

Internationalization and Ethnicity: Nazarene problems and Accomplishments

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Let's begin by considering Nazarene accomplishments. They are much larger than our public relations experts imagine. Only the Roman Catholic Church had done better, and it has been working on internationalization for a thousand years or so. We are probably the equal of the Anglican Church, which became international by spreading among the far-flung British colonies and by remaining in place everywhere when those colonies were nationalized.

When it dawned upon us that by making mission districts hope eventually to become regular districts we were in fact establishing an international community of Nazarene, the decision, slowly arrived at but at last firmly made, was that we were to become not a worldwide alliance of national churches but an international fellowship of related districts. Each one of these, at least outside South Africa, would include members of several different people, in our language, refers roughly to an ethnic group, a nationality to a common citizenship. Since most European language use the same word for both, it is confusing for those who do not speak English to understand distinctions between the two. But modern life, in Nigeria, Natal and Indonesia as much as in Florida, has made the distinction increasingly clear.

Moreover, ethnic groups do not stem simply from linguistic unity. This has always been obvious to Nazarenes. Our earliest missionaries to Guatemala found that the most educated Kekchi Indians in Central America spoke Spanish. We knew that whites and Blacks in the United States, who have been sharply segregated, speak the same language. And we soon learned that in their homelands as well as in cities like New York and Miami, Caribbean Blacks who spoke English and who identified themselves as Guyanese, Jamaicans, or Barbadians not only adhered to several ethnic groups but have had almost no associations with Spanish-speaking Cubans or with Haitians, whose language is Creole French.

In recent years, we have begun more actively to organize evangelism on an ethnic basis in the great cities of the world, while at the same time keeping our commitment to erecting a worldwide fellowship of denominational districts. The two programs sometimes diverge, however; ethnic groups naturally seek in their own, unrelated to geography. So the problem of keeping our long-term goal clear is a large one.

But consider what the Nazarene accomplishments have been amidst these great complexities, both overseas and in the United States. J. Fred Parker's recent fine history, *Into All the World: The Story of Nazarene Missions Through 1980*, is a splendid reconstruction of events. Overseas, we have established multi-ethnic districts, even when historical events have brought together different ethnic groups who spoke the same language. Possibly the European district is most obvious to us, because they are spread from Italy to Finland and from the Netherlands to the easternmost parts of Austria, and represent not only a variety of nationalities and people but of languages as well. IN the Far East; by contrast, only Koreans inhabited Korea and Japanese, Japan; so ethnic districts quite naturally emerged there.

The different peoples who make up the population of China, however, resulted in real ethnic integration in our missions there, partly because Americans were never able to understand that a citizen of China might be Mongolian, Taiwanese, Cantonese, or a member of one of several other groups. Each one of these spoke a different dialect--so different that the several people often could not understand one another, though the educated classes in northern China learned to speak Mandarin and southerners to speak Cantonese. In Hong Kong, recently, and in the Chinese settlements of such great south Asian cities as Singapore and Jakarta, a sort of "Chinese melting pot" has made all these into one people, making true what Americans had earlier imagined to be true. The same thing has happened in Taiwan, in part because our ministry to the refugees from mainland China, who had been Nazarene before the revolution, took precedence, but also because we could not close our eyes to either the Chinese or the aboriginal population there. Similarly, in the Philippine islands, we have discovered the people divided between Christians and Moslems and among numerous ethnic (we Westerners call them, incorrectly, "tribal") groups of both. The population of great cities like Manila, however, had generally coalesced into Christian or Moslem communities and speak Tagalog, the official language of the nation.

In India, our three original missions, one from Bresee's early Nazarenes in California, one from the Holiness Church of Christ in Texas, and another from New England's Pentecostal Association, gained converts from people who were disparate ethnic all religious backgrounds and divided further by being members of different castes. The population of South India which had much deeper and longer Experience both with British missionaries and with the ancient Christian "Church of Mar Toma" (St. Thomas), present several other ethnic elements, of course. Moreover, in parts of India, particularly in the Northeast, culturally backward ethnic groups existed that were quite different from any these. Their recent conversion as masses, under other evangelical auspices, produced the theory of homogenous conversion which had been such a large part of recent thinking about evangelism. It has been mediated to Nazarenes through our reception, and sometimes our distortion, of Dr. Peter Wagner's ideas. The task of making the Indian converts one community, however, remains. We must encourage them gradually to exchange their differing historic ethnicities for what is essentially a new one--that of Nazarene peoplehood.

