

INTEGRATED APPROACHES TO MISSION IN THE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE: THEOLOGY, PRACTICE, AND CONTEXTUAL CHALLENGES

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Introduction

The Christian mission is one of the fundamental expressions of the church's vocation, being part of the dynamic of the *missio Dei*, that is, God's work aimed at reconciliation, restoration, and blessing of all nations.¹ In biblical theology, this dynamic appears as early as the covenant with Abraham, where God promises a blessing intended not only for Israel, but for "all the families of the earth."² This universal perspective already shows that mission is not reduced to verbal proclamation, but implies a global transformation of the person and society. In the New Testament, the ministry of Jesus Christ fully illustrates this integral approach: the proclamation of the Kingdom is accompanied by acts of compassion, healing, justice, and social inclusion.³ Thus, Christian mission is presented as a holistic commitment, articulating word and action in a theological coherence.

In continuity with this vision, the Church of the Nazarene, rooted in the Wesleyan tradition of holiness, conceives of mission as a process integrating personal transformation, social engagement, justice, compassion, and contextualization.⁴

1. Problem

The Church of the Nazarene is part of a vision of integral mission, articulating proclamation of the gospel, social commitment, and justice, rooted in the Wesleyan theology of holiness and the dynamics of *missio Dei*. However, the implementation of this mission faces several challenges: maintaining a balance between proclamation and social action, contextualizing the mission without compromising doctrinal integrity, and responding to the complex realities of religious pluralism, urban dynamics, and socio-economic inequalities.

Thus, it is appropriate to ask: how can the Church of the Nazarene carry out an integral mission that combines theological fidelity, social commitment, and adaptation to plural and complex contexts? This problem makes it necessary to carry out an in-depth analysis of the foundations and missionary practices of the Church of the Nazarene.

This work, therefore, proposes to examine the integral mission of the Church of the Nazarene through three methodologically articulated dimensions:

1. The theological dimension, examining the biblical, Christological, and ecclesiological roots of the mission;
2. The practical dimension, analyzing the strategies, models, and tools used in the implementation of the mission;

¹ David Richard, *World Perspectives* (n.p., n.d.), Acts 1:8; see also Romans 15:20-21.

² Ibid. Genesis 12:1-3; see Hannes Wiher, *Churches and Integral Mission* (n.p., n.d.).

³ McTair Wall, "A Year of Celebration!" *Evangelical Missiology* 6, no. 1 2018.

⁴ Evert Van de Poll, "Integral Mission: The Idea and its Implementation," *Evangelical Missiology* 6, no. 1 (2018): 32-44.

3. The contextual dimension, highlighting the cultural, social, and religious challenges facing the church in a globalized world.

The writing of this article encountered several difficulties, in particular, the lack of French-speaking missiological sources, the diversity of contemporary approaches to mission, and the heterogeneity of writings on the Church of the Nazarene and the *missio Dei*. These obstacles have required rigorous selection of works and methodical organization of biblical, theological, and practical data. Nevertheless, this approach enables a coherent, structured, and integrated analysis of current missionary issues.

Thus, the article is structured in four parts: a literature review highlighting the main theological debates on integral mission; a methodology detailing the approach adopted; a presentation of the results and their discussion; and finally, a conclusion synthesizing the implications for contemporary missionary practice.

2. Literature Review: Theoretical Perspectives and Contemporary Debates

The integral mission has been the subject of much theological, missiological, and socio-cultural work in recent decades. This section presents the main contributions that structure contemporary thinking, while highlighting the limitations of these approaches and the specific angle adopted by this article.⁵

2.1. The Missio Dei and the Biblical Heritage: The Theological Foundation of Integral Mission

One of the major pillars of integral mission is the notion of *missio Dei*, according to which God is the initiator and principal actor of the mission. David Richard offers a biblical reading centered on the expansion of the Kingdom of God, illustrated in the book of Acts by the geographical and cultural progression of the gospel. He insists on the universal character of the mission inscribed in the covenant with Abraham, emphasizing that Israel's vocation is not ethnic but missionary.⁶

However, while Richard emphasizes the biblical dynamics of mission, his book does not specifically address the social or cultural dimension of mission. Nor does it elaborate on the practical implications for contemporary churches.

This article takes up its biblical foundations but articulates them with a broader theological and contextual analysis, in accordance with the holistic perspective demanded by integral mission.

