

HIGHER EDUCATION
AND OUR HOLINESS HERITAGE

an address by
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INTRODUCTION

These biennial theology conferences serve a very vital purpose in the life of the Church of the Nazarene. They have traditionally provided a forum for the discussion of very crucial contemporary doctrinal issues which face our church and its educational institutions. The first which I attended addressed the issue of the dynamic tension which exists between science and faith. The last considered the authority and inspiration of the Scriptures. Each conference has come at a providential point in time. This one is no exception. It finds the church poised on the threshold of our diamond jubilee year. On October 13, 1983, we will commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Church of the Nazarene. Our denominational focus will be on "Celebrating Our Holiness Heritage." In this light it is most appropriate that we relate our higher education enterprise to the historic vocation of our Zion.

Our Holiness Heritage

Gene Bartlett of Colgate observes that the church is a community of faith with both a memory and a mission. The two must be meaningfully related if the life of the community is to be complete. Samuel Johnson speaks to the necessity of historical perspective in these words:

The present state of things is the consequence of the past;
and it is natural to inquire as to the sources of the good we
enjoy or the ends we suffer. If we act only for ourselves,

to neglect the study of history is not prudent; if entrusted with the care of others, it is not just.

We who are "entrusted with the (spiritual) care of others" have a sobering responsibility to identify and articulate our ecclesiastical "roots."

The history of the Church of the Nazarene officially begins with the union of the Holiness Church of Christ with the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene at the General Assembly held at Pilot Point, Texas, in 1908. However, the previous year in Chicago the Association of Pentecostal Churches of America, which had been formed in New England in 1890, had united with the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene. The historical statement in the 1908 Manual describes the beginning of this latter group. It relates that 85 people met in a rented hall in Los Angeles at the call of a committee headed by Dr. Phineas F. Bresee on the first Sunday of October, 1895. The church was officially organized October 30 of that year.

This statement of mission was made concerning the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene:

These persons were convinced that they were called of God unto holiness, to teach others the doctrine, and to lead them into the experience of entire sanctification. They were convinced, both by the teachings of the holy Scriptures and by their own experience, that entire sanctification necessarily implies a second work of Divine grace to be received by faith in Christ and wrought by the Holy Spirit. That purity of heart, with holiness of life, is the will of God in Christ Jesus for and concerning all His children. They were convinced that believers thus sanctified will follow Christ's example of preaching the Gospel to the poor, to which work they felt especially called.

The Quadrennial Address of the Board of General Superintendents to the 1915 General Assembly confirms this institutional objective in these words: "We are the representatives and guardians of a church which holds as its central purpose the bearing to men of the message of the power of the blood of Jesus to cleanse from all sin, and the readiness of Christ to dwell in holy hearts. . . ."

History records the fact that denominations have traditionally shown a tendency to stray from their founding purpose with the passing of time. There is no evidence that there has been any intentional effort to alter the commitment of our church to its primary mission. However, we are not immune from an almost unconscious erosion of our basic reason for existence.

Five years ago in a meeting of Nazarene college and seminary presidents, Dr. L. Guy Nees (then president of Mount Vernon Nazarene College) spoke to this issue in these words:

The Church of the Nazarene may be in a life-and-death struggle for identity, the outcome of which will determine whether we will be a leader in Wesleyan evangelical theology . . . or be lost in a hodgepodge of doctrinal ambiguities and procedural uncertainties. Who are we, and what is our main mission in the world? There was a time when this question was not necessary.

He went on to say that in earlier years we knew who we were--spiritual descendants of John Wesley and more recently of the holiness fathers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. We were a holiness people. Our churches were holiness churches. Our preachers were holiness preachers. Our colleges were holiness colleges. Dr. Nees continued:

We had all kinds of epithets thrown at us. We were "holy rollers"--narrow, sectarian, and sometimes even cursed and run out of town. But we were not greatly disturbed, because we knew who we were. We rejoiced in our faith and sang with joy, "I'm so glad that I can say I'm one of them."

He concluded by raising this penetrating question, "I wonder if we are that certain today?"

