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TRENDS IN THE HOLINESS MOVEMENT
By Earl L. Gardner

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"The Holiness Movement and its Present Day Trends"

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A GUESS AT WHEN THIS BOOKLET WAS PUBLISHED

If the author of this booklet is the same Earl Gardner who was in the Rock Island, Illinois area when I was there in the 1960s -- he joined the Bible Missionary Church in about 1961. This being the case, the contents of this booklet suggest to me that it may have been written and published shortly before Earl Gardner joined the Bible Missionary Church in about 1959 or 1960 -- and, apparently he was still a Nazarene minister at the time the booklet was written. Finally, if that which I have posited be so, it would appear that the matters set forth by Earl Gardner in this booklet expressed some of the frustration he felt with conditions in the Church of the Nazarene shortly before he left that denomination and joined the Bible Missionary Church. -- DVM

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FOREWORD

In this small treatise we propose to set forth, briefly, the Foundations on which our present-day Holiness movements rest, the development of their organizations, and their present-day Status and Trends.

Some statements pertaining to present-day weaknesses will produce varied reactions from the reader. Nevertheless I submit them in the fear of God as a means of stimulating thought and

prayerful retrospection in an appeal for the recovery of the early spiritual Power and Glory once demonstrated among us.

We feel a need to revive the original character of the Holiness Movement which emphasized personal piety and simplicity as chief cornerstones.

We send this forth with a prayer for God's blessing upon the reader and upon all who are longing for a twentieth-century Pentecostal Revival within the ranks of the Holiness Movement.

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I. WESLEYAN HOLINESS

The history of the various holiness groups which have patterned their doctrine after the Wesleyan Emphasis is a very interesting and thrilling one, indeed. While holiness has always been God's standard and requirement, both in the Old and New Testaments, the Holiness Movement, in the fullest sense began on the Day of Pentecost. We have learned by the study of Church History, that since that time the doctrine and experience of Pentecostal Holiness has continued to exist in a greater or lesser degree up to this present time.

It was John Wesley, however, who, after the passing of the Dark Age and the Lutheran Reformation, rediscovered, restated and re-vitalized the doctrine of Entire Sanctification by faith in Christ as a second definite work of grace in the heart of the believer. Hence Wesley may be said to have been the founder of the present-day Holiness Movement.

Some quotations from the pen of John Wesley may be of value in showing his teaching. He was converted in 1738 in a Moravian meeting at Aldersgate Street while listening to someone read Luther's description of the change wrought in man's heart by faith in Christ for salvation. Here is his own testimony of what happened on May 24, 1738:

"About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for Salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death. I began to pray with all my might for those who had in a more especial manner despitefully used me and persecuted me. I then testified openly to all there what I now first felt in my heart." (From Wesley and His Century by Fitchett, p. 123).

In contrast to the view held by Count Zinzendorf and the Moravians, namely, that we are both saved and sanctified all in one experience, Wesley sought and obtained at a later date the experience of Heart Purity or Entire Sanctification by complete consecration and faith in Christ's atoning blood. He then became a strong exponent of this fundamental Bible doctrine. I quote from M. E. Redford's book, "The Rise of the Church of the Nazarene," regarding Wesley's experience and teaching of Entire Sanctification:

"This happened about seven months after his conversion at a memorable love feast in London when George Whitefield and he, with other prominent Methodist ministers, were having a

union meeting of the Methodist societies. Wesley's Journal, Monday, January 1, 1739, gives the following account of what happened:

"About three in the morning, as we were continuing instant in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us, insomuch that many cried out for exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground. As soon as we recovered a little from the awe and amazement at the presence of His majesty, we broke out with one voice, "We praise Thee, O God, we acknowledge Thee to be Lord."

"His description of this experience clearly indicates that he, and others, received the Holy Spirit in a powerful manner. Afterwards his preaching was more dynamic and fruitful. Thousands were converted and sanctified, and Methodist societies rapidly multiplied.

"The significance of the above incident is made clearer by two of Wesley's own statements. A year later, with his Aldersgate experience in mind, he said, 'I received a clearer view than I had before of the way to obtain holiness; namely, by faith in the Son of God, and immediately I declared to all, "We are saved from sin; we are made holy by faith."

