
TELLING THE STORY OF THE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE: A WESLEYAN REFLECTION ON CHURCH HISTORY

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History clarifies our identity and reason for existence as a people. Since our early days, we have spread geographically and culturally, and, today, the social contexts in which the Church of the Nazarene exists vary tremendously. What unites us? Does our reason-to-be still unite us, or are our ties to each other merely structural? Are there any transcending marks so rooted in our calling and identity that remembering them would revitalize the church today?

Various important implications for doing church history in the Church of the Nazarene emerged from the papers, responses, and cohort discussions of the Global Nazarene Theological Conference that met in Guatemala City, April 4-7, 2002. The conference drew together Nazarene scholars from throughout the world.

Philosophy of History

Within the Hebrew-Christian tradition, history is crucial. Salvation comes within, not apart from historical existence. The Bible magnifies God's grace and great acts of liberating salvation on behalf of weak and vacillating people. God admonishes his people to remember the past. In his farewell, Moses advised the Israelites when they faced enemies in the land God was giving them "not to be afraid of them; remember well what the Lord your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt" (Deuteronomy 7: 18). They were to remember not only God's faithfulness, but that they were once "slaves in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you" (Deuteronomy 15: 15). Furthermore, Moses tells the people to remember their own

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disobedience: “Never forget how you provoked the Lord your God to anger in the desert” (Deuteronomy 9: 7). Remembering the past, as the Old Testament prophets did, offers both judgment and hope.

The Hebrew-Christian tradition set aside days for remembering the past. But these days were not supposed to glorify the people. On the contrary, they were to be days for the people to humble themselves and repent, and thus to magnify the redeeming God.

Historians can only speak of the human response to God, not directly about God’s doing. This is because historians are not privy to knowledge of God’s specific acts in the same way that the inspired prophets and apostles were. The canon is closed. We are not inspired to say with the same certainty as the biblical writers, “this is how God acted,” when it comes to, for instance, the Councils or the Reformation, or Pilot Point. Not by the historian speaking for God, but by the historian allowing others to witness—to tell their stories—God will be glorified.

This way of writing history is congenial to the Wesleyan understanding that God works dynamically, by the gentle promptings of grace, and with human response—rather than by manipulation. The Wesleyan theological framework puts emphasis on the human response to God. There is a dynamic interrelationship between the graciously given human freedom to respond to God’s luring. The voluntary cooperation of human beings to God’s intentions is the way in which God interacts with creation. Wesleyans possess a philosophy of history that sees God as the great Persuader. Wesleyan historians will note the many human variables and contingent factors that go into the making of history, and not ascribe all that has been solely to God. With freedom, Wesleyans understand, God has granted open-endedness to all but the final events of history. God has not determined in detail what will happen in each historical moment.

The Wesleyan historian does not dichotomize the sacred and profane spheres of culture. The Wesleyan concepts of the prevenience and universality of grace obliterate the difference. God wills all to be saved, and works among all to lead them to salvation. Just as the Wesleyan historian sees everywhere evidences of original sin, the Wesleyan historian also sees everywhere the movements of God’s guiding grace through the Holy Spirit, who does not confine his activity to the church or to Christians. Every-

where, at all times, the Holy Spirit is facilitating, though not coercing, movements toward the will of God.¹

Historical Interpretation

History corrects our notions of who we think we are and what we think we are about, and appropriates it with particular purposes in mind. Timothy Smith used history to correct misperceptions about the church common in the late 1950s. He showed that holiness, in its mid-nineteenth century context, had little to do with either mysticism or moralism. He corrected the misperception that the Church of the Nazarene was primarily a rural movement of the economically disadvantaged and described, instead, the urban orientation of the Church. Though early Nazarenes protested the “worldliness” of the churches, they were indebted to the broad streams and not the small eddies of Christianity. They aimed in “organizing” holiness to build a church. The first generation of Nazarenes committed themselves to the essentials and had charity for those who disagreed on theological non-essentials such as practices of baptism or theories about the millennium.

