METHODOISM AND THE THEOLOGICAL IDENTITY OF THE
CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

BY STAN INGERSOL

Five missionaries sailed from New York City in late 1897. Sent by the
Association of Pentecostal Churches of America, an east coast parent body
of the Church of the Nazarene, their arrival in India in early 1898 is regard­
ed as the beginning of Nazarene missions. The missionary party had a lay­
over in England before boarding the steamer Egypt, which would carry them
across the Mediterranean. And so they devoted their single Sunday in
London to attending services at John Wesley’s old City Road Chapel and
visiting the graves of the founder of Methodism and his mother, Susannah.¹

As they stood at Wesley’s grave en route to India, one wonders: did they
recall Wesley’s comment that “the world is my parish”? Miss Mina Shroyer,
sent one year later to join them in India, devoted her Sunday in London to
visiting the same Methodist shrine.

The act of these missionary pilgrims worshipping in Wesley’s chapel
would have resonated with other early Nazarenes. “The Church of the
Nazarene is nothing in the world but old-fashioned Methodism, with a
Congregational form of government,” C. W. Ruth wrote W. C. Wilson in
1903. Then Ruth paraphrased a sentence published originally in the minutes
of the first Methodist conference in London in 1744 and reaffirmed at
American Methodism’s founding Christmas Conference in 1784: “Our busi­
ness is to spread Scriptural Holiness over these lands.”² Shades of Wesley
and Asbury!

I

By 1900 the Wesleyan-holiness movement floundered at the edge of a
sectarian snake-pit, divided by race, region, and nationality. Sixty years ear­
lier, Sarah Lankford combined the women’s prayer groups of two Methodist
churches in New York City to create the Tuesday Meeting for the Promotion
of Holiness. That action, coupled with the publication of Boston minister
Timothy Merritt’s Guide to Christian Perfection, marked the Wesleyan-
holiness movement’s advent. The remarkable career of Phoebe Palmer,
Lankford’s sister, followed. Mrs. Palmer stoked the fires of 19th-century

¹Beulah Christian (January 1898): 5.
²C. W. Ruth to W. C. Wilson, August 3, 1903. W. C. Wilson Collection, Nazarene Archives,
Kansas City, Missouri. Wilson joined the Church of the Nazarene and was elected one of its
general superintendents in 1915.
evangelical piety as leader of the Tuesday Meeting, trans-Atlantic revivalist, co-founder of a mission in New York City’s slums, author of several books, and editor of The Guide to Holiness (Merritt’s paper renamed).

John Inskip, William McDonald, J. A. Wood, and other Methodist clergy initiated a new phase of the American holiness movement after the Civil War. Beginning in 1867 and continuing well into the 20th century, the National Campmeeting Association for the Promotion of Holiness conducted specialized holiness camp meetings, conventions, and revivals throughout the United States. Earlier camp meetings and revivals focused on converting the unconverted. Those sponsored by the National Association aimed, instead, on bringing Christians into a “deeper work of grace”—an experience of entire sanctification.

A democratic spirit pervaded the Wesleyan-holiness movement. Bishops could control Methodist clergy but not the laity who led many local, county, and state holiness associations—some headed by women excluded from leadership in other sectors of church and society. Independent-minded evangelists defied the Methodist Discipline and used a local preacher’s license as their authority to conduct revivals, even competing directly with local pastors. By 1900 the Wesleyan-holiness movement included three different groups: sectarian “come-outers” who regarded establishment Methodism as deficient, “put-outers” who had been dismissed from their churches, and Methodist loyalists.3

The fragmented nature of the late 19th-century holiness revival posed a daunting question: did anything unite it anymore? The answers given were as diverse as the problem itself and further illustrated the problem.

II

The Church of the Nazarene emerged in this milieu. It was one of two dozen or so new religious bodies that emerged between 1880 and 1910, each enshrining its own particular vision of what it meant to be a believers’ church in the Wesleyan tradition.

