

**WHY I LEFT
THE NAZARENE
CHURCH**

—Waymon D. Miller

Front Cover

WHY I LEFT THE NAZARENE CHURCH

This sermon was delivered by Waymon Miller in a lectureship program at Vickery Boulevard Church of Christ, Fort Worth, Texas, in 1949. He was one of nine speakers during this series of sermons. Each one had left a denomination church and his assignment in the lesson was to tell the audience *Why I Left*.

These sermons were put into a book by that title and have enjoyed favorable comment and wide distribution over these intervening years.

Many of our students and national preachers in Third World countries have asked for such material to be used in their work of evangelizing their countries. They seem more sensitive to the need of refuting false doctrine than brethren have in this country the last few years. In fact, their correspondence indicates an urgency that most of us do not feel.

It is believed the distinctiveness of the Lord's church pictured in the New Testament requires that differences between truth and error be clearly delineated. The thousands of national preachers and Christians in other nations have told me that one of the most pressing needs confronting them is to be able to reply to false teachers with Bible truth. With that task they ask for help. Where such Biblical information has been furnished them they have converted thousands of their people to the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is hoped that such tools as this written sermon will prove to be a useful instrument to assist them in evangelizing their countries.

—Guy Caskey
Arlington, Texas
1994

WHY I LEFT THE NAZARENE CHURCH

I was reared in the Church of the Nazarene. I attended the Church of the Nazarene first when I was about six years old. At my home in North Little Rock, Arkansas, my oldest brother and I were playing the front yard one day. The pastor of the Nazarene church drove by and saw us. He stopped and asked, "Are you boys members of any church? Do you attend church anywhere?" We replied in the negative. He then got out of his car, went to the door, knocked and asked our mother if he would come and get us would she permit us to go to Sunday school next Sunday? To this she gave her consent. That was my first inducement to attend the Church of the Nazarene.

My grandfather was an invalid for eight years before his death. He was bedfast when I started attending the Nazarene church. Shortly after my brother and I started attending the Nazarene church, my mother also started going. And, soon, the Nazarene people (I pay tribute to them here for their zeal) were conducting cottage prayer meetings in our home for the benefit of my grandfather. This was a source of joy and inspiration to him as long as he lived. At about the age of six years, soon after I started attending the Nazarene church, my mother, my two brothers and I all became members of that denomination. I was a member of the Church of the Nazarene for approximately ten years, or until I was about sixteen years old. I must say that at this early age, while in my formative years, some of the impressions made upon me by the Nazarene people were ones that will be retained as long as I shall live.

It was rather unusual that I became a member of the New Testament church. For about a year prior to my obedience to the gospel I became dissatisfied with the teachings of the Nazarenes. Many reasons were involved in that, too numerous to discuss now, but I stopped going to church anywhere and for a period of a year hardly darkened a church door. About a year after leaving the church of my own free will and personal dissatisfaction, I was urged to attend the church of Christ in North Little Rock.

Perhaps I should return to some events even earlier in my life and connect some experiences that have a bearing upon my religious life. I was born in a rural village. Mayflower

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Arkansas, which is twenty-two miles north of Little Rock. In the fall of 1921, two gospel preachers, W.W. Still and J.C. Mosley, came through this little town on their way to Fort Smith to attend a *preacher's meeting*. At that time, there were a few Christians, but no established New Testament church in Mayflower. These brethren investigated the possibilities of holding a gospel meeting there when they returned from Fort Smith. The school house was obtained and brother Mosley preached for two weeks, baptizing seventy-five persons. My mother and father obeyed the gospel in that meeting. A thick layer of ice was broken on the gin pond to provide a place for baptizing. Brother Mosley is now very aged, but still living in Whitwell, Tennessee. I have long since lost contact with Brother Still. I was about three years old when the above meeting was held. My family then moved to Conway, Arkansas for a year, and then to Little Rock. My mother and father did not attend church regularly and soon lost all interest in the truth. Being left in its infancy and without qualified elders, the newly established church in Mayflower withered away. But the church there has since been re-established. It was after my mother and father had grown indifferent to the church that we started going to the Nazarene church, my father excepted. Before the lapse of much more time, after our becoming Nazarenes, my father was restored to the truth and assisted in the establishment of a church in North Little Rock. He was one of the charter members and one of the first deacons of the New Testament church in North Little Rock. And, it was through his insistence that, about eleven years later, I started attending the church of the New Testament.