Smith showed that at the beginning we were more “churchly” than sectarian. *Called Unto Holiness* refuted H. Richard Niebhu’s thesis that all “churches” begin as “sects,” and questioned the usefulness of the categories of “church” and “sect” as they pertained to denominations.²

There was an irony, Smith showed, about the first generation’s church building or denominationalizing leading to the second generation’s sectarianism. When members “came out” of the old churches, the holiness message lost the best means it had of “Christianizing Christianity” (Bresee’s phrase) and had to concentrate on making sure that it itself remained

¹See Albert C. Outler, “Theodosius’ Horse: Reflections on the Predicament of the Church Historian,” *Church History* 34 (1965), 260. See also Paul Bassett, “The Significance of Historical Study,” *Exploring Christian Holiness*, vol. 2: *The Historical Development* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1985), 15-22; Cunningham, “Christ, the Word, the Light, and the Message,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 16 (January 1992), 10-27; and Cunningham, “Interreligious Dialogue: A Wesleyan Holiness Perspective,” in *Grounds for Understanding: Ecumenical Resources for Responses to Religious Pluralism*, ed. S. Mark Heim (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 188-207.

²This was noted in the book reviews of Carl Bangs, *The Christian Century*, November 7, 1962, 1356, and C. Norman Kraus, *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 37 (January 1963), 63-64

revived. Revivals served this purpose. (The implicit question in this day of declining revivalism is: are there other ways to save the church from ecclesiocentricity?)

Furthermore, first generation Nazarenes were not, Smith showed, Fundamentalists. His historical work complemented H. Orton Wiley's *Christian Theology* in this respect. Later, Smith showed, there was a Fundamentalist "leavening" (as Paul Bassett was to put it) through the rise of pre-millennialist Southerners, and through the coming in of people such as J. G. Morrison, who left Methodism almost as much because of its Modernism as because of the Church of the Nazarene's holiness emphasis.

Smith also rebutted, implicitly, the idea of dissenters such as Glenn Griffith, that Bresee and other founders were legalists. Smith described, instead, the roots of our legalism in the Holiness Church of Christ, and the second generation's attempt to prove itself loyal to the pioneers by out-doing them in both "tempo" and rules. Through history, Smith was justifying the third generation's moderate position on rules and was calling it back to the first's concern for marginalized people, cities, and society.

Timothy Smith's earlier *Revivalism and Social Reform* refuted the commonly held thesis that the social gospel in America was rooted in the "new theology" of late-nineteenth century liberal Protestantism. Smith demonstrated, instead, the unexpected connections between holiness and women's rights, abolition and urban reform. The social gospel, he demonstrated, had roots in revivalism. What Nazarenes heard, when they read Smith, was that our heritage bent us close to some of the leading social and political reforms of history.

Christian historians such as Timothy Smith are sensitive to remain true, faithful servants of historical events. Historians have optimism that knowledge and truth are intrinsically liberating.

At the same time, pure objectivity remains a noble goal rather than a reality. Contemporary historians influenced by post-modernism emphasize that any telling of a story is based upon knowing what significant part of the story needs to be told for this generation and on the historians' own subjective and unique perspective. They emphasize that while each historian attempts to be objective, and to base narratives on reliable sources, there are always biases. That is to say, there is always a story behind the historian that determines what questions are asked, and what, and whose, stories to tell. Every historian stands at a particular place in

time and space, they emphasize, and this influences which events are told and how they are interpreted.³

Wesleyan historians are “modernists” in the sense that they have faith in the possibility of objective knowledge. To put it in holiness language, Wesleyan historians attempt to be “self-emptying,” freed from self-centeredness and selfish ambition.

