Nurturing a Prophetic Imagination:
Missiology as Ecclesiology

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Introduction

In late 1895 one of the first churches of what was to become the Church of the Nazarene grew under the leadership of Rev. Phineas F. Bresee. What made the church distinct from most other evangelical denominations was its emphasis on holiness and its ministry "among the poor." In fact, to be Nazarene at that time often meant that one belonged to the lower socio-economic groups in the United States. People were actively engaged across class lines, and the churches could be thought of as centers of social transformation, albeit a social transformation that was thought to start from the inside out.[1]

The language of "social transformation" as we understand it today would not have been on the lips of most early Nazarenes, but there was a deep passion for holiness of heart and life. Early Nazarenes prioritized discipleship that focused on reconciliation with God and with one another as relational, a concern for teaching all to love God and one another as the highest calling, a calling reflected in the language of a "call to holiness." Nazarenes have a long history of thinking of all transformation being from the inside out, beginning with the transformation of each individual heart and the formation of congregations composed of members with such transformed hearts. This call to holiness was principally and primarily a call to individual piety, a piety that in the aggregate would lead to profound social change. However, evidence of deep ecclesial reflection on the relationship between holiness and a concern for justice and an economics of common stewardship is all but absent.

A Theological Interpretation of Nazarene Institutional Development

Perhaps the two most important institutional commitments of the denomination from its earliest years that express holiness as personal piety have been international mission(s)[2] work and institutions of higher education. Many of the churches that joined the denomination already had international mission(s) work of their own; these institutions became Nazarene as their sponsoring bodies joined the young denomination. Early on Nazarenes saw their educational institutions not just as theological training grounds for pastors and Sunday school teachers, but as a means to a better life for those who would attend. Because of this, many of the Nazarene colleges were started in the early nineteen hundreds.

The priority on providing education for poorer families slowly began to change the demographics of Nazarene membership. As secondary education became more important, members of the Church of the Nazarene became more upwardly mobile. Nazarene liberal arts colleges were educating their young men and women and giving them important skills for the workplace. They were prosperous in their endeavors, and their bank accounts were beginning to show it. As with many of their protestant counterparts, Nazarenes who moved up the socio-economic ladder began to disassociate themselves from poorer communities, particularly in the United States. This process of "un-identifying" with poor people made it likely that the young Nazarene denominational infrastructure would support this gentrification.[3]

Alongside this gentrification, subsequent Nazarene assembly gatherings had to deal with a growing number of mission(s) and educational institutions that were being grafted onto the vine of the early denomination by deciding how to prioritize the increasing resources. In the past, every special group in the denomination solicited money individually from churches. There were orphanages, medical work in Swaziland, mission(s) in India, prison ministries, colleges, a seminary, etc., all of which needed resources to survive. As these institutions grew in number, fundraising became overwhelming for local congregations. Every other Sunday they were taking a special offering for some ministry or another.[4]

In the first two decades of the denomination's life it was decided to create a more efficient system of managing resources, and the church established what they called the "General Budget." A percentage of funds raised on the local level would go to the denomination's headquarters to be managed there and distributed to the various ministries. This released local churches to focus on care for the local members while not ignoring the work of the church elsewhere in the world. It also helped to lessen the potential for the fragmentation of attention and resources to frequent special offerings. In the consolidation of resources, special categories and priorities were made for educational institutions (particularly those in the United States) and the growth of "foreign missions."

The priority in developing educational institutions and "foreign missions" was not a top-down strategy of a centralized bureaucracy but bubbled up from the priorities of particular churches, districts, and regions. The regional growth and support of eight institutions of higher learning in the United States are evidence of the high priority the young denomination gave to this endeavor. As we learned from Stan Ingersol in private communication, "foreign missions" emerged as a priority over other ministries because of the Women's Missionary Society—a very democratic movement within the church.[5] By 1932, the membership of the WMS was greater than a third of the denomination's entire membership (or in other words, one in three Nazarenes was a WMS member).

All these changes were occurring in the context of larger changes in Protestantism in the United States. In 1917 Walter Rauschenbusch, a minister in Hell's Kitchen in New York City, published *A Theology for the Social Gospel* in which he defined the mission of the Church as social transformation. He felt the Church should address the dismal conditions of the working class in industrialized cities.[6] In reaction to what they didn't like in the "social gospel," Nazarenes enthusiastically participated in what Timothy Smith has called "The Great Reversal,"[7] in which evangelical churches emphasized the call to personal transformation while main line churches[8] emphasized the call to social transformation, each often to the exclusion of the other.[9]

Nazarenes in the middle of the 20th century found themselves resisting Rauschenbusch and more concerned about the life to come than the here and now. Nazarenes focused almost exclusively on evangelism as conversion of the individual soul. Increasing emphasis was given to "Church Growth."

Districts were beginning to hold churches and mission(s) accountable for growth in conversions, membership, and budgets[10] at the expense of other types of measurements of "success."

With the growth of the General Budget and the institutional mechanisms to manage this budget (i.e. the programs managed under the name of Nazarene Headquarters), the type of ministries Nazarenes eventually would call Compassionate Ministries became less of a focus as other priorities like education and mission(s) took precedence. Social concerns that churches continued to address at a local level (e.g. homelessness and hunger in local neighborhoods) remained without significant denominational attention while we endeavored to "save" the world one soul at a time. It would take until 1984 for the denomination to create a special department for the management of resources related to social transformation, Nazarene Compassionate Ministries (NCM).[11]

While the creation of NCM signaled an important shift in the church's attention to social concerns, it has also raised deeper ecclesiological questions with regard to institutional development. The church's creation of NCM is more consistent with a general trend in the professionalization of ministries (modeling corporations and other non-profits and para-church structures and organizations) than it is reflective of the history of the Church's engagement in social affairs.[12] More than a simple step in a generic process of denominationalism and consistent with much of what was happening in local churches in the United States, Nazarene Headquarters consciously modeled itself as an efficient, professional business (albeit a not-for-profit business).

