

HOLINESS AND MISSION

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Throughout our history, holiness has been our watchword and song. It is impossible to talk about the mission of the Church of the Nazarene in the world without seeing where we are in relation to our establishing doctrine. That being the case, what should we make of the still-jarring pronouncement in 1994 by Richard S. Taylor, our revered theologian and preacher, of the death of the holiness movement?¹

Insofar as Taylor was concerned, the torpedo that sank the holiness movement was *A Theology of Love* by Mildred Bangs Wynkoop. She offered a paradigm-shifting way of conceiving our key theology. Moving backward from the nineteenth-century transatlantic holiness movement, Wynkoop, along with others, rediscovered John Wesley not simply as an evangelist and church founder but also as a theologian.² Wynkoop cast doubt on our use of certain biblical texts. We were chastened not to be too hasty in attributing the disciples' sanctification to Pentecost, or building a theology of sanctification based on metaphors such as the altar sanctifying the gift, or the Hebrews' exodus from Egypt and entry into Canaan as our justification and entrance into the experience of entire sanctification. More importantly, Wynkoop focused the church's attention away from the structure of holiness (when, where, and how we experienced the second blessing) to its substance: Christlikeness. What was the outward sign of inward, sanctifying grace? Not testimony to a "second" work of grace, not a list of rules, not speaking in tongues, . . . but love. Even J. Kenneth Grider, a traditionalist and staunch critic of Wynkoop, recognized the "genius" that was at work in *A Theology of Love*.³

Already, Wynkoop had published *John Wesley: Christian Revolutionary*, a small book that spoke to my generation. The world was in upheaval. The war in Vietnam was unpopular and provoked demonstrations. Women asserted their rights. Slogans of love and peace. Massive rock concerts. Drugs. Agitation over the civil rights of African Americans. Riots after the assassination of Martin Luther King in 1968. Upheavals were everywhere. Che Guevara was pursued, captured, and put to death in Bolivia. In Peru, a military dictatorship took power, and there was a rising militant leftist movement, the "Shining Path." In 1970, not only did Wynkoop publish this small book, but at the same time, Peruvian theologian Gustavo Gutierrez was finding

¹ Taylor, "Why the Holiness Movement Died," *God's Revivalist* (1999), 1-15. See also Darius Salter, *The Demise of the American Holiness Movement: A Historical, Theological, Biblical and Cultural Exploration* (Lexington, KY: Emeth, 2019). Ironically, in *A Century of Holiness Theology*, Mark Quanstrom attributed to Taylor himself the small wedge that led to that death, when Taylor distinguished between humanity and carnality, which seemed to excuse a lot of areas of life from sin, if "sin" is properly defined, as Wesley would say it should be, as voluntary transgression. See Quanstrom, *A Century of Holiness Theology: The Doctrine of Entire Sanctification in the Church of the Nazarene 1905 to 2004* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 2004), 98, 102, 104.

² See Albert C. Outler, "Towards a Re-Appraisal of John Wesley as a Theologian," 39-54, and other chapters in *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage: Essays by Albert C. Outler*, eds. Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longden (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991).

³ See Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1972). Grider's comments came in *The Seminary Tower* (Summer 1973), 9-10. See also Victor Paul Reasoner, "The American Holiness Movement's Paradigm Shift Concerning Pentecost," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 31 (Fall 1996), 132-146.

political meanings in the Exodus story and exploring a theology of liberation, while Brazilian philosopher Paolo Freire was developing a pedagogy of the oppressed. In such turbulent times, to a church prone to grow in upon itself, Wynkoop admonished that to “cut off our contact with the world to preserve our purity is to corrupt our own purity,” for “purity does not consist in what we preserve but in the outflow of the love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.”⁴

How did Wesley fit? He provided guidance. He was not a recluse. What kind of gospel would it be that hoarded resources and failed to give compassionately to the poor?, he asked. Wesley taught Methodists, “Let our superfluities give way to our neighbor’s conveniences . . . our conveniences to our neighbor’s necessities; our necessities to his extremities.”⁵ When Wesley asked why the poor were poor, he did not attribute it to their character; he attributed it to social systems that favored the gentry class. While he offered his ideas on particular economic and political solutions, he saw something as simple as visiting the poor as a transformative means of grace.⁶ He challenged the Methodists, toward the end of his life, “Many of your brethren, beloved of God, have not food to eat; they have not raiment to put on; they have not a place where to lay their head. And why are they thus distressed? Because *you* impiously, unjustly, and cruelly detain from them what your Master and theirs lodges in *your* hands on purpose to supply *their* wants!”⁷ Wesley taught a simplicity of life, an abundant life unbounded by materialism, that would, if followed, wrote Free Methodist Alice Tenney, transform the world.⁸

Nazarenes rediscovered the social implications of their Wesleyan heritage. They also came to appreciate the reformist character of the nineteenth-century holiness movement. Even if some of its language and metaphors could not be justified, its works of righteousness could not be denied. Nazarene historian Timothy L. Smith, in particular, demonstrated this. Mid-nineteenth-century evangelicals fought against slavery. They found in Galatians 3:28 that there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, a message of liberation for women, and their right to be ordained, as well as freedom for slaves. Smith’s thesis, that social reform emanates from evangelicalism—particularly its Wesleyan side—overturned existing interpretations, and helped to inspire modern-day evangelicals to act on behalf of the poor.⁹

A Movement of The Spirit

Nazarenes reappropriated their own history. If, in preaching holiness, John Wesley hoped for moral reform in eighteenth-century Great Britain, Phineas Bresee, a founder of the Church of the Nazarene, likewise focused on society’s need for moral reform. The Church of the

⁴ Wynkoop, *John Wesley: Christian Revolutionary* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1970), 47.

