

# Internationalization in the Church of the Nazarene–

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## Introduction

First of all let me congratulate the ANSR organization for choosing to devote this meeting to the topic of internationalization of the church. Perhaps no other topic is as pertinent or essential in the organizational life of the church today as this one. It is also good sociology, as evidenced by Carla Howery's article "Researching the Church from within," which appeared in the December, 1986 issue of the American Sociological Associations' *Footnotes*. I can well recall Talcott Parson's fascination with the study of the organization of the church as well.

The relevance of this topic was highlighted for me recently by several factors:

1. One is our shrinking-planet. From their Florida lift off, astronauts fly over Africa within nineteen minutes. Last week it took only seventeen seconds until the phone was ringing in Siteki, Swaziland. Further, I direct-dialed the number using the same number of digits to Swaziland as to St. Louis! Our world is becoming a global village.
2. A second factor indicating the importance of this topic was the prolonged discussion at the 1985 General Assembly on the use of the King James Version. Several delegates from world areas mentioned that they did not even have a "King James Version" of the Scriptures in their language and wondered why they needed to be involved in such a debate in a world assembly.
3. A third stimulus toward this topic occurred as I participated in the meeting of the internationalization Commission last February. I was impressed that we are at a very important point in the development of our world-wide church structure. Should we maintain the present structure intact or should there be greater centralization, or greater regionalization?

All of these factors together, as well as others, indicate that this is a very vital and necessary topic. Further, I have discovered that little concrete research seems to have been done in this area. Hence, this conference, and the papers that will be presented here, should be of great importance in providing background information for the church. The subsequent policies that emerge may have important historic ramifications in the life of the church. If you would allow me to paraphrase Lincoln, "The church may little note, nor remember what we say here, but may never forget what we do here."

## Where Are We Coming From

Two concepts that were important precursors to the principle of internationalization in the Church of the Nazarene are:

1. The planting of Indigenous churches
2. The "provision of steps to regular district status," whereby an overseas district could become a full district, with the same privileges and responsibilities as a home district.

Without these two concepts, it is unlikely that "internationalization" would have arisen in the Church.<sup>(1)</sup>

It is of some interest then, for our purposes here, to trace the development of these two concepts in order to understand where we are coming from.

## The Concept of the Indigenous Church

The early leaders of our church understood the importance of mission. Even before union at Pilot Point, missionaries had been sent to Cape Verde, Japan, Guatemala, India, and China by the groups that eventually would come together to form the Church of the Nazarene. These Spirit-filled people were propelled to the proclamation of the Gospel and understood mission to be a very central aspect of the Church. This much we have known. In my research, however, I have discovered something more surprising than their missionary activity. I have discovered that even in the formative days of our church, points of view were expressed and policy statements made that have led us directly to the Internationalization theme of the denomination today. The first of these important statements is the concept of planting indigenous churches, populated by indigenous peoples.

By "indigenous peoples" we mean: "persons who are born in, reared in and inhabit a specific country."<sup>(2)</sup> The Church of the Nazarene from its earliest days was apparently aware of the principle of indigenization. Further, there is evidence that there was an attempt from the first for governmental structure of the church overseas to involve indigenous citizens as well as missionaries in one body.

In the earliest period (1908-1919) there were apparently separate policies issued for each field. The first extant policy of any kind in the Nazarene archives is typed on General Missionary Board stationery under the name of Dr H.F. Reynolds as General Missionary Secretary and is dated March 3, 1914. It is entitled, *The Policy of the General Missionary Board of the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene to Govern the Work in Japan*. This document gives the lie to any claim that the concepts of indigent and self-support are only recent phenomena. This 1914 policy, in a section entitled *Self Supporting and Self Governing Churches*, states:

When a Mission Church reaches a place where it can become entirely self supporting it shall be organized by the District Missionary Superintendent (SIC) into a self supporting body according to the manual of the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene adapted to the needs peculiar to the country, and shall be governed by the same. The church shall be granted a pastor whose duties and privileges (SIC) shall conform to the manual; and at this time all missionary control shall be relinquished except such superintendency as provided for in the manual.<sup>(3)</sup>

It is apparent then, that even in this earliest period of the infant church, there was provision made for self-supporting and self-governing churches. Additionally, in the last sentence of the quotation we find the harbinger of the concept of "regular district" status.