In its annual report in the 1979 session of the General Board, the Board of General Superintendents addressed this same issue:

No human institution can long remain effective that loses sight of its basic purpose. External forces are constantly at work to change its nature from without, and new personnel are gradually replacing those who brought the business, or the educational institution, or the church into existence. It is absolutely essential, therefore, for each new group of leaders and managers to come to grips with the institution's purpose, its raison d'etre. Surely the time has arrived for the Church of the Nazarene to come to a fresh and clear awareness of its reason for being, and then to deploy all its resources both personal and material for the accomplishment of its institutional purpose.

We reaffirm that the central purpose and mission of the Church of the Nazarene is to advance God's kingdom by the preservation and propagation of Christian holiness as set forth in the Scriptures. In so doing we respond to the Great Commission

of Christ to "go and make disciples of all nations"
(Matthew 28:19, NIV) and fulfill our institutional
objectives which are (as stated in Manual Paragraph
24) "holy Christian fellowship, the conversion of
sinners, the entire sanctification of believers,
their upbuilding in holiness, and the simplicity
and spiritual power manifest in the primitive New
Testament Church, together with the preaching
of the gospel to every creature.

One year later in the Quadrennial Address of the Board of General Superintendents to the twentieth General Assembly this declaration was made:

We firmly believe that God in His time and in His own way raised up the Church of the Nazarene for the supreme purpose of spreading Christian holiness around the world. To this holy purpose we are still totally and irrevocably committed. We shall never allow ourselves to be dragged into the shallows of a spurious religious emotionalism, nor will we be thwarted and stifled by a cold, sterile intellectualism which robs us of our zeal, joy, and spiritual reality.

At that General Assembly the theme "Celebrating Christian Holiness" was launched for the quinquennium, and the response of both ministry and laity has been heartening.

All of this constitutes strong evidence that the leadership of the church is seriously endeavoring to recapture and rearticulate the strong sense of mission which so evidently characterized our denomination in its early history. It is our fervent prayer that our seventy-fifth anniversary year will reinforce our commitment to our holiness heritage throughout the entire church.

But this commitment must be to more than a meaningful Nazarene tradition. Our church and our educational institutions have no better friend than Dr. Dennis Kinlaw--longtime president of Asbury College. His preaching and strong affirmation of Nazarene higher education at PALCON II endeared him to all of us. At one of these conferences he shared his concern that as we celebrate our first three-quarters of a century of history we trace our roots farther back than 1908. He explained that while officially this date marks the beginning of the Church of the Nazarene, we should make it clear that our doctrinal heritage goes back much farther to such holiness forebears as Frances Asbury and John Wesley. This linkage substantiates the fact that our distinctive doctrine is not a theological "Johnny-come-lately."

In this light we relate our specific reason for existence to Mr. Wesley's clear statement of the central purpose of Methodism being to "spread scriptural holiness throughout these lands." We acknowledge our doctrinal debt to the unrelenting holiness evangelism of Mr. Asbury. On January 10, 1773, he noted in his journal, "Felt much power while preaching on perfect love. The more I speak on this subject, the more my soul is filled and drawn out in love. The doctrine has a great tendency to prevent people from settling on their lees." His biographer, L. C. Rudolph, comments, "As he grew older he vowed to make every sermon a sermon on sanctification. And he probably did it no matter what the text" (Francis Asbury, pages 87 and 88).

But with all due respect for Wesley and Asbury, we must make it clear that our holiness antecedents go much farther back than even to these worthy advocates. They go all the way back to Moses, the prophets, the apostles and, most importantly, to Jesus. Our statement of mission identifies the Christian holiness which we are to preserve and propagate as that which is "set forth in the Scriptures"--nothing more, nothing less. In the very

heart of the levitical code is recorded this call to holiness: "I am the Lord your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy; for I am holy. . . . you shall be holy for I am holy" (Leviticus 11:44-45, NASB). The prophet Ezekiel, inspired by the Holy Spirit, makes this grand prediction in the name of the Lord: "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances" (Ezekiel 36:25-27, NASB).

