
WE SHALL REMEMBER THEM: MEMORIES OF NEW ZEALAND NAZARENE SAINTS

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“At the going down of the sun, and in the morning, we shall remember them.” This statement is repeated every year without fail at dawn parades throughout New Zealand. The parades are held on ANZAC day, New Zealand’s “memorial day” when troops from the World Wars are honored. The conduct of these troupes, and how they are remembered, is indicative of and formative for New Zealand culture. The troops are remembered for embodying virtues New Zealand most cherishes as a society.

No doubt the same is true around the world, and also in the church. A sermon published by Victor Potopov of the Russian Orthodox Cathedral in Washington, D.C. lauds the memory of Russian saints. He opens his message with these words, “Of the limitless richness of Christ’s personality, each nation has selected those features of holiness that are closest to its heart, that are most readily understood, that are, for that particular nation most attainable.”¹ Potopov identifies three particular Russian virtues embodied by the saints of his church: patience, humility, and love. He places all in a context of suffering and calls his parishioners to remember the saints, to bring to mind their expressions of those virtues and to strive to imitate them.

In the latter years of his life, Peter Bourke (d. 1992), a New Zealand journalist, began compiling notes for a history of the Church of the

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¹Victor Potopov, “The Day of all the Saints of the Russian Land,” The Russian Orthodox Cathedral of St. John the Baptist, Washington, D.C., June, 1985, online, <http://www.stjohndc.org/Homilies/8506.htm>.

Nazarene in New Zealand. Nazarene work in New Zealand began in 1951. Bourke's notes include selections from missionary books on the Church of the Nazarene in New Zealand, Bourke's own personal memories and notes from interviews with several other New Zealand Nazarenes. Not surprisingly, the remembrances of Nazarene saints gathered in the manuscript yield more insight into New Zealand's cultural values than into general holiness values. Even though many of the pioneers described by Bourke were not New Zealanders, the characteristics Bourke identifies in them are virtues and personality traits valued and idealized by New Zealand society as a whole.

The traits which come through strongest in Bourke's notes are those of hard work, inventiveness and ingenuity, frugality, perseverance despite meager resources and opposition, a sense of humour, a friendly personality, and team spirit. These are the features of holiness that are closest to New Zealand's heart. This is not to say that the other "spiritual" virtues were not present in Bourke's notes, but they were not as important in defining holiness for Bourke and most of those he interviewed.

In the classroom at Asia Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary, we asked students to write about the person who for them most embodied the ideals of holiness.² In their essays Filipino students (the largest group in the class) emphasized patience, humility, not getting angry, and hard work, while some also mentioned effective preaching and prayer. Missiologist Paul Hiebert observes that while North Americans define the cardinal sin as sexual immorality, in South Asia losing one's temper is considered much worse.³ This cultural value comes through as Filipino students list "not getting angry" among the treasured traits of their own "holy heroes."

A life of prayer, including time spent at the "prayer house" was, not surprisingly, important for the Korean depictions of holiness. Papua New Guinea and Myanmar (Mizo) students mentioned the absence of vices and the importance of sexual purity. Korea and Myanmar cultures do not allow a man even to touch a woman who is not his wife. Putting holiness into practice, and not just words was mentioned by students from the Philippines and Bangladesh. The students tended, then, in rehearsing their memories, to select those virtues which are "closest to the heart" of their cultural experience, their cultural ideals.

²Christi Bennett's class "Doctrine of Holiness," 2000.

³Paul Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1985), p. 47.

The portrayal of the Church of the Nazarene in New Zealand reflects this principle. While Bourke's history is not consciously attempting to describe holiness, it is recording the beginning of a holiness denomination in New Zealand. The holiness distinctive is emphasized in the history. The doctrine is the reason why the church was introduced, and opposition from other churches was because of the doctrine. An initial openness to Roland Griffith's (American) preaching was abandoned by all denominations in New Zealand except the Salvation Army and Brethren.