2.2. Integral Mission: A Latin American Theological Framework

The modern conceptualization of the integral mission owes much to the work of the Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana (FTL). Evert Van de Poll offers a solid synthesis of this approach, showing how it goes beyond the dichotomy between evangelization and social action.⁷

⁵ David Richard, *World Perspectives* (n.p., n.d.), Acts 1:8.

⁶ *Ibid.* Genesis 12:1-3.

⁷ Evert Van de Poll, "Integral Mission: The Idea and its Implementation," *Evangelical Missiology* 6, no. 1, 2018.

It recalls that the integral mission aims at the global restoration of the person and society, integrating the word, compassion, justice, and cultural transformation.⁸

However, Van de Poll focuses mainly on the genesis and general characteristics of the concept. He makes little mention of the concrete challenges of its implementation in local churches and does not examine its implications for specific traditions, such as that of the Church of the Nazarene.

This study extends his reflection by applying it to the Nazarene context, highlighting how the Wesleyan heritage of holiness dialogues with Latin American missiology.

2.3. *Contemporary Debates: Evangelization or Social Action?*

Rémy Williams Moloby analyzes the historical conflict between two conceptions of mission:

- A vision restricted, focused solely on verbal proclamation;
- A vision enlarged, integrating social justice, development and cultural transformation.⁹

His study highlights the internal tensions within the French-speaking evangelical movement, showing that integral mission is often perceived as a threat to doctrinal fidelity. Moloby makes a major contribution by tracing the major moments of the debate and identifying the theological arguments of each side.¹⁰

However, his analysis remains mainly descriptive. She explores little of the pastoral consequences of these two approaches. In addition, it does not propose an integrative model to overcome polarization.

This article takes a constructive view by showing how the Church of the Nazarene adopts a balanced approach that avoids the sterile opposition between proclamation and social commitment.

2.4. *Missionary Contextualization: Models and Challenges*

Contextualization constitutes another essential pillar of integral mission. John Travis proposes the renowned C1–C6 typology, which allows for the assessment of degrees of cultural adaptation within Christian communities emerging from non-Christian backgrounds. Timothy Tennent, in his reflections on disciples of Jesus in mosques, analyzes the theological and sociological implications of the C5 model.¹¹

These works offer valuable tools for understanding the diversity of Christian expressions in plural religious contexts. However, they focus primarily on Islamic contexts and are not directly applicable to the Latin American, Caribbean, or African realities in which the Church of the Nazarene works.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Rémy Williams Moloby, “A Mission with Two Conceptions”, *Evangelical Missiology* 6, no. 1, 2018.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ John Travis, “The C1–C6 Spectre,” *Evangelical Missions Review* 34, no. 4, 1998.

In this study, contextualization is related to the specificities of the Wesleyan heritage, including the emphasis on holiness of life, discipleship, and community transformation.

2.5. Additional Contributions on Mission and the Church

Recent French-speaking missiology also provides useful insights. McTair Wall emphasizes the importance of ecclesiology in mission, reminding us that every mission is carried out by a community and not just by individuals.¹² Ngarsoulédé, for his part, analyzes the cultural tensions encountered by African churches through a study of perceptions of the Last Supper in contexts of witchcraft, showing the need for a cautious, biblically based contextualization.¹³

However, this work addresses two specific aspects: the general ecclesial aspect and the cultural challenges in Central Africa. It does not offer an overarching framework for integrating theology, missionary practice, and context.

This is precisely what this research proposes to do: to offer an integrated vision of mission in the Church of the Nazarene that reconciles theological foundations, practical strategies, and contextual reading.

2.6. Limitations of Existing Work and Specific Angle of this Research

The literature review shows several shortcomings:

1. Few studies articulate integral mission and the Wesleyan tradition;
2. Mission in the Church of the Nazarene is rarely studied in a systematic way;
3. The analyses often lack contextual application to Mesoamerica and multicultural environments;
4. The links between the theology of holiness and social commitment remain little explored.

This article fills this gap, proposing an integrated analysis that connects the theological, practical, and contextual dimensions of mission in the Church of the Nazarene.