As the business of historians is “the recollection and representation of selected segments of the human past in an intelligible narration based on public data verified by scientific observation,”⁴ historical writing by its nature necessitates discrimination. Historians are forced to make choices as to what to find out and write. Not every record will be uncovered; not everyone’s story will be or can be told. Furthermore, the historical narrative must hang together, must be coherent. It must tell a story. History by its nature provides interpretation as well as records of dates and events. Current interpretative paradigms pertaining to Nazarene history, such as the urban/rural paradigm, the church/sect paradigm, the Christ and culture paradigm, the Wesley versus the holiness movement paradigm, the accomodationist versus Free Methodist paradigm, the generation paradigm and the Bresee/Reynolds paradigm are analytically useful, and new paradigms will be developed to interpret our history.⁵

³A historical approach to this issue is Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1988). See also M. Howard Rienstra, “History, Objectivity, and the Christian Scholar,” in *History and Historical Understanding*, ed. C. T. McIntire and Ronald Wells (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 69-82; James E. Bradley and Richard A. Muller, *Church History: An Introduction to Research, Reference Works, and Methods* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 48-62; and Shirley A. Mullen, “Between ‘Romance’ and ‘True History’: Historical Narrative and Truth Telling in a Postmodern Age,” in *History and the Christian Historian*, ed. Ronald A. Wells (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 23-40.

⁴Outler, “Theodosius’ Horse,” 253.

⁵Among the recent helpful paradigms is one contrasting Phoebe Palmer’s “accomodationist” holiness to B. T. Robert’s struggle against the *embourgeoisement* of holiness within Methodism. See Kathryn Long, “Consecrated Respectability: Phoebe Palmer and the Refinement of American Methodism,” in *Methodism and the Shaping of American Culture*, ed. Nathan O. Hatch and Johutt Wigger (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 281-307.

Global History

One implication is that though there still is room for history written from a missions perspective, the Church of the Nazarene's story must be global. Our church's history needs to be rewritten based on the global expansion of the church and the questions this brings.⁶

This is no reflection on past histories. Church history is constantly being revised and rewritten based on contemporary questions. In the late twentieth century, with the growing importance of Christianity in South America, Africa, and Asia, historians expanded the Euro-centric interpretation of the church's history and, more than they had before, told the story of the church beyond the West, and recorded the affect of the expansion of Christianity upon the home churches. At the same time, there was more focus on women in the church's history and religious movements among ethnic groups. Influenced by *The Annales* and similar approaches to social history, and learning from anthropologists such as Clifford Geertz and Anthony F. C. Wallace, church historians began trying to understand the beliefs and devotion of common people across the centuries.⁷ They became interested not only in the thoughts or acts of a few, but in what the laity was thinking, and how they were behaving. Among Wesleyans accustomed to talking about the universality of grace something reverberates with this egalitarian approach to history.

A global perspective to Nazarene history will help us to overcome a headquarters-centeredness to the story that we tell of ourselves. Our story unfolds from North American holiness groups that were world-minded. We did not aim to establish national churches. Rather, we aimed to be an association of districts governed by one *Manual*, led not by national but by

⁶See Wilbert Shrenk, "Toward a Global Church History," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 20 (April 1996), 50-54; Paul Spickard, "It's the World's History: Decolonizing Historiography and the History of Christianity," *Fides et Historia* 31 (Summer/Fall 1999), 13-29. One of the reasons Kenneth Latourette's *A History of Christianity* (first published in 1953) has remained useful is its global perspective. Latourette maintained an interest in the progress of the church in Asia and around the world. The first volume of what promises to replace Latourette is Dale Irvin and Scott Sundquist, *History of the World Christian Movement*, vol. 1: *Earliest Christianity to 1453* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2001).

⁷For examples, see Adrian Hastings, ed., *A World History of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999); Paul R. Spickard and Kevin M. Cragg, *God's Peoples: A Social History of Christians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 9-11.

General Superintendents, and proportionately electing delegates to an international General Assembly.

The global perspective reminds us that with God's people and among Nazarenes there are no "foreigners." All of us are "aliens" and "strangers" in the world. To shift the metaphor, we are a temple in the process of being "built together." We are one whole church. We must have a history that is inclusive geographically, a history that represents our diversity. As we grow, the history of our church outside North America becomes increasingly important to all of us.