"Some of his opponents insisted that Sanctification was received at the time of justification. To these Mr. Wesley replied, 'But we do not know a single instance, in any place, of a person's receiving in one and the same moment remission of sins, the abiding witness of the Spirit, and a new and clean heart.' In explaining the difference between his views and those of others on justification and sanctification he said, 'They speak of justification, either as the same thing with sanctification, or as something consequent upon it. I believe justification to be wholly distinct from sanctification and necessarily antecedent to it.' Thus he believed that justification preceded sanctification and that the latter was a second experience in the believer by which he was cleansed from all sin.

"Believing that sin remains in believers after conversion and that this necessitates their being sanctified, Wesley urged his ministers thus: 'As soon as any penitents find peace, exhort them to go on to perfection. Preach full salvation now receivable by faith . . . Do not neglect strongly and explicitly to urge believers to go on to perfection.' On one occasion he gave this charge: 'Preach full sanctification, preach it definitely, preach it explicitly, preach it strongly, preach it wherever you have an opportunity. Insist upon it everywhere. All our preachers should preach it, should make a point of preaching it constantly, strongly, explicitly. Explicitly assert and prove that it may be received now by simple faith. If others grow weary and say little about it, do you supply their lack of service. Speak and spare not. Let no regard for any man induce you to betray the truth of God.'"

This, my brethren, is scriptural holiness as taught by Wesley. It is to the preaching of this fundamental Bible doctrine of Full Salvation, received in two distinct crisis experiences, that we are committed as a part of the Holiness Movement. Let us heed Wesley's admonition not to grow weary of preaching, testifying and living this glorious experience.

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II. PRESENT DAY HOLINESS CHURCHES

Since the time of the great Wesleyan Revival the experience and doctrine of holiness have been preached far and wide. We cannot here deal with the histories of the various organizations in detail which have sprung up during the past two centuries.

We would, however, refer to the fact that the Holiness Movement came to consist of two wings -- the left wing composed of those who taught that the believer was not baptized with the Holy Spirit unless he had the evidence of "speaking in other tongues," and the right wing composed of those groups who held strictly to the Pauline, Wesleyan emphasis.

The present-day "Tongues Movements" have flourished considerably, but have divided themselves in several factions with varied emphasis on ecstatic and strange spiritual experiences. While these groups have been classified, generally, as holiness groups, yet, in emphasis they do not emphasize and in many cases do not teach heart purity. Hence the true message of holiness among these groups has suffered almost total loss.

Within the right wing, however, the doctrinal emphasis has been quite consistent with Wesley's views. Nevertheless, even in these groups some weaknesses have been recognized which tend to blur the "clear blast" of the "Holiness trumpet."

Prior to the beginning of the twentieth century there were several independent holiness churches throughout America which believed basically the same. There was, therefore, a trend toward unity which eventually resulted in the majority of these bodies uniting together forming the present-day Church of the Nazarene which is one of the largest holiness denominations now.

There were, however, several holiness churches of the right wing which did not merge into larger groups, probably because of differences on various points of church discipline and government. Most of these smaller groups have not grown to the status of a major denomination, yet have nevertheless maintained their central fundamental doctrine of Entire Sanctification. Perhaps an over-emphasis on external standards of dress, etc., or poor church polity, or other eccentricities, have retarded their numerical growth.

The Church of the Nazarene has had a phenomenal growth in size and wealth. It has its own colleges and seminary and a large foreign missionary scope.

Notwithstanding these gains, there are signs of weakness within her structure. She has become more and more insistent on statistical results and institutional in function so as to become somewhat ineffective in her direct emphasis on holiness evangelism. She has, perhaps, steered too far away from earlier standards of conduct and modesty and has failed in some degree to insist on the sanctified life as the mainspring of function.* [Many would regard these as under-statements! -- DVM]

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III. PRESENT DAY TRENDS AND THE NEED FOR REVIVAL IN THE HOLINESS MOVEMENT

A general sense of need for a fresh visitation of God upon us is felt by many within the holiness churches today. This is giving rise to a spirit of heart searching and re-evaluation of the mission and function of our churches.

The trend which has been toward unification is somewhat shifting to a trend toward division into new groups in an effort to regain the early spiritual power and purity of the early days and which is so sadly lacking today. This lack is being felt quite generally among the members of the Church of the Nazarene.