⁵ Wesley, “Salvation by Faith,” *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 1: *Sermons*, edited by Albert C. Outler (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984), 125.

⁶ See Randy Maddox, “‘Visit the Poor’: John Wesley, the Poor, and the Sanctification of Believers,” in *The Poor and the People Called Methodist*, ed. Ricard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville: Kingswood, 2002), 59-81.

⁷ Wesley, “Causes of the Inefficacy of Christianity,” *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 4: *Sermons IV: 115-151*, edited by Albert C. Outler (Nashville: Abingdon, 1987), 91 (italics in the text). See also Wesley’s sermon “The Danger of Increasing Riches,” in the same, 178-186.

⁸ Mary Alice Tenney, *Blueprint for a Christian World: An Analysis of the Wesleyan Way* (Winona Lake, IN: Light and Life, 1953).

⁹ Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Abingdon, 1957). Many of the themes were popularized in Donald W. Dayton, *Discovering an Evangelical Heritage* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976).

Nazarene's 1895 *Manual* declared: "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."¹⁰ Bresee further stated, "Perhaps no missionary work needs more to be done than the planting of centers of fire in this country to preach and lead people into holiness, and help Christianize Christianity, and save America from going utterly into worldliness and paganism."¹¹ Bresee took from the walls of the Grange Halls he saw when he pastored Methodist churches in Iowa a fitting philosophy for the Church of the Nazarene: "In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity."¹²

As it was for John Wesley, "feeding the poor, clothing the naked, and healing the sick" was integral to the Nazarene mission.¹³ As a leader of the still-in-formation Church of the Nazarene, Bresee kept up his interest in "civic righteousness," particularly regarding prohibition. For him, and for the reformers of that age, this was a social issue. Alcohol wrecked homes and families. In addition, Bresee kept a lively interest in the local Florence Home for unwed mothers and unwanted children and served as president of its Board. (At the same time, Holiness people in the rural Southern part of the United States were doing the same, building homes where unwed mothers could have their babies, and establishing orphanages.) Bresee believed that no truly beneficial service to human beings could be sustained without love-perfecting grace, and that the fruition of perfect love would be service to both the spiritual and physical needs of humankind.¹⁴

Bresee's church's sense of a distinct mission was so extreme that the Missions Committee reported to the 1904 Annual Assembly: "As strange as it may seem, God is more anxious for a holy church than he is for the conversion of the heathen."¹⁵ But in 1906, when an Indian woman, Sukhoda Banarjee, spoke in his church one Sunday night, Bresee changed his mind. He was ready. Banarjee's ministry in the crowded city of Calcutta focused on social needs neglected by others, in this case, the plight of child widows and orphans. It was the kind of urban work among the poor that appealed to Bresee. He appointed several laypersons from his church, and Banarjee herself, as missionaries.¹⁶

The early missions of the Church of the Nazarene were holistic, or what we would call "integral," combining compassionate works with revivalism. A good example is China, where Nazarene missionaries, working in comity arrangements with other Protestants, itinerated among

¹⁰ "Articles of Faith and General Rules of the Church of the Nazarene," November 26, [1895]; also in *The Manual of the Church of the Nazarene, Promulgated by the Assembly of 1898*, 13.

¹¹ Bresee, in *Nazarene Messenger* 11 (December 20, 1906), 7.

¹² Floyd T. Cunningham, "Phineas Bresee: In All Things Charity," in *Mosaic of Faith: Piecing Together Our Christian Story*, ed. Everett Leadingham (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 2007), 101-108. Regarding the Grange Halls, this is a hypothesis.

¹³ Bresee, *Sermons from Matthew's Gospel* (Kansas City: Nazarene, n.d.), 61.

¹⁴ Bresee, *Sermons from Matthew's Gospel*, 91-98.

¹⁵ *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene, 1903* (Los Angeles: Nazarene Publishing House, 1903), 7, 67-70; *Proceedings of the Ninth Annual Assembly of the Church of the Nazarene* (Los Angeles: Nazarene Publishing House, 1904), 37.