In the so-called Latin world, south of the United States, the fact that our missionaries spoke English caused them to pay early attention to Jamaica, Barbados, British Honduras, British Guyana, and, lately, to Antigua and the Virgin Islands. There missionaries did not have to learn a new language before they began to win converts. When Guyana became independent, however, it turned out to have three languages. British Honduras (now Belize) was Indian rural populations of Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Honduras. The early beginnings of our missions to Mexico and Guatemala, however, pointed toward the expansion of Spanish - speaking work throughout Latin America. In Argentina and Brazil, the urban residents comprised a kaleidoscope of what once were different European ethnic groups, much like those in the United States or Canada, except that the dominant one was in one case Spanish and in the other Portuguese. Our missions these countries, therefore, have become multi-ethnic in their outreach. Their real aim, however, has been to create new social communities whose members would be loyal Argentines or Brazilians and at the same time part of a worldwide fellowship called the Church of the Nazarene, in which different of race, nationality and skin color did not matter.

Although the denomination's outreach to Guatemala and Peru began with Spanish-speaking peoples in mind, William Sadat, C.H. Wyans and other Nazarene missionaries moved far inland to establish what have become immensely successful missions among the Indians of those countries. The result has been several multi-ethnic districts, most of their members being Indian, though the chief language of the ones serving Lima and Guatemala City is Spanish.

The urbanization of Mexico was proceeding so rapidly at the time of our arrival in the great rural southern provinces that our missionaries were torn between ministering in outlying regions and evangelizing the Indians who had moved to the cities and were learning Spanish. The General Assembly of 1920 created one district under Dr. Vincent G. Santin, a prominent physician in Mexico City and formerly a Methodist pastor. It was later divided into several, those in the south being comprised of a large company of poor people, mostly Indians or persons of mixed ethnicity. The pastors trained in Dr. Santin's Nazarene Theological Seminary, many of whom were university graduates, were able to persuade some better-off families of predominantly Spanish background to join us.

Being a church oriented toward the poor was especially difficult in Mexico, therefore. Not only did missionaries feel more at home with the well-educated elite, but Dr. Santin set high standards for national pastors also. How well we have managed to maintain our loyalty to the commitment of both John Wesley and Phineas Bresee to evangelizing the poor is evident when one compares or works with that of the Methodists in Mexico and other parts of Latin America. The latter arrives in significant numbers in that region only a few decades before the holiness churches began to send missionaries there. By then, however, Methodists did not think of themselves as either holiness people or a church of the poor. So the doctrine of entire sanctification, a recent scholarship informs us, has been almost unknown in Latin lands, and a "liberation theology" has matured without much reference to the perfectionist ideals of John Wesley. At the conference of the Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies, held seven years ago, the theme was "Sanctification and Liberation." The Latin American Methodists proved to be interested in liberation, but only mildly in sanctification; the North Americans, being burdened by their middle class mentality, were more interested in sanctification (though it was a bit of a novelty even to them) and very suspicious of liberation. Persons from Africa and Asia were interested in both and, at least in my view of things, the Britishers took no deep interest in either.

Nazarene Spanish and Indian-speaking districts of Central America and the Caribbean have enjoyed explosive growth in recent years. Part of it stems from the phenomenal success of the principles of indigenization in Mexico, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic, part from the accession of an independent holiness body from Puerto Rico, whose population seems bent upon making New York City as well as San Juan their metropolis, and as even larger part from the growth of the French-speaking districts in Haiti. True, linguistic differences have nurtured an English, a Spanish, a French, and several varieties of Indian group consciousness, along with fervent loyalty to the new Nazarene ethnicity. Various administrative ties anchor all of them to Kansas City and, more recently, to the regional director and regional office through which most Kansas City officials communicate with them. But there is no doubt that the immense growth in all of these countries owes much to rapid indigenization. The district superintendents all represent their own peoples, and missionaries have accustomed

themselves very well to serving chiefly as advisors, as channels of funds for new buildings, and as educators.

