Nazarenes
And the Wesleyan Mission

Can We Learn from Our History?

by

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Preface

We Nazarenes, like other Wesleyan evangelicals in the 20th century, understand the original mission of John Wesley's followers to have been, as he put it, "to reform the nation, and spread scriptural holiness" over the land. A recent reading of Wesley's 139 published sermons and most of his doctrinal tracts, in approximately the order in which he wrote them, has reaffirmed my belief that this understanding is historically accurate. God's promise to sanctify His people—to so perfect them in love for himself and for one another as to make them inwardly and outwardly holy—was the central theme of his life and ministry.

Though never implying freedom from ignorance, error, and physical or psychic frailty, he believed hallowing grace to be available "now, and by simple faith." The experience of the new birth broke one free of sinful deeds and habits. The subsequent experience of "entire" sanctification brought deliverance from the inward bent to sinning and enthroned love as the ruling impulse of the heart.

Some who bear Wesley's name understand that original mission and message differently, of course, and some consider it less important to follow what he set forth 200 years ago than to proclaim what they think in today's world are more relevant aspects of his message. I do not wish to argue these points here. We Nazarenes believe the original emphasis to be both scriptural and relevant. The purpose of the following address, delivered at the denomination's annual Leadership Conference in January, 1979, is simply to ask what lessons learned from the long history of Methodism's relation to the doctrine of Christian holiness will help Nazarenes keep it in its central place in our faith and fellowship.

—Timothy L. Smith

Our greatest collective temptation is to underestimate the worth and promise of the community of Faith of which we are leaders. History rarely repeats itself. Evangelical denominations are not subject to a spiritual second law of thermodynamics. The order, force, and beauty of Christian institutions do not inevitably waste away, requiring, at some dark time of crisis down the road, new and freshly anointed ones to arise and replace them. The promise of the continual, sanctifying presence of the Holy Spirit in the Body of Christ is as trustworthy now as it was at Pentecost.

But persisting problems do recur in salvation history, as the experiences of patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and reformers make plain. Every Christian generation since St. Paul's time has had to deal with the resistance of individuals and of social structures to incorporating into practical life the righteousness which flows from faith in Jesus Christ, the holiness that flows from perfect love. This was Wesley's problem, and it is ours. His movement was not bound to a foreordained cycle of defeat, nor are those of his successors. The history of the people of God in Old and New Testament times as well as in the 19th century offers instruction on how by God's grace we can, if we will, avoid the errors that would weaken or frustrate the mission our Lord calls us now to fulfill.

Look with me, then, at what I have concluded—studying all the facts that my years of freedom to study have allowed and thinking as sympathetically as I know how—were the live principal elements of compromise that led historic Methodism away from its Wesleyan mission. These five were:

1. The willingness to accept the adequacy of ministers whose quest for Christian perfection had not yet led them into the experience of perfect love.

2. The slow abandonment of the discipline of class and band meetings in which the early Methodists had cultivated the pursuit of holiness.

3. Active resistance to the revived emphasis of mid-19th century Methodists on Wesley's clear teaching that the second blessing of entire sanctification was an indispensable step in the lifelong process by which the Lord perfects His children in righteousness.

4. The growing tendency of the Methodist ministry to allow as normative the enjoyment of unconsecrated wealth and social eminence.

5. Last in time and perhaps also importance—the decline of the doctrine of holiness in Methodist colleges and theological seminaries.

Wesley's Mistake

The first error was John Wesley's, I think, but the group of preachers closest to him in education and eminence must share responsibility for it. For he and they accepted as adequate, though not ideal, ministers not yet in the enjoyment of the

experience of heart purity.

One day, in the period between 1774 and 1776 when John Fletcher was completing his *Checks to Antinomianism* and earnestly seeking for himself the blessing of entire sanctification, the saintly pastor of Madeley wrote Charles Wesley as follows:

> I think sometimes that the souls that are dissatisfied as you and I are . . . would do well if after the example of the apostles they retired from the world, to wrestle there 10 or 30 days in an upper room. . . . The world will generally cry out to us *Physician heal thyself*, and laugh at us for our pains, unless we are benefited by our doctrine. . . . Shall we only talk about it, or write hymns and checks? . . . Would not a conference of prayer and mutual exhortation among dissatisfied believers especially preachers, answer a better end than that of surfeiting our hearers with exhortations? . . . I, and thousands more, look at you and your brother, just as some of my flock took at me. If it is not for turn, they say, it is not for me. . . . I remain confounded, and conscious I am guilty of . . . saying and not doing, of tying preceptive burdens on the shoulders of others which I touch more with my pen or tongue than with my head and shoulders. I hope God has not yet sworn in His anger that I shall not enter into His rest, that I shall die in the wilderness of my past cowardice, disobedience, hypocrisy.
> . . . The Jewish priests were the last to get over Jordan, and to embrace the faith of Christ in Jerusalem: but Christian priests are always first in every good work and conquest. Undoubtedly the apostles went into [the] kingdom before the 3,000, on the Day of Pentecost. If we get in, who knows but perhaps three scores may follow us. This is the only way to retrieve the aspired doctrine of perfection. Our works will preach, and back our words with a kind of omnipotent influence; and God will seal a truth which we seal ourselves in a right manner.

No record of any response from Charles or John Wesley to this proposal has survived; certainly no such "upper room" conference ever took place.

Unquestionably the Wesleys, like Fletcher, wanted every Methodist minister and lay person to press on earnestly and rapidly into the experience of perfect love so that all could be freed from the inward bent to sinning, from the carnality of their minds which at every turn impeded their pursuit of the Christlike character that is the goal of all God's grace in human life. John Wesley never affirmed more clearly than during this critical decade that there was indeed a "second change" available to Christians in which the fullness of the Holy Spirit would destroy inbred sin and empower holy living, inwardly completing what the same Holy Spirit had begun to do in the new birth, or regeneration. And he insisted that this "second blessing" was available now, by faith, and only rarely, if at all, by a gradual process of growth.

