

CHRISTIAN IDENTITY: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE AN EVANGELICAL?

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What does it mean to be an Evangelical? an important and necessary question. John Stott begins the preface of his book *Evangelical Truth*, stating, "Nobody likes to be labeled. Since the labels others place on us are not normally compliments. Often the purpose of labels is to limit us, and even restrict us, to a narrow description that does not allow us to assume who we are"¹ This is true in spite of the latent prejudices that go along with identifying ourselves as evangelicals in many of our Latin American countries.

I consider it beneficial for our conference among us, Latin American Nazarenes, in these days that we explore some hidden implications beneath the question concerning our evangelical identity. As we contemplate the question, what is an evangelical? We need to realize that we would like to refer to instead of individual evangelicals to the evangelical **church** in its corporate dimension. We will also be focusing on the evangelical church in our **Latin American** context. However, it is even more relevant for us that we will be looking at our **Church of the Nazarene** within the evangelical movement in Latin America. Finally, we would like to reflect on the church **today** towards the future. So as we attempt to answer the question, what is an evangelical? my approach will to give a general description taking into consideration these specific elements.

What we are sure of is the need and relevancy of together carrying out an auto-introspection about our evangelical identity. To rediscover our identity is as much a conjectural experience, since the Latin American Evangelical Movement is at a historical crossroad, as the ongoing task of a developing church. In an overview of CLADE IV (Forth Latin American Congress on Evangelism sponsored by the FTL (Latin American Theological Fraternity) in Quito on September 2000), by John Corrie y Andrew Kirk, both British, conclude their analysis of CLADE IV saying:

The central issue though is one of identity: how are evangelicals to be recognized as distinctive in the midst of religious pluralism and ever more bewildering manifestations of spiritual extremism? This process of reflection should enable evangelicals to develop a distinctively Latin American theology and missiology, which hopefully will provide a solid biblical foundation for the burgeoning mission from Latin America to the rest of the world, which is already characterizing the beginning of the new millennium. (CLADE IV: Fourth Latin American Congress on Evangelism, see http://www.ocms.ac.uk/news/20001009_clade.shtml).

Maybe we should add, what role will the Nazarenes from Latin America play in the construction of this needed evangelical identity? ¿What will be our distinctive contribution to this evangelical identity and what will we receive from other traditions that will enrich us?

Now this task is for not only the evangelical church today but also "each generation must face the problem of identity. And the identity that a group accepts must include a specific sense of mission, a clear statement of its message and a dynamic expression of its motivation...the mission of a denomination determines its identity more than any other element."²

In our case, as Nazarenes, already in 1994 Donald Metz was warning us that

The Church of the Nazarene is experiencing a slight identity crisis. The denomination is not so sure 'whom or what' we are. The official declarations seem to be quite clear. Yet, often the personal or group practices do not completely agree the published objectives. Our roots and mission are quite clear. Our destiny depends on a practical and profound expression of our identity.³

The two fundamental issues of our question, what is an evangelical?, are identity and the 'evangel' (the gospel), by themselves they are difficult to define, how much more when we combine them? For example, which identity do we refer to? What we have been in the founding years? What we have been throughout the development of our church? What we should be? We also cannot disconnect what we are from what we do, since what we do and how we do things reflects something about who we are. Then, what does the way we have carried out our mission say about us? Also, identity itself, whether it is personal, cultural or corporate identity, is dynamic, changing, and more than being

something that is fixed is a dimension of human beings that permanently is being constructed with a degree of intentionality. It might be fitting to ask, who would we like to be?

In addition, to speak about the evangelical church in Latin America creates certain ambivalence. Some have described the evangelicals as an 'amorphous collection of sects,'⁴ "whose direction is not predestined"⁵ The Latin American evangelical church is a conglomerate of a diversity of churches with their respective traditions and focus. Far from being, a monolithic grouping of churches the phenomena or dynamic of the evangelical church is found in its diversity and variety, with the purpose of enhancing a complementary relationship, instead of competition or superiority of some. But, on the other hand, the evangelicals should have a "joint identity", which should describe and guide its action. Metz suggests that

The institutional identity is clarified when three affirmations are recognized: The first affirmation expresses a precise Picture of the group's origin--**its roots**. The second essential affirmation declares the reason why a group exists—**its mission**. The third affirmation presents the practices and polity that points to the future of the institution—**its destiny**.