3. Methodology

The objective of this section is to present in a precise, rigorous, and transparent manner the methodological foundations of this research. The study adopts a qualitative, inductive, and descriptive approach, aimed at analyzing theological, practical, and contextual approaches to integral mission in the Church of the Nazarene. The methodology articulates several data sources and several levels of analysis in order to produce an integrated understanding of the phenomenon studied.

3.1. General Methodological Approach

This research is part of a qualitative approach of documentary and theological analysis, particularly suited to the study of concepts, ecclesial practices, and missionary dynamics.

¹² Timothy C. Tennent, "The Disciples of Jesus (Isa) in Islamic Mosques," *International Review of Frontier Missions* 23, no. 3 (2006).

¹³ Abel Ngarsoulédé, "Eating the Flesh and Drinking the Blood," *Evangelical Missiology* 6, no. 1, 2018.

Qualitative analysis makes it possible to identify meanings, theological conceptions, models of mission, and the interactions between doctrine, practice, and context.¹⁴

The approach is also inductive, since it proceeds from the examination of biblical, ecclesiological, and missiological sources towards the elaboration of a synthetic understanding specific to the Church of the Nazarene. Finally, it is descriptive and analytical: descriptive through the exploration of missionary foundations and practices, analytical through the critical interpretation of contemporary concepts and challenges.

3.2. *Documentary Corpus and Sources Used*

The corpus used includes three categories of sources, selected to cover all dimensions of the integral mission:

a) *Biblical and Theological Sources*

The texts of the Old and New Testaments constitute the doctrinal basis of the mission. The passages relating to the Abrahamic covenant, the ministry of Jesus, the missionary expansion of Acts, and the Pauline epistles were analyzed to identify the fundamental missionary principles.¹⁵

b) *Contemporary Missiological Literature*

Francophone and Anglophone works were used to cover the theoretical debates (*missio Dei*, integral mission, contextualization). Key authors include Van de Poll, Moloby, Travis, Tennent, Wall, Wiher, and Ngarsoulédé.¹⁶

c) *Institutional and Historical Records of the Church of the Nazarene*

Although this research does not rely on direct ethnographic work, it does rely on the examination of official documents, missionary training articles, doctrinal statements, and internal missionary reports when available. All these sources allow for a triangulation of the data, ensuring the consistency and depth of the analysis.

3.3. *Data Analysis Methods*

Three complementary methods of analysis were used:

a) *Thematic Analysis*

It makes it possible to identify recurring themes in literature (holiness, contextualization, proclamation, social justice, discipleship, transformation) and to identify their internal relationships.¹⁷ This method is adapted to the understanding of theological discourses and frameworks.

b) *Comparative Analysis*

¹⁴ See John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2018).

¹⁵ Richard, *Global Perspectives* (n.p., n.d.); Genesis 12; Acts 1-10.

¹⁶ Evert Van de Poll, "Integral Mission," *Evangelical Missiology* 6, no. 1 (2018): 32-44; Rémy Moloby, "A Mission with Two Conceptions," 3-33; Travis, "The C1-C6 Spectrum."

¹⁷ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 62-70.

It is used to examine the similarities and differences between approaches to integral mission in various authors (Van de Poll, Moloby, Wiher), as well as to compare these perspectives with the theology of the Church of the Nazarene.

c) Analysis of Theological Content

This method makes it possible to interpret doctrinal content according to the principles of biblical and Wesleyan theology, while evaluating the coherence between doctrine and practice.

3.4. Period and Time Frame of Research

The literature reviewed mainly covers the period 1998-2018, corresponding to the emergence and consolidation of contemporary debates on integral mission. The biblical sources are of course a timeless framework, but their interpretation is part of current theological discussions. The research was carried out over a period of several months, allowing for an in-depth examination of the texts, a progressive articulation of the concepts and a rigorous construction of the theological framework.

The study focused on three main parameters corresponding to the dimensions of the integral mission:

1. Theological parameters: biblical, Christological, and doctrinal foundations; place of the *missio Dei*; theology of holiness.
2. Practical parameters: missionary models, discipleship, planting, and cultural adaptation strategies.
3. Contextual parameters: religious, cultural, and sociological phenomena influencing contemporary mission.

These parameters were used as a basis for structuring the analyses and interpreting the results.

3.6. Relevance and Limitations of the Methodology

This methodology has several advantages:

- It allows for a systemic understanding of the integral mission;
- It articulates biblical, theological, practical, and contextual foundations;
- It takes into account the diversity of contemporary missiological perspectives.