Yet John and Charles Wesley were the center of an elite circle of well-educated Methodist leaders, most of them ordained in the Anglican Church, who did not themselves profess the experience of entire sanctification. The reasons are both obscure and complex. Leading English churchmen as well as Lady Huntington's Calvinists had bitterly opposed and publicly scorned their preaching of the gospel of

Christian holiness and had closely and publicly inspected their words and deeds for any fault.

The original Oxford band, moreover, had sought perfection in a school of holy discipline whose major emphases included introspection, self-examination, and awe before the Christian ideal of love made perfect. They understood the ultimate goal to be full likeness to the God we know in Jesus Christ, not only of the inward person (will, affection, and intellect) but of the entire personality in its every relationship with God, man, and nature. They believed that the experience and profession of the second blessing was not a substitute for that overall quest but an indispensable step toward it. Nevertheless, this elite group suffered from a peculiar inward barrier to the exercise of faith for the experience that they insisted the Scriptures promised and their most spiritual converts enjoyed.

To break through the barrier they needed exactly what Fletcher recommended, I think: a long season of prayer and conversation together in which they could strengthen one another's resolve and dispel the hesitancy which held them back.

Surviving accounts indicate that among the group only Fletcher himself and, possibly, Joseph Benson, finally broke out of these constraints and came joyously to faith for inward purity. Fletcher's experience followed a long bout with tuberculosis, two years of which were spent in his native Switzerland, and it accompanied his abandonment of an ascetic resistance to marriage. The same summer of 1781, when he allowed himself to fall in love and plan to wed one of Methodism's most sensible and saintly women, Mary Bosanquet, he also was able, as he put it, to obey the voice of God who had spoken to him by the scriptural words, "Reckon yourselves, therefore, to be dead indeed unto sin." He testified to a company of friends, *"I* am freed from sin. Yes, I rejoice to declare it, and to be a witness to the glory of His grace, that *I am dead unto sin and alive unto God through Jesus Christ,* who is my Lord and King! I received this blessing four or five times before; but I lost it by not observing the order of God. . . . *With the mouth confession is made unto salvation."*

Since Wesley never himself made this clear a profession, he was scarcely in a position to insist that his preachers must experience the blessing before full acceptance into the Methodist ministry. In the decades following the founder's death, the notion that the pursuit of inward purity was sufficient and that the experience of perfect love was the distant goal rather than the present promise of Scripture spread widely in English Methodism. And the same notions penetrated America's Methodism as well. Holiness remained a denominational slogan, but only rarely a realized experience.

The lesson was not lost on the band of eminent and generally well-educated Methodist ministers in the New York and New England conferences who, beginning about 1820, set out to restore the doctrine of entire sanctification as a second work of grace to its central place in the Methodist understanding of the pursuit of perfection. Nathan Bangs, Wilbur Fisk, George Peck, and Timothy Merritt concluded that the crucial first step was to seek and find the experience themselves; the second was to learn how to preach and profess it in such a way as to point their

hearers to the sanctifying grace that flowed from the Cross. The holiness movement grew out of their ministry and, through the witness of such persons as Phoebe Palmer, Charles G. Finney, and William E. Boardman, spread widely outside the Methodist fold.

The prerequisites for the Methodist ministry were never changed, however, and in the last half of the century there arose among the many who did not seek and find this blessing a few who began publicly to oppose any profession of it. The founders of the National Camp Meeting Association for the Promotion of Holiness determined, therefore, to limit its membership to Methodist ministers who enjoyed as well as preached the experience of perfect love. From them Nazarenes inherited the deep conviction that persons ordained and appointed to preach or pastor in our churches must be clearly in the experience of entire sanctification and not simply seekers of it, for they must lead their flocks, as Fletcher long ago put it, "in every good work and conquest."

If this accounting of the history of the question is accurate, the moral for Nazarenes and other modern Wesleyan denominations is plain: we must encourage forms of fellowship and ways of preaching perfect love that will not only maintain an ancient standard but assure its living reality in the hearts of our ministers, young and old. No doubt we have at times so emphasized a proper and scriptural profession of the second blessing that we have seemed almost to dissociate it from the long process of sanctification. This process begins in conviction of sin, proceeds crucially in the experiences of regeneration and full salvation, and continues to the end of our days as we press forward "toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Whenever this has been the case, we have left thoughtful young ministers prey to the confusions that eventually stem from their having concentrated so fully on the subjective attainment of inward peace as to divorce it from the moral and biblical call to work out objectively the righteousness of Christ into all of their attitudes, habits, thoughts, and actions.

They soon discover in the Scriptures and in the community of the faithful the central importance of the quest of Christlikeness. Not seeing clearly, because they were not taught to see clearly, the organic connection between that quest and the experience of perfect love, some have become reticent and unclear about the second blessing. For the first time in my lifetime, I am finding small but significant numbers of my fellow ministers, old arid young, unable to testify clearly to an experience of full consecration and heart cleansing—and unsure they need to, except before a Board of Orders and Relations.

As much to provoke as to direct your thinking, then, may I suggest some concrete reforms aimed at encouraging and assuring a ministry composed of persons richly enjoying both inward and outward holiness?

1. District Superintendents should at least once year inquire carefully and lovingly of each pastor, and particularly of each licensed minister, whether they are making real progress in the pursuit of perfection in all the Christian graces. Such a question leads directly, of course, into a discussion of the experience of perfect hove and of its necessity to such progress. It also keeps that discussion centered

upon the larger goal of Christlikeness that we all must diligently and daily pursue.