In our new history, we need not only to see the presence and the importance of Nazarenes outside of North America, but also to recover the voices of women, youth and laypersons, and to understand what was taking place week after week in local congregations. One way of historians' reporting the gospel in our midst is to be a voice for the thousands of common people who were transformed by the message we have proclaimed and lived. We can tell their stories, and, in so doing, amplify muted voices.

Our church's history needs to be re-written because we are asking new questions of it, such as how we came to our globalization ideals, and how we have proclaimed and contextualized our message around the world over time. Today, we ask questions that would not have occurred to earlier historians: Did an individual-centered understanding of holiness resonate in Africa and other places? Has the church in any part of the world expressed holiness in non-Western, communal ways?⁸

When we talk about Nazarene history and identity we are too quick to ground it in a corporate culture, rather than in a common movement of the Holy Spirit around the world—a movement that was and is far older, far broader, and far deeper, than the Church of the Nazarene. We can show ourselves to be part of an on-going revival movement in the church's history and remain good, objective historians. In various countries we built upon old, deep holiness roots. In India, for instance, the holiness movement in Wasim began in 1877.⁹

⁸See J. Ayodeji Adewuya, *Holiness and Community in 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1: Paul's View of Communal Holiness in the Corinthian Correspondence* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), a Manchester University dissertation finished in 1999 under the direction of Kent Brower.

⁹W. H. Daniels, ed., *Dr. Cullis and His Work: Twenty Years of Blessing in Answer to Prayer* (Boston: Willard Tract Repository, 1885; reprint, New York: Garland, 1985), 300-318; Lucy Drake Osborn, *Heavenly Pearls Set in a Life: A Record of*

Nazarenes have supposed that they have more in common with each other than with people in their own local societies. Is the commonality built upon loyalty to the denomination, or upon the doctrine and experience of entire sanctification to which the denomination points?

The single-minded commitment of the church to holiness reflected the National Holiness Association's instructions to its registered evangelists not to major on millennialism, healing or other "side issues." We were not focused on holiness and unity, as was the Church of God (Anderson), or on "Four-Square" principles, as was the Christian and Missionary Alliance and various Pentecostal groups.¹⁰ We tried to be what we felt we were peculiarly raised up by God to be, a movement built upon one theme. One church leader boasted that "if you enter a thatched roof in the jungles of Africa, or an open tent in the steaming forest of Central America, or an iced-domed igloo in Alaska, or a store-front church in one part of America, wherever you see the sign 'Church of the Nazarene' you will hear the same message of full salvation."¹¹

This may still be true, but one will need to know how to listen to hear "the same message." When a revival came to China in the 1920s missionaries rejoiced only when Chinese converts began to pray, shout hallelujah and amen, and confess their sins in ways that missionaries, laboring under their own worldviews, could identify as a genuine movement of the sanctifying Spirit.¹² We must question the assumption that there is in fact—or should be—an international culture of the Church of the Nazarene. Does this lift up denominationalism rather than Christ? Is our essential identity our membership within the organization, or does the organizational structure really unify what are common beliefs and experiences? Perhaps we should be looking for the underlying, unifying experiences of God's grace, and the common goal of Christlikeness, rather than a uniform expression of holiness, conference discussions in Guatemala indicated.

Experiences and Labors in America, India, and Australia (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1893), 211-247.

¹⁰Donald W. Dalton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Francis Asbury Press of Zondervan, 1987), 21-23.

¹¹Kimber Moulton, quoted in Donald S. Metz, *Some Crucial Issues in the Church of the Nazarene* (Olathe, KS: Wesleyan Heritage, 1994), 138.

¹²Cunningham, "Faithful: The Church of the Nazarene in North China," *The Mediator* 3 (October 2001), 37.

With globalization we all the more need a common memory. Just as biblical history unites us as Christians, our collective denominational history unites us as Nazarenes. Perhaps we will find the undercurrent to the story we share in common spiritual experiences as well as in a common doctrine.