¹⁶ *Proceedings of the Tenth Annual Assembly*, 34-36; Hulda Grebe, "Minutes of the Assembly, October 3, 1906"; Cunningham, *Holiness Abroad*, 58-61.

rural villages in ten counties in southern Hebei and eastern Shandong provinces, preached the gospel with dramatic flair at town markets, and planted village churches. At the same time, the mission supervised flood control projects and road construction from Handan to Daming, initiated brick-making and other small industries, and taught old women how to read. They started primary schools as well as a Bible college, and established Bresee Memorial Hospital.¹⁷

C. J. Kinne, a member of Los Angeles First Church, who had married Bresee's daughter, managed the construction of the hospital in Daming and articulated not only its mission, but the mission of the church. "To love my neighbor is the test of whether or not I love God," Kinne wrote.¹⁸ Christians should seek to rectify social conditions not merely out of a sense of duty, Kinne believed, but out of love. "The church greatly needs this form of service in order to develop and increase the gift and graces which will make her Christlike. If we are to be like our Lord, then we shall have to possess and exercise the same compassion and love which he had for all who were in distress."¹⁹ Kinne emphasized that charitable work must be undertaken with disinterested benevolence. A religion, he said, "which does not flow out of the heart and life in streams of blessing unto needy souls is a poor thing in which to invest either time or money." Though Kinne appreciated the evangelistic impact of such service, this was not, for him, the primary motivation for such ministries. If our hearts are truly filled with perfect love, we can do no other.²⁰

Channels of the Spirit

The 1907 and 1908 mergers of the Church of the Nazarene with two other holiness groups, the Association of Pentecostal Churches of America and the Holiness Church of Christ, continued the movement each had begun from "boundlessness" to "consolidation."²¹

Though we were united in all things essential to salvation, Phineas Bresee and Hiram F. Reynolds, the church's first two general superintendents, differed in emphasis. While Bresee emphasized the church's distinguishing doctrine, holiness, and preferred to concentrate on urban ministries, Reynolds, as both General Superintendent and Foreign Missions Secretary, quickly set up channels of support among the districts for missions and pushed forward a carefully measured, financed, and controlled foreign mission program.²²

Reynolds had come to prominence in the Church of the Nazarene after serving as the foreign missions secretary for the Association of Pentecostal Churches of America, which was not very strong when it sent out its first missionaries (to India) in December 1897. Just before the missionaries left, a Foreign Missions Committee hastily composed a mission policy that became the prototype for all future policies in the Church of the Nazarene. The essence of the mission, the policy stated, was "to use every endeavor to bring lost souls to Christ, and to labor to bring every believer into the experience of entire sanctification." "Every endeavor" included education

¹⁷ Floyd T. Cunningham, *Holiness Abroad: Nazarene Missions in Asia* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2004), 19, 150-160.

¹⁸ C. J. Kinne, *The Modern Samaritan: A Presentation of the Claims of Medical Missions* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, n.d.), 10.

¹⁹ Kinne, *The Modern Samaritan*, 28

²⁰ Kinne, *The Modern Samaritan*, 85.

²¹ A phrase used by John Higham in *Hanging Together: Unity and Diversity in American Culture*, ed. Carl J. Guarneri (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 149-165.

²² Smith, *Called*, 250-257.

and what would later be called compassionate ministries, such as managing a dairy farm, and taking in destitute children during a famine, as well as directly evangelistic ministries. The policy put control of the mission under the Missionary Committee at home. Missionaries were to refrain from making major decisions without the approval of the Missionary Committee. Funds for the mission were not to be sent directly to missionaries, but rather, channeled through the Association's treasurer.²³

The Association's pioneer missionary to India, M. D. Wood, clashed with Reynolds over these policies almost as soon as he landed with others in Bombay. The argument between them involved the kind of polity that would best suit the movement of the Spirit and the mission of God in India and, by implication, the world. For the sake of strategically carrying the gospel to the world, Reynolds advocated strong superintendency. If Wood had had his way, the shape of the Church of the Nazarene would be very different today. He foresaw national churches, with their own organization and leaders independent of the mission board. The disagreement was not a matter of doctrine, but polity. Reynolds, thinking of the history of early Methodism, perhaps, saw the wisdom of centralized control. Francis Asbury had appointed ministers for the Methodist churches in America, and under his command, ministers could be deployed wherever they were most needed and most useful. He knew his evangelists, and he knew the spiritual and physical geography of the Methodist churches. Similarly, missionaries in the fledgling Church of the Nazarene, once appointed, could be strategically deployed to places where the mission was most in need.²⁴

The Church of the Nazarene was something of an experiment in its way of organizing districts rather than national churches. When Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson said that the goal of missions was to establish self-propagating, self-supporting, and self-governing churches, they were not thinking of a denomination that would retain one Manual for the world, an internationally representative General Assembly, and global General Superintendents. Venn and Anderson were thinking more along the lines of Congregational or Baptist church polity, in which "self-governing" meant autonomy.²⁵

Over time, it is true, boundless local congregations, left to themselves, form associations that trend toward centralization. The threat is that such centralization, instead of facilitating the mission, might displace it. At the 1940 General Assembly, R. T. Williams, on behalf of the General Superintendents, warned the church of the increasing danger of professionalism, institutionalism, and over-organization, as well as legalism.²⁶ Mendell Taylor saw the danger similarly and imagined the work of God in the world as a river. Denominations are like channels

²³ "Missions Committee of the Association of Pentecostal Churches of America," December 11, 1897, amended July 20, 1904, 3 pp.

²⁴ Cunningham, *Holiness Abroad*, 50-56. On Asbury see John Wigger, *American Saint: Francis Asbury and the Methodists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 281-284, 377-381.