*Unitive Holiness.* The desire to overcome the sectarian splintering of the American holiness movement was the prime motive behind forming the present-day Church of the Nazarene, which resulted from a series of mergers uniting regional holiness bodies from the east, west, and south. Rev. C. W. Ruth, a National Holiness Association evangelist, introduced the merger partners to one another, but the desire to be part of something larger and less provincial characterized each of the original parent bodies. The first merger

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Methodism and the Theological Identity

(Chicago, 1907) united the Association of Pentecostal Churches of America in the northeastern United States and the Church of the Nazarene centered in the west. The second merger (Pilot Point, Texas, 1908) brought the southern-based Holiness Church of Christ into the new denomination. Other key mergers occurred in 1915, when the Pentecostal Mission, centered in the southeastern United States, and the Pentecostal Church of Scotland joined the growing denomination. Since the Association of Pentecostal Churches of America and the Holiness Church of Christ were themselves the products of previous mergers, the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene in late 1915 encompassed seven previously independent denominations. The desire to overcome regional and national boundaries—and the subcultures based upon them—was an important aspect of the identity of the first generation of Nazarenes.

A Moderate Believers' Church. Nazarenes began their denominational pilgrimage as a moderate believers’ church. As such, they rejected the notion that they were restoring “true church polity” or had uncovered a scheme of church organization taught in scripture. The 1898 Manual of Bresee’s Church of the Nazarene in Los Angeles stated that founders of the Pacific movement, “believing that the Lord Jesus Christ had ordained no particular form of government for the Church,” were guided by “common consent” in framing their polity, provided that nothing agreed upon was “repugnant to the Word of God.” This statement underscores continuity with the Methodist Episcopal Church on one of the most fundamental assumptions of ecclesiology.

The majority of Wesleyan-holiness churches emerging at this time were also moderate in their expression of the believers’ church ideal. Nevertheless, the wider movement included other bodies with more radical restorationist ecclesiologies, like the Church of God (Anderson, Indiana) and the Church of God (Holiness), which claimed to have recovered the biblical pattern of “true church order.” While rejecting restorationism, the parent bodies of the Church of the Nazarene all insisted on a regenerate church membership, applied discipline to moral offenders, and regarded their church community as a “gathered” fellowship brought together providentially for a purpose.

Methodist Identity. The believers’ church impulse and the Wesleyan heritage were both critical components of the early Nazarene self-understanding. The decision of the Nazarene founders to embrace a believers’ church style of Protestantism was central to their critique of mainline Methodism, which they regarded as increasingly lax in moral and doctrinal discipline.

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4The best account of the individual histories of these parent bodies and the dynamics behind their union together is Timothy L. Smith’s Called Unto Holiness: The Story of the Nazarenes (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1962).

and acculturated to the extent that Methodism's rising middle-class prosperity increasingly blinded it to the needs of the poor.

Yet their careful nurture of a Wesleyan identity in the areas of soteriology, scripture, sacraments, ministry, and missionary vision is crucial for understanding the other side—their sense of continuity with the broad Methodist tradition. The overall scope of Methodist influence on Nazarene life is evident in the following areas:

- a quadrennial General Assembly, patterned after the General Conference, as the church's highest legislative body and court of final appeal
- a *Manual* patterned after the Methodist *Discipline*6
- General Rules adapted from the Methodist *Discipline*
- general superintendency7
- system of districts and district superintendents
- distinctive thrust of the church's doctrines of faith, grace, salvation, and holiness
- doctrine of the ministry
- major founders
- deed restrictions (or "trust clause") on local church property that makes the connection the actual owner of all church property

III

There were other important aspects of the early Church of the Nazarene's theological identity. Certain factors separated Nazarenes from other believers' churches in the Wesleyan-holiness tradition forming at the same time. Of the two dozen or so Wesleyan-holiness churches in 1900, why did these three and not a different combination join to create the present-day Church of the Nazarene?

The holiness movement's sectarian snake-pit included divisions over ecclesiology, baptismal theology, eschatology, the role of women, divine healing, and patterns of higher education. So beyond the shared paradigm of a "believers' church in the Wesleyan tradition," the various holiness churches often held narrow positions on other issues that either attracted them to one another or repelled them. In the case of the three uniting churches of 1907 and 1908, each arrived independently and by different trajectories to the same basic positions on a variety of issues that divided the holiness movement, including the following.

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7 Phineas Bresee's ideas of district and general superintendency were forged by his experiences as a presiding elder and as a delegate to the 1892 General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. There he was a member of the Committee on Episcopacy, which that year debated whether or not missionary bishops James Thoburn and William Taylor should be regarded, like other bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, as "general superintendents." See Carl Bangs, *Phineas F. Bresee: His Life in Methodism, the Holiness Movement, and the Church of the Nazarene* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1995): p. 174.
The role of women. A crucial aspect of early Nazarene identity was its willingness to open every lay and ministerial office in the church to women. While women in established denominations still fought for laity and clergy rights, those in each of the three uniting denominations were members of local church boards, served as delegates to higher governing bodies, and were ordained to the ministry, where they served as pastors and evangelists. This egalitarian impulse was one of the factors that separated the Church of the Nazarene’s parent bodies from the mainline Methodism of their day but bound them to one another.