Local History

The good news is that in telling our whole story, there is a great, ample supply of stories about Christlike pastors, humble missionaries and people in local congregations around the world who, from one generation to the next, sacrificed for the church, its schools and missions, rescued families and loved individuals into the Kingdom. Ours is the story of a people who often were different from the world and who provided alternatives to the message of the world. Though a historian as a historian cannot say it quite this way, these local stories reflect a response to a movement of the Holy Spirit in our midst.

We need not only to re-write the history of the church and its mission from a scholarly rather than promotional perspective but to encourage local histories told by and primarily about local leaders. For this very reason, we should encourage a small cottage industry of church history writing among us, especially between now and our centennial celebrations. This historical writing will reflect our diversity. We need to encourage the widespread, decentralized writing of the church's history. In this age and generation, people suspect that official histories tell the story in ways that suit institutional ends. We need authors who can tell the story from their own perspective and local leaders who can write their own histories. Much of our history has been produced to promote missions. There is a great need to note the ministries of pioneer local leaders, who, in many cases, preceded missionaries, or who worked alongside them from the beginning.¹³ We should cultivate local historians and regional histories, in languages other than English. At the same time, though such histories need to be written in national languages, the whole church somehow needs to hear how local

¹³Among the books that have been *about* local leaders, Helen Temple, *Like a Tree by the River: The Story of Dr. Cristobal E. Morales, Pioneer Preacher, Educator, and Musician in Mexico* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1973), A. Brent Cobb, *Tried and Triumphant: Testimonies of Twelve Korean Nazarenes* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1984); and Chuck Gailey, *Daughter of Africa: The Story of Juliet Ndzimandze* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1998). Among the few books written *by* a local leader, see Nobumi Isayama, *Consider Nippon: Incidents from My Life* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1957).

historians are telling their stories. Such accounts will not only supplement present ones but will correct misunderstandings about our identity.¹⁴ Such descriptions will enrich us all.¹⁵

Our church's history needs to be looked at from all angles. We need to encourage histories like that of Sergio Franco's account of our church in Nicaragua. Franco shook confidence that there was only one way for evangelicals, and, in particular, Nazarenes, to view the civil war that ravaged Nicaragua in the 1970s and 1980s.

When I, as an outsider, look at the Church of the Nazarene in Korea, I rejoice. It is by far the largest church in the Asia Pacific region. It had fewer missionaries and stronger local leaders than most other churches in the region and around the world. It had one of the first districts in the world to reach "regular" status. Korea is, in short, one of our shining success stories. However, when Kim Sung Won and other Korean Nazarene scholars look at their own story, they compare the Church of the Nazarene to other denominations in Korea. They see missionary domination, American control, limited growth, and a church struggling for relevancy to the Korean context.¹⁶

It is likely that local histories will teach us that, contrary to early Nazarene missions policy anticipations, the Holy Spirit's presence produced *different* responses among different people around the world and across time. As they read scripture and learned doctrine, people encountered Christ in their particular historical and cultural contexts. Understanding the roots of our tradition helps us to realize that while biblical truths about entire sanctification endure, our articulation of entire sanctification has always been within certain changing historical contexts. Various historians have noted the shift between the eighteenth century British articulation of holiness by John and Charles Wesley, and the nineteenth century American

¹⁴Sergio Franco, *Wounded but Transformed: A Story of Christians in Nicaragua Today: A Story of Good News* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1990).

¹⁵Among recent works doing this is Kim Young Baek's recent (2002) biography of Chung Nam Soo, founder of the Church of the Nazarene in Korea. Unfortunately, Kim's book is not yet translated into English.

¹⁶Kim Sung Won, "A Critical Reflection on the History of the Church of the Nazarene in Korea," paper presented at the Guatemala Conference. See also, similarly, Hong Ki Young, "Planting an Indigenous Nazarene Church in Korea as a Basis for Church Growth," *The Mediator* 1 (1996): 37-63.

articulation of holiness by Phoebe Palmer and those she influenced.¹⁷ One clearly sees shifts between the terminology of holiness used by J. B. Chapman, for instance, and William Greathouse. Through the Bible each generation tests its understanding anew.

