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Dissertation

NARRATIVES OF HOLINESS IDENTITY:
THE “SANCTIFIED PERSON”
IN
THE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

By

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is an exercise in practical theology, which investigates and responds to the problem of changing holiness identity in the Church of the Nazarene. The first part of the study is an empirical investigation into the social context of contemporary Nazarene holiness identity and practice among Nazarenes in three congregations located in the Northeast United States. Previous research relied too heavily on secularization and sect-church theory to understand the dynamics of religious identity change among Nazarenes. The theological result was a pessimistic appraisal of the future possibilities of holiness identity and practice in the Church of the Nazarene.

This study employs an alternative theory—Nancy T. Ammerman’s theory of narrative religious identity—to understand the dynamics of lived religious life within these congregations and to identify the various holiness narratives at play. Ammerman’s theory facilitates an empirical description of the multiple holiness identities emerging out of the social contexts of these Nazarene congregations and offers a way to account for identity change. At the heart of this research is the theoretical notion that a particular religious identity, in the case of the Church of the Nazarene, the “sanctified person,”

emerges out of a particular ecclesial context characterized by religious narratives and practices that shape this identity.

Chapter one reviews the problem of holiness identity in the Church of the Nazarene and offers an analysis of recent sociological attempts to understand the changing identity among Nazarenes. Chapter two draws on sociological research to describe and depict the range of views of holiness held by some contemporary Nazarenes. Chapter three identifies the varieties of holiness identity within the three Nazarene congregations that are part of the study. Chapter four investigates the social sources that shape the various holiness identities discovered in these congregations. Chapter five is a description of the many ways religious narratives are enacted and engaged within these congregations.

The second part of the study is a theological critique of contemporary Nazarene holiness identity. Chapter six draws on the theory of narrative identity proposed by Nancy Ammerman and outlines a theoretical model which describes the social conditions necessary to shape holiness identity, “the sanctified person,” within the context of the local congregation. Finally, chapter seven draws on the theological resources of Mennonite scholar and historian John Howard Yoder to propose a way of construing and facilitating holiness identity formation that takes the ecclesiality of holiness more seriously, emphasizes a clearer relationship between Jesus and the “Christlikeness” that is central to holiness, and highlights the importance of religious practices in the formation of a holiness identity.

INTRODUCTION

“For I am the LORD your God: you shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I am holy.”

Leviticus 19:2

“May the God of peace, himself, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.”

I Thessalonians 5:23-24

“Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us cleanse ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.”

II Corinthians 7:1

“But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy.’”

I Peter 1:15-16

These biblical verses give expression to a central feature of biblical religion - that God’s people are called to reflect God’s holiness in the way they live out their lives together. This exhortation to holiness points to a religious experience called “entire sanctification,” or “holiness,” that has historically been a dominant theme in the theological identity of the Church of the Nazarene, a Protestant holiness denomination. Early Nazarenes gave pride of place to this central doctrine, so that holiness belief and practice played an important role in the construction of religious identity, explaining exclusiveness, and informing the maintenance of cultural, social and religious boundaries.¹

Recently, however the Church of the Nazarene, it is said, is in the midst of an identity “crisis,” and at the heart of the crisis is changing beliefs about holiness. What

¹On the relationship between religion and boundaries see Robert Hodgson Jr., "Holiness Tradition and Social Description: Intertestamental Judaism and Early Christianity," in *Reaching Beyond: Chapters in the History of Perfectionism* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1986), 87.

constitutes the crisis, however, is much debated. For some, recent changes point to a turning away from the historic teachings of the church, out of which they respond with resistance. For others, change is a long time coming, and a sense of resolution about the necessity for belief change characterizes their attitude.

At the heart of the debate is the question of “change”—what does it mean for an individual, church, or denomination to change religious beliefs? When are beliefs allowed to change? When shouldn’t beliefs be changed? Is all belief change good? How should beliefs be changed? What social factors are related to belief change? This study is about changing beliefs about holiness in the Church of the Nazarene. This may, of course, be understood in two ways. Changing beliefs may refer to the sociological (and historical) endeavor to identify and describe the current social reality of holiness identity among Nazarenes, to determine whether and how it has changed, and to attempt to offer an explanation for why it has changed in the way that it has. It is interested in asking what social reasons account for the kinds of holiness identities Nazarenes currently live out. Changing beliefs may also refer to a more theological endeavor to assess and critique current religious beliefs and practices and to suggest ways they *should* change, if at all. Thus, the notion of “changing beliefs” expresses a double entendre, two ways of approaching the identity problem in the Church of the Nazarene.

About Belief Change

Recent discussions about changing Nazarene beliefs, among some church leaders, theologians and sociologists, have relied too heavily on sociological theories, such as secularization theory and sect-church theory, which, in effect, prejudicially favor the

denomination's past.² The assumption has been that change implies divergence from a pristine core of belief which arose out of a "golden age" of faith. Beliefs and practices emerging from this time are "unassailable." It is assumed that they are true and faithful expressions of the gospel without need of critique. Not only this, but there is the view that the tradition's beliefs and practices *must* be true because they have been corroborated by experience. Changing beliefs, from this perspective, implies a "falling away," a loss of original intensity and faithfulness, even an accommodation to sin and slothfulness. Also, in this model, change carries a stigma – to admit change is shameful. To say publically that one is changing one's beliefs is tantamount to admitting that one's past beliefs were false, in error, possibly even heretical.³

This general perception – that religious change signals a falling away from an original, pristine and unassailable sectarian core – is influenced by earlier sociological views about religious change and the decline of religion. For example, Max Weber, one of the early sociological theorists, was concerned that the "rationalization"⁴ of life, a central feature of the development of modern Western culture, would threaten to erode the sense of the "mystery" of life, which was endemic to religion. Rationalization included such aspects as the intellectual ordering of ideas about human purpose and meaning, the normative control over human actions as goal oriented, and demands for motivational commitment, both to believe in and live out, the systematized program or

²Both perspectives, the theological and the sociological, can be found in *Counterpoint: Dialogue with Drury on the Holiness Movement* edited by Keith Drury, et al (Salem, OH: Schmul Publishing Company, 2005), 17-35.

³See particularly the implications of belief change in Donald Metz in his discussion of Nazarene identity in his *Some Crucial Issues in the Church of the Nazarene* (Olathe, KS: Wesleyan Heritage Press, 1994), 5-28. The assumption that runs throughout Metz' critique is pervasive in discussions of Nazarene identity today.

⁴A synonym is "bureaucratization."

plan of life “as a whole.”⁵ Weber called this loss of mystery “disenchantment,” and the “double-sided rationalization–disenchantment process,” secularization.⁶

Science is, for Weber, the most significant manifestation of this rationalization process in modern societies. Science is that which brings about the disenchantment. He writes, “Scientific progress is a fraction, the most important fraction, of the process of intellectualization which we have been undergoing for thousands of years and which nowadays is usually judged in such an extremely negative way.”⁷ This “intellectualist rationality” was created by science and its offspring, technology. According to Weber, the scientific claim to be able, potentially, to explain “the conditions of life under which we exist” is the “means by which the world is disenchanting.”⁸ Weber draws the following conclusion about this “secularizing” process: “Hence, it means that principally there are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play, but rather that one can, in principle, master all things by calculation.”⁹ Thus, individuals have little need for “magical means in order to master or implore the spirits, as did the savage, for whom such mysterious powers existed.”¹⁰

The apparent inevitability of intellectual rationalization to pervade all aspects of society, and for bureaucratization to order human life, particularly in the economic

⁵See comments by Talcott Parsons in his introduction to Max Weber’s *The Sociology of Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), xxxii. Weber’s direct references to rationalization can be found in his *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York: HarperCollins, 1930; reprint, New York: Routledge, 1992), 180ff.

⁶Kevin J. Christiano, William H. Swatos, Jr., and Peter Kivisto, *Sociology of Religion: Contemporary Developments*, 2nd ed. (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008), 56.

⁷See Weber’s article entitled “Science as a Vocation,” in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. and trans. by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 138-9.

⁸Ibid., 139.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

sphere, caused Weber to envision this development as an “iron cage” in which individuals live out their lives.¹¹ Weber struggled over the possibility of individuals and groups escaping the iron cage. At the least, in the short term, religious asceticism, particularly as expressed in the Protestant ethic, has succeeded in separating itself from the cage. He writes:

Since asceticism undertook to remodel the world and to work out its ideals in the world, material goods have gained an increasing and finally an inexorable power over the lives of men as at no previous period in history. To-day the spirit of religious asceticism – whether finally, who knows? – has escaped from the cage.¹²

Thus, apparently, religious charisma operates to ameliorate the influences of rationalization.

Rationalist capitalism no longer needs the social support of Protestantism.¹³ But now that it is independent, and operates on its own mechanical foundation, will it succeed in imprisoning others in its iron grip? Weber, seemingly genuinely uncertain and coming close to prognostication, reflects on future developments:

No one knows who will live in this cage in the future, or whether at the end of this tremendous development entirely new prophets will arise, or there will be a great rebirth of old ideas and ideals, or, if neither, mechanized petrification, embellished with a sort of convulsive self-importance. For of the last stage of this cultural development, it might well be truly said: “Specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart; this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved.”¹⁴

¹¹Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 181.

¹²Ibid.

¹³In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber looks for the possibility of a relationship between religious ideas and cultural developments. In particular, he attempts to discover how Protestant notions of the call, the motivation to bring all of life under rational control, relates to the development of rationalist capitalism in the economic sphere.

¹⁴Ibid., 182.

We find in Weber, then, a kind of implicit theory of religious change. The rationalization of society, manifest in the “spirit” of capitalism and in the processes of modern science, threatens to “disenchant” the world of “divine”¹⁵ influences.¹⁶ This theory of religious change was reinforced by those who later developed the secularization thesis. Essentially, the pessimistic view of religious change persisted. Various models of secularization were suggested and refinements offered, all of which more or less predicted the eventual demise of religion. As Christiano, Swatos, and Kivisto point out, “[t]he principle thrust in secularization theory... is that in the face of scientific rationality religion’s influence on all aspects of life—from personal habits to social institutions—has dramatically declined.”¹⁷

The assumption that religious change is negative is reinforced also by sect-church theory. Also emerging out of the thought of Max Weber, sect-church theory originally was a sociological tool to compare religious organizations. Weber developed the notion of the “ideal type,” by which he meant, essentially, a “mental construct based on relevant empirical components, formed and explicitly delineated by the researcher to facilitate precise comparisons on specific points of interest.”¹⁸ The primary feature that differentiated sect and church, for Weber, was “mode of membership,” which is essentially a sociological characteristic. For the sect it was by decision, and for the

¹⁵Divine, of course, is a general reference to the de-magification, or the de-spiritization of the world brought about by the possibility of being able, if one wished to know, how the world operates.

¹⁶Weber seems almost to wax poetic speaking of, or rather, lamenting, this rationalization of life which has an “inexorable power over the lives of men as at no previous period in history.” See *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 181.

¹⁷Christiano, Swatos, and Kivisto, *Sociology of Religion*, 60. See Weber’s comments in “‘Objectivity’ in Social Science,” in *Max Weber on The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, ed. and trans. by Edward A Shils and Henry A. Finch (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1949), 89-91.

¹⁸Ibid., 88. On this distinction see Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968), 456. See also Gerth and Mills, *From Max Weber*, 306.

church it was by birth.¹⁹ The sect is a voluntary association to which admission was gained by virtue of a “moral qualification,” which was validated by other sect members. The church is “a corporation which organizes grace and administers religious gifts of grace, like an endowed foundation. Affiliation with the church is, in principle, obligatory and hence proves nothing with regard to the member’s qualities.”²⁰ It is important to see that the ideal types, sect and church, are criteria *to* which religious organizations are compared, not *by* which.²¹

Weber’s typology was extended by Ernst Troeltsch, who developed it in at least two ways. First, he extended the typology to include a third sociological type, mysticism. Mysticism is a lay movement and is characterized by a more radical individualism than the sectarian type. It is “simply the insistence upon a direct inward and present religious experience.”²² Mysticism does not spend its energy on concern for relations between individuals, but, rather, focuses on the “relations between soul and God.”²³ Like Weber, Troeltsch saw each of the ideal types – sect, church, mystic – as separate and distinct, with relatively clear sociological characteristics. For example, the sect type is not an undeveloped expression of the Church type, but, rather, it stands for an independent sociological type of Christian thought.²⁴ Second, Troeltsch elaborated on the “theological” characteristics of the Weberian types and highlighted their social ethical implications. For example, the church type is “is overwhelmingly conservative, which to

¹⁹Christiano, Swatos, and Kivisto, *Sociology of Religion*, 88.

²⁰Gerth and Mills, *From Max Weber*, 306.

²¹I agree with Christiano, Swatos, and Kivisto, *Sociology of Religion*, 88.

²²Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*, vol. 1 (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1931; reprint, Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 730.

²³*Ibid.*, 743.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 338.

a certain extent accepts the secular order, and dominates the masses; in principle, therefore, it is universal, i.e., it desires to cover the whole life of humanity.” The church type represents the “longing for a universal all-embracing ideal, the desire to control great masses of men, and therefore the urge to dominate the world and civilization in general.”²⁵ The church type represents a “compromise” with the State.²⁶ The sect type consists of “comparatively small groups; [which] aspire after personal inward perfection, and they aim at a direct personal fellowship between the members of each group.”²⁷ Troeltsch accentuates the attitude of the sects to the world as opposition. He writes, “The ascetic ideal of the sects consists simply in opposition to the world and to its social institutions, but it is not opposition to the sense-life, nor to the average life of humanity.”²⁸ Sects, for Troeltsch, often represent the original ideals of Christianity.

In addition, Troeltsch connects the types with a particular socio-economic status. On the one hand, the sect type is most closely associated with the lower classes. On the other hand, the church type takes advantage of the influence of the State and the ruling classes. The church becomes an integral part of the existing social order.²⁹ Troeltsch elaborates on the relation between church and state, “[T]he Church both stabilizes and determines the social order; in so doing, however, she becomes dependent upon the upper classes, and upon their development.”³⁰ As a result, Troeltsch, like Weber, often uses the language of “accommodation” or “compromise” as a distinguishing feature between the

²⁵Troeltsch, *Social Teachings*, 334.

²⁶Ibid., 335.

²⁷Ibid., 331.

²⁸Ibid., 332.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid., 331.

two types. Sects attempt to stand apart from the dominant social order, while church types find a way to integrate with the dominant social order.

The Weber-Troeltsch categories of sect and church are significantly transformed by H. Richard Niebuhr in his *Social Sources of Denominationalism*.³¹ Niebuhr utilizes the sociological types as a means by which he might critique what he sees as a critical ethical flaw in denominationalism, its disunity. Four features characterize Niebuhr's use of the ideal types. First, Niebuhr expresses a theological and social ethical value judgment about the sociological forms of ecclesial organization. The church, for him, is to express the primary value of the Kingdom of God – to be one. The various denominations, characterized as they were by socio-economic and racial categories failed to be faithful the Lord of the Kingdom. He writes, “For the denominations, churches, sects, are sociological groups whose principle of differentiation is to be sought in their conformity to the order of classes and castes.”³² Churches have accommodated themselves to the existing social order. Thus, denominationalism “represents the moral failure of Christianity.”³³ This theological judgment is entirely missing in Weber and Troeltsch.³⁴

Second, Niebuhr sharpens the contours of socio-economic characteristics of denominations, but also takes into consideration ethnic and racial categories. Third, he deepens and radicalizes the notion of accommodation and compromise. He writes:

The church as an inclusive social group is closely allied with national, economic, and cultural interests; by the very nature of its constitution it is committed to the

³¹H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1925) 18.

³²Ibid., 25.

³³Ibid.

³⁴In my opinion Troeltsch favors the church type, but it seems to be more implicit in his writings.

accommodation of its ethics to the ethics of civilization; it must represent the morality of the respectable majority, not the heroic minority.³⁵

In contrast, the sect type represents the “heroic minority, who “hold with tenacity to its interpretation of Christian ethics and prefers isolation to compromise.”³⁶ The sect “attaches primary importance to the religious experience of its members prior to their fellowship with the group, to the priesthood of all believers, to the sacraments as symbols of fellowship and pledges of allegiance.”³⁷ Fourth, Niebuhr transforms the two sociological categories, sect and church, into “poles of a continuum.”³⁸ Christiano, Swatos, and Kivisto write, “Niebuhr did not merely classify groups in relation to their relative sect-likeness or church-likeness, but analyzed the dynamic process of religious history as groups moved along this continuum.”³⁹ Niebuhr then applied this evaluative tool to denominations in his *Social Sources*. What is important to note here is not so much the continuum that Niebuhr constructs, but his attempt to devise a theory of religious change. His thesis was that “new religious organizations (sects) begin among the socially ‘disinherited’, but in the United States, as these groups attain higher social status, their religious expressions become more ‘respectable’ or socially accepted; thus, there is a movement across generations from sectarian to denominational religious life—or else the sectarian group dies out.”⁴⁰ Thus, religious change is depicted either as accommodation or death, both of which are problematic.

³⁵Niebuhr, *Social Sources*, 18.

³⁶Ibid., 19.

³⁷Ibid., 18.

³⁸Here I agree with Christiano, Swatos, and Kivisto. But while they argue that Troeltsch began the transformation, I attribute it to Niebuhr. See their *Sociology of Religion*, 89.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid., 93.

Recent sociological studies have employed secularization and sect-church theory as a way of framing Nazarene identity. For example, Ron Benefiel, in his “The Church of the Nazarene: The Fragmentation of Identity,” uses sect-church theory to discern what was happening to Nazarene identity within the denomination.⁴¹ The primary question orienting his research was why people were thinking differently about being “Nazarene.” The goal of his study was to identify and describe the various “sub-cultural identities” that he thought were developing in the Church of the Nazarene. Positing that, in the beginning, the denomination had an “identity that was strong and seemingly quite homogenous,” he tried to ascertain why “the core denominational identity of the church [was] eroding.” Even though Benefiel concluded that “[t]he data failed to identify discreet cohort groups around different value orientations or types,” and that “the population presented itself as a rather homogenous group, particularly in regard to political world view, with a persistent denominational loyalty,” I argue that the study was framed around the assumption that whatever change was taking place, whatever fragmentation was occurring, was due to underlying social forces that were contributing to the erosion.

Out of this frame of reference, Benefiel suggests that change might be caused by “upward socio-economic mobility of the church moving us away from the zeal and solidarity that sectness provides toward a mainstream ‘respectable’ identity.” Or, it might be caused by “the socio-religious environment of the society de-emphasizing the significance of denominational affiliation in favor of a local identity.” Or, it might be caused by “the resultant loss of our sectarian ‘shield’ making us more vulnerable to the

⁴¹Ron Benefiel, “The Church of the Nazarene: The Fragmentation of Identity.” A paper delivered at the annual meeting of the Association of Nazarene Sociologists and Researchers, 1996.

competing influences of political, cultural, and theological values from other religious groups and society as a whole.”⁴²

In another study by Benefiel, “The Church of the Nazarene: A Religious Organization in Conflict and Change—An Empirical Study,” church-sect theory is used as a way of framing the question whether the Church of the Nazarene evidences signs of movement from “more conservative, ‘sectarian’ traits toward more liberal ‘denominational’ traits.”⁴³ The primary social cause of movement along the continuum is because the “socio-economic level of the membership and clergy of the organization increases.”⁴⁴ His primary hypothesis was that “an increase in levels of education in the clergy over time will produce an increase in the percentage of clergyman with more liberal inclinations,” who, over time, would encounter more stress, apparently because of the pressure of having unorthodox beliefs. While the language of “conservative” and “liberal” could possibly be used without negative connotations, in this context the language of “liberal” prejudices the study, and is part and parcel of a body of assumptions that include the notion that the increase of liberal clergy effectively cause the denomination to move from its original pristine core to a more denominational stance, which is often framed as accommodation to culture.

Another recent study of views of sanctification among Wesleyan-holiness clergy (of which the Church of the Nazarene is a part) that relies on the church-sect model also perpetuates this way of thinking. In “Moving from Sect to Church: Variations in Views Regarding Sanctification Among Wesleyan/Holiness Clergy,” Jean Stockard, Susie C.

⁴²Benefiel, “The Fragmentation of Identity.”

⁴³Ron Benefiel, “The Church of the Nazarene: A Religious Organization in Conflict and Change—An Empirical Study.” A paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association of Nazarene Sociologists and Researchers, 1980.

⁴⁴Ibid.

Stanley, and Benton Johnson take as their base-line “the original doctrine of sanctification” and measure the differences in adherence to the traditional view. Those clergy who diverged from the traditional view were assumed to indicate a “movement toward less tension with and more acceptance of the social environment outside the church, as sect-to-church theory suggests.”⁴⁵ Also, clergy who have doubts about the traditional tenets of sanctification “would be more likely to promote linkages with other denominations, be more permissive on moral issues, and hold more liberal social and political attitudes.”⁴⁶ Results of the study found that:

[R]eligious leaders who have voiced concerns that the Wesleyan/Holiness movement is losing its unique characteristics will find confirmation in this work, for our results do indicate the movement of a substantial number of clergy away from the original concerns of the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition. On the other hand, these leaders can find comfort in the sect-to-church analyses, which have documented the dynamic relationship between churches and sects. While historically sects have tended to become churches, these churches, in turn, have experienced divisions and conflicts, producing new sects. Thus, even though our results indicate that many contemporary Wesleyan/Holiness clergy are moving away from traditional teachings, it is important to remember that in matters of faith, as well as religious organizations, there is always the possibility of change and renewal.⁴⁷

This is small comfort for denominations which think that splintering from within might be too costly a way to achieve renewal and revitalization. One major fault of this study is that none of the “other” views of sanctification were identified. Only the measure of agreement with or disagreement with the traditional view of sanctification was used, without asking what the other views were and why they were held. Disagreement with the traditional model, for any reason, was interpreted as accommodation. The traditional

⁴⁵Jean Stockard, Susie C. Stanley, and Benton Johnson, “Moving from Sect to Church: Variations in Views Regarding Sanctification Among Wesleyan/Holiness Clergy,” *Review of Social Research* 43 (September 2001): 74.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 75.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 88.

model has gone unquestioned as a benchmark against which present beliefs or changes are measured.

Studies of Nazarene identity that utilize the secularization model make similar kinds of assumptions. In a study done in 1999, Ken Crow and Rich Hauseal attempted to discern the level of secularization in the Church of the Nazarene. They define secularization as “declining trust in religious explanations.”⁴⁸ Relying on theoretical assumptions proposed by Theodore Caplow, who identified a number of consequences of secularization in a study on Muncie, Indiana, Crow and Hauseal looked for parallel kinds of consequences within the Church of the Nazarene. Virtually all of the consequences represented “declines” in religious influence and activity, which are presumed to be evidences of declining trust in religious explanations. Crow and Hauseal then “found” similar consequences in the Church of the Nazarene and concluded that:

Undoubtedly secularization has affected the Church of the Nazarene. All of our history has taken place without the “sacred canopy” of a coercive religious monopoly in which our theology might have been taken for granted understanding of reality. As we enter the twenty-first century, the Church of the Nazarene in the United States must deal with a secular, pluralistic culture.⁴⁹

Crow and Hauseal draw the conclusion that the organizational changes they see in these churches are the result of “secularizing forces.” The operative assumption follows the classic view of secularization—that the broader society is “secular” and secularizing, and that the church is declining as a result of accommodation to it. No alternative explanations for the organizational changes are offered. The Church of the Nazarene, without its sacred canopy of protection, is vulnerable to the eroding effects of a secular

⁴⁸Kenneth Crow and Rich Hauseal, “Secularization Within the Church of the Nazarene.” A paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association of Nazarene Sociologists and Researchers, 1999.

⁴⁹Ibid.

culture as individuals become more and more accommodated to it. And, apparently, whatever religious trust there might be left in the church is now vulnerable.

Two assumptions of these studies might be challenged. The first is that only the original traditional formulations of holiness can appropriately function as the criteria to judge the *legitimacy* of religious change. All subsequent views of sanctification are *ipso facto* declared accommodations to culture. The second is that “culture” is unified and homogenous. Culture is, by definition, “monolithic,” “uniform,” “secular,” “liberal,” “ecumenical,” and “permissive.” The assumption that an unchanging, uniform, cultural reality stands over and against sectarian religion permeates these sociological models.

Yet, an equally valid assumption might be offered. What would sociological analysis look like if our study began with the premise that sectarian groups form extreme, unrealistic, and ultimately, unlivable religious lives that are tempered over time by continued reflection within the community on its sacred texts and by rigorous testing of its religious formulations in the fire of human experience?⁵⁰ In this scenario, change could be seen as a positive development toward a more faithful reading of the community’s religious texts and the formation of a religious identity that is amenable to human life as the community of faith practices its life together.

Regarding culture, an equally valid assumption might be offered. What would cultural analysis look like if our study began with the premise that culture is not monolithic, but, is, rather, a collection of competing particularities? In this view, all

⁵⁰See Weber’s notion of “routinization of charisma,” in which early forms of charisma are brought under rational control. Gerth and Mills, in *From Max Weber*, write, “Weber sees the genuine charismatic situation quickly give way to incipient institutions, which emerge from the cooling off of extraordinary states of devotion and fervor” (54); and, “A charismatic movement may be routinized into traditionalism or into bureaucratization.”

collectivities have particular narratives and practices that are parochial in some way. One could, then, imagine that some aspects of these collectivities overlap with narratives of other particularities, but the assumption that there is a common, universal ethical or moral core to which religion might be compared would be called into question.

Yet, with few exceptions, much of the conventional sociological study of religion on Nazarenes has contributed to the perception that religious change is negative. In my view, these theological and sociological assumptions have worked to hinder positive theological construction that attempts both to critique contemporary holiness practice, and to reorient the tradition. New developments, however, are underway. For example, Christian Smith has called sociologists to rethink how they use the idea of religious “accommodation.” He writes:

Far too often, when sociologists see a religious group modifying itself in response to, or incorporating new elements from, its surrounding culture, they automatically label it “accommodation.” The typical connotation is that religion—in an ultimately losing, zero-sum struggle against secular modernity—is giving away more and more of its orthodox truth, its distinctive practices and moralities, its previously held cultural “territory.” The underlying image is self-defeating survival strategy, reminiscent of Chamberlain’s appeasement of Hitler. With each move of accommodation—despite possible simultaneous efforts at resistance—religion has that much less left to bargain away in the future; and the latest bargain stands little chance of ultimately satisfying the ever-encroaching demands of the adversary. Religion stands in relation to modernity like someone on a small island in a path of an oncoming hurricane trying to bargain with the sea for its storm surge to abate by throwing shovelful of sand at the breakers. Each shovel of sand slightly hinders the next wave; all the while, the island shrinks ever smaller.⁵¹

One of the goals of this present study is to explore the possibility that theoretical approaches employing secularization and sect-church models, which, in my view, assume

⁵¹Christian Smith, *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 98.

that religious change is mono-causal and negative, may not explain everything about belief change in the Church of the Nazarene. Thus, I try to orient research on Nazarene holiness identity away from earlier models of secularization and sect-church theory to those with assumptions more amenable to the American context. Fortunately, a “new paradigm” has developed in the sociology of religion,⁵² which challenges the assumption that religious change necessarily always implies weakness, accommodation, or decline. Central to the new paradigm is the notion that religion is a relatively independent variable.

One of the primary characteristics of this new paradigm is the view that the social context is one of religious competition. Warner writes, “The analytic key to the new paradigm is the disestablishment of the churches and the rise of an open market for religion.”⁵³ This paradigm rejects the notion of “monopoly” derived from the Constantinian synthesis of the 4th century as a way of understanding the relationship between religion and culture. Instead, the new paradigm uses the metaphor of “marketplace” in which the role of “choice” (religious or otherwise) is enhanced.

Warner sees four characteristics of religion in the new paradigm: disestablished, culturally pluralistic, structurally adaptable, and empowering. Yet, there is another feature of religion in the new paradigm which he calls “the new voluntarism,” by which he means “the complex of individualized religious identification.”⁵⁴ Commonly referred to as “switching,” this social phenomenon is incredibly important for understanding religious change in American churches. According to Warner, switchers are “morally

⁵²See especially R. Stephen Warner, “Work in Progress Toward a New Paradigm for the Sociological Study of Religion the United States,” *The American Journal of Sociology* 98 (March 1993): 1044-1093.

⁵³Ibid., 1050.

⁵⁴Ibid., 1074.

serious,” and research indicates that “Protestant’s inveterate switching of denominations is increasingly motivated by moral culture instead of socioeconomic status.”⁵⁵

One such approach, resonating with the new paradigm, can be seen in the work of Nancy Ammerman, whose work has been described as a “Geertzian” alternative to the old paradigm.⁵⁶ For Ammerman, *a priori* models, such as secularization, pluralism, and Niebuhrian sect-church theory do not say everything about contemporary religion. It is not that some individuals are not secularized, or that some denominations have not followed the slippery-slope from vibrant sectarianism to accommodationist denominationalism, if that is the empirical reality; but, rather her concern is that we not *start* with that assumption. She writes:

[P]luralism is neither a plus or a minus, neither a guarantor of vitality or a harbinger of doom. It is simply part of the cultural and structural world in which people are living their lives, a world that includes religious realities that are both old and new, powerful and fragile, institutionalized and emergent. We have no theoretical predispositions about pluralism beyond the expectation that people will engage in the construction of a social world for themselves that makes use of the cultural elements available to them.⁵⁷

Similar to Ammerman’s claims about pluralism, I argue that denominationalism is neither a weakness nor a strength. It is simply part of the religious scene. This is not to deny the sociological insight that religious and ethical views are closely tied to particular social locations. But, these relationships will need to be established through sociological research. The theoretical insight here is that Nazarenes will use whatever social

⁵⁵Warner, “Work in Progress,” 1076.

⁵⁶Christiano, Swatos, and Kivisto, *Sociology of Religion*, 39.

⁵⁷Nancy Ammerman, ed., *Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Lives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 8.

resources are available to them to construct religious identities. Social contexts change, and individuals can respond to new insights and discover alternative ways of life.⁵⁸

This new paradigm allows us to look at the empirical reality in more dynamic and complex ways, without trying to fit it into an *a priori* schema. The Nazarenes in this study appear not to fit the secularized model, nor do they seem to be radical individualists who abhor community. These Nazarenes do not construct religious identities in isolation, nor do they reject out of hand official denominational narratives. They are everyday Nazarenes trying to live out their faith in Jesus Christ in a world filled with competing religious and secular narratives. Whether or not denominational narratives still play a significant role in shaping their religious understandings remains to be seen, but in any case, because of the social realities of the modern world, they appear to have much more choice in religion, and they use it.

To begin with empirical reality is to question the assumption that the original sectarian expression of the Gospel is the only faithful one. The view taken in this study is that *every* social expression of the Gospel is open to critique and change. Original expressions of Christian faith are simply that, attempts to be faithful expressions of the life lived in the Kingdom of God. They are not better because they were first, nor are they necessarily weakened or eroded because they come later. One of the implications of the sect-church theoretical model is that only sectarian forms of religion are faithful to the

⁵⁸Earlier studies are not very helpful in explaining belief change. Two studies highlight the complex relationship between religious beliefs and social forces. Both these studies argue that changing beliefs depends on the particular social “context.” One study suggests that a change in theological beliefs is not necessarily related to a change in socio-political and ascetic beliefs. See Jack Balswick, Dawn Ward, and David E. Carlson, “Theological and Socio-Political Belief Change Among Religiously Conservative Students,” *Review of Religious Research* 17 (Fall 1975): 61-67. The other study focuses on the particular social context as a factor in belief change. Three factors – denominational affiliation, congregational affiliation, and socio-economic status – are among the variables which have been considered important determinants of belief change. However, the effects of these variables were not uniform. Each of the variables exerted influence in different aspects of belief depending on the particular social context. Thus, these studies suggest that explaining belief change within Nazarene congregations will be much more complex and nuanced than secularization or sect-church theory allows.

Gospel. The practical result is the conclusion that it is almost impossible for denominations to be faithful to the Gospel, because they, by definition, have accommodated to culture. This assumption should be challenged! Not all change that happens to resonate with the broader culture is bad, and not all forms of separation from culture are right, or necessarily Christian. Thus, each social expression of the Gospel must be evaluated on its own and in light of the call of Christ to faithful discipleship.

Therefore, while religious change *may* indicate accommodation, or that the church *may* be moving along the trajectory from its pristine unified sectarian origins to a fragmented pluralism, assessing belief change requires investigation into specific social contexts analyzing for the range and types of religious beliefs and practices present.

Up to this point I have been talking primarily about beliefs and religious change. Yet, this is too narrow for the purposes of this study. While belief is an important feature of religion, it is not the only one. Practices, too, are essential to religious identity.⁵⁹ Thus, in the pages that follow I utilize the notion of religious identity as a vehicle by which I discuss religious change.

The Nature of this Study

In this study, I attempt to identify and describe the holiness identities I found in three Nazarene churches located in the Northeastern United States. This is both a descriptive and an analytical task. But, this study is not merely a work of sociology, as important as that is. It is intended, also, to be a theological critique of both current holiness belief and practice *and* of the tradition's theological constructions. Ultimately, I do argue that holiness identity (beliefs and practices) *should* change, both in the way that

⁵⁹On the notion of beliefs and practices as essential to religious identity see Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass, eds, *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 247.

they are currently lived out and as they are articulated in the theological resources of the denomination.

The thesis of this study is that the so-called identity crisis, which the Church of the Nazarene appears to be experiencing, is a perfect opportunity for the Church of the Nazarene to reconsider its holiness identity, and to do so in light of the demands of the Gospel *and* the experience and practice of contemporary Nazarenes. This is not to say that experience dictates holiness theology, but, rather, it is an opportunity for the community of faith to look deeply at its practice of holiness and consider whether it is a faithful expression, not of its historic faith, but of the call of the Gospel to be disciples of Jesus Christ. In fact, I go on further to suggest that the Church of the Nazarene *should* change its identity (beliefs and practices). But, the change I advocate is *not* the result of accommodation to a secular culture. It is, rather, the intentional result of theological analysis of the problems of Christian practice.

It is possible that the predominance of secularization theory or sect-church theory has obscured the possibility of seeing religious change in lived religion as meaningful and valuable for theological construction. It fails to allow that religious experience can be a valuable resource to critique theology. Thus, those reflecting on religious change in the Church of the Nazarene should be less concerned with fear about diverging from an unassailable traditional core than with a willingness to allow contemporary religious experience to raise significant questions about theology and ethics, in order to be more faithful to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Yet, reflecting on corporate experience and advocating religious change in the church is not without problems. First, it appears to suggest that earlier expressions of Christian faith, such as original formulations of holiness in the 19th century, were wrong, or illegitimate. Certainly many Nazarenes had valuable religious experiences that resonated with that theology, and this needs to be appreciated. But, as I will show,

holiness practice in the mid-twentieth century became problematic for everyday Nazarenes and for denominational theologians. The problems centered around a misunderstanding of two aspects of holiness belief: original sin and anthropology. Another problem had to do with how change was perceived. Fear of being misunderstood about changing beliefs sometimes paralyzes religious groups and hinders them from much needed dialogue and reflection on current religious identity.

Narrative Religious Identity

In order to facilitate a dialogue between a sociological study of religious identity and theology, I employ the notion of “narrative religious identity.”⁶⁰ Theology is concerned with the meaning and truth of *particular* narrative religious identities. Thus, theology offers guidance and instruction for the construction of faithful religious beliefs and practices. Sociology of religion is concerned with describing and interpreting religious phenomena and with identifying *how* those religious identities are formed. It also offers an analysis of the social context that either facilitates or challenges the formation of those identities. Since theology is especially concerned with religious identity, a sociologically informed theological interpretation of the social processes of identity formation may facilitate the construction of holiness identities that are both faithful to the Gospel and able to be lived out in religious community. Thus, the empirical data will be invaluable to the task of reconstructing holiness theology.

That holiness identity, an aspect of religious identity, is the product of social processes in which individuals participate by appropriating socially available religious narratives into a coherent but revisable identity is a basic argument in this study. The following sections review the theoretical support for such a claim.

⁶⁰The term, of course, is derived from Nancy Ammerman. See her “Religious Identities and Religious Institutions,” 213ff.

Self-Identity

Identity, understood as the product of social processes, is a commonplace notion in social psychological literature.⁶¹ Identity “indicates a specific location within some form of social structure.”⁶² It includes both group identity and individual identity.⁶³ Identity “results from internal subjective perceptions, self-reflection, and external circumstances”⁶⁴ and as products of socialization identities can be negotiated and renegotiated in order to “create a more stable and coherent self-concept.”⁶⁵ Peter Berger writes that “it is within society and as a result of social processes that the individual becomes a person, that he attains and holds onto an identity, and that he carries out the various projects that constitute his life.”⁶⁶

⁶¹Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay, eds., *Questions of Cultural Identity*, (London: SAGE Publications, 1996), 1ff.

⁶²Kevin D. Vryan, Patricia A. Adler, and Peter Adler, “Identity,” in *Handbook of Symbolic Interactionism* edited by Larry T. Reynolds and Nancy J. Herman-Kinney (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), 368.

⁶³Lori Peek, “Becoming Muslim: The Development of a Religious Identity,” *Sociology of Religion* 66 (2005): 216.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵See Scott Thumma, “Negotiating a Religious Identity: The Case of the Gay Evangelical,” *Sociological Analysis* 52 (1991): 334.

⁶⁶Peter Berger, *Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Anchor Books, [1969] 1990), 3.

Thus, self-identity⁶⁷ is established through the socialization process. While social structure is a factor in the construction of self-identity, the social self is also the product of intentional action by the individual, who participates in his or her self creation by interacting with and “appropriating” the social world.⁶⁸ Identity results as individuals negotiate social influences (institutions, roles and identities) to form a persistent biography that is perpetuated by means of continuous conversation with others. Individual identity may change as new social factors develop⁶⁹ or individuals appropriate alternative narratives.⁷⁰ Maintaining the subjective plausibility of self-identity becomes one of the major projects of individuals in the late modern age.

Religious identity can be understood as a component of self-identity, an extension of the self. Some sociologists, like Cerulo, in spite of neglecting religion as a viable category of identity, have highlighted a number of identity categories used in identity construction, such as gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, sexuality, age, physical and mental ability, and class.⁷¹ Today, religious identity is being more seriously considered by social researchers as a vital component of self identity. Sociologists are seeing

⁶⁷This research project is significantly influenced by a symbolic interactionist social psychology. Cf. John P. Hewitt, *Self and Society: A Symbolic Interactionist Social Psychology*, (Boston: Allyn and Beacon, 2003).

⁶⁸Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 18.

⁶⁹Peek, “Becoming Muslim,” 215.

⁷⁰Ammerman, “Religious Identities,” 205.

⁷¹Karen A. Cerulo, “Identity Construction: New Issues, New Directions,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 23 (1997): 385-409.

religion as a significant determiner of self identity.⁷² While not all individuals come to have a predominately religious self-identity, for many a religious identity is fundamental to one's self understanding and way of being in the world.

Identities may either be *ascribed* or *achieved* as the result of reflexive projects in which individuals are self-conscious of their own biography and, thus, are “objects of their own attitudes and action.”⁷³ In this case, the individual is aware that his or her identity is created and sustained through the continuity of a particular narrative.⁷⁴ Self identity is now more malleable, intentionally and selectively constructed, and changing. Individuals gather information from the social situation in order to know how best to respond to any given situation.⁷⁵

While identity construction is a part of being human,⁷⁶ individuals face serious challenges in contemporary society. It is necessary for individuals to engage in such tasks as unifying identity in the face of fragmentation, establishing continuity in the face of diversity, dealing with feelings of uncertainty as traditional certainties are dissolved, and finding authenticity in a context of commodification.⁷⁷ According to Hewitt,

⁷²Peek, “Becoming Muslim,” 217.

⁷³Hewitt, *Dilemmas of the American Self*, 110.

⁷⁴Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, (Stanford, C.A.: Stanford University Press, 1991), 54-55.

⁷⁵The notion of presenting the self in public and negotiating situations and relations through various strategies implies the kind of perspective I have been highlighting from Berger, Giddens, and Hewitt. See especially Erving Goffman, *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, (New York: Doubleday, 1959).

⁷⁶Hewitt, *Dilemmas of the American Self*, 154.

⁷⁷Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 65.

individuals make pragmatic choices when challenged to find reconciliation between social identity and personal identity, which are in conflict.

Recent discussions of agency have recognized the increased role of choice in the social construction of religious identity.⁷⁸ While religious identities may have been “ascribed” in the past, due to powerful social process, today they are more likely to be “achieved.”⁷⁹ That is, religious identities today are understood to be the product of intention and deliberation. According to Anthony Giddens, they may be seen as “reflexive”⁸⁰ products in that they are constantly examined and reformed in light of new information.⁸¹ This increased sense of self-awareness is a decisive feature of the “modern” world.

Understanding the interplay of agency and structure in the development of identities is critical for Nancy Ammerman.⁸² Citing two ways of thinking about identity, “constructionists,” who “reject any category that sets forth essential or core features as the unique property of a collective’s members,” and “postmodernists,” who look for the

⁷⁸See for example Wade Clark Roof, *Spiritual Marketplace: Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 46ff.

⁷⁹Phillip E. Hammond, “Religion and the Persistence of Identity,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 27 (1988): 1-11.

⁸⁰By “reflexive” I simply mean that the self “can take itself as an object and can categorize, classify, or name itself in particular ways in relation to other social categories and classifications.” See Jan E. Stets and Peter J. Burke, “Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory,” *Social Psychology Quarterly* 63 (2000): 224-237.

⁸¹Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 38.

⁸²Ammerman’s theoretical discussion has implications for a much broader discussion regarding the relationship between religion and culture. Her perspective, which I call “narrative negotiation,” is distinct from other explanations of the relationship between religion and the modern world such as secularization, rational choice, and the pluralism thesis.

variation both within identity categories and between identity categories, thus highlighting the ongoing changing nature of these identities,⁸³ Ammerman suggests that neither view captures the lived religious dynamic that characterizes many identities in late modernity. She argues that personal identities are not as precarious as some theorists suppose, and social structures are not as rigid as others suppose. She writes, “I am unwilling to discard the possibility that persons seek some sense of congruence within the complexity of their lives. Nor do I believe that structured categories exist untouched by the actions and resistance of the actors who inhabit them.”⁸⁴ This study, then, may be seen, in part, as the attempt to ascertain the dynamic between agency and structure in contemporary Nazarene identity.

Unable to accept theories of identity constructions that either reduce the self to “complete chaotic indeterminacy” or define it according to “a single category of experience,” Ammerman argues that “any adequate account of identity needs an account of the ongoing coherence that is constructed by human consciousness and the solidarity that is created by social gatherings, however temporary.”⁸⁵ For her, “social action is guided by patterned regularities, social-constructed categories that organize our experience and thinking.”⁸⁶ Thus, individuals use established patterns to guide action, but they are also free to use those patterns in unpredictable ways. Ammerman borrows

⁸³Ammerman references Karen A. Cerulo, “Identity Construction: New Issues, New Directions,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 23: 385-409.

⁸⁴Ammerman, “Religious Identities,” 211.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Ibid.

the notion of “transposibility” from William Sewell, who argues that individuals import resources and schemas from other social structures. On the one hand, within social structures individuals form habits of action which are shaped into “settled dispositions.” These settled dispositions produce “predictable ‘strategies of action’.” But, on the other hand, religious agents also may invoke those strategies in other social contexts. She writes, “Identities, then, need to be understood as structured by existing rules and schemas, constrained by existing distributions of resources and power, but also malleable in the everyday reality of moving across institutional contexts and among symbolic worlds.”⁸⁷

Given that in modern life individuals are involved in multiple social groups, social engagements are dynamic encounters in which we “cumulatively build up a persona and collectively shape the solidarities of which we are a part.”⁸⁸ Thus, according to Ammerman, social identities emerge “at the everyday intersections of autobiographical and public narratives.”⁸⁹

The concepts of “identity” and “social self” have been utilized to conceptualize the relation between the individual and the larger social structure.⁹⁰ That the “self” is fundamentally a social product is crucial for understanding the narrative context of identity. Recent theoretical attention to narrative identity suggests that human social

⁸⁷Ammerman, “Religious Identities,” 212.

