For example, in many local churches of the Nazarene, people in the congregation may clap, raise their hands, and make small movements of the body or even dance. In some local churches in countries where the culture is to be cheerful, the changes are not noticeable because clapping, dancing, and shouting are not alien to their culture. However, many local churches get into trouble with their local, zonal, regional leaders for adopting these changes and mimicking Pentecostal or Charismatic churches. For example, churches that have perpetuated and enjoyed singing hymns from hymnbooks produced largely in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, view with disdain and criticism those who leave this mode and start singing contemporary songs; I would add that they not only view them with disdain, but even demonize them because these churches have interchanged traditional hymns for contemporary songs.

Let us return to the quote which shows how Charismatic and Pentecostal churches express their understanding of worship. For them, "the presence of God is not transmitted through a well-planned theologically rational discourse, but via aesthetics and the senses."⁹ From the outset, we noted that "emotions" remain at the center of their orientation. Emotions are not bad or satanic; I believe that they play an important role in worship. The major problem lies in attempting to make experiencing emotions the center of worship. Worship for Nazarenes can never be fully focused on emotions. The Church of the Nazarene takes into

⁸ In Sik Hong, et al., *Ética y Religiosidad en tiempos Post Modernos*, Editorial Kairos de Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana. Argentina, 2001. P. 29.

⁹ *Ibíd.*, p. 28.

account, the fact that God deals with each one of his children using media as emotions, reason, the will, and character, because the goal of worship is not only feelings, but being changed into the likeness of Christ. The character of the believers must reflect ethics.

Leaving our position would lead us to make worship a particular matter, private, individualistic and subjective. Worse still, the subject of worship (God), the source of all religious value, would no longer be the center of worship as He would have been replaced by the individual.¹⁰

So worship gives space for developing the believer's expressions in his desire to worship. But we should not lose sight that worship is more than this; it should be built into a lifestyle, a product of an intimate relationship with Christ, who gives spiritual life to the church. Dr. Purkiser expresses it in this way: "The Holy Spirit is not only the link between the individual to Christ; he is also the link that binds together the members of the body, and its living Head. The Spirit is the life of the body, since the churches inauguration at Pentecost. The Holy Spirit has its place or seat inside the church! "¹¹

Worship does not give, or produce spiritual life, it is a means whereby, if in the context of worship we find the Spirit of Christ, then we will be transformed and worship will have served its purpose. It is not worship that produces spiritual life in me, but my relationship with Christ.

To maintain this intimate relationship with Christ and not fall into the charismatic interpretation of private, individual and subjective worship, we need to review our ecclesiology expressed in Article of Faith No. 11, "the Church". Here is an idea which is little known and poorly articulated today by church leaders. "The church consists of those *who obey Christ, live in holiness and experience mutual accountability.*" (Italics are the emphasis essayist)¹²

At some point in the history of the church, we lost this principle. This was the principle which marked the genius of the Wesleyan movement. Being accountable to each other was a brand that could not be sidestepped, ignored or postponed. It was something that had to be done and it impacted the growth and development in the life of the believer.

¹⁰ Bosca, Roberto, *New Age: La utopía religiosa del fin del siglo*, Atlántida, Buenos Aires, 1993, p. 87

¹¹ Purkiser, W.T., *Explorando la Santidad Cristiana, Fundamentos Bíblicos*, CNP, Kansas City, MO. 1988, p. 114.

¹² *Manual de la Iglesia del Nazareno*, 2005-2009, p.36.

So our temptation in our contact with Pentecostal, Charismatic and independent churches is to abandon this role of the church and make worship a private matter, centered individually on emotions, without any sense of responsibility to our neighbors. For us Nazarenes, worship must be centered on God. God is the audience and we, the worshipers committed ourselves to our neighbor to form a community that gathers around the living Christ in order to walk in intimacy, and as we do this we are transformed from glory to glory by the Spirit.

This brings us to the second function of the church: to represent God in Christ to the world, to promote holiness of life and to proclaim the gospel to every creature. The Church of the Nazarene believes, preaches, and calls to holiness of heart and life. However today, we are not proclaiming the gospel as we ought to; or if we are proclaiming Christ, we are not winning many souls to Christ and his church.

We cannot deny that the Charismatic Movements, especially the "charismatic movement" in Bogotá, Colombia, led by Pastor Cesar Castellanos, among others, have experienced mega changes in many areas of organization.¹³

To assume that a change in worship, per se, will detonate the numerical growth of the church is wrong. Paul Baden in his book *The Worship Maze: Finding a Style to Fit Your Church* outlines the different types of worship that have been developed throughout history.¹⁴ One can analyze and determine which style fits best with the kind of church where one is pastoring, but his conclusion is that no kind of praise or worship style will impact profoundly the numerical growth of the church.