As a business, Headquarters is driven by priorities consistent with what is being called "managerial missions," e.g. involving specialty departments to be run by professional managers (often ordained but increasingly with more managerial education than theological training). It would be inappropriate to argue against efficiencies and professional handling of resources but the "professionalization" of our ecclesiology holds little biblical or theological credibility. There is a great need in the Church of the Nazarene for deeper reflection on the nature of the Church, a Nazarene ecclesiology. The ecclesiology implicit in Nazarene institutions has been one that starts with the successful salvation of the individual soul, prioritizes the financial independence of each congregation (and district and university, etc.), and creates programs as subdivisions of a professionally managed not-for-profit corporation to govern the use of its common pool of resources.

The dangers inherent in this implicit ecclesiology are many and will be discussed further below, but suffice it for now to show how such dangers are amplified on a global stage as the church tries to move to a truly catholic body from what has been at times a colonial style church managed by the membership in the United States. Today, the Church of the Nazarene is in 150 countries with an estimated 1.6 million members. More than half of the denomination's membership currently resides outside of North America, and that percentage is rapidly expanding. An institutional system of incentives

that primarily rewards individual growth as tied to financial independence makes it difficult to give voice to the majority of the church's members. A primary marker of the right for a district to vote at the general assembly is its ability to support itself financially. Without regard for economy of scale, this makes access to capital (or socio-economic class) a fundamental marker of voting power in the Church of the Nazarene. In this case, class even trumps faithfulness as a determinant of who has voice in the governance of the church. The growing international membership within the church signals the successful numeric growth by the Nazarene mission(s) programs but at the same time now raises fundamental questions about Nazarene ecclesiology.[13]

"Holistic" versus "Managerial" Mission(s): Adventures in Missing the Point

Before further exploration about these fundamental questions of Nazarene ecclesiology it is important to address the specific concerns of the Global Nazarene Missiology conference for which this paper was written. The question we were asked to address concerns the relationship between "managerial missiology" and "holistic missiology." A number of resources exist that offer definitions for these concepts and describe the current debates/dialogue in the theoretical and practical world of missiology.[14] For clarity, we give here a summary of our perspective on these two approaches as they relate to missiological principles and practices for the Church of the Nazarene.

The terms "holistic missiology" and "managerial missiology" were coined within the same ideological camp, that is, by those who prefer the practices and concepts represented under the rubric of "holistic missiology." Because the terms have essentially stuck, anyone who embraces the philosophical principles of "managerial missiology" starts out from a defensive posture. Before embarking on a position, "managerial missiologists" often find it necessary to justify their stance in light of the number of challenges already leveled at their ideas. This is dangerous in that it can render their arguments and ideas impotent without proper consideration.[15]

"Managerial" missiologists have made some important contributions to the Church that are worthy of consideration. Their deep concern for stewardship and the faithful use of God's resources to ensure the good news being spread to the ends of the earth has often brought greater financial accountability among churches and Christian agencies.[16] They have shown a concern for efficiency and effectiveness as it relates to mission(s) practice that has helped mobilize resources in unprecedented ways. There has been a concern for accurate measurements and strategic planning that has helped garner the Church's attention to ensure disciples are sought "from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Revelation 5.9).[17] In some instances, such as AD2000, Joshua Project and Operation World, greater collaboration among numerous agencies provided the opportunity for a more powerful witness and wider influence than any one agency could have done on its own.

Biblical evidence suggests that wise stewardship brings about positive and hopeful results. While DeCarvalho suggests that in the Bible, "management and stewardship (Greek *oikonomia*) are synonymous,"[18] Nehemiah reminds us that leaders who are adept at counting the costs, organizing efficient labor, and wielding masterful rhetoric to inspire loyalty, also must be faithful to call God's people to treat others fairly in order to be reconciled to God and to one another (Nehemiah 5). The book of Acts describes the fruitfulness of good ecclesiology, which included bold preaching, sound teaching, and authentic Christian witness, and led to significant church growth. This growth was often described in numeric terms, like 3,000 believers added in one day (Acts 2.41). While increasing numbers was not the primary "goal" of the fledgling Church, nevertheless, as the disciples "were together and had all things in common," they praised God for "the Lord added to their number those who were being saved" (Acts 2.44-48).[19]

The Bible also reveals how Paul was quick to use his Roman citizenship and the privileges that citizenship provided him for purposes advantageous to the Church (Acts 16.37, 22.25, 25.11, 27.24). The mission(s) strategy of the early Church often was determined by geographic and political considerations (Acts 8.4, 11.19-21, 19.21). The first example of a planned compassionate ministry program in the early Church was when the disciples divided up their labor and placed the responsibility for feeding widows to a committee of seven leaders in the Church. The disciples did this so they could devote themselves to "prayer and to serving the word" (Acts 6.1-7).[20]

These positive contributions from those who espouse a more managerial approach to missiology do not negate the important criticisms that also have been leveled at this perspective. Too often management principles and practices have upended sound ecclesial practices. A shift in focus to purely numeric growth and acquiring "converts" (rather than nurturing true disciples to live as a peculiar people of love and thanksgiving) empties the gospel of its true power and provides a surface-level Christianity that often uncritically mirrors prevailing cultural norms to the detriment of the Kingdom. In many instances, where compassionate services have been pursued as a "cover" for purely evangelistic purposes, the so-called "rice" Christians who emerge may look good recorded in annual statistical reports, but the Church fails to develop changed communities or nurture lifelong, mature believers. The results are a "veneer" of Christianity that is easily ripped apart when something as horrific as the Rwanda genocide occurs or is slowly lost to the creeping influence of other ideologies/faiths or through pure neglect, as explained in the parable of the sower (Matthew 13.1-23). A shallow Christian faith easily conforms its understanding of Christianity to fit the dominant culture rather than allow the word of God to transform culture through believers faithfully following God's will (Romans 12.2). It is to these criticisms and others that "holistic missiology" principles were offered as a counter-approach to "managerial missions."