At first I was not too well impressed with the idea of attending the church of Christ. It did not appeal to me very much. I did not know too much about the church of Christ, but what I did know, was not very favorable. I had heard people talk so disparagingly about *Campbellites* that I had a repulsion for them. I had been taught to avoid them and had regarded them as narrow and bigoted. To me they appeared the most reproachful of all the more distasteful religious sects. They seemed to be just fanatical rabble-rousers with a Pharisaical spirit. Everything that I had heard about the New Testament church was unfavorable propaganda, which had almost completely poisoned my mind against it. It seemed that to believe as *Campbellites* was the next thing to having no religion at all.

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But, the first time I attended the church of Christ, to my great surprise, I was deeply impressed and the service. It was so simple and unpretentious. The sermon especially attracted my attention. There was something about the ring of it, the first time I heard a true gospel sermon, that aroused my curiosity. I began to wonder what was the difference between the way that fellow preached and the manner of preaching to which I had been accustomed as long as I could remember. I spent considerable time in meditation upon the first gospel sermon. In it I had found something strangely different. Though I had intended to be indifferent to it, my heart was troubled and my conscience was stirred over it. I had supposed it would be insensible and unattractive, though I found it strangely appealing. And, it finally dawned on me that the real difference between the preaching of this man and that to which I had been accustomed was that in every single point, however insignificant, he had the scripture to verify his teaching. I had never been used to a religion that could sustain every phase and aspect of it by the simple word of God, without injecting into it any of the traditions, speculations and theologies of men. So, that appealed to me very much.

I will not say that it was easy to leave the Nazarene Church. It is never easy to depart from error. In this point, members of the New Testament church who have never been members of a sectarian denomination cannot wholly sympathize with those in error. But, my friend, if you are a member of a human institution, I can by personal experience, sympathize with you for sacrifices you may make in accepting the truth. You may say, "I am not a member of the true New Testament church, of which you now speak. I am hesitant to accept what you now teach because I am abiding in the religion of my youth, which has man sentimental and endearing attractions to me." I could once say the same thing! You say, "It is the religion of my friends and, if I depart from it, I would risk the loss of all my friends of this life." I had to do the same thing! You say, "If I abandon my present views, I might even make personal enemies." I had to take the same chance for the truth of Christ! You say, "If I depart my present religion, I would go into an institution to which few, if any, of my relatives belong." I did exactly the same thing. I can could on this hand, and have two fingers to spare, all of the relatives I have who are members of the Lord's church. And, so I can completely sympathize with any of these

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sentiments that might disturb you. But, if we are not willing to submit to sacrifices, we cannot be disciples of the Lord. On September 15, 1935, I obeyed the simple gospel of Christ, just as I can read it from this Book. I was baptized by Brother Clem Z. Pool. My younger brother, Orland, obeyed the gospel upon this occasion with me. He now is a gospel preacher having preached for the past seven years. He is now attending Abilene Christian College. Brother D.H. Perkins, now of Denver, Colorado, who followed Brother Pool in North Little Rock, is most responsible for my beginning to preach the gospel. Since I started preaching, no other has rendered more assistance than Brother E.R. Harper.

I should like to add an interesting side light to my obeying the gospel. When I was a member of it, the Church of the Nazarene occupied a building at 6th and Olive in North Little Rock. They outgrew that building and erected a new building at another location. When they moved into their new building, or brethren bought the building at 6th and Olive and, in this building, they still meet. Hence, I prayed "through" at the Nazarene mourner's bench and obeyed the simple gospel of Christ in the same building! I shall not speak disparagingly of the Nazarene people, many of whom are yet my intimate friends. To this day I hold these Nazarene people in highest esteem. I have not set myself against them, but rather oppose the erroneous doctrine which they hold. I can truthfully say that the Nazarene people are among as conscientious, zealous and sincere people as can be found. And, I did not leave them because of a lack of these qualities, but because I knew that conscientiousness, zeal and fervency alone were not sufficient. A person may have all of these and still not be obeying God. This is illustrated in the life of the Apostle Paul, in his persecution of the church before his conversion (Acts 23:1; 26:9-11).

It is impossible to relate to you all of the reasons why I left the Nazarene church. It would be impractical to array before you every tenet, even every cardinal doctrine, that the Nazarene church holds. But, I would like to supply, for your consideration, a few doctrines of the Nazarene church. They are doctrines I could not reconcile with the scriptures when I began studying my Bible. In presenting these matters I shall not have time either to give every scriptural denial of them. I have found this, in my study of the Bible, that God does not have to say a thing a

thousand times for it to be true, anyhow. When God states a truth in one place, in simple, unequivocal terms, it is just as much true if he had said it a million times! So, if we can find just one simple scripture which contradicts in an unmistakable way these cardinal teachings of the Nazarene church, then we shall have amply disproved them.