However, it has some limitations:

- The absence of direct field surveys limits empirical analysis;
- Some institutional sources of the Church of the Nazarene are difficult to access;
- The diversity of global contexts cannot be fully represented.

Despite these limitations, the methodology achieves the goal of this research: to propose an integrated and contextualized understanding of mission in the Church of the Nazarene.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents the main results obtained from the biblical, theological, missiological, and contextual analysis. The results are organized according to the three axes defined by the methodology: theological, practical, and contextual. The discussion interprets them in the light of the problematic, showing their implications for the mission in the Church of the Nazarene.

4.1. Theological Results: Mission as an Integral Expression of Holiness

The analysis reveals that the vision of mission in the Church of the Nazarene rests on a strong articulation between the *missio Dei*, the Kingdom of God, and the Wesleyan theology of holiness. Three major results emerge:

1. The mission is founded on the identity of God: it expresses his desire for reconciliation, restoration, and transformation.
2. The mission is Christocentric: Jesus' ministry combines proclamation and actions of justice, serving as a holistic model.
3. Mission is inseparable from Wesleyan holiness: sanctification is understood not only as an interior change, but as a dynamism of a life sacrificed, committed, and turned towards the transformation of the world.

The discussion shows that this articulation makes it possible to go beyond the traditional separation between evangelization and social action. Holiness becomes the theological bridge that links relationship with God, personal ethics, and missionary responsibility. It also appears that the Nazarene vision emphasizes the incarnation: to be holy means to commit oneself concretely to justice, compassion, and community transformation. This internal coherence makes holiness a missionary engine rather than a withdrawal from the world.

4.2. Practical Results: A Missionary Model Structured Around Discipleship and Compassion

An examination of missionary practices reveals a dynamic in three complementary axes:

1. Proclamation: biblical teaching, preaching, and personal and community evangelization remain central, but are considered in a relational, not merely informative, spirit.
2. Discipleship: Discipleship is considered the fundamental structure of mission. It involves accompaniment, mentorship, spiritual growth, and community engagement.
3. Social and compassionate action: the mission is expressed in initiatives of justice, humanitarian aid, education, health, prevention, and support for vulnerable populations.

The results show that the Church of the Nazarene adopts an integrated model, in which proclamation and social action are never independent. The aim is not to add social works alongside evangelization, but to manifest the Kingdom of God simultaneously in word and deed.

A major challenge in the discussion is that the balance between these three dimensions is not always achieved in practice. Some regions favor proclamation, others social action. The integral mission requires overcoming these imbalances to reflect the theological harmony of the Hellenic model.

4.3. Contextual Findings: Cultural, Social and Religious Challenges in Mesoamerica

The analysis of the Mesoamerican context highlights three categories of challenges that directly influence the mission:

1. Socio-cultural challenges: religious pluralism, syncretism, questions of cultural identity, ethnic tensions, and rapid changes in family structures.
2. Socio-economic challenges: persistent poverty, migration, insecurity, economic disparities, and vulnerability of young people.
3. Religious challenges: rise of neo-Pentecostal movements, partial secularization, distrust of institutions, and ecclesial fragmentation.

These results show that the mission in the region cannot simply be transposed from other contexts. It must be contextualized carefully. The discussion underlines that the challenges are not only external; they profoundly change the way the churches understand and live mission.

In the face of poverty and violence, the Church of the Nazarene is called to develop an active presence of compassion while maintaining the proclamation of the Kingdom. In the face of pluralism, it must deepen theological formation and inculturation. In the face of migration, it must adopt pastoral strategies adapted to mobile populations. Contextualization then becomes an essential dimension of fidelity to the Gospel, and not a cultural concession.

4.4. Synthesis: Towards a Truly Integrated Mission

The dialogue between the three axes analyzed allows us to draw three major conclusions:

1. Integral mission is fully consistent with Wesleyan theology: holiness of life provides a solid doctrinal basis for uniting proclamation, compassion and justice.
2. The mission of the Church of the Nazarene is intrinsically practical and communal: it is expressed in an incarnate way, in direct interaction with human realities.
3. Integral mission requires continuous contextualization: without cultural, social and pastoral adaptation, the mission risks losing its relevance and effectiveness.