²⁵ Henry Venn, "Organization of a Native Church" (1861), in *To Apply the Gospel: Selections from the Writings of Henry Venn*, ed. Max Warren (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 66-71; Rufus Anderson, "Principles and Methods of Modern Missions" (1869) in *To Advance the Gospel: Selections from the Writings of Rufus Anderson*, ed. R. Pierce Beaver (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 97-102. See also Paul William Harris, *Nothing but Christ: Rufus Anderson and the Ideology of Protestant Foreign Missions* (New York: Oxford U. Press, 1999).

²⁶ W. T. Purkiser, *Called Unto Holiness*, vol. 2: *The Second Twenty-five Years, 1933-1958* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1983), 134.

for the river of God's mighty Spirit. But institutions that once were conduits of God's Spirit could block God's Spirit rather than allowing it to flow. The institution could exist for its own sake and its own survival rather than remain a means of God's grace to the world. John Wesley's Methodist societies and Charles Wesley's hymns were conduits of God's Spirit within the eighteenth-century Church of England. The holiness movement, with its camp meetings, revivals, and altar calls, was a conduit of God's Spirit within nineteenth-century Methodism and other churches. Its measures as well as its message contextually fit the time and place. The point that Taylor was making to us seminarians was that we must make sure, insofar as it rests upon us, that the Church of the Nazarene remains a channel of God's Spirit. Phineas Bresee said, as well, "If the channels are kept open, God's grace will continue to flow through us to [women and] men."²⁷

Once set in stone or concrete, are denominational channels malleable enough to be used by the Spirit?²⁸ Roman Catholic historian Philip Sheldrake describes four stages in the development in spiritual traditions that also describe the cycles of denominational life. The first stage is "emergence," which includes both the origins and expansion of the church. This corresponds to the holiness movement of the nineteenth century and the first generation of the Church of the Nazarene, in which we sensed that we were doing something so great in the Kingdom of God that it could not be contained within a denomination. We were going to "Christianize Christianity." By the second generation, our expansion was less spontaneous and more planned—corresponding to the second stage that Sheldrake describes as "maintenance and stability." Religious movements (such as the monastic and religious orders in the Roman Catholic Church) form Rules. Life in the orders becomes routinized. Handbooks expand. (This sounds like the Church of the Nazarene in the post-World War II era.²⁹) This could lead, says Sheldrake, to stage three: "breakdown." The original reason for the movement that led to the organization is lost. This is what Richard Taylor saw in 1994. What can happen? As Sheldrake tells it, in the history of religious orders, zealous monks and friars attempt to get back to the primitive and original practices of their founders, and, to do so, form new orders. But as history shows, the new orders inevitably follow the same cycle toward institutionalization.³⁰

Insofar as the message of holiness is concerned, our fear is declension, of straying from our original mission. A declension model, a mode of analysis described in Perry Miller's account of the Puritans, for example, presupposes that a first generation's articulation of a set of ideas becomes the determining rubric upon which subsequent generations judge themselves. Any change must be justified as being consistent with the original generation. The question, when looking at a movement from this declension perspective, is always, has the movement strayed from its original purposes?³¹ Like the second and third generations of Puritan ministers'

²⁷ Taylor, *Exploring Evangelism* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1964), 7; Bresee, *Sermons on Isaiah* (Kansas City: Nazarene, 1926), 46. Similarly, see

²⁸ See the classic work of Howard A. Snyder, *The Problem of Wineskins: Church Structure in a Technological Age* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1975).

²⁹ Floyd T. Cunningham, Stan Ingersol, Harold E. Raser, and David Whitelaw, *Our Watchword and Song: A Centennial History of the Church of the Nazarene*, ed. Floyd T. Cunningham (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 2009), 347-356.

³⁰ Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality and History: Questions of Interpretation and Method* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 75-79.

³¹ Theodore Bozeman, *To Live Ancient Lives: The Primitivist Dimension in Puritanism* (Chapel Hill: U. of North Carolina Press, 1988), 356-359.

jeremiads, should we not bewail and lament the falling away from the founders? Do modifications to the defining doctrines and practices always amount to equivocations?³²

If one looks at religious movements from this standpoint, one is bound to ask, as Miller did of the Puritans, “Was there a further level of holiness to which the children could progress beyond that attained by the first settlers, and if there were none, could the later generations conceivably remain poised at the same pitch of virtue?” Or was their “holy experiment bound to fail”?³³ Failure, as Miller depicts it, came because of a three-part cycle: a church is born through divine grace, God rewards the church with prosperity, but prosperity seduces the church away from its purpose. Wesley worried exactly about this seduction of the world regarding future generations of Methodists.³⁴ We are faced with the possibilities of failure or “death,” as Richard Taylor said of the holiness movement, capitulation to outside forces, or, if it were possible, revitalization.