ORIGIN AND FOUNDATION OF NAZARENES

First, I shall relate a brief history of the Nazarene church. Near the close of the nineteenth century in America was begun what is now known as the *holiness movement*. The *holiness movement* in this country was an outgrowth of the Wesleyan *holiness movement* in England, which swept all Europe like wildfire. I have the official manual of the Nazarene church from which to quote. I do not wish to misrepresent any detail of their teaching. The manual provides the following historical data: "On May 12, 1886, a number of the brethren in Providence, Rhode Island, interested in promoting the Wesleyan doctrine and experience of entire sanctification, organized and held weekly religious services" (*Manual*, page 15). The Nazarene church is an outgrowth of that *holiness movement*. I quote further: "In October, 1895, a number of persons, under the leadership of Rev. Phineas F. Bresee, D.D., and Rev. J.P. Widney, LL.D., formed the First Church of the Nazarene, at Los Angeles, California, with one hundred and thirty-five charter members" (*Members*, page 17). There it is, acknowledged and claimed by the Nazarene church Manual, the official creed of that church, as to exactly when and surrounded by what circumstances, the Nazarene church was established. For these reasons I could not be a member of the Nazarene church any longer.

You may ask, "Why? What is elicited by these statements that caused you to see that you could not continue with them?" There are three reasons drawn from the above questions. In the first place, the Nazarene church was founded for the wrong purpose and upon the wrong foundation. I read to you very definite statements that this movement was instigated for the specific purpose of promoting *Wesleyan doctrine*. It was established, therefore, to promote the peculiar theology of John Wesley. As I studied my Bible I came to see that any organization founded upon human ideas and opinions in religion was established upon the wrong foundation. The Apostle Paul declared, "For no other

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foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 3:11). Our Lord Jesus Christ is then the foundation of the New Testament church. No other foundation is acceptable. No other can be laid that that which is already laid, which is Jesus Christ! So, I could not continue with an institution founded upon Wesleyan doctrine. The foundation of the true church, of which we can read in this Book, is Jesus Christ and Him only. "For no other foundation can any man lay!"

Then, secondly, the Church of the Nazarene was the wrong church to be the New Testament church. In consulting this manual, which is their church creed and expresses their doctrines, I found that the Church of the Nazarene was established in 1895 by two preachers and one hundred thirty-five charter members in the city of Los Angeles, California. Yet, when I referred to my Bible, in the second chapter of Acts, I found that the New Testament church was established in the city of Jerusalem. It is the distance around the world from Jerusalem to Los Angeles, California! The New Testament church was established in A.D. 33; the Nazarene church in 1895. Too much difference there for it to be the church which Jesus died to redeem and purchase (Ephesians 5:25; Acts 20:28). The Nazarene church is admittedly of human origin, being founded as we have already quoted from their manual. But, Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build My church ..." (Matthew

16:18). Jesus is the divine Builder of the true church and not these men mentioned in this manual! So, I could not accept Nazarene doctrine further, for it was founded in the wrong place—Los Angeles instead of Jerusalem; it was founded at the wrong time—1895 instead of A.D. 33; it was founded by the wrong persons—the men I named instead of Jesus Christ. In these three vital tests, the Nazarene church cannot be identified with the New Testament church.

And then, thirdly, the Church of the Nazarene was established for the wrong purpose. It not only rested upon the wrong foundation but was conceived for the wrong purpose. I have read from this manual that it was established for the purpose of promoting Wesleyan doctrine—established solely for the promotion of the peculiar theologies of John Wesley! As I studied my New Testament I saw that such would not do, that such is not acceptable to the Lord. Jesus emphatically stated, "And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments

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of men" (Matthew 15:9). That is exactly why the Nazarene church was established, to "teach for doctrines the commandments of" John Wesley! But, Jesus said those who do that, those who pursue such a course, would be worshipping Him in vain. Then, I considered Paul's warning in this matter: "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8). What is it, Paul? If anything else is preached that that which has been declared by inspiration, both the preacher and the recipient will be condemned thereby. I could not, therefore, further subscribe to the doctrines of John Wesley, because they were not preached by any divinely inspired preacher of apostolic time. The peculiar theologies of John Wesley were never proclaimed by divine authority and, therefore, I could not continue in them. While the Nazarene church was founded to promote the teachings of John Wesley, the New Testament church was established and exists today for the express purpose of proclaiming and promulgating the simple gospel of Christ (Ephesians 3:10). For no other reason was the divine church established, for no other reason does she exist today, except to preach the Word of God and that alone, unmixed and uncontaminated with human theologies.

