

The holiness tradition is a tradition whose primary focus is “the inward reformation of the development of “holy habits” (Foster, 61). The holiness tradition, because of its adherence to “holy habits”, has often been seen as a tradition of “do not”’s. With such a description, this tradition immediately captured my interest, as I am inclined toward conservative practices in my faith. In learning more of this tradition, I could feel familiar and alien aspects of the tradition. From my childhood days at a Presbyterian church, the traditional, conservative styles are aspects I am accustomed to, despite being so young that I did not focus when at sermons and would rather play with the children in the youth center. However, such aspects create a sense of homeliness and reverence in me. Yet, while I learned more about the tradition, I found doctrine and ideas that were quite different from my own. For example, the doctrine of “entire sanctification” and its many interpretations were appeared daunting and radical to me. Also, though I have heard sermons on reflecting inward and spent some time seeking God to transform me and mold me according to His ways, it was, in my mind, interesting and unique that a tradition exists that focuses specifically on reaching and measuring up to the standards of purity according to Christ and God. It is also noteworthy that the tradition does not have as much as an evangelistic approach during sermons as opposed to most Evangelical churches. In contrast, the time spent emphasizing turning to Jesus Christ as savior is spent on stressing the importance of the Holy Spirit working in and through believers and the relationship forged with God and Jesus.

In Foster’s explanation of the holiness tradition, he points out several strengths and weaknesses. After my attendance at the La Verne Community Church, a Nazarene church, I was noticed these strengths and potential weaknesses of the tradition. Among the strengths of the tradition, he lists its primary aim of reflecting God’s goodness and glory through reformation, its commitment to actions resulting from the reformation, its hope and progress in character growth,

and its growth in grace from personal and divine work (Foster, 85-91). It was apparent during the sermon and the interviews with Pastor Scharn and Dave Tubbs that the Nazarene church definitely reflected these strengths. Pastor Scharn informed me through his sermon and his description of the Nazarene focus is to turn to the Holy Spirit for guidance and, through deepening one's relationship with God, to use the gifts of the Holy Spirit to develop the fruits of the Spirit, the characteristics of Godliness (Scharn). Tubbs expanded on the missionary aspect of the Nazarene church, informing me of their practical and less rigid approach to doctrine to create relationships in the global community so others may turn to Christ (Tubbs). In these two aspects, it is clear that the inside transformation caused by the Holy Spirit has sparked passion and action within the believers of the Nazarene church. However, it is very easy to see where the holiness tradition can fall short in its fervor for sanctification. The shortcomings of the tradition to those who are not careful are legalism, Pelagianism, and perfectionism (Foster, 91-94). To slip into these hazards, one only has to become overzealous in Foster's list of strengths. To approach legalism, one no longer looks inward but the outward, attempting to act on standards rather than based on how Scripture and the Holy Spirit reveal how one should act during circumstances. Pelagianism does not follow far behind, as it is the crediting oneself for one's deeds over recognizing God in one and in the situation. Lastly, perfectionism creates a judgmental spirit within one, causing one to be rigid. These are hazards that one must constantly be aware of, though I did not see these weaknesses reveal themselves. However, it could be said that the Nazarene church could make the mistake of committing any of these weaknesses if they lose focus on the importance of Jesus Christ or over emphasize the doctrine of "entire sanctification."

When one hears of the holiness tradition, one expects conservative Christians in "Sunday" dress with Bibles, hymnals, and a small church. For the La Verne Community Church,

the small church aspect was the only one applicable. Generally, the service was not very different from my home church, Christ Church of the Valley in San Dimas. CCV, as it is called, is a mega church with contemporary style music and a huge stage with many musicians. In this small environment, the Pastor and greeters were able to seek me out and talk with me in friendly dialogue, showing the tight and loving community formed by the church. Such an experience is hard for me, as I tend to be reclusive, which works perfectly at CCV if one wants to blend in. Yet I found such a welcoming comforting. Some major differences, though, were that there was no baptism (mainly due to the fact that we were relocated to a school), communion, or altar call. At CCV, these practices are done every weekend, every service. However, I was more accustomed to my old Presbyterian churches' once-a-month communion, so only the "missing" altar call puzzled me. The worship had some contemporary artists, like David Crowder Band, and guitarists and drums, but the atmosphere felt more reserved than CCV. In talking with Pastor Scharn, he said that La Verne Community Church would be as contemporary as possible, though the small attendance size hinders many of those capabilities (Scharn).