2. Boards of Orders and Relations should assign a spiritual counselor to each licensed minister whose continuous attention to the candidate's spiritual growth will be at least as great as that which the Board of Ministerial Studies pays to his or her intellectual development. Such a counselor would be responsible to talk with the young minister earnestly and deeply several times a year about both the inward experience arid the growing expression of sanctity and love. At ordination time that counselor could then share with the board his or her sense of the progress the candidate is making and lead the questioning with both firmness and understanding when the candidate appears before the entire board.

3. The Board of General Superintendents should authorize and approve some standard questions to be asked and answered when candidates appear before Boards of Orders and Relations, questions which probe more deeply than merely the testimony to "some kind of second experience." The biblical promise of the righteousness which is by faith in Christ and the Pauline call to work out our salvation with fear and trembling are, as Wesley declared and we should realize from recent encounters with shallow experiences, the only context of commitment in which the experience of entire sanctification can remain a living reality.

All three of these suggestions aim at the renewal among Nazarenes of a culture of purity, of a community truly devoted to the grand object of redemption—holiness of heart and life. Of all Christian peoples we should be distinguished by our hungering and thirsting for that righteousness with which Jesus promised to fill us, and so enable us to help Him fulfill both the Law and the Prophets. My own effort to share in the development of such a culture of righteousness is reflected in the question I try often to ask, whether of mature or newborn saints: "How are you getting on spiritually? Tell me ways in which the Lord is helping you towards Christlikeness."

The Atrophy of the Class Meeting

The second compromising consensus that seems to me to have frustrated Methodist hopes to fulfill the Wesleyan mission came in the 19th century with the gradual abandonment of the class meeting. The declining estimate of the encouragement and guidance which these meetings provided for the pursuit of holiness was both symptom and cause, of course. But it reminds us of Wesley's serious words, "I know no holiness but social holiness."

Students have sometimes taken this statement to refer to his well-known commitment to social reforms—of slavery, of the wage system, and of the institutionalization of greed in the acquisition and display of wealth. But the words referred, rather, to the hallowing fellowship of mutual discipline that Wesley first experienced in his childhood home and then, more maturely, in the Holy Club at Oxford, in Moravian meetings for Bible study and prayer, and (in the long decades after his experience at Aldersgate Street) in Methodist conferences and class meetings.

No precise account of the stages by which class meetings were abandoned is possible from the records. Institutions die gradually and no one prints an obituary. But by the middle of the 19th century, the urgent appeals of leaders of the American holiness movement for their revival indicates that in many urban congregations class meetings were either moribund or extinct.

The holiness leaders probably did not understand what is clear in retrospect, that in both Britain and America classes had often functioned as congregations before Methodist churches were organized separately from parishes of the Church of England. For many decades afterward, in frontier America, the class also functioned practically as the congregation on one point of a preacher's circuit. It typically included all the Methodists at that point. The lay leader and a local preacher guided and encouraged the growth of the members during the long weeks when the preacher was at a far corner of the circuit. But as organized congregations with settled pastors and full programs of preaching and religious education emerged, bringing together all the members of a local community of Methodists, the class meeting became only one among the many organizations responsible to promote the pursuit of perfection in the local church.

Leaders of the holiness movement, sometimes accused of being so preoccupied with the experience of the second blessing as to be unconcerned about growth in holiness, in fact labored intelligently both to revive class meetings and to create new modes of corporate discipline and guidance. The most famous new institution was the Tuesday meeting for the promotion of holiness, begun in New York City in 1836 by Sara Lankford and continued by her sister, Phoebe Palmer. The idea spread to scores of towns and cities after about 1850, often under the leadership of women. Others were the weekly ministers' prayer meetings held in cities with several Methodist churches. There were also the separate tents that congregations maintained at large camp meetings, where pastors and laymen met daily to raise and answer questions and share in group prayers. Later came the holiness bands that sprang up in Midwestern towns, often without the approval of the local Methodist pastors.

But right down to the end of the 19th century, class meetings themselves remained central in the life of such Methodist congregations as stressed the experience of holiness, including those from New England to California out of which our denomination sprang. The largest amid wealthiest ones, however, especially in large cities, either abandoned them or minimized their significance. And without social holiness there was, as Wesley predicted, little holiness at all.

Where local bands and classes became independent congregations and united in new denominations such as the Church of the Nazarene, the same cycle took place. With a full program of preaching, religious education, and evangelism, the midweek prayer service became, for all intents and purposes, a substitute for the class meeting. But it was a public service and not by definition exclusively concerned with guiding the members in the pursuit of godlikeness. Indeed, testimonies frequently were reviews of the momentous experiences of conversion and sanctification. Following the pattern growing at camp meetings and revivals, their purpose was to

help individuals into these so-called "crisis" experiences.

In subtle ways this emphasis upon the great moments at the expense of the ultimate goal of Christian experience led into another tendency, also rooted in the nature of organizations and fellowship groups, namely, to make the recounting in culturally prescribed language of a past religious experience normative for both lay leaders and ministers. Sadly, the repetition of key words sometimes became a ritual, demonstrating relationship to the group rather than a biblical commitment to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. Shallow persons predictably used the language of Canaan as simply a password guaranteeing status in the congregation.

Our situation today is obviously not the same, then, as that of 19th century Methodism. The profession of the experience of entire sanctification was in no sense normative to membership in their congregations or prerequisite to full participation in their class meetings. But the biblical and Wesleyan challenge to fashion ever new and renewable fellowships among persons pursuing Christlikeness is just as crucial to us who have the words all straight as to those 19th century Methodists who suffered from the growing tendency to neglect the experience and expression in daily life of the grace of perfect love.