HEREDITY TOTAL DEPRAVITY

Perhaps the most important peculiar doctrine of the church of the Nazarene is that of heredity total depravity. Now, that is an expression as long as a yardstick—so long I can hardly pronounce it sometimes. But, it really has a simple, yet diabolical, meaning. Of course the term *heredity* means *by inheritance by birth*. The term *total* means *absolute or complete*. *Depravity* means *wicked, corrupt, estranged from God, a state of spiritual condemnation*. Now, here is what we have adding these together, that by birth one is completely wicked and abandoned of God; he is of such spiritual condition at birth, or by inheritance that he is wicked in heart and estranged from God! It will be well here to notice other terms by which this doctrine is also called. Sometimes it is called *inbred sin, inherent sin, the old man, the Adamic nature, or the carnal mind*. I cannot emphasize too strongly the importance of this teaching in reference to *holiness* doctrines. Were it not, I say,

for this one doctrine alone, all other so-called *holiness* doctrines could not stand, or would there be any need of them. This is the one doctrine that

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supports all of the other peculiar beliefs and I shall show you why as we study further.

Let us, then, consider what Nazarenes teach about this doctrine. On page 27 of the church manual, under the heading *Original Sin* or *Depravity* is found the following expression: "We believe that original sin, or depravity, is that corruption of the nature of all the offspring of Adam, by reason of which every one is very far gone from original righteousness, or the pure state of our first parents at the time of their creation, is averse to God, is without spiritual life, and is inclined to evil, and that continually; and that it continues to exist with the new life of the regenerate until eradicated by the baptism with the Holy Spirit." This, my friends, is the unscriptural, antisciptural, and nauseous doctrine of hereditary total depravity. This doctrine, as we trace it back through history, evidently originated with Augustine in the fourth century. As far as I have been able to determine, he was the first to assert this doctrine. It was not taught then very extensively until the time of John Wesley. The doctrine appealed to Wesley and he further developed it and amplified it. And, the teachings of John Wesley on inherent sin have become the basis of all *holiness* sects. Now, I want to call your attention to this, that this one false doctrine conceived in the mind of Augustine in the fourth century and amplified by Wesley in his day, paved the way for a number of other unscriptural doctrines. That is always the course of error. When one innovation, or unscriptural practice is introduced, usually other unscriptural practices must be invented to accommodate it.

What did Wesley teach about this doctrine, which served as the basis of modern *holiness* doctrines? Wesley said, "Every man born into the world now bears the image of the devil, in pride and self will; the image of the beast. In sensual appetites and desires" (*Wesley's Sermons*, Volume II, page 266). I quote further from Wesley: "We are condemned before we have done good or evil, and under curse ere we know what it is" (*Original Sins*, Wesley, page 340). Original sin, or depravity as I mentioned, fostered several other false doctrines. If a man were born totally depraved, Wesley then conceived that nothing short of a miracle of God could save him, hence the doctrine of the direct operation of the Holy Spirit. It also developed the unscriptural doctrine of sanctification, the *second blessing*, which *eradicates* this depraved nature. This also promoted the unscriptural

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doctrine of Christian perfection, the result of having the *image of the devil* removed by the Holy Spirit. All of these doctrines are intimately related, interdependent one upon the other and all reposing on the unscriptural doctrine of hereditary depravity.

Now then what does the Bible teach about that? Does the Bible teach that because Adam sinned, then all men are born in sin, bearing "the image of the devil," and "condemned before we have done good or evil?" Why, surely not! The Apostle Paul wrote in this matter: "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12). But, this scripture is not worded so as to favor Wesleyan doctrine. The verse says, "And thus death spread to all men, because all sinned." If Nazarene doctrine were true, the verse would have to read like this: "So that sin passed upon all men, for that Adam sinned." But, that is not what it says, is it? Or, again: "The image of the devil passed upon all men, for that Adam sinned." It doesn't say that either, does it? If you follow the thoughts Paul develops in the fifth chapter of Romans, especially noticing verses seventeen and eighteen, it will enlighten our study upon this subject. He, here, argues that Adam brought sin and death into the world and that Jesus came to offset these evil consequences through the redemption of man. Jesus came to "abolish death and bring life and immortality to light through the gospel" (II Timothy 1:10).

Now, let us examine the matter critically. If all men were born in sin because of Adam's transgression, then since the death of Christ all men are born redeemed, since Christ's work was to destroy the effect of Adam's sin! We are forced to accept one of the two horns of that dilemma—either total depravity or universalism! Let us see if all men are born so engrossed in sin as Wesley imagined. Luke informs us that Christ Himself was a descendant of the fleshly lineage of Adam (Luke 3:38). Luke, here, traces the genealogy of Christ back to Adam! Now, according to Nazarene theology, this would mean that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of heaven, the sinless Son of God, came into this world bearing "the image of the devil" and, therefore, under divine contamination! This conclusion they must accept if they maintain their doctrine of hereditary sin or they must accept the Catholic doctrine of Immaculate Conception. This Catholic doctrine claims that while all men inherit sin from

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Adam, that God miraculously purified the virgin Mary before the birth of the Savior. But, this simply another doctrine of Catholic forgery. Let us remember that Christ was in the flesh a descendant of Adam, yet Peter said the He "committed no sin" (I Peter 2:22), hence the doctrine that sin is inherited from Adam is false!