Baptismal theology. Baptismal theology was also a divisive issue within the American holiness movement. The New Testament Church of Christ originally recognized pouring as the only scriptural mode of baptism and required new members previously baptized by another mode to be rebaptized by this one. It dropped that stance when it merged with another Southern group to form the Holiness Church of Christ, but other holiness churches were not always willing to moderate their stance. The Holiness Baptists in Arkansas, for instance, considered merger only with groups who accepted their position that immersion was the only scriptural mode of baptism. Differences over believers’ baptism versus infant baptism, and over the modes of baptism, divided the ranks of American holiness movement churches.

By 1907, each of the three original parent bodies of the Church of the Nazarene had independently arrived at similar positions on baptism. Each left the issue of baptismal mode to the conscience of the baptismal candidate. Moreover, each permitted parents to present their children for infant baptism or allowed them to defer the sacrament if they leaned strongly toward believers’ baptism. On the timing and mode of baptism, “liberty of conscience” was the Nazarene watchword.8

Eschatology. Postmillennialism dominated 18th- and 19th-century American religious thought, but the mushrooming dispensational premillennialist movement caught some revivalistic holiness bodies in its web. By contrast, the Church of God (Anderson, Indiana) remained solidly amillennial as it entered the 20th century. Liberty of conscience also became the Nazarene position on eschatological theories. Some early Nazarene leaders, like revivalist C. W. Ruth and general superintendent E. P. Ellyson, were premillennialists. Others, like theologian A. M. Hills and district superintendent William E. Fisher, were postmillennialists.9 Eschatology was not a focus of Nazarene unity. Rather, the willingness to grant others courteous

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9 A. M. Hills’ 2-volume Fundamental Christian Theology (1931) was written from a postmillennial standpoint but contained a chapter on premillennialism written by J. B. Chapman, so that it could be placed on the Nazarene Course of Study for ministers.
respect when their eschatology differed from one’s own was the distinguishing mark when Nazarenes spoke of eschatology.

Divine healing. Through the ministry of the Episcopalian lay revivalist Charles Cullis and others, an emphasis on faith healing was associated with the American holiness movement from the 1870s on. Eventually this impulse flowed into 20th-century Pentecostalism. The divine healing emphasis was another issue that divided holiness ranks. Rev. Mary Lee Cagle was typical of several early Nazarenes. She experienced what she considered a singular instance of divine healing but never made the topic a central aspect of her preaching. The official position of the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene was that Christians should pray for healing and trust God for it but not shun medical professionals and facilities. The Nazarene patriarch, Phineas Bresee, lived the last twenty years of his life in the home of his son, Dr. Paul Bresee, a physician, whose office was in the home itself.¹⁰

Role of secondary factors. The role of these factors as attracting and repelling features in early Nazarene life is illustrated by the young denomination’s relationship to the Pentecostal Mission, a church network in the southeast headquartered in Nashville, Tennessee. The Pentecostal Mission was founded in 1898 by J. O. McClurkan, originally a minister in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. McClurkan was closely associated with A. B. Simpson and the Christian and Missionary Alliance. Yet leading lay members of the Pentecostal Mission, like the John T. Benson family, were Methodists in background. The Pentecostal Mission sent representatives to the Second General Assembly of the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene (1908) and hosted the Third General Assembly (1911). But McClurkan was unwilling to commit himself to union with the Nazarenes, for like Simpson he held a Keswick-holiness theology, firmly opposed the ordination of women (though he allowed women to preach and serve as pastors), and was an ardent premillennialist. Only with McClurkan’s death in 1914 did his followers feel free to merge with the Nazarenes, who ordained McClurkan’s widow a few years later.¹¹

Nazarene theological identity was not based solely on the desire to promote the holiness revival but on a desire to unite that revival with a believers’ church base that was liberal on women’s participation in church life, open to those of varying baptismal and eschatological perspectives, and sensible in its approach to divine healing. Each of these factors shaped early Nazarene identity by repelling other small groups that were incompatible on one or more of these issues. By the same token, the compatibility of the unit-

ing churches on these issues helped cement the original three groups together.