The advocates of "holistic missiology" have indeed also made significant contributions to the work of the Church around the world. From the 1974 Lausanne Covenant to today, many leading evangelical minds like Samuel Escobar, René Padilla, James Engel, and William Dyrness have argued that the mission of the Church includes ministering to the whole person, not just a person's spiritual condition.[21] Leaders in the "holistic missiology" movement seek to promote the idea that the purpose of life together in the world is more than merely a vertical orientation regarding a person's relationship to God but that it includes a person's horizontal orientations as well. These horizontal relationships include a person's brokenness with others, with one's self, and with one's environment.[22]

One of the most positive aspects of this ideology is its beautiful witness to the world that Jesus Christ loves and cares for the whole person, for communities, and for the entire world in its complex brokenness and sin. Proponents of "holistic missiology" have rightly helped the Church see that Christ's great commission to go proclaim the gospel and make disciples of all nations was to be fulfilled through Christians living out and proclaiming Christ's greatest commands to love the Lord with all one's heart, mind, soul, and strength and to love one's neighbor as oneself (Matthew 22.22-23, Mark 12.30ff).

Yet, just as with "managerial missiologists," "holistic missiologists" fail to respond to some deeper issues that are important for the Church to consider. Practitioners of holistic missiology often misplace their focus on "doing" service toward others, rather than on "being" present in more substantial ways. Because holism involves serving the needs of the whole person, a "messiah" complex can develop that pushes people to do more things out of obligation rather than a loving response to grace. It is easy to forget that it is God who supplies all our needs. Another critique leveled against holistic missiologists is that they describe any action or service that is expected to serve humanity as equally representative of the gospel. In a desire to treat people "holistically" sometimes the verbal proclamation of the gospel is either watered down to generic spiritualism or left out entirely from the equation. And, just as "managerial missiologists" can be distracted by obsessing about numbers of converts, "holistic missiologists" can be equally distracted by obsessing about the layers of human need they seek to address.

Both sides of this debate have contributed significantly to our understanding and practice of mission(s). Yet, it is also clear that while the debate rages, both sides are spending a tremendous amount of energy and money toward "proving" one side against the other side. The serious attention this debate generates, and the fact that the Global Nazarene Missiology conference is committed to asking this question and exploring the potential for balance between these two "camps," reminds us of the title of a recent book by Brian McLaren and Tony Campolo entitled *Adventures in Missing the Point: How the culture controlled Church neutered the gospel*.[23] We argue below that while the "managerial" versus "holistic" debate is interesting and somewhat helpful, it may well distract us from a deeper and more

fundamental discernment that demands greater attention and energy from our Church and a deeper dialogue among us all.

Missiology as Ecclesiology

With this paper, we want to re-center the discussion of mission(s) in the broader context of ecclesiology. We feel any discernment about mission(s) needs to start with the question "what does it mean to be the Body of Christ?" This question is theologically prior to and wrapped up in questions about the character of our mission(s). We cannot address the concerns about "holistic missions" versus "managerial missions" without first understanding what it means to be this people gathered by God as faithful and embodied witnesses (*ecclesia)* to the peaceable reign of God proclaimed by and incarnated in Jesus.

Any reflection on the mission of the Church should start with theological discernment, use our deepest theological language and tell our most central theological story. Too many discussions about "mission" or "missiology" put the cart before the horse, planning out how we strategize about doing church without substantial time and energy discerning what it means to be the Church. Our missiology often starts with the latest insights from the social sciences (e.g. anthropology, sociology, psychology, management, etc.) rather than deep theological reflection. We often quote a few scriptures like Matthew 28.18-20 or Luke 4.14-21 and assume these are self-evident guides for understanding the call of all Christians without spending much time thinking about what it means to be the Body of Christ, "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that we may proclaim the mighty acts of the One who called us out of darkness and into God's marvelous light" (I Peter 2.9).[24] We call this gathered people (ecclesia) the Church.

As God's gift of grace to a broken and sinful world, the Church is an expression of the love found in the character of God, the incarnation of Jesus, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. As creator and sustainer, God is always and everywhere in all ways calling all to reconciliation with God and with one another, and the particular vehicle chosen to proclaim and live out this call is the Church. This proclamation and embodiment is most fully witnessed to by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the incarnation of God's love. We then also have been given the gift of the Holy Spirit, the consolation and power to initiate and sustain the Church.

As a response to this gift, we are to be a holy nation, a peculiar people of love and thanksgiving. In John 15.12 Jesus tells the disciples, "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."[25] As a holy nation, we are not simply a voluntary gathering of like minded people who come together to develop their personal religious or moral well-being. "Not a natural or traditional grouping, this is a people formed by God's undeserved mercy. And more, this people has an important task to

fulfill: to proclaim God's mighty acts… Transformed by the receiving of God's mercy, this people has been empowered to witness to God's creative and redemptive activity."[26]

On the night that he was to be betrayed, Jesus broke bread with the disciples and inaugurated what has become a sacrament of God's presence in our midst. *Eucharist* means "thanksgiving" and marks a central part of our identity and calling. We are to be a people that remembers and retells stories of God's faithfulness and love as an act of thanksgiving. But more than retelling the stories of God, the Church that truly lives the *Eucharist* is a Church that embodies the reconciling work of God in Christ. Through the Church as the incarnated presence of God in history, we are not just remembering God, but God is re-membering (reconciling) a people lost and alienated from God and one another.