Turning to Africa, the story is, of course, altered by our long acquiescence in racial discrimination everywhere and in the policy of apartheid imposed upon the Union of South Africa by the white minority, chiefly by Afrikaners (formerly Dutch, or Boers) but also by British colonist. This did not create great problem at first, of course, because our original mission, under Harmon Schmelzenbaugh, was to Swaziland, a rural country almost totally filled with native Zulus, whom Great Britain ruled through their African king.

An independent holiness mission, preaching to thousands of male villagers attracted to work under eighteen-month labor contracts in the great underground gold mines near Johannesburg, united with ours in 1920. Shangaan converts there had taken the gospel back to their home villages in Mozambique (until 1974, "Portuguese East Africa") three hundred miles east. They organized a string of indigenous congregations there. The union thus enlarged our ministry to include a second Black ethnic group, and one in which, unlike the Zulus who remained in Swaziland, migration had magnified ethnic consciousness. Harmon Schmelzenbaugh had in fact already sent Louise Robinson and Rev. and Mrs. A. H. Shirley one hundred twenty-five miles north of Swaziland to the great but short-lived gold mining town of Sabie, in the eastern part of the Transvaal. There had gathered both Shangaans from Mozambique and Bantus from the nearby villages--a hundred thousand strong. They developed through their many converts a similar ministry to home villages, and brought yet a third Black ethnic group, the Bantus, into the Nazarene circle of concern.

After World War II, General Superintendent Hardy C. Powers helped us see the vision of evangelizing the so-called "colored" population of the Union of South Africa--that is, those who were of mixed race and were on that account isolated from both Blacks and whites. And he acted to fulfill the long desire of the missionaries that we begin ministering to the Caucasian population as well. We found among the Afrikaners a character group who were heirs of Andre Murray's ministry among them a hundred years ago. Moreover, many of the English-speaking white population had long been under the influence of the Keswick movement, the Methodists, or the Salvation Army. Not until the 1960's, however, did we undertake to evangelize the great mass of migrants from India, who had first concentrated in the city of Durban, capital of Natal, then spread out through the Union.

The South African Nazarene enterprise thus became, willy-nilly, a model for the kind of ethnically conscious urban ministry we are all now trying to set in motion in cities all over the globe. Legal segregation of the races suppressed somewhat the dawning consciousness of Nazarene people--villages enhanced evangelism in homelands both near and far away, offering the entire denomination an example we might be inclined to ignore. Both the ethnic feelings of migrant peoples and laws dictating apartheid caused them to develop cadres of preachers and to organize districts, camp meetings, and bible colleges on an ethnic rather than a geographical basis. On that account we now face criticism from those who most actively opposed apartheid, many of whom do not understand that tactical and, we have always hoped, temporary necessity of our compromises with it.

In the rest of Africa, our ministries and districts have often turned out to be more ethnic than geographical, simply because the principles of indigenous evangelism which Dr. Peter Wagner and others discovered in the evangelization of certain tribes in India were at work among missionaries and peoples who knew nothing about them. Though Nazarenes and other holiness groups established missions in Nigeria, Kenya, or Mocambique that they thought would minister to the whole nation, they prospered among some peoples and made almost no headway among others. In consequence, the denomination sometimes became identified with the fortunes of one of several ethnic groups in a given nation. However, the ideas with which the missionaries came, the facts of rapid migration to the cities, and, more recently, the ideology of internationalization encouraged Nazarenes to think multi-ethnically. Throughout Africa, the denomination now presses steadily toward a ministry and an ecclesiastical polity that asks peoples of all backgrounds to consider themselves one in Christ.

The missions in Mocambique slowly developed ties with our other Portuguese-speaking missions in the Cape Verds Island and Brazil. Missionaries training to work in those countries often spent some time in Lisbon, Portugal, in order to learn the language and something of the culture of the governing classes in all three. The mission to the Cape Verde Islands had originated in 1901 when John J. Diaz, a Cape Verdean youth who had joined the great migration to southeastern Massachusetts, was converted as sanctified in People's Church, Providence, Rhode Island, and sent back to his own land. He ministered their almost in isolation for twenty years. Brazil, of course, contained, like Argentina, a multitude of ethnic groups. But because its origin and official tongue was Portuguese, we have concentrated upon those who spoke that language.