IV

In what sense did the Church of the Nazarene originate as a believers’ church, and how does this aspect of its character relate to the wider community of Methodism?

Each of the merging parent churches functioned as a believers’ church and brought these characteristics into the united body. Each exhibited the traits described by Donald F. Durnbaugh in his classic study, *The Believers’ Church: The History and Character of Radical Protestantism* (1968). Durnbaugh defines the believers’ church as a voluntary fellowship based on the idea of separation from the world and the gathering together of regenerate believers, rejecting any notion of the visible church as a “mixed assembly” of the converted and unconverted. The believers’ church historically emphasizes the necessity of all members to be active in Christian work. It practices church discipline. Its members care for the poor and especially for Christian sisters and brothers in need. It follows a simple pattern of worship. And its common life is centered on “the Word, prayer, and love.”

Each of the three principal merging groups exemplified these characteristics over-and-against the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, from which the majority of early Nazarene leaders came. These two branches of the Methodist tree comprised together the largest Protestant church in the land and were becoming the quintessential American denomination. To reverse the direction of G. K. Chesterson’s fine phrase, mainstream Methodism was becoming the “church with the soul of a nation.” The point is crucial: had Episcopal Methodism been something other than what it was in the late 19th century, the Church of the Nazarene would never have happened. And so at the beginning of its denominational life, the commitment to a believers’ church style functioned in the Nazarene mind as an implicit rebuke of what it regarded as its increasingly undisciplined “mother.”

The Wesleyan-holiness movement’s standard complaint with mainline Methodism was that of “declension.” The different interpretations of entire sanctification within Methodism were a major focus of the holiness movement’s concern but not the whole issue. Many agreed with Lovick Pierce, a Southern Methodist patriarch and staunch advocate of entire sanctification, who in 1876 lamented the “thousands of denominational but unconverted Methodists.” Pierce added: “It is useless to preach sanctification to a church membership living so far below this plane of religion as not to feel its necessity.” Over twenty years later, Pierce’s posthumously published

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M miscellaneous Essay on Entire Sanctification charged Methodism with moral laxity, the lowering of membership standards (largely through abandoning the class meeting), and a general decline in the quality of spiritual life. H. C. Morrison's opinion was more brutal: "There is a stiffness and coldness in our city churches that freeze out the common people, and, worst of all shuts out the Christ of the common people. The pastors of our city churches are not soul winners."14 Here was an echo of B. T. Roberts' lament some forty years earlier at the time of the Free Methodist schism. Many others in the American holiness movement shared the assessment.

Yet there was no single, driving issue that led to the withdrawal of the various Nazarene parent bodies from Methodism. Instead, different factors led to each one's break with the Methodist church:

- **Ecclesiology:** The New Testament Church of Christ developed in Tennessee out of the "no-sect" restorationist ecclesiology of its founder, Robert Lee Harris, who broke with the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in 1894. Harris soon died and his successors moderated their views on "true church polity" and abandoned them totally in 1904 when they were incorporated into the Holiness Church of Christ.

- **Conflict over holiness revivalism:** C. B. Jernigan founded the first congregation of the Independent Holiness Church in Texas in 1901 as a result of local conflicts between holiness lay people and their Methodist pastors. Some holiness folks left the churches as a result and worshipped in loosely structured bands, a situation Jernigan deplored. In spite of criticism from other holiness leaders, Jernigan organized the bands into congregations where, in his words, "the sacraments could be administered." 15 Similar conflicts between holiness Methodists and their pastors resulted in the early congregations in New England that later entered the Church of the Nazarene. This was especially true of the denomination's oldest congregation, that in Providence, Rhode Island. 16

- **Desire to minister to the poor:** In the west, the issue that most clearly pulled Phineas Bresee out of the Methodist Episcopal Church centered around his desire to preach to the urban poor in Los Angeles, a conviction of increasing importance to him later in life, after pastoring affluent congregations in Iowa and California and serving as a presiding elder in two conferences. When the bishop and cabinet refused to appoint him to the city mission he desired, Bresee requested and received location, and accepted a position as pastor of a nondenominational work. One year later, he and others associated with the city mission organized the first congregation bearing the name Church of the Nazarene. Its earliest Manual states that those who joined Bresee were "called of God to this work, to come out and stand together." To what, exactly, were they called? To live holy lives together, to minister to the poor and neglected, and to give active Christian testimony to their faith. The new church also contained firm and explicit guidelines for applying church discipline against offenders. 11