Our Lord Jesus prophesied the outpouring of the sanctifying Holy Spirit in Acts 1:5 in these words: "John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now" (NASB). On the day of Pentecost this promise was fulfilled--"they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:4, NASB). This was clearly not their conversion. Previously Jesus had breathed on them and said to them "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22, NASB). Dr. Joseph Mayfield, lifelong Nazarene Johannine scholar, comments on this verse in the Beacon Bible Commentary: "This bestowal of the Spirit (22) is not the same as that described in Acts 2:4. . . . The former was a bestowal on disciples who were most certainly God's children" (pages 232-233). "The purity and power evidenced in their lives following Pentecost clearly indicates that in the upper room these followers of Jesus experienced "entire sanctification . . . that act of God, subsequent to regeneration, by which believers are made free from original sin, or depravity, and brought into a state of entire devotement to God, and the holy obedience of love made perfect. (This act) . . . is wrought by the baptism with the Holy Spirit, and comprehends in one experience the cleansing of the heart

from sin and the abiding indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, empowering the believer for life and service" (Manual Paragraph 13) . Oswald Chambers equates the Spirit's baptism with the second work of grace in subsequent disciples' lives when he writes: "In the momentous crisis of entire sanctification and the baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire, all heaven is open. . . ." (Christian Discipline, II, pages 69-70) .

Saint Paul prayed for the believers in Thessalonica: "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely . . ." (1 Thessalonians 5:23, NASB) . This is proof positive that there is a second crisis experience of cleansing for all Christians. It was the final answer to the evident carnality in the Corinthian church--"Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1, NASB) .

The exhortation of 2 Peter 3:18 makes it clear that Christian holiness involves maturity as well as purity, for the admonition is to "grow in grace." Interestingly, the earliest doctrinal statements on the subject of entire sanctification in our Manual included reference to this process of growth as well as to the act of cleansing. After the description of the crisis experience these words appear in the first Manuals:

There is a marked distinction between a perfect heart and a perfect character . The former is obtained in an instant, but the latter is the result of growth in grace. It is one thing to have the heart all yielded to God and occupied by Him; it is quite another thing to have the entire character, in every detail, harmonized with His Spirit, and the life become conformable to His image.

For reasons which are not explained, this statement became a note appended to the article on entire sanctification in the 1923 Manual. Then in 1928 this was replaced with a paragraph entitled "Growth in Grace" which was included in the Special Rules. It included these additional words:

Our mission to the world is not alone the spreading of scriptural holiness as a doctrine, but it is also that we be "an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." Our people should give careful heed to the development of holiness in the fear of the Lord, and to the development of the Christian graces in the heart and of their manifestation in the daily life.

This paragraph remained unchanged in the Special Rules for 48 years. Then in 1976 the General Assembly unanimously adopted the recommendation of the Commission on Holiness Ethic that a statement on this subject containing some revision in wording be added to the article of faith on entire sanctification. This action was subsequently presented to all district assemblies (as is necessary for proposed constitutional changes) and was unanimously ratified. In essence, this inclusion of a statement on growth in grace represented a return to the clearly articulated position of the Church of the Nazarene on the necessity of both crisis and process in the attainment of scriptural holiness.

Furthermore, our holiness heritage involves not only a commitment to a second experiential work of grace and subsequent growth in that grace but also a dedication to a distinctive holiness life-style. D. Paul Thomas in his PALCON II portrayal of the life of P. F. Bresee dramatically identified the major roadblock to union at Pilot Point in 1908 as a difference of opinion concerning holiness ethics. The Holiness Church of Christ in effect made the condition of its uniting with the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene the

adoption of several specific rules, including those concerning the use of tobacco and membership in secret orders. These stipulations were agreed upon and, along with the ethical standards previously endorsed by the Nazarenes, became the General and Special Rules of the church. In essence these have remained intact.

In 1976 the nineteenth General Assembly received the report of the Commission on Holiness Ethic which substantially retained these ethical positions. It recommended that the General Rules be constituted as timeless scriptural principles and the Special Rules become a contemporary restatement of our traditional stand against such social vices as degrading entertainments (including the "Hollywood" moving picture, low-grade television programs and books and magazines, homosexuality, abortion on demand and the use of hallucinogenic drugs and beverage alcohol). In each case our position was documented by supporting scriptures. The unanimous endorsement by the General Assembly of this strong restatement of our traditional ethical stance made it clear that this is still a vital part of our holiness heritage. Any dilution or erosion of these principles constitutes a serious violation of the clearly stated position of the Church of the Nazarene.

The Mission of Nazarene Higher Education

William Clark has rightly observed that the Christian college does not have a religious program; rather it is a religious program. In the strictest sense, Nazarene educational institutions do not relate to the holiness mission of our church--they are the church in mission. They have been from the very beginning.