Let us examine a few more scriptures which deny such an absurd and unscriptural doctrine. The Word of God positively declares: "The son shall not bear the guilt of the father" (Ezekiel 18:20). I do not know how much plainer scripture would have to read to deny this false doctrine. Nazarenes claim that sin is transmitted all the way from Adam down from father through son onto us. But, Ezekiel affirmed that "the son shall not bear the guilt of the father!" If that be true, how could sin be inherited? Nazarene doctrine asserts, as we have seen, that one is born in sin, inclined to evil and that continually. Does the Bible say whether this is so? It positively denies it! Ezekiel again proclaimed, "You were perfect in your own ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you" (Ezekiel 28:15). What is that? You were first perfect until sin was later found in you. Nazarene doctrine reverses that order. It claims that we are born in sin, which remains until

you are both saved and sanctified, and they you are perfect! The Apostle Paul contended that one is a sinner because of his own wickedness and lost because of his own sins. And, the Lord knows this is enough! Our own sins are sufficient to eternally damn us and enough for us to bear, without lading us with the sins of Adam or anyone else! Paul said, "And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now he has reconciled" (Colossians 1:21). Paul, alienated from God by Adam's transgressions? No, "by your wicked works!" My friends of the Nazarene Church cannot accept this scripture, with its undeniable implications. Paul, here, contends that one is separated from God because he has personally sinned. I formerly believed that I was separated from God because of Adam's sin; that his sin was transmitted father to son down to me, that I was held accountable for Adam's transgression, that I was born "bearing the image of the devil," as Wesley contended.

Let us consider this matter of depravity from another point of view. Truly, the rule is a poor one that will not work both ways. It has been asserted that the son inherits "the image of the devil"

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from his father. But, what if the father had already been to the mourner's bench, "prayed through," received the "second blessing" and had the "image of the devil" eradicated from him before the child was born? He is then regarded as sinlessly perfect, according to Nazarene theology. The child cannot, therefore, inherit "the image of the devil" from his father, because the father's sinful nature had been destroyed! Furthermore, if we can inherit a sinful nature, why cannot we inherit a righteous nature? Is damnation the only thing to be inherited from the parent? If moral character were hereditary, it would be as easy to inherit salvation as damnation! Further still, if moral character were hereditary we would frequently witness an even more complicated situation. If one parent were sanctified (perfect) and the other parent still retained "the image of the devil," then the child would be a spiritual enigma—half saint and half devil. But, I'm sure Nazarenes would not accept this conclusion. Yet, this logically demonstrates that moral character is not transmissible.

SANCTIFICATION

The second doctrine we shall examine here is that of sanctification. This is the second step taken in following the course of Wesleyan *holiness*. The doctrine of sanctification, as we mentioned, became necessary because of the first doctrine, inbred sin. If one were born bearing "the image of the devil," there must, of necessity, be some means of removing this image before one could obtain heaven. To fulfill this need, the "holiness advocates" produced the doctrine of entire sanctification, which is also called the *second blessing*, the *experience of grace*, the *fullness of the blessing* many such kindred expressions.

According to Nazarene theology, a person goes to the mourner's bench to pray away his past, personal sins. (And, I remind you, my friends, that I am speaking from personal experience. I sometimes say that I 'cut my teeth" on the Nazarene

mourner's bench!) This is the first "blessing," the first "helping" of salvation. But, God hasn't completed his work in this first experience and they must return again to seek the "second blessing." The first experience at the mourner's bench prays them "through" to salvation from their sins and, then, they have to return to the

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"bench" for God to pardon them of *Adam's* sin! That is sanctification in a nutshell, according to their concept of it.