In response to Miller, what historian Harry Stout, in *The New England Soul*, found among second and third generation Puritans, one finds among Nazarenes such as J. Kenneth Grider and Mildred Bangs Wynkoop—not a falling away, but a passionate and devoted engagement with the core beliefs of the founders. The very existence of controversy and jeremiads, Stout shows, proves how alive doctrines are among subsequent generations. Rather than a declension from religious piety, Stout insisted in his exhaustive examination of colonial Puritan sermons that the real issue was preachers’ fear of their own lessening authority. The problem was the preachers’ loss of status, not the people’s loss of piety. Stout finds not an abandoned but a redefined “errand” among third-generation Puritans. They realized the necessity of accommodating to outside influences and the realities of pluralism, in particular, if their faith was to be transmitted onward.³⁵

Channels harden. People stop attending class meetings. Churches no longer sing the songs of Charles Wesley or Haldor Lillenas. Camp meetings close. Churches stop having revivals. There are no more altar calls. We do not hear “entire sanctification” or preach about the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Does this mean declension? Is there a pathway leading us on our quest to find our mission in today’s world? Sociologist Wade Clark Roof speaks positively, in a way, of the possibility as well as necessity of re-engaging with tradition—reconnecting; reframing; “re-traditionalizing.”³⁶ Roof warns that “the absolutizing of existing and/or idealized religious forms in the presence of so much flux and ontological uncertainty is a strong temptation,” and that the “return to old religious formulations easily takes on the aura of an urgent, if not sacred mission—resulting in what Anthony Giddens calls the ‘assertion of formulaic truth without regard to consequences.’”³⁷ Missiologist Charles Taber similarly admonishes, “Quit

³² Quanstrom, *A Century of Holiness Theology*, 23-24. See Floyd T. Cunningham, Book Review, *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 43 (Fall 2008), 230-234.

³³ Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (1939; reprint, Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard U. Press, 1982), 466.

³⁴ Wesley, “Thoughts upon Methodism,” 1786, in *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 9: *The Methodist Societies: History, Nature and Design*, ed. Rupert E. Davies (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989), 527-530.

³⁵ Harry S. Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England* (New York: Oxford U. Press, 1986), 98, 106, 128-130.

³⁶ Wade Clark Roof, *Spiritual Marketplace: Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion* (Princeton: Princeton U. Press, 1999), 164f.

³⁷ *Spiritual Marketplace*, 302.

trying to return to the past, to put things into neat, unchanging boxes, to control or determine the process. Have faith in God, in the Holy Spirit, in the Scriptures, in the young church.”³⁸

The Outward Signs of Inward Grace

Or, have faith in a new generation? Wynkoop had faith in my generation, and by connecting holiness to love, Wynkoop provided the necessary theological prerequisite and justification for the Church of the Nazarene’s compassionate ministries. Compassionate ministries evidenced a revitalization and contextualization of the holiness tradition—a new wineskin. As Nazarenes moved in this direction in the 1970s and the 1980s, they were doing so within a larger movement of God’s Spirit.

During the decades after the Second World War, some evangelical leaders boldly stepped out and established organizations that cared for the poor and marginalized. Robert “Bob” Pierce, who studied for the ministry at Pasadena Nazarene College in the 1930s, helped Han Kyung-chik, a prominent Korean Presbyterian pastor, to start World Vision.³⁹ John L. Peters, one-time president of the Nazarene Young People’s Society, found in the Church of the Nazarene no room for what he envisioned, a development agency that would enable self-reliance among the world’s poor, and so he started World Neighbors in 1951.⁴⁰ Wallace Erickson, a former Nazarene pastor, led Compassion International from 1975 to 1993. Paul McCleary, a graduate of Olivet Nazarene College, directed Church World Services for the United Methodist Church. None of these found ready acceptance for their calling in the Church of the Nazarene of the era. But slowly, what Timothy Smith called the “great reversal” among evangelicals who had once been engaged with social problems was being reversed.⁴¹

Within the larger evangelical movement, in 1966, the Billy Graham Association sponsored the Berlin World Congress for Evangelism. Billy Graham and his associates were consumed with the evangelization of the world, not with social problems, but the very venue of the congress, in politically torn Germany, was a testament in itself. Huarani converts came to the Berlin Conference from Ecuador as “trophies of evangelical missions.”⁴² Few complained of Western dominance, but, in this period of time in which apartheid had taken hold in South Africa, and racial conflicts were playing themselves out on the streets in America, veteran missionary Samuel Moffett stated that “any racial discrimination in the Christian Church has already done irreparable damage to world evangelism.”⁴³ Paul S. Rees, the pastor of the

³⁸ Charles R. Taber, *The World is Too Much with Us: “Culture” in Modern Protestant Missions* (Macon, GA: Mercer U. Press, 1991), 178.

³⁹ On the founding of World Vision see David R. Swartz, *Facing West: American Evangelicals in an Age of World Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 35-62.

⁴⁰ See John L. Peters, *Cry Dignity!* (Oklahoma City: World Neighbors, 1976).

⁴¹ In David O. Moberg, *The Great Reversal: Evangelism and Social Concern*, revised ed. (Philadelphia: Holman, 1977), 11, and 30, and Moberg himself talks about the reversal of the “great reversal,” 150-200. For the testimonies of Paul McCleary, Wallace Erickson, and John L. Peters see *Evangelism and Social Redemption: Addresses from a Conference on Compassionate Ministry November 1985*, eds. Albert L. Truesdale, Jr., and Steve Weber (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1987).

⁴² Swartz, *Facing West*, 99.

⁴³ Moffett, “The Greatest Enemy is Within,” in Carl F. H. Henry and W. Stanley Mooneyham, eds., *One Race, One Gospel, One Task: World Congress on Evangelism, Berlin, 1966* (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1967) 2: 198. See also C. Rene Padilla, *Mission between the Times*, rev. ed. (Carlisle, Cumbria: Langham, 2010), 54.