The founding of the Church of the Nazarene cannot be divorced from the 14 Bible institutes, colleges and universities which were in existence

in the several groups which united to form the denomination. These schools were not ashamed to acknowledge their mission. In its first catalog published in 1900-1901, the predecessor of Eastern Nazarene College made this forthright statement:

The Pentecostal Collegiate Institute and Biblical Seminary is not an ordinary school. Its foremost aim is to spread scriptural holiness over the world. In the pursuit of this aim it requires every officer and teacher to be entirely sanctified, and thus proposes to secure the genuine conversion and entire sanctification of every student who may enter its halls.

The 1909-1910 catalog of the Oklahoma Holiness College (later Bethany Nazarene College) stated:

The college . . . has for its objective the spreading of scriptural holiness over this and every land. There is a need of holy intelligence and intelligent holiness.

The articles of incorporation of Illinois Holiness University (later Olivet Nazarene College) dated 1909 declared:

The object for which it is formed is to encourage, promote, maintain, and support Christian education in all of its branches (including) Bible study and theology, especially the doctrine of entire sanctification as a work of Divine grace, wrought in the heart by the Holy Ghost, subsequent to regeneration, cleansing the heart from all sin, and filling it with the pure love of God, and that the same is obtained instantaneously by faith.

Dr. P. F. Bresee linked the mission of the church and college in his message to the fourth General Assembly in 1915: "While the evangelization

of men and their building up in holiness is our great commission and our first work, it also adheres in our commission to train and educate those who, through our labors, are brought into this great salvation." It is significant that the last public address made by Dr. Bresee was given in the chapel of the Nazarene University of Pasadena (later Pasadena-Point Loma College) in the fall of 1915. In it he stated: "The very first thing for this institution and for all our institutions is to see that our students are led into the holy of holies and filled with all the fullness of God. . . . Your supreme work is to see that young manhood and young womanhood of this institution get to Calvary and the upper room. . . ."

The articles of incorporation of the Idaho Holiness School (now Northwest Nazarene College) specified the "theological department more specifically to conserve, maintain, advocate and promulgate the great New Testament doctrine of entire sanctification or Christian holiness."

General Superintendent R. T. Williams wrote in the July 26, 1916, issue of the Herald of Holiness:

The importance of our schools in promoting the church and in propagating holiness cannot be over-estimated. . . .

We often say that the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene has built schools. Truly it might be said, with no small degree of accuracy, that the holiness schools have done much in raising up the church.

In 1921 Dr. James B. Chapman observed:

In the Church of the Nazarene our educators are all revivalists.

They all consider it a greater thing to get a soul converted and sanctified than to get a student to matriculate in any school. They all count it more necessary to have revivals

in the schools than to pass the final examinations. They all put religion above scholarship. . . .

All of this constitutes undeniable evidence that the primary vocation of Nazarene schools was intended to be the implementation and amplification of the church's call to preserve and propagate Christian holiness. Furthermore, colleges justified their existence and the support of the denomination only as they were strongly loyal to the church. In his final address to the faculty and students of Pasadena University quoted before, Dr. Bresee left no doubt in any mind at this point:

These are not the groves of sectarianism. . . . But we mean that there shall be a strong, pure, healthy denominationalism. We have no sympathy with the twaddle which attempts to express the desire that all people be of one denomination. We believe that such is neither providential nor desirable. We are lovingly, earnestly, intensely denominational. If anyone wishes to criticize his own denomination, this is a poor place for him to do it.

Furthermore, Bresee left no doubt about the fundamental expectation of faculty members:

Men and women are to be so trained as to be immune from intellectual and spiritual diseases. It is sought that intellectually and spiritually diseased men shall be barred from creating influences here. Men and women who exude the microbes of worldly or low ideals, or of doubt, or of fanaticism, or of phariseeism, or of selfishness are to be excluded. We want nothing second-rate or doubtful here. This platform

is not a free forum, except in the sense of freedom toward the best, the purest, the noblest.