I will follow this outline as I approach the identity of the evangelical church in our part of the World as Nazarenes.

Roots: Our Historical Heritage

"The Latin American Evangelical Church is an expression of the Christian Church with a long a historic trajectory".

The origin of the Evangelical Church in Latin America has been focused from a variety of perspectives trying to trace its historical roots: (1) from the apostolic church, (2) from the Protestant Reformation, (3) from North American evangelicalism (4) from the arrival of the Protestant movement to Latin America, (5) and from the arrival of Pentecostalism to our countries. It would be helpful not to see these different starting points as competing views but as different stations in the path towards the present evangelical church.

Larry Eskridge's position on this issue, in his article Defining Evangelicalism, caught my attention. This author mentions that

In the English-speaking world, however, the modern usage usually connotes the religious movements and denominations, which sprung forth from a series of revivals that swept the North Atlantic Anglo-American world in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Key figures associated with these revivals included the itinerant English evangelist George Whitefield (1715-1770); the founder of Methodism John Wesley (1703-1791); and, the American philosopher and theologian, Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758).⁶

According to this perspective, Wesleyanism played a key role in the evangelical movement from its beginnings. This is good for us to know as Nazarenes.

Although Latin American evangelical Protestantism has been greatly influenced by evangelicals from North America evangelicalism, in Latin America it "takes on new meaning in its new setting."⁷ Stoll continues affirming,

"while *evangelical* in the United States refers to a theologically conservative person who emphasizes the Bible, personal salvation, and evangelism, in Latin America, the term «evangelical» usually refers to any Christian that is not Catholic."⁸

This is another way of saying that the Latin American evangelical church has its own history, in the beginning a reactionary church, but it is necessary to be acquainted with her history so that we can appreciate this movement.

Berg y Pretiz, in their introduction of their book, *Mensajeros de Esperanza: Los Evangélicos* (Messengers of Hope: The Evangelicals), reaffirms the importance of its history in the identity of the evangelical church in Latin America.

To know its religious history is to appreciate its tears, the pain and courage of its founding fathers. To know its poverty is to comprehend its search for meaning, comfort, relief and healing of the persons in the evangelical communities. To witness its faith in action is to love

her and better understand why the scene in Latin America is changing due to the evangelicals.⁹

These authors continue relating the history of the evangelicals in Latin America in terms of "five waves evangelical advancement," that is the five stages of development of the evangelical church. These are "(1) the first churches of immigrants, (2) the main denominations, (3) the 'faith missions', (4) the newer denominations, and (5) the churches with origin in Latin American soil."¹⁰

There are also diverse forms of classifying evangelicals in general. These means of grouping evangelicals go from considering (1) their common theological foundations, whether it be parting from the two basic creeds of Christianity (The Apostolic and Nicean Creeds), or the Protestant Reformation, or the historic beginnings of evangelicalism, (2) the affirmation of key doctrines and some practical emphasis¹¹ (3) the diverse ecclesiastic traditions¹² (fundamentalism, charismatics, ecumenicalism, liberals, among others), (4) the life style reflected in conduct and ethics.

Emilio Núñez from and for Latin America describes four general traits that historically have characterized the evangelical majority. In his opinion, the evangelical church in his context has reflected "an evangelical conservatism...a theological dualism...the spiritualization of our evangelization...premillennial eschatology."¹³ Further on in this same book Núñez describes the evangelical identity in negative terms, what we are not, and positively, what we are. According to him, our evangelical identity does not consist only in our evangelical-catholic polemics, our forms of worship or liturgy, our methods, the evangelical subculture (evangelical practices and prohibitions) but rather our evangelical identity depends on our doctrinal convictions. These doctrinal stances arise from the Reformation with their base in *sola* Escritura, *sola* gracia, *solo* Cristo y *solo* fe (only Scripture, only grace, only Christ and only by faith). Núñez adds to the evangelical identity a personal, serious and profound commitment with Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, a biblical concept of mission that should include the social dimension and the availability of the believer and the church to constantly be renewed.¹⁴