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Ibid., 215. I endeavor to ask in these three Nazarene churches, “Why do they express these particular religious narratives, and not others?”

⁹⁰See Peter L. Callero, “Role Identity Salience,” *Social Psychology Quarterly* 48 (1985): 203.

identity is constituted through narratives. Margaret Somers argues that “it is through narrativity that we come to know, understand, and make sense of the social world, and it is through narratives and narrativity that we constitute our social identities.”⁹¹ People construct identities by locating themselves in a story, or even multiple stories. Stories guide human action. The interaction between agency and structure elaborated here “allows for human action that is both bounded and constrained by structural restraints.”⁹²

Narrative Identity

Recent research has demonstrated how valuable narrative is in understanding identity.⁹³ Agency and action are embedded in larger stories, or narratives of meaning. Drawing on the work of Margaret Somers, Ammerman suggests that there are four levels of narrative that inform social identity. First, “autobiographical narratives,”⁹⁴ are “carried by the individual actor as a way of orienting and emplotting the actor’s own life.”⁹⁵ This view recognizes that “narrative *location* endows social actors with identities – however multiple, ambiguous, ephemeral, or conflicting they may be (hence the term *narrative identity*).”⁹⁶ This way of understanding personal story enables us to understand that the individual is not wholly determined by the cultural situation. Even though the “core self”

⁹¹Margaret Somers, “The Narrative Constitution of Identity: A Relational and Network Approach,” *Theory and Society* 23 (October 1994): 606.

⁹²*Ibid.*, 614.

⁹³Ammerman, “Religious Identities,” 213.

⁹⁴Somers refers to these as “ontological narratives.”

⁹⁵Ammerman, “Religious Identities,” 213.

⁹⁶Somers, “Narrative Construction of Identity,” 618.

is constantly being negotiated, there are certain themes and actions that individuals retain which gives a certain “predictability” to that person,⁹⁷ and which “belong” to that person’s biography. Thus, social practice is intricately tied with narratives, and biographical narratives in particular. Somers argues that “to know, to make sense of, to account for, perhaps even to predict, anything about the practices of social and historical actors, their collective actions, their modes and meanings of institution-building and group-formations, and their apparent inconsistencies” requires attentiveness to these biographical narratives.⁹⁸

A second type of narrative is “public,” expressed by cultural groups and institutions. Denominational narratives fall into this category and can play a significant role in the social construction of religious identity. These narratives “are publicly shared, existing beyond the agency and consciousness of any single individual.”⁹⁹ This would also include such broad religious categories as Fundamentalism, Evangelicalism, and theological Liberalism. Local congregations, then, may be understood as social locations in which religious action can occur. The narratives provided by these social institutions may be seen as a primary shaper of “habitus.”¹⁰⁰ That is, they “supply structured religious biographical narratives – the saved sinner, the pilgrim – within which the actor’s

⁹⁷ Ammerman, “Religious Identities,” 214.

⁹⁸ Somers, “Narrative Construction of Identity,” 618.

⁹⁹ Ammerman has a kind of theory of identity strength. Those institutions whose narratives are influential in culture, and whose narratives are emplotted by others, are considered stronger.

¹⁰⁰ The term “habitus” is taken from Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 78.

own autobiographical narrative can be experienced.”¹⁰¹ For Nazarenes this would include such narrative personas as “sanctified saint,” “Christian made perfect,” or “Spirit-baptized servant of God.”

Third, “meta-narratives,” are what Somers calls “masternarratives.” These are epic in nature and function to set social actors in the framework of history or science. They are “overarching cultural paradigms.” Meta-narratives, such as secularization theory, can play powerful roles in shaping social identities in relation to the place and significance of religion in public spaces.

Finally, “conceptual narratives,” are narratives constructed by scientists and social researchers for the sake of explanation. These are constructed narratives that illustrate and interpret “market patterns, institutional practices, and organizational constraints.”¹⁰²

These narratives, multi-layered and dynamic, influence and become resources for the construction of self-identity and strategies of action as they converge as viable options for appropriation at a particular time and in a particular place. Ammerman summarizes the dynamics of this process:

[A]ction proceeds, then, from the specific place and time in which it is situated. It proceeds, as well, from the relationships embedded in the situation, including the specific institutional contexts of rules and practices in which it is located. Action takes place in a relational setting, which is composed of institutions (recognized, patterned structural relations), public narratives, and social practices, all of which are both patterned and contested - constructed and constrained.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹Ammerman, “Religious Identities,” 217.

¹⁰²Somers, “Narrative Construction of Identity,” 620.

¹⁰³Ammerman, “Religious Identities,” 213.

These varied and complex dynamics hold great significance for explaining the way holiness identities are formed in local churches and it is this understanding of narrative identities that will inform the way I ask what narratives are publically available for the social construction of Nazarene identity within the context of three Nazarene churches.

Self identities, then, are constructed and formed with these narratives interacting, merging, and competing. Identity is the result of being located in social narratives. Individuals “emplot” the events of their lives within broader narratives which give meaning to relationships and help to guide actions.¹⁰⁴ For most individuals, this is not a conscious process, for “internalized narratives guide most action through habit.”¹⁰⁵ Only when action becomes problematic do individuals consciously reflect on the narratives and relationships in which they are embedded.

Narrative Religious Identity

Narrative religious identities can be seen to have the following characteristics. First, religious identities are characterized by layered religious narratives that are enacted by the agent. Individuals take events and “emplot” them in action accounts. The events, then, become part of a narrative plot, which has a temporal order and implies causation and gives a sense of closure to the event. Events are placed in a network of relationships. This meaning making process is “inherently a moral exercise.”¹⁰⁶ But, emplotment is not

¹⁰⁴Ammerman, “Religious Identities,” 213.

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

always a conscious action. Ammerman suggests that “internalized narratives guide most action through habit.”¹⁰⁷

Second, religious identities include both narratives *and* practices. Ammerman takes seriously the presence of the body in identity formation. Embodied practices play a significant role in identity formation. She moves in this direction out of a fear that identity may be reduced only to texts and words. Narratives are “enacted by physical bodies in material environment.”¹⁰⁸ The implication is that the physical self as agent is important in defining identity and membership in social groups.

Third, narrative religious identities emerge at the intersections of autobiographical and public narratives. Individuals tell stories about themselves influenced by public narratives that are shaped by culture and specific institutions, which are guided by powerful personas and prescribed social roles. Identity, then, is situated “in the socially structured arenas of interaction present in everyday life.”¹⁰⁹ Yet, public narratives are constantly being revised, and there may be “surprises and dilemmas that may create gaps in the script or cast doubt on the proffered identity narratives of the participants.”¹¹⁰

Determining religious identity is not straightforward, because individuals must negotiate between many narratives. Religious identities are the “dynamic, layered, embodied, emerging, negotiation of autobiographical and public narratives. Individuals are confronted not only with denominational narratives, but also narratives from the

¹⁰⁷Ammerman, “Religious Identities,” 213.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 215.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 213.

¹¹⁰Ibid.

broader society. As a result, there may be a significant difference between individual religious identity, an expression of lived religion of everyday people, and the “traditional” and “authoritative” formulations of identity, such as those presented in the public narratives of denominations or other ecclesial body. McGuire makes the distinction between “official religion,” and its expected religious identity, and “nonofficial religion” and its various expressions. She reminds us that religious identity is not equated merely with religious affiliation.¹¹¹ Thus, while there may be denominational expectations of what a religious identity should be, actual religious identity will likely include many nonofficial aspects.¹¹²

Yet, while official religion is only one of the many narratives individuals encounter and choose from in day-to-day life, traditional religious institutions still play a significant role in the forming and maintaining of religious identities.¹¹³

Religious Identity in the Contemporary World: Negotiation

Numerous studies have dealt with the details and specifics of the construction of religious identities in the contemporary context.¹¹⁴ Religious identities may be

¹¹¹Meredith B. McGuire, *Religion: The Social Context*, 4th ed. (Belmont, C.A.: Wadsworth Thomson Learning, 2002), 53.

¹¹²One must not neglect the fact that even denominationally established identities face serious challenges and are in continual flux. This is no less true for the Church of the Nazarene.

¹¹³Ammerman, “Religious Identities,” 218.

¹¹⁴Nancy T. Ammerman, *Bible Believers: Fundamentalists in the Modern World*, (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1987); Michele Dillon, *Catholic Identity: Balancing Reason, Faith, and Power*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Lori Peek “Becoming Muslim: The Development of a Religious Identity.” *Sociology of Religion* 66 (2005): 215-242; Wade Clark Roof, *Spiritual Marketplace: Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion*, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1999); and, Christian Smith, *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998).

differentiated, individualized, or sectarian.¹¹⁵ They may also be constructed within the framework of larger religious contexts by individuals at the margins of power and influence, such as an identity established in critique of the Catholic church, but utilizing existing Catholic symbols and ritual. Religious identities, negotiated within pluralistic contexts may attempt to be both “fluid” and “grounded.” In this negotiation with tradition, various narrative construction strategies may be used, such as reconnecting, reframing, and retraditionalizing.¹¹⁶ Some individuals are able to synthesize and integrate two seemingly incongruent identities.¹¹⁷ Identity dissonance functions as a motivational force in identity renegotiation. Community and group support are crucial to enable the individual to strengthen and maintain the newly revised identity.

While for some the construction of religious identities in the midst of modernity has become problematic,¹¹⁸ others seem to be able to construct religious identities that seem to thrive in modern contexts as individuals develop narrative construction strategies that locate themselves in religious narratives that are morally orienting, and “create distinction from and significant engagement and tension with other relevant outgroups, short of becoming genuinely countercultural.”¹¹⁹ Other religious identities are constructed not only in the face of “corrosive powers of modern individualism, pluralism,

¹¹⁵Nancy Ammerman, *Bible Believers: Fundamentalists in the Modern World*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 2.

¹¹⁶See Roof, *Spiritual Marketplace*, 267.

¹¹⁷Scott Thumma, “Negotiating a Religious Identity,” *Sociological Analysis* 52 (1991): 333-47,

¹¹⁸See Dean R. Hoge, Benton Johnson, and Donald A. Luidens, *Vanishing Boundaries: The Religion of Mainline Protestant Baby Boomers*, (Louisville, K.Y.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994).

¹¹⁹Christian Smith, *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 119.

relativism, and consumerism,” but also in a context of the encounter with the “religious other.”¹²⁰ These narrative constructions attempt to “improve the interior of meaning systems” rather than “defend their boundaries.”¹²¹

Recent research has highlighted the active negotiation that characterizes identity construction.¹²² That religious identities are in some way products of practical reasoning has been expressed in studies on charismatic Catholics, American Muslims, gay Evangelicals, pro-change Catholics, and Fundamentalists. This intentional and deliberative dynamic has often been overlooked in the analysis of religious identities. For example, Mary Jo Neitz argues that many, if not most, studies of religious conversion “present the convert being drawn to the social movement or group on the basis of something within the person or as encapsulated by a social network and therefore becoming a part of the social movement. In neither case is the decision made by the individual examined.”¹²³ An alternative approach would investigate the “self as making choices over time that commit (or do not commit) him or her to the new identity.”¹²⁴

How does negotiation play out in the construction of religious identities today? Lori Peek, in her study of Muslims, explores the process of religious identity formation and highlights the deliberative process of moving from religion as ascribed, to chosen,

¹²⁰Fayette Breaux Veverka, “Practicing Faith: Negotiating Identity and Difference in a Religiously Pluralistic World,” *Religious Education* 99 (Winter 2004), 40.

¹²¹Ibid., 48.

¹²²For example, see Thumma, “Negotiating a Religious Identity,” 333ff.

¹²³Mary Jo Neitz, *Charisma and Community: A Study of Religious Commitment within the Charismatic Renewal*, New Observations Series edited by Howard S. Becker (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1987), 73.

¹²⁴Ibid.

and finally to declared. Each successive stage was evidenced by increased introspection, deliberation, and choice. Peek describes the “processes, decisions, and social factors involved in developing a highly salient religious identity.”¹²⁵

Scott Thumma has studied the process of constructing a gay Evangelical identity. His study describes the process of “identity negotiation,” by which he means a “natural process in which people engage to create a more stable and coherent self-concept.” He suggests that one’s self-concept becomes organized around a central or “core identity” “which gives some unity or consistence to the other identities of the person.” Thumma, citing Becker and Lofland, describes in more detail the aspects of this negotiation:

The stability of the core identity resides in the interplay between one’s continual experience of the world, the relative meaning assigned to such experiences, the plausibility of these meaning systems for ordering existence, and one’s interaction with a significant “reference group.”¹²⁶

Thumma goes on to discuss how the dissonance of having both a gay and an Evangelical identity functions as a motivation mechanism for revising religious identity. Thus, he offers important insight into the ways individuals actively negotiate religious identities in late modernity.

Another approach can be seen in the work of Michele Dillon, who looks at this problem from the perspective of Catholic identities. She argues that rather than gay or lesbian Catholics rejecting their Catholic identities, “pro-change Catholics remain deliberately, reflectively, and self-consciously engaged with Catholicism, while aiming

¹²⁵Peek, “Becoming Muslim,” 236.

¹²⁶Scott Thumma, “Negotiating a Religious Identity: The Case of the Gay Evangelical,” *Sociological Analysis* 52 (1991): 333-347.

to make the church more inclusive, participatory, and pluralistic.”¹²⁷ Her work illuminates the identity construction mechanisms used by institutionally marginalized Catholics. She highlights the active, deliberative process by which pro-change Catholics draw on the diverse symbolic resources of the Catholic tradition to renegotiate the boundaries of Catholic identity as an “emancipatory project.”

These studies, and others, highlight the ongoing deliberative process (negotiation) individuals engage in to construct religious identities. What does this research imply about the formation of Nazarene holiness identities today? This study on Nazarene identity attempts to capture the ways individuals make practical rational decisions in the construction of holiness identities. In order to ascertain the dynamic of Nazarene identity construction it is necessary to accomplish three tasks. First, it will be important to discover the range of religious narratives available to lay members in the three Nazarene churches selected.¹²⁸ Second, it will be critical to identify and describe the various kinds of religious identities formed in these churches. And, finally, it will be necessary to account for the ways these identities are formed in these particular social contexts. In doing so, I look for the lived religious practice of these Nazarenes and the deliberative process by which they make decisions about identity formation.

Salience and Holiness Identity

¹²⁷Michele Dillon, *Catholic Identity: Balancing Reason, Faith, and Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 33.

¹²⁸Nancy Ammerman suggests that understanding religious identity construction includes as a first step the "catalogue of religious narratives, looking for the chapters and themes that are most common in different social locations." See her "Religious Identities," 223.

Identity salience will be an important concept in this study and has been a significant area of study in sociological research. Salience refers to “those contributing factors and processes that make one identity...of greater, even paramount, importance in the hierarchy of multiple identities that comprise a sense of self.”¹²⁹ Sheldon Stryker has argued that “discrete identities which comprise the self may be thought of as ordered in a salience hierarchy.”¹³⁰ Thus, the more committed an individual is to a given role, “that role will assume higher identity salience.”¹³¹ According to Peek, a more salient identity will, then, more likely be expressed in any given situation, or, even, many different situations. An individual who invokes a given identity in an ongoing fashion in this way may be said to have a highly salient identity. While these social identities and salience hierarchies tend to be relatively stable, “we do sometimes take on new social identities, shed old ones, or rearrange our salience hierarchies.”¹³²

Individuals make choices about the salience of religious identities by means of practical reason.¹³³ In Peek’s research on Muslim identity, she discovered that some individuals embrace a Muslim identity more closely “in order to retain a positive self-

¹²⁹Peek, “Becoming Muslim,” 217.

¹³⁰Sheldon Stryker, “Identity Salience and Role Performance: The Relevance of Symbolic Interaction Theory for Family Research,” *Journal of Marriage and the Family* (November 1968): 560.

¹³¹Peek, “Becoming Muslim,” 217.

¹³²Kevin D. Vryan, Patricia A. Adler, and Peter Adler, “Identity,” in *Handbook of Symbolic Interactionism* edited by Larry T. Reynolds and Nancy J. Jermann-Kinney (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), 381.

¹³³Ammerman’s insight here is helpful and suggestive. Drawing on Nietz’ research on the nature of religious conversion, Ammerman recognizes the role of “practical reason” as individuals negotiate the complex and diverse social context making decisions about the role and place of religion in their lives. See especially “Religious Identities,” 208-209.

perception and correct public misconceptions.”¹³⁴ Peek discovered Muslim identity moved through three stages: identity as ascribed; identity as chosen; and identity as declared. Thus, a highly salient identity is the result of “heightened reflection and self-awareness, individual choices, and the acknowledgment of others.”¹³⁵ Christian Smith, too, attributes identity robustness and salience to interaction with the social context. He explains this by drawing on the notion of “reference group.” The construction of positive and negative reference groups by Evangelicals acts as a dynamic by which religious identities are constructed, maintained and strengthened.¹³⁶

The issue of identity salience, particularly when attempting to identify a holiness or Nazarene identity, is not without its problems. First, since individual religious constructions are often eclectic it may be difficult to determine exactly how a person’s religious views resonate with denominational theology. Second, a person may have a highly salient denominational identity, but a less salient holiness identity. With this caveat in mind, then, I looked for the way holiness identity stands out or is prominent in a person's life.¹³⁷ For my purposes, a Nazarene identity includes the presence of beliefs

¹³⁴Peek, “Becoming Muslim,” 237.

¹³⁵Ibid., 236.

¹³⁶See Smith, *American Evangelicalism*, 89-119.

¹³⁷Christian Smith has constructed an instrument to determine a religion’s vitality characterized by six dimensions of religious strength: adherence to beliefs, salience of faith, robustness of faith, group participation, commitment to mission, and retention and recruitment of members. See his *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving*, 20ff. For him salience of faith is that aspect of faith that “stands out” or is of “tremendous significance” for the individual. Unfortunately, he does not explicitly support this with a theory of salience hierarchy.

and practices associated with the doctrine of entire sanctification,¹³⁸ and if it is highly salient it should be prominent in a member's faith, understanding, and expression. That is, as I listened to an individual's religious narratives I looked for definitions, expressions, images and metaphors that reflected and pointed to a resonance (or not) with the official denominational holiness narratives. The absence of references to or images of traditional views of entire sanctification would indicate a less salient Nazarene identity¹³⁹ (although I do consider the possibility that an individual may express a highly salient holiness identity, but a less salient Nazarene identity.)

Nazarene Identity

In what way are Nazarene identities shaped by practical reason? While little has been written specifically on the construction of Nazarene identities, some work has contributed to a better understanding of the social construction of Nazarene identities and the religious narratives that inform them. Research that has included Nazarenes has indicated that Nazarenes, too, have been affected by social challenges to traditional beliefs.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸Throughout this chapter I will consider "entire sanctification" and "holiness" as synonyms unless otherwise indicated.

¹³⁹I say "holiness" identity, here, because I want to allow the possibility that an individual may affirm a high salient holiness identity, but not a high salient "Nazarene" identity.

¹⁴⁰Roof 1999; Smith 1991; and Alan Wolfe, *The Transformation of American Religion: How We Actually Live Our Faith* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

Some of the work on Nazarene identity has been limited to demographic information.¹⁴¹ Nazarene identity has been correlated with white, middle-class, moderately wealthy Americans. Other research has concluded that contemporary Nazarene identity has diverged from its historical emphasis on the poor¹⁴² and has a strong “consumer” mentality.¹⁴³ Contemporary Nazarene identity places less emphasis on the doctrine of holiness¹⁴⁴ and is less connected with a denominational identity.¹⁴⁵ Those who disaffiliate from the Church of the Nazarene do so because their religious identity is less salient.¹⁴⁶

Two other issues, both theological in focus, have been more dominant for sociologists and researchers of Nazarene identity. First, the relation between Nazarenes and Fundamentalism has been reviewed by Stan Ingersol.¹⁴⁷ He finds that many Nazarenes identify themselves with Fundamentalism. This has been corroborated by Ron

¹⁴¹ Kenneth E. Crow, “The People Who Call Themselves Nazarenes,” A paper summarizing material drawn from the CUNY Survey of American Religious Affiliation, July 15, 1991.

¹⁴² Ronald R. Emptage, “Denominational Identity in Historical Perspective.” Paper presented to the Association of Nazarene Sociologists and Researchers in Kansas City, MO, 1989.

¹⁴³ Ron Benefiel and John Wright. “Consumer Versus Commitment Based Congregations in the Church of the Nazarene, 1992-1996: Sociological and Theological Reflections.” Paper presented to the Association of Nazarene Sociologists and Researchers in Kansas City, MO, 1997.

¹⁴⁴ Richard Benner, “Naming the Silences: The Doctrine of Holiness.” Paper presented to The association of Nazarene Sociologists and Researchers in Kansas City, MO, 1996.

¹⁴⁵ John Johnston, “Crisis of Confidence in Authority and Denominational Self- Perception.” Paper presented to the Association of Nazarene Sociologists and Researchers in Kansas City, MO, 1989.

¹⁴⁶ Michael K. Roberts, “Slipping Out the Back Door.” Paper presented to the Association of Nazarene Sociologists and Researchers in Kansas City, MO, 1988.

¹⁴⁷ Stan Ingersol, “Strange Bedfellows: The Nazarenes and Fundamentalism.” Paper presented at the Association of Nazarene Sociologists and Researchers in Kansas City, MO, 2004.

Benefiel and Ken Crow in a longitudinal analysis of social and political values among Nazarenes.¹⁴⁸ Second, how prominent is the Evangelical aspect of the Nazarene tradition? Evangelicalism is “generic” in that in order to embrace a wide range of traditions the Evangelical theology must cast a wide net. Thus, Evangelical theology becomes “thin.” Also, Evangelicalism leaves the primary issues of identity to the individual in his or her personal relation to God through Jesus Christ. This generic, personal, even individualistic, emphasis on faith ameliorates the social dimension of life in community, and corporate moral deliberation.

Another dominant focus for researchers has centered on identifying and explaining the cause for an apparent change in religious identity within the Church of the Nazarene. Ron Benefiel attempts an empirical study of conflict and change in the Nazarene church in his “The Church of the Nazarene: A Religious Organization in Conflict and Change: An Empirical Study.” The hypothesis being tested was that increased elements of religious liberalism among clergy could be correlated with increased levels of education. The hypothesis could not be confirmed.

While these studies are interesting and helpful in identifying features of Nazarene identity, they tend to be quantitative in methodology. What is lacking, however, is a focused study on the details of Nazarene identity formation, the impact of social forces, and the role practical reason plays in that construction. This information should provide

¹⁴⁸ Benefiel, Ron and Ken Crow. “Fundamentalism in the Church of the Nazarene: A Longitudinal Analysis of Social and Political Values.” Paper presented to the Association of Nazarene Sociologists and Researchers in Kansas City, MO, 2004.

a good empirical base for practical and systematic reflection in order for theology to offer guidance to contemporary believers for the construction of Nazarene identities.

Theology, Identity Formation and Practical Reason

The focus of this study is on religious identity and change (identity includes both beliefs and practices). In order to look more carefully at holiness identity, and to offer an assessment, I set the investigation of changing identity within the broader task of practical theology. Practical theology arises out of the interrelationship of a concrete event, situation, or problem (in this case the problem of contemporary Nazarene identity formation); the religious and theological resources relevant to that event, situation, or problem (here those which emerge out of the Nazarene tradition); and descriptive/analytic tools such as philosophy, history or the social sciences (in this case sociology of religious identity) (Schlauch 2000; Stone 1995). In the previous section, I identified the specific problem that required theological reflection and, in the chapters to follow, I elicit the tools of sociology to assist me in description and analysis of that problem. I explore whether the problem, at least in part, might lie in how practical reason is taken into account as individuals construct Nazarene religious identities in the late modern age. Therefore, the purpose in the first section will be to “describe how people think and act practically in specific contexts” and “to describe the forms of *phronēsis* that actors use in concrete situations.”¹⁴⁹ In this introduction I am proposing the need for a “thick description” of lived religion¹⁵⁰ in order that the problem may be seen in its

¹⁴⁹ Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 97. He highlights five dimensions of practical thinking: the visional, the obligational, the tendency-need, the environmental-social, and the rule-role.

¹⁵⁰ The term “thick description” is derived from Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretative Theory of Culture,” in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973). Geertz meant it to refer to the analysis of signs in cultural contexts to gain an understanding of meaning. I use the term in the way Don Browning uses it in *A Fundamental Practical Theology* as a way of understanding the ways in which theology, whether implicit or explicit, is expressed in social contexts and informs human beliefs and action.

contextualized and complex setting. The second major section will situate this sociological study in the context of the theological task. The basic argument is that the function of theology is to form individuals in the *habitus* of the Christian life,¹⁵¹ and in order to do this the relationship between theology, identity formation, and practical reason must be elaborated. Thus it asks, what role, if any, does practical reason play in theological construction? The purpose of this section is to propose a model by which practical reason and systematic theology may be placed in conversation, and to show the implications for theology and religious identity.

Practical Reason and Systematic Theology

Recent developments in theology have highlighted the significant role of practical reason in the theological enterprise.¹⁵² The recognition that all practice is already “theory-laden”¹⁵³ offers us the opportunity to place religious identity construction, already identified in the previous section as an expression of practical reason, in dialogue with systematic theological reflection. The traditional theological model tends to see the relationship between theology and identity construction as a one way movement from theory (theology) to practice (experience). Recent practical theologians critique this model and propose alternative models that take the social context more seriously. For

¹⁵¹The notion of “habitus” is a retrieval of a concept from Christian tradition. It is also a growing emphasis in sociology and religion. See David Swartz, *Culture and Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997).

¹⁵²See in particular Don Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals*. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1991); Thomas H. Groome, *Sharing Faith: A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry: The Way of Shared Praxis*, (San Francisco: Harper, 1991); and Robert Shreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1985).

¹⁵³Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 6. Browning makes the distinction between the traditional linear *theory-to-practice* model and his *practice-to-theory-to-practice* model reflecting the current philosophical interest in contextual and hermeneutical concerns.

them, since practice is already informed by theological concerns, theology, then, begins with practice, moves to theory and then back to practice.¹⁵⁴

There is a wide spectrum of practical theological models ranging from critical correlational (scientific) to critical confessional, depending on whether greater emphasis is placed on the sciences or the confessional tradition.¹⁵⁵ The choice of a methodology is complex and should arise out of the practical theological analysis. The concerns in this study are the following: to maintain the normative status of Scripture; to portray theology as an expression of communal faith in a particular historical time and cultural/social place and thus as revisable, and to maintain the integrity of the social sciences. The approach in this dissertation generally favors an ongoing dialectical relationship¹⁵⁶ between social analysis and theological construction so that religious identity and systematic theological reflection on identity formation mutually inform each other. Thus, it will be crucial for theology to understand the social context of lived religion. Individuals make decisions regarding holiness beliefs and practices based on their own discernment of the situation and employing practical reason.

Regarding the method by which the various sources will engage each other, I draw on the practical theological process, with its diagnostic questions, already elaborated by Groome and Browning. While their conceptual frameworks vary considerably, the basic movements towards the integration of practical reason and

¹⁵⁴ In, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, Browning writes, “[I]t goes from present theory-laden practice to a retrieval of normative theory-laden practice to the creation of more critically held theory-laden practices” (7).

¹⁵⁵ See James Poling, *Foundations for a Practical Theology of Ministry*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000).

¹⁵⁶ See Chris Schlauch, “Sketching the Contours of a Pastoral Theological Perspective: Suffering, Healing, and Reconstructing Experiencing,” in *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology*, edited by James Woodward and Stephen Pattison, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000): 207-222.

systematic theology coincide.¹⁵⁷ The first step is to describe the situation. This has the effect of grounding theology in present context. I will attempt to do this in the social research section highlighting current Nazarene holiness identity.¹⁵⁸ The second step places this empirically derived theological description in dialogue with the theological resources of the tradition, in this case selected theological texts of the Nazarene church. The third step calls for a “conversation” between the traditional sources and current practice. The unique feature of the third step is what calls the traditional relationship between theology and identity as a theory-to-practice model into question. At this point the theologian asks whether current practice may have something to say to the constructive process. Thus, the theory-laden questions that arise out of the empirical-descriptive task will be placed in conversation with the biblical/historical/theological material. In this research, theological appropriation of the empirical-descriptive material may require theology to hear the “classic” texts in different ways, and use different hermeneutical methods, in order to address the contemporary problem of the crisis of Nazarene identity. Experience and practical reason will need to be dialogue partners with the systematic theologian. The fourth step is the proposing of a renewed practice, but a renewed practice now in critical dialogue with the traditional sources.¹⁵⁹ In moving from present praxis to theology individuals may ask not only what may be true or valuable in

¹⁵⁷ See Robert J. Schreiter, “Theology in the Congregation: Discovering and Doing,” in *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*, ed. Nancy T. Ammerman, *et al*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998): 23-39.

¹⁵⁸ It is important to note here that this “social” research is at the same time theologically laden. That is, in asking respondents to describe and identify their own religious identities and to identify the religious stories that inform them they will be engaging in theological analysis. They will make explicit those narratives and practices that up to this time may have been thoroughly implicit. The same will be true for me.

¹⁵⁹ This summary is drawn from Robert Schreiter in Ammerman, *Studying Congregations*, 25-27.

available religious symbols, but what is problematic, or needing reformulation.¹⁶⁰

Groome calls this last step a “creative and hope-filled activity.” From his perspective, the purpose of this step is to “deepen the Christian identity/agency of participants by enabling them to make the tradition their own in ways that promote commitment and wisdom in Christian faith.”¹⁶¹ It is essentially a practical theological task investigating the interplay between “personal experience, Christian tradition, and cultural information.”¹⁶²

Holiness, Tradition, and Theological Method

The goal of this research is theological reflection on contemporary Nazarene holiness identity construction. In order to better critique contemporary practice it will be necessary to review the sociological and theological resources engaging this issue. The genesis and nature of the identity “crisis” in the Church of the Nazarene is only recently being researched and discussed academically, in spite of the fact that there has been a general perception that there has been an identity crisis in the denomination for some time.¹⁶³

While each of these scholars has identified some aspect of the problem of identity, and some have even attempted a diagnosis and prescription for the identity “malady,”

¹⁶⁰Thomas H. Groome, *Sharing Faith: A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry: The Way of Shared Practice*, (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), 251.

¹⁶¹*Ibid.*, 253.

¹⁶²James Whitehead, “The Practical Play of Theology,” in *Formation and Reflection: The Promise of Practical Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987): 37.

¹⁶³See for instance Keith Drury, et al, *Counterpoint: Dialogue with Drury on the Holiness Movement*. Epilogue by Larry D. Smith. (Salem, OH: Schmull Publishing Company, 2005); and Donald Metz, *Some Crucial Issues in the Church of the Nazarene*, (Oalthe, K.S.: Wesleyan Heritage Press, 1994).

special attention should be given to the attempt by Don Metz, who, in his insightful analysis and theological critique, identifies many key aspects of the identity problem.¹⁶⁴

The strength of Metz is his attempt to understand the development of the crisis by utilizing sociological and historical tools. The weakness of Metz is his questionable social strategies due to a lack of sociological insight and the unrealistic (implausible?) theological articulation of both the doctrine of entire sanctification and ecclesiology.¹⁶⁵

From another perspective, the Nazarene identity crisis is currently being perceived by some as difficulty in establishing a clear understanding of the denomination's distinctive doctrine of entire sanctification, a belief having significant implications for religious experience. This theological "crisis" in the Church of the Nazarene has been identified as a debate between the "substantialists" and "relationalists."¹⁶⁶ The older, traditional view of Nazarene identity, often labeled the "substantialist" view, and most closely associated with the American Holiness movement, finds expression in Donald Metz, Richard Taylor and J. Kenneth Grider. More relational versions of holiness identity, which purport to be "correctives" to the traditional model, can be found in Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, and H. Ray Dunning.

¹⁶⁴See especially Donald S. Metz, *Some Crucial Issues in the Church of the Nazarene*. (Olathe, K.S.: Wesleyan Heritage Press, 1994).

¹⁶⁵Metz is absolutely right when he addresses the two doctrines in tandem. Any real attempt to revitalize the doctrine of holiness as moral vision requires a concomitant revisioning of the nature of the church. I commend him for this insight.

¹⁶⁶The distinction between substantive and relational views of Wesleyan-holiness theology centers on the different views of original sin. Substantialists tend to view sin as 'thing-like' that can be taken out or eradicated from the life of the believer by the act of God through the baptism with the Holy Spirit. The relationalists, on the other hand, tend to see original sin as the product of a broken relationship between God and the believer. Thus, as the relationship is healed or restored, so also there is a progressive victory over original sin. See Mark Quanstrom, *A Century of Holiness Theology: The Doctrine of Entire Sanctification in the Church of the Nazarene: 1905 to 2004*, (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2004).

While denominational leaders limit the debate to these two expressions of Nazarene identity,¹⁶⁷ other theological construction, with the identity problem in the background, continues. Younger theologians continue the holiness debate along trinitarian, narrative, and “open and relational” paths.¹⁶⁸ Thus, already we see that the interpretation that the crisis is due to the problem of two competing theological interpretations is probably too simplistic.

One of the questions that arises when thinking about constructing beliefs about holiness is the role of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral.¹⁶⁹ The Wesleyan Quadrilateral has, in the Wesleyan tradition, become the standard paradigm for ordering the “sources” that inform theological construction (Dunning 1988; Gunter, *et al* 1997; Maddox 1998; Thorsen 1990/2005).¹⁷⁰ Generally, the Quadrilateral is a construct that assists theological reflection by making manifest the relationship between scripture, reason, tradition, and experience. Recent concerns, however, over the relationship of the sources, and in particular the place of scripture, in theological construction has prompted new reflection on the Quadrilateral and its application to contemporary Wesleyan (and Holiness)

¹⁶⁷Jim Bond, “This We Believe.” Concluding paper presented at 2004 USA/Canada Theology Conference at Nazarene Theological Seminary in Kansas City, MO, 2004.

¹⁶⁸Respectively, Samuel M. Powell, *Holiness in the 21st Century: Call, Consecration, Obedience Perfected in Love*, (San Diego: Point Loma Press, 2004); Michael Lodahl, *The Story of God: Wesleyan Theology and Biblical Narrative*, (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1994); and, Thomas Jay Oord, *Defining Love: A Philosophical, Scientific, and Theological Engagement*, (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2010); *The Nature of Love: A Theology*, (Danvers, M.A.: Chalice Press, 2010).

¹⁶⁹One must be wary of the danger of anachronism here. The language of “Wesleyan Quadrilateral” is a modern construct popularly expressed by Albert Outler, which post dates the development of Wesleyan or Holiness theology. Still, contemporary Wesleyan and Holiness theologians (Wiley, Dunning, Noble) seem to find it necessary to address methodological issues *vis-a-vis* the Quadrilateral.

¹⁷⁰Don Thorsen is cautious here in his *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Experience as a Model of Evangelical Theology*, (Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2005). He writes, “But the term...is not the only model for studying Wesley’s theology. Other models could be used, as for example, the models of Wesley as a practical, an ecumenical, or a systematic theologian that have been used in the past” (6).

theology (Dunning 1988; Gunter 1997; Jones 1995; Stone 1995; Thorsen 1990/2005). One of the major questions that arises in this study is whether approaches to the Wesleyan Quadrilateral have taken seriously enough the role of experience as it gets expressed in the lived religious lives of everyday Nazarenes as an expression of communal wisdom.

The official doctrines of the Church of the Nazarene are expressed in the *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene*.¹⁷¹ This communal text has several social functions, such as establishing identity boundaries and perpetuating a community of memory.¹⁷² These common beliefs are expressed and elaborated in two denominationally approved systematic theologies: H. Orton Wiley's *Christian Theology*¹⁷³ and H. Ray Dunning's *Grace, Faith, and Holiness*.¹⁷⁴ However, a review of these theological resources reveals

¹⁷¹The *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene* is a supplemental volume that presents in summary form the history, constitution, and government of the denomination. It also functions as an important guide to theological and ritual expressions. The volume referenced in this paper is that edited by E. Lebron Fairbanks, *et al*, (Kansas City, M.O.: Nazarene Publishing House, 2005-2009).

¹⁷²See Daniele Hervieu-Leger, *Religion as a Chain of Memory*, (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2000). The preamble of the denomination's constitution reads as following:

In order that we may preserve our God-given heritage, the faith once delivered to the saints, especially the doctrine and experience of entire sanctification as a second work of grace, and also that we may cooperate effectually with other branches of the Church of Jesus Christ in advancing God's kingdom, we, the ministers and lay members of the Church of the Nazarene, in accordance with the principles of constitutional legislation established among us, do hereby ordain, adopt, and set forth as the fundamental law or Constitution of the Church of the Nazarene the *Articles of Faith*, the General Rules, and the Articles of Organization and Government here following, to wit.

¹⁷³H. Orton Wiley, *Christian Theology*, 3 vols. (Kansas City, M.O.: Beacon Hill Press, 1941). Wiley's text is the first authorized theology for the denomination. Wiley, predating the debate over the nature of the sources of theology, says little about the Wesleyan Quadrilateral. Wiley, in addressing the issue of sources of theology, places Scripture first as the "authoritative source." He recognizes experience, tradition (Confessions or Articles of Faith), philosophy, and, nature as "subsidiary" sources (37).

¹⁷⁴H. Ray Dunning, *Grace, Faith, and Holiness: A Wesleyan Systematic Theology* (Kansas City, M.O.: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1988). Dunning writes, "Following John Wesley, Wesleyan theology has always built its doctrinal work upon four foundation stones commonly referred to as the Wesleyan quadrilateral. In addition to the Scripture, they are tradition, reason, and experience. These are not of equal authority, however. In fact, properly understood, the three auxiliary sources directly support the priority of biblical authority" (77).

that the Quadrilateral does not play a significant role in Nazarene theological methodology. For example, there is no consideration of distinguishing between sources in the Nazarene *Manual* for the construction of doctrine. Doctrinal statements are elaborated in the *Manual* supported solely by selected texts of Scripture. In speaking of sources of theology, H. Orton Wiley makes the distinction between authoritative and subsidiary sources. For him, the Bible is the only authoritative source for theology. Subsidiary sources, with carefully limited functions, include experience, confessions or articles of faith, philosophy, and nature. More careful consideration of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral and its relationship to Nazarene theology is expressed in the theology of H. Ray Dunning. For him, Scripture has priority because it is the primary source of salvation history and tradition plays a mediating role.¹⁷⁵ Following Wesley, and the model of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral, Dunning mentions tradition, reason, and experience (having rejected nature as a source) as “auxiliary sources” not of equal authority with the Bible.¹⁷⁶ A contemporary expression of the significance of the quadrilateral for Wesleyan-holiness theology in the Nazarene mode is expressed by Thomas A. Noble. Using the image of a three-legged stool, he envisions “Holy Scripture as the floor upon which the stool stands, and tradition, reason, and experience as the legs standing upon the floor and supporting Christian doctrine, which is represented by the seat.”¹⁷⁷ For Noble, scripture is primary, and the other sources “shape, corroborate, and give us concepts to express our church doctrine, ...”¹⁷⁸ It is this shaping, corroborative function of the other

¹⁷⁵Dunning, *Grace, Faith Holiness*, 57.

¹⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁷⁷Tom Noble, “The Nazarene Theological Stance,” 12. A paper presented at the North American Nazarene Theology Conference held at Nazarene Theological Seminary, Kansas City, M.O., October, 2004. Noble references the “stool” illustration used by Timothy L. Smith.

¹⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 14.

sources that is of interest here. The question might be asked, how are these shaping, corroborating, and conceptualizing aspects of the sources related to Scripture and practical reason? Tom Noble argues that the movement from text to doctrine is a complex affair. For him, it is a “hermeneutical circle” in which “we all come to the text of Scripture with our doctrinal framework of ideas received from church *tradition*, from the plausibility framework of our culture (*reason*), and from our *life-experience*.”¹⁷⁹

Though the quadrilateral, however it is construed, figures more centrally in contemporary Wesleyan and holiness systematic theologies that are intentional about their method, whether this frame functions in any meaningful way at the level of practical reason for Nazarene congregations, parishioners, and clergy is a question to be asked by the present research.

Experience and Theological Construction

It is well known that experience plays a significant role in Wesleyan-holiness theology, and this is no less true for the Nazarene tradition. However, the role of experience in theological construction is often ambiguous. The more traditional theory to practice model seems to see experience as passive and malleable. This current research, following a practice-theory-practice model, intends to suggest that experience is dynamic, and may have certain “limits” that act back on, and interact with theological claims about what is religiously possible (Browning 1991).

How does the role of experience play out in the Wesleyan-Nazarene trajectory? Recent renewed interest in the roles reason and experience play in theology, both in the methods of John Wesley and in subsequent Wesleyan/Wesleyan-holiness theologians, has prepared the way for an investigation into the role of practical reason in theology (Maddox 1994; Stone 1995; Wynkoop 1972). First, experience is seen as a crucial aspect

¹⁷⁹Noble, “The Nazarene Theological Stance,” 14.

of the method of John Wesley's "practical theology." Randy Maddox suggests that Wesley used experience as a test. On this relationship he writes, "Actually, something more fundamental was taking place [than merely experience subordinated to Scripture]; experience was being used to *test* proposed *interpretations* of Scripture" (46).¹⁸⁰ In addition, this corroborating function of experience (Noble) also underlies the view of Mildred Bangs Wynkoop who highlights the practical theological problem of the discrepancy between the practice of holiness and the theological formulations of the 50's and 60's. She calls it a "credibility gap" and attempts to propose a way theory and life could meet together meaningfully.¹⁸¹

Second, recent anecdotal evidence illustrates this corroborative function of experience in molding religious beliefs. For example, Methodist Randy Maddox, in a critique of 19th century holiness theology, alludes to his own religious experience, which reflects a similar development among baby-boomers in the Church of the Nazarene. He argues that contemporary 20th century Wesleyan-holiness adherents found it difficult to appropriate the 19th century model of "instantaneous" holiness.¹⁸² The criterion was lived experience. Another example of the corroborating function of experience can be found in the collective religious experience of members in the Church of the Nazarene. One could understand the recent changes in the *Articles of Faith* in the *Nazarene Manual*

¹⁸⁰This can be illustrated by identifying two events in the life of Wesley. First, Wesley's "testing" of the Anglican texts for religious validity, in particular his use of Taylor's work. Wesley finds Taylor's theology insufficient for the formation of vital religious identities. Second, it is evident in the now famous discussion with Peter Böhler over how to discern the validity of various interpretations of Scripture. Wesley appeals to "common experience." See Barry L. Callen and Richard P. Thompson, *Reading the Bible in Wesleyan Ways: Some Constructive Proposals*, (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2004): 100.

¹⁸¹Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism*, (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1972): 39-40. Wynkoop argues that Wesley proposed a model for just such an integration. She basis it on her understanding that love acted as a "hermeneutic" for Wesley.

¹⁸²Randy L. Maddox, "Reconnecting the Means to the End: A Wesleyan Prescription for the Holiness Movement," *WTJ* 33 (Fall 1998): 29-66.

-- in particular the elision of the language of “eradication” from the paragraph on “entire sanctification” and its replacement with the language of “cleansing,”¹⁸³ -- as more than simply a concern for faithfulness to biblical language. Rather, it should be seen as a theological response to the practical problem of living the Christian life with an understanding that original sin has been “eradicated.” It was as much a question of religious experience as it was theological language.¹⁸⁴

Third, this implied relationship between social context and theological construction is corroborated by H. Ray Dunning in his article, “Christian Perfection: Toward a New Paradigm.” Dunning argues that the 19th century holiness theology, which now suffers wide-scale implausibility, was “only a culturally and historically conditioned form of spiritual experience,” which requires constant assessment and revision.¹⁸⁵ He argues for a renewed theological construction in light of contemporary historical and social developments.