Explicit definitions of holiness are twice included as a clarification for other denominations which accused the Nazarenes of teaching "sinless perfection." Bourke writes that "it really meant perfect love or perfect motive and that God was able, through the Holy Spirit, to deal with the sin problem, but that this would be a continuing process" and "it simply means perfect love and aiming for the highest standards, as put forward by Jesus Christ."⁴ Gideon B. Williamson (American General Superintendent) is remembered to have preached on the "power to witness" in a service in 1953 where Mrs Aline Taft was sanctified entirely.⁵

Yet it is not specifically adherence to these definitions of spirituality, which is emphasized by Bourke and his informants. It is what "perfect love" meant to these New Zealand Nazarenes that is interesting. The virtue of being a hard worker, especially in manual labor, is mentioned of pioneer Roland Griffith (American) in the construction of the first church, which was in Auckland. The first District Superintendent, S. Palmquist (American North West) also engaged in manual labor and was "never afraid to roll up his sleeves."⁶ In regard to the campsite at Piha, Palmquist "worked like a Trojan" and often had to be carried off the job at the end of a "working bee."⁷ Those unwilling to join in the physical tasks were seen as unworthy for the holiness denomination. Not surprising in a country not far-removed from its pioneer days, a country built on the sweat of agricultural workers. A young ministerial student, Rex, was helping with the excavation for Auckland First church when he declared that he had been called to preach—not to crack rocks, and he walked off the job.⁸

⁴Bourke, 13, 21.

⁵Bourke, 5.

⁶Bourke, 79. Palmquist was D.S. from 1968.

⁷Bourke, 14.

⁸Bourke, 41.

A sense of humor and a friendly personality are also valued in New Zealand culture. James A. Michener in *Return to Paradise* identifies the “typical New Zealander” as a person “addicted to dreadful jokes.” Bourke notes Palmquist, Jervois Davis (American immigrant pastor), and Hillary Hansen (pastor) for their sense of humor.⁹ Friendliness is noted with regard to George Yearbury (pastor) and Jervois Davis.¹⁰

Perseverance despite opposition and hardship is another New Zealand value that is noted in Bourke’s history. This is often linked to faithfulness. Bourke quotes extensively from Griffith’s appeal in the *Voice of the Nazarene* which calls for martyrs, that is, people willing to make costly sacrifices.¹¹ The Tonga family (immigrants from Nuie Island) provides an example of this. Otara pastor’s wife Joan Ranger remembers that they “were faithful witnesses and, amidst many trials and battles they proved to be real saints of God.”¹² This is the same virtue New Zealanders idealize at ANZAC day as they remember the disproportionate sacrifices New Zealand made in the world wars of the twentieth century.

More spiritual characteristics such as prayer, preaching, patience, kindness, and caring are also mentioned (in some cases more by the females that Bourke interviewed). But the definition of holiness in terms of the values of New Zealand culture seems unmistakable. In Bourke’s history it is the ideals that are closest to the New Zealand heart that receive the most attention.

The definition of holiness and the memory of the saints is conditioned in part by the culture of the observer. This realization is important in the presentation of holiness and the memory of the church in New Zealand, and in any culture. It is important, too, for the writing of church history in an international church—even historians have a hard time escaping the shaping force of cultural values. “At the going down of the sun, and in the morning, we shall remember them.” But will you remember the same things about them that I do?

⁹Bourke, 14, 53, 67.

¹⁰Bourke, 39, 57.

¹¹Bourke, 9-10, July, 1957.

¹²Bourke, 33. Events are from 1973.