If this is the case, why are Pentecostal, Charismatic and independent movements growing? First, we need to affirm that not all of them are growing, but we also accept that some of them are growing explosively. What makes these churches grow numerically? I would like to present two examples of the Nazarene churches. The first one is the miracle of Grove City Nazarene Church, in Ohio, USA.

The leadership of the Church of the Nazarene in Grove City has many passions for church: "... It has many other gifts. ... The people have many physical and emotional needs.

¹³ Garrison, David, *Movimiento de plantación de Iglesias*, Mundo Hispano, El Paso, TX. 2004, pp. 120-123.

¹⁴ Basden, Paul, *The Worship Maze: Finding a Style to Fit Your Church*, InterVarsity Press, 1999

Therefore, the church has decided to focus much of its attention on being a church of excellence to reach the lost and those who do not attend a church. "¹⁵

One of the key reasons that successful churches have a culture of excellence is because they "do" a few things right and "don't do "the rest."¹⁶ Grove City Church for many years experienced stagnation and this was not because they didn't have activities, in fact, the entire church budget was spent on these activities, but the church remained stagnant. They broke the deadlock when they discovered that they had many gifts, many skills, many needs, but they decided to put all these to one side and dedicate themselves to doing the most important thing, winning the lost for Christ and his church. They decide to put all their effort, money, and talents in doing one thing and doing it with excellence.

Churches that do not reach excellent growth (with orientation towards the lost), are those where much of the church's ministry is focused on the members. And when these members who focused on internal things of the church resist change in issues such as styles of worship, pastoral care, music options and colors of carpet, they get angry. A divided church is inevitably focused on itself.¹⁷ The purpose of the church is clear: it has a mission to fulfill winning the lost and they need to dedicate everything they have to achieve this aim.

The other example is the Church of the Nazarene "House of Prayer" in Cali, Colombia, where the pastor is Adalberto Herrera; in 1981 Adalberto Herrera Cali with his wife Nineye de Herrera became pastor of the church. This church had a total of 15 members. It took several years of stagnation, in which each year one member was gained and one lost, until one day the impasse was broken. Over time, after enduring numerous tests and crying out to God for revival, they gradually started adding new believers. Today, the Church of the Nazarene "House of Prayer" has approximately 12,000 members and is one of the largest churches in the country. Just looking at his "Master Plan" we note that the secret is prayer and the ability to reproduce through cells groups where discipleship is carried out intentionally, and where there is a well-organized system of "assimilation" or integration of new converts to all of the churches systems.¹⁸

These churches have moved from stagnation to explosive growth because they have developed a system that retains disciples and sends converts to win others to Christ. This

¹⁵ Rainer, Thom S., *Iglesias Exitosas*, Editorial Vida, Miami, FL. 2007, pp. 146-147.

¹⁶ *Ibíd*, p. 155

¹⁷ *Ibíd.*, p. 79.

¹⁸ Information seen on the Internet at www.nazareno.net, 5.1.13.

is what the vast majority of churches throughout the world need to do, because statistics do not lie. Let's look at the statistics recently released by the Secretary of the General Church: We can see that they have been years of overall membership loss. According to the report, we have 20,041 organized churches globally; among us all we won a total of 14,761 new members. That is, among all the world's churches we didn't even win a new member (0.73), without taking into account the loss of 11,040 members.¹⁹

What is happening at the level of the organization globally and at the local church level? Payne may give us some answers that will help us in our problem of stagnation. Claude E. Payne says that the main causes of the symptoms that are affecting traditional denominations—the basic disease that is damaging the church—is that traditional churches have lost their vision of being missionary churches dedicated to the community, to discipleship and to personal transformation. This loss of vision creates many symptoms.

While it is true that there are many reasons for this stalemate, or symptoms which I will not attempt to cover in this essay, it is important to note the statement made by Payne: there has been a loss of vision of being a missionary church dedicated to the community, to discipleship and to personal transformation.

At this point, it is good to revise John Wesley's contribution to the development of a healthy ecclesiology in order to establish clearly the way to salvation. John Wesley's work was dedicated to the community, to society, to discipleship and to personal transformation.

We can take note of what George Whitefield himself (successful preacher and contemporary of John Wesley) said as to what was the difference between the results of his ministry and those of John Wesley; with honesty he said, "My brother Wesley was wiser than me. He organized into classes the souls who came under his ministry. I was careless and my people are become like sand that is blown away."²⁰ That is, John Wesley developed a system of assimilation, retention and training of new converts to the gospel.

Woodie Stevens ponders: "What will happen to our ministry when it does not develop a reproducible system which will advance onwards when we have gone to the Lord's presence?"

¹⁹ Source: General Secretary releases 2012 stats. (Global Ministry Center, David P. Wilson, December 20, 2012

²⁰ Stevens, Woodie J., *Bases Wesleyanas del Plan del Maestro*, CNP, Lenexa, KS. 2012, p. 6.