The Story of Ourselves

Another implication of our discussion of “memory” at Guatemala was that, though recognizing the limitations of history, we must have a history that both invites others into the stream of it, and is honest.

A poor model of church history would portray us as a collection of faultless individuals. Timothy Smith honestly and fairly discussed the rift in our church’s history between Seth Rees and Howard Eckel in the late 1910s; but it is not always easy for us, a people aspiring to be holy, to be open about our conflicts. Sometimes we have described more holiness and less humanness among our founders than Luke described within the apostolic church. The church is less “incarnate” than Christ. It is fully human, and not in its earthly state “fully divine.”

The reason for Nazarene history is that as a people aspiring to be holy, we must have as true a picture of ourselves as we can. Church history’s purpose is to enable us to better understand the present, not to venerate ancestors. Like everyone else, historians know that good men and women sometimes fail, or fail to grasp all of the truth. After having researched Nazarene archives to uncover the histories of the Nazarene churches in the countries of my students, I realized how far available accounts were from our whole story, our inner story. Sometimes, there were personal conflicts among missionaries who bore the second blessing holiness message to a people whose highest values were living together in harmony. What conception of holiness could the people have had if missionaries themselves could not cooperate with one another? Normally, the history of a squabble would not, need not be told. But in the case of Japan the story is significant because of its lasting affect upon our churches.¹⁸

¹⁷See, for example, Harold Raser, *Phoebe Palmer: Her Life and Thought* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1987), 227-287.

¹⁸Cunningham, “Mission Policy and National Leadership in the Church of the Nazarene in Japan, 1905-1965,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 28 (Spring-Fall 1993), 139.

Such accounts may help correct some misunderstandings about Christian perfection itself. The story may prove to be instructive, cathartic and redemptive. We must speak the truth, but in love—out of a deep, passionate love for Christ and his church. We do not tell stories whose purpose is to bring embarrassment, hurt and shame to ourselves or to our ancestors, but to lead us on a corrective path closer to the Kingdom. If a story does not do that, it is not worth telling.

The conference's participants challenged the church, as a Kingdom-seeking people, to tell the whole story. We can (and must) handle the truth, participants at the conference contended, because in order to be a holy community, we need a collective repentance from collective sin. While as individuals we may find personal forgiveness through sorrowful repentance, how do we corporately confess our failures to reach beyond them to what we aspire to be, a holy people? Just as we face our estrangement from God, we must also face the historical roots of our estrangement from others—if there is to be repentance, reconciliation, wholeness and holiness. Several of the discussion groups and papers at the Guatemala Conference lamented our earlier stand (or the lack of it) on apartheid in South Africa, and our segregation in North America. To be a holy church, we cannot afford a “selective memory” that forgets the legacy of racism in our church. During the days when we were silent on apartheid and practicing segregation, we were seemingly orthodox in our theology of second blessing holiness.

Racism is not some others' story; this is our story and we cannot escape from it. Racism is part of our collective historical identity. It is difficult for us to really tell the truth about this because we are not accustomed at various levels to deal with collective or systemic guilt and sin. We must face this side of our story in order for us to understand how others look at us, why they are not part of us, and to look critically upon ourselves in our own time and place—to avoid the sin of our ancestors.¹⁹

We must have a history that glorifies God, not us, members of the conference declared. But how? If we are writing a history that is filled with our humanity, will it still bring glory to God? Will it invite others to join us? Will it be winsome?

Do we fear that if we were to tell our whole story, some would doubt our claims about entire sanctification, would question our credibility? How can we be both honest and winsome? Would collective repentance deepen the testimony of our lives' commitment to God and testify well to God's

¹⁹Compare Al Truesdale, “Christian Holiness and the Problem of Systemic Evil,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 19 (Spring 1984), 47-54.

sanctifying grace in our midst? Some at the Guatemalan conference believed so, but still wondered: Would confession take away the positive center and replace it with a sense of failure; or would it evidence a self-emptying humility that should be at the core of holiness?