Pastor Scharn then continued to explain the outlook of many traditional or non-Californian Nazarene churches, as California tends to be a place of the progressive (Scharn). He told me of days when he was young and he had to wear a suit to church, which contained pews and hymnals. The Robinson article appears to be the bulletin of a Nazarene worship service, outlining the phases of the service and the sermon. The bulletin reveals a very rigid structure with readings and hymns (Robinson). Also, depending on where one attends church, the church may have a greater focus on certain regions or concerns. Yet, a main reason why the churches are allowed leniency is due to the early Nazarene policy of "unity in essentials; liberty in nonessentials" (Quanstrom, 29). This allows a bit of autonomy for the churches. When it comes

to the essentials, though, there must be general agreement. One essential is the doctrine of “entire sanctification”, a vague but distinguishing doctrine for the Nazarenes. “Entire sanctification” refers to another revelation of grace from the Holy Spirit that removes sin from the believer’s life and leaves them free from it. However, due to such an ambiguous nature, it can be seen as immediate or an ongoing process, or seen as free from conscious sin, a gradual freedom from sin, or a relative experience (Quanstrom, 178-180). This belief definitely differs from what I believe, as I believe the Holy Spirit dwells in one upon conversion and aids one in becoming the person God desires one to be. It would also be a lot easier to contrast this statement if it was more direct, but it is still in the continual process of being defined and refined. Another core conviction that is considered distinguishing of the Nazarene church is that the Holy Spirit lives and works in our lives. However, Pastor Scharn feels that the phrase is incorrect. Rather than say it is a distinguishing idea of the church, he says it is an important conviction, as other churches and pastors of other denominations whom he associates with have a strong belief of this idea, or should be phrased as the realization of the Holy Spirit in Scripture and understanding of it (Scharn). Either way, it is definitely seen that the Holy Spirit is the dominant focus of the holiness tradition along with many core values, as “all else is expendable”. Knapp, as a Nazarene Christian finds many of the sacramental issues, such as baptism, finding little significance from its influence from the Evangelical churches and the heavy focus of holiness and purity through the Holy Spirit. These influences have transformed the transforming and mystical aspect of baptism into nothing more than a reflection of an altar call testimony and remove its significance (Knapp, 231-232). In comparison to CCV, it has a heightened emphasis on the Evangelical calling of Christians and bringing more people into a relationship with Christ. When looking at

churches, it is interesting to realize that churches of differing denominations are often more similar than they appear.

As I became more curious about the transformation from a conservative style service to a contemporary style, I determined to look into the history of the Nazarene church to understand what sparked such a contrast in style. To my astonishment, I found out the truth behind “unity in essentials; liberty in nonessentials”. The entire century of Nazarene history has been all about change! In 1905, when they first began, the early Nazarenes “believed that they had found the secret for uniting all of Christendom” (Quanstrom, 28). With their new holiness theology, the newly begun church believed in a changed United States for the close of the millennium with unity for all Christians. However, it starting a new theology based on the doctrine of holiness, a comprehensive theology needed to be written as to create unity of all the ideas. This daunting task was given to H. Orton Wiley, who set about the task to define their beliefs. In doing so, he explained “entire sanctification” as an instantaneous elimination of sin, departing from the Holiness Movement and Methodist ideas of a gradual sanctification. This basis was determined from the analyzing of the Greek terms of “to sanctify”, defined as a complete action in an instant (Quanstrom, 75, 80-81). However, despite the work done for the Nazarene theology, ambiguity arose and enthusiasm declined due to the disastrous events beginning in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, like World War I (Quanstrom, 93-94). Therefore, the Nazarene theologians continued to narrow down their theology and expand on definitions. Richard S. Taylor, as one such theologian, contributed to the view that even the entirely sanctified individual will still struggle with humanly issues. He believed that, though one’s conscious and intentional sin was destroyed, “one may still have temperamental impulses [...] and physical impulses which are natural and need to be controlled, yet none of which are essentially sinful” (Quanstrom, 104). The aftermath