**A RESPONSE TO HOLINESS
IN THE CONTEXT OF PRESENTATIONS MADE
AT THE GLOBAL THEOLOGY CONFERENCE,
SPONSORED BY THE CHURCH OF THE
NAZARENE**

Robert Charles Donahue

Background

Mendell Taylor used to tell his classes at Nazarene Theological Seminary that virtually anything was possible to be legislated in the Church of the Nazarene if there was a broad enough consensus among the members of the General Assembly! Of interest in this regard is the removal of the term “eradicated” from our Articles of Faith by action of the 2001 General Assembly and subsequent concurrence by the necessary number of district assemblies. It had long been taught in the Church of the Nazarene that “original sin continues to exist with the new life of the regenerate, until eradicated by the baptism with the Holy Spirit.” Most of the theologians of the church, however, seemed to have taken issue with this statement several decades before it was ultimately changed. Their views were communicated to one or more generations of pastors who in turn made this sentiment more widely known across the general church. Change may seem to happen quickly when it happens, but most change takes time and goes through a process.

Crisis

Jim Bond, General Superintendent of the Church of the Nazarene, in his address to the theologians of the church assembled in Guatemala City, stressed that there is a crisis concerning sanctification in our church today. Much of the time of the theology conference was taken up with discussions about aspects of this crisis. The crisis was summarized by Bond that “we are adrift in a sea of theological illiteracy, marginalization, and uncertainty.”

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The illiteracy is often evident among the laity of the church who seem to have little understanding of theology. Often the laity will move freely from denomination to denomination with little or no understanding of theological distinctives. This lack of theological literacy can often be traced to the pastoral leadership of the local church. Preaching is more often relational than doctrinal, conforming to popular topics rather than grounded in good exegesis and sound theology. Particularly, a clear preaching and teaching of the “what,” “how” and “when” of holiness is simply not done. Increasingly, for instance, the secondness or subsequentness of holiness is not heard. Could it be that this arises increasingly from a lack of emphasis and clarity in the educational institutions of the church? Could this perhaps be a reflection to a large extent of the teaching that has been given by current and recent theologians of the church?

Bond points out this lack of mention of the secondness or subsequentness of holiness as a point of concern. He says that when it is “not taught clearly and with conviction, it results in uncertain proclamation from the pulpit.” He goes on to say:

If the pastor has doubts regarding the “how” and “when” of entire sanctification, will this not reduce his/her holiness emphasis almost exclusively to process? Ultimately, does this not erode one’s conviction regarding the “what” and “why” of Article of Faith X? Does this not marginalize the holiness message and ultimately contribute to our theological malaise?

That many no longer teach or preach the secondness or subsequentness of holiness is obvious. It is also clear that many wish to drop one or both concepts as exegetically and hermeneutically indefensible. However, General Superintendent Jesse Middendorf makes the point: “I am not able to relinquish the conviction that the passages . . . at least allow an interpretation of ‘secondness’.” This statement speaks volumes for the issues at hand. A general leader of the church is reduced to pleading for at least an inclusion of these interpretations in the face of strong teaching to the contrary.

Accommodation

It seems to me that there has been a growing tendency within our Nazarene circles to accommodate ourselves to a wider theological audience that is often skeptical of our stated positions. On the local church level this has led to the dropping of even our denominational name in favor of more “community” kinds of names, and, indeed, a whole range of accommodations to make our churches more like community churches offering a kind

of evangelical pluralism and a theological buffet from which to choose according to one's likes and dislikes. Therefore, ultimately, the necessity to restate, re-narrate, and reformulate our doctrinal statements must be carried out to make our church more understood within this new context. The danger may be that we may only attempt to make ourselves more palatable within a large context without bringing forth much understanding.

Scripture

There is every reason to do good scholarship. As Roger Hahn pointed out, we do need "to seek a full-orbed biblical theology of holiness that is driven by Scripture . . ." Scripture is the bedrock of our holiness theology. Let us be careful in our scholarship lest we imbibe from wells of theological and even biblical reflection not based upon a firm foundation and appreciation for the plenary inspiration of Scripture. Some scholarship upon which we rely from the outside may be too quick to relegate often clear and authoritative passages to a pejorative category of "biblicism." Let us not forget that experience, tradition, and reason also have their supporting parts to play. Often these elements can be illuminating and helpful in our understanding. But let us at the same time reaffirm that Scripture always has the premier role in theology.