Nazarenes today, I think, ought not to aim simply at going back and restoring such old institutions as the class meeting and the love feast but at developing structures of fellowship within congregations that will attain the same goals. What we have learned recently about group dynamics, in what we sometimes call "relational" Bible studies, suggests the wide variety of settings in which the Holy Spirit can enable sensitive and sanctified leaders to guide small groups into the experience of holiness and a life of spiritual growth.

I suggest we begin with a reform of our business meetings. Early Methodists didn't have many of these because the church was governed from the top. John Wesley appointed the preachers, and preachers appointed the class leaders and arranged all the services. When Methodists began building their own chapels, local persons of good reputation who were not members of the congregations were often named trustees and took care of the church property. When primitive Methodists met, therefore, it was for spiritual purposes.

Our Nazarene government was fashioned quite differently; it draws our lay people into numerous kinds of meetings to plan and arrange the work of the church. Might we not establish the custom of beginning every business meeting with a time of sharing, even a brief one if necessary, of the experiences or concerns of at least two or three persons? And could we not concentrate on the quest of the fruits of the Spirit and how the blessing of heart purity sustains that quest?

I see no reason why meetings of the General Board and of its several departments might not begin with a half hour of such sharing aimed at sealing our relationships around the higher purposes that bring us together. District boards and committees would get more work done and do it more wisely, I should think if they began their meetings this way. And so would church boards. A religious culture marked by mutual dependence and faithfulness in the quest for holiness might then prompt

even *ad hoc* committees at the general, district, and local level to begin their meetings with a period of open thanksgiving for spiritual quests completed and confessions of hunger for the grace to undertake and complete other ones.

Let the primary aim of Nazarenes be fellowship with one another in the pursuit of Christlike character, and let all our business be conducted under the repeated acknowledgment of that objective. If that were the case, many of the tensions and confusions that afflict our efforts to do the Lord's work would, I believe, disappear. For we would be putting first things first.

The other suggestion follows naturally: that we expect every Nazarene to share at least once a week in a group that combines friendship with mutual assistance in the quest of righteousness through grace. My own view is that local churches would normally do better to build such spiritual support groups around the units already existing in youth and adult Sunday school classes. The continuing structure of such classes provides the stable relationships needed for both friendship and faithfulness. And our longstanding eagerness to create new classes whenever new purposes or interests arise makes the institution sufficiently elastic to allow persons to opt out of a group not presently helpful to them and move into another or a new one.

Room exists, of course, for all sorts of group meetings during the week, as such gatherings as Earl Lee's (former pastor of Pasadena First Church of the Nazarene) "Early Christians" demonstrate. But human inertia keeps many shy or conservative persons from affiliating with such new groups. For this reason, I think existing Sunday school classes are a promising vehicle needing only to add to the present Sunday morning gathering another biweekly one specifically aimed at mutual support in the quest of full likeness to Christ.

Folks, we need more friendship than we have. We need it to be grounded in both personal loyalty and the sharing of our hunger for righteousness rather than simply in the love of pleasure or the enjoyment of good food. And we need it from the very top of our church, here in Kansas City, to the newest struggling congregation in some faraway small town. Jesus said the world will know we are His disciples if we love one another as He loves us. That's quite a standard. We Nazarenes aren't beginning to come up to it yet. The Methodists did on many occasions, in the early days, and so did our fathers and mothers. We can do it, too, not in spite of, but actually with the help of the new affluence that enables us to get together despite social or geographical distance. We really do need one another.

Doctrinal Divergence from Wesley's Teaching

The third movement of compromise of the Wesleyan mission came during the latter half of the 19th century when for the first time prominent Methodists began to resist, on doctrinal grounds, the idea of a second work of grace. The resistance surfaced only after some 40 years of active cultivation of the experience by the leading ministers of the New York, New England, and Philadelphia conferences. By

the time of the Civil War, this holiness awakening—rooted deeply in the teachings of Wesley and the various writings of John Fletcher and sparked by the winsome reasonableness of Phoebe Palmer and Alfred Cookman—had captured the allegiance of the leading editors and officials in Methodism. Bishops Leonidus Hamline and Edmund Janes had been led into the experience partly through Mrs. Palmer's Tuesday meetings. Scores of outstanding pastors, including half-dozen future bishops, had followed in their train.

Methodist camp meetings from Maine to Georgia were devoted clearly to the experience of entire sanctification, including several new ones founded at resort areas such as Old Orchard Beach, Me., and Asbury Grove, N.J. In Civil War days Cookman was the most notable witness to the doctrine and Bishop Mathew Simpson its most eloquent expositor. Presidents of colleges and seminaries, such as John C. McClintock of Drew, and editors such as Gilbert Haven and George O. Peck, were thoroughly in accord with the movement. Through the experiences of Congregationalists Asa Mahan and Charles G. Finney, Presbyterian William E. Boardman, and Quakers Pearsall and Hannah Smith the doctrine was by that time spreading very widely outside Methodism and beginning greatly to influence religious life in the British Isles.