of editing the theology led to a call to restudy the works of John Wesley. To the dismay of many, they had found that many of the practices and beliefs of the church had evolved and differed in definition from his works (Quanstrom, 128-129, 131). Following the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Mildred Wynkoop introduced a more relational theology of Nazarene doctrine. However, late in the century, many viewed this to be a cause of the decline of holiness as her teachings “tended to undermine the Nazarene distinctives concerning the second work of grace” (Quanstrom, 172). By the time the Nazarene church’s 100 year anniversary came about, the theology had been twisted from a glorious human transformation to a relativistic viewpoint of those entirely sanctified (Quanstrom, 180). Not only has the church had doctrinal trouble, but the recent global outreach has also affected the young church. In preaching to other cultures, it has been difficult to approach the people with a theology of restrictions (Scharn). Therefore, much of the church has changed to be more progressive in their thinking, with love and relationships at the core of their missions (Tubbs). The result has impacted the all Nazarene churches, as they have become more lax over rigid and conservative “nonessentials” of their beliefs, such as the traditional “Sunday” attire (Scharn). In looking at the history, it is simple to see that the Nazarene church has always been progressive in thought. In wanting to make a distinct doctrine, they focused on fixing the ambiguity of the early church. This resulted in the steady consideration of what they believed to be true. However, as people became more radical in thought, it deeply severed the original and traditional motifs held by the early Nazarene church. Though the theology of the Nazarene church has come with plenty of problems, the intent to becoming less sinful people that reflect God still remain the focal point of their theology. Thus, through their use of change, they attempted to sharpen their views and broaden their understanding. For them, the changes, positive or negative, have always been steps toward reaching a deeper relationship with God.

Reflecting on the experience at the La Verne Community Church, I found that I would perhaps like to study with the Nazarenes a little more. I find their development of “holy habits” and a correct heart to be extremely intriguing. It is very applicable in my life because I am currently attempting to discipline my heart, mind, and soul. To become as removed as possible from the sins that haunt and penetrate me seems a worthwhile cause. I have only recently determined to focus on restructuring my life, which is touched on at CCV, but not in the same magnitude in which the Nazarenes pursue it. However, as much as I do believe in the reformation caused by the Holy Spirit, I cannot say that I agree with the “entire sanctification” doctrine I have read about. I believe that the Holy Spirit enters us when we accept Jesus as Christ. Yet, I find that a second cleansing from grace to be misleading. I believe we are redeemed by the grace of God and remain redeemed from constant discipleship to Jesus. I believe the transformation to Christ’s likeness comes from growth in faith. For me, the holiness tradition harbors many strengths with a few flaws from ambiguity.

Observing the holiness tradition at work has guided me to focusing more on God’s healing processes in my life. Often, I resist change, for fear of the new and different. Yet, in looking at the Nazarene church, they incorporated change frequently, though taking careful and cautious steps with each change. Such behavior is something I would like to model. Again, divining the work of the Holy Spirit in my life and its transformative process inside me are things that I wish to reflect on more, so that way I am be an example of God’s work and light. As the issue of “entire sanctification” was never truly resolved, I would like to know how they will next define the doctrine (Greenberg, par. 6-7). Overall, I greatly appreciate and enjoy the perspective that the holiness tradition and the Nazarene church have to offer.

## Works Cited

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