Dennis McCallum (pastor of Xenos Christian Fellowship) states: "If we raise Christian disciples, they naturally evangelize and bring growth to the church."²¹ So, compared to the Pentecostal, Charismatic and independent movements, we need to review our ecclesiology. We need to re-focus our vision and our mission. We need to analyze the internal and external functions of the church to guide us in our task of reaching the mission of the church. Many of the Charismatic Movements are reviewing John Wesley and his system and are adjusting to his movement and this is giving amazing results of numerical and spiritual growth, etc. Let's not put too much emphasis on superficial changes of music, whether or not we applaud, if we dance in worship or not, and let's put the emphasis on developing leaders and in winning people for Christ. We need disciples who can disciple others to form mature disciples, who are stable and strong in their faith. We need to develop a system where the new convert does not escape through the back door, but is intentionally guided until he or she becomes a solid believer in the faith, capable of reproducing themselves in others.

We need to make the fundamental change which would modify our structure or programs, or whatever is necessary to put emphasis on local evangelism primarily, of course, without neglecting global evangelism, as the one should be the product of the other.

One of the conflicts which may occur, or disinformation, or whatever, is in terms of changes in the strategies and methodologies we need to adopt to achieve the goals. Many times, through lack of information we stick to strategies that do not work and enter into conflict because "we feel" that if we try another strategy we are being unfair to the tradition of the church or on the other hand, we think that other strategies may be are "satanic". I have understood in the light of the Scriptures that God has used hundreds or thousands of strategies to do things, as the strategy He gave to Joshua to attack Jericho. And so we see in the Bible that God has not always used the same strategy, in fact, He has always changed strategies. I conclude that strategies are neither good nor bad, but we should have enough discretion to use those with adequate guidance for our doctrinal context and therefore I would like to recommend that we review the strategies of "the master plan" according to Wesley.²² The Wesleyan system he adopted to make disciples has six basic components fully reproducible and adapted to fit every cultural context.

²¹ Rainer, Thom S. *Iglesias Exitosas*, Editorial Vida, Miami, FL. 2005, p. 126.

²² Stevens, Woodie. "*Bases Wesleyanas del Plan de Mestro*" ps. 7-8

The system begins with a weekend retreat for spiritual rebirth, revival, healing, total dedication, freedom from guilt and bondage of sin past, entire sanctification with the Holy Spirit. It is called the "Encounter with God". Hundreds of thousands have witnessed the powerful impact that the Encounter with God has put in their spiritual life. From the beginning to the end, prayer is practiced, and the retreat focuses intensely on the work of God in the life of the person transforming and renewing those who seek him.

Secondly, after the experience of the encounter, maintaining the spiritual fervor of the moment, the new member is introduced to weekly follow-up classes. During the first 90 days new Christians are trained in the basic disciplines of the Christian faith which include daily prayer, reading the Word of God, and training on how to share their faith.

The third component consists of integrating the new convert in a small group. This group is open to everyone. It's like a vibrant Sunday school class or small group that can meet at any place and at any time.

In the open group, new believers have the opportunity to share their testimony, study the Bible, invite their friends and pray fervently for evangelistic opportunities to lead someone to faith in Christ. Once settled in their small group or "cell group", the disciple is formed in a School of Leaders. This is a curriculum on biblical teaching and practical leadership consisting of nine months.

Through intense training during the year the relationship with the counselor or instructor **becomes the fourth component**. This step includes spiritual direction and one-to-one counseling. Through this long relationship spiritual growth and advancement of the newly converted is monitored. Counseling often takes place in connection with a larger group of up to 12 who gather as brothers or sisters with mutual responsibilities.

The fifth component of the Master Plan is mutual accountability in a closed group of up to 12 members. In this group the 12 help each other to follow Christ more closely. They encourage and affirm each other as they grow and develop their spiritual gifts within the body of Christ. They learn to be accountable to each other for their Christian life and walk with Christ. Through a learning process the newly converted person will be encouraged to invite, win and consolidate their friends in the open group of evangelism and Bible studies during the first year of the new course of disciples. This leads to the sixth step.

Step number six is to help each newly trained disciple maker who has completed the first year of studies to form their own small group of 12 members, to teach them, lead them, advise them and help them to make disciples who make disciples.

This strategy can be summarized in the following way: **Win; Consolidate; Disciple** and **Send**. No doubt there are objections and adjustments that need to be made, but I think we have enough Biblical and theological bases to say it is a strategy with a healthy gene which pastors can investigate and apply.

I conclude with Matthew 28:19-20 (NIV) " Therefore go (*win*) and make disciples of all nations, baptizing (*consolidate*) them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching (*disciple*) them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always (*send*), to the very end of the age."