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The Nazarene parent bodies came to their believers' church identities by different routes, but came to them nevertheless. In each of the parent bodies, it was not enough to want to "flee the wrath to come." Each emphasized a regenerate membership and brought this concern into the united church. The ritual for receiving new members printed in the 1908 *Manual* of the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene asked a direct question: "Do you take Jesus Christ as your Saviour, and do you realize that He saves you now?" After an affirmative answer, the candidate was further asked:

Do you covenant to give yourself to the fellowship and work of God . . . as set forth in the General Rules of the Church; endeavor in every way to glorify God, by a humble walk, godly conversation, and holy service; devotedly giving of your means; faithful attendance upon the means of grace; and abstaining from all evil, seek earnestly to perfect holiness of heart and life in the fear of the Lord?18

In reaction to a Methodism that they believed was compromising its spiritual and doctrinal heritage, early Nazarenes accepted their Wesleyan-holiness identity and placed it within the context of the believers' church tradition with its emphasis on regeneration, covenant, commitment, and love.

V

Early Nazarene theologian A. M. Hills claimed that "the Church of the Nazarene is the fairest flower that has ever bloomed in the Methodist garden, the most promising ecclesiastical daughter that prolific Mother Methodism has ever given to the world."19 E. F. Walker, a popular preacher and later a general superintendent, insisted: "Scratch a real Nazarene, and you will touch an original Methodist; skin a genuine Methodist, and behold a Nazarene."20 Hills and Walker differed from the majority of first generation Nazarene leaders in that both had served Presbyterian and Congregational churches before uniting with the Church of the Nazarene. But despite that fact, or perhaps because of it, each was keenly aware of the underlying Methodist identity of their new denomination.

Hills' essay was published in conjunction with the Church of the Nazarene's twenty-fifth anniversary celebration in 1933, and it cited Nazarene continuity with Methodism in six primary areas: leadership, evangelism, missionary endeavor, theological scholarship, spiritual inheritance, and higher education for a Christian culture. Under each trait, Hills listed a string of Methodist representatives and attached Nazarene representatives to the tail of the list, emphasizing the basic continuity that he affirmed between Methodism and Nazarene life.

20 *Nazarene Messenger* (April 1, 1909).
VI

The doctrine of the ministry was one of many areas of Nazarene life in which a sense of continuity with Methodism was apparent. The church historian Abel Stevens, summarizing a century of American Methodism, argued that part of its genius had centered around the fact that Methodism—like primitive Christianity—enshrined "a ministry" and not "a priesthood." This sentiment likewise captures the spirit of the early Nazarene movement, which depended to a high degree on lay initiative as early Methodism had done. But Methodist influence on the Nazarene ministry went deeper.

Ordination of elders. The Anglican bishop had a large area of discretion in who to ordain, when to ordain, and where to ordain, but American Methodism established practices that have been carried over into the Church of the Nazarene. The early Methodist Episcopal Church placed the power of electing candidates to the orders of deacon and elder in the annual conference's own hands, made the conference elders co-participants with the bishop in the laying on of hands, and established the annual conference as the setting for ordination. Nevertheless, the bishop was the presiding elder in the act of setting apart candidates to the office of deacon and elder. This combination of features reflected a melding of episcopal and presbyterian elements.

The ordination practices of the groups who united to form the Church of the Nazarene differed from one another. The Association of Pentecostal Churches of America created ad hoc presbyteries to examine and ordain those elected to the office of elder by congregational vote. Initially, congregation-based ordinations also characterized both parent bodies of the Holiness Church of Christ (New Testament Church of Christ and Independent Holiness Church), but at the time of their merger in 1904 they established the procedure of their annual regional council electing and ordaining candidates to the ministry. In the west, Bresee initially ordained whoever and wherever he pleased until about 1904, when the first Methodist-style districts were created. From that point on, the annual district assembly elected individuals to elder's orders and the general superintendent, with the participation of other elders in the district assembly, laid hands on the ordinand. This became the established pattern of the united church and continues as the practice of the Church of the Nazarene down to the present.