I quote again from the Nazarene manual: "We believe that entire sanctification is that act of God, subsequent to regeneration, by which believers are made free from original sin or depravity, and are brought into a state of entire devotion to God, unto holy obedience of love made perfect. It wrought by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, empowering the believer to life and service" (*Manual*, page 29). Now, let us consider the complications of such a theory. According to this doctrine a person is first "regenerated" and then, later, "sanctified." Before obtaining this "second blessing" this would make one a child of God, regenerated, but still bearing "the image of the devil!" According to this theory, one is a believer while still possessed of "original sin or depravity," since this experience "eradicates" these from the believer. I suppose we are to look upon the regenerate, who has not yet obtained sanctification, as a "depraved believer!" The doctrine also has a person regenerated, not having as yet his heart cleansed from sin. But, there is no such idea in the scriptures as a regeneration which does not cleanse the heart from sin! Furthermore, the theory avers that sanctification empowers the believer to life and service. I suppose, then, that before sanctification one is a believer without life or service! These are ridiculous and absurd, as well as manifestly unscriptural. The Bible denies and refutes such theological concoctions. I again charge this doctrine to be but a figment of John Wesley's imagination! There is not a single syllable of scripture that suggests such a doctrine.

The English verb *sanctify* is translated from the Greek *hagiazō*. Thayer, a peerless and universally accepted Greek scholar, defines *hagiazō* in this manner: "To render sacred or holy, to consecrate, to render or to acknowledge to be venerable, to hallow, to separate from things profane and dedicate to God, to purify by expiation, to purify internally by a reformation of the soul" (*Greek-English Lexicon*, Joseph M. Thayer, page 6). Personally, I prefer the expression, "to separate from things profane, and dedicate to God." That is a most appropriate definition of sanctification, as the idea is used throughout the Bible. Surely the Bible teaches the sanctification of God's children, but not at all according to Wesley's ideas. As people of God we are separated, a peculiar people, a holy nation (I Peter

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2.9). Most assuredly we are separated from the world and dedicated to the service of God. We must separate ourselves from defilement and touch not unclean things, for God to accept us (II Corinthians 6:17). This matter is stressed with

great force in the Bible. But this is far removed from Wesley's ideas of sanctification. The Bible explains how we are sanctified. Sanctification is effected by the offering of the blood of Christ (Hebrews 10:14). The Bible nowhere teaches that we are sanctified by a baptism of the Holy Spirit, as Nazarenes claim. The Holy Spirit never appeared directly to anyone to save or sanctify them, but Nazarenes assert that He does both. Let us consider another scripture: "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (I Corinthians 6:9-11). What happened, Paul? You were once in sin, engaged in these worldly practices, but now you are washed, sanctified and justified. Notice that order. That is not the Nazarene order of washing, sanctification and justification.

The Nazarene order is: (1) Pray at the mourner's bench; (2) then you are justified, and (3) later, at a second "experience," you are sanctified. The divine order is: (1) "Washed" in the blood of the Lamb of God, (2) "sanctified," or set apart for God's service, and (3) "justified" or accepted with God. The apostle further shows how this separation from sin and dedication to God occurs. "But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness" (Romans 6:17-18). You were once the servants of sin, but obeyed from the heart the gospel of Christ, which then (not later) set you apart (sanctified you) into the service of God. That is simple sanctification as expressed in the Bible.

SINLESS PERFECTION

The next doctrine in order is sinless perfection, which we have already defined. Simply speaking, sinless perfection is the product of sanctification. When one receives sanctification it

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enables him to live a sinlessly perfect life, according to Nazarene theology. Recently, I heard of a Nazarene preacher who professed never to commit a sin. He claimed, "Since I have been sanctified, every impulse or desire to sin has been completely erased from my heart!" This is a claim which is consistent with Nazarene doctrine. They claim that their desire to perform sin is removed by sanctification. Yet the Nazarene church manual prescribes discipline to be exercised upon those who live such "perfect" (?) lives, but who are found committing sin! Such a gross inconsistency! Every Nazarene preacher who is ordained must first experience sanctification, have all sin removed from his life and testify that he is living sinlessly.

But the manual also reveals how a Nazarene preacher can be disfellowshipped if he walks in sin! But, if in sanctification the *Adamic nature* is removed and I have

absolutely no impulse to sin, if I do sin after that, then with what nature do I commit sin? It cannot be the Adamic nature, for that has already been *eradicated*. It must, therefore, be my Christian nature which led me into sin! Yes, Nazarenes withdraw fellowship from those whose *Adamic nature* has been removed and who have absolutely no desire, no impulse, to commit sin, but are guilty of sin anyhow! Such inconsistencies cannot be compatible with scriptures.