In all three cases, however, migration from rural to urban areas—that is, from the Mocambique hinterland to Johannesburg, from isolated Cape Verde settlements to Brava and thence to New Bedford and Brockton, and from the Brazilian countryside to the barrios of that country's great cities—was a crucial aspect of the story. Shared language made it easier for the denomination to evangelize these widely-separated ethnic groups and to publish *The Herald of Holiness* and broadcast "Shower of Blessing" in their tongue. But the real shift of ethnic feelings was not toward Portuguese but Nazarene peoplehood.

All this leads to a major conclusion, namely, that conversion during their migration to the city produced in the early years enlarged dependence upon the associations, language, and cultural background common to each ethnic group. At the same time, however, it gave each people a new set of both religious and economic goals that made them part of a larger community. The Wesleyan and Nazarenes instincts was to seek out poorer people from each uprooted group and help them find a salvation that brought them both eternal and temporal hope. The renewal of personal moral standards was a key to the kingdom, both in heaven and on earth. In every great city we entered, therefore, we soon realized that we were ministering to poorer migrants who believe God would give them the best of both worlds.

Against this background, let us consider in the second part of this paper the rise of ethnically oriented ministries in the United States and Canada. Migration to the United States from overseas peoples among whom our missionaries had labored has yielded a small number of families in every great city whose old world had already been changed before they came to America. Their move to "the land of promise" was in some cases inspired and in all cases

made easier by their evangelization and their acceptance of a new Nazarene identity. Their arrival, however, found them in great need of the same social, linguistic and cultural supports from their traditional ethnic groups as all immigrants have relied upon. To thoughtless persons in the new land they often seemed to look only backward. In their own eyes, however, their decision to leave their homeland brothers and sisters and migrate to the New World was forward-looking. Those who sought and found support along the way from their Nazarene friends demonstrated rapid acceptance of a new ethnic identity, which did not depend upon their language, color, or cultural background.

We now have a considerable body of scholarship, some of which I and my students have worked out, showing the relationships of religion to immigrant ethnicity. I summarized it in a Bicentennial Address to the American Historical Association in 1975 and printed it in *The American Historical Review* for April, 1978. If I am correct in that address, and if my student who taught me so much of what I know about the subject are correct (Josef Barton, now Professor of History at Northwestern, John Briggs, now Professor of History and Education at Syracuse, Mark Stolarik, now director of the Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies in Philadelphia, William Galush, now Professor of History at Loyola, Chicago, Paula Benkart, an independent scholar in Madison, Wisconsin, and Fredrick Hale, a prolific writers on Scandinavian evangelical movements), the following propositions usually describe the religious experience of ethnic minorities:

1. Their migration was often preceded by some kind of religious awakening in their largely rural homelands.
2. Only a small minority actually chose to leave of the cities, and it included persons with great ambition for a better economic and educational opportunity for themselves and their children.
3. The choice of American cities over homeland ones was made by only a portion of the vast number who left rural for urban centers.
4. The act of migration, whether to homeland or to American cities, was in fact a theologizing experience. Those who moved had to think about God's relationship to the whole world, and not just to their homeland; and their sense of God's care for them intensified as individuals tore themselves loose from the rural villages that once had nurtured them.
5. Migration to foreign lands created an international outlook. The acceptance of a new allegiance to America was in the long run less significant than the dawning awareness of their unity with the entire human race. Christians, called in a special sense to be the children of God, defined their peoplehood by a religious commitments that reached out to include the whole world.
6. In both the process of abandoning their old culture and becoming Americans, as well as in becoming a part of the larger community of evangelical Christians, the immigrants relied much more on the Bible than on traditions--even Nazarene ones--as the source of religious authority.
7. For all immigrants, including the Nazarene ones, economic aspirations, judge against their earlier privations, were rapidly fulfilled. This phenomenon their brothers and sisters who had chosen homeland instead of American cities also experienced. As a result, Wesleyan people became in the space of a generation or two so well off that their affluence undermined the disciplines their religious teachers treasured.