History seems to indicate that when a church exists long enough to acquire its own institutions of learning and matures into a strong and well organized denomination it carries with it the seeds of spiritual failure. The "machine" seems to become so complex that all its working parts cannot coordinate in complete obedience to the checks and leadings of the Holy Spirit. It becomes overly complicated with its numbers of committees and departments until the average layman and preacher alike seem to be confused in trying to keep in step with the program. The source of weakness is not easily found, however, since it seems that each function taken by itself has value.

Nevertheless, there are some very real diversions which may be responsible for the low spiritual tide within. We list some here which we feel are definite points of weakness leading to spiritual decline and decay.

1. Unscriptural Increase of Centralized Power

It is necessary here to define the true Church of Jesus Christ. What constitutes the visible church? What and where is the Body of Christ -- the Church?

The true Church in a scriptural sense seems to be the local congregation. This is the lighthouse to a lost world in a very real sense. It is Biblical and necessary, however, to have central leadership over the numerous bodies, but not ecclesiastical dictators who usurp unscriptural authority. There is an increased authority being given to centralized leadership which is injurious to the spiritual welfare of the local congregation, and, as a result, spells failure to the church in general. This tends to a modified popery. The Bible pattern seems to be a classification of laity, pastor, evangelist, and a central body such as is characterized in Acts 15.

The place of the pastor as leader of the flock must still be recognized and protected. This does not mean that he has absolute authority but is primarily responsible for the souls of the laymen. There is also need for district and general leadership. There should be a proper balance of authority and understanding between the layman, pastor, district leader and general leader. One should not infringe on the liberties of the other. Ecclesiastical monarchy has no place in the church of Jesus Christ.

2. Unscriptural Imposition of Budgets

While the objectives which necessitate finance may be worthy, it does not follow that the local church is obligated to support everything that is proposed by central leadership. The principle and privilege of free-will giving must be respected and protected, regardless of how little a church may give. While it is true that people within the church must be taught and challenged to give tithes and offerings, yet they must not be assessed against their will and beyond their ability to give.

The demand for a local church to tithe her total income to any one outside phase designated by central leadership is totally unscriptural. However, should the church agree together to do this willingly, God would bless on the basis of free-will giving.

3. Unscriptural Handling of Preacher's Credentials

In this matter, as well as in all others, church leaders must recognize that they are merely stewards. They should recognize their responsibility to confer upon all who qualify, scripturally, proper credentials without hesitation. While it is necessary that the church have practical requirements for its ministers, yet let centralized leadership recognize that it is God who chooses and calls men to preach, and it is the responsibility of the church to help them fulfill their calling rather than to hinder them. Let them beware of trafficking in the bloody business of using credentials as a club to force God-called men into some political scheme which is not God-directed. Christ is still the Head of the Church; the human leaders are but servants.

There is a trend today to "brainwash" any man who will not "sign a blank check" for everything central leadership dictates. The withholding of credentials from a sincere man who gives all to win men to God is a very cruel torture. And be sure God will not let guilty parties go unpunished unless they repent.

4. Usurping the Power of the Pulpit

The Christian pulpit is central in the life of the Church of Jesus Christ, since it is by the preaching of the Word that men are saved. It is "God's throne" of communication to His people. It is the "Holy of Holies" to the heart and life of the people of God.

We must not desecrate its power and potential for lesser ideals and objectives by:

(1) Promotional speeches to promote secular, political, or social functions which have no bearing on our primary mission of holiness evangelism.

(2) Promotion of man-made projects and programs which substitute for God-inspired preaching of the Word.

We are against cut and dried preaching schedules designed to promote denominational projects out of harmony with our true mission. Our ministers must be "voices" not "echoes." Not denominational or organizational "puppets" who have no conviction of their own. I am not here advocating a poor spirit of cooperation with those things which are good and in order, but the

preacher must maintain a Biblical sense of values. He must keep himself in tune with God so as to preach the Word of God with full authority.

(3) Unscriptural and unethical methods of raising money.

The "high pressure" method of getting people to give is not conducive to a good spiritual atmosphere. While it is proper in some cases to present specific needs of the church from the pulpit, we should always respect the liberties of the congregation to give willingly without undue pressure. Some have erred grievously at this point at times and have grieved the Spirit of God.

(4) Allowing the pulpit to become a place of lightness by "borderline" jesting, which smacks of the sensual or secular and grieves the Spirit of God.

Such things are out of line with the purpose of the church. May His "Flaming Sword" cleanse and keep the pulpit of our church in its high place of honor and dignity for which it has been dedicated.