The good news is that history not only provokes us to sorrow but to joy. It shows that the past cannot and need not hold us captive. History offers options, choices, and hope. Our knowledge of history enables us to overcome it. Jesus has the power over dead ancestors, we have affirmed.

While a lot of our story is racist, we might also tell the story of some of our ancestors and brothers and sisters in Christ who repented of their complicity in corporate evil. The Holiness Association of Texas, many of whose members became Nazarene, some through the Holiness Church of Christ, and others through membership in the college church at Texas Holiness University in Peniel, which united with the Church of the Nazarene in April 1908, addressed the state of race relations in the South. In 1907 Association members issued this statement: "With humiliation we confess that we and our fathers, of the white race, of this country, have not done near as much as we might have done toward the well-being and advancement of the colored race and are willing to take our part of the blame for the unneighborly and unbrotherly feeling which has sprung up and seems to be growing every day." They went on to say that they must take the initiative in "correcting the wrong and effecting a reconciliation, and if we have the spirit of Christ, to accomplish this, we will be willing even to yield up some of our rights and preferences, to suffer wrong rather than do wrong." They admonished white employers to supply Christian literature to African American workers and even to worship with them. Evangelists should take opportunities both to preach to both whites and African Americans, and to attend their worship services, Association members advised. White preachers should speak out both publicly and privately about crimes committed against African Americans and advocate speedy trials whenever they are accused. At the same time, holiness people should denounce mob violence, Association members declared. For the time and place, at the height of "Jim Crow" segregation in the American South, the affirmations of the Holiness Association of Texas were remarkably bold.²⁰

Asians realize even more than Westerners that in some sense we carry about inherited shame. On March 15, 1993, the Church of the Nazarene in Japan issued a "Confession." It stated the church's "regret" that at the time

²⁰*Holiness Association of Texas Year Book 1906-07* (n.p., n.d.), in the "Merging Religious Bodies" microfilm.

when militarism dominated the country, the Church of the Nazarene “did not resist the aggression, but rather cooperated with it.” This was publicly read at a gathering of the Asia Pacific Region.

Should such actions help to alleviate the fear of declension from core values and doctrines? Perhaps something historians can say is this, that from the beginning our church was more seeking, more restless, more heterogeneous, and more human than we have sometimes made it out to be. Another reason for hope is that fearfulness that the next generation will lose something precious has been a perpetual characteristic of our church—from the time of the passing of the first generation in the 1910s, through the dark 1940s, and shadowing the 1958 and 1983 Pilot Point celebrations. Any review of the sermons of various evangelists across our history indicates that we have *always* been fearful of movement away from our original message. We have always nervously wondered whether the next generation would embrace and internalize the essence for which the church stands. Evangelists call us to repent. We do. The church moves on. Perhaps that in itself should encourage us.

Conclusion

It seems we must learn how to tell the story not of a church that is glorified, not of a denomination that has arrived, but of a church yearning and learning to know what it means to be a holiness church in various contexts. A church that has “arrived” has lost its mission and sense of “movement.” Ours is the history of a movement aiming to do the impossible: to “organize” holiness experience, practice and doctrine. Ours is a denomination that always has been in the process formation. We have not arrived at whatever we will be, but we are in the process of becoming. Just as we are understanding Christian perfection this way, so are we understanding ourselves. We are trying, particularly in this glorious time of globalization, to find out what it means to be *corporately* a holiness church, a holiness people in this place and in this time. Wesley figured it out, at least in part, for his time and place, American holiness people did so again in the nineteenth century, and our predecessors in the twentieth did so as well. But what does it mean for us to be a holiness church, or to be both individually and collectively holy now, in the thousands of places where the Church of the Nazarene is? As soon as we think we have arrived, we not only betray our arrogance, but find that society has changed, and that our expression of holiness must also.