What does the Bible teach in the matter of Christian perfection? There are numerous different senses in which the term "perfect" is used in the Bible. The term is used at times to signify absolute perfection and at other times to suggest a relative perfection. When absolute moral perfection is meant, the term is always applied to God and never to man. When the term is applied to man it is invariably suggestive of a relative perfection. The idea of man's absolute moral perfection or sinlessness is foreign to the Bible. In the matter of perfection, God is our flawless example which we cannot fully duplicate, but after Whom our lives are to be patterned (Matthew 5:48). Paul used the term in both these senses. He disclaims absolute perfection (Philippians 3:12), but claims a relative perfection (Philippians 3:15). This is the only intelligent interpretation of these two passages. The term *perfectis* also used in still another manner in the Bible, to refer to spiritual maturity. Paul urged the Hebrew brethren to lay aside the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, and to go on unto

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perfection (Hebrews 6:1). The Bible denies that man can achieve absolute moral perfection in this life. As already cited, Paul disavowed perfection in the absolute sense (Philippians 3:12). The write of old claimed, "For there is no one who does not sin" (I Kings 8:46). And, further, "For there is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin" (Ecclesiastes 7:20). These ought to be conclusive. Yet Nazarene preachers claim, "I do good, and never have any impulse to sin!" But the Bible preaches that there is no such person!

How does one obtain perfection or holiness? I would like to answer this with a personal experience. Last year I preached in a meeting in Oregon. One night at the close of the service a lady shook hands with me and said, "Preacher, you do not believe holiness, do you?" My reply was, "Surely, I do." She asked again. "Do you believe in the holiness of the child of God?" Again I replied, "Yes, I believe that." The next night there was submitted a written question which asked how a person received holiness. For an answer I turned to Ephesians 4:24 and read, "And that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and true holiness. "The new man is created after God according to *true holiness* and not the imaginary, hypothetical type for which Wesley contended. How does a person receive this holy nature?

Paul said, "By putting on the new man." The apostle further instructed us as to how this "new man" is put on (Romans 6:3-6). In this passage the apostle discusses water baptism at the consummating act of conversion, from which one arises "to walk in newness of life." In this completion of conversion, the old man is crucified and one is raised to live unto God (verses 6, 10). Christian holiness is not, therefore, a *second work of grace*, but is imparted at conversion. Holiness is

received by putting on the "new man" and the "old man" is discarded, and the "new man" is received in conversion. Hence, holiness is received at conversion. There is, therefore, nothing mysterious in the meaning of holiness. It is synonymous with righteousness or godliness, which none would deny are received at conversion.

THE MOURNER'S BENCH

The last doctrine we shall review with you is that of mourner's bench salvation. Remove the mourner's bench from the Naza-

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rene church and, with this stroke, you would inflict a mortal wound to their *holiness* doctrines. The mourner's bench cannot be divorced from all vital *holiness* doctrines; they are all dependent upon it. At the mourner's bench most of their vital spiritual transactions occur. It is at the mourner's bench they receive everything worthwhile in the *holiness* religion. It is there they *pray through* to salvation. It is there that they get the *second blessing*. It is at the mourner's bench that they pray for divine healing. It is at the bench that they pray for the salvation of their friends. It is there that they pray for a *spiritual revival*—great emotional demonstrations. Hence the mourner's bench is indispensable to *holiness* doctrines. If we can show the impropriety of the mourner's bench, then all of their other doctrines shall fall with it.

The mourner's bench is without question the most ridiculous and absurd feature of the *holiness* religion. Let me illustrate how this is true. The preacher will preach for an hour or so. He injects all the vigor and vitality of his system into his sermon, convincing sinners, who stand perilously upon the brink of eternal doom, that if they will only decide to accept God that he will immediately save them. After the hour of persuasion, he finally convinces the sinners that they should be saved, and that God is willing to immediately save them. Sinners come in assurance of the fact that God is willing to save them, but they get to the mourner's bench only to find out that God has changed his mind!

Instead of God saving them instantly, then now they must pray, scream, cry and beg God to do what the preacher assured them He was already willing to do. When the sinner is out of the notion of being saved, and the preacher does all he can to get him into the notion of being saved, God is in the notion of saving the sinner. But, when the sinner finally takes a notion to be saved, he then finds that God has changed His mind; he now backed out! God, who was at first willing to save the sinner, must be begged to change his mind again, and return to a willingness or notion of saving the sinner! Such is the glaring absurdity of this doctrine.

To impress the unscripturalness of such a doctrine, I wish to file a number of charges and indictments against the mourner's bench system of salvation.