Another aspect of ordination unites Nazarenes and Methodists. Over half of all those who have served as general superintendents of the Church of the Nazarene can trace their ordination line as elders directly to Thomas Coke's ordination of Francis Asbury at the Christmas Conference in 1784. By

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22 These are general superintendents Bresee, Reynolds, Morrison, Williams, Nease, Vanderpool, Jenkins, Benner, Coulter, Lawlor, Strickland, J. Johnson, Knight, Cunningham, Porter, and T. Johnson.
extension, this means that over half of all ministers ordained in the Church of the Nazarene throughout its history could also do the same.

The ministry of women. Each of the three uniting churches ordained women to the ministry prior to their union with one another. In 1902 the Central Evangelical Holiness Association, a forerunner of the Association of Pentecostal Churches of America, ordained Anna S. Hanscome, a pastor in Malden, Massachusetts. In 1902, the APCA ordained Martha Curry of Lowell, Massachusetts. In 1899 the New Testament Church of Christ, a root of the Holiness Church of Christ, ordained Mary Lee Cagle and Mrs. E. J. Sheeks to the ministry in a ceremony in Milan, Tennessee. By 1908 the Holiness Church of Christ had thirty-one ordained women in its ranks. They constituted 17 percent of its ordained ministers. In the West, Phineas Bresee ordained Elsie Wallace of Seattle in 1902 and Lucy Pierce Knott of Los Angeles in 1903. Both women were already pastors.

The story of Nazarene women in ministry forms an interesting chapter in the history of women in American religion generally, but it is most intelligible from within the context of the wider Methodist tradition. For years, Cagle struggled over her call to preach as a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, finally accepting the “burden of dissent” as the only way to resolve her dilemma. Knott was a life-long member of the M.E. Church prior to becoming a charter member of Bresee’s Church of the Nazarene in Los Angeles in 1895. Bresee’s pre-merger wing of the church affirmed women’s gifts to preach, lead, and be ordained as ministers in one of its earliest meetings. Bresee’s commitment was informed by the debate over women’s ordination at the 1892 General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, to which he was a delegate, and by his friendship with revivalist Amanda Berry Smith, a preacher in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, who conducted a revival for him at Asbury M.E. Church in east Los Angeles in 1891.

The ordination of women by each of the three merging groups separated them from mainline Methodism but gave them another cohesive bond. Their theology and practice was the direct inheritance of a Methodist stream of thought that originated when John Wesley first allowed women to participate with other lay preachers in the “extraordinary ministry.” It can be traced, subsequently, through the public ministry of lay revivalist Phoebe

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23 Two ministerial lists, including a separate list for those from the Holiness Church of Christ, appears at the beginning of the Proceedings of the Second General Assembly of the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene, 1908 (Los Angeles: Nazarene Publishing Company, 1908).
24 Brief biographies of all these women and others can be found in Rebecca Laird’s Ordained Women in the Church of the Nazarene: The First Generation (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1993).
25 Bangs, Phineas F. Bresee, 168, 172. Bresee commented on Amanda Smith: “She preached one Sabbath afternoon, as I never heard her before, and as I have rarely ever heard anybody preach, in strains of holy eloquence and unction, almost equal to Bishop Simpson in the zenith of his power and sacred oratory.” High praise, indeed, since Simpson was Bresee’s personal hero. Quoted in Bangs, 169.
Palmer and the women who followed her example, and in a growing body of Methodist-related literature on women’s ministry. That literature includes Palmer’s *Promise of the Father* (1859), Catherine Booth’s *Female Ministry* (1859), Frances Willard’s *Woman in the Pulpit* (1889), William B. Godbey’s *Woman Preacher* (c. 1891), B. T. Roberts’ *Ordaining Women* (1891), Walter Sellew’s *Why Not? A Plea for the Ordination of Those Women Whom God Calls to Preach His Gospel* (1894), and Nazarene writer Fannie McDowell Hunter’s *Women Preachers* (1905).

VII

While Methodism influences many aspects of Nazarene life, a central aspect of the Wesleyan core of the Church of the Nazarene is found in a web of doctrines that are expressed formally in the church’s Articles of Faith. These include statements pertaining to the Holy Scriptures and to the nature of grace, election, and spiritual life.

Article IV in the Church of the Nazarene’s current *Manual* (2001) is on “The Holy Scriptures.” It follows three articles pertaining to the Triune God that place Nazarene affirmations about the Trinity within the broad Catholic tradition. Article IV, however, shows a definite Anglican slant, mediated through the Methodist Episcopal Church. In good Protestant fashion, Article IV identifies the Holy Scriptures with “the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments.” It then states that these scriptures “inerrantly [reveal] the will of God concerning us in all things necessary to our salvation, so that whatever is not contained therein is not to be enjoined as an article of faith.”