The recent suggestion that the holiness movement of the 19th century substantially revised Wesley's doctrine and language is, I think, incorrect. They simply put heavy stress upon the necessity of Methodist ministers and lay leaders actually finding the blessing and so being able to proclaim the promises of God to be true from firsthand experience. And they grafted onto John Wesley's language of cleansing and Christlikeness what John Fletcher had made central to his preaching, namely, the equating of entire sanctification with the baptism or the fullness of the Holy Spirit. They rooted that emphasis, as both Fletcher and Charles G. Finney had, in the link between the Old Testament prophecy of a New Covenant and the promise of John the Baptist and Jesus of the abiding presence of the sanctifying Comforter. They believed Pentecost to have signaled the fulfillment of the "promise of the Father" to write His law of love in believers' hearts, baptizing them with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

Wesley did not adopt Fletcher's doctrine that Pentecost was the moment when the apostles received the experience of perfect love, though after about 1741 he always equated the fullness of the Spirit with that experience. He had long thought Pentecost displayed the whole work of the hallowing Spirit in regeneration as well as entire sanctification. Nevertheless, he urged Fletcher to accept the role of his designated successor during the very years Fletcher's writings (declaring Pentecost to be the fulfillment of the promise of love made perfect) were circulating widely. And he praised both these writings and Fletcher's preaching during the years when Fletcher seemed unable to preach or talk or anything else but the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Nor did the holiness movement of the 19th century, in its stress upon the cleansing fullness of the Holy Spirit, alter Wesley's definition of sanctity as likeness to the God revealed in Jesus Christ. Borrowing directly from Wesley's "standard" sermons and from his *Plain Account,* its preachers expounded carefully what perfect love did and

did not accomplish. They stressed, as he had, the centrality of the process of the sanctification of thought, attitude, and personality structure continuing after that experience. And they called men and women to faithful use of the means of grace to "press forward toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God." The writings of Wesley and Fletcher and the biographies of Hester Ann Rogers and other Wesleyan saints circulated widely at holiness camp meetings throughout the century. They seemed to contemporaries, as they do to me, not contradicted at all but sustained in the newer works of Phoebe Palmer, Hannah Whitall Smith, George Peck, Randolph Sinks Foster, Asbury Lowery, and Daniel Steele.

The real departure from John Wesley in the years after 1850 was not among those who employed Fletcher's appeal to Pentecost as grounds for seeking and expecting the blessing of entire sanctification. Rather, it began among those Methodist ministers who, at first very quietly, began to question the need for a second work of grace and to argue that growth in holiness after conversion was sufficient.

Their initial strategy was simply to complain of what seemed to be the inconsistencies of some who professed the grace of perfect love. They also charged them with divisive tendencies such as abolitionist perfectionists had displayed in founding the Wesleyan Methodist connection in 1843 and, under B. T. Roberts's lead 15 years later, the Free Methodist Church.

Their second step was to declare that the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit was the grand message of Methodism. They began also to define that assurance in subjective terms, implicitly denying what Wesley had always affirmed: that in both regeneration and entire sanctification the witness of the Spirit must be validated by full deliverance from sin—first from what he called "outward" sin and then from its inward root. In the process, men such as Daniel D. Whedon, editor in the 1870s of the learned *Methodist Quarterly Review,* substituted a sense of inward peace for inward and outward righteousness—precisely what some modern students have misunderstood the holiness movement to have done. When cut from its rooting in the larger Methodist doctrine of sanctification, the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit degenerated into reliance upon emotional states rather than upon a transformed life and a sanctified disposition.

The third step came later, in the last two decades of the century. J. M. Boland, in the southern church, and James Mudge, in the northern, published book-length arguments against the second blessing, declaring that entire sanctification came through growth in grace alone. Boland acknowledged from the outset that his doctrine was un-Wesleyan, even in the title of his book The Problem of Methodism. In the rich debate that followed, he and others who supported him took the position that Wesley had simply been wrong in stressing a second work of grace. Although stating his case less boldly, James Mudge occupied the same ground. However, he seems to have decided some years later that perhaps Wesley was right after all and to have gone back to stressing both a moment of heart cleansing and growth in holiness. By that time, however, some who had earlier made Christian nurture the way to entire sanctification had begun to argue on the same grounds against a radical experience of the new birth as well.

These were the years when our own denomination was forming. As a result of these events, our founders determined to state unequivocally what they believed was a biblical as well as a generally Wesleyan understanding of the doctrine. It combined the insights of John Wesley and John Fletcher on the subject with a bit sharper emphasis upon the baptism or fullness of the Spirit in order to counter the interpretation of the latter doctrine that Pentecostal Christians were by then teaching.

We must beware, however, of assuming that because we Nazarenes stated our doctrines in this way and because we have remained consistent in our emphasis upon them we are not in danger of making compromises at all. Have we not in practice focused so much of our attention upon the experience of heart cleansing and so little upon translating that grace into patterns of habit, understanding, and personality as slowly and subtly to divorce the profession of inward holiness from the pursuit of full perfection? And have we not increasingly grounded the former in warm but ethically undefined feelings—in inward peace rather than in righteousness of intent expressed in joyous cultivation of the fruits of the Spirit in every part of our personalities and in every aspect of our relationships?

Wesley thought the form of sound and scriptural words important, but he scorned any who made such an issue over terminology as to let words stand between them and the untrammeled quest of a fully sanctified life. Would he accept our casual and worldly holiness as a valid fulfillment of his heroic call to the radical expression of perfect love in both personal and social ethics? I think not.

Were Wesley here I think his prescription for Nazarenes would run something like this: preach the pursuit of perfection, growth in holiness, and the ideal of godlikeness so earnestly that both saints and sinners will long for the fullness of the sanctifying Spirit to heal their inward bent to sinning by filling them with perfect love. This experience, he would have us declare, will enable them day by day to grow beyond the prejudices, the psychic weaknesses, and the misperceptions of moral obligation that keep them, as much as inward sin does, from being truly Christlike persons.

If you should ask Wesley which is most important, the quest of a Christlike character or the instantaneous experiences of the new birth and of entire sanctification that set us fully on that quest, he would reply that though the goal and the quest are primary, the sin-cleansing experiences are indispensable to them. Indeed, the hearts of earnest Christian men and women will never be satisfied with a promise whose fulfillment seems to have taken place in the past, often when they were young and unaware of how great and continuing are the moral challenges in a truly sanctified life.