The Church does not have a mission; it is God's mission in the world. It is to be a sign, a foretaste, an instrument of God's reign in the world. We are to be both the messenger and the message of the *euangelion*—good news. One danger of interpreting "*euangelion*" (gospel) as "good news" is the temptation to read "news" as mere words and images abstractly communicated as in a newspaper or television report and not in actual lives. "We need not denigrate proclamation… to insist that at the heart of evangelism is the Spirit's formation of a people into a distinctive set of habits, practices, disciplines, and loyalties that together constitute a visible and recognizable pattern before a watching world."[27]

The new creation to which evangelism witnesses is

> God's peaceable reign—a work of prophetic imagination that both demands and makes possible a distinctive reordering of loyalties, priorities, and relationships and of the way power and resources are shared and distributed… The first Christians called this new social option *ecclesia*… To speak of *ecclesia* is to speak of a calling to be the people of God in public, a new and transnational nation gathered and assembled as a visible politics in and for the world.[28]

We must not reduce the Great Commission down to a few verses at the end of Matthew 28 or the story of God down to the moment where Jesus declares the purpose of his ministry as recorded in Luke 4. We need the entirety of scripture to remember the word and works of God, to see more clearly the ongoing revelation of God's presence in the world, to discern more fully the signs of the times in light of God's story, and to discern how God calls us to participate in this hopeful movement of the Spirit.

In order to discern together well the movement of God in the world, we will need to develop disciplines of prayer, scripture reading, and faithful, embodied witness to the love found in Jesus. We cannot be satisfied with strategies that create mere converts. We are called to "make disciples." This requires much longer and deeper engagement with people and places than is typically a part of mission(s) strategies. As the Ugandan theologian Emmanuel Katongole reminds us about the Church: "The most urgent task facing Christian agencies in Africa is not humanitarian intervention, but community building. Moreover, the task is not simply one of church planting, but of building up local ecclesial communities characterized by disciplines of memory and lament."[29]

We cannot underestimate the importance of lament, confession, and forgiveness as important habits of this peaceable Body we are to be. Katongole encourages us not to shy away from the painful memories of the Church's past. We must mourn the Church's complicity in the violence to which it has contributed throughout history, from the crusades to the inquisition, from the conquistadors to colonialism, from slavery to apartheid, from the holocaust to the genocide in Rwanda.

> Cultivating a discipline of lament is thus a way to re-establish a link between the hope for the future and the memory of a painful past, a past which Christians must learn to name as 'our' past and whose pain we can claim as 'our' pain not simply because we are its victims, but its perpetrators. Lament thus cultivates the anger necessary to see that there is something fundamentally wrong with the way the Christian story has been easily conscripted in the performance of violence. It is thus through lament that one may begin to appreciate the extent to which violence has become a seductive temptation and a powerful spell for Christians.[30]

Katongole reminds us of the dangers of ignoring our complicity in the pain of the past in our attempts to "grow the Church" in Africa: "One must also resist the consolation of those well designed programs, heavy on numbers, Western dollars, and mobilization, that seek to move on too quickly towards reconstruction without attending to the past."[31]

As the Gospel of John reminds us, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13.35)."[32] As witness, people will have to be able to look at the Church and say, "This is what God's love looks like." "As they rejoice in the blessings of the gospel, it will be the quality of relationships, the dynamics of mutual love, the concern for the stranger and outcast, that serve as the evangelizing community's trademark and credentials."[33] If we are to bear with one another in love (Ephesians 4.2), mutuality is key. "Without a substantial experience of mutuality, communal discernment is simply impossible… [we are called] to set aside the time and the space to slow down and develop the skills of listening to and learning from one another."[34]

In 2002, Jamie Gates co-facilitated a different kind of mission(s) trip to Tecate, Mexico. Point Loma Nazarene University's director of Student Ministries, Josh Sweeden, had planned a weekend leadership training retreat where the group would not be playing soccer with neighborhood kids, leading a Vacation Bible School, building anything, doing street evangelism, showing a Jesus film, serving in a soup kitchen, or preaching. Profesora Cynthia Ovando-Knudson co-facilitated the trip. A professor of Spanish language and literature, Cynthia is more Mexican than she is American. She has the linguistic and cultural affinities that gave her the skills and the heart to listen well. Both leaders were missionary kids and have deep histories and sensitivities to being part of a global Church. The entire weekend was dedicated to one thing: listening.

Josh made arrangements for the group to meet some of the pastors with whom he had developed deep friendships. Everyone the group met with was asked a question that was difficult to answer and difficult

to be received. The pastors were requested to be open and straightforward about the difficult aspects of receiving so many "*gringo*"[35] mission(s) teams from "*El Otro Lado*."[36]

One of the pastors smiled when the term *gringo* was used. He recognized that the group was being confessional. He was kind. He said that not all of the teams that come from *El Otro Lado* were in fact *gringo*, only the ones who wouldn't listen.

Using the name *gringos* was a confession by the group of their complicity in the gross disparities created by the border between the U.S. and Mexico. *El Otro Lado* is more than just a phrase meaning "the other side" in Spanish. Living in San Diego, Jamie's Spanish-speaking brothers and sisters often use this phrase in reference to the United States. Rarely is *Estados Unidos* used; *El Otro Lado* has become a standard reference for the side of the border that the group had come from. It couldn't have been a better lesson for that weekend – the group was from "the other side." And members thought they had just arrived on the other side. They were the "other."

It was as if the group's confession gave each person they met with permission to speak about difficult relations and dynamics. Perhaps the most truthful and prophetic comments came from the caretaker of the campgrounds where the group slept. In telling about leaky pipes and cracked walls, about the old bunk beds still with the Point Loma Nazarene University stamp on them and the new buildings that mission(s) teams had built over the years, the caretaker reminded the group not just of the materiality of their faith and their fellowship, but of their participation in a Church that is also a global economic body.

In his conversation about his difficulty in getting parts from *El Otro Lado* for the new showers in the old cinderblock dormitories, the caretaker made the uneven reality of the border come alive. Parts and people flow south across the border almost at will. Yet, crossing the border north for even the most mundane of needs is a monumental task. The social/economic/political/psychological/theological fence between north and south determines fellowship far too significantly. Those from *El Otro Lado* can zip down for a weekend leadership training retreat by flashing a driver's license to the border patrol; the caretaker and the pastors in Mexico had to apply three months in advance just for the chance to get a temporary permit to buy supplies or visit Point Loma's campus.