The word “inerrantly” was added to the statement in 1928, at the height of the fundamentalist/modernist controversy, but its placement was strategic. H. Orton Wiley, raised in the United Brethren in Christ and trained academically in biblical theology, was in his eighth year of writing a systematic theology for the Church of the Nazarene. Wiley’s biblical studies background, combined with his recent studies in theology, convinced him that if the church was going to nod to fundamentalist concerns, it should do so in a way that did not steer it down channels blazed by the Reformed theologians at Princeton. Through Wiley’s influence, the concept of “inerrant” was introduced into the Nazarene article on scripture in a way that kept the church’s position within the Anglican framework that emphasizes the principle of “the sufficiency of scripture” as a guide to salvation. That Anglican view, embodied in Article VI of the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion of the Church of England, became, with the most minor changes, Article V of the Twenty-Five Articles of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Both bear the title “Of the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for salvation.”

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The Methodist identity of the Church of the Nazarene is underscored further when examining Articles V through X of the Articles of Faith, which concern original and personal sin, universal atonement through Christ, free will, repentance, justification, regeneration, and sanctification. These brief statements point to a wider theology that has shaped the central themes of Nazarene preaching. At the same time, these articles are formal expressions of themes that characterized Methodist preaching during the Evangelical Revival and were taught to generations of Methodists through the sermons and hymns of John and Charles Wesley.

The point is important. It is sometimes asserted that the doctrine of entire sanctification is "the cardinal doctrine" of the Church of the Nazarene. But Article X (Entire Sanctification) does not stand alone. It is part of an ordo salutis and stands within a web of related doctrines whose particular shapes inform and support one another. There are phrases here and there that represent specific concerns of the American holiness movement, but each of Articles V through X is distinctly Wesleyan-Arminian. The basic thrust of each was not worked out by the American holiness movement but by John Wesley and reflect his distinctive imprint.

Consistent with Wesley's distinction between original sin and "sin properly so-called," Article V is titled "Sin, Original and Personal." The original article in the 1908 Manual, half as long, was limited to "Original Sin" and taken (with light editing to modernize terms) almost verbatim from the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England and the Twenty-Five Articles of Methodism. In the current Manual, the additional paragraphs on "personal sin" stress that it is "a voluntary violation of a known law of God" and "not to be confused with involuntary and inescapable shortcomings, infirmities, faults, mistakes, [and] failures"—familiar themes to readers of Wesley's Plain Account of Christian Perfection and his other standard writings on Christian perfection.28

Article VI ("Atonement") reflects the Wesleyan-Arminian doctrine of Christ's universal atonement for sin as "the only ground of salvation, and . . . sufficient for every individual." Article VII ("Prevenient Grace") specifically defines the scope of free agency in terms of God’s enabling grace, rather than as a natural ability, thus adhering to Wesley’s concept of free will as an empowerment through divine grace.

Article VIII on "Repentance" has no analogue among the articles of religion of the Church of England or the Methodist Episcopal Church, but the statement in the Nazarene Manual represents a theme that was at the core of Wesley’s spiritual theology and a principal concern of his preaching. It was a staple of 19th-century American Methodist preaching, from whom Nazarenes inherited this theme.

Article IX, "Justification, Regeneration, and Adoption," again reflects fundamental Wesleyan themes. As a unit, these short paragraphs in the Manual underscore what Wesley termed the distinction between the "relative" change and the "real" change in the life of Christian believers, and God's adoption of the justified and regenerated person. The paragraph on justification is the only one in this article that has a forerunner in the Thirty-nine and Twenty-Five Articles. The brief sentences on regeneration do not explicitly use the term "initial sanctification" in relation to it, but do identify regeneration as "the new birth" or "the gracious work of God whereby the moral nature of the repentant believer is spiritually quickened and given a distinctively spiritual life, capable of faith, love, and obedience."29

Article X on "Entire Sanctification" states that it is "that act of God, subsequent to regeneration, by which believers are made free from original sin, or depravity, and brought into a state of entire devotion to God." This echoes Wesley's understanding of entire sanctification as "a full deliverance from sin." The article further states that entire sanctification is "wrought by the baptism with the Holy Spirit." The echo here is not Wesley but John Fletcher and William Arthur. Arthur's The Tongue of Fire played a key role in reviving the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the theme of Pentecost throughout 19th-century Methodism. Arthur did not deal with entire sanctification explicitly, but the Wesleyan-holiness movement, like the rest of world-wide Methodism, drank deeply from his book and found ways to connect Arthur's concerns with their own. Article X also lists various synonyms for entire sanctification—"Christian perfection," "perfect love," "heart purity," "baptism with the Holy Spirit," "fullness of the blessing," and "Christian holiness." Some reflect Wesley's language, while others reflect 19th century developments in Wesleyan-holiness thought and preaching. Last of all, Article X has two paragraphs that deal with "growth in grace" subsequent to entire sanctification.