John Stott in his chapter *Evangelical Essentials*, takes another approach. He mentions that

Seeking to define what it means to be an evangelical, inevitable one must begin with the gospel. Since our theology, (evangelicalism) as well as our activity (evangelism) derive their meaning and importance from the good news (the gospel). And when we are thinking about the gospel, in our minds three fundamental questions and answers arise in reference to the origin, substance and efficacy of the gospel.¹⁵

Interestingly enough, Stott suggests that the discovery of our evangelical identity, even the Latin-American kind, should begin with the gospel itself. Therefore, this is a theological endeavor with three generative questions: ¿Where does the gospel come from?, ¿What does the gospel consist of? And ¿How does the gospel become effective? Stott finds the answers to these questions in 1 Corinthians 2: 1-5.¹⁶

Now we Latin American Nazarenes, should ask ourselves some questions. How does our history intersect with the evangelical development in Latin America? Are we evangelicals by our own identification, by choice, or because there was not another way of classifying us? Could our stance concerning our relationship with other evangelicals be sectarian? In general, what is our Nazarene identity in relation with other evangelicals? Which have been our contributions, throughout the years, to the evangelical movement?

I am sure that our Nazarene pioneers in each country experienced the same vicissitudes that their evangelical companions of their epoch. But my experience serving in various Latin American countries is that we Nazarenes are virtually unknown and many times, as a church, we live on the fringes of the rest of the evangelical movement. In addition, for some reason it has been difficult for us to identify ourselves as part of the evangelical church. In more than one occasion we have been asked, and you Nazarenes, who are you? We quickly respond, "we are evangelicals. Then they respond, "you mean you are Pentecostals," No. "you are Baptists," No. "you are Jehovah Witnesses," By no means. In an interdenominational theological conference in which one of the expositors made reference to John Wesley and associated the Nazarenes with him, a colleague came up to me and said: "so you Nazarenes are wesleyans, you had it well hidden."

I know things are changing and that the situations are not the same in each one of our countries. The opposite danger is to be absorbed without discernment, whether it be by one of the fads of some

evangelicals or to get involved in interdenominational activism that wind up exhausting us and taking away our vitality for ministry. Maybe the key and our challenge is to discover, as Latin American Nazarenes, our true evangelical complexion.

Mission: Our Reason for Being

*The Latin American Evangelical Church represents
a particular focus of the mission of the church.*

From its beginnings, the Evangelical Church saw as fundamental to its mission return to the Heart of the biblical message, the gospel, motivated by its emphasis of fulfilling the great commission. This was carried out in contrast with the different types of Christianity that existed, that emphasized more its tradition, formalism and sterile intellectualism. The evangelicals attempted to return to the apostolic church that lived its faith dynamically and tried to be contagious. The charismatic groups that followed emphasized the experience with the Holy Spirit and miraculous signs as part of their identification with the Primitive Church.

In Latin America, the mission of the Evangelical Church experienced at least two distinct moments. In the mid XIX century, it was to "protestantize" the Catholics, or it is better known as an effort to evangelize the Catholics so that they could live the new life in Christ through conversion, the reading of the Bible, and the public testimony of their newfound faith. Based on these they were guided to leave behind their catholic practices and dogmas and in that way definitively break away from Catholicism. The second moment was the pentecostalization of the protestants, which also had its repercussions among the Catholics, through the Charismatic movement within its ranks. This began to take place approximately in early years of the XX century, as a result of the different Pentecostal revivals in Latin America and around the world. This represented a marked emphasis in the experience with the Holy Spirit and its natural consequence of enjoying a victorious life in Christ. In that fashion, they fulfilled their mission. During both moments, there was fierce opposition by those that were targeted.

This brought about an aggressive, even confrontational, way of carrying out the mission as it was declared publicly "only Jesus saves and the Holy Spirit baptizes with fire and power." All of this was done with the disposition of becoming a martyr and receiving social stigma. Because of this type of witness and other factors, the evangelical church started gaining ground. As we can see today, this way of carrying out the mission has resulted in great numerical success. At the present, we are a lot more than the handful of men and women that initiated the evangelical movement in Latin America.