Recently, Bryan Stone has dealt significantly with the question of the interfacing of Wesleyan theology and experience.¹⁸⁶ For Stone, the primary question is how to conceive the nature of biblical authority in relationship to human experience. He argues that John Wesley not only allowed human experience a “confirming” role, but also a “qualifying” role, in the formation of belief. Yet, to appeal to Wesley as a model for

¹⁸³For details on the change at the 1988 General Assembly of the Church of the Nazarene see Quanstrom, 225. Also, it is significant that what it means for the heart to be “cleansed” from original sin can only be understood in dialogue with “experience.”

¹⁸⁴This arises out of an interview with Dick Wilson, one of the members of the committee who proposed the change to the *Manual* paragraph to the General Assembly in 1984.

¹⁸⁵H. Ray Dunning, “Christian Perfection: Toward a New Paradigm,” *WTJ* 33 (Spring 1998): 151.

¹⁸⁶Bryan Stone, “Wesleyan Theology, Scriptural Authority, and Homosexuality,” *WTJ* 30 (1995): 108-138. Stone writes, “Surely it is not unwarranted to assume that this revolution in our “experience” has some impact on our conclusions about homosexuality, especially for those of us who take seriously the legacy of John Wesley with regard to the value of reason and experience in the reading, interpretation, and application of Scripture” (110).

theological method is problematic in part because of Wesley's inconsistency in relating biblical authority and human experience, as well as the ambiguous meaning of "experience" in his 18th century context. Rather than looking at Wesley as an historical example in handling the sources, it is better to look to Wesley (and the Wesleyan tradition) for "theological commitments" that should shape the attempt to relate Scripture and experience. Stone finds the necessary theological direction in the Wesleyan notion of the relationship between divine grace and human freedom.¹⁸⁷ The central insight is that Wesley "consistently sought to hold in balance the idea of divine sovereignty and purpose with human autonomy and freedom."¹⁸⁸ Thinking about the relationship between divine grace (biblical revelation) and human experience (human freedom), Stone argues that divine grace is not coercive in the soteriological task, but, rather, engaging and inviting. Thus, analogously, Scripture does not function as a coercive force, but, rather, "pedagogically" as a "teacher" leading us to become aware of our "humanness."¹⁸⁹

Stone's purpose in clarifying this relationship between nature and grace is to enable the church to engage in deep reflection on the contemporary practical theological problem of homosexuality. What is the significance of Stone's "prolegomenon" for this present research? I take his summary as a point of departure. "The upshot," he writes, "of all this of course, is that, regardless of how faithful or consistent to Scripture a Wesleyan theological claim or ethical position purports to be, it is not thereby exempt

¹⁸⁷Stone, "Wesleyan Theology," 111. For Stone, how are experience and theology to be interfaced? He writes, "It is my conviction that there are such resources [for the interfacing] and that their nucleus is the distinctively Wesleyan understanding of the relationship between *divine grace* and *human freedom*. It is this unique relationship, I believe, that can serve as a liberating and creative model and analogy for the way we assert the authority of the Bible, on the one hand, and the dignity and autonomy of human experience on the other" (110).

¹⁸⁸Ibid., 117.

¹⁸⁹Stone, "Wesleyan Theology," 123-124. Stone's appropriation of Segundo and Freire to support his Wesleyan interpretation of God's relatedness to human beings as tutorial and educational is insightful.

from the question of its credibility to human reason and experience."¹⁹⁰ Stone's thesis has direct relevance and application to the present research in this way: contemporary (or past) articulations of the doctrine of holiness, purporting to be faithful to or consistent with Scripture, are not exempt from the question of their credibility to human reason and experience.

It appears, then, that in practice, experience does indeed play a significant role in the development of religious beliefs. The question remains, however, what role experience plays in the contemporary development of Nazarene identity, and in particular, in the development of a doctrine of holiness and sanctification. In order to prepare for this theological work it will be necessary to review the current diagnoses of the crisis of the practice of holiness in the Church of the Nazarene as well as to analyze any proposed social and theological solutions.

An interpretation of the practical theological problem, then, will require a more nuanced approach that appreciates the complexity and diversity of the situation. In order to achieve this depth, the theological resources (Scripture, Wesley, 19th century formulations, ecclesial changes, the semi-officially¹⁹¹ sanctioned theological texts of Wiley and Dunning, and the recent developments in Nazarene theology and practice) will be placed in conversation with experience and practical reason.

¹⁹⁰ Stone, "Wesleyan Theology," 124.

¹⁹¹I say "semi-officially" because the Nazarene *Manual* alone is the officially sanctioned statement of Nazarene belief as authorized by the General Assembly of the Church of the Nazarene. However, it is widely accepted that both Wiley and Dunning are generally approved by the denomination as systematic statements expressing Nazarene faith and belief in contemporary language. Other works which will be referenced are part of the wider theological and biblical discussions among Nazarenes.

Sources and Methodology

This project as a whole includes two major research sections. The first involves social science research of identity formation processes. The second involves theological construction and the analysis of the social research from a theological perspective. In the sociological research I utilized data from case studies of three Nazarene churches¹⁹² of varying size, socio-economic characteristics and theological identities in order to examine the process of religious identity formation.¹⁹³ This study included focus groups, individual interviews, participant observation, and questionnaires. The choice of the congregations was made in consultation with key denominational leaders who had insight into the diversity and characteristics of local churches. The goal was to select three Nazarene congregations which varied in theological perspective. In informal conversation, three theological expressions were suggested: liturgical, traditional, and expressive. The liturgical congregation reflected the interest among some members of the denomination to reflect the broader church traditions of liturgy, Eucharist, and meditation. The traditional congregation reflected the more typical Nazarene congregation as has been expressed in the American context. The expressive congregation integrated the more Pentecostal aspects of the Holiness movement.

The initial phase of my research employed three descriptive fieldwork methods: individual in-depth interviews, focus groups, and participant observation. The individuals selected for the in-depth interviews were chosen with the assistance of the

¹⁹²It was necessary, for practical reasons, to choose Nazarene churches within driving distance.

¹⁹³I am aware that the churches I am selecting are located in the Northeast. There are, indeed, likely to be theological differences along geographical lines. This research anticipates a larger study incorporating the denomination as a whole. Needless to say this is beyond the scope of the current project.

pastor. Nine individuals were selected from each church and interviewed with the goal of determining the use of practical reason in constructing Nazarene identity. The in-depth interviews attempted to discover the religious narratives used to construct Nazarene identity as well as how individuals made religious choices. Questions of religious salience were part of the interview. The focus groups included approximately 9 individuals chosen from the congregation who met the study criteria. I selected 3 individuals who were born and raised in the Church of the Nazarene, often called “birthright” Nazarenes. Also, I included 3 individuals who had been members of the Church of the Nazarene for between five and nine years, and 3 individuals who were relatively new to the Church of the Nazarene. These individuals had been in their local congregation for varying lengths of time. The goal of the focus groups was to enter into dialogue about what it means to be a Nazarene. I attempted to determine how individuals constructed religious identities in a late modern context. Participant observation was used as well. I attended each church at various times over a four to six week period. I visited the church services, bible studies, prayer meetings and other assemblies in order to ascertain individual and group identity formation processes.

The second phase of my research employed a questionnaire which was offered to as many members of the congregation as was feasible. The questionnaire identified significant aspects of Nazarene identity. The function of the questionnaire was to gauge demographic and identity information of the church as a whole. This information was measured against previous research and became a base-line for future research in Nazarene identity in other Nazarene congregations.

The second major section of this project will address the so-called "crisis" of Nazarene identity which had affected the Church of the Nazarene. The goal is to move towards a contemporary reconstruction of a Nazarene holiness theology informed by contemporary religious experience. In the previous section, I utilized the tools of sociological research and theory to investigate contemporary religious experience. Fundamental to this investigation was the assumption that individuals utilized practical reason to make significant religious identity decisions that made sense to them in their contemporary context in order to create, establish, and maintain coherent biographical and religious narratives. (This is no easy task in a highly pluralistic late modernity.) This "thick" description of lived religion was then placed in dialogue with the biblical, historical, and theological texts that had historically informed the formal beliefs and practice of the denomination to determine whether and how experience has a corroborating, confirming, or explicating function in theological construction. This engagement of practical reason with systematic theology within a practical theological model, in which systematic theology is seen as one movement in a larger theological endeavor to form believers in the *habitus* of the Christian faith, should inform a renewed theological construction and, hopefully, point to and inform a renewed practice of holiness in the Church of the Nazarene.

Review of the Chapters

The following chapters constitute the layout of this study. In chapter 1, "Diagnosing A Crisis," I survey theological and sociological attempts to understand and explain changing beliefs in the Church of the Nazarene. The chapter highlights attempts

to diagnose the identity crisis, and prescriptions for its cure. In this chapter I propose an alternative lens through which I view the current dilemma of religious identity. I argue that the current problem lies in understanding the role of practical reason in identity construction. In chapter 2, "Nazarenes Today," I begin to argue against the interpretation that belief change is primarily the result of secularization or sect-church processes. And, I highlight the potential for variations of holiness identity. In chapter 3, "Varieties of Holiness identity," I utilize a variety of tools to identify and describe the current reality of holiness identity in three Nazarene churches. In chapter 4, "Social Sources of Variety," I look at the social factors influencing identity change in the Church of the Nazarene. I highlight current trends that Nazarene identity appears to be taking. In chapter 5, "Conduits of Identity: Holiness Identity in Comparative Perspective," I further complexify the identity problem by suggesting that local church culture may also be a factor in identity change. The pastor's holiness narrative plays a key role in the development of religious identity in the local congregation. In chapter 6, "The Social Construction of the 'Sanctified Person'," I review some of the theological resources available in the tradition which may offer guidance for identity construction. I argue that they are insufficient to address contemporary problems of identity formation. Chapter 7, "The 'Sanctified Person': Toward an Ecclesial Ethic," constitutes the theological constructive piece of the study. In light of theological issues which arise out of lived religion, I draw on the historical and theological work of John Howard Yoder to propose a theological approach that engages contemporary Nazarenes in the construction of holiness identity in a "communal hermeneutic."

CHAPTER 1

NAZARENE HOLINESS IDENTITY: DIAGNOSING A “CRISIS”

Introduction

The problem of Nazarene identity has reached a threshold of public awareness.¹ Lay people, pastors, denominational officials and even “outsiders” talk publically about a sense of difference, shift, or change in the Church of the Nazarene. Many offer their own diagnosis of the problem, and identify the cause of the ailment in different ways. Others sense something has changed, but they cannot quite put their finger on the nature of the change or the cause. Most of those who are aware of change more often than not point to a change in beliefs and practices. Almost everyone has a diagnosis for the “patient,” and most are ready to prescribe a cure. Yet, it seems to me that the reasons for the identity problems are far from clear, and prescription may be a bit premature.

In this chapter, I review some of those diagnoses. In the following pages, I look at theological criticisms and sociological explanations of the changing beliefs about holiness in the Church of the Nazarene. The idea that emerges in this chapter is that the change in identity may not have only one cause. Rather, it may be more multifaceted than early research indicated. The primary point I make, however, is that an interpretation of the meaning and significance of identity change in the Church of the Nazarene can be discerned only by taking into consideration the denomination’s peculiar

¹During my research I had many informal conversations with denominational leaders, clergy, and laypersons. Once they learned about the topic of my research the conversation quickly turned to what they thought had “gone wrong” with the denomination.”

and particular theological and cultural history.

Diagnosing Crises and Prescribing Cures

One of the earliest voices to suggest that the holiness movement had changed in its beliefs and practices was Keith Drury.² He believed that the holiness movement, including the Church of the Nazarene, had diverged from its original emphasis on holiness. In 1994, in an address delivered to the Christian Holiness Association, Drury made the straightforward claim that the holiness movement was “dead” and called for its revitalization. He identified a number of, what might be loosely called “sociological” reasons for the demise. First, he claimed that holiness people wanted to be respectable. Holiness, he says, calls for a “peculiar people,” a people who “live differently.” But, today, he argues, there is no distinctive practice associated with holiness. The different denominations are generally perceived to be very much alike. “Presbyterians, Baptists, Lutherans move into our churches from their former denominations with ease. They don’t see that much difference, because there isn’t much difference.”³

Another reason he gives for explaining the movement’s turn from the holiness emphasis was the church’s desire to be seen as “respectable” within the broader Evangelical mainstream. The kind of language people used to describe themselves shifted from “holiness” to “Evangelical.” Drury believes that the holiness movement’s embracing of the National Evangelical Association (NAE) was a pivotal event in this

²His address can be found in *Counterpoint: Dialogue with Drury on the Holiness Movement* edited by Keith Drury, *et al* (Salem, OH: Schmul Publishing Company, 2005), 17-35.

³*Ibid.*, 19.

identity shift. He goes on to argue that the ameliorating effects of this “generic” identity contributed to the loss of holiness identity.

A third reason Drury gives is that the World War II generation failed to convince its children, the Baby-Boomers, of the necessity of holiness, especially as it was to be experienced in instantaneous “entire sanctification.” Boomer pastors, teachers and lay leaders opted for a “progressive sanctification” rather than proclaiming a more “biblical” instantaneous experience. He writes, “It’s hard to be a holiness movement when many of the aggressive boomer and buster pastors do not preach holiness, and if they do, it is with little passion or insistence.”⁴

Another reason he gives is that the movement lost its connection with lay people. While Drury spends little time discussing this issue, it lies at the heart of the current research. For Drury, holiness meetings became “fellowships of ministers on expense accounts,” Two additional reasons Drury gives are that younger holiness people “overreacted against the abuses of the past” and the movement adopted church growth strategies that were incommensurate with holiness belief and practice. Without denying those abuses, Drury suggests that much of what the holiness movement is today is “merely a reaction against who we were.”⁵

At the end of his address Drury shared with his listeners a yearning for a “new

⁴Drury, “The Holiness Movement is Dead,” 20.

⁵Ibid., 22.

holiness movement.”⁶ He describes this new holiness movement as one which will “preach that God is holy and does not accept sin.” It will have as its essential theological component emphasis on “a second work of grace which God does in the life of a believer to cleanse and empower him or her, enabling an obedient life of devotion to God.” It is an “aggressive” movement that “recruits” individuals and calls them “to abandon worldliness even at the risk of losing some people to the positive, upbeat, cheery service down the street.”⁷

What does Drury think is the solution to this problem? For him, the key to revival of the holiness movement is a renewed effort to preach instantaneous entire sanctification. Interestingly, Drury never considers the possibility that the formulation of the doctrine itself may be contributing to the problem and that a theological reconstruction may be necessary in order to lay the groundwork for the rise of a new holiness movement.

Drury’s attempt to diagnose the problem by using sociological analysis is, I believe, an important step in ascertaining contributing factors to the present dilemma. However, a sect-church typology⁸ lies implicitly as an assumption behind his analysis. That is, the holiness movement, and thus the Church of the Nazarene, has forsaken its sectarian status and moved into the broader mainstream of culture. Drury seems to

⁶Theologically, the “new holiness movement” looks very much like the old one.

⁷Drury, “The Holiness Movement is Dead,” 22.

⁸I will argue that other analyses utilize this model as well, and by doing so miss key aspects of the cause of identity change.

assume a kind of “secularizing” effect of broader culture. Thus, the broader “Evangelical” culture appeals to holiness people as a way of being Christian, but without the embarrassing social stigma of holding what appear to be “extraordinary” beliefs and practices. Two problems face this approach. First, Drury offers little, if any, empirical support for his claims. And second, it is doubtful whether the current problems of holiness identity can be explained substantially by appeal to sect-church theory. His assumption is that whatever change has occurred in the Church of the Nazarene must be attributed to secularization. The changing identity is assumed to be accommodation to a secular culture. There is little concern to determine *why* persons have changed their views about holiness. A more rigorous and systematic sociological analysis may offer a different perspective from which to critique the current problem.

Another writer who attempts to draw on sociology to diagnose the current identity problem is Donald S. Metz. In his *Some Crucial Issues in the Church of the Nazarene*, Metz addresses directly the issue of church identity and argues that the Church of the Nazarene is “experiencing a mild identity crisis.”⁹ He begins by noting that the Church of the Nazarene can now be listed as one of the denominations that is “splintering from within.” The Church of the Nazarene faces serious disagreements over doctrine and practice within its ranks. Metz highlights a series of “issues” that face the church. By issue he means “the decline of unanimity within a given group due to introduction of concepts, practices, or trends which appear to run counter to the original views or

⁹Donald S. Metz, *Some Crucial Issues in the Church of the Nazarene* (Olathe, KS: Wesleyan Heritage Press, 1994).

practices of the group.”¹⁰

For Metz “church identity” is at the heart of the problem. An ecclesial identity, he argues, includes three aspects: clear understanding of a group’s origins, essential affirmation of the group’s reason for existence, and practices and policies that point to the institution’s future.¹¹ Identity, for him, is non-problematic, because anyone who questions the identity of the holiness movement needs simply to remember the historic truths. The roots of the Church of the Nazarene lie in the “movement of the late nineteenth century, the Methodist Church, and the ministry of John Wesley.”¹²

Central to the identity of the Church of the Nazarene is its mission, which it also inherits from John Wesley and the Methodists. That mission is to lead people into the experience of entire sanctification, which ought to be understood as “a second work of Divine grace to be received by faith in Christ, and wrought by the Holy Spirit.”¹³ Drury believes that the two components of this experience, the moral vision and the means of attaining it, are both already a part of the holiness tradition and neither is problematic.

Metz sees other sociological factors that contribute to the failure of the Church to discern its identity. Changing life-style choices, influenced by the broader culture, are filtering into the denomination. The Church is likened to a “frog in a kettle” which is placed in a pot of cold water and heated slowly until the frog is boiled to death. The

¹⁰Metz, *Some Crucial Issues*, 2.

¹¹Ibid., 5.

¹²Ibid., 12.

¹³Ibid., 15.

Church then, is in the midst of a changing cultural context that is bringing major changes in life-style and perspective, and these are destroying the Church. These changes include the following:

- 1) the trend toward *secularism* in the laity;
- 2) the inclination to *professionalism* in the clergy;
- 3) the drift toward *compromise* in higher education;
- 4) the development of *formalism* in worship.

He believes that the Gospel is being accommodated to contemporary culture. By this he means that more and more individuals in the church live “as though God did not exist.”

He laments preaching that is “more concerned with personality adjustment than with converting sinners.”¹⁴ Individualism pervades our social fabric. A focus on “pragmatics” rather than on spiritual development aggravates these problems. Metz lists a litany of related issues: concern for entertainment rather than on growing spiritually through devotions; a greater concern for self-expression than self-surrender; an emphasis on self-esteem rather than self-discipline; and an acceptance of relativism, rather than an affirmation of truth through biblical principles.¹⁵ All of these, he argues, are expressions of secularism.

But, for Metz, the issue is not just sociological. It is also theological. While Metz recognizes the need for theological construction, he disagrees vehemently with the mid-twentieth century corrective of 19th century holiness theology that moved away from the holiness movement and back towards Wesley. In the chapter entitled “Confusion About

¹⁴Metz, *Some Crucial Issues*, 54.

¹⁵Ibid., 57.

differences in Theological Perspective,” Metz argues that the holiness movement followed Wesley in the foundational doctrines. He writes that the holiness movement remained faithful on such doctrines as “the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, the nature of man, original sin, the deity of Christ, the Trinity, and Christian Perfection.”¹⁶ What it did, however, was to modify Wesley in the area of “practical procedures – *how* to arrive at experiential holiness and *what* was involved in the experience.”¹⁷ The kinds of modifications the holiness movement made were as follows:

- 1) a strong emphasis on the “second blessing” as something to be experienced now;
- 2) the introduction of a simplistic method of entering the experience;
- 3) an emphasis on Pentecost and the baptism with the Holy Spirit.¹⁸

One particular theological change Metz criticizes focuses on the problem of original sin. For Wesley, he argues, original sin was “an existential fact – it was a reality of human experience.”¹⁹ Wesley seemed to see original sin as “a state, or condition.” Later followers of Wesley, however, began to reject this “substance-like” depiction of original sin, particularly as it was expressed in the 19th century holiness movement, and began to modify Wesley’s views of original sin towards more “relational” images. The relational model tends to understand the Fall as loss of “relationship,” in which “man loses original

¹⁶Metz, *Some Crucial Issues*, 133.

¹⁷Ibid. This point is extremely important for the purposes of this study. In fact, the holiness movement, by altering Wesley’s method, *did* also modify his moral vision. This, however, is not widely understood by proponents of the holiness movement. Thus, any revision of the method of the 19th century holiness model will also entail a corresponding change in moral vision.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid., 163.

righteousness and totally distorting the meaning of his existence.”²⁰ This modification came to be expressed in Nazarene theology in the work of Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, but was more clearly expressed in the systematic theology of H. Ray Dunning. Metz expresses the following concerns, among others, about the relational model:

- It accepts the evolutionary concept of the origin of humanity rather than biblical creationism.
- Original sin is regarded primarily as deprivation, or separation, rather than depravation, or conditional.
- Entire sanctification is regarded essentially as commitment, not cleansing or empowering.
- It tends to be modified by contemporary scholarship rather than refined or sharpened by current thought.²¹

Metz sees relational theology as a distinct departure from Wesleyan thought.

For Metz, this way of understanding original sin challenges the classical Wesleyan position of original sin as “a state of corruption.” Metz interprets the relational view of original sin as a rejection of “an ‘inherent’ human nature” that requires the work of God to correct through a second work of grace called “entire sanctification” in which original sin is cleansed by the baptism with the Holy Spirit.²²

Part of the contemporary dilemma regarding holiness, Metz suggests, is that both theological perspectives of original sin are present in the denomination. The confusion about original sin, and by extension, entire sanctification contributes to the problem of identity.

Metz’ criticism of the current state of Nazarene identity reflects a mixture of

²⁰Metz, *Some Crucial Issues*, 169.

²¹Ibid., 171.

²²It is interesting that Metz never uses the word “eradication” that was so common to the holiness movement.

sociological and theological analysis. The value of this method should be recognized and appreciated. However, even though Metz recognizes that the identity crisis facing the Church of the Nazarene is complex, and that a solution to the problem requires more than a simple retrieval of preaching instantaneous entire sanctification, he tends to base his conclusions on anecdotal evidence, and he does not envision the possibility that a theological reconstruction of the doctrine of holiness might be informed by that empirical sociological data.

Both Drury and Metz are committed to the revitalization of the traditional 19th century holiness formulation. But another writer, Randy Maddox, who also diagnoses the crisis, comes to different conclusions about both the nature of the crisis and the response to it. Maddox presents his analysis in an essay entitled, “Reconnecting the Means to the End: A Wesleyan Prescription for the Holiness Movement.”²³ In this essay, Maddox agrees with Drury that holiness belief and practice is on the decline. He recognizes that Drury’s response consists basically of a call for “a renewed emphasis on preaching boldly (and enforcing disciplinarily!) the ideal of instantaneous conversion and instantaneous entire sanctification.”²⁴ Maddox does not think this remedy will have much effect on the current crisis, however, and offers his own diagnosis and prescription. Drury highlighted the fact that many Boomers failed to embrace the 19th century model of holiness. Maddox identifies himself as one of those Boomers who struggled experientially with the traditional holiness model. He targets the primary issue as a problem of conceiving the “means” for achieving holiness. He writes:

²³Randy L. Maddox, “Reconnecting the Means to the End: A Wesleyan Prescription for the Holiness Movement,” *WTS* (Fall 1998): 29-66.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 30.

I can confirm Drury's judgment that most of my peers shared with me a dissatisfaction with the models of the sanctified life that dominated our upbringing. But our dissatisfaction was not totally reactionary. For many of us it was precisely because we *had* imbibed a conviction of the importance of holiness of heart and life that we were so frustrated: we sympathized with the goal to which we were repeatedly called, but found the means typically offered for achieving it to be ineffective. In particular, we sought instantaneous entire sanctification through innumerable trips to the altar, and then puzzled over why the impact of these "experiences" so consistently drained away. The reluctant conclusion most often reached was that the goal was unrealistic, that we were constitutionally incapable of experiencing it. *That is why so many in our generations have let the topic of Christian Perfection fade from view (and why some are extending similar conclusions to the possibility of any spiritual regeneration).*²⁵

Maddox's analysis draws heavily on his own religious experience, and that of his generation, of attempting to replicate the religious experience of his parents and grandparents. That he was unable to experience holiness in the same way led Maddox to critically reflect on both the nature of holiness, and the means by which it was achieved. Out of his own personal search, Maddox came to believe that the primary cause of the holiness crisis was the problem of "moral psychology," by which he means "one's fundamental assumptions about the dynamics that account for human moral choice and action."²⁶ He suggests that the heart of the problem was "the tendency of the movement to focus the notion of holiness so heavily on the achievement of such an *instant* when one responds to the proclamation." This focus has led to a relative neglect of the equally essential dimension of spiritual growth in achieving full holiness of heart and life, and of

²⁵Maddox, "Reconnecting the Means to the End," 30-31.

²⁶Thus one can see that moral psychology is critical when discussing the role of practical reason. See his "Reconnecting the Means to the End," 33.

the various means of grace that nurture this growth.”²⁷ For Maddox, the 19th century holiness movement failed to maintain Wesley’s “full model of Christian nurture.”

Maddox describes Wesley’s view as an “affectional” model of holiness of heart and life, which, he thinks, comes close to the “habituated virtue model of Aquinas.” For Wesley, the primary emphasis in the Christian life was “the renewal of the heart after the image of [God who] created us.” Maddox describes the process of renewal;

This renewal involves both the enlivening of our affections in response to the effect of God’s graciously communicated loving Presence and the tempering of these affections into holy dispositions. Thus for Wesley, the essential goal of “true religion” is the recovery of holy tempers.²⁸

There was also a communal element to Wesley’s moral psychology. Wesley, says Maddox, included the integration of the “means of grace” in the pursuit of holiness. The role of the church, and practices related to it, played a central role in the formation of the affections and, thus, into holy dispositions. Maddox describes the importance of the means of grace for Wesley:

Wesley valued the means of grace both as avenues through which God conveys the gracious Presence that enables our responsive growth in holiness and as exercises by which we responsibly nurture that holiness.²⁹

Maddox highlights two aspects of Wesley’s moral psychology that have implications for the social construction of holy identities. First, the role of community is critical. Wesley understood that God’s loving Presence is mediated in many ways, and often it is through

²⁷Maddox, “Reconnecting the Means to the End.” 31.

²⁸Ibid., 42.

²⁹Ibid., 33.

other people. Second, the role of practice is critical to Wesley's understanding of the formation of holy dispositions. It remains to be seen, however, whether the means of grace, as they are currently conceived, function to facilitate the formation of holy identities.

Up to this point I have focused on three recent attempts to diagnose the so-called crisis of identity facing the Church of the Nazarene. Before moving on to more systematic sociological analyses, it may be helpful to think about the internal development of Nazarene theology and to see what a historical critique might conclude about the current holiness dilemma.

In *A Century of Holiness Theology: The Doctrine of Entire Sanctification in the Church of the Nazarene*, Mark Quanstrom acknowledges that Nazarene identity has changed over its 100 year history. He argues that Nazarenes have changed their beliefs about their central doctrine, entire sanctification, a primary feature of Nazarene identity. The changing theological developments have resulted in the current situation in which, in the Church of the Nazarene, there are two "contemporaneous and competing definitions of entire sanctification."³⁰ How did this change come about within a denomination that purportedly had an identity that originally had a commonly accepted, vigorous, optimistic, and high salient, holiness identity³¹ to a denomination that is divided over its primary identity? Quanstrom suggests that cultural pressures had a significant role to play. He attributes this to "a reluctant and gradual change reflective of the loss of

³⁰Mark R. Quanstrom, *A Century of Holiness Theology: The Doctrine of Entire Sanctification in the Church of the Nazarene: 1905-2004* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2004), 11.

³¹I am assuming that the early doctrinal identity of Nazarenes was high salient. I have no data on which to base this belief.

optimism that characterized most of the 20th century.”³² Quanstrom traces this “relative change” to the decade of the 1950’s in which there were both internal and external pressures. For example, internal pressure came from the fact that significant leaders had died. Also, there was a difficult debate over the “special rules.”³³ External pressures came from the philosophical and cultural changes regarding the intractability of sin in human life. Quanstrom highlights Reinhold Niebuhr’s *The Nature and Destiny of Man* as an example of such pessimism regarding human perfectibility. One can imagine the cultural impact of such a philosophical change in society for a denomination that believed so strongly in Christian perfection, and in the real possibility of holiness of life and behavior.³⁴

Quanstrom suggests that the key figure who reconstructed the doctrine to address concerns that arose out of the debate at this time, was Richard Taylor. The task Taylor took on was to try to explain the place of sin, and especially the place of original sin, in a holiness theology that takes seriously the historical and cultural turn towards philosophical realism. This worked out in his theological construction as an attempt to distinguish between infirmity, the human component that was not directly affected by entire sanctification, and inbred sin, which was. In doing so, however, Taylor, according to Quanstrom, “defined sin more narrowly and infirmity more expansively.”³⁵ Thus, Quanstrom argues that one of the theological strategies to accommodate the cultural skepticism resulted in “clinical qualification of the doctrine of entire sanctification that

³²Quanstrom, *A Century of Holiness Theology*, 23.

³³Special rules are those guidelines in the Nazarene *Manual* regarding Christian behavior.

³⁴One ought not to discount however the optimism of the 1950’s. The post-war economic boon is one example of that optimism.

³⁵Quanstrom, *A Century of Holiness Theology*, 142,

defined more of man's "fallen-ness" as infirmity instead of sin."³⁶ The "theological realism" that emerged in the 1950's caused theologians in the Church of the Nazarene to reformulate the doctrine. The trend continued into the 60's and 70's.

Eventually, growing dissatisfaction with the traditional formulation prompted an alternative theological vision. Around this time, this theological ferment prompted a significant change in the creedal statements in the *Manual* of the Church of the Nazarene. Central to the theological vision of the holiness movement of the 19th century was the notion that original sin was "eradicated" at entire sanctification. This wording was replaced with a more "biblical" metaphor, "cleansing." Quanstrom attributes the change of metaphors, in part, to the influence of the work of Mildred Bangs Wynkoop. In *A Theology of Love: The Dynamics of Wesleyanism*,³⁷ Wynkoop calls into question the relevance of the 'traditional' understanding of the doctrine of entire sanctification. According to Quanstrom, Wynkoop calls the difficulty of reconciling the "promise of entire sanctification and the facts of human experience" a "credibility gap," instigated by a "dualistic" view of human personhood and a "fundamentally wrong ontology" that tended to depict original sin more as a "substance-like thing" rather than a relation.³⁸ He writes:

According to Wynkoop, the Holiness Movement had erred when it conceived of sin in terms of a kind of substance inhering somewhere within the person, thus needing to be "eradicated" in a second work of grace. Much of the confusion in the Holiness Movement was a consequence of this inappropriate and unbiblical concept. Wynkoop believed that sin was better understood as a relational term. It

³⁶Quanstrom, *A Century of Holiness Theology*, 115.

³⁷Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1972.)

³⁸Quanstrom, *A Century of Holiness Theology*, 142.

did not describe any-thing. It was rather best understood as a wrong relation....³⁹

These two aspects, dualism and substantivalism, resulted in a fundamental misunderstanding of salvation. “According to Wynkoop, the ‘dualistic’ concept of persons coupled with a ‘substantive’ definition of sin led to a ‘magical’ understanding of salvation.”⁴⁰ According to Wynkoop, salvation should be understood primarily as an “ethical relationship.” Sin is the description of the estranged relationship between God and human beings. Holiness, then, is a restoration of that relationship “contingent on a person’s obedience.” Wynkoop calls this the “moral” view of salvation, in contrast with the “magical” view of salvation, which bypasses human volition. Quanstrom records Wynkoop’s critique of the 19th century holiness movements’ understanding of entire sanctification:

This means that a sub-rational, psychological mutation defines cleansing from sin. The problem here is that men come to expect a substance alteration of the soul in salvation which occurs below the level of rational life and which, apart from personal involvement, changes the impulsive reactions of the self.⁴¹

Thus, for Wynkoop, entire sanctification did not eradicate the sinful nature. But more pertinent to my study is the way she depicted holiness as an “ethical” response that emerges from “personal involvement.”

In Quanstrom’s analysis, the result of Wynkoop’s reconstruction of holiness doctrine was that it tended to *minimize* the doctrine as a “distinctive” teaching of the

³⁹Quanstrom, *A Century of Holiness Theology*, 143.

⁴⁰Ibid., 144.

⁴¹Ibid. Here Quanstrom is quoting Wynkoop.

church. And, indeed, there may have been that effect, for Wynkoop placed greater emphasis on conversion as the primary transformative experience, out of which persons in community make moral and ethical choices. But, in defense of Wynkoop against Quanstrom, this effect was necessary since she views holiness as an ethical response which emerges from an initial transformative work of God at salvation.

Quanstrom concludes his theological survey by acknowledging that the Church of the Nazarene is divided regarding its “distinctive doctrine.” New definitions, he says, “effectively emasculated the promise of entire sanctification.” He ends with a question:

The question for the Church of the Nazarene at the dawn of the new millennium is how to understand this promise of freedom from sin as an amazing work of God’s grace in the believer’s life while acknowledging the reality of the deep sinfulness of humankind.⁴²

One of the sociological implications of Quanstrom’s historical survey is that, since there are two competing theological views of holiness, there may be, then, two competing religious identities in the local churches. Part of the task of this study will be to discover what religious identities are present in Nazarene churches.

Quanstrom’s survey of the historical development of the doctrine of entire sanctification in the Church of the Nazarene is a helpful analysis of the theological challenges within a denomination in the context of a culture in transition. While his assessment that the theological history of the Nazarene Church indicates that there are only two competing holiness narratives is probably too simplistic, the value of his careful, detailed, and sociologically informed analysis suggests that the crisis facing the

⁴²Quanstrom, *A Century of Holiness Theology*, 180.

Church of the Nazarene is both *theological* and *sociological*. Thus, I draw two conclusions. First, any understanding of identity change requires a nuanced and comprehensive approach taking into consideration individual variation, denominational developments and cultural changes. And, second, any theological *response* to the identity crisis must itself be sociologically informed.

What is needed today may not be a simple retrieval of the 19th century model of holiness, nor simply a mid-course correction based on past identity markers. Rather, what is needed is an intentional theological construction that takes seriously the changed circumstances of the denomination and life experiences of Nazarenes today as well as a sociologically informed understanding of how religious identities are formed. The task of theology is to listen to contemporary practice and enter into dialogue with it to see if it might learn something from it. This essay intends to attempt that dialogue.

Sociological Analysis and Nazarene Identity Change

Nazarenes have shown significant interest in understanding their identity for decades. For example, in 1982 the Church of the Nazarene called for the creation of a sociologically informed organization that would serve the church in self-analysis. The resulting organization was the Association of Nazarene Sociologists and Researchers (ANSR), which, led by Jon Johnston, has implemented a series of studies called ANSR Polls through which they gather sociological data that might be used in the analysis of questions like religious identity, denominational change, and cultural influence. One overriding concern for this research group has been whether and how the religious

identity of the Church of the Nazarene has changed over its history. There has, of course, been other research, too. In this section, I review what some of those studies reveal about Nazarene identity.

A study conducted by Ron Benefiel in the mid-1990's revealed that there was little fragmentation of identity in the Church of the Nazarene. In his, "The Church of the Nazarene: Undercurrents of A Changing Identity,"⁴³ Benefiel, tried to determine the depth and extent of identity fragmentation in the Church of the Nazarene. His stated intent resonates with the spirit of this present research. He writes, "It is my purpose here to explore what characterizes people called 'Nazarenes' today and whether or not there are multiple sets of worldviews and value orientations developing within the general membership of the church."⁴⁴ Benefiel wondered if discreet identities had developed in the Church of the Nazarene.

I review Benefiel's methodology. In order to measure Nazarene identity Benefiel constructed an ideal typology (theoretical model) that posited six distinct identities that might be present in the contemporary Nazarene church. The typology was informed by his own experience in the church as well as by the results from previous ANSR Poll research. A questionnaire was constructed to test the typology. Respondents were asked to respond to various questions by selecting items that were considered to be representative of the various types. The sum of responses on those items indicating a

⁴³The results of this study are published in *Maps and Models for Ministry* edited by David Whitelaw in an essay entitled "The Church of the Nazarene: Undercurrents of a Changing Identity" by Ron Benefiel (San Diego, CA: Point Loma Press, 1996), 77-92.

⁴⁴Ibid., 78.

given type then represented the individual's typology profile. The typology highlighted three sets of dyads:

(T) Traditional	(NF) Neo-fundamentalist
(Ch) Charismatic	(Co) Contemporary
(SC) Neo-Wesleyan ⁴⁵	(NE) Neo-evangelical ⁴⁶

The first pair of dyads represents the conservative nature of the church. The neo-fundamentalist node of the dyad indicates influence from outside the denomination. The second pair also represents outside influence. The charismatic and contemporary are influences “from outside the church, drawing especially from other evangelical groups whose theologies and methods are meeting with apparent success in the market place.”⁴⁷ The third dyad, neo-Wesleyan and neo-evangelical, “finds its identity in the traditions, symbols and spirit of historical Christianity.”⁴⁸ The neo-Wesleyan, with an emphasis on “social concern,” focuses on issues of social justice. And, the neo-evangelical “may be one of the emerging identities of the future.”⁴⁹

Benefiel encountered a number of challenges in analyzing the results. First, there were few respondents who identified with Social Concern or Neo-evangelical. There

⁴⁵SC refers to “Social Concern.” Benefiel posits that this type carried by young adults constitutes a return to the original concerns of the Holiness movement for the poor and social justice. Whether this represents a sizable population is questionable.

⁴⁶Benefiel, “Undercurrents of a Changing Identity,” 87-90.

⁴⁷Ibid., 79.

⁴⁸Ibid., 80.

⁴⁹Ibid.

were not enough to allow substantive analysis of these types compared to others. Second, he found that the other four, which did have enough respondents, were not different enough to make any statistical significance. He concludes, “there turns out to be very little variance in frequency distributions between types on most items in the survey.”⁵⁰ And, finally, respondents scored high on more than one type, which he also interpreted as indicating a measure of homogeneity. This made it difficult to identify discreet cohorts within the sample population. Benefiel draws this conclusion about the sample and the data:

Our conclusion based on the data analysis to this point would be that there remains a strong rather homogenous unifying core identity and culture in the church that can be understood not only in terms of theological distinctive but also in terms of political world view.⁵¹

In spite of these results, Benefiel believed that there was still the possibility that there were factors that indicated the potential for future fragmentation. In order to identify those factors he employed factor analysis to discern any trends that may be complicating Nazarene identity. Factor analysis allowed him “to understand tendencies within the sample as a whole that do not necessarily show up when dividing the sample into discrete types by analyzing which responses to various questions tend to cluster together.”⁵² Seven factors were produced that he believed indicated tendencies within the sample population. He argued that the various factors “strongly suggest that there are

⁵⁰Benefiel, “Undercurrents of a Changing Identity,” 83.

⁵¹Ibid., 84.

⁵²Ibid.

different configurations of core values and orientations embraced within the population.”⁵³ While the factors identified correlations with other variables, it was not possible to relate the factors to the typology. The data did, however, point to “complicating” factors in Nazarene identity. He concluded that unless measures were taken by the church to establish a strong core identity and shared value system, then it would “become increasingly vulnerable to adopting popular theologies and values from outside groups and the mainstream of society.”⁵⁴

Two things need to be said about this very important study of Nazarene identity. First, Benefiel’s hunch that there was a growing diversity in the Church of the Nazarene is worth looking at. The typology Benefiel constructs looks at these cohorts from a decidedly political and cultural stance. The question I raise, however, is how these identities might be related to views of holiness, and whether there were different cohorts of holiness. The descriptive and predictive power of his typology would be enhanced if holiness narratives were at the heart of the typology.

Second, Benefiel’s idea that factor analysis may reveal underlying causes is helpful. The sense that he gets from his own church experience was that there was indeed evidence of a fracturing of identity in the Church of the Nazarene. Factor analysis did indicate factors within the data. I wonder, then, if factor analysis might be used to identify variations in holiness identity, which, then, might be used to correlate with other

⁵³Benefiel, “Undercurrents of a Changing Identity,” 86.

⁵⁴Ibid. This is a very significant assumption and ought to be investigated. On this issue see Thomas F. O’Dea, “Five Dilemmas in the Institutionalization of Religion,” *JSSR* (October 1961): 30-39.

variables, whether political or economic. Of course, one conclusion is possible. It may be that there is no correlation between holiness beliefs and political or economic views. Even if this were the case, however, knowing whether there were variations in holiness identity would go a long way toward explaining identity shift in the Church of the Nazarene.

Two other important studies deserve mention, both of which were also conducted by Ron Benefiel and address the issue of denominational identity. The primary questions asked by these researchers relate either to the impact of secularization on the church or the influence of Fundamentalism. First, Benefiel's "The Church of the Nazarene: A Religious Organization in Conflict and Change – An Empirical Study"⁵⁵ is of seminal importance in its attempt to understand the nature of change in the Church of the Nazarene. In this study, Benefiel tests whether there is a correlation between education and denominational traits, that is, whether there is a connection between education and the development of the Church of the Nazarene from a sect type to denominational type church. Drawing on theoretical data that suggest that a "variety of internal and external forces affect the nature of religious organization with the tendency of moving them away from more conservative, 'sectarian' traits toward more liberal, 'denominational' traits,"⁵⁶ Benefiel asked whether education had a liberalizing influence among clergy in the Church of the Nazarene. While the final result of the study did *not* support the

⁵⁵Ron Benefiel, "The Church of the Nazarene: A Religious Organization in Conflict and Change – An Empirical study," <http://www.nazarene.org/ministries/administration/ansr/author/display.aspx>. Accessed 7 July 2008.

⁵⁶Ibid., 1.

hypothesis, Benefiel found that there were indications that there was some increase in liberal elements in some clergy and that these clergy experienced more stress than their counterparts. The value of Benefiel's study for this research is that he identifies the possibility of a shifting identity in the Church of the Nazarene, but the exact reason for it is ambiguous. His research indicates that it is unlikely that the liberalizing effects of modernity, by virtue of a liberal education, are the cause of such a shift.

The other study, by Ron Benefiel and Ken Crow, looked at the influence of fundamentalism on the Church of the Nazarene. Historically, the Church of the Nazarene has always had a flirtatious relationship with fundamentalism.⁵⁷ Benefiel locates fundamentalism in the normal, human response to social disintegration. For him, "fundamentalism is a natural psycho-social response to rapid social change, social complexity and diversity."⁵⁸ Fundamentalists, then, exhibit particular responses to this *anomie*, either fight or flight. The tendency to see the world as becoming increasingly more evil and to withdraw, or to see the world as encroaching on long held values and to try to eliminate those threats, fight, would constitute such fundamentalist responses. Thus, survey data indicating such responses would be flagged as fundamentalist. Given this understanding of fundamentalism, Benefiel and Crow suggest that "the majority of

⁵⁷See especially Paul Bassett, "The Fundamentalist Leavening of the Holiness Movement, 1914-1940 The Church of the Nazarene: A Case Study," Nazarene Archives.

⁵⁸Ron Benefiel and Ken Crow, "Fundamentalism in the Church of the Nazarene: A Longitudinal Analysis of Social and Political Values," Nazarene Archives.

Nazarenes are somewhat fundamentalist.”⁵⁹ However, these researchers found a diminishing influence of fundamentalism on the Church of the Nazarene between 1996 and 2004.

In the introduction, I have already mentioned a study on changing beliefs about holiness among Nazarene pastors by Jean Stockard, Susie C. Stanley and Benton Johnson, in which I challenged the assumption that belief change could be attributed to decline and accommodation. Yet, the study does support the notion that beliefs about holiness *have* changed. Assuming the sect-church model, the researchers attempt to gain insight into the social forces that promote this development. They write:

Any such changes on the organizational level no doubt reflect alterations in the views of individuals, as church leaders and members gradually abandon traditional beliefs and practices and adopt ones that are more similar to the larger society.⁶⁰

In spite of the problematic assumptions of this study, it is valuable that the researchers found that there *were* indications of differing views on sanctification. They found that “a substantial number [of clergy] express doubts on some traditional doctrinal elements.”⁶¹ It seems clear from the research that views regarding sanctification *are* affected by things such as denominational affiliation and generational replacement. Thus, those with more involvement in denominational culture are more likely to hold traditional views of

⁵⁹Benefiel and Crow, “Fundamentalism in the Church of the Nazarene,” 6.