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1. God has nowhere required the unregenerate, or alien sinner to pray for the forgiveness of his sins. If anyone will confront me with just one verse of scripture which teaches the alien sinner to pray for the pardon of his sins, then I'll go back to the Nazarene mourner's bench!.
 2. Of all the cases of conversion in the New Testament, especially in the book of Acts, no inspired gospel preacher ever urged a sinner to pray his sins away at a mourner's bench. Gospel preachers many times informed inquirers what to do to be saved. On Pentecost three thousand were saved (Acts 2). But there is no record of a single prayer being uttered on Pentecost! The procedure was simple. The gospel was preached (verses 14-17), the hearers were exhorted to believe that Jesus is "both Lord and Christ" (verse 36) and they were commanded "to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins" (verse 38). Those who did so were saved and added unto the Lord's church (verse 47). Our *holiness* friends often pray for a reenactment of Pentecost, but they are not willing to follow these Pentecostal precedents. There was no mourner's bench there!
 3. The mourner's bench places all the responsibility of salvation upon God, whereas man is responsible for accepting God's will (Acts 2:40). Man is responsible to God for hearing and obeying the truth. The mourner's bench represents man as being passive, which God is active in conversion. This idea is foreign to the New Testament. Man is required to *save himself*—take an active, responsible, obedient part in his own conversion.
 4. The mourner's bench represents God as being a respecter of persons. The Bible declares, however, that "with God there is no respecter of persons" (Romans 2:11). God treats all men with equality; what he does for one, he will do for all. I could not begin to estimate the number of times I have seen a Nazarene mourner's bench swarmed with *seekers* for salvation and usually as many would go away not having found God as those who claimed to have found him there! I still read the Nazarene church paper, *The Herald of Holiness*. Nazarene preachers report to that paper the achievements of their revival meetings and many times their reports indicate

that there were more left *seeking* salvation at the mourner's bench than found it. Under the dispensation of grace, God does not refuse to save any who earnestly apply for the salvation he offers. The mourner's bench is therefore inadequate. It will not save all to need to be saved! The divine plan of salvation is offered to "all the world" and "every creature" (Mark 16:15).

5. The mourner's bench, in a similar connection, implies that God is unwilling to save all who come to him. As already seen, many turn away from the mourner's bench disappointed and filled with despair, feeling that God will not save them. We have been cited a case in Tennessee where one man,

after repeated and unsuccessful attempts to obtain *salvation* at a mourner's bench, went totally insane and was committed to a state institution. The thought that God would not save his miserable soul was too much for this poor man. But whether it leads to this unusual extreme, the mourner's bench does nevertheless argue that God is not willing to save all who seek salvation. The Apostle Peter strongly denies that idea when he contended that the Lord is "not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9). This can never be reconciled with the teaching of the mourner's bench.

6. Saul of Tarsus was commanded to cease his fasting and prayer and complete his obedience to Christ. If God ever intended to teach that prayer and mourning obtains our salvation, the case of Saul would have offered the best opportunity in all the Word of God. But after having spent three days in fasting and prayer, he was asked by the inspired, spirit-led preacher, "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). Had Ananias been a modern *holiness* preacher, he would have said, "Pray on, Brother Saul, and you will 'get it' after awhile!" I have never known a Nazarene preacher to instruct a mourner to do precisely what Ananias required of Saul! In the case of Saul, God amply demonstrated that he does not save by the mourner's bench method
7. The mourner's bench disregards the fact that it is useless to call upon the Lord without obeying him. Jesus asked, "But

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why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not the things which I say" (Luke 6:46)? Since the mourner has not completed his obedience to the Lord (Acts 22:16), his tarrying in prayer is useless.

8. Finally, the mourner's bench does not comply with God's plan of salvation. It is rather a system conceived as a substitute for obeying God's divinely revealed will to the sinner. In send the apostles forth into all the world with gospel, Jesus charged that they preach the gospel to every living creature. He also gave the provisions of the gospel, commands for the sinner to obey: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved ..." (Mark 16:16). On the day of Pentecost, Peter commanded that countless throng: "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins ..." (Acts 2:38). According to these revelations of inspiration, God requires the sinner to believe in Jesus Christ, repent of his sins and be baptized for the remission of sins. Any system that does not incorporate these divine requirements is not of God but of men. Since the mourner's bench does not include all these divine requirements, it is not then God's means of saving the sinner.

Will you not yield your hearts to the crucified Savior in obedience to the simple terms of the gospel? He is both ready willing to save you; he will not turn you away! If you have never obeyed the truth of God, let it make you free. Will you not thrust aside the shackles of sectarian bondage for the freedom of the truth?

You may be led out of the dismal, dark abyss of error and into the marvelous, radiant light of the truth. Have you the courage to lay all aside for Christ, regardless of the cost? Will you not be unashamed to confess your Lord, though others may scoff and scorn you for doing so? The only unquestionably safe course for your soul is to take your station upon the simple teachings of the word of God and forever reject the wisdom and councils of men in religion. If you will live for Christ by obeying him, He will wash your soul from sin in His own blood, make you a new creature, a citizen of the kingdom of Christ and give you hope of that blessed eternal inheritance in the celestial city of God.

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