Cynthia asked the caretaker to reflect a bit more critically on the mission(s) teams that came down so often from *El Otro Lado*, particularly the difficult ones. The caretaker showed her a slab of concrete with a half-crumbled wall in the middle of a courtyard. He explained that there are a lot of very talented people with a lot of construction experience and expensive tools that come to help out. But the same dynamics that make it difficult for him to get supplies to fix the showerheads also make him cautious to use the latest and greatest technologies in his construction projects. He often chooses to use a simpler technique and technology because it is something he can fix once all the talent and tools leave.

When the caretaker has one of those teams that just won't listen or do things the way they need to be done in Tecate, he has them build a wall or two on that slab of concrete. When it's time for the team to go back to *El Otro Lado*, the team celebrates the work they've done together, pray, and part in peace. The caretaker then tears down the wall and gets it ready for the next group that has too much to give and not enough time or patience to listen and learn. The group later dubbed this the *gringo* wall as they realized how profound a sign this wall was in representing their inability to listen to one another, to be reconciled to one another, to be agents of reconciliation as the Body of Christ in the world, to be witnesses to the reconciliation that God has already made possible in Christ.

The borders erected by the dominant ideologies and institutions of our time make it increasingly difficult for us to be a sign and instrument of God's reign. Philosophical individualism, the modern nation-state, and hyper-consumer capitalism are labels we use for three main interrelated counter-formations to the kind of people we are called to be. A faithful Church will help us develop the vision and habits to recognize how modern philosophy (even in its "postmodern" form) prevents us from recognizing that there is "no holiness but social holiness."[37] The God of "individual autonomy and freedom" fragments the Body of Christ into competing, supposedly autonomous individuals settling for a "personal relationship with Jesus."[38] If the Church is to live "the creativity of an imaginative remembering and communal reenactment of the story it has been gifted," it cannot reenact "an autonomous production by solitary, tradition-less individuals."[39] Our faith calls for a way to re-imagine how God relates to persons as part(s) of the Body.

A faithful Church will help us develop the vision and habits to recognize how modern politics (especially in its "nation-state" form) can hinder us from being "one body, one spirit" (Ephesians 4).[40] As we learn from the "Pledge of Allegiance" in the United States, nation-states vie for our loyalty at the expense of our catholicity. National borders tempt us to be citizens of particular geographies rather than recognize our home only in God. National priorities tempt us to sacrifice our children in the name of national ideologies like "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." "How does a provincial farm boy become persuaded that he must travel as a soldier to another part of the world and kill people he knows nothing about? He must be convinced of the reality of borders, and imagine himself deeply, mystically, united to a wider national community that abruptly stops at the border."[41]

God's reign is fundamentally a peaceable reign. The love for our brothers and sisters cannot respect such borders and faithfully witness to the God who "in Christ was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us" (2 Corinthians 5.19). In God's reign, "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3.28). The politics of evangelism stands in contrast to (and offers a salvation from) a politics of domination, exclusion, national

idolatry, and individualistic rights."[42] Our faith calls for a *koinonia* that is non-conforming to the violent fragmentation of identity and community enforced[43] by modern nation-states.

A faithful Church will help us develop the vision and habits to recognize how modern economics (especially in the form of hyper-consumer market capitalism) prevent us from being "one faith and one baptism" (Ephesians 4).[44] Globalization's elevation of efficiency, expediency, and productivity as the ultimate of human virtues makes it increasingly difficult for us to slow down and listen to the Spirit of God and to one another. Particularly for the church in the north, and increasingly for the Church everywhere, the principles and habits of the global economy can so easily deform our desires and keep us busy supporting our "goods and services" that we don't set aside the time and the space to slow down and develop the skills of listening to and learning from one another.[45]

If we are truly one faith with one baptism, the marks on our body will look like the Fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control. Growing fruit takes careful cultivation. These are hardly the marks of modern hyper-consumer capitalism that so readily exploit "market"-style exchanges (commodifying love), manufactured desire (reducing joy to happiness you can buy), niche marketing (fragmenting us and undermining possibilities for peace), over-productivity and Mc-instant consumption (making patience obsolete), self-sufficiency (making mutuality seem unnecessary), self-help (making goodness irrelevant), planned obsolescence (making faithfulness unfashionable), aggressive accumulation (making gentleness seem like a weakness), and preying on addictions (making self-control next to impossible).[46] Our faith calls for a community that can practice an economy that "stands in contrast to (and offers a salvation from) an economics of scarcity, consumption, greed, utility, and competition."[47]

There is much to confess in our complicity with powers and principalities that are constantly at work seeking to divide the Body of Christ and prevent reconciliation with God and each other. But in Christ, God has already established God's reign. This reconciliation has already been made possible in Christ. Signs of the Kingdom are all around us. God is growing amongst us a prophetic imagination. God is giving us eyes to see and ears to hear. We believe we are at a moment when God is calling the Church to nurture the prophetic imagination.[48]

Nurturing the Prophetic Imagination

Imagine a Church who reflects regularly and together as a catholic body over the central question: *What does it mean to be the Body of Christ in the world?*

Imagine a Church that sees its mission to develop a catechism (ideas, practices, and relationships also known as discipleship) that will not only help us learn how we are to be in the world but in the process also provide credible alternatives to reigning secular ideologies and institutions[49] that prevent us from being "one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one

faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all" (Ephesians 4.4-6).[50] Imagine if all our churches were mini-monasteries[51] or seminaries training the Body to study scripture and Christian history deeply alongside a careful reading of contemporary times. Imagine if our universities became resources to help facilitate such profound nurturing of the prophetic imagination.