⁶⁰Jean Stockard, Susie C. Stanley, and Benton Johnson, “Moving From Sect to Church: Variations in Views Regarding Sanctification Among Wesleyan/Holiness Clergy,” *Review of Religious Research* 43 (September 2002): 71.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 83.

holiness. Younger clergy and pastors of larger churches are more likely to reject traditional views of sanctification.⁶²

The value of these findings is minimized by the failure of the study to identify those nontraditional views of sanctification. It seems to me that before one can conclude that change is the result of decline and accommodation, and attribute change to liberalization and permissiveness, the researcher must ask what the changes are, and whether other factors may account for those religious changes. Examples might include: communal religious experiences that indicate problems with the original theological formulation of sanctification, new insights into biblical studies, theological and practical problems in the original doctrinal formulation, and the like.

Yet, there is another positive aspect of this study. These researchers attempt to connect the observation of changing views of holiness with the particular cultural and historical characteristics of the various religious groups, such as whether the group is creedal or not, whether the group has a tradition of racial integration or not, and whether the group has an historical opposition to bureaucracy or not.⁶³ This is an important explanatory move, yet the importance of this methodology is again diminished by two controlling assumptions of the study, which I mentioned in the introduction, original pristinzation and accommodation. The intentional theological changes of the denominations and their impact on generational religious identity are *not* taken into consideration when explaining belief change. And, this is a fundamental flaw in the

⁶²Stockard, Stanley, and Johnson, "Moving from Sect to Church," 77-78.

⁶³Ibid., 86.

research.

History, Culture, and Theology

Not only is it necessary to evaluate existing efforts to understand contemporary Nazarene identity, that contemporary situation must be put in the context of an understanding of Nazarene history, including theological history. I argue that Nazarene beliefs have always developed in relationship with the broader culture. Certainly, earlier studies of Nazarene identity have recognized this, but those studies have not taken as seriously the particular theological changes that have influenced the contemporary identity of the church, and which are still major factors in identity change today.

The best of Nazarene historiography, however, has recognized this. For example, Timothy Smith, in his *Called Unto Holiness: The Story of the Nazarenes: The Formative Years*, recognized that the Church of the Nazarene, like other holiness groups which emerged at this time, was a product of the religious ferment of the 19th century.⁶⁴ Thus, the theological identity of the church was greatly influenced by the cultural and philosophical forces working at that time. Smith identifies such social forces as urbanization and industrialization, the “social upheaval and spiritual confusion” brought about by the turmoil of the Civil War, immigration and the onset of new media, and modernity and its scientific discoveries.⁶⁵

Floyd Cunningham, *et al*, in *Our Watchword and Song: The Centennial History of*

⁶⁴Timothy L. Smith, *Called Unto Holiness: The Story of the Nazarenes: The Formative Years* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1962), 9.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 13.

the Church of the Nazarene, write Nazarene history with an eye on both the external social changes within which the denomination exists, and the internal experiential problems of embracing a doctrine of holiness. Regarding the church's relation to both of these he writes:

The church faced the choice of whether it would adopt a *conservative* (preserving) or a *liberal* (progressive) stance toward the cultures in which it existed, or whether it would rediscover a radical (renewing, reforming, and transforming) Christian identity. The church's witness to the world was not something separate from its embodied existence in that world. The church attended to its internal well-being because that was its witness in the world. The late century church restructured itself, reformulated its ethics in relation to society, and reconsidered its core values.⁶⁶

Cunningham and his associates hint here at the complex inter-relationship between cultural changes and internal theological concerns in the Church of the Nazarene. The church is not something "separate from its embodied existence in that world." Much of sociological interpretation has emphasized the impact of external forces on belief change, but belief change, especially theological in the Church of the Nazarene, has been as much a conscious process as unconscious.

Most recently, however, the notion that the theological identity of the Church of the Nazarene is tied closely to its *intentional* response to historical and cultural experiences has been highlighted by Mark Quanstrom in his historical theological analysis of the development of the doctrine of entire sanctification.⁶⁷ Quanstrom tracks

⁶⁶Floyd Cunningham, ed., *Our Watchword and Song: The Centennial History of the Church of the Nazarene* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2009), 550.

⁶⁷This is not to say, however, that *all* the changes in identity in the Church of the Nazarene have been intentional. I am arguing that those that have been intentional have been left out of consideration.

the shifting and changing theological expressions of holiness theology as responses to internal and external realities. Two central themes emerge from his study. First, Nazarene beliefs have been affected by broad cultural and philosophical currents. For example, that early Nazarenes formulated holiness theology influenced in part by a reigning cultural philosophy of idealism is handily expressed. In a chapter entitled “Perpetuating the American Ideal,” he writes:

It was an optimistic age, no less for the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene than for the culture at large. According to Vincent Synan, this idea that one could be perfected paralleled the general optimism that prevailed throughout all of American society. He has rightly characterized the Holiness Movement as a “kind of ‘evangelical transcendentalism’ that thrived in the idealism of a young and growing America.”⁶⁸

The primary way this cultural optimism was expressed was in a particular way of reading holiness passages in the Bible as indicating the possibility of “eradicating” the sinful nature. This American reconstruction of Wesley was certainly influenced by this broad cultural optimism, which also shaped the way people interpreted Scripture and experienced holiness.

Cultural optimism, however, was not to last and a subsequent change in cultural philosophy toward realism, if not pessimism, influenced religious experience and theological construction. The devastating effects of two world wars, and a world-wide economic collapse, changed the way people thought about human perfectibility. Influenced by such theological works as Reinhold Niebuhr’s *The Nature and Destiny of*

⁶⁸Mark R. Quanstrom, *A Century of Holiness Theology: The Doctrine of Entire Sanctification in the Church of the Nazarene: 1905-2004* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2004), 17.

Man in which the pervasiveness and intractability of sin in human life is accentuated, some began to think differently about the possibility of eradicating the sinful nature.

Quanstrom explains some of the impact of cultural changes on theological beliefs:

Thus, there were two movements in the Church of the Nazarene in the fourth and fifth decades of the church's existence, both a consequence of the changing historical circumstances. The unavoidable reality of the apparently inherent sinfulness of humanity resulted in clinical qualifications of the doctrine of entire sanctification that defined more of man's "fallen-ness" as infirmity instead of sin. At the same time, the threat of this "theological realism" compelled the denomination to a greater attention to "conserving, maintaining, and advocating and promulgating" the precious doctrine with which it had been entrusted. Entire sanctification eradicated sin in its entirety, but sin in its entirety was understood quite particularly.⁶⁹

The second way Nazarene beliefs about holiness changed is due to internal problems. Practical difficulties arose as a denomination tried to live out the theological belief that original sin was eradicated from the hearts of believers in the religious experience of "entire sanctification." Some careful observers began to suggest the development of a "credibility gap," which pointed to the separation between what was promised in entire sanctification and the experience of those who claimed to have received the grace of entire sanctification.⁷⁰ Citing Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, Quanstrom highlights the theological result of the credibility gap. Wynkoop, he says, "proposed nothing less than a restructuring of the conceptual framework within which holiness theologians had worked."⁷¹ Wynkoop's restructuring was extensive. As we have seen

⁶⁹Quanstrom, *Century of Holiness*, 115.

⁷⁰Ibid., 142.

⁷¹Ibid., 143.

earlier in this chapter, it included a reconception of the nature of persons, the nature of sin, and the nature of salvation. Her critique of traditional 19th century holiness theology was to have a significant impact on how individuals conceived holiness belief and practice, and on denominational identity. The effects of her work, as we shall see, linger still.

Quanstrom has helped us gain insight into only a few aspects of the complex nature of belief change in the Church of the Nazarene. In the next few chapters, the dynamic interaction between cultural changes and denominational theology will be remembered as one factor in identity change.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have surveyed several analyses of the crisis of identity in the Church of the Nazarene. Several questions remain to be answered.

First, what is actually taking place among Nazarenes? What do Nazarenes actually believe about holiness? Previous research has relied heavily on quantitative data, but, as I have shown, this approach leaves many questions unresolved. For example, if individuals are changing beliefs about holiness, what are the new beliefs? If individuals are changing beliefs, what reasons do they give for the change? While quantitative data is critical in assessing belief change, qualitative data can assist in contextualizing the quantitative material.

Second, what are the social causes of belief change? While some researchers focus on secularization and accommodationist models, like church-sect theory, the picture

actually appears much more complex. If, as earlier research indicates, denominational culture is a significant determiner of belief, then we might focus on specific denominational changes that influence identity. For example, what might be the social and cognitive impact on individuals in the local congregation if more than one denominational narrative of holiness is in play? Denominational change also points to the possibility of generational, or age, differences. Differences in identity construction due to varying levels of education would also be a possibility. Many alternative explanations are possible.

Third, how is change to be evaluated? What response should there be to belief change? This question, while more “theological,” requires insight into the nature of identity today. It seems to me that the empirical data is critical in theological construction. What practices and beliefs characterize contemporary holiness identity, and what relation do these have to a biblical vision of holiness?

The following chapters present the results of a sociological study. Explaining contemporary Nazarene holiness beliefs will be one of its major tasks. The goal, however, is not simply to describe and define holiness beliefs today, but to critique them. This is the task of theology. If current holiness identity is the result of accommodation and secularization, and religion is seen as only a dependent variable, then it is difficult to see how theology might be able to reverse this trend, other than to simply reaffirm the original formulation, and to let the process of accommodation play out and await the rise of a new sectarian movement to split off from the original group and begin the process all over again, as projected by Stockard and her colleagues. But, if holiness identity is the

result of more complex processes, and religion is seen as an independent variable, and the current context is understood as a market place of competing and inter-relating narratives, religious and secular, then theological construction becomes crucial, if not imperative, in the formation of holiness identity today.

CHAPTER 2

NAZARENES TODAY

Who are Nazarenes today? What are their defining characteristics? Where are they located socially? What are their views about God? Is church attendance important to them? How often do they attend? What kind of relationship do they have with their denomination? Do they experience doubt? If so, how do they resolve it? What are their views of the Bible? Are they secularized, and are they accommodating to contemporary culture? Do they express Fundamentalist tendencies? Are they individualistic in their religion or are the community's beliefs and practices important in their religious lives? These are important questions that will help set a context for the following chapters which investigate what contemporary Nazarenes believe about holiness and the practices they associate with those beliefs.

In this chapter, drawing on research data such as survey results, focus groups, and in-depth interviews drawn from members of three Nazarene churches in the northeast, I hope to paint a picture of today's Nazarenes. The Nazarene churches in view here vary in size, social setting and geographical location.¹ I begin the chapter by telling the religious stories of six Nazarenes. I listen for the meanings and interpretations they themselves give about the significance of their own religious lives and the role holiness beliefs and practices play in their self-identity. I conclude the chapter by asking what

¹I describe the churches in more detail in chapter 5.

their responses to research questions have to say about individualism, secularization, and denominational identity.

Six Nazarenes and their Holiness Stories

Nazarenes come from diverse backgrounds and life experiences. In a pluralistic world, individuals have different experiences and form unique understandings of themselves and the world around them. Thus, religious identity, and by extension holiness identity, has the potential of being quite different. The best way to get to know these contemporary Nazarenes is to hear their own religious story. Therefore, in this section I introduce six Nazarenes whose religious narratives, while unique, may also point to representative groups within Nazarene churches. Dave, a 46 year old baby boomer, grew up in the church and represents a large portion of baby-boomers who “rebelled” as teenagers, left the church, and returned later in life to become reacquainted with their childhood religious faith. Sue, a 68 year old home-maker, has been a long time Nazarene, and represents someone who reflects fairly closely the beliefs of the denomination. Ron, represents a segment of the sample population who have been Nazarene for a long time, but whose views of holiness and sanctification are a mixture of themes from denominational narratives and their own unique holiness narrative. I selected George as a representative of those Nazarenes who have highly salient “Christian” identities, but who, in spite of being in the Church of the Nazarene for some time, do not really understand holiness doctrine, nor is holiness a very highly salient aspect of their religious identity. Paula, Kent, and Arnie, are “switchers,” that is, those who have been members of another church or denomination in the past, but who, for

various reasons, are now members of the Church of the Nazarene. As we shall see, switchers play a significant role in shaping contemporary holiness identity. Paula was a Baptist before joining the Church of the Nazarene. She represents those individuals who came to the Church of the Nazarenes for reasons other than theological, but who later found that they had to negotiate between their prior faith and those of their new church and denomination. Kent is through and through an Evangelical. His own religious identity has little, if any, themes of “holiness,” but he does identify himself as a “Nazarene.” He represents a growing group in the church. And, finally, Arnie, a long time Catholic, who “found Jesus” in the charismatic movement, represents even another group of individuals who, while not numbering very many, and who did not grow up in the Church of the Nazarene, purposefully sought it out because of its holiness theology. His and the stories of the others follow in the next few pages.

Dave

Dave is a service man for the local propane gas company. He grew up in the Easton Nazarene church. His life was not all that different from that of his other friends who were a part of the youth of the church. Common experiences of Sunday school, Bible studies and youth events were shared with others of his age. Dave eventually became a leader in the youth group, responsible for scheduling and directing youth events, leading Bible studies and spending time with the pastor. In his late teens, however, he “did the rebelling thing and walked away and turned [his] back on the Lord.” In early years of his marriage Dave had been unfaithful and had committed adultery. Dave tells the story of his return to the Lord and to church. His wife, Patty, had started

attending church with her father-in-law (she had been married previously) after his wife passed away. Patty sensed that he was lonely and she didn't want him to go to church alone. This happened under the ministry of Pastor Williams, a previous pastor of Endicott church. Every Sunday the pastor had an "altar call," an invitation for people to come to the altar to pray following the message. One Sunday, after Pastor Williams preached, Patty "found the Lord" at the altar. She had "invited Jesus Christ into her heart as savior." During one of the women's Bible studies, led by one of the elder ladies in the church, the topic of forgiveness came up. Patty was deeply moved and felt that in order to be a faithful disciple of Jesus she needed to forgive Dave. One afternoon Patty approached Dave and said, "If I say something to you will you promise not to laugh?" Dave responded, "With a leading [sic] like that, I'll try." Patty simply said, "I forgive you." This represented for Dave the kind of unconditional forgiveness that modeled Jesus. "I had never said, 'I'm sorry,' you know?" Dave reflects on that moment, "I never asked [to be forgiven], I never went through that process, and it was then that I realized that's what Christ did for me. And that was the first step of me coming back to the Lord."

Dave's experience is not unlike many of those I interviewed. Stories of forgiveness and renewal, brokenness and restoration, were primary episodes in people's lives. They were the first things people talked about and they were effusive about their "love for Jesus," who had forgiven them, and who would always love them.

What labels does Dave use to describe himself? Like many Nazarenes I spoke with, Dave doesn't like religious labels. Dave is different, though. He doesn't like them, but he knows they can be useful; they say something important about what a person

believes about God. “Yeah,” he says, “I do use that terminology, because when I’m talking with other people they’ll ask what church do you go to, or what religion are you, and I don’t hesitate to use that.” I asked Dave what it means to be a “Nazarene.” His reply suggested that he was familiar with the general divisions of Christianity, Protestant and Catholic, and some of the theological variations of the denominations. “Well, first it’s a Protestant religion and it’s Christian, I am a Christian. And I will basically come back around to that when I describe who I am.”

What about holiness though? Dave is humbled by his behavior when he was “away from the Lord.” The reality of what he was capable of, the kind of person he could be, has made him cautious. For Dave, being a Nazarene is about holiness. He says, “It’s holiness. We’re associated with the Holiness association in that we truly believe that we can be closer to God and the closer we come to God the more holy we will become.” Dave is quick to add, however, that the claims Nazarenes make about holiness are not to lead to pride. “Not that that makes me any better than this guy over here who doesn’t call himself a Nazarene. Say he says he’s a Baptist, it doesn’t make me better than him as a person *per se* other than that I can describe my relationship with God as I grow closer to God I will become more holy.” Dave’s concern not to appear despising of Christians of other traditions and their beliefs was clear. It’s not that beliefs of others (at least other Christians) are wrong; they are just different.

When I asked Dave what are the defining characteristics of Nazarenes, he quickly made reference to the “rules,” like many Nazarenes I interviewed, who grew up in the church. Rules about behavior had defined Nazarene identity in the 1960’s and 70’s when he was growing up. Nazarenes attempted to establish clear lines of identity by

distinguishing themselves from the “world.” The world was life lived in the flesh, or sinful nature. Norms of behavior were, in the minds of many Nazarenes, the way one indicates one’s differences from the broader culture. Nazarenes distinguished themselves by accentuating what they didn’t do. “When I first came here [to the church as a young person],” Dave said, “there was a big thing about no dancing. Like Nazarenes don’t dance. Nazarenes don’t go to movies. Nazarenes don’t, don’t don’t....There was a focus on what Nazarenes don’t do.” But, it didn’t seem all that clear to Dave why dancing was so bad. It didn’t seem all that “sinful.” Dave’s difficulty in seeing the “logic” of the prohibitions caused him great frustration in his youth and teens, but, more importantly, today he is leery of making claims that appear to be more extreme than necessary. It’s not that Dave doesn’t want to be seen as a Christian. He does! But, the Christian faith has to be something more than rules, he says.

So, what is holiness for Dave? What does it mean to be Nazarene? He clarifies:

It’s when we open ourselves completely to the influence of the Holy Spirit – when we give ourselves completely over to God...and not hold anything back. When we come to the Lord for salvation we get all the Holy Spirit, we get all of God. He’s all here for us, but we don’t always necessarily, and there are some people who have, and I’ve seen lives who have gone from here just 180 degrees complete change, habits dropped immediately, language goes, everything in their whole life and they begin to follow the Lord 100 percent right now! But for the most part most people when they come to the Lord they don’t know, they’re not looking at all the things, asking forgiveness for all the things they’ve done, and all the situations and the problems and things that they’ve caused. So, I mean, there’s a progression as they become aware of things to surrender that part of their life, as they become more aware of this is taking way too much of my time and I just need to surrender that part of my life to the Lord. So, the holiness comes when we surrender 100 percent of ourselves. And, that’s why I say the closer I get to God the more of myself I do surrender to Him and the more holy I can become.

This extended quotation from Dave demonstrates his reliance on his own experience and his own observations of other’s experiences when he thinks about holiness. For Dave,

holiness is a work of the Holy Spirit. At conversion the believer “gets all the Holy Spirit,” but individuals aren’t always aware of the things they need to confess. So, for some, it takes time to become aware of the faults, sins, and behaviors that characterized their lives before they came to Jesus Christ. It is not just to ask forgiveness for them, but to come to grips with them, to be aware that these attitudes and behaviors were “mine.” It is the “ownership” of responsibility that is important. While Dave recognizes that this “process” could be more immediate for some, from his experience, most Christians take much more time to work through them. “Surrender” is an important religious notion for Dave. It was a common term in holiness circles when he was growing up. “Full surrender” was a synonym for “entire sanctification.” The progressive nature of sanctification is pretty clear in Dave’s depiction. The more one surrenders, the more one moves closer to God, and, thus, becomes more holy. This is mostly an internal process, one the individual does through prayer, reflection and confession. Complete holiness, then, could be understood as achieving full surrender to God. One does this by looking deep within one’s heart in order to acknowledge one’s sins, take responsibility for them, and confess them to God. While ideally this process can be complete in this life, and Dave has seen this happen, for most people it takes a long time.

Sue

Sue, a home-maker in her late 60’s, is a “Nazarene,” and “proud of it,” she says. She’s been a Nazarene all her life. Her father played a key role in her life, especially in her spiritual life. He was a dedicated layman and took his family to church “whenever the doors were open.” In her mind, he was an exemplar of Christian holiness. Sue grew

up in the Church of the Nazarene and she has many good memories of Sunday school, youth activities, and her family being together in church at worship.

Nazarenes are clearly “holiness people” to Sue. Are Nazarenes different from other Christians, I asked her. “I don’t know what makes them different, but they are different,” she says. “You can go into a Nazarene church and most Nazarene churches that I’ve ever been in you can feel that people are caring. They are interested in you. They’re friendly. It’s just that, it’s part of who they are. And it’s things you don’t feel in other churches. That people are just very standoffish.” I asked her if she thought that was the result of their holiness doctrine. “I think, probably, it is,” she replied. “It is because when you’re filled with the love of Christ, it just naturally flows out of you and spills over on other people. And I think that’s one thing that’s probably quite unique to the holiness denominations including the Nazarenes.”

Sue, like Dave, remembers the strong emphasis on “rules” when she was growing up. But her view of the rules is much different than Dave’s. Sue has a much more positive view of the guidelines of the church. She says, “I think the reason for that is that some people function better with guidelines. If they knew there were things they could or could not do it was easier for them. They didn’t have to figure it out. They didn’t have to, well, you know, ask is this right for me or is it wrong for me. The church says, ‘No’! So, therefore, I’m not going to do it.” For Sue the church has a responsibility before God to guide and shepherd the people. In one way or another guidelines and rules are necessary.

But, holiness isn’t just about rules for Sue. It’s about loving God and one’s neighbor. There are two sides to holiness. One is what we don’t do, and the church has a

say in that. But, the other is equally important, what we should do, and that is to love.

We love God first, and then out of that relationship we are able to love others.

But, there were certain things that were characteristic of Nazarenes that need to change. For example, Sue suggested that attire should have been allowed to change. Men in the 1960's and 70's wore suits and ties to church. But, younger people wear jeans, and that's alright with Sue. Things like that *should* change. There are many other of these "incidentals" that need to change to fit the day. One of the most significant ones is music style.

While Sue believes that holiness is about loving God and others, she is less clear on more specific aspects of holiness and sanctification. The goal of holiness is love, but the way one becomes loving seems obvious to Sue. The Holy Spirit plays a central role in sanctification. She says, "The Holy Spirit definitely has the place in sanctification. The Holy Spirit, you allow the Holy Spirit to come in and just do whatever he needs to do. But, we have to let him do it." So, for Sue, God knows us best, and God, the great healer physician, knows what we need. Therefore, we need just to let God work inside our heart. She tries to clarify:

I think God will do that to a certain extent [without understanding] as long as the person is obedient and willing to have whatever God has for them. Not everybody is going to have someone to show them the way. I think those of us who have been in the church have a responsibility to help people see that, but there are ultimately going to be many, many people that aren't exposed to someone that can help them. And, I believe that God in their ignorance God can show them what they need to do. And He puts a hunger in people for something more and he's not going to make you hungry without giving you what you need.

For Sue, God leads people to himself through the Holy Spirit. Sue is not overly concerned about the details of holiness because she believes that God will take care of it.

Even if someone were completely ignorant about holiness, God would still work in them to make them holy. Even though Sue grew up in the church, she does not readily identify any moment in which she was entirely sanctified. Her simple faith in God, and her own positive experience in the church, affirm to her that she is right before God and “in the center of his will.”

Ron

Ron, a retired laborer, does not like labels. In spite of the fact that Ron grew up in the church and has been a Nazarene all his life, he prefers to be called a “Christian.” He says, “I think Christian is better, if you’re going to put a label on – I would say that I’m a Christian before I said I’m a Nazarene, because I think it’s more important to be a “Christ-ian” than a Nazarene.” Ron’s repeated emphasis on the importance and priority of being Christian over a particular denominational identity is also evident in the emphasis he places on being “born again.” For him, Nicodemus is “the” model of how one comes into the Kingdom of God. He says:

So, “Christ-ian” is believing on Christ – that makes you a Christian. “Ye must be born again.” Now you get into this ‘born again’ aspect of Christianity, Okay? There’s more to believing than... just believing that’s one thing that makes you a Christian, but that doesn’t make you eligible for the Kingdom of Heaven. You have to be ‘born again.’ You have to repent of your sins, God says, right? And have forgiveness, and then, by the mercy of God, the grace of God, then you become a ‘born again’ Christian. And, I think...there’s Christianity and there’s being a ‘born again’ Christian.

For Ron, being ‘born again’ is the central experience of Christianity. It is obvious that this is a high salient aspect of his identity. But is holiness an equally strong part of his religious story? Ron did not share any specific episodes of his life that related to holiness or sanctification. That language was not a natural part of his religious narrative and

hearing none I asked what he thought about the Nazarene understanding of holiness and sanctification. Having grown up in the church Ron was fairly knowledgeable about the doctrine, but he had his own ideas about sanctification. He was particularly careful to point out his disagreement with the denomination over original sin. He goes on to comment:

I think sanctification is the infilling, or the taking in, of the Holy Spirit so that you let the Holy Spirit take over your will. We have a self-will which enables us to make decisions on our own. When we turn that will over to Christ, and say, “Christ, or God, fill me with your Spirit, and control my will so that I don’t control it,” then you’re to a point of sanctification.

Self-will is a central theme in Ron’s understanding of sanctification. While giving up the will to the control of the Holy Spirit does not appear to be language used in the denominational theologies, it was the way evangelists and preachers framed it as Ron was growing up.

Ron makes a distinction between sanctification and salvation. For him, salvation is when a person realizes that he or she is “filled with sin, that the carnal nature that we’re born with is controlling us.” It is the influence of the carnal nature that “enables us” to commit acts of sin. But, it is also a time when the Holy Spirit “speaks to us and brings guilt – we need forgiveness of sins so we confess our sins to God and God in his mercy forgives us of those sins – all of these sins and guilt is gone.” Yet sanctification is closely tied with salvation for when we recognize our sin we realize that we are “empty,” that “there’s something that we need,” because we come to realize that we need something to control our will. At that time the believer can fruitfully turn to God and ask for the Holy Spirit to “come and fill us.” Ron uses a lot of “filling” language. I asked

him where he got that language. “I don’t know,” he responded, “I guess from my time in the church.”

But Ron disagrees with the church over the issue of “eradication.” “We always have the carnal nature,” he says. It never leaves us. Ron tests beliefs by the results they bear. We continually experience the effects of original sin, he says, but that does not mean that we need to be subject to original sin, because God give us his Spirit to aid our will and cause us to please him. Ron explains:

We always have the carnal nature, it’s not eradicated....so when that evil thought comes into my mind, whatever it might be, well, old sinful man why don’t you cheat on your wife – the Holy Spirit quickly takes over and says,” Ronald, that’s not the thing to do.’ Or, “Ronald, why don’t you cheat on your income tax,” and you can do that. And all of a sudden the Holy Spirit just takes over and eliminates all those evil thoughts that continually come upon us and controls us and controls the carnal nature.

The Holy Spirit “controls us and controls the carnal nature.” How and when does the Holy Spirit do this? The Spirit does this only as individuals “give over their wills.” This must be done on a continual basis, because human beings want to keep the control for themselves. Thus, the believer must always be “filled with the Holy Spirit,” but this is difficult to do all the time. Someone may be filled with the Spirit at one time and not at another.

George

George is in his early 60’s and nearing retirement from the hospital where he works. He grew up in the New York area and has been attending church since 1949. He had been a Methodist until about 10 years ago, when he left there to join the Nazarene church. George left the Methodist church because the church board had fired the choir

director and he felt that wasn't right. That was something of the last straw for George, and he decided it was time to leave. He had tried other churches, but when he attended the Nazarene church he just liked Pastor Wood, and he liked the people who were there. For him, it just "felt right" to come to this church.

George admits that he is simple in his faith, and prefers simple descriptions. The only label he likes is, "A Christian, man of God." He hates labels, he says, "Christians make too much of labels." What matters to George is the Bible. "Yes," he says, "as Nazarenes we know the Word and know that the teachings come from the Word of God." This focus on the "Word" is intertwined with belief in Jesus as God's Son. For George, being Nazarene means, "A man of God, of faith, who believes in Jesus Christ, his son, as our Lord and Savior. Just being a man of God, with integrity. That His Word is supreme and there is no variation from it." Yet, like Ron, George includes no episodes of holiness or sanctification in his personal religious story.

George feels that things have changed in the Church of the Nazarene. While he doesn't like focusing on the "rules," he believes the church has become lax, too much like the world. "Our values are slipping," he says. I asked George if he was a Fundamentalist or Evangelical. He was straightforward with me and responded that his impression is that he was both, but he's not sure what they really mean. Early Nazarenes who focused on the rules were not being too strict; for him, rather, they knew what the world was like and recognized the need for clear guidelines. While talking about rules George did begin talking about "godliness." Godliness, for George, is to live differently from the world, to have strict guidelines of behavior.

In George's mind there is not really much difference between Nazarenes and Christians of other denominations. The only real difference for him is that Nazarenes are stricter and provide "more Bible teaching." I asked George what he thought holiness meant. He responded:

Somebody that takes Christianity very seriously. Not only taking it in, projecting it out. You know who is holy – now I don't want to come across as better than anyone else. I'm not. I've fallen way short of the glory of God, like all of us have. We're in a walk toward perfection. I don't think we'll ever get there in this lifetime. We're never going to be perfect. We can't.

George's understanding of holiness as "walk toward perfection" resonated with many Nazarenes I interviewed. Many Nazarenes used the language of "striving" as a metaphor of the Christian life. But, why can't people be perfect? George responds that it is an issue of human "nature" that restricts us from attaining such a goal. He believes that "God is the only one that is the perfect one. By nature we just can't achieve that. It's just not us. It's not a human thing. We are all going to fall short. It is our intention, but to strive." George's skepticism about the possibility of living free from sin in this life is grounded in his understanding that sin is a part of human nature. "By nature" we cannot achieve perfection. Yet, even though we cannot be perfect, we can attain levels of holiness. For example, George believes that some people are holier than others. He thinks people like Billy Graham are good examples of people who have attained a high degree of holiness. How does George account for this? He says, "I think some people have just made an honest commitment that they love God so much that they're going to strive to do everything possible they can in their lives to be holy, or try to achieve that holiness. That's the decision that each individual has to make."

Kent

Kent is in his early 50's and had been transferred from Iowa to New England about 5 years ago by his employer. He grew up in the Mennonite church in the mid-west. Kent became acquainted with the Nazarene church when he had to move to the east coast for his job with the federal government. He and his family began attending the Catholic church when they first arrived, but Kent wanted a more Protestant experience. They turned to the "Yellow Pages" and began to see what churches were in the area. Not far from them was a Methodist church, and they were going to try that one first, but then Kent saw an advertisement for the Church of the Nazarene. He had remembered that Nazarenes had attended high school with him years before. They attended the church one Sunday and liked it so much that they never tried any of the others. He says, "We just fit in here."

He joined the Nazarene church in 2004 and he says he "feels at home" in the Church of the Nazarene. The worship style, preaching, and music are similar to the Mennonite churches he attended in Iowa. For Kent, there is not much difference between the beliefs of the Church of the Nazarene and Mennonite beliefs. The primary difference is that "Mennonites teach pacifism."

Kent and his wife must make significant decisions regarding their own religious differences. Kent's wife is Filipino and a practicing Catholic. This has raised difficulties for the family, making it awkward to decide where to attend church. Kent tried attending the Catholic service, but he felt it was too "ritualistic," and he missed the sermon and the "homey" atmosphere in the Protestant church with which he was familiar. Right now his wife attends the Catholic church mostly on Saturday evenings, but sometimes on Sunday

morning. Kent attends the Nazarene church on Sunday mornings and only occasionally attends the Catholic Mass on Saturday night with his wife. Kent feels awkward that they do not attend the same church and feels he has to explain this to his Nazarene friends.

Raised in the Mennonite tradition, Kent began early in his young adulthood to question the viability of pacifism in today's world. Influenced deeply by conservative Republicanism he believes strongly in the function of the military in national defense. He calls himself a "rightwing conservative" and wears that label proudly. Leaving the Mennonite church, Kent began attending a large Evangelical Free church, and, though he did not join, he found there a church that expressed his political and religious beliefs.

Kent's religious identity has many dimensions. For example, Kent has been deeply influenced by the "pietism" of the Mennonite tradition, which, for him, emphasizes the centrality of personal conversion, individual responsibility, and inerrancy of the Bible. He identifies himself as a "Fundamentalist." For Kent this means not only an affirmation of the inerrancy of the Bible but also a firm antagonism toward the teaching of evolution. For him, the teaching of evolution in public schools was the beginning of a decline in morality in America. If the term "Evangelical" means trying to convert others to the Christian faith, then he is also an Evangelical. Kent sees himself as a "Nazarene" because he attends a church in the denomination, but it is a term he is just beginning to understand.

Although a member of the Church of the Nazarene, Kent knows little of Nazarene beliefs. When I spoke with him, he had little knowledge of either the Nazarene understanding of holiness, or of the doctrine of entire sanctification. He remembers the pastor saying something about it in the membership classes, but does not really

understand it, and, now that I have questioned him on it, has a lot of questions about what it is. For him the Nazarene church is not that much different from either the Evangelical Free church he attended in Iowa, or the Mennonite church he attended growing up. They all emphasize personal faith in Jesus Christ, and the importance of reading the Bible.

Regarding entire sanctification, he says that the pastor does not talk a lot about it in his sermons. In fact, Kent couldn't remember any time when the pastor used that terminology. For Kent, the pastor "just preaches the Bible," which means being "born-again" and "being forgiven for our sins."

The definition of holiness that Kent agreed with the most was the Evangelical definition that expressed holiness as "the gradual work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer in which the believer grows in grace and matures in moral character and spiritual wisdom." After reading the description of entire sanctification in the Nazarene *Manual*, Kent responded:

I agree...I mean, I have no disagreements with what you just described. That's absolutely what I strive for, I mean the entire sanctification. Like after I gave my life to Christ, you know, I mean I grew up in the church and, of course, there's sin. I mean, everyone's going to sin, it's there. As far as a second experience? I mean, of course you need to confess your sins, obviously, and taking communion is, in the Mennonite church it's not any different than here. You take elements...I can't say I've had any huge, you know, second significant work of grace. You know, it's just growing in your walk as you go along, becoming more mature, you learn what God's leading looks like to you. You learn to recognize things, and you're always striving obviously not to sin, and if you do you confess your sins and it's an ongoing thing.

Kent, here, expresses what I take to be an Evangelical view of holiness. First and foremost is personal conversion. Persons accept Jesus Christ into their heart and become a Christian. They are saved. From that point on it is a "striving," a gradual process in which they learn to hear God's voice and to heed God's leading by the Spirit. Gradually

they become more mature in their faith, able to discern what God wants them to do.

They “strive” not to sin, but when they do, forgiveness is possible. Holiness is an ongoing process.

When asked about the possibility of being free from sin, Kent was skeptical.

Interviewer: “Do you think it’s possible for a person to come to a point in their Christian faith where they have real victory over sin, on a regular basis long term? Can we really avoid sin for the better part of our lives? Is that possible?”

Kent: “Acts of sin?”

Interviewer: “Yes, acts of sin, where a Christian does not commit acts of sin. Do you think that is possible?”

Kent: “Man, I don’t know, you mean...well, everybody’s a sinner, even, I see where you are going.”

Interviewer: “Do we have to sin? Do we have to be sinners or is there a possibility of God’s grace working in us to free us from sin?”

Kent: “Not, man I don’t know, not completely. The only one who was completely free from sin was Jesus, of course.”

Kent finds the notion that a Christian can be free from sin quite extraordinary.

Kent continues: “I think all sin is from the Devil. To me, even after sanctification or you reach a point where you no longer are sinning, that to me means like the Devil totally gave up on trying to convince you to sin anymore, and I just don’t think the Devil is ever going to give up on trying to convince people to sin.”

Eventually, as Kent reasoned his way through the question he conceded [to himself] that it is technically “possible” to live free from sin, primarily because of the biblical truth that “all things are possible” with Christ. But, while theoretically possible, it is highly unlikely. He goes on, “Let me say, I will say it’s possible, but it’s not likely. I say it’s possible, because all things are possible with Christ. It’s not likely because we’re human and the Devil, he’s pretty sneaky, pretty tricky. He does what he can; and ‘Boy!’ if you get somebody to the point that you’re talking about, that’s, I mean, that’s impressive.” For Kent people can’t be free from sin primarily because they are “human.”

Somehow sin is intricately connected with being human. Yet, another reason it is highly unlikely people will be holy is because the Devil has power over us. The Devil has power to influence our minds. “The Devil is so tricky,” he says, “and powerful,” that “he could even trick you into thinking you’re not sinning when you are.”

Kent finds it hard to imagine the possibility of a person living even relatively free from sin. His practical rationality is informed by theological understandings of sin, the nature of humanness, and his view of the Devil. But also, significantly, his own personal experience is a factor. His own reasoning informed as it is by his understanding of the Bible, and the range of possibilities in his own life, clearly shape his beliefs about holiness.² His religious narrative makes it virtually impossible for him to even imagine the possibility of being holy, or in any way free from sin. This skepticism characterizes the Evangelical view of holiness.

Why did Kent join the Church of the Nazarene if he does not really understand or agree with one of its primary doctrines? For him the Church of the Nazarene, or the church he attends, is not really much different from other Protestant churches he’s attended. The Mennonite church, the Evangelical Free church, and the Nazarene church are, in his experience and understanding, essentially the same. Each has maybe one or two peculiarities, but in the main they are theologically the same.

Kent’s view, that most Evangelical denominations believe essentially the same, is certainly s certainly reminiscent of Don Metz’ complaint that most Nazarenes do not see

²Kent is certainly someone who diverges from the “traditional” characterization of holiness, but who cannot be said to do so because of the influence of secularization. His reasons are personal and religious!

themselves as having a different identity than those in other denominations. Whatever differences there might be are understood to be minor and relate to “peripheral” beliefs.

Paula

Paula became a Christian as a little child in Vacation Bible School in the Baptist church. She was raised in the Baptist church and attended there as an adult until 14 years ago. She became a member of the Nazarene church in 1998. How did it come about that she left the Baptist church of her youth and joined the Church of the Nazarene? Paula had gone through a divorce. Her husband, also a member of the Baptist church, divorced her and married another woman. Paula struggled deeply with how a self-professed Christian man could follow through with a divorce, knowing that it was not God’s will. For Paula there was only one reason for divorce, and that was marital unfaithfulness. And she knew, and her husband knew, that she had never been unfaithful. This did not deter him from divorcing her. Paula tried to reason with him and even appealed to his Christian convictions. How could he do this and disobey God? He responded by saying that he knew it was against God’s will, but he would ask forgiveness when he was ready. Apparently, in his mind, God would forgive him of this sin. Paula struggled with, and continues to struggle with, how God could allow such a blatant act of sin.

Not long after the divorce Paula moved a short distance away and began looking for another church to attend. She tried many Baptist churches but “didn’t feel a connection.” What was she experiencing at that time? “I was really struggling at that point with my whole relationship with God, and with other Christians. I felt a lot of judgmental issues, you know, because I was divorced and that set me apart.” An old

school friend who attended the Church of the Nazarene invited Paula to try out the church and when she did she “instantly felt like we could be a part of something here.”

For Paula, being a Christian means having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. She prefers this description of herself over any other. While Paula concedes that religious labels do help in some way to distinguish beliefs, she prefers not using them.

Paula does see herself as a Nazarene. What does it mean to be a Nazarene for her? She says, “I think the holiness issue is a big thing, that as a Nazarene I try to live a life of holiness – not that I can ever attain that completely, but God calls me to try to live apart from what the rest of the world sets as priorities.” For Paula this is not much different from what she heard in the Baptist church. But, there was one major issue that Paula had to get resolved before she could feel comfortable being a member of the Church of the Nazarene, and that was “eternal security.” Paula had grown up being taught that Christians are eternally secure in their faith, and that no Christian could lose their salvation for any reason. She knew that Nazarenes did not believe this.

Paula: “One of the big issues I had when I first started coming to the Nazarene church from the Baptist was the issue of eternal security.”

Interviewer: “Really? How did you resolve this issue?”

Paula: “Because I had always been taught that the Nazarenes didn’t believe in eternal security and the Baptists were very straight forward and said, ‘Once you’re saved, you’re always saved. You can’t lose your salvation.’ So, I was kind of curious and had to sit down with Pastor Wood [the previous Nazarene pastor] and really discussed that because it bothered me, before I could join the church, and having come from the background of being taught that I would never lose my salvation no matter what. And over the years I had talked with some Nazarenes that said, ‘Well if you do certain things you could lose your salvation’ type of thing and that just really bothered me.”

Interviewer: “How did you work through that? You are a member so you must have worked through that in some way. How did you resolve that in your own mind?”

Paula: “I think it was in the end it was the explanation that Pastor Wood gave me, and, in my mind the way he explained it was more like there was a good possibility that if you were to lose your salvation it was because you were never really saved to begin with, that you just kind of emotionally accepted something but didn’t whole-heartedly accept it.”

Interviewer: “I see, alright. And that helped you?”

Paula: “Yes, very much.”

Paula had to find a way to reconcile the religious narrative of her Baptist past with that of her new-found church. While life circumstances had brought her to the Nazarene church, certain religious and theological issue had to be resolved for her to embrace that identity, feel a part of the church and to feel free to join. Given the significant role the pastor plays as spokesperson for the denomination, Paula was able to negotiate with him regarding a technical theological issue, eternal security. Paula had to resolve the tension in her own mind. Pastor Wood’s concession helped her find a way to join.

A similar kind of negotiation was necessary as Paula began to learn about the Nazarene doctrine of holiness and “entire sanctification.” When asked how she understood holiness, Paula responded:

Trying through the Holy Spirit to live a holy life. A life that, where you don’t have to sin, that you have a choice. And that you can, if you are really living with the Holy Spirit in you, you’re constantly trying to attain holiness and make the right choices.

Paula responds with skepticism about the possibility of living out holiness in the Christian life.

Interviewer: “Is this notion important for you? Do you try to live this out?”

Paula: “Yes.”

Interviewer: “Is it possible for someone to be holy?”

Paula: “Perfectly holy? No! But it’s possible to try to work toward that goal.”

Interviewer: “You said, ‘Not perfectly holy.’ Why is it that humans can’t be perfectly holy?”

Paula: “Because we still have a sin nature.”

Interviewer: “So, you talk about a sin nature? What is the sin nature?”

Paula: “It’s the fact that we’re born with sin in our life, and apart from God we’re sinners.”

Interviewer: “How did you learn about the idea of sin nature? Did you hear this in the Baptist church?”

Paula: “Yes, but it’s also because of what I do. I studied a lot of psychology, and watched all kinds of people, from babies to death, and know that there’s just this in-born nature that causes us to want to choose the wrong things.”

Interviewer: “So, if Baptists talk about holiness, how do Nazarenes talk about it differently than Baptists, or do they?”

Paula: “I don’t really think they do.”

Holiness, for Paula, is “trying through the Holy Spirit to live a holy life.” The characteristic theme of the holy life is “striving.” While open to the possibility of living relatively free from sin, she is hesitant about any sort of perfectionism or absolute holiness. Her rationale for this is her belief in original sin. Human beings are born with original sin and are never free from its effects. Not only is original sin a religious idea she learned while in the Baptist church, it is also something she finds corroborated in everyday life. Her observations and experiences of life itself are, in her mind, proof of the reality of original sin, and, on this basis, she concludes that it is impossible to live fully free from sin.

Arnie

Arnie, an 86 year old retired meat cutter, clearly exhibits a “holiness” identity. His story, however, is not typical of those I talked with in these three churches. Arnie grew up Catholic. He attended parochial school and he and his family faithfully attended Catholic Mass. Gradually, Arnie became disaffected with the “ritualism” of his Catholic

tradition and began to yearn for a more vital faith. When Arnie was 48 years old he had attended a Catholic Mass and in front of the church was a picture of Jesus Christ.

Looking at that picture he said to himself, ‘God, I want to know you more.’ He became involved in the charismatic movement within the Catholic church and was “born again.”³

Arnie persistently attended services and prayer meetings held by a Charismatic priest in his local parish. Unable to make it one night to a Wednesday evening prayer group meeting, Arnie decided to have his own prayer time and to begin to read the Bible. He had heard the Bible read during Catholic Mass and had listened to the homilies given by the Priest, but he had never read it himself. Arnie had heard that in the Gospel of John “was a lot of love” so he started there first. He had been saying to himself and to his family and friends that he wanted to know God more. He prayed to God, “God, I want to know you more.” Opening to the Gospel of John, Arnie read the first verse, “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.”