Evangelical Covenant Church in Minneapolis, whose father had been a prominent leader in the early years of the Church of the Nazarene in California, also spoke on the issues of race and discrimination, and called for “penitence” at the close of the conference, in an address on “Evangelism and Social Concern.”⁴⁴

The Church of the Nazarene had had ministries of compassion from its very beginnings in India, Swaziland, China, and almost everywhere, and in 1967, we opened another hospital in Kudjip, in the highlands of Papua New Guinea. The ministry of the hospital there and in India initiated community-based health care. In the 1970s, our work in Haiti became an example of compassionate ministries on an even more comprehensive scale, with agricultural projects, nutrition and feeding programs, primary schools, vocational courses, literacy programs, and a credit union. By the end of the decade, we were teaching fourteen thousand students in one-hundred day-schools in Haiti.⁴⁵

Without optimism in God’s sanctifying grace to change us and give us love, we could not hope for God’s sanctifying grace to change others and to change the world in which we live. The church’s home missions director, Raymond Hurn, wrote in 1973, in the midst of social crises, that the church must not crawl into its “own little enclave, polish the saints, refuse contact with outsiders, maintain personal piety, and totally miss the real mission of Christ in the world.”⁴⁶ Nazarenes wanted to convert the world and to go triumphantly forth into it, yet aimed to do so without really being a part of it. But it could not stand aside. Hurn led the church back to the urban centers that we had left decades before.

At the same time, in November 1973, Ronald Sider met with a group of socially-minded evangelicals in Chicago. They issued “A Declaration of Evangelical Social Concern.” The fifty-three signatories, insofar as I know, included no Nazarenes, but Paul Rees signed, as did Donald Dayton of the Wesleyan Church and Nancy Hardesty of the Christian and Missionary Alliance. Sider himself came from the Brethren in Christ Church, a denomination strongly influenced by the holiness movement. Though Billy Graham did not sign the Declaration, he stated, “We have a social responsibility, and I could identify with most of the recent Chicago Declaration of Evangelical Concern.”⁴⁷

As the follow-up conference to the Berlin Congress was being planned, some wanted social issues to play a prominent role, and others wanted to keep the message centered on evangelism. A pointed debate went on between people such as C. Peter Wagner and Harold Lindsell, and Latin Americans Samuel Escobar and Rene Padilla over whether the church’s mission to the world could center solely on evangelism, in the traditional sense of that word, or whether it should be holistic and “integral”—the term Padilla used.⁴⁸ Jesus, said Padilla at the Lausanne Conference in 1974, “confronts the power structures by denouncing their deep-seated ambition to rule, and by proclaiming another alternative, based on love, service, self-dedication

⁴⁴ In Henry and Mooneyham, eds., *One Race, One Gospel, One Task*, 1: 306-308.

⁴⁵ R. Franklin Cook and Steve Weber, *The Greening: The Story of Nazarene Compassionate Ministries* (Kansas City: Nazarene, 1986); Howard Culbertson, *The Kingdom Strikes Back: Signs of the Messiah at Work in Haiti* (Kansas City: Nazarene, 1990); Cunningham, et al, *Our Watchword and Song*, 582-591.

⁴⁶ Hurn, *Mission Possible: A Study of the Mission of the Church of the Nazarene* (Kansas City: Nazarene, 1973), 82.

⁴⁷ Grant Wacker, *America’s Pastor: Billy Graham and the Shaping of a Nation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U. Press, 2014), 243.

⁴⁸ C. Rene Padilla, *What is Integral Mission?* trans. Rebecca Breckveldt (Oxford: Regnum, 2021).

to others.” Jesus “does not take refuge in ‘religion’ or ‘spiritual things,’ as if his kingdom had nothing to do with political and social life.” Furthermore, in Latin America, “the evangelist often has to face innumerable prejudices that reflect the identification of Americanism with the gospel in the minds of his listeners.”⁴⁹ Samuel Escobar spoke even more radically, indicting evangelicals who tend to “oppose the violence of revolution but not the violence of war; they condemn the totalitarianism of the left but not that of the right; they speak openly in favor of Israel, but very seldom speak or do anything about the Palestinian refugees; they condemn all the sins that well-behaved middle class people condemn but say nothing about exploitation, intrigue, and dirty political maneuvering”⁵⁰ When the Lausanne Conference composed its agreed statements, Clause Five affirmed “that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty. For both are necessary expressions of our doctrine of God and man, our love for our neighbor, and our obedience to Jesus Christ. The message of salvation implies also a message of judgment upon every form of alienation, oppression, and discrimination, and we should not be afraid to denounce evil and injustice wherever they exist.”⁵¹