In the light of these general propositions, let us look at the relatively short experience of Nazarene in Canada and the United States with ethnic ministry. This experience, by comparison with that of other denominations, is more successful than we generally understand. Keep in mind, however, the peculiarities of each ethnic group in American and try to identify the challenges and opportunities facing us in each.

Our long ministry to Mexican-Americans, concentrated especially in Southern California and nearby southwestern states, sheds much light on both our achievements and the reasons for our numerous mistakes. Here, of course, one group of Spanish-speaking people were the old settlers, having migrated there three hundred years or more before any white Protestants arrived in the Rio Grande, Gila, and Colorado river valleys or on the coastal plains. They were sharp rivals of the old native American (what we once called "Indian") population, long before that population was swollen by the arrival of eastern and so-called Plains Indians in Oklahoma and along the foothills of the Rockies.

In the twentieth century the situation of these Hispanic and Native American residents of the Southwest was immeasurably complicated by mass immigration of peasants from Mexico to the irrigated farms of the Imperial and Central valleys of California and to southern Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. The flood of newcomers spilled over the barrier erected by American immigration law. What are ungraciously called "undocumented persons," that is, illegal immigrants, have been in recent decades the majority.

In the early years both Bresee's movement in Southern California and the Holiness Church of Christ in Texas began missions to Mexican-Americans in the United States. Numerous small congregations appeared. In recent decades, the Los Angeles, Southern California, Arizona, New Mexico, and San Antonio districts added many new Mexican-American congregations, though they never gave this task the enthusiasm or the personnel that it deserved.

Meanwhile, the growth of our congregations in Mexico yielded a growing number of immigrants who had assumed a Nazarene identity before they moved across the border. They gave new vigor to our work among Mexican-Americans and helped prompt the organization of separate districts to serve them, located in the same geographical areas as those serving the non-Mexican population. The problems of establishing an educational institution to provide ministers for these districts and the difficulties of attracting Mexican-American students to the existing denominational colleges have proven almost insurmountable. This, along with the agitation in secular politics of what Cesar Chaves calls "La Causa," has made our church leaders aware that ethnic loyalties affect every effort our denomination make to win the Hispanic-Americans to Christ.

In the last few years, the rapid growth of our Mexican districts, and in general of our Spanish-speaking work throughout Central America, has made all of us aware of the connections between what were once thought of chiefly as foreign missions and the immense challenge of evangelizing the rapidly multiplying Spanish-speaking population in the southwestern states. Throughout the region, we are in danger of becoming simply another middle-class church, ministering to the wealthiest portion of that population. But the ideal of ministry to the poor, in which not only our church but the church of Christ and the apostles began, demands renewed thought and commitment. And the ideal of a worldwide Christian peoplehood bids

every congregation in the region, no matter what its principal ethnic identity has become, to open its doors wide to persons of every race and nationality.

The task of that rethinking would be easier if we consider the close intertwining of our home and foreign missions to the Chinese people. Bresee's Los Angeles congregation founded a Chinese mission in Pasadena and another in Los Angeles. Women faculty members of the institution that was ancestor to Point Loma College were active in supporting them. Their concern of Chinese immigrants prompted a company of these women to leave the college and open the first Nazarene mission in China itself. Though the evangelization of the Chinese in America suffered a bit from what Bresee thought was their ill-considered action, the outcome was a Nazarene attitude toward orientals that was far more Christian than the general discrimination against them that characterized early twentieth-century California. In retrospect, it might have been wiser for us to have invested just as fully in so-called "home" as in "foreign" missions to the Chinese people, and relied more upon the converts of each eventually to become leaders of other. This is, in fact, exactly what was done a decade later in our evangelization of the Japanese in California, as the story of Hiroshi Kitagawa illustrates.

By comparison, the ministry to Hispanics, Chinese, and Japanese offered no different challenges and opportunities than those which our church faced in dealing with English, Scottish, and Irish Protestant immigrants to the United States and Canada.