Immediately, Arnie felt that the Holy Spirit revealed to him that if you want to know God you can know him in Jesus. From that point on he began praising Jesus and he became filled with the Holy Spirit, an experience that was palpable and dynamic. He says, “I could feel the joy filling my heart.” It is this experience that Arnie uses to validate his faith. He says, “I know my faith is real because He [God in Jesus] touched me.” After this experience Arnie says he “had a hunger for the Bible.” He began reading the Bible voraciously, and he says, “It hasn’t ceased even today.”

³Arnie clearly represents the kind of person who was the focus of the research of Mary Jo Neitz who studied the Charismatic movement in the Catholic church. The conversion process described by Neitz suggested the gradual replacement of one “root reality” for another. Arnie’s similar practical rational process suggests that Neitz’ analysis is corroborated in my own research.

Arnie stayed in the Charismatic movement for seven years. During that time he began to compare what he was being taught to what he was reading in the Bible. He began to see a discrepancy between what was taught him in the Catholic church and what he was reading in the Bible. On this basis Arnie began objecting to the veneration of Mary and prayer to the saints, as well as the doctrine of transubstantiation.⁴

I asked Arnie why the Bible was so important to him. He said, as a Catholic attending Mass he had no concern for reading the Bible, but after being born again he found an interest in reading Scripture. He attributes his interest in the Bible to the influence of the Holy Spirit in his life.

Over time Arnie began to realize that he needed to leave the Catholic church, but unfamiliar with the Protestant tradition, he was unsure of where to attend. Over the next few years Arnie tried many churches in search for a church to call home. Because of his new found belief in the importance and centrality of the Bible for faith, the primary criterion he used to judge which church to attend was “do they preach the Bible?” Arnie began attending a Methodist church not far from his home. The pastor was a retired Assemblies of God minister. It was here that Arnie heard preached the understanding of holiness that he had discovered in the Bible. Here he found preached by the Assemblies of God pastor what he had read for himself, the doctrine of complete sanctification. During that time Arnie purchased the 14 volume set of *The Works of John Wesley* and began reading about Wesley’s life and theology. He remained in that church until the pastor left and a new pastor came in, who was Methodist. Again, Arnie compared what

⁴Transubstantiation is the Catholic belief that in the Mass the bread and wine miraculously become the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ, thereby validating the actual presence of Christ in the Mass.

this pastor taught to what he believed was in the Scripture and found discrepancies. He left and began attending an Assemblies of God church and was there for seven years. During that time Arnie began talking about his belief in Christian perfection. Since the Assemblies of God also placed a high premium on Scripture, Arnie believed that if he appealed to the Bible then he could show them the basis of his belief in total sanctification. One of the Assemblies of God pastors began to confront Arnie and to chastise him for having these views, and many of the believers in the Assemblies of God church “came against” him and said that they did not believe in total sanctification. Disappointed, Arnie left the Assemblies of God church and visited many churches in the hope of finding a “theological” home. After trying a Congregational church for a time, he happened to attend the Emmaus Nazarene church and there met a pastor that held to the 19th century narrative of holiness. This pastor, according to Arnie, taught holiness and “reinforced his belief in holiness.”

What does Arnie believe about holiness? For him holiness is “freedom from sin,” and “being filled with God’s love.” Arnie was one of the few Nazarenes interviewed to refer to a positive vision of holiness. Having read the sermons and letters of John Wesley, Arnie believed that he had found a theology that was faithful to the Bible as he read it. He says, “Yes, when I was in the Methodist church I became acquainted with Wesley’s teaching. When I read his sermons I said, ‘Boy, is he right on, right on.’ To this day I’m a Wesleyan.”

Arnie, in his search for holiness, attended many churches after his exodus from the Catholic church. In many places Arnie went he encountered opposition to the notion of perfection in the Christian life. We have seen that nearly all the other Nazarenes

interviewed rejected the possibility of perfection in this life. How does Arnie justify his beliefs in holiness? The answer lies not in his appropriation of Wesley, but, rather, in his reading of the biblical text. The opposition Arnie faced led him to justify his beliefs by an appeal to an interpretation of Scripture. His analytic skills became sharpened as he listened to, weighed, and reasoned with the religious narratives he heard in each church. Over time Arnie began to develop a nuanced method of biblical interpretation. He purchased books that presented a methodology of reading and interpreting the text. For Arnie, the primary task is to discern the flow of the text, or the argument of the biblical writers. He contrasts and compares texts to determine the right interpretation. All of the texts Arnie emphasizes are “holiness” texts, those passages that he thinks pertain to Christian perfection.

Arnie’s concern for grounding his beliefs and his faith in a biblical interpretation, and his skill in reading the text far exceeded that of any lay Nazarene interviewed. Yet, it would be incorrect to say that Arnie’s religious narrative is a clear example of any of the Nazarene denominational narratives with which I deal in this study. In spite of the fact that Arnie calls himself a Wesleyan, and has embraced the Church of the Nazarene, and while many of the images, themes, and plots from the denominational narratives can be seen in his story, Arnie uses numerous images that do not resonate with the Nazarene theological tradition. In many ways, though, Arnie exemplifies the theory of identity construction I depicted in earlier chapters. The resources Arnie uses to construct his own religious identity are those religious narratives he encountered in the many local congregations he visited, but the identity he constructed certainly was shaped by his own personal experience and biographical narrative.

A Question of Holiness Identity

These holiness narratives reflect the lived religious lives of six Nazarenes who are members of the Church of the Nazarene. They are personal and autobiographical. In their stories, the first hints of varieties of holiness identity emerge. Yet, personal religious stories are not just individual and personal. If, with Ammerman and Roof, we accept the notion that the religious stories of individuals also include aspects of broader cultural stories, which “connect our sense of self with the larger social order and anchor us in a meaningful context, in time and space,”⁵ then we must imagine how the cultural and social forces shape and influence holiness identity. Certainly, as we have already seen, secularization and cultural accommodation are possible explanations of these holiness identities, because social influences work to shape self identity. In the following sections, I look at these Nazarenes as a whole and ask whether they fit the picture of secularized Christians who have accommodated to contemporary culture.

General Characteristics

In this section I shift from my focus on these six individual holiness stories to include the larger group of individuals, within the three Nazarene churches I mentioned, who participated in this study. What can we say about these Nazarenes taken as a whole? I begin with a general characterization comparing them to the U.S. population in general and Nazarenes nationally. In order to facilitate the contrast, I compare the findings of this study with the portrait of American religious affiliation presented by the CUNY

⁵Here is an instance in which we see the influence of Clifford Geertz. Wade Clark Roof, *A Generation of Seekers: The Spiritual Journeys of the Baby Boom Generation* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), 31.

Survey of American Affiliation conducted from April 1989 to April 1990,⁶ which includes both the general U.S. population and Nazarenes. **Table 2.1** displays the comparative data.

I begin with how Nazarenes in this study compare with Americans in general. First, as in most American religious groups, there is a slight female majority. This present study follows that trend, but at 57.3 percent includes slightly more female respondents. Second, these three Nazarene churches include a larger baby boom population (born between 1946 and 1964) than in the broader society. The baby boomer cohort in the general population is just over 21 percent. In the churches in this study, baby boomers make up about 36 percent of the population. At the same time there are fewer younger adults in these churches taken together. Thus, it appears that in these churches there is an aging boomer population that is not being replaced with younger adults of the next generation. Third, the Nazarenes in this study are less diverse than the general U.S. population. In the present study there were no Blacks or other non-white, non-hispanics. While the present study included a small Hispanic population the number was significantly lower than in the general population.

⁶The following data is drawn from the CUNY Survey of American Religious Affiliation conducted from April 1989 through April 1990. It was prepared for the Church Growth Division of the Church of the Nazarene by Bill M. Sullivan, Director. It is presented in report form by Kenneth E. Crow for the Association of Nazarene Sociologists and Researchers, <http://www.nazarene.org/ansr/articles/1990s/naz.html>.

Table 2.1 Comparative Demographic Data (1989-90 CUNY Study and Present)

	Adult Americans	Adult Nazarenes	Present Study
Gender			
Male	47.5%	47.3%	42.7%
Female	52.5	52.7	57.3
Age Distributions			
25 or under	16.9%	16.2%	19.6%
26-44	41.9	48.2	21.7
45-64	21.1	26.4	36.4
65 and over	21.0	9.2	22.4
Ethnic Identification			
Hispanic	5.6%	0.3%	2.8%
White	77.5	97.4	97.2
Black	13.5	1.0	0.0
Other	2.5	1.6	0.0
Marital Status			
Single	21.3%	13.8%	21.8%
Married	62.0	68.8	68.3
Separated	2.1	0.8	* ⁷
Widowed	7.3	8.1	4.2
Divorced	6.9	8.6	5.6
Formal Education			
< High School	21.4%	20.0%	10.5%
High School	35.6	44.7	11.9
Technical School	1.7	0.5	N/A
Some College	21.1	17.1	25.9
College Grad	13.8	12.5	28.7
Graduate School	5.9	3.9	23.1
Employment			
Employed, full-time	52.6%	50.1%	45.7%
Employed, part-time	11.7	15.9	15.7
Retired	17.3	15.3	22.3
Homemaker/student	13.0	13.5	13.2
Unemployed	4.3	3.1	3.0
Annual Household Income			
< \$15,000.00	27%	28%	11.4%
\$15-24,999.00	19.2	23.1	11.4
\$25-39,999.00	21.5	26.5	16.3
\$40-74,999.00	17.4	13.3	38.3
\$75,000.00>	4.8	1.3	21.0

⁷Divorced and separated are included together.

Fourth, marital status shows a general agreement with the statistics of the general population.⁸ The Nazarenes in the present study have a slightly lower divorce and separation rate than the national average.

Fifth, this sample of Nazarenes diverges fairly radically from the general U.S. population (and Nazarenes nationally) in socio-economic status. For example, whereas 22.2 percent of the general population earned more than \$40,000.00 annually, 59.3 percent of Nazarenes in this study do so. These are Nazarenes who are financially well off, compared to the general U.S. population and Nazarenes in the nation as a whole.

This is accentuated by the types of occupations Nazarenes have. While I do not include types of occupations for the general U.S. population, **Table 2.2** presents the distribution of occupations for Nazarenes in this study. Over half of these Nazarenes work in white-collar jobs. For example, occupations in business and education predominate. Over 19 percent of Nazarenes work in blue-collar jobs, such as in manufacturing.

Table 2.2 Distribution of Occupations Among Members

Occupation	Percentage of Members
Education	27.3%
Business	24.2
Manufacturing	15.6
Medical	11.7
Government	5.5
Homemaker	3.9
Ministry/Clergy	3.9

⁸A recent Pew survey suggests that there is a larger percentage of Nazarenes who are married than in the general U.S. populations. See <http://religions.pewforum.org/pdf/table-status-by-denomination.pdf> (accessed January 18, 2010).

IT (Information Tech)	3.1
Transportation	2.3
Disabled/Welfare	1.6
Service Economy	0.8
Total	100%
(Number of cases)	(128)

Note: Number of missing cases = 15.

Another difference between Nazarenes and the general population is in formal education (refer to **Table 2.1**). The Nazarenes in the current study differ from the general U.S. population in amount of education. For example, whereas 34.9 percent of Americans have some college or college degree, 54.6 percent of Nazarenes in this study do so. In addition, the number of Nazarenes with graduate education, 23.1 percent, is substantially higher compared to the 5.9 percent of Americans who have graduate study.

In summary, then, these Nazarenes are similar to the general population regarding gender, age, and marital status, but they differ substantially in ethnicity, education, and income. These Nazarenes are less diverse, more educated, and enjoy a higher socio-economic status.

How do the Nazarenes in the present study compare to Nazarenes nationally? One difference is in age distributions. In the three Nazarene churches involved in this study there are fewer young adults in the 26-44 age group than among Nazarenes nationally. Whereas 21.7 percent of Nazarenes fit that age group, 48.2 percent do so nationally. We see a corresponding difference in those Nazarenes aged 65 and over. For example, 22.4 percent of Nazarenes are over 65 compared to only 9.2 percent among Nazarenes nationally.

Another way Nazarenes in this study compare to Nazarenes nationally is in formal education. Adult Nazarenes nationally are much closer to the U.S. population than to Nazarenes in this study. While only 29.6 percent of national Nazarenes have any college or a degree, 54.6 percent of Nazarenes in this study have this level of education.

Finally, the Nazarenes in this study receive a higher annual household income than Nazarenes nationally. While fewer Nazarenes nationally make over \$40,000.00 than the general U.S. population (22.2 percent and 14.6 percent respectively), the number of Nazarenes in this study who make over \$40,000.00 is substantially more at 59.3 percent.

It would seem then that the Nazarenes in this study, compared to the general U.S. population and to Nazarenes nationally, enjoy a higher socio-economic status and would seem to fit almost perfectly the demographics of persons who we should expect to be secularized or secularizing. As we have already seen, earlier studies of identity change suggested that higher socio-economic status tended to correlate with more liberal accomodationist characteristics. But is this true of these Nazarenes? What is the relationship between these demographic variables and matters of religion and faith?

Faith and Commitment

One indication of accommodation is that individuals exhibit lower levels of faith and commitment. Do these Nazarenes exhibit doubt about the existence of God, or whether God is active in their lives, or do they consider religious faith and commitment to be unimportant to their religious identity? Is church attendance, an often used indicator of commitment, only incidental to these Nazarenes? While the amount of time spent in religious services is used as a significant indicator, so also is the amount of

money individuals give to their church. Do these Nazarenes give financially to support their churches? Higher levels of time and giving would indicate lower levels of accommodation and secularization. These questions will be addressed in the following section.

I begin with the most obvious question: how strong is their belief in God? Do these Nazarenes have any doubts about whether God exists or not? **Table 2.3** presents the distribution of responses to the question of belief in God.

Nazarenes overwhelmingly have a strong belief in God. Yet 7.9 percent indicate some measure of doubt. It is important to note that these few doubters tend to be baby-boomers and to have been members of another church or denomination before joining the Church of the Nazarene.

Table 2.3 Distribution of Responses to Question of Belief in God

Strength of Belief	Percentage of Members
Don't believe in God	0.0%
Don't know if God exists, and don't believe there is a way to find out.	0.0
Don't believe in a personal God, but believe in Higher power.	0.0
Believe in God sometimes, but not at other times.	0.7
Have doubts, but do believe God exists.	7.9
Know God really exists, no doubts.	91.4
Total (Number of cases)	100% (139)

Note: Number of missing cases = 4.

How committed are these Nazarenes to their faith? One indicator of commitment is how important religious faith is to them.⁹ **Table 2.4** shows that ninety-seven percent of these Nazarenes consider their religious faith to be very important in their lives. Faith constitutes a large part, even primary part, of their self-identity. This was corroborated also in the in-depth interviews. One respondent, in the in-depth interviews, emphasized how much his faith mattered to him:

My Christian faith is very important to me. I can't imagine how people live in this world without faith. God has been there for me. He's never failed me.

Phrases like this were repeated again and again during my time spent talking with Nazarenes.

Table 2.4 Distribution of Importance of Religious Faith Among Members

Level of Importance	Percentage of Members
Very important	97.9%
Somewhat important	1.4
Somewhat unimportant	0.7
Total	100%
(Number of cases)	(142)

Note: Number of missing cases = 1.

As we shall see this translates into high levels of commitment in group participation, too. **Table 2.5** shows that 92.9 percent say that church attendance is very important to them. As Mary stated:

I don't know what I would do without my church family. When I go to church I find Christians who believe the same thing I believe, that Jesus Christ is my

⁹There are, of course, other ways. For a good discussion on ways to test group participation as an indication of religious strength, see Christian Smith's, *American Evangelicalism*, 32-34.

savior and God loves us and wants to save us. I can't imagine not going to church. I don't know how people in the world who don't have Jesus can make it. The Bible tells us not to forget to keep meeting together. It's God's will and his way is best.

For Mary, church is a place where she hears the gospel preached, learns more about Jesus, finds encouragement, and is able to participate in the lives of others of like faith.

Church is not only about spiritual matters, but there is a very important social side.

Table 2.5 Distribution of Importance of Church Attendance Among Members

Level of Importance	Percentage of Members
Very important	92.9%
Somewhat important	7.1
Total (Number of cases)	100% (140)

Note: Number of missing cases = 3.

Church is also a place Nazarenes find friends and social support. Participation in the life of the congregation appears to be a vital part of the lives of these Nazarenes.

But, the attitude that faith is important also translates into action. Another way these Nazarenes demonstrate faith commitment is by looking at how often members actually attend church. **Table 2.6** shows that almost half of these Nazarenes attend church services at least 3 or 4 times per month. This alone signals a high level of faithfulness. But Nazarene motivation exceeds even this level of commitment. A significant 35.3 percent attend 8 or more times per month. Given this level of motivation and commitment it is unlikely that these are secularized individuals who see religion as peripheral to their lives.

Table 2.6 Distribution of Number of Services Attended per Month Among Members

Services Attended	Percentage of Members
1-2	0.7%
3-4	47.8
5-7	16.2
8+	35.3
Total (Number of cases)	100% (136)

Note: Number of missing cases=7.

Religious life, and the social practice of church attendance, is an essential and predominant core of their self-identity. This is accentuated by the fact that over 90 percent of Nazarenes say that faith is very important to them. Only 7 percent say that faith is somewhat important, and 1.8 percent say that faith is somewhat unimportant.

Not only do these Nazarenes demonstrate a high level of commitment to their faith as evidenced in attendance at church services, but they also show this in their financial giving too.

Table 2.7 Distribution of Annual Contribution Among Members

Amount Given	Percentage of Members
Less than \$100	5.7%
\$100-599	9.8
\$600-1199	6.5
\$1200-1799	17.9
\$1800-2399	5.7
\$2400+	54.5
Total (Number of cases)	100% (123)

Note: Of the 143 members, 20 did not respond to this question.

Table 2.7 shows the amount given by members each year. About half of all members give over \$200 dollars per month to their church. And 72.4 percent give over \$1200 per year.

While these Nazarenes are highly committed attendees and givers, they are not all lifelong members of their congregations. **Table 2.8** suggests that a large number of these Nazarenes are relatively new to their churches. Nearly one-third (31.4 percent) have attended for less than 5 years. This may place a great deal of pressure on the socialization process.

Table 2.8 Distribution of Attending Years Among Members

Attending Years	Percentage of Members
0-5	31.4%
6-10	23.4
11-15	12.4
16-20	8.8
21-25	5.8
26-30	6.6
31-40	2.2
41+	8.5
Total	100%
(Number of cases)	(137)

Note: Number of missing cases = 6.

To this point we have discovered a well educated, white, and financially well-to-do, population of Nazarenes who exhibit a strong faith, and are highly committed, in spite of the fact that many of them appear to be relatively new to the church. Yet, there is something more going on here and it emerged during the in-depth interviews. Almost all of the members interviewed wanted to make sure that I knew that they made a distinction between their Christian identity and any denominational identity they might have.

Nazarenes made a distinction between satisfaction with their local congregation and agreement with their denomination. Most of the Nazarenes I interviewed explicitly downplayed their denominational identity. For example, Mary, a life-long Nazarene, and representative of many that I talked to, said, “It’s not about labels. I am a Christian first and a Nazarene second.” And, Ron, a life-long Nazarene kept putting great emphasis on being a “Christ-ian,” which for him meant one who has been forgiven, saved by Jesus’ blood. Indeed, for many Nazarenes I interviewed, it was Christian first and Nazarene second, if at all. I found very few Nazarenes who wanted to talk very much about being a part of a denomination, or of being “Nazarene.”

Let us follow-up on this question. How do Nazarenes, in general, feel about their denomination? If Nazarenes moved to another location would they seek out a Nazarene church? How committed are they in finding and attending a church of their own denomination? Two questions were asked on the survey that attempted to gauge salience of denominational identity. The first asked Nazarene members if they moved to another city or town where there was no Nazarene church what they would do. **Table 2.9** shows that a large number of these members, 56.7 percent, have a high degree of commitment to the holiness tradition and would seek out a church with similar beliefs even if only 12.1 percent would go to the extreme and travel as far as necessary to find a Nazarene church. So, it seems that there is a high level of commitment to a holiness identity. Yet, not everyone shares that same commitment. For example, for 17.7 percent of Nazarenes denomination does not matter, nor, apparently, does a holiness identity matter. These, combined with another 12.8 percent who would possibly join another denomination,

point to the presence of members for whom holiness and denominational identities are less salient.

Table 2.9 Distribution of Commitment to Attend Nazarene Church Among Members

Response to Denominational Commitment	Percentage of Members
Attend a church of another denomination, and possibly join.	12.8%
Attend a church of another denomination, but not join.	0.7
Find a church of a denomination close to Nazarene belief.	56.7
Find suitable church, the denomination does not matter.	17.7
Travel as far as necessary to attend a Nazarene church.	12.1
Total (Number of cases)	100% (141)

Note: Number of missing cases = 2.

These are signals that point to the reality that holiness and Nazarene identities are not universal or uniform.

A second question on the survey asked how these members saw themselves in relationship to their Nazarene identity. **Table 2.10** shows that the vast majority, nearly 65 percent, have a strong degree of commitment to a Nazarene identity. Another 27.1 percent are committed to a holiness identity. Of course, not all members see themselves in this way. Fifteen percent could easily be Evangelical and 13.6 percent, while Nazarene now, could easily attend another denomination. And, 6.4 percent do not have a

Nazarene identity. Thus, 34 percent have an unshakeable commitment to being Nazarene and/or holiness.

Table 2.10 Distribution of Commitment to Nazarene Identity Among Members

Level of Commitment	Percentage of Members
I will always be a Nazarene.	64.7%
Committed to Nazarene, but might attend other holiness church someday.	27.1
Committed to Nazarene, but might attend evangelical church someday.	15.0
I am Nazarene now, but could easily attend a church of another denomination.	13.6
I am not really a Nazarene.	6.4
Total (Number of cases)	100% (140)

Note: Number of missing cases = 3.

This strong commitment to the denomination is certainly an indication that participating in a religious community is an essential part of the religious identity of everyday Nazarenes.

A similar minority say that they are not sure that their beliefs agree with the denomination. As we can see in **Table 2.11**, 64.7 percent say their beliefs agree very closely with those of the denomination of which they are members. The fact that 31.7 percent indicate that their beliefs agree only somewhat closely with the denomination indicates a measure of difference that I investigate in this study. Personal interviews with

Nazarenes suggested that the greatest differences among Nazarenes are those involving beliefs about holiness and sanctification. Whatever difference there might be, however, 90 percent of Nazarenes suggest that the church should emphasize its beliefs more. Thus, in spite of the fact that members may disagree with some of what the denomination teaches, they do think that the denomination should promote its beliefs.

Table 2.11 Distribution of Views on Belief Agreement Among Members

Belief Agreement	Percentage of Members
Very closely	64.7%
Somewhat close	31.7
Somewhat different	3.6
Total	100%
(Number of cases)	(139)

Note: Number of missing cases = 4.

Yet, it is the measure of difference on the issue of holiness beliefs that will be the focus of the next section. In what ways do beliefs and practices differ among Nazarene members? Are Nazarenes more liberal or more conservative? Do they have differing views on the Bible?

Religious Beliefs and Practice

Clearer indications of variations of identity can be seen when the discussion turns specifically to beliefs and practices, particularly when these members are asked what they think about the beliefs of the church on the theological spectrum. **Table 2.12** presents the views of Nazarene members on whether they think the church is too liberal or too conservative. The vast majority of members think the Church of the Nazarene is about

where it should be theologically. While this does seem to corroborate earlier studies that suggest there is a homogenous core, there are indications that there may not be as much agreement as first appears. Collectively, counting those who think the church is too liberal and those who think the church is too conservative, 18.5 percent have problems with the current theological position of the Church of the Nazarene.

Table 2.12 Distribution of Views on Theological Spectrum Among Members

Theological View	Percentage of Members
Much too liberal	0.8%
Too liberal	7.7
About where it should be	81.5
Too Conservative	9.2
Much too conservative	0.8
Total	100%
(Number of cases)	(130)

Note: Number of missing cases = 13.

There is a great deal of concern, among church leaders, over the influence of Fundamentalism on the Church of the Nazarene. One indication of Fundamentalism is the emphasis on the inerrancy of Scripture. How these Nazarenes view the Bible may contribute to the variety of holiness identities in these churches. **Table 2.13** presents the distribution of views of the Bible. If we take the last view of the Bible as indicating a tendency towards Fundamentalism, then a large number of Nazarenes would fit that type. Fundamentalism is a trans-denominational phenomenon. Just as Nazarenes can be identified as Evangelicals, so they may be identified as Fundamentalists. At just over 37 percent, the view that the Bible is the actual Word of God and is to be taken literally has a significant presence in the church. It may be the case that one's view of the Bible may be

a better indicator than one's self-selected religious identity whether one is Fundamentalist or not. In contrast, 60.7 percent of members see the Bible as both inspired and as having some human error.

Table 2.13 Distribution of Views of the Bible Among Members

Belief About Bible	Percentage of Members
Bible valuable, but not really God's Word	0.0%
Bible record of many people's responses to God, churches need to interpret it for themselves to find Bible's moral teaching	2.1
The Bible is the inspired Word of God and its basic moral and religious teaching are clear and true, even if it reflects some human error.	60.7
The Bible is the actual Word of God and is to be taken literally.	37.1
Total (Number of cases)	100% (140)

Note: Number of missing cases = 3.

The Nazarene church takes a decidedly different view of the Bible, intentionally diverging from a more Fundamentalist view of inerrancy.¹⁰ Yet, fully one-third of Nazarene members in these churches hold to a more conservative, even Fundamentalist view of the Bible.

¹⁰See Gay Leonard, ed., *Articles of Faith: What Nazarenes Believe and Why* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2005), 30.

Questions of Faith

The secularization of the Church of the Nazarene has been a source of concern for researchers. Secularized people would demonstrate a larger measure of doubt about their faith. We have already seen that these Nazarenes exhibit a strong belief that God exists, but what about other matters of faith? **Table 2.14** presents the distribution of responses to belief about God.

Table 2.14 Distribution of Frequency of Doubt Among Members

Frequency of Doubts	Percentage of Members
Never	27.1%
Sometimes	68.6
Often	2.9
Frequently	1.4
Total (Number of cases)	100% (140)

Note: Number of missing cases = 3.

At first glance it would seem that Nazarenes exhibit a significant measure of doubt about their faith, but this would draw the wrong conclusion. The in-depth interviews fill out this picture, however, and clarify exactly what kind of doubt is present. When these Nazarenes talk about having doubts they refer to the kinds of doubt that most Christians have when going through personal trial – does God love me, am I still in the middle of God’s will? And, why am I going through this difficult time? Many Nazarenes were willing to give examples of their doubt. For example, Mary talked about the doubts she had when her Christian husband told her he wanted a

divorce after 36 years of marriage. Mary's questions about God were, "If God was in control, why did he let this happen?" Even though Mary struggled with this question it did not cause her to doubt so as to lose her faith. Mary believed all the way along that God must have a good reason for allowing this to happen. Mary answered the theodicy question by affirming that, in her mind, the event did not question God's sovereignty. Also Mary wondered how a man could be a Christian for so long and do this kind of thing.

Joe also had doubts. Joe tells the story of his father-in-law, whom he believed to be an upright and Godly man. "One could expect no better servant of God," Joe said. But, his father-in-law, Jim, was involved in a "freak" accident. He had retired from his full-time job, and was working part-time as a crossing guard for the local school to keep busy. He liked serving others and saw this as a way to "get out of the house," make some money, and help others. Jim was standing near the stop sign on the corner and a garbage truck came by, as it passed the stop sign a metal rod sticking out from the truck hit the stop sign and drove it into his father-in-law's head and caused a concussion. He was in the hospital for months and Joe confessed he was angry at God for allowing this to happen to a good man.

Even though Nazarenes struggled with how a good God could allow such bad things to happen, they were able to reason through it, and, for the most part, I think there was a general consensus. For example, most of them resolved the tension by arguing that human beings are free, and that this freedom was given to them by God. Most also affirmed the possibility of "accidents" in life. But, when they concluded this, they were sure to express the belief that God knew all about what happened, it didn't "surprise"

God. God, they said, “allows” these things to happen, but does not cause them. It seemed to give Nazarenes a measure of comfort to know that everything that happens to them “passes by God first” and “He gives strength to overcome” their doubts. In spite of all, they affirmed that “God was in control.” Affirmation of God’s “sovereignty” was an occasion of comfort and assurance.

How do Nazarenes like Joe and Mary resolve their doubts? What resources do they draw on to continue to have faith? Do they emphasize their own personal resources, or do they look to more communal ones? **Table 2.15** presents the distribution of responses to how members resolve doubts.

Table 2.15 Distribution of Responses to Doubt Among Members

Response to Doubts	Percentage of Members
Go to pastor, ask advice	35.7%
Read Bible, determine for self	62.9
Use own religious experience as guide	30.7
Read denominational literature	10.7
(Number of cases)	(139)

Note: Number of missing cases = 4. Many respondents chose more than one option.

Most members, when faced with doubts, go to the Bible and decide for themselves how to answer the tough problems of faith. In a denomination that places a great premium on personal reading of the Bible and personal prayer, this is no surprise. Yet, nearly 36 percent would ask their pastor for advice. Again, this is no surprise, because the image of pastor as guide and authority still plays a role in congregational life. And, in a

denomination that places great emphasis on religious experience, that nearly 31 percent would look to their own experience for clues to resolving doubt is, again, no surprise.

Finding God's will for one's life is a common question in church life among Nazarenes. **Table 2.16** presents the distribution of responses to how members discover God's will for their lives. The two most common responses, knowing God's will through personal walk and seeking guidance by searching the Scriptures, offer no surprise to those who know the Nazarene tradition. Nazarenes have traditionally placed a great deal of emphasis on both means of discovering God's will. The belief that through personal Bible reading, prayer, and faith one can discover how to please God, pervades the historical tradition.

Table 2.16 Distribution of Responses to Knowing God's Will Among Members

How to Know God's Will	Percentage of Members
From teaching of local church	22.1%
Consider Nazarene doctrine, or consult Nazarene <i>Manual</i>	3.6
Consult with other Christians	17.9
Think through issue for oneself	10.0
Know God's will in heart through personal walk with God	61.4
Seek guidance by searching Scriptures	50.7
Don't Know	2.9
(Number of cases)	(140)

Note: Number of missing cases = 3. Respondents were allowed to choose more than one.

The response of thinking through the issue for oneself, while most likely what many Nazarenes actually do, probably sounds too “rationalistic” for people to choose. And in a tradition that puts more emphasis on “heart” over “head,” it did not appear to appeal to many Nazarenes.

The previous two questions, what resources individuals may use to resolve doubts and by what means they find out God’s will for their lives, could also be seen as indicators of whether Nazarenes tend to be more individualistic or more communal in moral matters.¹¹ **Table 2.15** and **Table 2.16** both point to individual, rather than communal, sources of spiritual authority. Reading the Bible for oneself is the most common response, and that is not a surprising number given that there is little emphasis on community decision-making in the Nazarene tradition. Nazarenes are encouraged to read the Bible for themselves. The pastor has some measure of authority, and Nazarenes are willing to go to the pastor for counsel and advice. But those responses that represented more communal approaches were little used. In making moral decisions, few turn to the teaching of the local church, to denominational literature such as the *Manual*, or even to consulting with other Christians. While there is some communal representation here, Nazarenes generally do not appeal to the wisdom of the community to address the everyday moral questions they face. The Protestant pietistic emphasis on personal, even individualistic, reading of the Bible and the witness of the heart are part and parcel of traditional Nazarene identity.

¹¹This issue is an important one for the denomination. The issue of individualism in the church has been a growing concern. Ever since Robert Bellah’s *Habits of the Heart*, fears of growing individualism have predominated in the Church of the Nazarene. See Kent E. Brower and Andy Johnson, eds., *Holiness and Ecclesiology in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007).

Conclusion

What can we say about these Nazarenes? In spite of the fact that they are on the whole more financially well-off, and more educated than the general population, they do not seem to be secularized people. They exhibit strong faith in God and have a high degree of appreciation for faith and church attendance. They experience doubt, but not to the point that it interrupts their faith in God. In spite of the fact that there appears to be a significant number of Nazarenes who do not have a strong denominational identity, most do. Also, while for some Nazarenes denominational identity may not be a strong element of their identity, they exhibit a strong faith and trust in God. For many, holiness is still a vital aspect of their religious identity. These Nazarenes do appear to be more individualistic in their faith. Communal resources are less likely to be drawn on to answer matters of faith, resolving doubt, or knowing God's will.

We saw also that there may be signs that Nazarenes differ on matters of holiness belief and practice. Many indicated disagreement with the denomination over matters of belief, and many indicated that if they moved, they would not necessarily need to find a Nazarene church to attend. How does this play out in regard to specific holiness identities? This question will be explored in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

VARIETIES OF HOLINESS IDENTITY

If Nazarenes are changing in beliefs, what do they believe today that is different? What do they think and say about holiness? Are there any special beliefs or practices that might identify them today? Is the story of Nazarene identity one of fragmentation and change? Has Nazarene holiness identity diverged from the consensus out of which it emerged in the 19th century? Or, is there still some homogenous core that reflects a measure of agreement on beliefs and practices, and if so, what are some characteristics of this core? Is there still a common holiness identity in the Church of the Nazarene?

In this chapter, drawing on this project's in-depth interviews, focus groups, personal observation, and survey responses, I identify and describe the variety of contemporary holiness identities I discovered in three Nazarene churches. I explore the data and offer a typology of holiness identity. Allowing factor analysis to guide my initial interpretation, I supplement the description of the types with information gleaned from other sources. Using the in-depth interviews, focus groups and observations, I try to put names and faces to the more general descriptions of the types. Finally, I draw on my own eleven years' experience in the church as a pastor ministering to persons representing these holiness types. I trust that my own intuitions only add depth and nuance to these lived holiness identities.

Aspects of Holiness Narrative Identities¹

Religious identities, because they are formed and shaped by narratives, have multiple dimensions. I analyze three narrative components of holiness identity: the labels by which a religious identity is named, a guiding narrative depicting the means by which holiness is able to be achieved or not, and images or metaphors that give the holiness narrative depth and nuance.²

Self-selected Religious Identity

The first narrative component is what labels people use to describe themselves.³ I included in the survey, and followed up with questions in the in-depth interviews, the following religious categories: Fundamentalist, Evangelical, Wesleyan-holiness, Nazarene, mainline Protestant, and theologically liberal Christian. Participants were asked to choose the label that best described them from this rather expansive list. These labels refer primarily to what Christian Smith calls “historical religious traditions.”⁴ They are intended to allow survey respondents to locate themselves in terms of categories widely used in the culture. They do not primarily refer to denominational organizations.

¹I am aware of two major difficulties related to this study. First, it is difficult to research and discover the religion of individuals. For the methodological problems see Meredith G. McGuire, *Religion: The Social Context* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2002). Second, it is difficult to unravel the complex problems of operationalizing theological identities for social research. On this issue I was most helped by the discussions with Nancy Ammerman.

²There are, of course, other features of holiness identity, such as a definition of holiness, and the role of the Holy Spirit, but I do not deal with them in this study.

³On self-selection see Smith, *American Evangelicalism*, 233ff. This is a critical issue for Smith since the validity of his findings depend on this major assumption, that individuals are able to situate themselves both in denominational identity and with reference to “historical religious traditions” (p. 233).

⁴*Ibid.*

“Fundamentalist” refers to that historical tradition which emerged in the early 20th century as a reaction to the cultural challenges of modernity. Fundamentalists tend to view the Bible as having no errors (often calling themselves inerrantists) and place great importance on specific theological formulations of beliefs, such as the Trinity, two nature of Jesus Christ, salvation (justification) by faith alone, and pre-millennial eschatology, as criteria of orthodoxy. Some theologians and sociologists have suggested the possibility that certain Nazarenes identify themselves with this group.⁵

The label “Evangelical” can be understood in at least two ways. First, it may simply express the general pietistic emphasis on the need for a personal faith in Jesus Christ as savior, and the proclamation of that faith in evangelistic efforts. In this regard, Nazarenes have long been identified as being part of this broad religious stream of Evangelicalism,⁶ having been influenced by the pietistic strain which runs through Wesley to American Methodism and later forms of Wesleyanism. As a result Nazarenes have much in common with other pietistic groups such as Baptists, Charismatics, Pentecostals, and many other holiness groups. The term “Evangelical” may also refer to the development of a broad religious movement arising out of and as a reaction to Fundamentalism in the early to mid-20th century. This view of Evangelicalism refers

⁵See, for example, Ron Benefiel and Ken Crow, “Fundamentalism in the Church of the Nazarene: A Longitudinal Analysis of Social and Political Values,” Paper given at the ANSR Conference March 12, 2004; Stan Ingersol, “Strange Bedfellows: The Nazarenes and Fundamentalism,” *WTJ* 45 (Fall 2005): 31-45; Robert W. Smith, “Wesleyan Identity and the Impact of the Radical Right,” Paper given at ANSR Conference March 1996.

⁶Theologians such as Kenneth J. Collins have identified them as such, and sociologists such as Christian Smith have included them within the study of Evangelicalism. See, Kenneth J. Collins, *The Evangelical Moment: The Promise of an American Religion* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005) and Christian Smith, *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998).

more to broader-minded approaches to biblical studies and the use of critical approaches to biblical interpretation. For example, Evangelicals, more than Fundamentalists, are open to using such biblical studies tools such as form and source criticism. In addition, these Evangelicals are more open to seeing the human component in the origin and development of the Bible. Fundamentalists are more likely to see these developments as attacks on a divinely inspired text. This understanding of the term Evangelical may or may not resonate with Nazarenes depending on their view of the Bible and their broader experience in American religious culture.

Given the close connection historically between Wesleyanism and Evangelicalism, it will be important to see whether and how these narratives interrelate and shape holiness beliefs and practices among Nazarenes. Another reason I included this religious category is because recent research suggests that Evangelicalism contributes to the erosion of denominational identity,⁷ and I wondered if this were true for Nazarenes.

The term “Wesleyan-holiness” refers to that faith tradition which highlights the view of holiness and sanctification that emerged from the teaching of John Wesley and which was mediated through and by the American holiness movement of the 19th century. The label could be understood as an umbrella term which includes many specific groups with somewhat different views about holiness. For example, the Church of the Nazarene

⁷See in particular Gary B. McGee, “‘More Than Evangelical’: The Challenge of the Evolving Identity of the Assemblies of God” in *Church, Identity, and Change: Theology and Denominational Structures in Unsettled Times* edited by David A. Roozen and James R. Nieman (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 35-44. In this article McGee attributes the identification of the Assembly of God with Evangelicalism as the reason many Assemblies of God members are minimizing the denomination’s distinctive theology of tongues speaking as a sign of the Baptism with the Holy Spirit. A similar phenomenon may be occurring in the Church of the Nazarene regarding its distinctive doctrine of entire sanctification as radically dealing with sin. The issue is that when a denomination takes on a relatively broad religious identity such as Evangelical it tends to have the effect of minimizing its distinctive doctrines.

considers itself Wesleyan-holiness but differs from other Wesleyan-holiness groups in views about sanctification. In this sense it is a broader term than that of “Nazarene.”

The label “Nazarene,” then, would refer more narrowly to the specific expression of Wesleyan-holiness faith in the Church of the Nazarene. It would indicate an identification with emphasis on a distinct, discreet, experience of holiness called “entire sanctification,” which is understood to be instantaneous and the result of a religious experience called the baptism with the Holy Spirit. As I have already mentioned, the use of this label can be problematic, because the other religious labels used in this study refer to religious emphases or traditions. The label Nazarene could refer both to a faith tradition, and to a denomination. It may be the case that individuals who use this label to identify themselves mean by it that they are members in the Church of the Nazarene as a denomination, and not the faith tradition. Thus, a measure of ambiguity enters in. I try to minimize this problem by asking clarifying questions in the in-depth interviews.

The label “mainline Protestant” refers to the more established religious traditions that were predominant in the American context until the late 20th century. For many people it may simply mean that they think of themselves as “middle of the road” or “normal.” The label “liberal Christian,” on the other hand, is likely a signal that one belongs to the “left wing” of Christianity, placing oneself among the “progressives” in American religion. These two labels were included primarily because they were found in

previous studies on Nazarene identity, but there are indications that some Nazarenes might identify themselves with one or the other.⁸

How do Nazarenes identify themselves religiously? What labels best describe them? Labels are not much liked by Nazarenes. Most of those interviewed were reluctant to identify themselves using religious labels. Indeed, many did not really know what the labels meant. For example, few Nazarenes were able to explain what “Fundamentalism” or “Evangelicalism” meant. Nor were they able to say if they or the Church of the Nazarene was either of these. They were on more solid ground when it came to labels like “Nazarene,” however. Frequently, the Nazarenes interviewed claimed that the label “Christian” best described them. Only when they were asked to select a label would these Nazarenes decide which of these labels designated their religious identity. Even then many members made it quite clear to me that they wanted to be known as Christians first and Nazarenes second. There were exceptions, however. For example, Arnie, an 82 year old, retired meat cutter, who had converted from Catholicism late in his adulthood, made it well known that labels were extremely important. They are “belief indicators,” he says. For him they are important theological markers that distinguish one church from another. Sue, an elderly school teacher, who grew up in the Church of the Nazarene, also appreciated labels. “The label ‘Christian’ is too general,” she says. “The trouble I have with that [the label Christian] is that Christian is such a broad term. It covers anybody that is not Jewish, or not Buddhist, or not [something else]. They’re Christian, they believe that Jesus was the Christ, but you know, how deep

⁸See Christian Smith, *American Evangelicalism*, Appendix A for rationale and definition of these religious categories, 221-232.

does that go?” For Sue, labels indicate one’s depth of commitment to Jesus Christ. Yet Arnie and Sue were exceptions among these Nazarenes.

In spite of the initial apprehension about labels, however, when given options from which to choose, most Nazarenes were able to situate themselves using the descriptions I offered. The identity questionnaires distributed to three Nazarene churches asked individuals to select religious identity markers from a list. **Table 3.1** presents their responses.

Table 3.1 Distribution of Self-selected Religious Identities Among Members

Religious Identity	Percentage of Members
Fundamentalist	7.2%
Evangelical	37.4
Wesleyan-holiness	33.1
Nazarene	79.1
Mainline Protestant	2.9
Liberal Christian	4.3
Total	>100%
(Number of cases)	(143)

Note: Respondents were asked to choose all that apply to them therefore the total is greater than 100%.

It is evident that Nazarenes, when asked to choose, use a wide range of religious identities to describe themselves. One of the curious questions that arises out of this data, and may be an early indicator of variation and fragmentation, is why only 79 percent of members chose to identify themselves explicitly as Nazarene. They are, after all, “members” of the Church of the Nazarene. Does this indicate to some that by choosing the label “Nazarene” they are identifying with the religious tradition, or does it simply mean they attend a Nazarene church? In either case it is telling that not all of the

respondents use this label as a primary identification. How do the other 21 percent see themselves? The question becomes more curious when one thinks about membership. Affiliation with a denomination has traditionally been seen as voluntary; one joins a church because one agrees with its beliefs and practices. But affiliation may not strictly mean that to these Nazarenes. **Table 3.2** presents the data identifying the range of self-selected religious identities chosen by members who did *not* self identify as Nazarene.

Table 3.2 Distribution of Self-selected Religious Identities Among Members Not Selecting ‘Nazarene’

Religious Identity	Percentage of Members
Fundamentalist	10.3%
Evangelical	51.7
Wesleyan-holiness	27.6
Mainline Protestant	0.0
Liberal Christian	17.2
Total	100%
(Number of cases)	(29)

Note: Number of missing cases = 0.

Among some of those members who did not select Nazarene as a primary label, a majority identified as Evangelical. Over half (51.7 percent) identified themselves in this way. We also see in this group a larger percentage of people who identify as fundamentalist and liberal Christian.

Respondents were offered a long list of religious identities and they were allowed to select multiple categories. While some people chose only one label to situate themselves in the religious landscape others chose multiple categories. **Table 3.3** displays the many ways Nazarenes identify themselves religiously.