We commonly pride ourselves in the significant number we represent as evangelicals in Latin America, although there are no reliable statistics. The estimates of Patrick Johnstone¹⁷ indicate that in 1993, 12.4% of all Latin Americans were Protestants, which corresponded to 51 million persons, ten times the number of believers in (6.7 million). Of this total amount, the Pentecostals make up 80% of the evangelical population in Latin America.¹⁸ It is true that "the evangelical church would be an imperceptible minority if it were not for the Pentecostal presence."¹⁹ According to Stoll, what is surprising and should call our attention about the growth of the evangelicals in Latin America "is the growing presence of evangelicals reflected in its percentages"²⁰ and their effects if these numbers continue to grow. The evangelicals in some Latin American countries since 1960 to 1985 have doubled, tripled and in some cases have grown seven times.²¹

But we need to study these statistics carefully and compare them with the other realities of the Latin American Evangelical Church. First, the growth among evangelicals has not been proportional. There is a lot more numerical growth (1) among some groups of evangelicals, mainly among Pentecostals, (2) in some countries much more than others, (3) in the lower socio-economic sectors, (4) among women and children than males. All of this leaves unreached great and important sectors of Latin American society.

Second, not only is it important how many we are as evangelicals but also most significant for us should be how we are and where we are going, that is, what is the integral condition of the evangelical church in our countries? In light of the gospel, how are we fulfilling our mission? "In reality, the proportion of the population that are evangelicals is not as important as the vitality of that proportion."²²

I believe that we need to be careful in our analysis, avoiding the two extremes of being overly optimistic or pessimistic. Without a doubt, the evangelical church has made, and continues making, its great contributions to our reality and beyond; such as the mobilization of the church, an evangelism that is experimental, theological education by extension, working with small groups, the inclusion of women in ministry and other contributions that are a part of the times we are living. However, even then the evangelical church in Latin America has failed in many other vital aspects of the Gospel. There is a degree of genuine concern among us evangelicals that love this church and are committed to the faithful realization of the evangelical mission as reflected in Scripture.

For example, in general, in our setting the evangelical church has not been pertinent to our reality and times, ignoring the evangelical call of social transformation. There are more evangelicals but the social problems in our countries continue the same or worse, and in some churches instead of being different, they reflect the same problems but camouflaged. Robinson Cavalcanti, Brazilian theologian, comments about the evangelical church in Brazil: "The lack of pertinence of Protestantism has come to the point that if the rapture of the church would take place today, the Brazilian society would delay a week to note that the believers have left"²³

There are other voices of committed Latin American evangelicals that call us to a serious reflection, since the situation of the evangelical church is critical. Berg y Pretiz mentions two facts:

Studies in Mexico City indicate that only half of the evangelicals that were registered in the census are in churches... more disappointing is a survey that shows that there is a substantial number of Catholics that are declared 'former-protestants' in a country."²⁴

Victor Rey cautions us, "The numerical growth of the evangelical churches encompasses certain dangers, perhaps the most obvious is superficiality. The mega-churches that convert the movie theaters in temples, run the risk of institutionalizing an evangelical pop religiosity...A large part of evangelical churches are only worried about growing numerically. Quantity cannot be raised up as the only criterion for truth."²⁵ If we add to this the reigning division and power struggle in the evangelical movement, its theological poverty, and the parallel growth neo-evangelical sects we realize that we have to do something so we do not deviate from our mission.

¿What about us, Latin American Nazarenes, concerning our identity through the way we carry out our mission? Have we faithfully lived and proclaimed the Gospel in our countries? Has the fulfillment of our mission as Wesleyans been holistic? Is numerical growth our only and main concern? How have we influenced the rest of the Latin American evangelical church so that they can know and live the full Gospel, which includes holiness of heart and life? Is there a parallel way of fulfilling our mission as a Holiness Church as evangelicals?

Destiny: Our Unfinished Task

The Latin American Evangelical Church embraces great potential and possibilities for the future but needs to make some adjustments.

Our destiny as an evangelical church has to do with towards where we are headed, or better still, towards where do we believe God is wanting to direct us. In this sense, forging our identity as we delineate our destiny is the possibility of integrating our roots, as well as our mission, in a vision and action towards an immediate and long term future based on the Gospel.