If Nazarenes had similar sentiments, they came slowly in response to human needs. In 1975, a powerful earthquake shook Guatemala, where the Church of the Nazarene had an old and well-established work. The church set up an Earthquake Reconstruction Fund to which churches as well as individuals might give, and the results astonished leaders. Within a year and a half, Nazarenes had given \$300,000 for the Guatemala crisis. Other projects followed. Holiness was not simply a watchword and song. This tangible evidence of a social conscience demanded organization. In 1984, Nazarene Compassionate Ministries began under Steve Weber, who had served as director of the integral mission in Haiti. In 1985, the church held the first Nazarene Ministries Conference in Kansas City. General Superintendent William Greathouse, a participant, observed: “Today we are witnessing in the Church of the Nazarene a rebirth of social concern and compassion as an authentic expression of Christian holiness.” He continued, “God is reawakening within us an understanding of the gospel as embracing the total needs of people.”⁵² The conference provided a kind of reconciliation with those former Nazarenes who had been driven away from the church because of their engagement in social ministries. We sang “Rescue the Perishing” with the destitute in mind, something of Fanny Crosby’s original intent. “Weep o’er the erring one,” so that “touched by a loving heart,” and “wakened by kindness,” broken lives might “vibrate” once more. Among the speakers was Tom Nees, who had left a comfortable pastorate to minister to the poor of Washington, DC, and to found the Community of Hope. In 1985, Nazarenes gave \$1.2 million for Nazarene Compassionate Ministries.⁵³

⁴⁹ Padilla, “Evangelism and the World,” in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice: International Congress on World Evangelization, Lausanne, Switzerland*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1975), 130, 126. See David C. Kirkpatrick, *A Gospel for the Poor: Global Social Christianity and the Latin American Evangelical Left* (Philadelphia: U. of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), 9-12, 15, and throughout.

⁵⁰ Escobar, “Evangelism and Man’s Search for Freedom, Justice and Fulfillment,” in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice*, ed. Douglas, 304.

⁵¹ <https://lausanne.org/statement/lausanne-covenant>. See Padilla’s description of events leading to this point, and after, in *Mission between the Times*, rev. ed. (Carlisle, Cumbria: Langham, 2010), 1-25. See Kirkpatrick, *A Gospel for the Poor*, 29, 61, 82; Swartz, *Facing West*, 97-131

⁵² William Greathouse, “Compassionate Ministries in the Church of the Nazarene,” in *Evangelism and Social Redemption*, 109.

⁵³ Cunningham et al, *Our Watchword and Song*, 582-591; Greathouse, “Compassionate Ministries,” 109. See Tom Nees, “The Church Meeting Human Need,” in *Evangelism and Social Redemption*, 44-62; and

The groundswell continued. In 1986, R. Franklin Cook and Steve Weber concluded that “God never intended for us to live as if we could ignore the poverty and social evils surrounding us.” They agreed that “sin has caused our world to be selfish and self-centered. God’s Word reminds us it is the Church’s responsibility to care and minister to the victims of this misallocation of His resources.”⁵⁴

“Lausanne II,” sponsored by the Billy Graham Association, was held in Manila, the Philippines, in 1989. While in the intervening years, Wagner and others still insisted that evangelism must be primary,⁵⁵ in the “Manila Manifesto,” evangelicals averred “that we must demonstrate God’s love visibly by caring for those who are deprived of justice, dignity, food, and shelter.” Furthermore, we must “affirm that the proclamation of God’s kingdom of justice and peace demands the denunciation of all injustice and oppression, both personal and structural,” and “we who claim to be members of the Body of Christ must transcend within our fellowship the barriers of race, gender, and class.” The delegates also repented “where we have been indifferent to the plight of the poor.” They saw that “good news and good works are inseparable.” One commented that after 1989, “evangelicals engaged in social action ministries need no longer be defensive.”⁵⁶ Indeed, there was an incredible shift in emphasis from the 1966 Berlin Conference to the 2010 Lausanne Conference in Cape Town and to the 2024 Lausanne Conference in Incheon, South Korea.⁵⁷ By that time, compassion had become embedded among Nazarenes, not simply as a program and policy but as an outward sign of sanctifying grace.

Pathways Forward

Today, we are living in a post-denominational period, when traditions, labels, and slogans about holiness are of little value. The evidence of post-denominationalism comes in different ways—in the generic forms of worship and music, in the social-media-captured messages of preachers, and in the rise of independent megachurches. But post-denominationalism also comes, for some, in the form of what we might call pre-denominationalism, the search for ancient and reflective ways of Christian thought and practice. In either case, a sociologist of religion observed some years ago, people are not looking for a local church or a denomination that has all the answers. Being part of something already built and (literally) set in stone is of little interest.⁵⁸ This generation is looking for a church allowing them to ask questions, a church in quest, a church honestly searching the scriptures, a church authentically seeking God, and realizing that no one quite fits into the same order-of-sanctification models offered by either Wesley or the holiness movement. Each one’s pilgrimage toward Christ is different.⁵⁹

Like early Nazarenes, this generation is seeking Truth, and like the early Nazarenes, it wants to be part of a journey of authenticity rather than pretense. If that is so, a church positing,

Nees, “Journey Inward, Journey Outward: Our Heritage of Compassion,” in *The Heart of Holiness: Compassion and the Holy Life*, ed. Carl M. Leth (Kansas City: Nazarene, 2015), 13-26.

⁵⁴ Cook and Weber, *The Greening*, 37.

⁵⁵ Kirkpatrick, *A Gospel for the Poor*, 29.

⁵⁶ Alan Nichols, ed., *The Whole Gospel for the Whole World: Story of Lausanne II Congress on World Evangelization, Manila 1989* (Charlotte, NC: Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 1989), 79, 110-26, 143.