Table 3.3 Distribution of Multiple Self-selected Religious Identities Among Members

Religious Identity	Percentage of Members
Nazarene	41.9%
Nazarene, Evangelical and Wesleyan-holiness	16.8
Nazarene and Wesleyan-holiness	5.6
Nazarene and Evangelical	2.8
Nazarene, Fundamentalist, Evangelical, Wesleyan-holiness	2.1
Nazarene and Mainline Protestant	1.4
Nazarene, Fundamentalist and Evangelical	0.7
Nazarene and Fundamentalist	0.7
Nazarene, Fundamentalist, and Wesleyan-holiness	0.7
Nazarene, Evangelical, Mainline Protestant and Liberal Christian	0.7
Evangelical	9.1
Evangelical and Fundamentalist	1.4
Wesleyan-holiness	4.2
Wesleyan-holiness and Liberal Christian	0.7
Fundamentalist	0.7
Mainline Protestant	0.0
Liberal Christian	2.8
Total	100%
(Number of cases)	(143)

Note: Number of missing cases=0.

Some Nazarenes used only one label to describe themselves. For example, 41.9 percent identified themselves only as “Nazarene.” This group did not seem to find the other labels as helpful in describing their own religious identity. For many, but not all, of these Nazarenes being “Nazarene” is the primary way they see themselves. On one occasion, when I asked Mary, a homemaker, whether she minded calling herself “Nazarene,” she responded, “No, not at all. I’m proud of it.” Nazarene identity “stood out” in the stories of many of these people.

Yet 58.1 percent of Nazarene members use either multiple categories or some other single category to describe themselves. Situating themselves in multiple traditions was common. For example, 19 percent of respondents saw themselves as Evangelical, Wesleyan-holiness, and Nazarene. While many individuals saw themselves also as Wesleyan-holiness, only a few, 4 percent, saw themselves exclusively in this way.

Since investigating the impact of Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism on Nazarene identity is one aspect of this study, how Nazarenes see themselves in relation to these traditions is important. On the one hand, only a handful of individuals who selected Nazarene also selected Fundamentalist. This religious designation does not seem to be an important identity feature for them. Evangelical identity, on the other hand, plays a significant role in Nazarene identity. For example, 21.4 percent of those who selected Nazarene also selected Evangelical. And an additional 10 percent, who do not identify as Nazarene but who are members, also identify as Evangelical.

All in all, there does appear to be some measure of variety in the ways Nazarenes perceive their religious identity. In spite of this, however, the vast majority of members see themselves as Nazarenes. Fundamentalist identity has only a very small presence. A greater number of people see themselves as Evangelical, but they are not a majority. Some also see themselves as Wesleyan-holiness. While few members who see themselves as Nazarene also include either liberal Christian or mainline Protestant in their religious identity, a larger percentage of those who did not select Nazarene do so. Those persons are not many, however.

Sanctification Narratives

Self-selected religious labels are one way that people situate themselves in religious traditions, but individuals also incorporate narratives of sanctification into their religious identities. Sanctification narratives, the second component of holiness identity, focus on specific theological and religious beliefs and relate to personal and subjective religious experiences. Individuals may find general agreement on broad religious themes, but they might differ quite radically on the specifics of particular Christian doctrines or practices.

Holiness identities are given specific shape by particular narratives of sanctification. Such narratives generally represent the ways human beings become holy, either emphasizing the work of God the Holy Spirit within human life or the human element in the process (or a combination of the two). There are two aspects to this. First, there is the positive aspect which emphasizes the possibility of loving God with one's whole heart, mind, strength and body. Second, there is a negative aspect which centers on ameliorating sin in the heart. In the case of the Church of the Nazarene (and the broader Wesleyan tradition) this has focused on both acts of sin and original sin in the life of the believer. The narratives and definitions here represent important, and in some cases substantially different, ways of understanding the nature of sin, the role of divine grace, the relationship between divine and human action, the nature of human beings, the meaning and import of the atonement, and the nature and extent of salvation.

In assessing how contemporary Nazarenes tell the story of sanctification I wanted to be consistent with previous research on Nazarene identity. Therefore, I borrowed

sanctification narratives first used in survey questions in a 1996 ANSR poll. In that poll, the following accounts of the sanctification process were distinguished:

19th century Traditional

It is the distinct second work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer in which the old sinful nature is eradicated and the believer is empowered for Christian life and service.

Manual Compromise

It is the distinct second work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer in which the old sinful nature is cleansed and the believer is empowered for Christian life and service.

Neo-Wesleyan Corrective

It is the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer, both gradual and instantaneous, in which the old sinful nature is cleansed and the believer is empowered for Christian life and service.

Evangelical

It is the gradual work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer in which the believer grows in grace and matures in moral character and spiritual wisdom.

Other Options

None of the above statements adequately represents what I believe.

I do not understand entire sanctification enough to reply.

Before reviewing the results of the study an explanation about the origin and meaning of these definitions is in order. The survey instrument was originally constructed to gather information about Nazarene identity and to test the hypothesis that the Church of the Nazarene was undergoing fragmentation as a result of a transition from “sect” type to “church” type. I included them in the current research on Nazarene identity in order to be able to correlate my research with those previous studies.

Two major issues arose with the use of these definitions. First, they did not correspond fully to systematic theological narratives of holiness that are used in the

denominational theology. Upon further reflection, I concluded that it was more difficult to correlate these definitions with particular scholarly theological positions in the Church of the Nazarene than I had hoped. At one level I was, and am, interested in whether and how “official” versions of holiness become present in the lives of everyday Nazarenes. However, this question is not as straightforward as I had originally thought. The definitions I appropriated from earlier research on Nazarene identity were constructed from hypotheses and “common sense” assumptions about “what was out there” in the church, always with an eye on academic theology. Yet, there is no simple and straightforward connection between these definitions and the historical and theological analysis of entire sanctification in the Church of the Nazarene.⁹ This, of course, raises significant methodological issues. Originally, (in Benefiel and Crow) the definitions were intended to reflect the major theological debates in the Church of the Nazarene. The first involved the question of whether entire sanctification is an instantaneous experience or an ongoing process. The second involved the question of what happens to original sin at entire sanctification.¹⁰

⁹Discussions with Ron Benefiel and Ken Crow, individuals who created the 1996 ANSR Poll, indicated that there was little serious self-critique in the development of these definitions. These two churchmen, having long histories in the Church of the Nazarene, produced definitions that they believed were usually expressed by pastors and lay members of the church. Their intended goal was to discern what religious identities were “out there” and not to correlate with specific theological works. My own awareness of this problem of correlation came only late in the research, which I now consider to be a major weakness. It is unlikely that the third definition truly reflects the Neo-Wesleyan position on entire sanctification. In order to determine whether specific theological expressions are present as viable options for lay members the definitions would have to be reworded to reflect more accurately the Neo-Wesleyan perspective of Mildred Bangs Wynkoop and H. Ray Dunning.

¹⁰It is important to note that this includes not only such notions as “eradication” or “cleansing” but also “suppression.”

In light of this internal denominational debate, then, the first definition reflects quite accurately the view of the 19th century holiness movement which emphasized the instantaneousness of entire sanctification and the eradication of original sin. I call this the 19th century Traditional view. In the years since, some individuals have come to believe that eradication may not be the best metaphor to describe what happens to original sin at entire sanctification, but are unwilling to concede that entire sanctification is not an instantaneous event. Thus, the second definition attempts to reflect this religious belief. It best represents the narrative of holiness currently expressed in the Nazarene *Manual*, which I call the *Manual Compromise*.

The third definition is certainly influenced by Neo-Wesleyan theological concerns. Neo-Wesleyans put a great deal of emphasis on the *process* of holiness. But the definition does not fully reflect the views of that tradition. For example, Neo-Wesleyans, like Wynkoop and Dunning, do not use cleansing language to depict entire sanctification.¹¹ Also, they are often either skeptical about using language of “instantaneousness” or are ambiguous about the nature of the experience. Thus, for the purposes of this study, I suggest that this definition reflects at least *some* measure of influence from Neo-Wesleyans. I call this the Neo-Wesleyan Corrective.

Still others, influenced by the Evangelical “Growth” narrative, may define entire sanctification simply as a growth in grace toward maturity and Christ-likeness, without reference to a definite moment in the Christian life. This view is much more amenable to

¹¹In particular see Wynkoop, *Theology of Love*, 252-53; and, H. Ray Dunning, *Grace, Faith and Holiness*, 470.

the Evangelical tradition which, historically, has not placed a great deal of emphasis on the instantaneousness of sanctification or eradication of the sinful nature.

Thus, while I consider these narratives of sanctification to be attempts to capture possible lived religious options that reflect general influence from certain theological debates, I do not think they correspond exactly with specific theological positions in the Church of the Nazarene. My designations of them indicate the rough approximation between a range of grassroots theologies and the range of theological positions articulated by theologians and teachers.

The second major issue that developed with these definitions is that they may not tell the whole story about what Nazarenes are thinking about sanctification. For example, in the in-depth interviews I found that individuals told stories of sanctification that depicted them as “striving” and “fighting” against sin. Moralistic and legalistic images of holiness abounded in the interviews. Many of the sanctification stories seemed to resonate more with suppressionist or mitigationist ideas of sanctification, rather than eradication or cleansing.¹² Thus, the research instrument has the potential to miss some of the kinds of sanctification stories I heard in the interviews. The qualitative data, then, function to correct the survey data which was originally formulated by previous researchers.

One of the questions asked of interviewees was about their religious journey. I reasoned that as individuals shared with me their religious narrative, important and salient aspects of their religious and holiness identity would emerge. The result was

¹²For examples of alternative sanctification narratives see Stanley N. Gundry, ed., *Five Views of Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987).

rather surprising. Out of 29 individuals interviewed (26 randomly selected lay individuals and 3 pastors), only a handful (3) included events that were directly related to holiness or sanctification. Indeed, these themes did not emerge naturally out of our conversation. In almost every case it was necessary for me to ask specifically whether they had an experience or story that related to holiness or sanctification.

Yet once I asked, these Nazarenes did indeed have a lot to say about holiness and sanctification. While few spoke of radical or powerful religious experiences of sanctification that could be said to be reminiscent of “old time” Nazarenes (indeed, even “old time” Nazarenes did not speak about holiness in the same way), they had much to say about their own specific views on the subject. In the following section, I describe the sanctification narratives of these Nazarenes drawing on in-depth interviews and results from the questionnaire. Let us look at how Nazarenes depicted holiness and sanctification when it came to choosing from a list of definitions. **Table 3.4** shows the narratives Nazarene members find important in their lives.

Table 3.4 Distribution of Narratives of Sanctification Among Members

Sanctification Narrative	Percentage of Members
19 th century Traditional	7.7%
<i>Manual</i> Compromise	17.6
Neo-Wesleyan Corrective	47.2
Evangelical “Growth”	16.9
None of the Above	1.4
Do Not Understand	7.7
Other	0.0
Total	100%
(Number of cases)	(142)

Note: Number of missing cases=1.

One of the most important observations about these data is that Nazarenes tell different stories about how sanctification happens, and no one definition carries a majority. It is significant that the traditional 19th century holiness narrative is used by so few Nazarenes. This, in itself, signals a profound shift in the understanding of sanctification within the denomination from its early inception. If the Church of the Nazarene enjoyed a wide consensus regarding sanctification in the early 20th century, it does no longer.

But we must remember that the shift from the 19th century narrative to the Neo-Wesleyan Corrective was generally intentional. This new narrative was proposed and embraced by a large number of Nazarenes, with apparent extraordinary success, because 47 percent of contemporary Nazarenes still utilize this sanctification narrative in their personal religious stories, even after 30 years. This must be considered a virtual success story.

As understandings of sanctification have continued to evolve, they have found their more recent expression in the *Manual* of the Church of the Nazarene. This book, and the beliefs and practices contained in it, are the result of communal deliberation. Since it represents such corporate negotiation it is surprising that only 17.6 percent of respondents embraced the compromise view of holiness it represents.

One of the more striking observations arising from this survey is that nearly 17 percent of Nazarenes use the Evangelical narrative of gradual growth toward sanctification. Not only do a significant minority think of themselves as evangelicals, a

significant minority has interpreted the core holiness story of sanctification in a distinctly evangelical mode.

It may be expected that a certain number of adherents to any religious faith may not completely understand its doctrine or be able to articulate its core beliefs. Nazarenes are no exception here. Almost eight percent of Nazarenes say they simply do not understand holiness. As members of Nazarene churches, they have presumably been introduced to Nazarene beliefs, lifestyle, and practices, but they were not able (or willing) to articulate a response to a question about one of the denomination's core doctrines. It is interesting to note that this response was more likely among those who called themselves "liberal Christians" and less likely among those who claimed the "Nazarene" label for themselves. The former may simply not accept any version of sanctification, while those who have come to call themselves Nazarene have gained at least some sort of story about the nature of sanctification.

Are there any trends developing? There appears to be at least one. **Table 3.5** presents a comparison between a 1992 survey by the Association of Nazarene Sociologists and Researchers and the present study. I intentionally used many of the same survey questions, and, in particular, the same definitions of sanctification, in order to facilitate a longitudinal comparison. The most striking developments over the 16 year period are the decline in the number of individuals who use the 19th century traditional definition of sanctification (from 20.5% to 7.7%), and the corresponding growth in the Evangelical account (from 11.2% to 16.9%).

Table 3.5 Comparison of Percentage Distribution of Narratives of Sanctification

Sanctification Narrative	ANSR Poll 1992	Current Research 2008
19 th century Traditional	20.5%	7.7%
<i>Manual</i> Compromise	17.0	17.6
Neo-Wesleyan Corrective	45.5	47.2
Evangelical “Growth”	11.2	16.9
None of the Above	0.9	1.4
Do Not Understand	4.9	7.7
Other	0.0	0.0
Total	100%	100%
(Number of cases)	(224)	(140)

Note: Number of missing cases=3.

This may be an appropriate place to ask whether there is any correlation between the labels individuals use to identify themselves and their stories of sanctification. Is there any connection between them? **Table 3.6** presents the results of a Pearson correlation matrix indicating the relationship between self-selected identity and sanctification narrative. There are some points to be made about this data. For example, first, there is a strong negative correlation between those who self-select Nazarene and those who selected “None of the Above.” The point is that those who had a Nazarene identity found that one of the four sanctification narratives included in the survey represented something close to their own personal view. This corroborates, in my mind, the fact that these views of sanctification do seem to resonate with some Nazarenes and reflect their lived religious experience.

Table 3.6 Pearson Correlation Matrix – Self-selected Religious Identity and Sanctification Narrative

Sanctification Narrative	Self-selected Religious Identity					
	Fundamentalism	Evangelical	Wesleyan/ Holiness	Nazarene	Mainline Protestant	Liberal Christian
19 th century Traditional	-.082	.047	.076	.020	-.051	-.063
<i>Manual</i> Compromise	.019	-.081	.041	.096	-.079	-.098
Neo-Wesleyan Corrective	.064	.142	.082	.003	.005	-.207*
Evangelical “Growth”	.025	-.027	-.069	-.103	.155	-.286**
None of the Above	-.034	-.094	-.086	-.235**	-.021	.569**
Do Not Understand	-.074	-.084	-.125	.064	-.046	-.056

** Correlation significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Second, those who self-selected as “liberal Christian,” were not likely to select any of the holiness narratives. Their personal story of sanctification appeared to differ substantially from those in the Nazarene tradition or the Evangelical “Growth” narrative. They were more likely to choose “None of the Above.” Yet, none of these respondents gave any alternative definitions, even though that option was open to them. These two groups simply do not seem to be full participants in the narrative world of holiness.

Except among those outlying groups, however, the results indicate that the labels people use for themselves are not correlated with the stories that they tell about how sanctification happens. A variety of labels and a variety of theological narratives about holiness seem to coexist and mix among these Nazarenes.

Images and Metaphors of Holiness

Another way to think about these stories of sanctification is to ask about the images that capture sanctification’s end result. What does the sanctified person look like? The third component of holiness identity involves metaphors and images that elaborate on, describe and explain the nature and characteristics of sanctification. These offer depth and nuance to holiness beliefs about identity. The following wide range of images was used:

19th Century Traditional

Sinful nature is eradicated
 Original sin is eradicated
 Being baptized with the Holy Spirit
 Becoming perfect

Neo-Wesleyan Corrective

Being filled with love

Becoming holy

Manual Compromise

Cleansed from Sin

Other Traditional

Becoming like Jesus Christ
Being completely devoted to God

Becoming obedient to God
Being made God-like

Non-traditional

Being filled with the Holy Spirit

Other Options

None of the above
Other

While not intended to be exhaustive, this list represents important and commonly used language about holiness. Besides language of being filled with the Holy Spirit, each of these images can be found in the Nazarene tradition. While not every image can be easily associated with a particular theological position in Nazarene theology, some can readily be connected with sanctification narratives. For example, images like eradication, perfection and baptism with the Holy Spirit are often associated with the 19th century traditional understanding of sanctification. Images of being filled with love and becoming holy have become prominent in the Neo-Wesleyan story. And cleansing language is readily associated with the revised sanctification narrative that can be found in the Nazarene *Manual*.

There are, of course, other images used in the tradition, which individuals might use to express their understanding of sanctification. Images like becoming like Jesus, devoted to God, obedient to God and being made like God, while certainly options in

Nazarene thought, do not crystallize around a particular sanctification narrative. I include them here to see if any Nazarenes appropriate them for identity construction.

I did not include any images that especially related to liberal Christian or mainline Protestant. The questionnaire included an option that allowed respondents to write in a response, and some respondents did that. However, the ones I included in the list are intended to be representative of the internal dialogue within the Nazarene tradition, and also to capture possible Evangelical ways of thinking about sanctification. Again, these are not the only images used to depict the goal of sanctification or to describe the sanctified life, but they are those that have emerged in common use.

Survey respondents, then, were offered this long list of commonly-heard descriptions and asked to say whether or not they described sanctification for them.

Table 3.7 shows the distribution of images of sanctification used by Nazarenes.

Table 3.7 Distribution of Images of Holiness Among Members

Image of Holiness or Sanctification	Percentage of Members Utilizing Image
<i>19th century Traditional</i>	
Sin Eradicated	10.9%
Baptized w/ the Holy Spirit	8.0
Original Sin Eradicated	6.6
Perfect	0.7
<i>Manual Compromise</i>	
Sin Cleansed	19.0
<i>Neo-Wesleyan Corrective</i>	
Love	22.6
Holy	14.6
<i>Other Traditional</i>	
Like Jesus	46.7
Devoted to God	44.5
Obedient to God	34.3
God-like	20.4

<i>Non-traditional</i>	
Filled w/ Holy Spirit	60.6
<i>Other Options</i>	
None of the Above	0.7
Other	6.6
Total	>100%
(Number of cases)	(143)

Note: Respondents were asked to choose three images that applied to them; therefore the total is greater than 100%.

Let us look first at the images most closely associated with the 19th century holiness narrative. Early Nazarenes optimistically claimed that entire sanctification dealt radically with the root cause of sin. As a result, images of eradication and perfection were important images these early Nazarenes used to express their beliefs about what happened in sanctification. Equally, theological expressions of the 19th century connected the Baptism with the Holy Spirit with entire sanctification. This was a nearly universal expression of holiness belief in the early days of the Nazarene church. Today, few Nazarenes find that the traditional language of baptism with the Holy Spirit or eradication says very much about their holiness experiences.

The language of “cleansing,” so closely associated with the *Manual* Compromise narrative, fairs little better. At 19 percent, there is little evidence that this view of sanctification is an essential component for many Nazarenes. And there is no correlation between this image of holiness and any of the sanctification narratives. That is, Nazarenes who use the cleansing image do so whether or not they select the 19th century definition of sanctification.

While a wide variety of images and metaphors are used by Nazarenes to depict what the sanctified person looks like, none of the traditional or official ones is selected nearly so often as are the more evangelical and Pentecostal images. The most commonly used image of all is the Pentecostal-inflected “filled with the Holy Spirit.” Ascertaining the meaning of this image for religious life is difficult because it not used by any of the classic Nazarene theologies such as H. Orton Wiley or H. Ray Dunning, nor is it a primary image found in the Nazarene *Manual*. Not far behind are phrases such as “Like Jesus” and “Obedient to God.” Evangelicalism uses such language to describe the goal of the Christian life, but it is ultimately skeptical about whether human beings can really attain anything like the sanctification desired in the holiness tradition.

The language of “love” historically played a significant part in holiness theology. John Wesley placed love for God and neighbor at the heart of his doctrine of holiness and entire sanctification. Early Nazarenes believed the heart was filled with love for God and others instantaneously at entire sanctification. That this image finds so little representation among contemporary Nazarenes may indicate quite a substantial shift in thinking about holiness.

What can we say about how Nazarenes are depicting sanctification today? First, traditional language associated with the 19th century vision of sanctification is not popular. Few Nazarenes talk about sanctification in those ways. Neither does the compromise language of “cleansing” seem to reflect their views. Other sanctification language, such as love or being holy, while important to the Wesleyan tradition, it little used. The more Pentecostal language of “filled with the Holy Spirit” is the primary way Nazarenes think about the goal of the sanctified life. Close behind are images that

resonate well with the Evangelical tradition, such as devoted to God or being like Jesus. It seems, then, that contemporary Nazarenes are influenced by less by the tradition than by developments in contemporary religious culture.

Identifying the components of holiness narratives and showing how these Nazarenes relate to them is helpful in grasping what is happening in these churches regarding holiness identity construction. But, a more significant question is how Nazarenes are putting all these narrative components together in a lived religious identity. In the following section, I construct a typology of holiness identity that represents ideal types of lived religious holiness identity.

Narrative Holiness Identities

Narrative holiness identities in the Church of the Nazarene, then, are multi-dimensional, including identification with a stream of religious tradition, as well as accounts of what holiness is and how it happens. Taking self-identities, images, and understandings of the doctrine together, we might, then, posit the following narratives of Nazarene life:

19th Century Traditional Narrative

The person with this identity would self identify as “Nazarene,” and define entire sanctification as “the distinct second work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer in which the old sinful nature is eradicated and the believer is empowered for Christian life and service.” The primary images associated with this definition would be “eradication,” the “Baptism with the Holy Spirit,” and “perfection.”

Neo-Wesleyan Corrective Narrative

The person with this identity would self identify as “Wesleyan-holiness” and define entire sanctification as “the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer, both gradual and instantaneous, in which the old sinful nature is cleansed and the believer is empowered for Christian life and service.” The primary images associated with this definition would be either “love,” or “filled with love.” “Holy” is also a possibility.¹³

Contemporary Manual Compromise Narrative

The person with this identity, like those who hold a 19th Century formulation, would self identify as “Nazarene” (possibly Wesleyan-holiness, but not as distinctive as Neo-Wesleyan), and define entire sanctification as “the distinct second work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer in which the old sinful nature is cleansed and the believer empowered for Christian life and service.”¹⁴ However, here the primary image would be “cleansed.” “Devoted to God” may also be an image associated with this identity.

Evangelical “Growth” Narrative

Given the significant presence of Evangelicalism in the Church of the Nazarene, it was important to determine whether there is a distinct, evangelically-influenced holiness narrative. The person with this identity would self-identify as Evangelical, or possibly Fundamentalist. This view of holiness would emphasize a more “gradual” approach to

¹³Relationality is also an important image employed by Neo-Wesleyan theologians. However, it is not an image that was tested in this study.

¹⁴ The reader will recognize how difficult it is to represent complex and variegated religious views in such limited language. These narrative summaries represent “ideal types.”

sanctification, and focus on growth in maturity, character, and wisdom. It is unlikely that this person's religious life would include episodes of a second religious experience following salvation, and most likely they would be quite skeptical about the possibility of reaching full maturity, or entire sanctification in this life.

Two additional narratives must be mentioned, the Mainline Protestant and Liberal Christian. While they do not play a significant part in the identity construction of most Nazarenes, some members do utilize these narrative traditions in the formation of religious, even holiness, identities.

Mainline Protestant Narrative

The person who carries this identity would have the mainline Protestant narrative as a core aspect of that identity. While the questionnaire did not offer a corresponding definition of entire sanctification that might correlate with this identity, those who hold such a view are unlikely to select traditional Nazarene language about holiness. It is conceivable that mainline Protestants could, however, select the Evangelical "Growth" narrative. In any case, the questionnaire did allow individuals to offer their own alternative definition and images if they chose.

Liberal Christian Narrative

The person with this identity would self-identify as a "liberal Christian." Like the mainline Protestant, this person is unlikely to embrace traditional Nazarene narratives about holiness. While few Nazarene members selected this identity, the fact that non-members, who attend the Church of the Nazarene, do identify themselves in this way is an important development. Again, like the mainline Protestant, individuals were offered

the opportunity to identify their own alternative definitions and images if they were so inclined.

Having identified and described the holiness narratives that we might expect to see in Nazarene churches, a number of questions arise. For example, what kinds of holiness identities are actually “out there?” Do we find that traditional holiness narratives shape religious identity in lived religion? How significant are denominational narratives in persons’ religious lives? Do individuals appropriate non-official definitions and images into their religious identities? Whether individuals use official denominational narratives or not, are there any, relatively distinct and identifiable, cohorts who tend to see sanctification in similar ways? Or are Nazarene holiness identities so diverse that there is little discernible coherence?

Lived Narrative Holiness Identity

I have argued that holiness identities, as narrative constructions, can be seen to have at least three components: religious labels that situate individuals in the religious landscape, definitions of sanctification that depict the means of becoming holy, and images and metaphors that deepen and elaborate on the nature and characteristic of the sanctified life. How do Nazarenes weave these components together in everyday life? What combinations of these components do we find among contemporary Nazarenes? Are there any social cohorts that share identity features, or do they reflect more individualistic ways of forming holiness identity? In the following section, I identify and describe the kinds of religious identities that emerge out of the lived religious experience.

Six Holiness Types

I employed factor analysis as a tool to discover the underlying coherence that emerged from the responses individuals gave to items in the questionnaire. Based on these findings I constructed an ideal typology that is intended to reflect common ways individuals associate the various components of narrative identity. These factors point to the social presence of groups of like-minded Nazarenes who tend to understand holiness in similar ways. In order to offer insight into the reasons for the connections Nazarenes make, I draw on material gleaned from in-depth interviews, focus groups, and personal observation.

Factor analysis produced 20 factors that accounted for the variation in responses to the survey questions. Four of those factors emerged as clearly identifying clusters of Nazarenes. However, these four factors account for only 30 percent of the variation in the data. (For example, factor one accounted for 10 percent, factor two 8 percent, factor three 7 percent and factor four 5 percent.) The other factors identified relationships among survey responses, but whose meaning was somewhat difficult to discern. I interpret the first four factors as “types” of Nazarenes who share a common cluster of responses to the survey questions. They shared common views of religious identification, definitions and images of holiness. The following types were identified:

Type 1 Neo-Wesleyan and Evangelical. Persons who exemplify this type utilize features from both religious traditions. While they tend not to use traditional 19th century language of holiness, they also diverge from the Wesleyan-holiness tradition by employing an understanding of holiness drawn from Pentecostalism.

Type 2 Traditional 19th Century Holiness. Persons who exemplify this type draw language and images from the Nazarene and Wesleyan-holiness traditions. They employ traditional images such as eradication and instantaneousness to describe

what happens in sanctification, but diverge from the tradition by not referring to sanctification as being baptized with the Holy Spirit.

Type 3 Evangelical. Persons who exemplify this type are influenced deeply by the Evangelical tradition, using language of growth and development in the Christian life, with one important exception. They utilize Pentecostal language of filled with the Holy Spirit to describe what happens at sanctification. While they are members of the Church of the Nazarene, these Nazarenes do not employ many of the traditional images of the Nazarene and Wesleyan-holiness tradition.

Type 4 Wesleyan-Holiness Fundamentalist. Persons who exemplify this type identify with both the Wesleyan-Holiness identity and the Fundamentalist identity. They identify with the Evangelical “Growth” narrative, but embrace the image of sanctification as “love.”

Type 1 Neo-Wesleyan and Evangelical¹⁵

Type 1 Nazarenes are the most predominant group, consisting of about 10 percent of the Nazarene population. They have a narrative holiness identity which includes aspects of both the Neo-Wesleyan and Evangelical traditions. For example, while they make use of the Neo-Wesleyan definition of sanctification, which depicts sanctification as both a crisis and a process, they see themselves as both Wesleyan-holiness and Evangelical. They are Evangelical in the broader sense of the term, as emphasizing personal relationship with Jesus Christ and evangelization. As we have already seen there is a statistical correlation between these two religious labels. That is, individuals

¹⁵Factor loadings:

- .652 Neo-Wesleyan definition of entire sanctification
- .633 Self-selected religious identity “Evangelical”
- .483 Self-selected religious identity “Wesleyan-Holiness”
- .404 Image of entire sanctification as “filled w/ Holy Spirit”
- .531 Not an Evangelical (growth) definition of entire sanctification
- .277 Not an image of entire sanctification as “like Jesus”
- .262 Not an image of entire sanctification as “obedient to God”
- .249 Not an image of entire sanctification as “love”

who embrace the Neo-Wesleyan label also are more likely to also see themselves as Evangelical. Even though they see themselves as Evangelical, they tend not to use the Evangelical definition of sanctification that emphasizes growth toward holiness. The primary image they use to describe the sanctified person is the more Pentecostal-inflected “filled with the Holy Spirit.” Yet, traditional images of holiness, such as “like Jesus,” “obedient to God,” and “love” are not employed by these Nazarenes. Thus, the religious label “Wesleyan-holiness” seems to be a broader term than “Nazarene.”

Ron, a 68 year old retired laborer, approximates this type. Having grown up in the church, Ron knows a great deal about the church and the various traditions that inform it. He specifically minimizes his “Nazarene” identity, in favor of a broader “Christian” identity. His holiness views resonate closely with the Neo-Wesleyan narrative. For Ron, holiness means having the Holy Spirit “take over your will.” Inclined towards self-will, as all humans are, holiness is the reversal of this so that individuals allow the Spirit to “control” them. In repentance and faith, the believer asks God to “fill [him or her] with the Holy Spirit” and take over the will. The believer is no longer in control, but God is. This is a dynamic relationship, however. It is not once-for-all. The individual may re-take control of the will at any time. Thus, constant vigilance is necessary to keep the will in the hands of the Holy Spirit. When the believer gives over his or her will to God, then this may be called entire sanctification, but it is not a “given.” One is not “locked in” as if it were now impossible to sin.

Type 2 Traditional 19th Century Holiness Nazarene¹⁶

The **Type 2** identity includes persons who are the most traditional and comprises about 8 percent of the Nazarenes in these churches.¹⁷ These persons have a strong Nazarene identity. They tend to embrace the traditional narrative of sanctification as a distinct work of grace in which original sin is eradicated, but also embrace the *Manual Compromise* which envisions sanctified persons as being *cleansed* from original sin. Thus these Nazarenes are aware of the changing language in the denomination and attempt to embrace both the 19th century language and the compromise language of cleansing. **Type 2** individuals tend not to use the Neo-Wesleyan definition of sanctification which emphasizes both process and instantaneousness. And they employ eradication language to depict what happens in sanctification. Holiness means for these Nazarenes to be like God, and this is a definite, instantaneous event, whether one calls it cleansing or eradication. What is curious about this identity is that these Nazarenes do not utilize the traditional language of baptism with the Holy Spirit to describe what happens at sanctification.

¹⁶Factor loadings:

- .624 Self-selected religious identity “Nazarene”
- .543 19th Century definition of entire sanctification
- .410 Image of entire sanctification as “God-like”
- .373 Self-selected religious identity “Wesleyan-holiness”
- .365 *Manual Compromise* definition of entire sanctification
- .351 Image of entire sanctification as “sin eradicated”
- .313 Image of entire sanctification as “original sin eradicated”
- .341 Not Neo-Wesleyan definition of entire sanctification

¹⁷This is not to say that others in these churches are not traditional in their thinking about holiness and sanctification, but this type emerges as a cohort of commonly held views.

In the in-depth interviews, I did not encounter many of these Nazarenes. However, one lady, Martha, used language that at least partly resonates with the views of holiness favored by this type. She had a clear Nazarene identity. Martha was aware of some of the changes in the Nazarene *Manual* (she was a “preacher’s kid” and thus had some experience with these issues). She did not much like “cleansing” language, but admitted that some people found that language helpful. Martha found it difficult to critique her denomination, and, for the most part, accepted the traditional language, in spite of the fact that in her own depiction of sanctification she did not use much of that traditional language. Martha saw sanctification as involving a person “opening their hearts to the Holy Spirit so that God could do a work” in it. While not using this explicit language, Martha implied an instantaneous work of God that in some way dealt with the problem of sin.

Type 3 Evangelical “Growth”¹⁸

Type 3 Nazarenes make up no more than 7 percent of the population. An Evangelical identity is a core theme in the religious lives of these people. They primarily see themselves as “Evangelical.” And along with this they embrace the Evangelical “growth” narrative of sanctification. Two images dominate in the religious imagination

¹⁸Factor loadings:

- .468 Image of entire sanctification as “like Jesus”
- .442 Image of entire sanctification as “filled with the Holy Spirit”
- .358 Self-selected religious identity “Evangelical”
- .328 Evangelical (growth) definition of entire sanctification
- .442 Not image of entire sanctification as “devoted to God”
- .422 Not image of entire sanctification as “sin cleansed”
- .392 Not image of entire sanctification as “baptized with the Holy Spirit”

of these Nazarenes as they think about what the sanctified life looks like. Both being like Jesus and being filled with the Holy Spirit are important to them. Becoming like Jesus, then, is a life-long process and includes growth and maturity. Yet, becoming like Jesus also means being filled with the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, they tend not to see sanctification as being devoted to God, or having sin cleansed. And, the traditional 19th century language of baptism with the Holy Spirit is also eschewed.

Kent, the ex-Mennonite we met in chapter two, has a strong Evangelical identity, and is representative of this group. For Kent, while we are already “holy” based on the work of Christ on the cross, we are called to strive to be like Jesus. This is a lofty goal, and is largely impossible because of the power of sin in our lives. But, it is possible to the extent that we allow the Holy Spirit to fill us. Through continuous fillings of the Holy Spirit we gradually grow towards Christlikeness. Kent does not use language of cleansing, nor does he view sanctification as the result of the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

The presence of **Type 3** Nazarenes in these churches raises the question of the possibility of the mutual leavening of Evangelicalism and Wesleyanism among some Nazarenes.¹⁹ While views of sanctification and related images are prominent in the religious views of these people, the use of the image of being filled with the Spirit may point to a mutual interchange between Wesleyanism and Evangelicalism. Also, Christlikeness is language that is used by the Wesleyan tradition, and we find these Nazarenes employing it.

¹⁹See Kenneth Collins, *The Evangelical Moment: The Promise of an American Religion* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005).

Type 4 Fundamentalist Wesleyan-holiness²⁰

Type 4 Nazarenes make up about 5 percent of the population. These Nazarenes primarily see themselves as Fundamentalists. As the factor loadings show a Fundamentalist identity is closely associated with a Wesleyan-holiness identity. These Nazarenes embrace the Evangelical “growth” narrative of sanctification as a progressive growth in grace and maturity. The sanctified life is depicted as a life of love.

Other Factors

Other factors were produced that were more difficult to interpret because the underlying logic accounting for the variation was difficult to identify. For example, how is one to interpret the following factor loadings?

- .387 Image of sanctification as “God-like”
- .320 19th Century definition of entire sanctification
- .300 Image of entire sanctification as “sin eradicated”
- .596 Not *Manual* Compromise definition of entire sanctification
- .531 Not image of entire sanctification as “obedient to God”
- .311 Not image of entire sanctification as “devoted to God”

This factor includes traditional 19th century language of sanctification, but shows a negative loading on the *Manual* Compromise definition of sanctification. Interpretation is made more difficult by the fact that there are no religious labels associated with it that might situate it in the religious landscape.

²⁰Factor loadings:

- .571 Self-selected religious identity “Fundamentalist”
- .368 Self-selected religious identity “Wesleyan-holiness”
- .350 Evangelical (growth) definition of entire sanctification
- .314 Image of entire sanctification as “love”

In a similar way, the following factor loadings are also problematic.

- .369 Image of entire sanctification as “holy”
- .358 Image of entire sanctification as “perfect”
- .337 Image of entire sanctification as “original sin eradicated”
- .314 Evangelical (growth) definition of entire sanctification

- .478 Not Self-selected religious identity “Fundamentalist”

What is the factor accounting for the relationships in this cluster of responses? How do the various images of holy, perfect and eradication relate to the Evangelical understanding of sanctification as growth in grace and maturity? Both appear to be affirmations of more traditional holiness identities.

A survey of these factors reveals an interesting and dynamic process of religious identity construction in these three Nazarene churches. I have identified a “Neo-Wesleyan and Evangelical” factor, a “Traditional Nazarene” factor, an “Evangelical” factor, and a “Fundamentalist and Wesleyan-holiness factor.” Additional factors were produced that appeared to be variants of more traditional types. Two points from these observations deserve mentioning. First, each of the factors accounts for only a small amount of the variation in the survey responses, which indicates a degree of plurality in the formation of lived religious identities. Second, while the factors indicate the prevalent use of denominational language and images, the identities produced are not identical to any of the denominational stories.

Conclusion

What shall we conclude about narrative holiness identity in the Church of the Nazarene? How do Nazarenes construct holiness identities? The first inference that can be drawn is that self-selected religious identities are critical in orienting individuals.

Individuals think of themselves initially by reference to these categories, after, of course, first seeing themselves as “Christian.” The second inference that can be drawn is that denominational narratives play a significant role in contemporary identity construction. Denominational narratives of sanctification along with images and metaphors are the primary resources individuals use to construct narrative holiness identities. Of course, there is a great deal of variety in language and phraseology, invention, and appropriation involved. The third inference that can be drawn is that individuals express a great deal of choice and creativity in the selection of the components of their holiness identity. Yet, in spite of the freedom to choose, individuals tend to select the religious narratives of the denomination, and integrate them, along with their own personal histories and experiences, into lived holiness identities. The fourth inference is that there is a great range and variety of narrative holiness identities, and clear indications that there are few sizable cohorts in these churches. Factor analysis, supplemented by other research data, revealed many small groupings that shared a cluster of narrative components in common. Thus, language of fragmentation may not be inappropriate to describe the current situation. A fifth inference is that holiness, in its variegated forms and expressions is still an aspect of Nazarene identity, if not always a highly salient aspect.

Holiness identity, however, is tracking generationally. Theological changes made in the life of the denomination make an impact on congregations fairly quickly. We have already seen that older Nazarenes tend to embrace the 19th century traditional model of holiness. Following that, baby boomers tend to embrace the Neo-Wesleyan model of holiness. As generations pass, however, we have seen the increase in the Evangelical “Growth” model of holiness, particularly as it gets expressed among those under 45. The

very concerning number of young people, 25 percent under 25, who report not understanding holiness or sanctification may very well be due to the difficulty the Church of the Nazarene currently faces in deciding which holiness identity to embrace. The good news is that Nazarenes have generally done a pretty good job transmitting their denominational identity to individuals in its local churches. The question, of course, is what that holiness will look like? What religious identity, sanctification narrative, and images and metaphors will the denomination intentionally embrace in its future?

CHAPTER 4

SOCIAL SOURCES OF VARIETY

Holiness identity in the Church of the Nazarene *has* changed; holiness identities constructed today differ from the past, but how do we account for the change? Are these Nazarenes secularized, or secularizing? Or, can the change be attributed to church-sect transition, an accommodation to secular society? Or, are there other social reasons for the change? How did such a situation come about? How do we account for such variety? Is theology the primary explanation? If so, how do we account for the variety of theological differences?

Nazarenes are not the only ones to have experienced changes in religious identity. A sociological perspective suggests that changes in religious identity (or belief change) can be at least partially explained as the result of *social* forces. Sociological analysis helps us to see that differences in social location, education, age, gender, and other social experiences can significantly influence religious beliefs and practices. This chapter investigates the impact of those social factors on religious identity (holiness beliefs and practices) among these Nazarenes.

Differences in Social Status

Do status factors account for the variety of holiness identity? Theories such as secularization and church-sect suggest that we ought to see some difference between lower status groups and higher status groups in matters of belief. Higher status groups

should demonstrate a movement from more conservative beliefs to more theologically liberal beliefs. Thus, belief change should move from the more traditional Nazarene beliefs to those more closely associated with the broader society. Is this true for Nazarenes? Do race, gender, education or income influence belief change in this way?

Race, Gender, and Income

It is not possible to compare information based on race because there just is not enough data to do so. However, men and women do seem to differ somewhat in how they talk about their religious identities. Women for instance, are more likely than men to claim the denominational Nazarene label for themselves (83 percent compared to 75 percent), and the small group of people who identify as liberal Christians are almost all men. Nine percent of men selected that label, compared to only 1 percent of women (statistically significant at the .05 level). In addition, women are more likely than men to think about sanctification in terms of the Neo-Wesleyan narrative (51 percent compared to 43 percent). And they are also slightly more likely to select “love” as an image depicting holiness (25 percent compared to 20 percent men). The greatest difference between men and women, however, was women’s far greater likelihood of selecting the image “filled with the Holy Spirit.” Only 48 percent of men selected this image, but 70 percent of women found this an image of sanctification with which they could identify. There are, indeed, differences in the way men and women depict religious identity, but the differences are not likely to be explained by secularization or church-sect theory.

Men and women also differ slightly on views of the Bible. As **Table 4.1** shows, while men and women are similar in their views of the Bible, men are more likely to think the Bible needs interpretation.

Table 4.1 Comparison of View of the Bible by Gender

View of Bible	Women	Men
	(Gender)	
Bible Valuable, not God's Word	0.0%	1.2%
Bible needs Interpretation*	0.9	6.0
Bible Inspired, but has Human Error	58.0	56.0
Bible Actual Word Taken Literally	38.0	37.0
Total (Number of cases)	100% (115)	100% (84)

Note: Number of missing cases = 1.

Note: Respondents were asked to choose all that apply to them, therefore the total is greater than 100%.

* Significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

At first it would appear that since men are more likely than women to think the Bible needs interpretation, this would be support for secularization or accommodation. A closer look, however, reveals that the percentage of men and women who do think the Bible needs interpretation is very small. On other views of the Bible there is little difference among men and women, who represent the vast majority of Nazarenes. Gender tells us very little about what view of the Bible a person will hold.

Income

Does income influence religious identity and beliefs? As **Table 4.2** shows, it does appear that income has some influence on self-selected religious identity, but only on the likelihood of choosing a Nazarene identity or an Evangelical one.

Table 4.2 Comparison of Self-selected Religious Identities By Level of Income

Religious Identity	<\$15000	\$15-24,999	\$25-49,999	\$50-74,999	>\$75,000
Fundamentalist	0.0%	14.2%	12.5%	14.3%	0.3%
Evangelical**	7.0	28.6	41.7	39.3	60.0
Wesleyan-holiness	28.6	28.6	37.5	35.7	40.0
Nazarene*	100.0	85.7	79.2	78.6	72.5
Mainline Protestant	7.1	0.0	8.3	0.0	2.5
Liberal Christian	0.0	7.1	4.2	7.1	2.5
Total	>100%	>100%	>100%	>100%	>100%
(Number of cases)	(14)	(14)	(24)	(28)	(40)

Note: Number of missing cases = 23.

Note: Respondents were asked to choose all that apply to them, therefore the total is greater than 100%.

* Significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

** Significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

The higher the income level, the more likely the person is to self-identify as Evangelical. And while the relationship is not as strong, the opposite is true for Nazarene self-identity. All those in the lowest income category claim the denominational identity, while only 72 percent of those with the highest incomes did so.

While income does have an influence on self-identity, it is not a significant predictor of definitions of sanctification. Nor does income have any influence on the images people use to depict holiness and sanctification.

Does income have any influence on a person's view of the Bible? **Table 4.3** shows that just as self-identifying as Nazarene is correlated with lower incomes, so is this more traditionally-Nazarene view of scripture. Over 78 percent of Nazarenes who make less than \$15,000 per year see the Bible as inspired but also having human elements. And just as an Evangelical self-identity is associated with higher income, so is the language of literal biblical interpretation. A full 60 percent of those who make over \$75,000 per year have a more Evangelical view of the Bible, if not Fundamentalist.