Wesley and Fletcher both believed the grace of entire sanctification was initiatory to the life of fullest holiness in the same sense that graduation from college is a "commencement." For that experience initiated a full freedom from the inward hindrances to the growth in righteousness on earth that is also the preparation proper to one who would live forever in the presence of eternal holiness. If in recent years we Nazarenes had stressed that progressive element in Wesley's

message more, there would have been less room for the Pentecostal and charismatic movements to seem to have something to offer to our people. The cultivation of the fruits of the Spirit is as integral to Christian and Wesleyan understanding of "the Way" as are the sublime moments of grace.

Ethically, moreover, I think Wesley would fault our tendency not to define entire sanctification as perfect love toward our fellow human beings as well as toward God. He did not perceive any distinction between individual and social ethics because the Bible would not allow it. Though politically conservative himself—a royalist opposed to American independence and deeply distrustful of popular democracy—he was sure that in the long pull the spread of the gospel of Christian holiness would indeed reform the nations, bring slavery to an end, create justice between employers and employees, and drive all forms of institutionalized evil from the face of the earth. While not in the modem sense either a premillenialist or a postmillennialist, he was firmly convinced, as Catherine Booth was 100 years later, that Jesus Christ was manifested to destroy the works of the devil, first in individual human hearts and then In social institutions as well.

Theologically, Wesley saw clearly the links between the covenant and the promise of righteousness, from Moses and the prophets through Jesus to the Church of Pentecost. John Fletcher showed those links to have a somewhat different biblical sequence than Wesley had at first understood. He made the outpouring of the promised Holy Spirit at Pentecost, through the blood of the covenant, the climactic moment in the New Testament and, hence, in all God's dealings with mankind. But theologically they would not have understood the recent distinction between a Christological and a pneumatological definition of sanctity. They thought only in Trinitarian categories.

Fletcher spoke of the two Promisers, God the Father and God the Son, and the two Comforters, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The Father promised the Son; both Father and Son promised the Spirit; and the Spirit glorified the Son as the Son glorified the Father. Covenant, Cross, and Comforter—one Lord, one faith, one baptism—defined the process by which God found sinners lost and undone and in sanctifying grace prepared them for presentation before the throne eternal both blameless and faultless.

Front Pews for Rich Christians

Parallel in time to this doctrinal departure from Wesley was the increasing allowance Methodism made in the late 19th century for the unconsecrated enjoyment of wealth and social eminence.

Wesley's relationship to wealthy persons was not, of course, a simpleminded preference for the poor. Though he himself followed a rigorous discipline, he did not demand that all Methodists either despise wealth or dispose of whatever portion of it they had inherited in order to fulfill all righteousness. He urged, rather, that they show in daily deeds their freedom from the love of money and their determination

to use all they gained beyond their barest needs to do good to both the bodies and the souls of persons with less.

Mary Bosanquet, along with Charles Perronet and his family, are representatives of a large number of wealthy English people to whom Wesley communicated throughout their lives the tenderest and most searching inquiries about their quest of Christian perfection. Nary a word was said suggesting they must become poor in order to follow Jesus. But when Miss Bosanquet, Fletcher's future wife, spent her inheritance to support a communal home in Yorkshire where saintly Methodist women could educate orphans and care for the poor, he rejoiced. In this stance, it seems to me, Phineas Bresee and a host of early Nazarenes stood close to the Methodist founder, as did A. B. Simpson, William and Catherine Booth and, much earlier, Orange Scott and Phoebe Palmer.

We all know that Wesley realized that the life of Christian holiness would make people function better in their business or labor and so bring them a rising income. His doctrines of free grace and good works nurtured responsible individuals, able to function effectively in the new society of industrial capitalism. Bernard Semmel has called this *The Methodist Revolution*. But Wesley set before these redeemed individuals the New Testament challenge to reject the love of money, to emulate the Church of Pentecost in care (or one another's financial needs, and to give all income beyond their own necessities to relieve those who were hungry, enslaved, sick, or imprisoned. His several sermons on the Christians of Pentecost praised the selling of their goods and living out of a common store as expressions of the love of God shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit. They had not been commanded to act out the long-lost idealism of the Jewish Year of Jubilee but did it, he said, at the impulse of love made perfect.

In America, Methodism also at first flourished among people of scant means. The effect of their growing riches upon the denomination's message and ministry did not become evident until the latter half of the 19th century. That railroad speculators Cornelius Vanderbilt and Daniel Drew should have endowed Methodist colleges and seminaries and that Jay Gould should have for a time seemed to the youthful Phineas Bresee a model to emulate in business ventures, suggest what was happening.

The indulgence of pride in the dress and adornment of church buildings and worship (if not of the worshipers themselves) seemed by the end of the century an affront to Wesleyans like Bresee and General William Booth. These leaders, prompted by their experience of perfect love, set out to reach and uplift the poor. The practical neglect of the working-class newcomers to the city prompted holiness leaders to found missions and peoples' churches in which simplicity of style of life and care for the needy made poor people feel at home. Their antipathy toward the power exerted by ladies' aid societies in wealthier congregations was rooted not so much in social class as in the conviction that the pretensions of these women's organizations were corrupting the Methodist commitment to sacrificial giving of one's means.

Here, certainly, few will question that history threatens to repeat itself. Radical

Christianity finds the great mass of its converts among the poor and needy and lifts them out of moral and social bondage. The resulting generous, cooperative, and honest character are tickets to advancement in any culture, including our own. Wesley believed, as our fathers and mothers did, that nothing less than the mighty experience of sanctifying love and a lifelong and daily effort to express it in human relationships could prevent the corruption of human nature that flowed from success in one's work or business.