Our projected evangelical identity towards the future or destiny will depend on how we face our Latin American challenges to preserve and enrich our evangelical mandate. However, our destiny must spring from the present or new reality of the world reflected in the evangelical church. Arturo Piedra describing *The New in the Reality of Latin American Protestantism* establishes his presentation on three principles with their respective questions, which could be for us key clues for our renewed identity:

First, we should recognize that there are sufficient reasons to believe that the way we have understood the Christian mission should vary in some of its principles, as a result of the changes that have occurred in the region (*Latin America*) in the last decade...¿What aspects need to be changed and what aspects do we need to preserve?...Second, we should comprehend that a strategy should be developed to understand in what measure those changes have directly affected the vision, as well as the life and mission of the churches...¿Which are the greater challenges that question the church today?...Third, we

should understand that the accomplishments of our mission in the coming years, depends in great part, on the type of relationship we are able to establish among the churches....¿What initiatives should we realize to strengthen the communication with the churches in this new decade?²⁶

After elaborating the new aspects that Piedras sees within the Latin American evangelical church he mentions:

It is fundamental for the church to comprehend the challenges that some realities, it must faces today that were not contemplated in the past as clearly, represent: the influence of evangelical media upon its membership, the presence a new generation of enthusiastic evangelicals without a past, the strength behind entertainment liturgy and the low profile of Christian discipleship, the financial reductionism of the Gospel in the theologies of prosperity, the excessive eagerness for the 'big' achievements in the numerical growth and the religious multi-culturalism...The positive thing about all these aspects of the new reality is the great need for orientation that the leaders show and the concerns expressed by the pastors.²⁷

It is crucial for the evangelical church in our part of the World to recognize and understand the religious pluralism present in our society and within its own ranks. This should propel us to discover together which are the nonnegotiable values and truths of our basic identity as an evangelical church and to discover what are secondary elements in our identity so the can be substituted by some new elements present in our present challenges.

I believe we are still in time to do some adjustments in our present-future identity to orient better our destiny. I would like to suggest some themes that I consider are key and that we need to work on more for our clearer y more contemporary evangelical identity as a church:

1. Evangelical Ecclesiology. What are the fundamental and indispensable elements of the church? Are these elements only its amount and activity? What type of evangelical church is required of the context and times we live in Latin America? How can we have structures that reflect better the Gospel and facilitate the dynamic realization of the mission of the church by all its members?
2. Unity of the Evangelical Church. When will we stop working in isolation from others churches, each one bringing water to its own mill? Is there any relation between explosive evangelism, seeking to fulfill our mission and the unity of the church? When are we going to give a joint testimony of our mutual love and urgency in the mission? Is it possible to collaborate without having vested interests among some evangelical churches of different backgrounds?
3. Evangelical Ethics and Compassion. How are we going to equip our verbal message of the Gospel with our lifestyle? Are the Christian values of modesty, honesty, simple lifestyle, and moderation pertinent for today? Besides verbally communicating the Gospel, ¿How do we demonstrate our love for our World and neighbors? Can we elaborate a social ethic that can make it possible for the Gospel to inform the political and economic world?
4. Evangelical Means of Communication. How can we take better advantage of and in accordance with the Gospel the mass means of communication? Is not the use of technology an area of Christian stewardship? What place should the oral and written means of communication have in the mission of the evangelical church?
5. Evangelical Theology. Do we have to continue conforming ourselves with the stigma that the evangelicals in Latin America are a people without our own theology?
6. Evangelical Spirituality. Until recently, as evangelicals, our spirituality was totally absorbed in our restricted form of evangelism. What place should our spirituality have, understood as our ongoing personal and collective relationship with God, in our mission as an evangelical church? What should distinguish our spirituality from the great amount of spiritualities surrounding us? In his dissertation in the Forth Latin American Congress on Evangelism (CLADE IV), René Padilla points out that

The evangelical church is living a special time in Latin America, because of its numerical growth and its social and missionary conscience. Yet, I notice, that this growth is threatened, on one hand, by a deficit in the field of theological reflection and

by a deficit in the area of spirituality...a church without theological reflection is threatened by the danger of heresy or worldliness. That is why, he added, it is not surprising that in midst of this biblical illiteracy, the gospel of prosperity and love for power flourish. The deficit in the area of spirituality, he affirmed, takes us to the danger of senseless activism or with objectives that do not alien with the purpose of God...true spirituality refers to a life style of thinking, feeling and acting in coherence with Jesus Christ.²⁸

7. Evangelical Culture. How do we unmask and replace the evangelical sub-culture with a truly evangelical culture? I will mention more about this in the conclusion.

