

Ramón Sierra Introduction

Three persons actively involved in theological education in the SAM Region of the Church of the Nazarene for more than ten years write these articles. They are Wilfredo Canales, Luis Meza and myself (Ramón).

I. Luis Meza – is the Rector or Director of the Seminario Teológico Nazareno Sudamericano (South American Nazarene Theological Seminary) in Quito, Ecuador. He is originally from Peru and serves as a missionary. He is also the Regional Coordinator for Compassion Ministries. Luis' article is titled: Challenges For Theological Education Towards the XXI Century. Luis divides his presentation in two major blocks:

First, he gives a general profile of the type of ministers we need to prepare for the future. He shares four key characteristics that any minister must have, he or she must be prepared... (1) with an adequate focus of the nature and function of pastoral ministry, (2) so that they confront new theological currents and contemporary novelties, (3) in order to know how to read the signs of our times and not be molded by the spirit of our times, and, finally (4) to encounter the reality of religious pluralism.

Second, Luis goes on to mention some practical aspects institutions in our context face as they endeavor to carry out the challenges of theological education for the XXI Century: We must... (1) Redefine the philosophical dimension of the education process in theological education; (2) make sure that the Word of God is at the center of our ministerial education; (3) wisely administer our academic resources; (4) revise our educational programs; and (5) begin a systematic process of training for our professors.

II. Wilfredo Canales – is presently serving in Paraguay as a missionary; he is pastor of the Luque Church in Asunción and District Superintendent of the Central district in Paraguay. He has been Rector of our seminary in Quito and Director of the former Latin American Nazarene Communications. He is originally from Peru.

Wilfredo shared this paper entitled *The Formation of a Christian Mindset in a Society in Crisis* in the Forth Latin American Congress of Evangelization (CLADE IV) in Quito, Ecuador in September 2002. This event is sponsored by the Latin American Theological Fraternity (FTL), which gathers churches across different denominations and para-church organizations. Some 1,300 leaders representing the diverse sectors of evangelicals joined under the theme: *The Evangelical Testimony Towards the Third Millennium: Word, Spirit and Mission*.

Wilfredo's paper gives a biblical approach to the theme based on Romans 12:1-2, a contextual approach describing geopolitical changes, the communication and computer revolution, the revolution in the patterns of production, the appearance of new social actors and classes. In this last point he stresses that the implementation of the neoliberal model of economic growth in most of our continent has meant: (1) greater inequalities, (2) deterioration of the quality of life, (3) a widening in the gap between North and South, (4) inefficient international system. He continues that in the midst of this crisis there has been a search for alternatives for a new paradigm based on the following principles: (1) a dichotomist vision of the relation subject-object should be rejected; (2) the human being should take care of and protect his/her ecosystem; (3) progress should not be assumed as an indefinite, linear, cumulative process; (4) there are no absolute patterns for culture; (5) the relation between the sexes should no longer be governed by masculine domination; (6) cooperation is the fundamental social relation and not competition, struggle, aggressiveness; (7) anthropology with an integrative perspective should recognize that the human persons are not only rational beings. Wilfredo concludes his paper with the implications these new characteristic will have for education.

III. Ramón Sierra– My paper is on the theme: Character Development of the Christian Leader. After sharing in the introduction that character development today has become the focus of unlikely sectors like the business, enterpernual, leadership world and the “secular” education focus, we as Christians must regain our rightful birthright to this dimension of personal growth. I divide my presentation in three sections related to character development within the church and its institutions:

1. A Personal and Ecclesiological Deficit in our Past Experience.
2. A Present Need in the Ministry.
3. An Imperative Challenge for the Future of the Church.

I finish with seven Christian foci that can help us carry out character development in the church and its seminaries, they are: (1) the wellness model by Howard Clinebell. (2) the recent emphasis on spiritual formation. (3) William Willimon’s perspective on ministerial ethics,(4) Parker Palmer’s insights on identity and integrity, (5) Gordon MacDonald’s approach in *Ordering Your Private World*, (6) *Spiritual Direction* by Eugene Peterson and *The Pastor as Spiritual Guide* by Howard Rice, (7) *The contemporary emphasis on Christian Excellence* by Jon Johnson and *Quest for Quality in the Church*, Ezra Earl Jones.