Imagine a Church that marked time by the Christian calendar rather than the rhythms of any particular nation-state, industry or ethnic preference. Our various "independence days" and national holidays would no longer make as much sense, our 9-5 work day would become secondary to the rhythms of prayer and koinonia, and our celebrations of ethnic uniqueness would become subject to our celebration of unity in Christ at the Eucharistic table. Celebrating Advent as opposed to the "Christmas shopping season" might help us to reform our hyper-consumer addictions. Disciplining ourselves deeply together for the 40 days of Lent may help us slow down and listen more carefully to the cries of those who regularly go without. Restructuring time may call us to restructure the rest of our lives to be more consistent with being the Body of Christ.

Imagine a Church that structures its universities to nurture the prophetic imagination, to nurture in students, faculty and staff a call to engage seriously the radical call of both Matthew 28 and Luke 4, sending graduates into all the world to make disciples of all peoples, the kind of disciples who nurture the deep love of Christ, a love that brings good news to the poor, release to the captive, recovery of sight to the blind, freedom to the oppressed and a social life lived faithfully in the year of Jubilee! Imagine a Church whose universities structured education in such a way that wealthy students and poor students could work together in solidarity with those that suffer around the world, where neither would amass the kind of debt that forces them into well-paying upwardly mobile jobs but frees them to creatively follow Christ among the Dalit ("Untouchables") in Calucutta, and to preach from there to the impoverished souls on Wall Street.

Imagine a Church whose university professors, staff and students were all engaged in ongoing discipleship and theological training together for the sake of the Church. Imagine a Church whose universities dared to develop a curriculum that took the Fruit of the Spirit as its outcomes measure rather than the accreditation of a professional association. Imagine a Church whose universities habitually marshal the combined resources of all its theologians[52], including those with strengths in medicine, economics, languages, literature, science, social analysis, etc. to engage in hopeful alternatives to the deepest of social injustices. Imagine a Church that developed liberal arts educational institutions outside the United States that were as well-resourced as those inside the United States. Imagine if the resources of all of these universities were marshaled to reflect deeply on how to live together in an economy of abundance rather than scarcity, where all work together to develop regional productive capacity for those without enough and those with too much learn to live with less in solidarity with those who go without.

Imagine a Church that spends the time and energy it takes to develop disciplined practices of love and mutuality, practices of listening to one another, hearing one another, acknowledging the profound gifts God has granted each of us. Imagine a host of what we now call "Work and Witness Teams" spending all that money to go, provide the materials and wages for local contractors to do the building (i.e. providing some jobs along the way), and spending the travel teams' time in persons' homes sharing stories of life and faith. Imagine teams coming from the two-thirds of the world without easy access to travel, sponsored by churches with plenty of resources, as agents of reconciliation. Imagine the wisdom such trips could generate around discerning God's economy and just how much consumption is enough.[53] Imagine a Church that develops sister-church relations with brothers and sisters in another part of the world, where those church members start to care for one another in all facets of life, including listening to each others' interpretations of scripture together, praying together, learning about one another's cultural worlds, and redistributing resources as each has need.

Imagine a Church whose love for God and one another woos us to deeper practices of contrition, confession, and forgiveness like what is starting to happen in South Africa. We are all in need of repentance for our complicity in the oppressive structures and habits of apartheid, a system that divided even the Church into racially segregated life, particularly oppressive for South Africans who were not white. Gauteng district (in and around Johannesburg) is now a district that refuses to be divided by race into white, black, and coloured districts. But this structural change is only a beginning; the structural move only makes way for the much harder work of actually living together, eating in each others' homes, joining each others' churches, supporting each others' compassionate ministries… the hard work of truly listening to one another.

Imagine a Church whose membership no longer reflects the borders (divisive social constructions) of our fallen world like what is starting to happen in southern California. District Superintendents from the region are thinking about restructuring the zoning of church districts in the southwestern United States, moving away from apartheid-style districting with the Western Latin American District overlaid in a region with numerous "English-speaking" districts (most of which also count Spanish-speaking, amongst other languages, in their churches). Imagine a Church willing to face the challenge of inviting everyone to the same banquet table without marginalizing those who have been left out for a very long time. Imagine a Church that faces head on the challenge of not letting the Spanish-speaking voice be drowned out by numerically and fiscally stronger voices so used to speaking as and for the Church. Imagine what it would look like if we extended this re-imagination to cross the border between Mexico and the United States.

Imagine a Church where the diversity of our denomination is appreciated enough to be heard not just by those in positions of authority but from those in positions of authority because those in authority

reflect the diversity of the Church around the world. Imagine a Church leadership structure that was no longer rooted in the North American church but invited fuller participation from the Church around the world, empowering even our poorest pastors, churches, and informal districts to true leadership roles.

Imagine with us a Church marked by generosity and reciprocity where the people of God work together and direct resources until all who are able to can find meaningful and productive work that pays them a livable wage and offers them long-term job security so they are able to support themselves and their families, a place where disciples are "of one heart and soul" and where everything is "held in common" so that there is "not a needy person among them" (Acts 4.32, 34).[54] Imagine a world where churches, Christian organizations, and businesses led by believers in every country are characterized by how their wages are more evenly distributed across the organization, significantly narrowing the gap between the highest paid and lowest paid workers, and where capital is brought to bear on maximizing job creation and job sustenance over and above maximizing profits and individual or shareholder wealth creation.[55]

Imagine with us a Church marked by its concern to identify with, embrace, suffer alongside, and mobilize its resources and voice to walk alongside those who suffer and are outcast by society. Imagine a Church that needs no compassionate ministries structure or arm because the entire Body of Christ is engaged in and working towards providing the hungry something to eat, the thirsty something to drink, the stranger a place to stay, the naked clothes to wear, the sick comfort and care, and those in prison visitors. Imagine a Church whose life exudes peace, justice, love, and grace particularly focused on the "least of these" at the local, regional, and international levels.