Were they wrong? Is the only way to preserve the purity of Christianity to insist that believers give away any substantial increase in their income? Must we lay up no treasure on earth and disdain a large portion of the creature comforts we rationalize in the name of order, beauty, and security? In order to do good to the bodies and souls of men, should we submit by choice to levels of poverty such as only the broken and oppressed of this world know? Or should we, in the conviction that all God's children should have shoes, aim at a rising standard of living for our own and every other family of Adam's race in all lands?

Certainly any Christian community that takes seriously the challenge to holiness and love in a world of evil must study far more seriously than we Nazarenes have the constant attention of the Scriptures to the relationships among wealth, poverty, and injustice. I do not believe the Old Testament teaches there is virtue in poverty but, like the New, it warns insistently of the corruption that flows from greed. When Jesus said, 'The poor you have with you always," He was not sanctioning their neglect but quoting the very passage from the Book of Deuteronomy that affirms the duty of God's people to care for them. The behavior of the Early Church toward the needy, particularly within their own circle, and their determination to disdain laying up treasures on earth is an example we would do well to follow. We can no more safely ignore this than we can their loyalty to Jesus' renewal of the moral force of the Ten Commandments in the Sermon on the Mount.

Would we not perfect holiness more readily among our people if, following the example of the most godly and evangelical among today's Mennonites, we would determine to devote increasing portions of our personal income and property, and increasing portions of our denominational income, to lifting the burdens of hunger, illness, and dependency that lie so heavily upon both our converts and their communities overseas? Can we conscientiously continue our taste for expensive food and clothing, our approval of traveling first-class, our conspicuously expensive ways of conducting our church gatherings? Does paying our tithes somehow qualify us to enjoy the incredible riches of the rest of our incomes?

The denial of Christ's way of self-denial will in the long run, I fear, make embezzlers of us all. Although the riches of the affluent may not be the only or even the primary cause of the indigence of the poor, the relationship between them is often substantial. In God's sight it may be as clear as the relationship between the ridiculous wealth of Saudi Arabian sheiks and the cold and darkness in which the poor must continue to live in many corners of this energy-hungry world.

In recent decades the Korean holiness church has demonstrated that the experience of perfect love practiced in congregations where Christian community

touches all of life can indeed empower a renewal of Christian social ethics whether by orphanages, widows' homes, child-care centers, secondary schools, or the creation of new agricultural villages. Would it be unreasonable for us to adopt a standard expecting every Nazarene pastor and congregation to engage in and specifically report at district assemblies upon one major ministry to the very needy, whether prisoners, alcoholics, unemployed black young people, unwed mothers, or neglected children?

Higher Learning versus Commitment

Finally, let me speak for a few moments concerning the responsibility of institutions for higher education to the Methodist compromise of the Wesleyan mission. A recent study of Christian colleges in the Middle West has not significantly revised my earlier judgment made while writing *Revivalism and Social Reform* and *Called unto Holiness,* namely, that teachers in such institutions were not at all the spearheads but rather the secondary and sometimes reluctant participants in theological subversion. Nevertheless there is some element of truth in the old notion, cultivated too much, I fear, by ill-educated ministers aware of their inadequacies, that higher learning, whether in colleges of theological seminaries, is an enemy to Christian holiness.

Certainly a complex set of tensions works to polarize scholarship and biblical faith in an increasingly scientific age. The traditions of modem learning, including those of natural science, are of course rooted in the marriage of Hebrew and Christian faith with classical thought. Biblical religion affirms that the eternal Father teaches His children by both acts and words to understand the truth of His faithfulness. In a manner not subject to scientific verification, He speaks to His children, calling them to a life of holiness and love, and assures them of everlasting life. By such "knowledge of the Lord," imparted by His illuminating Spirit, they are able with the help of the same Holy Spirit to respond to Him in covenant faith and commitment and to be renewed in the Divine image.

By the 1880s, however, the ruling ideas in a number of major scholarly disciplines were moving rapidly away from this radical faith in a transcendent God who breaks into human history in the word of Moses and the prophets, in the presence of His Son, and in the outpouring of His Spirit. By that decade, the scientific way of acquiring knowledge (whose central concern is empirical verification) was being widely applied even to the Bible, yielding conclusions that some scholars thought refuted its major spiritual and theological claims. Soon faculty members in scores of Methodist colleges realized that reconciling scientific thought in biology, psychology, economics, and history with the central doctrines of biblical religion would be no easy task.

At this moment of awareness, the Fundamentalist movement emerged, joining neo-Calvinist views of the verbal inerrancy of Scripture and dispensational views of the Second Coming with what became, later on, a widespread fear that all intellectual endeavor was antithetical to Christian faith. This latter fear Wesley, a notable

thinker in an age of intellectual giants, would have found preposterous. Nevertheless, an estrangement between Methodist colleges and seminaries and the most earnestly religious segments of the denomination was in these new circumstances almost certain to occur. A religiously popular, but essentially sub-Christian, anti-intellectualism fanned sparks of distrust into flames of controversy. In reaction, some teachers in Methodist colleges fell prey to an equally unjustified fear of all earnest piety, including that symbolized by the doctrine of Christian perfection.

Meanwhile, larger Methodist colleges and universities seemed increasingly to serve the interests of affluent and upwardly mobile families. The denomination was responsible for the founding of many of what became the greatest urban universities in America. Boston, Vanderbilt, Syracuse, and Northwestern Universities, and the Universities of Cincinnati, Denver, and Southern California were only more obviously successful than Emory, in Atlanta, or Hamline in Minneapolis. These institutions were nurtured in urban culture and sought to serve its highest social, economic, and artistic as well as its moral and religious interests.