Certain aspects of these Articles of Faith bear the marks of the holiness movement's internal development, and yet their basic orientation is toward the Methodist theological tradition. Each was taught by John Wesley and as a package they comprise the core of his spiritual theology. Nazarene theology is not simply a reflection of a generic American holiness movement. There is no impress of the Oberlin holiness tradition, the Keswick holiness tradition, or the Pentecostal holiness tradition. Nazarene theology reflects, instead, the orientation of the Wesleyan-holiness tradition.

IX

Methodist influence permeated the Church of the Nazarene's early Course of Study for ministerial preparation. John Miley's systematic theology first appeared on the Course of Study in 1911 and remained there as the

primary text until 1932. Thomas Ralston’s *Elements of Divinity* was listed as an alternate to Miley from 1919 to 1932, when it replaced Miley as the primary systematic theology. Nazarene theologian A. M. Hill’s *Fundamental Christian Theology* was published in 1931 and added to the Course of Study in 1932—but only as the alternate to Ralston. Thus, until the first volume of H. Orton Wiley’s 3-volume *Christian Theology* appeared in 1940, the systematic theologies of Methodists Miley and Ralston provided the basic introductions to theology for Nazarene ministers.30

Wesley’s biography and writings had direct influence. Ministerial candidates from 1915 to 1928 were required to read Fitchett’s *Wesley and His Century*. After Fitchett was dropped, ministerial candidates from 1928 to 1944 read John Telford’s, *Life of John Wesley*. Ten Wesley sermons were published in a small collection by the Nazarene Publishing House and were on the Course of Study from 1915 until 1932.31 J. A. Wood’s *Christian Perfection, As Taught by John Wesley*—a compilation of Wesley’s writings from many sources—was required reading from 1919 to 1932. In short, the Nazarene ministers going through the Course of Study in the 1920s had to read a Wesley biography, a selection of his sermons, and a compilation of his works on Christian holiness.

Other Methodist influences abounded. The spiritual theologies of E. M. Bounds on prayer and William Arthur on the Holy Spirit were staples of the Course of Study through at least 1944. Bishop John F. Hurst’s *Short History of the Christian Church* also appeared from 1923 through 1944.

There were other writings by Methodists: Bishop Randolph Sinks Foster (*Christian Purity*), William McDonald (*Life of Rev. John Inskip*), Asbury Lowry (*Possibilities of Grace*), Bishop Matthew Simpson (*Lectures on Preaching*), Daniel Steele (*The Gospel of the Comforter*), Samuel Chadwick (*The Way to Pentecost*), and Jesse T. Peck (*The Central Idea of Christianity*), among others. Some of these writers were deeply involved in the 19th century holiness revival, while others were not. But all were Methodists, writing for the most part on theological topics. Their influence on the Course of Study underscored the underlying Methodist identity shared by the early Church of the Nazarene.

The Church of the Nazarene originated as a believers’ church in the Wesleyan tradition, uniting the core of Wesleyan spiritual doctrine (sin, universal atonement, repentance, justification, regeneration, adoption, and sanctification) to the disciplined ways of the believers’ church tradition (regenerate membership, covenant fellowship, commitment, mutual sup-

30Manuals, 1911-1944, in passim.
port, and love). It was one of several such denominations that emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Its distinctive genius lay in the desire to find common ground and unite various Wesleyan-holiness groups through tolerating different views of eschatology and baptism, embracing a moderate position on divine healing, and firmly backing the full laity and clergy rights of women.

At the same time, an American Methodist identity was reflected and nurtured throughout many aspects of Nazarene life, including the process of selecting and ordaining elders, the basic structure of church governance (local, district, and general—with the Nazarene district combining the functions of the Methodist district and annual conference), district and general superintendency, the doctrine of scripture, and the doctrines of spiritual life that form the core of Nazarene soteriology.