Table 4.3 Percentage Distribution of Views of the Bible By Level of Income

View of Bible	<\$15000	\$15-24,999	\$25-49,999	\$50-74,999	>\$75,000
Bible valuable, Not God's Word	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Bible needs Interpretation	0.0	7.1	0.0	3.4	0.0
Bible inspired but Has Human error*	78.6	50.0	76.9	58.6	40.0
Bible actual Word Taken literally**	21.4	35.7	23.1	34.5	60.0
Total (Number of cases)	100% (14)	100% (14)	100% (26)	100% (29)	100% (40)

Note: Number of missing cases = 20.

* Significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

** Significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

If increases in social status are associated with declines in a distinctively Nazarene identity, that decline is certainly not tending in a more theologically liberal direction.

Thus, it would be incorrect to conclude that this change signifies an accommodation to culture or a movement from sect to church.

Education

A very similar pattern can be seen in differences between college-educated persons and those without a college degree. As **Table 4.4** shows, it is the college educated among these Nazarenes who are more likely to choose an Evangelical identity and less likely to choose a Nazarene one.

Table 4.4 Comparison of Self-selected Religious Identities By Level of Education

Religious Identity	No College Degree	College Degree
Fundamentalist	4.5%	9.7%
Evangelical*	23.9	50.0
Wesleyan-holiness*	25.4	40.3
Nazarene**	89.6	69.4
Mainline Protestant	6.0	0.0
Liberal Christian*	1.5	6.9
Total	>100%	>100%
(Number of cases)	(67)	(72)

Note: Number of missing cases = 4.

Note: Respondents were asked to choose all that apply to them, therefore the total is greater than 100%.

* Significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

** Significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Those college-educated respondents were also more likely than those without a college degree to self-identify as “Wesleyan-holiness” and, as **Table 4.5** shows, to think in terms of Neo-Wesleyan corrective.

Table 4.5 Comparison of Narratives of Sanctification By Level of Education

Sanctification Narrative	No College Degree	College Degree
19 th century Traditional	11.6%	4.1%
<i>Manual</i> Compromise	18.8	16.4
Neo-Wesleyan Corrective	39.1	54.8
Evangelical “Growth”	17.4	16.4
None of the Above	0.0	2.7
Do Not Understand**	13.0	2.7
Other	0.0	0.0
Total	100%	100%
(Number of cases)	(69)	(73)

Note: Number of missing cases = 1.

** Significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

It is also perhaps significant that many of those with less education simply do not understand these theological distinctions. It is also significant that Nazarenes with different levels of education are much more alike than different on all these measures. Especially in the range of images they chose, education is not the primary factor separating some Nazarenes from others in their views of holiness.

Age

Differences in holiness identity, as they are revealed in this research, are significantly related to differences in age cohort, however. Generational influences, identifying significant socio-economic, cultural, and religious differences, have been an

important part of sociological research.¹ **Table 4.6** shows that the Baby Boomer cohort (roughly aged 45-64) is the strongest carrier of the Evangelical self-identity among these Nazarenes.

Table 4.6 Percentage Distribution of Self-selected Religious Identities By Age

Religious Identity	Under 25	26-44	45-64	65+
Fundamentalist	0.0%	7.1%	9.6%	9.6%
Evangelical**	7.1	25.0	59.6	38.7
Wesleyan-holiness	25.0	21.4	36.5	38.7
Nazarene	92.8	78.5	73.1	77.4
Mainline Protestant	0.0	0.0	1.9	9.6
Liberal Christian	0.0	14.2	1.9	3.2
Total (Number of cases)	>100% (28)	>100% (31)	>100% (52)	>100% (31)

Note: Number of missing cases = 1.

** Significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

In every other cohort, the number choosing “Nazarene” outnumbers the number choosing “Evangelical” by at least 2 to 1. Among Boomers, “Evangelical” is nearly as popular as the denomination’s own label. Nearly sixty percent of the Baby Boom cohort self-identified as Evangelical.

Just as the Evangelical identity is carried by an older generation, so also is a more Wesleyan-holiness identity. Nazarenes over 45 were more likely to identify themselves as Wesleyan-holiness. Indeed, those who self-selected Wesleyan-holiness also were

¹See especially Dean R. Hoge, Benton Johnson and Donald A. Luidens, *Vanishing Boundaries: The Religion of Mainline Protestant Baby Boomers* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1994), Wade Clark Roof, et al, *A Generation of Seekers: The Spiritual Journeys of the Baby Boom Generation* (San Francisco: Harper, 1994), and Wade Clark Roof, *Spiritual Marketplace: Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

more likely to select an Evangelical identity, and those who did were less likely to identify themselves as Nazarene.²

One of the most striking results was that 92.8 percent of those under 25 years of age self-identified as Nazarene. The Evangelical identity did not seem to resonate as well with 26-44 year olds, and very little with those under 25. The children of the Baby Boomers are more closely identified with a Nazarene self-identity than are their parents.

The number of 26-44 year olds who selected liberal Christian is surprisingly high. It seems surely to be an anomaly. It is difficult to understand how this age group could be so socially influenced by this religious tradition. However, the research tools I employed in this study were not sufficient to determine the social source of this identity for Nazarenes.³

The distinctiveness of the Baby Boomer cohort is less apparent in narratives of sanctification. What is apparent here is that the most “traditional” view is less prevalent in each younger age group. As **Table 4.7** shows those over 65 were more likely to select the 19th century traditional narrative of sanctification, which is no surprise. But the narrative of eradication of sin is virtually non-existent among the younger generations of these Nazarenes. The various compromises and correctives that have emerged in recent decades are embraced by a similar range of members in each of the age cohorts, but time is not on the side of the 19th century holiness narrative. The prominence of the Neo-

²A Pearson correlation matrix indicated a correlation of .341 between Wesleyan-holiness and Evangelical identities, significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

³It is likely that this will be a major research interest among Nazarene sociologists and researchers in the coming years.

Wesleyan corrective in all the age cohorts (including those over 65!) indicates the influence of this narrative among Nazarenes, but there are indications that its presence is declining in younger generations.

Table 4.7 Percentage Distribution of Sanctification Narratives By Age

Sanctification Narrative	Under 25	26-44	45-64	65+
19 th Century Traditional*	0.5%	0.0%	9.6%	16.1%
<i>Manual</i> Compromise	17.9	12.9	17.3	22.6
Neo-Wesleyan Corrective	35.7	45.2	53.8	48.4
Evangelical “Growth”	17.8	22.6	17.3	9.6
None of the Above	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0
Do Not Understand**	25.0	9.7	0.0	0.0
Other	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
(Number of cases)	(28)	(31)	(52)	(31)

Note: Number of missing cases = 1.

* Significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

** Significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

The real story among younger Nazarenes, however, is that they are more likely than older Nazarenes (a full 25 percent of those under 25) to indicate that they do not understand sanctification. This development poses a significant concern for Nazarene identity.

It is worth pointing out that virtually no Nazarenes selected “none of the above” or “other” as options for sanctification narrative. For those who do understand sanctification, one of the four narratives offered to them – each representing common accounts present in Nazarene churches -- was chosen.

Switching

One of the significant social influences on belief change is an encounter with someone with a different religious narrative, an alternative to one's own. I have already mentioned education as a significant social influence on belief for Nazarenes. Another source of influence is what is called "switching" in the sociological literature. Switching refers to those individuals who were affiliated with one church or denomination and have become affiliated with another church or denomination. **Table 4.8** shows that over half of all Nazarenes in these churches were at one time affiliated with another church or denomination.

Table 4.8 Distribution of Prior Denominational Affiliation Among Members

Denomination	Members
Have not belonged to another denomination	47.1%
Baptist	11.4
Catholic	10.0
Other Christian	9.3
Methodist	5.0
Wesleyan	5.0
Congregational	4.3
Other Holiness	3.6
Presbyterian	2.1
Episcopal	1.4
Non-Christian	0.7
Total (Number of cases)	100% (140)

Note: Number of missing cases = 3.

Thus, switchers constitute a large percentage of Nazarene members. While no church or denomination predominates, Baptist, Catholic and other Christian top the list. The social impact of these religious outsiders on Nazarene belief, and especially on holiness narratives, may be quite significant. Is there any difference between life-long Nazarenes and these switchers?

As **Table 4.9** shows, “Nazarene” is the most common self-identity among both groups. At 74.3 percent, switchers are somewhat less likely to choose this label, but they seem clear about the denominational location they have chosen. That fewer switchers select the Wesleyan-holiness identity makes sense, given that it has been less prevalent in church teachings in the last 10 years. Switchers would be expected to reflect the denominational culture of the present more than the longer denominational history they did not experience.

Table 4.9 Distribution of Self-Selected Religious Identity: Life-long Nazarenes vs Switchers

Religious Identity	Life-long Nazarenes	Switchers
Fundamentalist	3.0%	11.4%
Evangelical	36.4	38.6
Wesleyan-holiness*	47.0	20.0
Nazarene**	84.8	74.3
Mainline Protestant	1.5	4.3
Liberal Christian	1.5	7.1
Total	>100%	>100%
(Number of cases)	(66)	(70)

Note: Number of missing cases = 7.

Note: Totals amount to more than 100% because individuals were allowed to select more than one.

* Significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

** Significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

It is surprising that switchers were no more likely than lifelong Nazarenes to select an Evangelical identity, but the real surprise was the number of switchers who selected a Fundamentalist identity. This is corroborated by the fact that switchers have a more conservative view of the Bible as shown in **Table 4.10**.

Table 4.10 Distribution of Views of the Bible: Life-long Nazarenes vs Switchers

View of the Bible	Life-long Nazarenes	Switchers
Bible valuable, not God's Word	0.0%	0.0%
Bible needs interpretation	4.5	0.0
Bible inspired but human error	63.6	56.8
Bible actual Word taken literally	28.8	43.2
Total	100%	100%
(Number of cases)	(66)	(74)

Note: Number of missing cases = 3.

Switchers, then, appear to be a social source of Fundamentalism in the Church of the Nazarene. On the other end of the spectrum, switchers are also more likely to identify as mainline Protestant and liberal Christian. Thus, switchers seem to be a source of pluralism in identity as they join Nazarene churches.

Switchers and lifelong Nazarenes differ very little in the range of views of sanctification. As **Table 4.11** shows, there are only slight differences among them. For example, there is a slightly greater representation of the traditional sanctification narrative among lifelong Nazarenes than among switchers, but not as much as I had expected.

Table 4.11 Distribution of Narratives of Sanctification: Lifelong Nazarenes vs Switchers

Sanctification Narrative	Lifelong Nazarenes	Switchers
19 th century Traditional	12.3%	4.1%
<i>Manual</i> Compromise	16.9	18.9
Neo-Wesleyan Corrective	50.8	43.2
Evangelical “Growth”	13.8	20.3
None of the Above	0.0	2.7
Do Not Understand	6.2	9.5
Other	0.0	0.0
Total	100%	100%
(Number of cases)	(65)	(74)

Note: Number of missing cases = 4.

Switchers are slightly more inclined to select the Evangelical “Growth” narrative, but compared to life-long Nazarenes that number is not statistically significant. In addition, switchers are also about as likely to not understand sanctification as are life-long Nazarenes.

Some differences can be discerned when we look more closely at switchers. As **Table 4.12** shows, there are some differences among them. For example, former Baptists are much more likely not to understand sanctification than are those from other denominations. Former Baptists are also less likely to select any of the three Nazarene narratives of sanctification, with the 19th century traditional narrative not being selected at all. And they are more likely than others to choose “none” of the narratives of holiness.

Table 4.12 Distribution of Narratives of Sanctification: Life-long Nazarenes vs Switchers

Sanctification Narrative Christian	Life-long Nazarene	Former Baptist	Former Catholic	Former Holiness	Former Other
19 th century Traditional	12.3%	0.0%	7.1%	0.0%	7.7%
<i>Manual</i> Compromise	16.9	12.4	42.9	25.0	7.7
Neo-Wesleyan Corrective	50.8	25.0	35.7	58.4	53.8
Evangelical “Growth”	13.8	25.0	14.3	8.3	23.1
None of the Above	0.0	6.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
Do Not Understand	6.2	31.3	0.0	8.3	7.7
Other	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
(Number of cases)	(65)	(16)	(14)	(12)	(13)

Note: Number of missing cases = 2.

Former Catholics, on the other hand, were more likely to select one of the three possible Nazarene narratives of sanctification. The most common selection is the compromise narrative of the Nazarene *Manual*. Other former Holiness members were similar to Nazarenes in most respects except for one - they did not opt for the 19th century traditional view of holiness. Interestingly, those Nazarenes who came from other Christian denominations were very similar to life-long Nazarenes. Fewer of those who came from other Christian groups selected the two more traditional holiness narratives, opting instead for the more general Neo-Wesleyan view. And slightly more of this group selected the Evangelical narrative of growth and maturity towards holiness.

Switchers, then, hold slightly different views on holiness than life-long Nazarenes. Did these switchers know the denomination’s stand on holiness and sanctification before they joined? How important was the denomination’s stand on

holiness in their decision to switch? Given the picture presented in **Table 4.13** there is indication that some switchers joined the Church of the Nazarene *because* of its stand on holiness and sanctification.

Table 4.13 Distribution of Importance of Nazarene Stand on Holiness and Sanctification

Importance	Percentage Switchers
No, did not know Nazarene stand	27.4%
Very important	30.1
Somewhat important	15.1
Somewhat unimportant	6.8
Not very important	8.2
Not sure	12.3
Total	100%
(Number of cases)	(73)

Note: Number of missing cases = 1.

Nearly half (45%) of switchers say that the Nazarene stand on holiness was an important factor in their decision to join the church. Like Arnie, who came to the Nazarenes by way of the Catholic charismatic movement, most had already formed a holiness identity and were looking for a church where those beliefs and practices were present.

Among the other half of the Nazarenes who are switchers, holiness beliefs and practices were not what drew them to the denomination. They either considered it unimportant or said that they did not know about holiness teaching before they joined. For this significant minority of Nazarene members, adopting a holiness identity was dependent on what happened after they joined the Nazarene church as adults, rather than

on a lifetime of participation in a holiness denominational culture. In an earlier chapter, we met Kurt, a former Mennonite, who knew almost nothing about what Nazarenes believed about sanctification when he joined. Nazarene beliefs about holiness were not a deciding factor for him in joining. Only later, as a participant in this research, did Kurt become aware of what Nazarenes believed about holiness.

Switchers often bring with them their own Christian narratives, which at times conflict with the views of their new-found church home. Recall the story of Pat, who was a Baptist before she joined the Church of the Nazarene in the mid-1980's. She had only a vague sense that Nazarenes believed in "holiness," but this was not a factor in her decision to first attend, and then later to join. For Pat, the most important reason for joining was that she felt that the Christians in that church showed her Christian love. Yet, Pat brought with her a belief in the doctrine of "eternal security," a belief she knew Nazarenes did not hold. Pat understood eternal security to be the belief that believers who "accept Jesus Christ into their hearts by faith" cannot "lose their salvation." They are eternally secure in Jesus because "he died for their sins on the cross of Calvary." Since salvation is not by human good works, then when God declares someone saved, they are always saved. Before Pat could join the church she needed to know that her beliefs were acceptable. She didn't want to be a "hypocrite," she says. She met with the pastor who, in her estimation, agreed with her that there is "security in Christ." This negotiation was important to Pat, and the fact that the pastor was able to demonstrate some measure of agreement with her Baptist beliefs, enabled her to find a home in the

Church of the Nazarene, even though she did not view holiness the same way as did traditional Nazarenes.

What can we conclude about the social influence of switching? There is evidence, I believe, of mutual influence. For example, while switchers tend to be more conservative and more Evangelical in their theological views, many switchers have embraced denominational narratives of holiness. The social phenomenon of switching may be a more significant factor in explaining belief change in the Church of the Nazarene than are explanations offered by accommodation or church-sect theory

Those Who Don't Join: Problems of Non-Affiliation

Not everyone who attends the Church of the Nazarene decides to join. Affiliation may be seen as a deeper commitment to one's church or denomination. This may include investing more of one's time and money, or a closer study of the beliefs and practices which characterize the community. Reasons why individuals affiliate, or choose not to, are varied. Of those who participated in this study, 28.5 percent indicated that they were not members of the Church of the Nazarene. A look at this group can provide a valuable window on the relationship between commitment to a local church and the formation of a holiness identity.

Non-members do not differ substantially from members in range of social status. Non-members tend to be slightly younger than members (34 percent under 35 compared to 26 percent under 35). The range in gender and ethnicity are virtually the same. More non-members are single than members (32 percent compared to 23 percent). Non-

members have a slightly lower income (24.5 percent below \$25,000 compared to 22.8 percent). And, more non-members have a high school education than members (26.8 compared to 11.9) while slightly more members have either a college degree or some graduate education (51.8 percent compared to 41.1 percent).

How long have these non-members attended Nazarene churches? Not surprisingly, over half of them have been attending for five years or less. Clearly, they have attended on average less long than members. But a substantial number of individuals attending these three Nazarene churches, members and non-members alike, are relatively new. Thus, socialization and integration are major social factors in identity stability. Still, **Table 4.14** reveals that 41.8 percent of them have been attending for more than five years.

Table 4.14 Years of Attendance Among Non-members and Members

Number of Years	Non-Members	Members
0-5	58.2%	31.4%
6-10	18.2	23.4
11-15	14.5	12.4
16-20	5.5	8.8
21-25	0.0	5.8
26-30	1.8	6.6
31-40	1.8	2.2
41+	0.0	8.5
Total	100%	100%
(Number of cases)	(55)	(137)

Note: Number of missing cases = 7.

Non-members, then, exhibit a relative degree of commitment, but are they as committed as members? Over 62.5 percent of non-members attend religious services at least 3-4 times per month. And 25 percent attend more than 5 times. Among members, however, 45.5 percent attend at least 3-4 times per month, and nearly half (49%) attend religious service more than 5 times per month. If attendance is an indication of commitment, then members clearly are more committed. Another indication that members appear more committed is in their giving. Only half of non-members (52 percent) give over \$1200 per year. Among members, on the other hand, 78.1 percent give over \$1200 per year. Thus, while non-members make a commitment of time and money which in itself is significant, members do so even more.

Yet, if these individuals are even this committed, why do they not join? The picture becomes clearer when we look at how non-members view themselves religiously. **Table 4.15** provides a strong clue to the puzzle of why they are not members. Two-thirds (67.9%) of them do not view themselves as Nazarene. Unlike switchers, who have joined these Nazarene churches from other denominations, the non-member attenders are not disproportionately Fundamentalist or Evangelical in identification. They are, instead, disproportionately mainline and liberal in identification.

Table 4.15 Distribution of Self-Selected Religious Identity: Non-members vs Members

Religious Identity	Non-Members	Members
Fundamentalist	7.5%	7.2%
Evangelical	30.2	37.4
Wesleyan-holiness	3.8	33.1

Nazarene	32.1	79.1
Mainline Protestant	17.0	2.9
Liberal Christian	18.9	4.3
Total	>100%	>100%
(Number of cases)	(53)	(143)

Note: Number of missing cases=3.

Note: Totals amount to more than 100% because individuals were allowed to select more than one.

How do these non-members compare to members on sanctification narratives?

Table 4.16 shows that denominational influence is relatively weak in this group, with neither the 19th century holiness narrative nor the *Manual* Compromise and Neo-Wesleyan Corrective having as strong a presence as they do among members. Yet, that the Neo-Wesleyan Corrective is selected by 37.5 percent of non-members does suggest that denominational influence can be substantial. Non-members are only slightly more likely than members to choose the evangelical-style “growth” narrative of sanctification, and this more generic version of holiness belief is less prevalent among them than the various Nazarene holiness stories they have been hearing while attending these churches. It is not surprising, of course, that 26.8 percent of non-members do not understand sanctification, but perhaps it is surprising that nearly three quarters of those who have not joined can nevertheless identify with some version of the holiness story that shapes the Nazarene churches. It appears, then, that even among non-members denominational narratives have a substantial influence.

Table 4.16 Distribution of Narratives of Sanctification: Non-members and Members

Sanctification Narrative	Percentage Non-Members	Percentage Members
19 th century Traditional	3.6%	7.7%
<i>Manual</i> Compromise	1.8	17.6
Neo-Wesleyan Corrective	37.5	47.2
Evangelical “Growth”	23.2	16.9
None of the Above	0.0	1.4
Do Not Understand	26.8	7.7
Other	3.6	0.0
Total	100%	100%
(Number of cases)	(56)	(143)

Note: Number of missing cases=0.

Note: Number of missing cases=0.

Conclusion

What can we conclude about the impact of social forces on the changing beliefs of the Church of the Nazarene? The story told in this chapter points to a more complex situation than that suggested by mono-causal theories like secularization or church-sect. The impact of moving into the middle-class for these Nazarenes is ambiguous. Beliefs are indeed influenced by social status and changing cultural patterns. Differences in gender impact the kinds of images Nazarenes employ in depicting sanctification. Changes in income, for many of these Nazarenes, are closely related to participation in a conservative Christian culture that transcends denominational boundaries, such as Evangelicalism. Education, too, among some Nazarenes points in this direction. For others, education introduces them to alternative ways of conceiving sanctification that resonate with the broader Wesleyan or Neo-Wesleyan movement in the tradition. Lower

status Nazarenes, on the other hand, not having the social influence of a college education, tend to associate more with the classic Nazarene identity that they might find in their local church. This seems to be true for young people under 25, even though a large minority do not understand what sanctification means. There can be significant generational differences, too. Age cohorts can understand, describe and depict sanctification differently. Also, an influx of new Nazarenes from other denominations can have an impact on beliefs. Many of those who “switched” had beliefs that were akin to Evangelicalism. Yet, the influence goes in both directions. Denominational narratives seem also to have an impact on beliefs among members and non-members alike. Non-members too tell stories of sanctification that employ themes and images very much like those of the denomination. Social influence, then, comes into the churches from both the “right” and the “left,” but denominational stories of sanctification influence newcomers, too. The picture of identity that emerges from this chapter is less like one in which a secular culture is impinging on belief than like a situation in which multiple religious narratives and images are at play. There are powerful religious narratives that have great social impact, such as Evangelicalism, but other religious stories are present, too. And in these Nazarene churches the denominational narratives of sanctification play a significant role in the constructed religious identities of those who are there each week.

CHAPTER 5

CONDUITS OF IDENTITY: HOLINESS NARRATIVES IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

The local congregation is an important site for religious experience and for the construction of religious identities.¹ Within the local congregation religious narratives and practices are offered to participants as resources for identity construction. Local congregations are the places in which denominational narratives – “public narratives,” which are accounts that express the history and purpose of the church – are proclaimed, nurtured, and lived out.² These public, denominational narratives include religious biographical narratives that characterize the Christian life. Ammerman writes:

These organizations [congregations] create widespread social arenas in which religious action can occur, and they supply structured religious biographical narratives – the saved sinner, the pilgrim – within which the actor’s own autobiographical narrative can be experienced.³

These narratives are established within the social context through “elaborate sets of roles, myths, rituals, and behavioral prescriptions that encourage participants to perceive Sacred Others as their coparticipants in life.”⁴

In this chapter, I attempt to identify and describe the identities which emerge in each of the churches of the study. I compare and contrast them and ask how holiness

¹Ammerman, “Religious Identities and Religious Institutions,” 216.

²Ibid., 217.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

narratives are enacted in the local setting. I look at what I call “conduits of identity,” which I take to be “narratives, practices and texts of a community” that express the theological and religious identity of a congregation.⁵ Narratives are the “stories that shape and transmit the memories of a congregation.” Practices are “pathways that shape our lives.” And, texts are “what we say about ourselves.”⁶ Almost every social encounter between individuals in the local congregation enacts some religious narrative or another that points participants to the kind(s) of religious biographical identities embraced by the local congregation.

There are many ways in which these “conduits” are employed as resources for identity construction. Practices common to all three churches are worship, Christian education, fellowship, and outreach. Each church, however, also has narratives, practices, and texts peculiar to the rhythm of its own communal life. Many factors influence the range of narratives that are present in congregational life. Examples include social context, educational background, personal and corporate experience, gender, age, denominational affiliation, and many more.

I ask whether the ways religious narratives are enacted in local congregations influence individuals as they construct holiness identity. Enacting similar holiness narratives has the potential to promote continuity and minimize a change in beliefs, but, on the other hand, enacting different holiness narratives can possibly contribute to

⁵For an excellent introduction to the study of theology in local congregations see “Theology in the Congregation: Discovering and Doing” by Robert J. Schreiter in Nancy T. Ammerman, *et al*, *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 33.

⁶*Ibid.*, 35.

variation, change, and adaptation in holiness identity. There are many ways denominational narratives can be disrupted, truncated or displaced. Alternative narratives, either biographical narratives carried by individuals participating in the corporate life of the congregation, or other public narratives, such as those offered by other religious traditions (i.e., Evangelicals), may be enacted either intentionally or unconsciously.

In the following pages, I try to illustrate the complexity of identity construction by highlighting the range of conduits of identity. Along the way I listen for predominant images and metaphors, themes and practices that capture the kinds of holiness identities that emerge in these congregations. I listen for both the official and unofficial narratives that constitute the lived culture, or *habitus*, of each church. I highlight the characteristic themes and emphases that emerge out of worship services, Sunday school classes, fellowship, Bible studies, and other rituals that contribute to the construction of biographical narratives.

Identifying these conduits, and variations in the narratives enacted, can be an extensive task. While I do offer a general picture of corporate life in each church, I focus particularly on two conduits of identity – the pastor’s holiness narrative and the religious literature that lay people read. The pastor’s religious narrative is important because it has the potential to be extremely influential in the life of the congregation given the role and significance of the pastoral office in the Church of the Nazarene. Also, given the fact that individuals express much more choice in religious life today, and given the fact that

social boundaries are so permeable today,⁷ individuals have access to a wide range of religious literature in the popular marketplace. Individuals, then, are introduced to alternative religious narratives which, if incorporated into their personal biographies, influence holiness identity.

In order to see whether conduits of identity have any social impact, at the end of the chapter I compare the kinds of holiness identities that emerge from each of the three churches and highlight similarities and differences. While larger, macro, social factors can affect individual and congregational identity, it might be helpful to ask if smaller, micro, ones do so as well.

Introducing the Three Churches

The three Nazarene churches in focus in this chapter are all located in the Northeastern United States.⁸ Easton church is located in a moderately sized rural village located in what was once the thriving manufacturing area of the lower Hudson River valley. Southside is essentially a “bedroom community” for a large and growing East Coast city and Millvale is a small rural city located not far from its state capital.

All three churches follow the polity of the Church of the Nazarene, which reflects a balance between congregationalism and episcopacy. The pastor and church board share oversight responsibility for the day to day operation of the church, but the dynamics between pastor and church board can be affected by many things. For example, it could

⁷Ammerman, “Religious Identities and Religious Institutions,” 219.

⁸As is customary, the names of people and places have been changed to protect anonymity.

be influenced by the pastor's understanding of his or her role as leader of the congregation, and the images and themes that shape pastoral identity. Images of pastor as CEO, "shepherd," or servant carry different expectations about the pastor's relationship with the church board. On the other hand, narratives and themes of lay leadership can also influence this relationship. Congregations which are used to a relatively independent board function differently than when a board looks to the pastor for its direction.

Table 5.1 Characteristics of Study Congregations

Characteristic	Easton	Southside	Millvale
Age	53 years	69 years	100 years
Membership	126	208	221
Attendance	150	257	174
Financial (Yearly Income)	\$160,012.00	\$505,443.00	\$499,314.00

As **Table 5.1** indicates, these are well established mid-sized churches. While they are not unlike many churches across the denomination, they do not represent the "average" Nazarene church. According to Nazarene Research, the average Nazarene church is located in a rural setting, is 64 years old, has a membership of 50, and an annual income of \$48,000.00.⁹ In fact, 73 percent of congregations in the Church of the Nazarene have a membership under 100. Thus, the three churches which are the focus of this study represent the 22 percent of congregations with membership between 100 and 349.

These churches vary in the relationship between attendance and membership. Easton and Southside both report a greater number in attendance at Sunday morning

⁹See the resources available in the Nazarene Archives at <http://www.nazarene.org>.

worship service than their membership reflects. As we have already seen, not all who attend a Nazarene church decide to become members. Millvale, on the other hand, reports an attendance substantially less than its membership.

These churches vary in annual budget, too. Millvale is a relatively well-to-do church with an annual budget nearly equal to Southside's even though it has a much lower attendance. And, Millvale's budget is nearly three times that of Easton's, even though they have about the same number in attendance.

When we examine the demographic profile of these churches, it is important to recognize the substantial difference between Southside's two services. The "congregation" for one is quite different from the "congregation" for the other (see **Table 5.2**), with the contemporary service drawing a much younger group of worshippers. That 36.9 percent of worshippers who attend the contemporary service are under 25 years old reflects the fact that it attracts young people from the denominational college nearby. The congregation at that service, not surprisingly, also includes more single adults than are present in the other three.

At the other end of the spectrum is the aging population at Millvale. Young families are missing in this congregation. The baby-boom cohort makes up 50 percent of the congregation. Another 30 percent is over 65 years of age. Only a little over 18 percent of the congregation is under 45. Easton, on the other hand, reflects a more typical pattern for most Nazarene congregations. Members of all age groups attend the morning service.

Table 5.2 Comparative Demographic Data of Study Congregations

	Easton	Southside Trad.	Southside Cont.	Millvale
Gender				
Male	34.7%	38.6%	42.9%	63.6%
Female	65.3	61.4	57.1	36.4
Age Distributions				
25 or under	10.2%	9.1%	36.9%	0.0%
26-44	34.7	4.5	29.8	18.2
45-64	32.6	56.8	23.8	50.0
65 and over	22.5	29.5	9.6	31.8
Ethnic Identification				
Hispanic	0.0%	0.0%	2.6%	4.8%
White	97.8	100.0	97.4	95.2
Black	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other	2.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
Marital Status				
Single	12.5%	9.1%	46.4%	0.0%
Married	75.0	77.3	45.2	95.5
Separated ¹⁰	6.3	6.8	6.0	4.5
Widowed	6.3	6.8	2.4	0.0
Formal Education				
< High School	12.2%	6.8%	9.5%	0.0%
High School	34.7	4.5	11.9	13.6
Some College ¹¹	20.4	29.5	31.0	18.2
College Grad	22.4	34.1	27.4	22.7
Graduate School	10.2	25.0	20.2	45.5
Annual Household Income				
< \$15,000.00	10.7%	6.6%	21.7%	5.0%
\$15-34,999.00	38.3	4.0	14.5	10.0
\$35-49,999.00	12.8	10.1	13.0	10.0
\$50-74,999.00	21.3	13.0	11.6	40.0
\$75,000.00>	17.0	1.3	39.1	35.0

¹⁰Divorced and separated are included together.

¹¹Includes Vo Tech

Besides these differences regarding age, distributions of gender and marital status are roughly similar. The low number of females reported for Millvale is probably accounted for by the fact that for whatever reason women tended not to fill out the survey.

Income and education differences are more striking, especially between Millvale and Easton. For example, Millvale Nazarenes are older, wealthier and more educated than those at Easton. The average age in Easton is 48, while it is 57 at Millvale. Also, the average income in Easton is around \$26,000, while it is \$55,000 in Millvale. Education, too, is much different. For example, 32.6 percent in Easton have a college degree or greater. In Millvale that number is 68.2 percent. If social class is a conduit of identity, we would expect these congregations to exhibit different approaches to holiness identity.

These churches also vary somewhat in occupations. In **Table 5.3** we see that occupations in business, education and manufacturing are prominent in all three churches. Yet, there are many Nazarenes who work in the medical field, too.

Table 5.3 Distribution of Occupations in Three Nazarene Churches

	<u>Easton</u>	<u>Southside Trad.</u>	<u>Southside Cont.</u>	<u>Millvale</u>
Occupation				
Business	14.6%	26.8%	40.9%	13.6%
Education	22.9	24.4	28.8	27.3
Manufacturing	29.2	17.1	10.6	27.3
IT	0.0	7.3	0.0	4.5
Transportation	6.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
Government	8.3	4.9	3.0	0.0
Service Economy	2.1	0.0	1.5	0.0

Medical	4.2	12.2	13.6	4.5
Disabled/Welfare	4.2	0.0	0.0	4.5
Homemaker	8.3	0.0	1.5	9.1
Ministry	0.0	7.3	0.0	9.1
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
(Number of cases)	(31)	(31)	(44)	(22)

Note: Number of missing cases = 0.

Southside is noteworthy for the large number of workers in medical and business occupations. Otherwise there are only slight variations. For example, a slightly larger minority in Millvale are homemakers and clergy, while in Southside some work in transportation, government and the service economy.

We have noted the differences and similarities among these three Nazarene congregations. These churches vary in characteristics such as when they were founded, attendance, membership, and annual budget. They vary somewhat in demographics such as age, education and income. And, there are slight differences in occupation. Later we ask whether these differences translate into differences in identity at the local level.

Differences are also reflected in the history and social context of each congregation. There are variations in worship style, pastor's holiness narrative, and the kinds of religious resources Christians use. In the following section, I describe some of those differences, and, where possible, point out how different religious narratives are expressed.

Millvale Nazarene

Millvale is the oldest of the three churches. Formed in 1898, it predates the birth of the Church of the Nazarene. Because of this, Millvale has enjoyed a unique status,

being considered an historic congregation and a flagship church in its district. Its longevity, size, geographical location and financial resources allowed it significant influence in the broader denomination as well. The church is home for many retired pastors. Recently, however, the church has been experiencing decline in attendance and membership, a fact that is heavily felt among many of its aging members. Fewer young families are joining the church, and this causes concern for the pastor. As membership has declined so have financial resources.

Social Context

The Church is located in one of Connecticut's major rural cities that surround the state's capital. The population of the city is mostly White, non-Hispanic. The city is experiencing a growth in population. In the year 2000, the population of Millvale was 114,664. It is estimated to be 120,016 in 2008 and is projected to be 122,674 in 2013. The growth represents a demographic shift. In spite of the fact that in the year 2000, the White, non-Hispanic population constituted 85.2 percent of the population, which is above the national average of 69.1 percent, the largest growth during the next period is expected to be among Black and Hispanic populations. Once exclusively a White, non-Hispanic population in and around the church, the area now exhibits signs of a substantial ethnic and racial shift.

The history of Millvale Nazarene's growth and decline spans 55 years. In 1950 the church was in the middle of a significant growth spurt. Attendance had been steadily on the rise for the previous decade and had topped 200 by the late 1950's nearly reaching the building's seating capacity. Sunday School attendance was consistently higher than

the primary morning worship service. In 1957, the church sold its property on Main street, and construction began on a new building a few blocks away, also on Main street. The new church is a magnificent building with A-frame style and lots of windows giving the foyer a bright and spacious appearance. The church has a contemporary feel, much different from the older white New England style building often seen. The sanctuary's seating capacity was increased to 500. With a Sunday morning worship attendance reaching a peak of 320 by 1981, some began to wonder if another building would be needed in the near future. The increased attendance, and the church's concern for the deleterious effects of American "secularism" on church youth, prompted the pastor and congregation to pray about starting a Christian school. The school was initiated in 1981 with 56 children attending Kindergarten to 6th grade. Additional classes were added over the years. Today the school includes classes from pre-K to 12th grade and has an enrollment of 174.

The school had been a source of conflict for the board, however, and many members felt that a school was more than the church could handle. While not the only cause of contention, the church began to see its attendance decline. By 1985 attendance had fallen to just over 200. Sunday school attendance had dropped below Sunday morning worship numbers a decade before that, and declined an additional 25 percent over the period of 1980 to 1990. The church called a new pastor in 1986, however, and he began extending local church ministries and emphasized the need for a youth program. The new pastor dismantled the old youth building and had a new one built. New ministry initiatives were begun, and attendance rose steadily until the mid-90's, reaching and

matching its all time high of 320. Shortly after, however, attendance again began to decline until reaching its current level of 174.

Worship Style, Preaching, and Ministry

The church carries the air of New England formality in its worship and represents a typical Nazarene worship service in general. Technological improvements, such as audio-visual projection and sound, help give the service a more contemporary feel. Music tends to be traditional Nazarene hymns as the staple, but worship choruses are plentiful. While not a band, *per se*, an acoustic guitar and trombone are played in the background. The congregation of 150 or so seems dwarfed by the large sanctuary that could easily sit three times that number. Tapestry signs hanging high on the sanctuary walls proclaim verses of Scripture that are long time Nazarene references to holiness or entire sanctification. One says, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.” And another reads, “Holiness Unto the Lord.”

The music is led by a sharply dressed African-American man, who obviously stands out amidst the overwhelmingly White congregation. The congregation seems to have some difficulty singing to his jazz-like renditions of the old classics of the church, but they are diligent in their attempt to follow the music leader. They seem to appreciate his rich tenor voice and his powerful presentation of old-time favorite songs, even if they do find them difficult to sing. The hiring of the worship leader is the pastor’s attempt to reach out to the younger generation.

The order of service follows a standard format widely used by the majority of Nazarene churches, beginning with a call to worship, usually the reading of a Psalm or

Proverb. Next comes a time of “music and worship” followed by the announcements of the day. The pastoral prayer is an important time in the service with the pastor “opening the altar” for families to come and “spend time with the Lord.” The pastor’s prayer is generally extemporaneous and takes a monologue form as he “brings the people before the throne of the Lord” seeking God’s grace and mercy. Much of the prayer is spent praying for people’s needs such as seeking God’s help for healing from sickness, strength in difficult times, resolution to family and relationship problems, and for faithfulness in challenging circumstances. Following the prayer and just before the sermon, which is the focal point of the service, there is a time of “special music” sung by someone from the congregation, or by the music minister. This usually “sets the tone” and prepares the worshipper to “hear God’s voice.” The pastor’s sermons are personal and encouraging. Often they focus on personal or family struggles, and exhort individuals to “trust in God’s leading” and to be “faithful in the midst of life’s challenges.” The sermon almost always focuses on a passage of text from the Bible, which is affirmed as the Word of God. This is generally the time when the pastor gives guidance and exhortation to his people. The sermon may or may not address current issues in the congregation, but usually focuses on the establishment, maintenance and promotion of a “personal faith in Jesus Christ.” A closing hymn, less often a chorus, sends the worshipper off to live out faithfully the teaching of Scripture. And the service is concluded with a benediction by the pastor. A coffee time or “fellowship” generally follows the morning service to allow people to converse, say hellos and good-byes, and catch up on the week’s events.

A church bulletin is a primary reference and resource for worshippers, guests and

members alike. It can be a window into the identity the congregation wishes to portray. The bulletin is a means by which the church communicates important information such as the order of service of the day, announcements of events of special interest, and contact information. Millvale Nazarene's bulletin is larger than most. It is tri-fold, 11 x 16 size, and the cover page lets the worshipper know that the church is a member of the Nazarene denomination. All current bulletins have a picture of a sunset over the ocean with the words of Psalm 83:18 superimposed over it. The words read, "That they may know that You, whose name is the LORD, are the Most High over all the earth." For Millvale Nazarenes, knowledge of the Lord as creator and sovereign is an essential Christian belief. The front of the bulletin gives the contact information, with web page and e-mail address for the church. Individuals may request an on-line version of the bulletin by signing up for it.

The first inside page gives the order of service. The outline of the service obviously emphasizes the centrality of the Bible in the life of this congregation. The first part of the service is labeled "Preparing for the Word." This includes the "Call to Worship," opening prayer, and welcome by the pastor followed by the singing of a hymn, such as "Blessed be Your Name" and "My Saviour Lives." A contemporary chorus entitled, "I Could Sing of Your Love Forever," is sung just before the children are dismissed to go to children's church. The next major section of the service (which includes the sermon) is labeled, "Hearing from the Word" and the next is entitled, "Responding to the Word."

On one of my Sunday morning visits to the church, Pastor Jerry preached from

Acts 3 on the theme “Having a Passion for Christ.” Pastor Jerry began by asking the congregation a question, “What are you passionate about?” Using a narrative preaching style, the pastor recounted the story of Peter and the early disciples. “Peter,” he says, “had a passion for Christ.” Peter allowed himself to be transformed by the power of Jesus. Peter was passionate about sharing Christ. Pastor Jerry challenged the congregation to “not be passionate about our possessions,” but to put them aside and be passionate about Jesus. The altar was opened and individuals were invited to come forward and exhorted to allow Christ to come into their lives and create a passion in their hearts for Him. The moment of dedication at the altar showed God that one was serious about Him, and seeing this, God would “do a mighty work in us,” creating in us the same passion Peter had for Christ.

Two ways are suggested as responses to the Scripture and sermon. The first is “through prayer.” These Nazarenes believe that God the Holy Spirit, applies the truth of the message to individual hearts. This is a fundamental belief of how God works in the lives of believers. The next way worshippers are called to respond to the Scripture is through “ministry opportunities.” A central feature of this is by personal giving. This may take the form of service opportunities, but always includes the exhortation of sharing with the church in the form of financial giving. For this church “storehouse tithing” is a primary model, which teaches that believers are to give 10% of their income to the Lord’s work. The final aspect of the worship service is entitled “A Blessing from the Word,” and leaves the worshipper with a short reminder of the message, and a benediction.

The rest of the bulletin lists ministry opportunities for individuals and families,

noting, for instance, a church work day coming up, the 2008 100-year anniversary of the Church of the Nazarene, and advertisements for the Cornerstone Christian School sponsored by the church.

The church's belief in prayer is emphasized by an invitation for "Prayer Warriors." The church built a special chapel just off the main sanctuary devoted to prayer. A "prayer chain" exists if someone has a special prayer need. The first person in the "chain" is called and the prayer is shared with them, that person then calls the second person in the chain, and so forth, until the entire chain of prayer warriors is finished.

The summer schedule for the church is filled with many other special ministry opportunities. Vacation Bible School (VBS) is a tradition in most Nazarene churches. VBS is a special week designated by each church for the purpose of gathering children and teens to the church for a time of "learning about Jesus." Many adult Nazarenes remember making their first commitment to Jesus Christ in VBS. Asking "Jesus to come into your heart" is the primary goal of VBS. Summer camps at the District camp, Windsor Hills in New Hampshire, are other ways people may serve. There are children's camps, family camp, men's and women's camp, and special worship services throughout the summer.

Another special reminder to those who read the bulletin is the reminder to "fulfill the Great Commandment and Great Commission." The great commandment is to "Love the Lord your God with your whole heart, strength, soul and mind," and the great commission is to "Go into all the world making disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit." Individuals are called to live out these two responses to

the Word of God in every aspect of their lives.

Other ministry opportunities include many possibilities for Bible study, a tape ministry that records the morning service, especially the pastor's message, and then send them out to "shut-ins" (i.e., those who cannot make it out to the service). Nursery volunteers are requested to work in the church children's nursery which runs during the morning service. Finally, on the back page of the bulletin, one finds a list of the church leadership staff, and the names of those who oversee church ministries. Names of the church board are also included.

The primary way someone encounters the Lord in this church is through the morning worship service, especially by engaging the pastor's message from the Word of God. The Holy Spirit then applies the message to individual hearts, and the individual is called to respond to the guidance of the Holy Spirit through various ministries in the church. The primary focus is on the establishment of a "personal relationship with Jesus Christ."

What religious narratives emerge from the picture drawn above? Many themes and images are expressed on a Sunday morning through the worship service. For example, the bulletin portrays the Christian as someone who "knows the Lord." The emphasis here is on knowing God as creator who is sovereign King over the whole creation. For these Nazarenes this is an expression of the biblical injunction to enter into personal relationship with God and implies obedience. The pastor's message focused on the religious passion that one should exemplify in loving Jesus. The congregation is exhorted to have a passion for Christ, rather than a passion for material things. This

passion is a gift from God, something God can work in a believer's life. The belief that this is what God does and not what humans do "in their own strength" is a common theme in Nazarene belief and practice.