⁵⁷ Kirkpatrick, *A Gospel for the Poor*, 143, 174-175.

⁵⁸ Roof, *Spiritual Marketplace*, 163, 307, and throughout.

⁵⁹ See T. A. Noble, *Holy Trinity: Holy People: The Theology of Christian Perfecting* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2013), 101.

or even advertising, “come, we have the answers you are looking for,” is of no appeal. This generation longs to be part of what first-generation Nazarenes experienced: the exhilaration of being part of something new, something transformative, something countercultural, something making waves, something they could help mold and build. Like our foremothers and forefathers, they are willing to give something, maybe even everything, for that. Sociologist Robert Wuthnow agrees. He refutes the idea that Christians today are less interested than their parents and grandparents in giving generously for God’s mission in the world.⁶⁰

What are pathways forward? Philip Sheldrake, in *Spirituality and History*, speaks about a fourth stage: “renewed flexibility.” His example of this is Vatican II. In that Council, the Roman Catholic Church discarded practices once seemed sacrosanct to the people—veils for women in the church, meatless Fridays, black-robed nuns. It offered Catholics throughout the world the opportunity to worship more freely with guitars and folk music, to hear the mass in their own language, and to read the Bible.

The holiness movement left us hanging on a theological twig that broke, if Richard Taylor was correct, and a generation or so ago, we grabbed onto a branch called Wesley. In the decades since *A Theology of Love*, the surge of studies on John Wesley has led to a return to *his* sources.⁶¹ He has led us to deeper founts than himself, to the pre-Nicene traditions, and, especially, to the ways in which the Greek church spoke of Christ and of our participation in him.

Has Wesley finished his task among us and pushed us into the future by returning us to the past? In his Foreword to volume one of the “Great Holiness Classics,” William Greathouse wrote that though John Wesley was the “chief architect of the doctrine of entire sanctification,” Wesley did not give the “final and complete formulation of this truth.”⁶² From that still-sturdy branch we call Wesleyan, we grab onto the girthy tree itself. I take this to be the point that T. A. Noble is offering in his yet-to-be-completed *Christian Theology*. What we affirm is what Wesley himself affirmed: the common heritage of the Christian church. Wesley offered nothing distinctive. His theology was practical and pragmatic, evangelical, and catholic.⁶³

We find others, like ourselves, digging deeper than the theologies of the eighteenth or sixteenth centuries, to the ancient Christian faith, to the Scriptures, to Christ himself. On our pathway toward making Christlike disciples in the nations, we might find not only Cleopas, but Baptists seeking to make Christ-like disciples in the nations, Pentecostals seeking to make Christ-like disciples in the nations, and Roman Catholics seeking to make Christ-like disciples in the nations—for what group of Christians does not seek to make Christ-like disciples in the nations?! Is this not a joyful thing? Like others, we are yearning to know more of the Christ we serve, and we are yearning to see him manifest in our lives and in our world. On this pathway

⁶⁰ Robert Wuthnow, *Boundless Faith: The Global Outreach of American Churches* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 235.

⁶¹ See Ted A. Campbell, *John Wesley and Christian Antiquity: Religious Vision and Cultural Change* (Nashville: Kingswood, 1991); Geordan Hammond, *John Wesley in America: Restoring Primitive Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 2014).

⁶² Greathouse, “Foreword,” to *Holiness Teaching – New Testament Times to Wesley*, ed. Paul M. Bassett (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1997), 11.

⁶³ T. A. Noble, *Christian Theology*, vol. 1, *The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, part 1, *Faith and History* (Kansas City: Foundry, 2022), xxii, 24, 29, 43.

toward making Christlike disciples in the nations, we may have come to realize that it is easier to be in the nations than to be like Christ.

If we take this lead, along with the supposed death of the holiness movement, are we then, perhaps, more rightly to call ourselves “a church in the holiness tradition”? Or “a church in the Wesleyan tradition”? What will we have to offer the Church? Moving ahead, will we possess the same passion for compassion as a generation ago? For me, I admit, that is an ongoing dilemma, but it may simply mean that we are becoming what we are raised to be. We are not yet completed. If we are a movement of God’s Spirit, we are in process, as Paul puts it in Ephesians 2:22, rising to become a holy temple in the Lord, and as a community, collectively rising to be a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. That is, we are constantly finding out what it means to be, in this generation, here and now, a people of God called to be holy. Doing so, we live Christ.

Conclusion

We have come to greater maturity as we have walked along this path together—as God has spoken to us about this or that doctrine, this or that experience of the heart, this or that practice. Today, there is more of a seeking and less of a “we have found it” mentality. A greater restraint, a chastened triumphalism, fits this questing generation. Not only that, it fits the best of our tradition: if we are still a movement, it means that we have not yet arrived at our final destination; and we hope that as we walk along this road together, with Christ in our midst, he is still talking to us from the Scriptures, whispering to us about himself, until the end of the age.

One day, when Jesus was in his hometown of Nazareth, he unrolled the scroll to Isaiah 61:1-2. The words were self-revelatory. They expressed Jesus’ own sense of his mission in the world. The mission was to preach the good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the prisoners, to recover sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor—a Jubilee year of recovery and reconciliation. We call this the “Nazarene Manifesto.”