Time has not altered the relevance of this qualification for teaching at a Nazarene institution. Why else would a faculty member associate himself or herself with a Nazarene school except to positively promote the clearly-stated holiness mission of the church? This is a valid principle in all academic disciplines in our colleges but certainly most of all as it relates to professors in our seminary, Bible college and departments of religion of our colleges. There can be no place in our system for one who belongs to what Elton Trueblood describes as "the cult of detachment" which he says keeps the students from knowing the professor's own position because he will not reveal his personal convictions (Yoke of Christ, page 72). And a church in mission can never tolerate teaching in its educational institutions which questions or contradicts that mission. Bishop Gerald Kennedy faces up to the tragic situation which has developed in many Protestant schools at this point:

There seems to be some unwritten law that the church must never tell (professors) to go somewhere else, for that would be trespassing in a forbidden land labeled "academic freedom." . . . as far as the Protestant theological school is concerned, it seems as if anything and everything goes. The man on the faculty of a church college can be sure he is a hero if the church raises any question about his teaching pronouncements which destroy its reason for existence" (The Seven Worlds of the Minister, page 109).

All this must not be interpreted as a plea for blind loyalty or knee-jerk conformity to the denomination. Dr. Bresee made a plea for freedom within proper parameters in his often-quoted statement: "In essentials, unity;

in non-essentials, charity." Uncompromising commitment to our basic mission is absolutely essential and unifies us in this common cause.

Samuel Shoemaker, the Spirit-filled Episcopalian, observed that there are two characteristic signs of theological seminaries: "scholarship divorced from life, and deferred realization of power. . . . There is the same risk with colleges," he continues, "to leave students with no suggestion of synthesis of what they have learned. Harry Emerson Fosdick says that college gave him a lot of spokes but no hub!" (Revive Thy Church, pages 67-68).

These perceptive comments should serve as a mandate for every seminary and college professor to get beyond the theoretical and bring his students into an experiential and intellectual grasp of the holiness "hub" from which spiritual power and all of the other practical "spokes" will emanate.

Conclusion

"A true minister, filled with the Holy Ghost, feels a repugnance to a college presidency or professorship and he yields to the call only when he is convinced that he can be more effectively preaching Christ in teaching others to preach. It was this that reconciled Dr. Chalmers to the chair of theology in Edinburgh University. He came to see 'that while many were called to catch and salt fish, some men are called to make salt.'" These perceptive words written by Daniel Steele 78 years ago in The Gospel of the Comforter still speak to the fundamental vocation of the educators who have gathered in this theological conference. We salute you as "salt makers." Through the lives of the thousands of young men and women in whom you invest your dedicated service, the salt of the earth will be liberally sprinkled upon a world which desperately needs this savor. This also involves a sobering responsibility. In the previously quoted Herald of Holiness article dated

still believed in and taught entire sanctification as "the second blessing, rightly so called" in the words of Wesley. However, he acknowledged that fully one-half of Methodism's ministers espoused gradualism--growth into sanctification. Small wonder that Dr. Bresee and his holiness cohorts felt impelled to go out under the stars and found a church dedicated to full salvation as taught in the Scriptures.

History must not repeat itself in the Church of the Nazarene because of our failure at this point. We must continue to preach and teach that Pentecost was the occasion of the entire sanctification of the one hundred twenty disciples gathered in the upper room. The cleansing and empowerment of these believers by the fiery baptism with the Holy Spirit on that day is undeniable scriptural evidence that there is a second definite work of grace. This truth is non-negotiable. Any discussion of Spirit baptism which questions this position cannot be tolerated.

2) Keep a proper balance between crisis and process in Christian holiness. It is not either/or, it must be both/and. The pendulum must not swing too far in either direction. There are serious dangers in emphasizing either to the neglect of the other.

3) Train our ministers to preach expository sermons on holiness (and all other subjects). Too many of our pastors and evangelists are settling for topical and textual messages with precious little milk or meat of the Word. Small wonder that all too many of our people are fuzzy in their doctrinal understanding. They not only need but want clear biblical preaching. Why else has Evangelist Stephen Manley, with his no-nonsense, expository holiness preaching, become the most sought after revivalist in our church today?

4) Personally and professionally uphold the traditional holiness ethic of the church. The Manual carefully identifies the two basic factors in ethical determination as: (1) Timeless biblical principles (Paragraph 32:1); and (2) The collective Christian conscience illuminated and guided by the Holy Spirit (Paragraph 32:2) . No amount of contemporary social pressure from a predominantly hedonistic society enamored with situation ethics should induce us to compromise the guidelines and standards of our General and Special Rules. They have never made more spiritual sense than they do today.

Your unrelenting commitment to our holiness heritage will in a large measure insure the ongoing of our mission. In so doing you will, in Charles Wesley's words,

Unite the pair so long disjoined
Knowledge and vital piety.