The first general policy statement for use on all fields extant in the archives is the *Policy of the General Missionary Board of the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene to Govern Its Work in the Foreign Fields*.<sup>(4)</sup> It is modeled after the 1914 policy which was apparently used on several fields.

The 1919 policy indicates that in the earliest period of the church governmental responsibilities were in fact shared by both missionaries and citizens. However, the final sentence quoted above in the 1914 version, stating that "all missionary control shall be relinquished," was excised from the 1919 version. In the place of that sentence were these words: "The pastor and delegates from the self-supporting church to the District Assembly must be able to enter into the deliberations of the Assembly in the English language until such time as a self-supporting district may be formed."<sup>(5)</sup>

A further major revision of the policy took place in 1922. A lengthy "Preamble" is added. The word indigenous" is used for the first time and the document states that "the planting of indigenous churches and districts...is our general aim and is believed will be the logical outcome of our work if directed by the Holy Ghost."<sup>(6)</sup> However, in actual fact this policy sets up a council of missionaries "instead of a District Assembly composed of both foreigners and Natives."<sup>(7)</sup> It was explained that "The Mission Council shall perform...the functions of a District Assembly until a regular district shall be organized..."<sup>(8)</sup>

It is interesting to note that the authors of this document were not only cognizant of the concept of indigenization but were sensitive enough to the problems of discriminatory language to include the following "apologetic":

we believe it is wise to use the term :Mexican" for the people of Mexico, "Japanese" for the people of Japan, "Indian" for the people of India, etc., rather than the term "Native" seems to be the most convenient. We would like it clearly understood, however, that its use carries in our minds no thought of inferiority. It is simply a term of convenience.<sup>(9)</sup>

Further, the authors state that "the pronoun "he" may mean persons of both sexes." In what was then an age of rampant colonialism, it seems that the early leaders of the Church of the Nazarene were somewhat more sensitive to the use of invidious terms than many anthropologists of the period!<sup>(10)</sup>

This concern for the development of the indigenous church is repeated in subsequent policies issued by the church. By 1932, these policy statements had been broadened to full "three-self" language, with the instruction to missionaries to cultivate among local Christians "...self support, self leadership and responsibility for the propagation of the gospel in that field."<sup>(11)</sup> That language was unchanged for the next twenty years, and has remained essentially intact until the present time.

The concept of indigenization then, far from being a "modern" innovation in church policy, actually has been part of the enunciated mission goals, although imperfectly carried out, since the earliest days of the Church of the Nazarene.

## Steps to Regular District Status

The other conceptual stream that eventuated in our "internationalization" policy was the provision whereby overseas churches could be formed into a regular district.

We have already seen the seeds of this idea in the 1914 policy. The concept of regular district status was written into official policy, as early as 1922 as follows:

(This policy) is intended chiefly for the government of the work of the mission in its high purpose until regular churches and districts may be formed. The churches and districts will then be governed by the *Manual* of the Church of the Nazarene.<sup>(12)</sup>

By 1937, the policy was formulated in these words:

In the event a missionary district desires to become wholly self supporting and to assume the relation to the general church of a regular assembly district. It shall through its constituted authorities appeal to the General Board for such organization. When a district is thus constituted, it shall be governed in all respects only by the provisions of the *Manual*.<sup>(13)</sup>

Although the above language, with the additional proviso of "a record of stable self-government," remained virtually intact for nearly thirty years, it was not until 1966 that the actual steps to be followed to achieve regular district status were spelled out. The idea of concept of regular district had been around since the early period of the church, but now real provisions were being made for implementation. This was therefore and extremely important move.