Imagine a Church that took its commitment to go into all the world and make disciples (and not just converts) so seriously that it would limit its expansion to those areas where it could develop significant resources/capacity/infrastructure for both proclamation and embodiment. Imagine a Church that would be unwilling to show the Jesus Film and plant churches in an area where it was not willing to also put in place access to seminary training for pastors and church leaders, vocational training and job creation, liberal arts education and compassionate ministries.

The Body of Christ is both messenger and message, a peculiar people of love and thanksgiving, ambassadors of reconciliation in a broken and fallen world, bearing witness to the peaceable reign of God in word and deed. We are indeed called to be a Holy people with discipleship practices that woo us into the life of holiness. This is a world that God is already mending, healing the rift, *tikkun olam*.[56] As we, the gathered (*ecclesia*), remember and reenact the story of God in the Eucharist, God is re-membering us (uniting, drawing us together) as the Body of Christ, the Church.

Endnotes

[1] "We seek the simplicity and the Pentecostal power of the primitive New Testament Church. The field of labor to which we feel especially called is in the neglected quarters of the cities and wherever else may be found waste places and souls seeking pardon and cleansing from sin. This work we aim to do through the agency of city missions, evangelistic services, house to house visitation, caring for the poor, comforting the dying. To this end we strive personally to walk with God and to incite others so to do." Ernest R. Camfield, Organizing Director of the T. Richard Willis Bresee Historical Collection, Minutes of the Church of the Nazarene, Los Angeles, California 1895-1912 3/31/1990, compiled by T. Richard Willis, Meeting of the Congregation, Vol. 1, p.3.

[2] We have chosen this designation for "missions" to represent our concern that this term not be taken as self-evident in that the term "missions" or "mission" too often references only the church in the 2/3 world and implies an ecclesiology that we seek to re-imagine.

[3] It is possible the Church of the Nazarene was moving away from the original purpose of Dr. Phineas F. Bresee rather early on, as evidenced in a statement he wrote in the *Nazarene Messenger*, "The evidence of the presence of Jesus in our midst is that we bear the gospel, primarily, to the poor. ~This must be genuine; it is more than sentiment; it can not [sic] be simulated, nor successfully imitated." *Nazarene Messenger*, Los Angeles, Cal., 9/12/1901, v. 6 No. 11. (found by Deron Matson at Trevecca Nazarene University - microfilm and Nazarene Bible College - hard-copy).

[4] "Again, there is great need for concentration of our money. How can we hope to build a great church for the promotion of holiness when we scatter our money in all directions? That kind of work cannot be blest of God. We are to bring all our tithes INTO THE STOREHOUSE, not scatter them in all directions. The church must have money, and a lot of it too, if it is to advance rapidly. We are in a commercial world where it requires money to move things material, and we need good church buildings, where the people can come to worship God and the multitudes come for salvation. We need missionary money, both home and foreign. We need money for our publishing interests so we can push holiness literature to the ends of the earth. We need money for our universities and other schools over the land. This is a great need at the present time. For if we do not educate our young men and women in holiness schools, then we cannot get holiness preachers for our churches. And the Church of the Nazarene must make its own preachers. We cannot go elsewhere for them, but they must come from our schools and be trained for the work our church is to do. Many of the older men have been trained in other denominations and it is a hard matter to get them adjusted to the methods of our church, but if we get young men who are trained by strong teachers in our schools, then we may look for gracious results from them." Rev. E. M. Isaac, "The Need of the Hour, *Nazarene Messenger,* Feb. 23, 1911, Vol. XV, No. 3, p. 3.

[5] Email discussion with Stan Ingersol, November 15, 2006.

[6] Rauschenbusch, Walter. A Theology for the Social Gospel, The MacMillan Co.: Hampshire, England, 1917.

[7] "The Great Reversal," a term coined by historian Timothy L. Smith, refers to the change evangelicals made in the early part of the 20th century from evangelical social concern to individualism. Early "evangelicals," both in England and America, were noted for their social involvement, establishing welfare societies such as the Salvation Army, schools for immigrants, homes for unwed mothers, city missions, and agencies to help the poor, the sick, prisoners, and other needy folk. The church supported legislation to bring about social justice. Then came the "Great Reversal." The social gospel became linked with liberal theology, and evangelicals, anxious to separate themselves from this group, turned away from social action in order to get "back to first principles." This controversy is in essence a continuation of the modernist-fundamentalist disagreement. http://www.directionjournal.org/article/?114; see also Timothy Smith's Revivalism and Social Reform, 1939; Carl F. H. Henry's The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism, 1947 (Eerdman's); and David Moberg's The Great Reversal, 1972. These books also helped evangelicals rediscover social ministry.

[8] "The Great Reversal" may not have created the division between "main line" and "evangelical," but it certainly helped to codify the boundaries and decrease the possibilities for ecumenical collaboration and discernment.

[9] This theological split was also complicated by disagreements over eschatology as reflected in the pre-millennialist vs. post-millennialist debates, an intimate part of the fundamentalist-modernist controversy alluded to earlier. These debates contributed greatly to the polarization of the mission of the church into 1) focusing on the saving of souls for this world will pass away OR 2) working toward the coming Kingdom of God in this world.