5. Over-Emphasis on Statistical Gains

(a) We think it unnecessary to set quotas for church membership. First of all, it is our task to everlastingly evangelize the lost. If we succeed in this, the membership problem will be worked out proportionately and properly. If we set goals to get a certain number of members and set out to get them, the temptation is to by-pass the Bible requirements and "pick our fruit green." The principle of probation should be practiced in essence if not so designated

This is a dangerous trend. Other old-line churches have lost their spiritual moorings at this point.

(b) The same danger is seen in financial quotas which tend to create similar tensions on the people. While we certainly believe all should tithe and give offerings, yet it must be done as a means of obedience to God and as a spiritual service and not primarily to make a quota or goal. We must keep the horse ahead of the cart. This is not to rule out challenge, but to keep the undergirding sense of worship and free-will giving basic.

6. The Growing Tendency Toward Recreational Rather Than Spiritual Pursuits.

Participation by preachers and laymen in questionable recreational activities is an indication that we are not a "separated" people any longer. World Series ball games, corrupt television programs, prize fights, community affairs where gambling and nudeness are paramount and such like indulgences are grieving God's Spirit away from us. God is a jealous God and will not look on sin of any nature.

Banqueting is becoming a fixed routine in many conventions and gatherings. While some things of this nature are not in themselves sinful, yet we are falling into a trend of socialized gospel. We ought to enjoy prolonged prayer vigils together more than periods of feasting and frivolity. It is a shifting of emphasis which is spelling our downfall.

Halloween parties are now being sponsored inside the sanctuary and in some churches a kitchen is standard equipment: "Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set" (Proverbs 22:28).

7. Academic and Cultural Over-Emphasis in our Colleges.

Originally our schools were founded to serve the church exclusively in producing and training preachers and missionaries to save the lost. Now the church is called upon to support a college curriculum on the level of a State University with a minor emphasis on producing spiritual giants and Bible preachers and teachers.

Also we have set a pace in our cultural and recreational curriculum which tends to have the same sway over our students as any worldly college. We follow all the silly customs of Freshman initiation, no matter how stupid it looks to the outside or what scars it leaves on conscientious students who want to be an example of true holiness. Our "wide open" scope of academic and cultural "spread" opens the doors to unspiritual people allowing them to pursue their secular pursuits and introduce worldliness into our midst. They get the benefit of church supported training and go out on their own when finished and never put back a thing into the church -- in service or money.

We don't feel it is the mission of the church of Christ to educate the sons of the world. This is a violation of Bible separation from the world.

All this grieves the Spirit. He cannot reign in complete control over an arrangement of this kind.

8. An Improper Distribution of Finance

The law of love as stated by the Apostle James tells us that "if a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?"

We seem to have developed a "double standard" of ministerial support. It seems not to concern our central leadership that many Home Mission pastors get little or no support to carry forth a very vital ministry here in America. They are expected to rough it through and carry their own financial load by secular work and also help pay the church's bills and budgets while at the same time we multiply offices with salaried men on a high level and continue to take on larger building projects and pay no attention to the decaying Home Mission front. I believe God expects strict and just stewardship in this realm as in others. A "feast or famine" standard of ministerial support is contrary to the law of love and the scriptural implication of the reason for tithing.

In the field of education we are not getting sanctified results from sanctified dollars.

Multiplicity of departments and their heads are taking an increasing amount of support which should be directed more specifically to the actual function of the preaching of the Gospel. Holiness evangelism on the level of personal witness and revival efforts is still the "cutting edge" of the "Gospel sword."

Strict stewardship of the tithe and offerings of the people of God is a distinct responsibility imposed upon all in authority by God Himself. We can commit the sin of robbery on a general plane the same as individuals who refuse to pay their tithe. We are under moral obligation to use sanctified money at every level for God's purposes, rightly interpreted.

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IV. THE FORWARD LOOK

Our heart cry is "back to Pentecost." Let us free ourselves of our spiritual shackles and set our spiritual houses in order. Let us be reassured that God is still interested in the souls of men and is anxious to bless any and all who will pay the price in obedience and sacrifice to open the channels of spiritual power. Pentecostal power upon the Church is the only answer,

It is time to ". . . blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly. . . Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children. . . Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?" (Joel 2:15-17).

Earl L. Gardner

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THE END