The ostensible sponsor of this 1965-66 plan of concrete "steps" to regular district status was the then head of World Mission, Dr E. S. Phillips. But I have discovered in my research for this paper that the real architects were three men, two of whom worked outside the Department of World Mission. These three men are: Franklin Cook, Paul Orjala, and Honorato Reza. I'm not sure what to call them: The Three Wise Men, The Three that were greater than the Thirty or (Shades of Mao) the Gang of Three! Reza represented the Latin Church and a non-U.S. viewpoint, Orjala was an experienced missionary and mission theoretician. Cook had been raised in India and was a staff member of World Mission- he served as broker between this "braintrust" and the World Mission Division.

Dr E. S. Phillips had received some training in psychology, and was one of the first non-directional executives in World Mission. He was able and willing to delegate, and he often have this informal "committee" a task. He would meet with the groups later when the committee had formulated a recommendation.

It was Franklin Cook, coming into the World Mission office as staff member in 1961, who kept nudging Dr. Phillips to issue a separate national church policy, (separate from the missionary policy) which could be placed directly in the hands of the District Superintendents.<sup>(14)</sup> The year 1965-66, was the watershed year for this change, which was worked out by Dr. Phillips with this "Committee of Three." In the Appendix you will find photocopies of the 1965 and 1966 policies governing the national church. In 1965 it was billed as a sort of sub-title of the

*Missionary Policy*. But note that in 1966 it stands in its own right as the *National Church Policy*. This signifies more than a change in thinking at Headquarters that was largely promulgated by the "Committee of Three."

The importance of this change in policy cannot be easily over-estimated.<sup>(15)</sup> For the first time a uniform policy of clear steps was spelled out whereby a district could become a regular district.<sup>(16)</sup> And, of course, the district quickly responded. Northeast Guatemala became the first regular district (outside of the U.S. and British Isles) in 1974.

Since that time, the number of regular districts (24) and participation of world areas in General meetings of the Church have all increased dramatically, leading us to what we call "internationalization."

## **Internationalization**

Thus far we have seen that it was the concept of indigenization that led to the formation of "stages of district development" that in turn has led naturally to what is termed "internationalization." As Paul Orjala has put it, "once the goal of building indigenous churches was established in the policy, (as it early was) this inevitably led us toward internationalization."<sup>(17)</sup>

This whole process has been helped along by other circumstances, both within and without the Church. In the 1928 General Assembly it was voted that General Superintendents take jurisdiction overseas as at home. This provided more impetus to internationalization, in as much as the overseas areas would no longer just belong to the "missionary arm" of the church itself.

The collapse of colonialism and World War II were external forces which pointed to the need to internationalize. The rapid growth and expansion of missionary force and territory in the post-World War II era, gave further emphasis toward internationalization. This trend was enhanced by the twin factors of a shrinking world and emergent nationalism. As governments became independent, there was a natural bent toward self-government in the Church as well. Nazarene lay persons in the U.S.A. began to get involved in such overseas ministries as the Student Mission Corps, International Student Ministries and Work and Witness teams. We were on our way to becoming an "international church."

This general trend was accentuated in 1972. After the General Assembly in Miami, denominational leaders met directly with the District Superintendents and other leaders of the overseas areas, with no missionaries present. This was eloquent testimony that the central church planned to carry through with direct linkage to the world areas.

This milestone was further reinforced at the 1976 General Assembly in Dallas which called for the appointment of an Internationalization Commission. the Commission saw its work... "to set forth broad principles and objectives toward internationalization of the Church of the Nazarene."<sup>(18)</sup> The third internationalization Commission was established at Anaheim in 1985. It will hold its second meeting in just a few weeks, here in Kansas City.

## What Does it Mean to be an International Church?

We are still learning what "internationalization" really means. Our need to learn is evident when we realize that six out of every hundred Nazarenes in a Haitian, and that one out of every twenty-five Nazarenes is now a Korean. At the close of 1986, 278,754 members of the Church of the Nazarene were located outside of the U.S.A.; 530,912 were Americans. It is estimated, at the current rates of church growth, that by 1995 there will be more Nazarenes outside than inside the U.S.A. We are rapidly ceasing to be a church of one nation. What does this mean?