[10] See the contemporary annual report forms for the licensing of pastors to note the way numerical and budgetary growth continue to be of the highest priority in the institutional accountability and reward system.
[11] Shortly following the beginning of Nazarene Compassionate Ministries, church leaders came to accept the importance of social action not because they were particularly concerned with confronting social injustice, e.g. poverty, per se, but often because compassionate work was seen as a tool with which the the church could gain access to areas hostile to the type of evangelization Nazarenes wanted to do. NCM has functioned as an arm of Church Growth and World Missions. NCM projects have been very effective in drawing new people into the Church of the Nazarene. Disaster and relief programs and micro-enterprise development have frequently been used to gain access to new countries (e.g. Albania, Romania, Pakistan, Bangladesh) that would be closed to traditional evangelization. Another motivating factor for the acceptance of NCM among church leadership was that the resources generated could replace general budget subsidies for pastors in the form of child sponsorship and the development of bi-vocational income generating projects for pastors, which freed up more resources to expand the church growth movement.
[12] Think here of the tremendous body of discernment and wisdom generated under the rubric of Catholic Social Thought in the last 100 years or so. In typical North American Protestant fashion the Church of the Nazarene has developed its institutional structures more in conversation with modern corporate models than with the historic practices of the church catholic.
[13] Much more needs said here, but for now, we argue that greater wisdom is required as to how we deal with transitioning from a US-based church who treats the church in the 2/3 World as an object of "our" mission to one that includes everyone fully as members of One Body.
[14] DeCarvalho, Levi T. "What's Wrong with the Label 'Managerial Missiology.'" *International Journal of Frontier Missions*. Fall 2001, vol. 18:3; Padilla, C. Rene. "Holistic Mission." *Lausanne Committee for World Evangelism*. Occasional Paper No. 33, September 25 to October 5, 2004; and Hesselgrave, David. "Redefining Holism." *EMQ*. July 1999.
[15] DeCarvalho.
[16] See, for example, the founding of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability in 1979.
[17] Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version. www.devotions.net/bible/00bible.htm.
[18] DeCarvalho.
[19] Holy Bible.
[20] Ibid.
[21] For the equivalent of the Joshua Project in this perspective, see the Micah Project.
[22] Myers, Bryant. Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development.Orbis Books, Maryknoll: New York, 1999.
[23] McLaren, Brian and Tony Campolo. Adventures in Missing the Point: How the Culture Controlled Church Neutered the Gospel. Zondervan, 2006.
[24] Holy Bible.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Dietterich, Inagrace and Laceye Warner. *Missional Evangelism*. p. 3.
[27] Stone, Bryan P. Evangelism After Christendom: The Theology and Practice of Christian Witness. Brazos Press: Grand Rapids, 2007. p. 319.
[28] Ibid., p. 177.
[29] Katongole, Emmanuel. *Violence and Christian Social Reconstruction in Africa: On the Resurrection of the Body (Politic).* theotherjournal.com.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Holy Bible.
[33] Dietterich and Warner. p. 12.
[34] Ibid. p. 15.
[35] Like the terms *Mzungu* (central Africa) and *Murungu* (southern Africa), *gringo* is a slang term used as short-hand for those from the privileged north, citizens of the United States or Europe, most often assumed to associate with some variation of whiteness. The term can be simply shorthand for those from *El Otro Lado*, or it may also carry a pejorative connotation. Context determines its specific meaning. We indicated that we in fact meant the less than flattering meaning of the word.
[36] Literally "the other side" in Spanish.

[37] This is a famous phrase from John Wesley, quoted from Works V p.295: "The bible knows nothing of solitary religion. There is no holiness but social holiness."
[38] We are not saying that a deep relationship with God through Jesus is not of central importance to being Christian. Nor would we want to deny the reality of a God who reaches out to touch the heart of every person and who calls for a response from every person. Our point here is that God calls and shapes first and foremost a people, a social body with a deep history, diverse membership, and common discipleship. We do not deny the existence or importance of the self, merely its secondary character.
[39] Stone. p. 318.
[40] Holy Bible.
[41] Cavanaugh, William. Theopolitical Imagination: Discovering the Liturgy as a Political Act in an Age of Global Consumerism. T&T Clark: New York, 2002. p.1.
[42] Stone, p. 318.
[43] The imagination of a modern nation-state is enforced as much with an imagination that makes real the false division between Democrat and Republican, Liberal and Conservative as much as it is enforced with the barrel of a gun, a standing army, or nuclear weapons.
[44] Holy Bible.
[45] See Dan Bell's excellent article *What is Wrong with Capitalism? The problem with the problem with Capitalism.* *http://www.theotherjournal.com/article.php?id=55* See also William Cavanaugh's article *World in a Wafer: The Geography of the Eucharist as Resistance to Globalization, http://www.jesusradicals.com/library/cavanaugh.php*.
[46] See Phillip Kenneson's poignant social analysis of the challenges of modernity to our ability to cultivate the Fruit of the Spirit in Christian community – Life on the Vine: Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit in Christian Community. Downer's Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1994.
[47] Stone. p.178.
[48] See Walter Brueggemann's The Prophetic Imagination. Augsburg Fortress Publishing, 1978.
[49] e.g. nation-state; consumer-based markets; globalization; modernization; neo-colonialism; capitalism/socialism; modern neo-liberalism.
[50] Holy Bible.
[51] '...the restoration of the church will surely come only from a new type of monasticism which has nothing in common with the old but a complete lack of compromise in a life lived in accordance with the Sermon on the Mount in the discipleship of Christ. I think it is time to gather people together to do this...' Extract of a letter written by Dietrich Bonhoeffer to his brother Karl-Friedrick on the 14th of January, 1935. (Source: John Skinner, Northumbria Community).
[52] All Christians are theologians and biblical scholars, just with various degrees of historical study and depth of wisdom. We need special care and attention for those we call out particularly for the task of studying the history of Christian thought and practice, the interpretation of scriptures and the training of clergy.
[53] See Ross and Gloria Kinsler's The Biblical Jubilee and the Struggle for Life: An Invitation to Personal, Ecclesial and Social Transformation, 1999 (Orbis Books) and God's Economy: Biblical Studies from Latin America, 2005 (Orbis Books).
[54] Holy Bible.
[55] See Steve de Gruchy's "Of Agency, Assets and Appreciation: Seeking some Commonalities between Theology and Development,"*Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, Nov. 2003, p. 20-39, for an excellent essay on giving voice to poor people and advocating for their equal participation in work and in theological reflection.
[56] ***Tikkun olam*** (תיקון עולם) is a Hebrew phrase which translates to "repairing the world." It is important in Judaism and is often used to explain the Jewish concept of social justice.