In our practice as Nazarene evangelicals, what values and principles are forming our identity and guiding our destiny? Where is the Church of the Nazarene headed in Latin America? What type of adjustments are we making as a church to assure the continuity and relevancy of our evangelical message and testimony? How are our identity and destiny related to the rest of the evangelical church in Latin America?

Conclusion: Evangelical theology, holiness and culture.

The identity of the evangelical Church is composed of man and women of the Gospel, that is, persons who incarnate the Gospel in their daily lives and relationships considering the needs and the opportunities their context provides. Our greatest challenge is simply to be faithful to the authentic Gospel of Christ in a setting plagued with falsehood.

It would seem like that the Latin-American evangelical church is in its adolescence, since it continues to suffer an identity crisis. An identity crisis is essentially a theological crisis. This crisis does not only consist of that in general terms we are not "thinking our faith" or that we not "doing theology", or not even that we are not practicing our faith. But besides the weaknesses that we might have in these areas, we have to question our theological model exported and product of the modernism that puts too much confidence in the rationality. We need a more integrative model, "placing" God at the center but at the same time being a lot more aware of the inner and surrounding human reality. For this, I believe we need to focus our theology more biblically and interdisciplinarily, using all the sciences and the inner and social dimensions of the human being.

In this sense, our theology will help us better to rediscover our identity as His evangelical church to fulfill the holy purposes of God for all of humanity. That is the realization of our God given identity, as we would live our faith in its fullness in relation with one another and the cosmos. This type of identity, having its starting point in our vital spirituality would help us, beyond "thinking our faith," and at the same time "feel our faith," "communitize our faith," "socialize our faith," "symbolize our faith," "humanize our faith," "solidarize our faith," "do our faith."

The need of a contextual Latin American evangelical theology is not new. Already in 1986, René Padilla challenged us to put in writing a renewed evangelical theology.²⁹ Emilio Núñez retakes this same theme in 1996³⁰; last year, right here in San José, Arturo Piedra spoke about the crisis of the Latin American theology before the characteristics of the new reality of postmodernism in the evangelical church. In our Nazarene context, the necessity of a contextual theology around the world in our church was reiterated many times in Johannesburg 2000 as in Guatemala 2002. Maybe from this point on we need to recognize the urgency of our theological task for our Nazarene evangelical identity.

As part of our theological agenda, Could it be that the Latin American evangelical church is before the challenge of articulating an evangelical culture rooted, as much, in the Bible as in our present context? I am not suggesting the concept of culture in a restricted manner, so to create our own "ghetto" or closed context (sub-culture), but rather that we evangelicals leave that status. It is more an organic or corporate culture open to the interchange of the surrounding cultures (e.g. postmodernism, national cultures, denominational cultures, biblical culture, etc.).

It is culture as a tool for our hermeneutics, our interpretation of all reality, and for our ethics that overflows in a relevant missiology, our evangelical action in the world oriented to fulfill the mission of

God. It is an evangelical culture as a way of thinking, feeling and believing.³¹ It is culture as “summary term for a holistic way of life: material, intellectual, spiritual.”³²

It is culture as a live and dynamic expression of our Latin American evangelical identity before the challenges of the growing globalization. It is a theological culture of faith that emphasizes all the dimensions of the Gospel in its reflection, living out of its faith and communication. In this fashion, we could incorporate the following dimensions of cross-cultural communication: worldview-the way we see the world, mental processes-ways we think, linguistic forms-ways we express our ideas, conduct patterns-ways we act, social structures-ways we interact, influence of the means of communication-the way we channel messages, motivational resources-ways we make decisions.³³ We can do all of these taking the Gospel as our foundation.