Liturgy

I propose that our holiness emphasis can only be maintained, communicated effectively, and strengthened as a living reality among our people if we give close attention to the liturgy of the church. Specifically, I mean the practice of believer's baptism, the joyous sharing of the Lord's Supper, and the celebration and praise of the Triune God in worship and prayer.

The new believer must be received into the Body of Christ visibly and quickly through the rite of baptism. This is the first element of the fulfilment of the Great Commission. It must be taught by the symbol of baptism that believers are justified and regenerated unto a new life in Christ Jesus. And that we are to pray for and wait upon God for the fulfilling of the promise to give us His Holy Spirit. The water baptism is the foreshadow of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and with fire. This baptism of the Spirit is the baptism of heart cleansing and purity-holiness or entire sanctification.

The joyful and often sharing of the elements of our Lord's broken body and shed blood must be both a symbol and a point in time in which

believers especially receive grace and experience the mystical presence of the living Christ in community. Holiness is always social in nature. We do not progress in holiness in isolation, but in living community. John Wesley seems to have understood the necessity of this for the holy life. Bond reminds us: “It was his [Wesley] passion to bring people into the holy life which we must recapture.” We must recapture this emphasis upon the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper with its reminder of our Lord’s return—this hope of His return acts as a purification for our souls as the Holy Spirit draws us into the Hope of the One of is Pure.

Our music, praise, prayer and worship must be much more than following a prescribed program! The testimony of the redeemed must be heard in word and song. The joy and celebration, the pouring out of the soul before God in a creative experience must be re-captured in the practice and life of our churches. The glory of God should permeate our gatherings and move our souls before God. This is a celebration of the holiness of God—as the seraphs sing holy, holy, holy—so we come in adoration, awe, and wonder before Him and are touched anew by the purifying coals of fire from His presence.

The liturgy of the church is the methodology to keep holiness within the warp and woof of the life of the people of God. Liturgy must be revisited with an eye toward careful biblical implementation. This is part of the original genius of the Wesleyan movement.

Morality

Some argue that holiness should not be understood as moral. This may be a reaction to a narrowly defined moralism. However, we ought not to throw out the baby with the bath water! If holiness is not moral, what is it? Certainly not immoral. And certainly not amoral. The moral nature of the church itself as the Body must come into clear focus in regard to an understanding of holiness. This has not been clearly articulated, though we see it in Scripture in both the Old and New Testaments. It comes through in the vision of Isaiah, and well as the dealings of Ananias and Sapphira as well as many other passages. Doug Johnson states: “Ultimately, Holiness theology is lacking because it refuses to reflect upon embodied holiness in the life of the Church.” Holiness must be reflected within the lives of believers within the Church. Holiness must be a live experience rather than an abstraction. Johnson further says: “It is toward the life of the faithful that all Christian theology must gesture, if it is to help sustain the promise of holiness.” Holiness must be the living reality in the lives of the people

of God, therefore the quality of life within the church is of great importance to the understanding and sustainability of the doctrine of holiness.

Caution

Bond notes, “It is time to reaffirm this important aspect of our theology and restate it in the most plausible manner from our primary sources: tradition, reason, experience, and Scripture.” Let us be careful in any restatement. Let us be careful that a restatement does not nullify that central doctrine of the church altogether nor make that doctrine less understandable. Let us be careful to make Scripture primary as we consider these things. May we begin a reaffirmation through personal affirmation and application of doctrinal truth to our own lives.

A Continuous Call

I believe General Superintendent Jim Bond gives us all a strong challenge in regard to the crisis we face in the church. He says we must participate in “a continuous call for believers to make a whole-life commitment, exercise faith, and experience the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit in purity and power . . . this ‘is obtained in an instant, the result of entire sanctification.’” May we arise to the challenge before us.