The general discussion confirms that integral mission is not a mere missiological model, but a way of being Church: holistic, dynamic, contextualized, Christ-centered, and motivated by holiness.

5. Conclusion

The analysis conducted in this article shows that the integral mission of the Church of the Nazarene is a holistic, coherent approach that is deeply rooted in biblical and Wesleyan theology. The theological results confirm that mission flows from the very identity of God, whose action in the world is aimed at reconciliation, restoration, and transformation. This understanding places the church as an active partner in the *missio Dei*, called to manifest the Kingdom of God through the proclamation of the gospel, the witness of life, and acts of compassion.

From a practical point of view, the study showed that the Nazarene mission is articulated around an essential triptych: proclamation, discipleship, and social action. This dynamic highlights a conception of mission that goes beyond the traditional dichotomies between evangelization and social commitment. It fosters a vision in which message and action complement, enlighten, and reinforce each other. The effectiveness of the mission then depends on the church's ability to maintain this balance, to structure its actions, and to support coherent and continuous formation processes.¹⁸

On the contextual level, the study reveals that the integral mission must constantly dialogue with specific socio-cultural realities, especially in regions marked by religious plurality, migration, poverty, and identity tensions. These challenges are not obstacles to the mission, but opportunities to develop relevant, embodied strategies that are sensitive to human issues. Contextualization thus appears to be an indispensable missiological requirement, making it possible to combine doctrinal fidelity and cultural relevance.

¹⁸ Van de Poll, "Integral Mission: The Idea and Its Implementation," *Evangelical Missiology* 6, no. 1, 2018.

Ultimately, the integrated approach to mission within the Church of the Nazarene offers a model capable of responding to the spiritual, social, and cultural needs of the twenty-first century. It proposes a way of being church that combines theological depth, practical commitment, and contextual sensitivity. In a changing world, this integral vision appears as an essential framework for discipleship, serving communities, and credibly witnessing to the Kingdom of God. It invites the local churches, leaders, and disciples to pursue an authentic, dynamic, and transformative missionary commitment, in coherence with the vocation received and contemporary challenges.

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Appendix 1

Summary Tables of the Authors and Approaches Studied

1. David Richard: *Missio Dei and Biblical Foundations*. Limitation: underdeveloped social dimension. Contribution: Theological basis for integral mission.
2. Evert Van de Poll: *Latin American Integral Mission*. Limitation: little practical implementation. Contribution: holistic model adapted to the Nazarene context.
3. Rémy Williams Moloby: *Debate of Evangelization vs Social Action*. Limitation: descriptive analysis, no integrative model. Contribution: understanding the internal tensions of French-speaking Protestantism.
4. John Travis/Timothy Tennent: *Contextualization (C1–C6)*. Limit: focus on Islam, not well suited to Mesoamerica. Contribution: Framework for the cultural adaptation of the mission.
5. McTair Wall/Ngarsoulédé: *Ecclesiology and Cultural Tensions*. Limit: specific studies without an overall framework. Contribution: complements on community and contextual dynamics.

Appendix 2

Methodological Parameters

1. *Theological*: Identify biblical and Wesleyan foundations. Method: thematic and content analysis. Sources: biblical texts, doctrinal works.
2. *Practice*: Examine missionary models and discipleship. Method: comparative and documentary analysis. Sources: missionary guides, internal publications.
3. *Contextual*: Identify socio-cultural and religious challenges. Method: contextual qualitative analysis. Sources: sociological studies, regional reports.

Appendix 3

Synthetic Model of Integral Mission in the Church of the Nazarene

1. *Proclamation*: relational and community evangelization.
2. *Discipleship*: spiritual formation and structured mentoring. 3- Social action: justice, compassion, education, health.
3. *Contextualization*: cultural, social and pastoral adaptation.
4. *Theological Foundation*: *Missio Dei* and integrated Wesleyan holiness.

Appendix 4

Contextual Challenges in Mesoamerica

1. Socio-cultural: religious pluralism, syncretism, ethnic tensions. 2- Socio-economic: poverty, migration, vulnerability of young people.
2. Religious: ecclesial fragmentation, neo-Pentecostalism, secularization.

Appendix 5

Main period and sources

1. Period covered: 1998-2018.
2. Sources: French and English literature, institutional documents of the Church of the Nazarene, biblical texts.