Finally, the Latin American evangelical identity is incomplete, more it is without a center, without the doctrine and life of biblical holiness. We believe that the Gospel is a radical call in which God by His grace forgives and purifies us to live in holiness, being made every day more in the likeness or image of Christ to reflect His love to the world. Evangelical holiness is the integrative element of our identity that gives integrality to all that we are and do as evangelicals. This necessarily takes us to the evangelical ethics. A recognized Baptist Latin American author reminds us that, “the Gospel of Christ brings with an ethic. Coherency is an imperative of the life of the Christian. For the first Christians the issue of holiness was of first order, not something optional. They took very seriously the order ‘to be holy as I am holy.’”³⁴

Without being overly optimistic or displaying a spirit of pride, we need to realize with humility, that we are living an evangelical awakening regarding the doctrine of holiness. Far from, our characteristic message being obsolete or old fashion it is the most relevant and needed message of our times. The revival that is approaching, the new reformation that the evangelical church needs in our setting will be of evangelical holiness, we hope with social y structural repercussions. This places upon us Nazarenes a great responsibility, challenge and opportunities. We need to model holiness in al spheres of the church y come out of our theological niches, hiding places, and contribute to the evangelical identity of our beloved Latin America. Was this not what Breese meant when he stated that part of our mission, as a church, was to “Christianize Christians”?

Our supreme call as a Nazarene evangelical church is to be what we are, men and women of the Gospel, that is, to be faithful to all of the holy Gospel. We cannot be selective in this. John Stott, in his already mentioned book, based on Philippians 1:27-30 make an appeal that we evangelical be faithful to quintuple call to which the Gospel challenges us. It is to be obedient to the call of “evangelical integrity, live a life worthy of the Gospel; evangelical stability, to be stand firm in the Gospel; evangelical truth, defend the faith of the Gospel; evangelical unity, work together for the Gospel; evangelical perseverance, suffer for the Gospel”³⁵

Are we willing to recuperate our identity as evangelicals and Nazarenes in Latin America? This is our moment together with the rest of the evangelical church. What joy it would be if God would use us as a Church to spark the holiness revival that is approaching. May the Lord guide and help us!