The Methodist impulse to make institutions grow, however, required a great deal of money. Much of this came from wealthy Methodists, but even more from outside donors who cared little about the mission of that denomination to spread scriptural holiness over the land. What both groups of donors wanted most was an institution that would give them and their children the same symbols of status, privilege, arid achievement that older and more famous universities gave to wealthy families in the East.

Students reflected and reinforced these secularizing tendencies. Never protected by a denominational scruple against secret societies, Methodist colleges permitted them to organize fraternities and sororities. At Northwestern University in the 1890s an interfraternity dance provoked a crisis. Methodist churchmen in northern Illinois forced out of office the president who had allowed such things and replaced him with a deeply religious economist, Edmund Janes James, namesake of an honored 19th century bishop. James was soon called away, however, to become president of the University of Illinois, leaving the financial needs of the Evanston institution unmet. Within a decade or so, not only Northwestern but, as we know from the experience of Phineas Bresee and J. P. Widney with the University of Southern California, many others of the Methodist urban universities offered scant encouragement to the earnest piety that only a few years before had flourished there.

The colleges, and a bit later the seminaries, followed in the wake of compromises that had taken place first in the center of the life of the church, among bishops, editors, presiding elders, and great and wealthy urban congregations. The facts, as I see it, vindicate the educators of original responsibility for the denial of the Methodist mission but not of responsibility for ratifying it. Moreover, the stumbling indirection of the denomination's history during the early 20th century makes it doubtful that any existing force was strong enough to have prevented the educators from leading the Methodist community back towards the ideas of its founder—as a few of them at the University of Syracuse seem to have wished to do.

Granting for a moment that the recent history of Nazarene higher education affirms the possibility of a reenactment of this sad drama among us, what prescriptions do the facts suggest?

First, a proper concern for sound doctrine, and particularly for loyalty to biblical teachings, should not be aimed solely at departments of religion or persons who teach Bible. The 20th century has twice endured a controversy provoked by strict Calvinists who seem to love a battle as much as the Bible. Many evangelical Christians today argue far more heatedly over modern theories of verbal inerrancy than over whether Christians should be expected to live by what the words of Scripture promise and require. One shows his respect for the inspiration of the Bible, Wesley would say, by obeying its teachings, for they are, indeed, an unerring and sufficient Guide to pure doctrine and holy behavior. The whole gamut of instruction in Christian colleges, and not just that in religion departments, and the entire program of student co-curricular activities, from art to athletics, should partake of the biblical commitment we all share—the perfecting of righteousness through love both in individual experience and in all social relationships.

Second, as we seek to renew the vitality of the holiness ethic in the daily life of our congregations, we must include in that circle of renewal the faculty and staff of our colleges. We need to recover faithful relationships between pastors and lay people who send money and young people to sustain the schools and the persons who work and teach there. A merely political enforcement of the power of boards of trustees over faculty members will, I believe, be insufficient. In fact, in the long run it may produce either covert or explicit reactions opposed to our hopes and intentions. We need, rather, a community of shared faith and understanding in which faculty members are invited to knit their lives more closely into the fellowship and service of a denomination renewed in the graces of perfect love. Lay leaders and pastors not associated with the colleges should respect and seek in their own lives the integration of faith and reason that biblical religion calls for, that our colleges stand for, and that our forbears so beautifully affirmed.

The other prescription that seems to me to fit the historical diagnosis is to make the gospel of evangelical perfection central also to the conduct of extracurricular life in our colleges. It would be ironic indeed if, in a day when earnestly Christian academic communities other than our own are searching out new ways to lead students and faculty members toward simple and self-sacrificing lifestyles, toward the healing of moral illnesses, and freeing the hungry and oppressed of this world, Nazarene educators should celebrate instead what we have recently called "the gospel of wealth" in which we point our students chiefly to their ever-brightening economic future. The brother of our Lord would say, and Wesley would repeat, "Go to, now, you rich men, howl and weep." Shame upon all who would train a generation of young people to call themselves educated Wesleyans and assume their entitlement to affluence and worldly success, meanwhile believing that the lot of the rest of humanity is likely to consist of apocalyptic suffering, race war, and poverty and hunger so pervasive as to maim both the physical and the psychic health of generations not yet born.

Though I have reminded you by both analysis and prescription that history rarely repeats itself, we all can, I believe, draw lessons from past experience. There are in every emerging situation too many complex elements, some of them hidden from the view of both participants and historical observers, and too many unexpected combinations of new and old factors, for the lessons to be either simple or sure. But certain elements do persist in human situations. These are often strikingly clear in cases of such historical parallels as that between Methodist history and the history of modern holiness denominations. We share a common doctrinal heritage, a social origin in the acquisition by poor people of a sanctifying faith, and a similar experience of denomination-building in an increasingly democratic society.

The most helpful historical lessons, however, rarely point to one-step solutions. If Nazarenes today do in fact face a crisis in our relationship to the Wesleyan mission comparable to that which Methodism confronted in the late 19th century, there are no simple steps which administrators or pastors or theologians can take to assure for us a happier outcome. Rather, every one of us, leaders as well as followers, ministers as well as lay persons, educators as well as investment counselors, men and women, parents and their children—all of us must lay hold upon the promise of the Father for these last days. We must each one assume responsibility for some actions aimed at making that promise shine more clearly in the particular corner of our fellowship where we are able and, therefore, responsible to act.

The successful maintenance of a truly holiness church is by no means beyond our grasp. And the secret of both purity and power lies very near to each one of us, namely, to let the Holy Spirit keep our own hearts and minds utterly dedicated to the pursuit of Christlike character and to maintain faithful and loving relationships even with those who may have for the moment disappointed us. Then, not by might nor by power but by His Spirit, each one of us can help to bring new health and new life—the very life of Christ himself—to the community of persons we call the Church of the Nazarene.