One of the basic meanings of internationalization is *partnership*. The Internationalization Commission puts it this way: (Internationalization is founded upon)... "The biblical principles which reflect the Church of Jesus Christ as a world-wide fellowship of believers in which there exists full acceptance within their cultural contexts."<sup>(19)</sup> Equal opportunity, privileges and authority are part of this partnership. As stated in the *Journal of the Twenty-First General Assembly of the Church of the Nazarene*:

We feel it is imperative that we state again that the final goal of internationalization shall be to involve all world areas of the Church of the Nazarene in the total program of the denomination with rights, privileges, and responsibilities without limitation or stigma because of culture, color, or geographic location.<sup>(20)</sup>

The other key element in what it means to be an "international church" is the distinctive message that binds us together. Herein lies *unity*: "...to spread scriptural holiness which is the key element in a core of non-negotiables."<sup>(21)</sup> (Beliefs not subject to compromise or negotiation). Without the unity afforded by God's call to holiness and to missions, we would not really be the body of Christ in today's world. We choose then, in the midst of what in many cases may be national or international disunity, to focus on the *unity* of the Gospel. *This is the message that ultimately breaks down the walls that separate persons and groups!* This enables us to say to all others in Christ everywhere:

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household...with Christ Jesus himself as the chief Cornerstone. In Him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. (Ephesians 2:19).

In Christ there is no East or West,  
In Him no South or North;  
But one great fellowship of love  
Thro'out the whole wide earth.

The earliest pioneers of the Church of the Nazarene mapped out their work well. They were concerned with indigenous principles and the bringing of overseas districts to regular status in the church to a far greater degree than perhaps anyone has recognized heretofore. As we talk about internationalization in these days together at this conference, we would do well to recall another quote from Lincoln:

It is for us, the living, rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they have, thus far, so nobly carried on.<sup>(22)</sup>

1. Two of the original architects of the policy of "internalization," Paul Orjala and Franklin Cook, agree with this assessment.
2. "Indigenous Peoples," *Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, (New York:, Harper and Row, 1976), p. 215.
3. *The Policy of the General Missionary Board of the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene to Govern the Work in Japa*, March 3, 1914. (Nazarene Archives), p. 6.
4. This document itself is undated but has been determined by the archival staff to have been written in 1919, prior ro the General Assembly of that year.
5. *Policy of the General Missionary Board of the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene To Govern Its Work In Foreign Fields*, 1919 (Nazarene Archives), p. 9. (Draft Copy)
6. *Policy of the General Board of Foreign Missions of the Church of the Nazarene To Govern Its Work In Foreign Fields*, 1922 (Nazarene Archives), p. 1.
7. *Ibid.*, p.2.
8. *Ibid.*, P.2.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
10. Some anthropologists were still using the term "native" in the 1930's
11. *Policy of the General Board of the Church of the Nazarene To Govern Its Work In Foreign Fields*, Kansas City, Missouri, 1932 (Nazarene Archives), p. 14.
12. *Policy of the General Board of Foreign Missions of the Church of the Nazarene to Govern Its Work In the Foreign Fields*, 1922, (Nazarene Archives), p. 1.
13. *Policy of the General Board of the Church of the Nazarene to Govern Its Work In Foreign Mission Fields*, Kansas City, Missouri, 1937, p. 11 (World Mission Files), p. 11.
14. Interview with Franklin Cook, by the author, San Diego, California, July 10, 1986.
15. "This is especially true because our denomination is essentially a denomination of districts, not national blocks." Paul R. Orjala, In an interview with the author, November, 1986, Kansas City.
16. For a copy of the 1966 provisions for the steps to achieve regular district status, see the Appendix. Since 1966 a third step (Mission District) has been inserted between National-Mission and Regular District status, and the steps are now referred to as Phase I-IV.
17. Paul R. Orjala, Interview with the author, November, 1986, Kansas City.
18. Commission on Internationalization, *Journal of the Report of the Twentieth General Assembly of the Church of the Nazarene*, (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1981), p. 232.
19. *Ibid.*
20. Commission on Internationalization, *Journal of the Twenty-First General Assembly of the Church of the Nazarene*, (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1985), p. 351.
21. Commission on Internationalization, *op. cit.*, p. 232.
22. Abraham Lincoln, *Gettysburg Address*.