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- ¹ John Stott, *Evangelical Truth*, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1999, 7.
- ² Donald Metz, *Some Crucial Issues in the Church of the Nazarene*, Kansas: Wesleyan Heritage Press, 1994, 12-13.
- ³ Metz, 24.
- ⁴ Miguel Berg y Pablo Pretiz, *Mensajeros de Esperanza: Los Evangélicos* (Messengers of Hope: The Evangelicals). Miami: Editorial UNILIT, 1992: 146.
- ⁵ David Stoll, *¿América Latina Se Vuelve Protestante? Las Políticas del Crecimiento Evangélico* (Is Latin America Turning Protestant? The Politics of Evangelical Growth), Quito: Ediciones Abya-Yala, 1993: 6.
- ⁶ Larry Eskridge, *Defining Evangelicalism* (http://www.wheaton.edu/isae/defining_evangelicalism.html).
- ⁷ Stoll, 16.
- ⁸ Stoll, 16.
- ⁹ Berg y Pretiz, 24.
- ¹⁰ Berg y Pretiz, 25.
- ¹¹ In this sense, Eskridge cites the British historian, David Bebbington, which notes four specific hallmarks of evangelical religion: *conversionism*, the belief that lives need to be changed; *activism*, the expression of the gospel in effort; *biblicism*, a particular regard for the Bible; and *crucicentrism*, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.
- ¹² Stott, 25. Quotes different authors along the years that have classified the evangelicals in different ways (e.g. , Peter Beyerhaus, Gabriel Fackre, J. I. Packer, y David Bebbington).
- ¹³ Núñez, Emilio. *Teología y Misión: Perspectivas Desde América Latina* (Theology and Mission: Perspectives from Latin America). San José: Oficina Regional de Visión Mundial Internacional, 1996: 19-22.
- ¹⁴ Núñez, 64-71
- ¹⁵ Stott, 29.
- ¹⁶ Stott, 29-34.
- ¹⁷ Patrick Johnstone, *Operación Mundo* (Operation World), Bogota, Centros de Literatura Cristiana, 1995, 51.
- ¹⁸ Núñez, 19.
- ¹⁹ In the prologue by Norberto Saracco in the book by Donald W. Dayton, *Raíces Teológicas del Pentecostalismo* (Theological Roots of Pentecostalism). Buenos Aires: Nueva Creación, 1991: vii.
- ²⁰ Stoll, 21-22. Also see chapter 1 the section on *Typologies, Growth Rates and Variation by Country*.
- ²¹ Stoll, 21-22. From 1960-1985 evangelicals have approximately duplicated their proportion in relation to the population in Chile, Paraguay, Venezuela, Panamá and Haiti. They have tripled in Argentina, Nicaragua, and in the Dominican Republic. In Brazil and Puerto Rico they have quadrupled. In El Salvador, Costa Rica, Perú and Bolivia the evangelicals have quintupled. In Ecuador, Colombia and Honduras they have multiplied six times over. In Guatemala evangelicals have growth seven times. If these same growth rates continue for the next 25 years until 2010, Brasil will reach an evangelical population of 57%, Puerto Rico of 75%, y Guatemala of 127%.
- ²² Berg y Pretiz, 177.
- ²³ Víctor Rey, *Misión y Vida en América Latina* (Mission and Life in Latin America), 72.
- ²⁴ Berg y Pretiz, 146, 147.
- ²⁵ Víctor Rey, 73.
- ²⁶ Arturo Piedra, Sydney Rooy y H. Fernando Bullón. *¿Hacia Donde va el Protestantismo: Herencia y Perspectivas en América Latina* (Where is Protestantism Headed? Inheritance and Perspectives in Latin America), 2003: 10.
- ²⁷ Piedra, Rooy, Bullón, 21-22.
- ²⁸ http://www.compa.org.mx/en_contacto/octubre/ciee.htm
- ²⁹ René Padilla, *Misión Integral* (Integral Mission), Buenos Aires: Nueva Creación, 1986: 80-105.
- ³⁰ Núñez, 196-219.
- ³¹ David J. Hesselgrave, *Communication Christ Cross-culturally*, Grand Rapid: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978: 68.
- ³² Richard Taylor y otros, *Diccionario Teológico Beacon* (Beacon Theological Dictionary), Kansas City: Casa Nazarena de Publicaciones, 1995: 185.
- ³³ Hesselgrave, 97.
- ³⁴ Rey. *Misión y Vida en América Latina* (Misión and Life in Latin America), Santiago: Impresos Flecha, 2002.
- ³⁵ Stott, 135-146.

**CHRISTIAN IDENTITY:
WHAT DOES IT MEAN
TO BE AN EVANGELICAL?
By Ramón A. Sierra**

Defining 'Evangelical'. Its meaning has shifted throughout Christianity's long history and changes depending on who you ask. Why? Jonathan Merritt. December 7, 2015. Spire / Flickr. The religious historian George Marsden once quipped that in the 1950s and 1960s an evangelical Christian was "everyone who likes Billy Graham." But when Billy Graham was asked to define the term in the late 1980s, he replied, "Actually, that's a question I'd like to ask somebody too." As it turned out, even America's most famous evangelical preacher couldn't describe what the term meant. Graham isn't alone. While in America, evangelicalism has become as much a political as a religious identity | The Economist explains. So what do evangelical Christians really believe? That question has been debated for decades. According to David Bebbington, a British historian, an evangelical Christian believes in four essential doctrines: to be saved a person must have a "born again" conversion experience; hence evangelicals are also known as "born-again Christians"; Jesus's death on the cross atones for mankind's sins; the Bible is the ultimate spiritual authority; and Christians ought to actively share their faith through witnessing and good works. Mr Bebbington's definition, which he codified in the late 1980s, is perhaps Does the term Evangelical describe a set of beliefs or a political viewpoint? To begin, let's break down the two words. The term Christian essentially means "follower of Christ." Christian is the term given to followers of Jesus Christ in the first century A.D. (Acts 11:26). The term evangelical comes from the Greek word that means "good news." For others, "evangelical Christian" is a title used to differentiate an individual from a Catholic Christian or an Orthodox Christian. Others use the term to indicate adherence to the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. In this sense, an evangelical Christian is a believer who holds to the inspiration, inerrancy, and authority of Scripture, the Trinity, the deity of Christ, and salvation by grace through faith alone.