Religious narratives are expressed in other ways in the church. When one leaves the sanctuary and enters the foyer area, tables are laid out that display information and resources for visitors. On one table sign-up sheets invite people to such things as a "men's prayer breakfast," and "women's night out." Literature from James Dobson's *Focus on the Family* lay prominent on another table. Millvale Nazarene is currently working to encourage its members to read the Bible more, therefore, one section of a table offers numerous guides to reading the Bible. The church had just had its annual meeting and the Annual Report 2007-2008 lay on another table for those interested.

The Church of the Nazarene has historically placed great emphasis on Sunday morning Sunday School. Although attendance at Sunday school has waned over the last 50 years throughout the denomination, Millvale Nazarene tries to make Sunday school a significant emphasis for children and adults by offering special age-level appropriate classes. The church has two adult Sunday school classes. One class is attended mostly by older Nazarenes. The average age of class members would be about 50 or so. This class uses the traditional denominational literature prepared especially for adult classes. They meet at the traditional time, 9:30am, for one hour with a short break for coffee and fellowship just before the morning service. The other adult class, for young married couples, meets at the same time. I attended the older adult class. The focus was on a passage from the book of Ephesians, "God chose us in himself to be holy," and the theme

for the class was “holiness.” The class leader began by asking the class, “What does it mean to be holy?” After allowing members of the class to offer suggestions, he went on to emphasize four characteristics of holiness: reverence for God, living differently from the “world,” giving our best to God, and being adopted by God. Not long into the session some members of the class began asking whether individuals are “predestined” or not. Standard queries about God’s sovereignty and human freedom were raised, but the final consensus of the class was that God was both absolutely sovereign, and Lord of the universe, and at the same time persons are free to choose for themselves. This is a paradox, they affirmed, that only God can understand.

What was the dominant narrative of holiness emerging out of this Sunday school class? Believers were depicted as being “secure” in their relationship with Jesus. Sanctification was pictured as an ongoing “striving” to be like Jesus. And the goal of sanctification was seen as Christlikeness. It is the Holy Spirit who “fills” us and helps us to be like Jesus. Little was said about what it meant to be like Jesus, however. Most of the class agreed that we will not be perfect in this life, but that we can always be forgiven for our sins. One gentleman, using more traditional language of holiness, suggested that holiness was an experience of God resulting in cleansing of the heart from sin. His comment generated little discussion, and did not seem to be the general consensus of the class.

The Pastor and His Holiness Narrative

Pastor Jerry is a tall, distinguished looking man in his late 50’s, with slightly graying hair at the temples. His affable disposition sets people at ease, and his quiet and

calm demeanor gives the sense of assurance and confidence. Trim and fit, dressed in suit and tie, he looks like the eminent preacher. He himself comes from a long line of Nazarenes and is generally comfortable with the traditional Nazarene identity, although he feels that it is possibly time for some change, both in his local church and in the denomination. Pastor Jerry was educated in Nazarenes institutions, completing a B.A. in Religion at Eastern Nazarene College and going on to do graduate work at Nazarene Theological Seminary. The pastorate at Millvale Nazarene is Jerry's first since he left an influential leadership position as assistant district superintendent, a position he had held for over a decade before returning to pastoral ministry.

Two concerns have been occupying Pastor Jerry's attention as he thinks about the life of the congregation. First, he is concerned about the decline in attendance. He mourns the loss of the under-25 group, and struggles with how to reach them. He brought in the current music minister because he felt that a new tone in music was needed, but there is some opposition to the new style of music by some, even though most feel it is a good move. Second, he is concerned about the interrelated problems of finances and the school. Finances are tight due to attendance, which complicates board decisions about how much money to spend on school-related budget items, and how to find money for much needed ministry projects. Pastor Jerry has also been concerned about helping his congregation reach out to the community.

Pastor Jerry sees himself as on the "cusp" of the transition between the World War II generation and the baby boomers. Jerry's holiness narrative is a result of a painful negotiation between his inherited faith and his own personal experience. Born in 1948

Jerry grew up in a family that was deeply immersed in the Church of the Nazarene. His father, grandfather and great-grandfather were all pastors. Each of them were firm believers in the 19th century traditional model of entire sanctification and gave public testimony to having been sanctified in a moment at an altar of prayer. They testified to the “mighty work of God in cleansing their hearts by faith.” But it was not only the patriarchal side that affirmed and reinforced this theology. His mother and grandmother were “dear loving saints” and left powerful and long-lasting impressions on Jerry’s psyche. Many others of his parent’s generation - family, friends, and church members - attested to having received this instantaneous gift of God’s grace in which original sin was eradicated from their hearts so that only love remained.

None of this was problematic, until Jerry himself attempted to enter into this “second blessing.” Attending revival services, and listening to “holiness” messages, did not have the result that he hoped for. Jerry struggled to have the same kind of experience that his parents had. He went to the altar and prayed for entire sanctification, but “nothing happened.” Repeated “trips to the altar” failed to produce the desired experience. His father prayed for him, and his mother put him in the “prayer line.” “Jerry’s seeking sanctification,” she shared with the prayer chain. Jerry wept and cried out to God, but, to no effect. After a lengthy period of time, Jerry began to question himself. “What was wrong with me,” he wondered. He asked himself and God, “Why can’t I have this experience?”

Jerry never did come to have the kind of experience that was such a dominant theme in the Nazarene church in which he grew up, and which he loved deeply. In his

early 30's Jerry experienced a deep and long lasting depression. His own struggle with his faith, the church, and issues of knowing and understanding entire sanctification were long term issues with which he dealt. Even during our interview Jerry began to weep. In his mind, the 19th century model was *the* model, *the* way one enters into the Christian experience of entire sanctification. For a time Jerry thought about leaving the church. Early in his life he felt called to Christian service as pastor, but he struggled with it given this difficulty in attaining holiness. "How can a person preach holiness," he asks, "if they have not gotten the experience?" Jerry did stay in the Church and eventually went to seminary and became a pastor. He even has been in leadership positions in the District.

Why did he stay in the church? And, how has he resolved the tensions over holiness? He stayed because it was "home" - he was "born and raised in the Church of the Nazarene." And, fundamentally, he believes in the message of holiness, that "God can create a people for himself who are holy." Currently, Jerry is doing a lot of reading about holiness and sanctification, and he thinks he has begun to discover a way to think about holiness that can resolve some of the tensions for him. But at 59 he still wonders if God might still give him the experience for which he hungers.

In his mid-40's Jerry worked on a master's degree in psychology. His focus was on "wholeness" and the Christian life. Psychological themes prompted him to think about personality, dispositions and holiness. In glowing terms, he tells the story of his father. He admires his father and the way he lived his Christian life. His mother, on the other hand, was the opposite. Calmness, passivity, and quiet were *not* characteristic of his mother. She was bubbly, energetic, and gregarious. She often "spouted" out what

she was thinking and reacted emotionally and demonstratively to the issues and events of life. Jerry often thought his mother “over reacted” at times. Jerry had favored his father’s model of holiness over his mother’s. Eventually, Jerry began to realize that his own personality was a blend of the two. Inside, Jerry was effusive, emotional, and impatient. Outwardly he tried to live his Christian life like his father did, but his attempts to be quiet, passive, and patient often failed. Out of this introspection Jerry has developed a psychological model of holiness that he believes can be open to all types of personality and psychological dispositions. Each person represents a different expression of the Gospel. All of the personality types express the Gospel in their own way.

For Jerry, holiness means a life lived like Christ. This is central to his notion of sanctification. But, there is a tension in Jerry’s holiness theology. On the one hand, he thinks entire sanctification is “an integration of the human psyche” so that it follows God and expresses itself in sacrificial love. It is in many ways learned from models we see in the real world. But, on the other hand, he also wants to say that this “Christ-likeness” comes at a moment of insight and awareness of our complete dependency on God who cleanses our hearts from sin. Jerry’s concern is to develop a view of holiness and sanctification that is faithful to the neo-Wesleyan construction with its stress on both process and instantaneousness. In some way, then, Jerry’s model is also an attempt to resolve the “credibility gap” which Mildred Bangs Wynkoop identified. Although Jerry acknowledges that he did not see this gap in the lives of his family or in his own church experience, he admits that many of his friends had complained about such things.

For Jerry, then, holiness is an integration of the human psyche. It is personality

integration. Sin is destructive of the human psyche and the Gospel promises healing and wholeness through forgiveness of sins and the call to a restored relationship with God. Jerry's therapeutic interpretation of the Gospel pervades his preaching, counseling, and teaching. Pastor Jerry offers individuals opportunities to gain insight into themselves, and once having realized their brokenness, to respond to the invitation to "come to the Father, who brings healing and restoration."

Southside

Southside Church of the Nazarene was established in 1954 as a "church plant." Seventeen members of a Sunday school class from a neighboring Nazarene church felt moved by the Holy Spirit to establish a new church in one of the many suburbs of this major Northeastern coastal city. After its inception, the church grew slowly and steadily, declining only briefly in 1965 before reaching 100 in 1978, and hitting the 200 mark a decade later. Southside experienced rapid growth in the late 90's, reaching an all time high of 315 in 2000. Since then, however, Southside showed moderate decline, staying at 300 for the next three years and then settling at its current attendance of 257.

The style of the church building and the atmosphere of the church services bear little resemblance to the New England formality of Millvale church. The church building is far less elaborate and dignified. It is simply a "functional," single level building typical of Nazarene churches built in the 1950's and early 60's. The brick architectural design of the church, and the standard "Nazarene" welcome sign, blue with white lettering, leaves the visitor with the feeling of a traditional Nazarene church, but the style of worship and Nazarene narrative carried by the congregations differs substantially from

the “classic” church of the 50’s. In particular, the number of children and the large young adult population bring an energetic and sometimes hectic feel to the church.

Social Context

The Church is located in one of the suburbs of a major East Coast city. Southside is essentially a bedroom community for many who work in the city. The growth in Southside Nazarene reflects the growth of the city. The population of the city in 1990 was 125,762, and is estimated to be 136,500 in 2010. The rate of growth over this 20 year period was 4.26 percent per year. Southside grew at a rate of 5 percent per year from 1965 to 1995.

Like many other middle-class suburbs surrounding the city, the population of Southside is predominately non-Hispanic White, at 95.3 percent. African Americans, Hispanics, and others make up a tiny fraction each. In Southside, 40.5 percent of the population is between the ages of 35 to 54, only slightly higher than the national average. The major differences between the demographics of Southside and the U.S. averages are in education and annual income. In Southside 32.5 percent of the population have a bachelor’s degree or more, while only 24.4 percent enjoy this level of education in the U.S. Also, the average household income for the typical Southside resident is \$75,635, far exceeding the national median household income of \$54,814.

Thus, the surrounding population of the Southside Church of the Nazarene is relatively young, and comfortably well-off and well educated. That the church has matched or exceeded the growth rate of the city may mean that they have made it easy for people to assimilate into the life of the congregation. How that has happened will be seen

later.

Worship Style, Preaching, and Ministry

One primary difference between Millvale and Southside is that Southside has, in effect, two separate congregations worshipping in the church, one called a “traditional” service, which meets at 8:30am on Sunday morning, and the other a “contemporary” service, which meets at 11:00am. Sandwiched between the two worship services is Sunday school, which participants from both services attend. The shared Sunday school hour was the church’s way to build community and maintain relationships between the two congregations.

The effective separation between congregations is what some in the congregation called the result of “worship wars.” Others in the church, according to one of the pastors, suggest that the separation was largely due to the simple realization that the church needed to reach out more to the community, to offer a service that was uplifting and used music that appealed to a younger generation.

The two services manifest obvious and significant demographic differences. The average age of those attending the early morning traditional service is 57 and the average age of those attending the 11am contemporary service is 26.

But, this isn’t the only difference. The style, tone and tempo of the services are significantly different. With about 50 attending, the early traditional service is quiet, reflective, and dignified. The service is begun with the singing of an old-time hymn; on one Sunday I visited, it was “Rock of Ages.” On that Sunday morning Pastor Dave preached on the importance of a “spiritual life.” He identified three characteristics of this

life: prayer, reading God's Word, and service. He focused on the use of the Bible in "spiritual battles" against Satan's attacks, and he offered seven different Bible reading plans, inviting worshippers to take copies from the display tables in the foyer.

The pastor is overtly careful not to make people feel guilty about not having a spiritual life, or not praying, or not reading the Bible. Guilt destroys, he says. We must read the Bible, and pray, and witness because we love God, and we must remember that He loved us first. The Christian life is an invitation to enter into a loving relationship with God our heavenly Father. The service concludes with the hymn, "Let the Beauty of Jesus Be Seen in Me."

The order of service is the same in both services, but even the traditional service is much less elaborate and structured than that in the Millvale church. The "welcome" is an informal greeting from the pastor, who works hard to make people feel "at home," especially visitors. The music in the traditional service is mostly hymns. Only four songs are sung. The music in the contemporary service, however, takes up twice as much time and is mostly contemporary choruses. A large band accompanies the singing in the contemporary service, the drum setting a lively and loud beat. Worshippers stand, raise their hands in worship, and move about the sanctuary with ease. Groups of young people stand in the foyer watching and listening, occasionally entering to join in the service, or stepping out to talk to each other. The contemporary service has a greeting time in which worshippers welcome and encourage each other.

The pastor preaches the same sermon in both services, but his style and demeanor are noticeably different. Much more subdued and reflective in the traditional service,

Pastor Dave focuses on the Bible passage and is intent on explaining the meaning of the text. The message in the contemporary service, however, is upbeat, lively, and filled with humor, with much less “order” to the message. More and different illustrations fill out the later morning message. The pastoral prayer is less formal and mostly extemporaneous, although there are signs that he has pre-written the prayer for each congregation. The language of “family” permeates the contemporary service.

If we use the church bulletin as a window into the identity of this church like we did for Millvale we see a very different picture. For example, the Southside bulletin is more elaborate, with eye-catching images and color. The front of the 11x16 tri-fold bulletin has a full-color picture of a White family, laughing and playing in the snow, obviously having a good time. The family is surrounded by snow-covered woodlands, the sun gleaming brightly off the icy branches. The face of a cherub looks down on the family from the clouds above depicting the watchful joy of heaven. The word “Faith,” in snowy font, gives the impression of the Christian life as a joyful, fun-filled experience for worshippers and their families. This image is exactly what is expressed in the contemporary service. Upbeat, with lively contemporary music, Christian worship is a joyous celebration.

The bulletin is filled with humorous cartoons and more “youthful” looking images. Different fonts and colors add an appealing dimension to it. Wednesday is “Family Night Ministries.” The pastor initiated the serving of a meal on Wednesday called “Manna.” He did this because he realized that many people were not coming to church on Wednesday nights because working parents needed to make supper and feed

the family before coming. The “Manna” ministry is immensely popular, and people take advantage of the simple meals, like soup and sandwiches, wraps, and pizza.

The bulletin includes a range of information, from Sunday school teacher appreciation month to a request for costume help for the Easter musical. An ad appeals for volunteers for pre-school children’s church. An invitation to the Ladies Retreat appears on one page, next to an appeal to attend “Truth Talk Women’s Conference.”

On the back of the bulletin is a page especially for guests. Information encouraging guests to feel at home and to stop by Guest Services promises them a coffee mug as a “gift to help remind you to come back and worship with us again!” A tear-out information card is included on the guest page asking for contact information, reason for visiting, and what they were interested in.

The promised welcome packet is entitled “We’re Glad You’re Here.” Consonant with the “family” theme, the packet includes information about how individuals can learn to know their heavenly Father. A flyer welcomes them to the Church of the Nazarene, “A Spiritual Home Where You Can Find God.” A copy of the monthly calendar is filled with scheduled events like women’s ministries, men’s breakfast, and District Festival of Life, an annual competition for youth. The calendar has the schedule of morning worship times called “Southside Nazarene Celebration,” and the evening service is a “gathering” time for God’s people. Small groups meet two times a month for “mutual encouragement and support.”

What religious narratives get expressed through the bulletin and sermon?

Through the bulletin the believer is portrayed as a member of the family of God who

receives all the benefits and blessings of being God's son or daughter, but most especially that person receives God's love. Being a part of God's kingdom is a family celebration. The pastor's message portrays the Christian life as a "spiritual battle" in which the Christian must be prepared by knowing the Word of God. The Christian prays, reads God's Word, and serves God and others in joyous celebration.

Other religious narratives are expressed in the church. Out in the foyer, racks are filled with literature for members and visitors to take. A table is laid out with the seven Bible reading plans, and individuals are encouraged to begin the "fulfilling journey of reading God's Word." A magazine entitled *Answers: Finding a Biblical Worldview* fills one rack. It is not a Nazarene publication, but appears to be a popular read for many of Southside's members. The magazine is put out by an organization started by Ken Ham, a national "creation science" spokesperson, who has expressed vigorous opposition to the theory of neo-Darwinian evolution. The purpose of the magazine is to demonstrate that the story of biblical creation fits modern science better than evolution does. The magazine is high-color glossy pictures of animals, the world, and dinosaurs, with sections for kids and adults. Key articles fill the pages with titles like "Unlocking the Truth of Scripture," and "Isn't the Bible full of Errors?" Another article asserts that "The Stars of Heaven Confirm Biblical Creation." A flyer invites individuals to a local Creation Science meeting. Publications from other Evangelical organizations, such as James Dobson's *Focus on the Family*, a popular Evangelical radio speaker who ministers to families, also are displayed.

The *Standard*, a Nazarene Sunday School publication, fills a nearby rack.

Another resource of the church is entitled *The Heartbeat of the Southside Church of the Nazarenes: Jesus is the Heart of Families*. This six page newsletter includes a front cover letter to children from Pastor Dave, thanking them for cards and notes sent him during his recent hospital stay. The note goes on to encourage kids to “spend time in God’s Word every day,” and to “learn to share your insights by talking with someone about what you have discovered.” Kids are encouraged to “start by asking the Holy Spirit to help them” understand God’s Word.

I attended the senior adult Sunday School class. The teacher began by reading a short passage from a book by Billy Graham on discipleship. The class spent a good deal of time talking about how Billy Graham was one of the few evangelists who maintained his integrity over the many years of his ministry. He was clearly lifted up as an exemplary Christian minister. Following this discussion the class turned to the lesson of the day taken from the Nazarene Adult Sunday School curriculum. The theme was discipleship, what it is and how to be a good one. Discipleship was described as “following Jesus.” Much of the discussion centered on the difficulty of following Jesus in our world today. There was comfort in knowing that the Holy Spirit helps us, and there were many affirmations that “God has everything under control.” For these believers, when life gets difficult, and the world does not accept them or the message of Jesus, they ought not to worry because “God is still on the throne.” And when they fall short of God’s will, there is always forgiveness. It was affirmed that God will “never leave us nor forsake us.”

On Wednesday nights Southside offers a series of Bible studies for men and

women. I visited the men's Bible study where there were about 10 in attendance. The focus was on the first epistle of John, chapter two. The theme was the new commandment Jesus gave to his disciples, to love one another. Love was seen as the essential characteristic of the new covenant. The leader exhorted the men to love others. He said there are four ways to treat other people. We can ignore them, despise them, endure them, or love them. Discussion ensued about examples of the first three. The general consensus was that the primary way to love others is to share the "good news" that Jesus died for them and saved them.

The Pastor and His Holiness Narrative

Pastor Dave is approximately 5'10", in his early 50's, and slightly balding. He is demonstrably friendly, with few getting away without a big bear hug (including the researcher). He has recently been in the hospital recovering from a mild heart attack. Dave grew up in a Nazarene church in Rhode Island and was one of those baby boomers who struggled with the legalism of the church of the 1960's and 70's. Weary of the denominational debates, holiness is for Dave, simply love. While he does not reject the idea that human beings are born into this world with original sin, for him, the Bible depicts the sanctified life as relational, and relation means love. Pastor Dave believes that if someone feels loved in his church then they get a sense of how much God loves them. He cares deeply about families, and wants to reach out to families in the neighborhood.

Pastor Dave's belief that the Christian life is basically relational suggests to him that since our lives are immersed in human relationship, which have to be nourished to

grow, so our relationship with God must be nourished. God wants us to enjoy Him, but our busy lives get in the way. We must spend more time in the “Word” to get to know our heavenly Father and to learn about his love and grace.

As we have seen, the Southside contemporary service is billed as a “family celebration.” Thus “Family of God” is a predominant theological theme of this church’s identity. The theme and identity of the service is shaped largely by Pastor Dave’s own understanding of holiness as the expression of God’s love for His children. The goal is to create a “relational experience” in which individuals and families come to know God’s love in community.

Easton

Easton is the youngest of the three churches. It is characterized by its “blue collar” flavor which fits its location in a rural village in the southern tier of the Hudson River valley. One major difference separates Easton Nazarene from the other two churches – its name, Easton *Community* Church of the Nazarene. Early founders of the church desired that their church have an impact on the immediate community.

Demographically it is more representative of the typical Nazarene church than either Millvale Nazarene or Southside.

The primary economic mode in the Easton community is manufacturing, but the radical decline in American manufacturing has hit this area of the country hard. At one time factories, scattered all along the Hudson River valley, provided the majority of jobs in these local cities and villages. Today, the area is experiencing both population decline and economic distress.

Easton shows signs of change and decline. For example, the population of Easton in 2008 was 79,232. The estimated population in 2013 will be 78,698. Average household income in 2000 was 4.2 percent below the U.S. average, and is expected to continue to decline to 2010. Only 59 percent of today's village residents lived in the same residence five years ago.

The town's household profile indicates a lower number of households with children. Households with children only make up 29.3 percent of the population, compared to 33.4 percent in the United States as a whole. This is also reflected in the number of persons between 35 and 54. Easton's 31.9 percent falls short of the national average of 37.9 percent.

Easton, like Southside, is mostly a White non-Hispanic town, with that population at 91.4 percent. However, as many White families move out of the area, homes are purchased by minorities, with the Hispanic population increasing slightly over the last decade, rising to 1.8 percent of the population.

The pattern of growth and decline in worship attendance in Easton is probably typical of many Nazarene churches. Established in 1938, attendance steadily rose to 80 in 1950. With the baby boom, attendance rose to 170 by 1965, then dipped and plateaued during the late 70's and 80's, settling at about 100. The church experienced a rapid growth spurt during the early 90's reaching its peak of 191 in 1994. Shortly after, attendance dropped to 150 or so, and has been fairly steady since. Sunday School attendance has diminished drastically over the years falling to nearly half of the Sunday morning service attendance.

Worship Style, Preaching, and Ministry

Pastor Gregg designs Easton worship services to be “blended” services. By this he means a blend of congregational hymns and contemporary worship choruses. The service order is much less structured than even Southside’s contemporary service. No special order of service is listed in the bulletin.

Pastor Gregg wears a lapel microphone and likes to move about the platform. He is demonstrative and gestures with hands and head. He works hard to keep the attention of his hearers. The message the day I visited was entitled, “Mountain Top Experiences.” Mountain top experiences are those times in our Christian life when we feel especially close to God. They are important, but we must remember that they are relatively rare, and we learn most of the important lessons of the Christian life from the “valley experiences.” Pastor Gregg’s text is taken from Matthew 17:1-13, the story of Jesus’ transfiguration. Gregg describes the disciple’s “mountaintop experience” with Jesus. He sees in the text the promise that God is always there in our lives. His presence is near. Like Jesus, who enjoyed favor with God, His Father, we can recognize that God is with us in Jesus. This should give us courage and comfort in the many valley experiences of our spiritual lives.

Identity issues have been a primary concern for the church. In order to clarify who they wanted to be Pastor Gregg encouraged the church to develop a vision statement: “The Easton Community Church of the Nazarene exists to...Invite everyone to know Christ and experience His love, Connect with other disciples, Grow as Disciples, become equipped to Serve God by serving others, so that He will be honored through our

lives.” Pastor Gregg makes constant mention of the church’s vision statement in his preaching and teaching.

The Pastor and His Narrative

Pastor Gregg is in his late 40’s and has an air of confidence about him. He was in the military, and this demeanor and disposition are evident, without being overbearing. He holds a B.A. in religion from a denominational school, but is sensitive about the fact that he never went on to get his Master of Divinity degree. His last pastorate was in mid-Massachusetts, where he served for 12 years.

Gregg brings a unique emphasis to Easton - his ministry to homosexuals. A longtime spokesperson for Exodus International, a ministry organization bringing Christ to gays and lesbians, Gregg feels an important impulse to reach homosexuals with the loving understanding of God. Gregg finds motivation for this ministry out of his own struggles with the lesbian lifestyle of his sister. There has been some apprehension among some parishioners over their pastor’s ministry, and not all of the congregation agree with it. Some gays and lesbians attend the church, and Gregg wants the congregation to learn to love as Christ loved. His basic understanding of the Gospel - that we are loved unconditionally - gets expressed in various ways in his church.

Gregg’s ministry flows out of his understanding of the Christian life as “acceptance.” God accepted us even while we were sinners, therefore we must accept others, and love them, even before they are transformed by God’s love.

Pastor Gregg was not raised in a Christian home, and he did not remember hearing about Jesus until he went into the Air Force, where he got saved. A borderline

alcoholic, Gregg realized that his life was heading in the wrong direction. He began to attend a Nazarene church in the mid 1980's and there found a group of guys who were accountability partners for him. He grew spiritually and gradually felt a call to full-time Christian ministry.

Gregg has a strong antagonism to "academic theology." He calls it "a theology of arrogance." He says, "It's more to puff myself up, to show the people how smart I am, that I can God-talk better than they can." Gregg's attitude is not anti-intellectualism, but his concerns are more pragmatic. What does one do when faced with human suffering? What does one do when faced with death or cancer? These are the kinds of questions he thinks are the real test of theology.

Early in his Christian life, Gregg thought holiness was mostly defined by a set of laws or rules. It was legalism. In the past, he says, the Church of the Nazarene had a set of special rules and these were used to negatively define what holiness was. But he saw holiness defined in this way as unattainable, and it made him frustrated, almost angry. When he was tempted he found himself always giving in - he fell short of the goal of perfection.

A turning point came when a special speaker came to the church emphasizing "giving your all to Jesus." Gregg felt the need to give his heart to the Lord in "full surrender," which meant for him the beginning of a life-long process.

How does Gregg see holiness? For him, it is a choice of "two ways," either you go your own way, or you go God's way. Gregg is uncomfortable with using "eradication" language to refer to holiness. While salvation is a crisis moment for Gregg,

the Christian life is better depicted as a “journey,” and that is his most common reference. There may be key moments along the way, but holiness is not about “perfection.” It is about being accepted by God, and participating in “the process of being transformed and renewed in His [Christ’s] image.”

In describing these three Nazarene churches I have highlighted similarities and differences in characteristics, demographics, social context, worship style, and pastor’s holiness narrative. The pictures of holiness that emerge out of these three churches are different as well. They certainly do not fully coincide with any of the holiness narratives we have been looking at. Yet, there are themes and images that resonate with the tradition. For Pastor Jerry holiness is psychological integration. Images of well-being, healing and wholeness are central. Pastor Dave emphasizes the relational component of holiness and experiencing God’s love. The image of family of God is important to him and his church. Pastor Gregg sees holiness more as a journey as believers choose between two paths. It is not about “perfection” for Gregg, but about an ongoing process of being transformed into the likeness of Christ.

Nazarenes and Religious Literature

In the previous section I have tried to illustrate the range of conduits of identity within the communal life of the congregation in which religious narratives are enacted. The pastor’s narrative is one of the primary resources for identity formation within the congregation. Another way religious narratives enter the life of a congregation is through the religious literature members read. In this section, I look at two sources –

denominational literature and popular Christian literature. Denominational resources express the official narratives of the Church of the Nazarene, which describe and explain its peculiar identity. These materials can be used in such places as worship services, Sunday school sessions, group Bible studies, youth meetings, and the like, in order to enable participants to construct religious identities that resonate with the tradition. The broader religious marketplace supplies religious literature depicting other religious identities. These more “popular” resources often express competing narratives drawn from religious traditions other than Wesleyan or Holiness. Some try to present a more generic Christianity, which might appeal to a larger population. In the current research, I was interested in two questions: do Nazarenes read any of the denomination’s theological resources, such as the more technical theologies, and do they read the more “popular” religious materials available in the religious marketplace.

Denominational Literature

Denominational literature can take many forms. Many Nazarene churches have informational pamphlets available for guests, which introduce them to the beliefs and practices peculiar to the Church of the Nazarene. Hymn books, sanctioned by the denomination, present songs and religious readings that articulate its religious vision. Sunday school materials for all ages present the denominational identity for catechetical use. Personal devotional magazines, such as *Come Ye Apart*, are available for personal and family use. Bible study resources and aids present a denominational reading of important Scriptural texts.

The *Manual* of the Church of the Nazarene is important for the promulgation of

official denominational identity since it contains the official statements of belief and practice that are normative for members. While the denomination prescribes the use of the *Manual* in some instances, such as when members are elected to positions on the church board, it generally leaves decisions for the reading of the *Manual* to the local congregation. In my research I discovered that very few Nazarenes read the *Manual* or are familiar with its contents.

Differences in the formation of religious identity occur when churches make decisions about whether and how denominational resources are to be used. Not all Nazarene congregations decide to use the denomination's worship and educational materials. Reasons for this vary considerably. For example, in Easton the older adult class used the traditional denominational adult curriculum for Sunday school, but the young adult class used material from another publishing company because it seemed "old" to use the traditional materials. Sometimes groups want a more dialogical approach to Sunday school and, therefore, look to other sources for material. Also, the pastor's attitudes toward denominational narratives are important. For example, Pastor Gregg in the Easton church, while not openly antagonistic to the denominational narratives, was much more ambivalent towards the denomination than the other two pastors.

In some churches, a Sunday school teacher, the Sunday school superintendent, or the pastor, might simply disagree with the official denominational beliefs and practices and, since they are in an influential position, could choose to use alternative resources that express religious views closer to his or her own. For example, more generic Christian resources, or explicitly "Evangelical" material, could be used. This might

occur if the pastor, who does not embrace the traditional beliefs of holiness, decides not to use the denomination's official resources. If there are no resources which reflect the pastor's holiness views, he or she could possibly draw on more "Evangelical" resources rather than use those from the denomination.

Important sources for official holiness narratives are denominational theologies. These materials are sanctioned by denominational leaders to describe and explain the agreed-upon beliefs and practices which are officially stated in shorter "creedal" form in the *Manual*. Not all theological books published by the denomination's publishing house are officially sanctioned by the denomination. Some are simply "representative" of debates within the tradition. In any case, these more technical resources are most often used in colleges and seminaries, but are also written to be used in the local congregation, and to be read by its lay members. How influential are these resources in the local congregation? Not very. **Table 5.4** shows that few of the Nazarenes in this study report having read any of the officially-sanctioned theologies.

Millvale Nazarenes are more likely to read Nazarene theologies than those in the other two churches. Of those who have read denominational theology one was clergy, and the other three were well educated laity. All of them were males who had at least a post-graduate education and were over 55 years of age.

In-depth interviews simply corroborate these findings. Few Nazarenes indicated that they read or were familiar with the denomination's theological resources. And, hardly anyone interviewed had read much of the Nazarene *Manual*.

Table 5.4 Official Nazarene Theologies in Three Nazarene Churches

Book	Easton	Southside Trad.	Southside Cont.	Millvale
Grider, "Entire Sanctification"	0.0%	4.5%	2.4%	18.2%
Grider, "Wesleyan-holiness Theology"	0.0	0.0	0.0	13.6
Wynkoop, "A Theology Of Love"	2.0	4.5	0.0	9.1
Dunning, "Grace, Faith, and Holiness"	0.0	0.0	6.1	13.6
Maddox, "Responsible Grace"	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.1
Total (Number of cases)	≥100% (49)	≥100% (44)	≥100% (84)	≥100% (22)

Note: Number of missing cases = 2.

Respondents were allowed to choose more than one.

Popular Religious Literature

If Nazarenes do not read denominational theologies, do they read other Christian literature? Yes. The array of Evangelical authors listed in **Table 5.7** demonstrates that generic Evangelical ideas about how to live a Christian life are widely available in all three congregations.

Nazarenes in these churches (especially the Millvale congregation) read many popular books written by authors of widely differing theological backgrounds. Substantial numbers have read James Dobson and Billy Graham and other Evangelical writers. With the exception of Reuben Welch, none of these writers expresses holiness narratives that resonate with the Wesleyan tradition.

Table 5.7 Prevalence of Reading Christian Authors in Three Nazarene Churches

Author	Easton	Southside Trad.	Southside Cont.	Millvale
<i>Evangelical</i>				
Rick Warren	42.9%	18.2%	26.8%	45.5%
John MacArthur	2.0	13.6	6.1	0.0
Billy Graham	36.7	29.5	14.6	36.4
John Maxwell	20.4	15.9	4.9	27.3
John Ortberg	0.0	0.0	2.4	13.6
Charles Stanley	14.3	13.6	12.2	18.2
D. James Kennedy	4.1	4.5	6.1	18.2
James Dobson	32.7	40.9	29.3	54.5
Bill Hybels	4.1	6.8	0.0	4.5
<i>Nazarene</i>				
Rueben Welch	2.0	9.1	2.4	13.6
Total	≥100%	≥100%	≥100%	≥100%
(Number of cases)	(32)	(33)	(56)	(22)

Note: Number of missing cases = 0.

Respondents were allowed to choose more than one.

It is clear that popular religious literature is much more prevalent than Nazarene theological resources. The higher number of Nazarenes who have read Rick Warren is due to the fact that his book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, was the text for a congregational study in both the Millvale and Easton churches. Billy Graham and James Dobson are popular among Nazarenes, and their books (and Dobson's radio programs) are important spiritual resources for them. Many Nazarenes in the in-depth interviews mentioned that they saw Graham and Dobson as exemplars of Christian faith, whose lives were to be emulated. It is likely, then, that the religious narratives expressed by these Christian authors are incorporated into the religious identities of everyday Nazarenes.

Holiness Identity in Comparative Social Context

The conduits and practices I highlighted in the previous section were only suggestive of the numerous possibilities of engagement with religious narratives in the local congregation. In this section, I contrast and compare the holiness identities produced in these three Nazarene churches in order to ask whether there are “local” differences in identity formation. I highlight two aspects of identity in the following section – self-selected religious identity and holiness narrative.

A comparative look at religious identity in these three churches indicates that social context does play a role in influencing local religious identity. **Table 5.6** shows that Southside participants are extremely unlikely to describe themselves as “Fundamentalist,” while Easton participants choose “Evangelical” much less often than participants in either Southside or Millvale.

Table 5.6 Distribution of Self-selected Religious Identities in Three Congregations

	<u>Easton</u>	<u>Southside Trad.</u>	<u>Southside Cont.</u>	<u>Millvale</u>
Self-selected Religious Identity				
Fundamentalist**	13.3%	3.1%	1.8%	19.0%
Evangelical**	16.7	40.6	37.5	61.9
Wesleyan-holiness	23.3	46.9	28.6	38.1
Nazarene	90.0	75.0	76.8	76.2
Mainline Protestant	3.3	0.0	1.8	9.5
Liberal Christian	3.3	0.0	7.1	4.8
Total	≥100%	≥100%	≥100%	≥100%
(Number of cases)	(32)	(33)	(56)	(22)

Note: Number of missing cases = 0.

Respondents were allowed to choose more than one.

** Significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

While Southside participants from both services agree that they are not Fundamentalist, those who attend the traditional service are more likely to choose a “Wesleyan-holiness” label for themselves, while a few “mainline” and “liberal” identifiers can be found in the contemporary service. A significant number of participants at Easton see themselves as Nazarene (90.0%). Alternatively, few see themselves as having a “Wesleyan-holiness,” “Evangelical,” or “Fundamentalist” identity.

Other than these peculiarities, the data strongly suggests that, with relatively little variation, individuals in all three churches select traditional religious identities. But, does the picture change when we consider sanctification narratives? Not very much. As we can see in **Table 5.7** there is little difference between these three churches in the distribution of views of sanctification.

Table 5.7 Distribution of Holiness Definitions in Three Nazarene Churches

Holiness Narrative	Easton	Southside Trad.	Southside Cont.	Millvale
19 th Century Traditional	12.5%	6.3%	5.4%	9.1%
<i>Manual</i> Compromise	21.9	12.5	21.4	9.1
Neo-Wesleyan Corrective	43.8	56.3	42.9	50.0
Evangelical “Growth”	18.8	12.5	12.5	31.8
None of Above	0.0	0.0	3.6	0.0
Do Not Understand	3.1	9.4	12.5	0.0
Other	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
(Number of cases)	(32)	(33)	(56)	(22)

Note: Number of missing cases = 0.

Participants are slightly more likely to select the Evangelical “Growth” narrative in Millvale, and those in the Southside traditional congregation are slightly more likely to select the Neo-Wesleyan corrective. With a small number of cases, none of these differences are statistically significant.

While participants in Millvale are sure of what they believe about sanctification, those in Southside, particularly those in the contemporary congregation, are slightly more likely to say that they do not understand sanctification or to say that none of the definitions apply to them.

The story so far is that there is not much statistically significant difference between these churches. In spite of the differences between the churches highlighted earlier, the pattern of survey responses is nearly the same – the 19th century traditional narrative is in decline, the Neo-Wesleyan corrective is most predominant, and the Evangelical “Growth” narrative has at least as much social presence as the *Manual* compromise. The presence of the Evangelical narrative is at least influenced by the religious literature Nazarenes in all three churches read, although it is likely that there are other conduits as well.

Comparison of Lived Narrative Holiness Identities

In the next section, I explore whether there any differences between these

churches in the types of holiness identities produced. Employing factor analysis I look at socially constructed religious identities as they get expressed in each of the churches of the study. Factor analysis produced multiple factors for each church.¹² Here, I look only at the first three factors produced and use these to explore the range of identities constructed and to compare and contrast between congregations. Just as I did in an earlier chapter, I take the factors to point to the social presence of clusters of like-minded Nazarenes who tend to understand holiness in similar ways.

Easton

The following three types were identified in Easton Church of the Nazarene:

Type 1 Neo-Wesleyan, Evangelical, and Traditional¹³

The Neo-Wesleyan narrative of sanctification, which depicts sanctification as having moments of both instantaneousness *and* process, is the guiding narrative for this cluster. Yet, the 19th century traditional narrative of eradication also plays a role in shaping views of holiness, as do also images such as “eradication” and being devoted to

¹²In some cases up to seventeen factors were produced.

¹³Factor 1 accounted for 14% of the variation among the data. Factor loadings:

- .610 Neo-Wesleyan “Corrective” definition of entire sanctification
- .519 Image of entire sanctification as “holy”
- .516 Self-selected religious identity “Evangelical”
- .510 Image of entire sanctification as “sin eradicated”
- .481 Image of entire sanctification as “original sin eradicated”
- .460 Image of entire sanctification as “devoted to God”
- .319 19th Century definition of entire sanctification

-.308 Not an Evangelical “Growth” definition of entire sanctification

God. Even though traditional images are used, this group does not embrace an explicit Nazarene self-identity.

While Neo-Wesleyanism influences their view of sanctification, such as through images depicting the sanctified person as “holy,” their self-identity is more influenced by the broader Evangelical tradition. Their identity label, however, is at odds with how they understand holiness. They do not embrace the Evangelical “Growth” narrative of holiness, even if the label “evangelical” is one with which they identify. While they are less likely to call themselves Wesleyan-holiness or even Nazarene, they reject the Evangelical view of sanctification as a continuous process of growth toward maturity.

Type 2 Traditional 19th Century¹⁴

Like those I characterized in type 1, individuals in this cluster do not clearly embrace a Nazarene self-identity. But neither do they identify themselves as Wesleyan-holiness, Fundamentalist, or Evangelical, either. In spite of the lack of a clear connection with a Nazarene identity, however, both their definition of sanctification and the images they use to depict the sanctified person are drawn from the 19th century narrative. These Nazarenes see sanctification as a distinct second work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the

¹⁴Factor 2 accounted for 13% of the variation among the data. Factor loadings:

- .602 19th Century definition of entire sanctification
- .473 Image of entire sanctification as “sin eradicated”
- .351 Image of entire sanctification as “obedient to God”
- .689 Not Self-selected religious identity “Wesleyan-holiness”
- .577 Not Self-selected religious identity “Fundamentalist”
- .546 Not Evangelical “Growth” definition of entire sanctification
- .409 Not Self-selected religious identity “Evangelical”

believer in which the old sinful nature is eradicated and the believer is empowered for Christian life and service. Other images of sanctification, such as “eradication of sin” and “obedient to God” reinforce this view. These Nazarenes clearly reject the Evangelical “Growth” narrative of sanctification.

Type 3 Traditional Nazarene and Fundamentalist¹⁵

These Nazarenes are the most eclectic at Easton. Their religious identities are shaped by three primary images that depict the sanctified person – original sin is eradicated, the believer is filled with the Holy Spirit, and the heart is cleansed from sin. But the image of love, often associated with the Neo-Wesleyan story, is used as well.

While this cluster is somewhat influenced by the 19th century tradition, they primarily understand sanctification as it is expressed in the *Manual* compromise narrative, as a cleansing of the heart from sin.

Like others at Easton, these individuals do not have an explicit Nazarene self-identity. Instead, they identify themselves as both Fundamentalist and Evangelical. Yet, even though they have an Evangelical self-identity, they do not understand sanctification

¹⁵Factor 3 accounted for 11% of the variation among the data. Factor loadings:

- .545 Image of entire sanctification as “sin cleansed”
- .453 Image of entire sanctification as “filled with the Holy Spirit”
- .449 Image of entire sanctification as “original sin eradicated”
- .417 Self-selected religious identity “Fundamentalist”
- .392 *Manual* Compromise definition of entire sanctification
- .387 Self-selected religious identity “Evangelical”
- .332 Image of entire sanctification as “love”
- .404 Not Evangelical “Growth” definitions of entire sanctification
- .372 Not an image of entire sanctification as “devoted to God”

as an ongoing process of growth toward maturity.

In Easton, then, we see much more of the traditional 19th century holiness emphasis among these Nazarenes, but like their pastor, few of these Nazarenes have an unambiguous Nazarene identity. Definitions of sanctification and images of holiness drawn from this tradition are prominent in their holiness identities. But, other themes and images are woven into their religious biographies, too. As Easton Nazarenes construct holiness identities they express both official and unofficial views of sanctification and holiness. This is a pattern that will be replicated in the other two congregations as well.

Southside Traditional

The following three types were identified in the traditional congregation at Southside Church of the Nazarene:

Type 1 Pentecostal and Neo-Wesleyan¹⁶

These Nazarenes are influenced by the more Pentecostally-inflected image of the sanctified person, one who is “filled with the Holy Spirit.” But at the same time they also retain the more traditional notions. For example, in the sanctified person sin is

¹⁶Factor 1 accounted for 12% of the variation among the data. Factor loadings:

.566 Image of entire sanctification as “filled with the Holy Spirit”

.474 Image of entire sanctification as “sin eradicated”

.407 Image of entire sanctification as “God-like”

.390 Neo-Wesleyan definition of entire sanctification

.330 Do not understand entire sanctification

-.616 Not image of entire sanctification “devoted to God”

-.553 Not *Manual* compromise definition of entire sanctification

-.475 Not image of entire sanctification as “love”

eradicated, and the believer is made like God. Images such as “devoted to God” and “love,” certainly evident in the *Manual*, are not utilized by these Nazarenes.

Utilizing the Neo-Wesleyan view of sanctification they understand sanctification as including both process and instantaneousness. Thus, the *Manual* compromise definition is not a part of their narrative.

There are two other characteristics of this cluster. First, they do not clearly associate themselves with any of the self-selected religious identities. And, second, while these Nazarenes do employ many images and themes, they have difficulty, however, understanding sanctification.

Type 2 Traditional and Evangelical¹⁷

These Nazarenes also mix images and definitions of sanctification, but they also hold what appear to be contradictory beliefs about holiness. For example, they integrate both the Evangelical “Growth” and the 19th Century Traditional narratives of sanctification. Also, while they draw on traditional Nazarene images of entire sanctification such as the 19th century language of “sin eradicated” and the Neo-

¹⁷Factor 2 accounted for 11% of the variation among the data. Factor loadings:

- .492 Image of entire sanctification as “sin eradicated”
- .488 Image of entire sanctification as “holy”
- .416 Evangelical “Growth” definition of entire sanctification
- .339 Self-selected religious identity “Evangelical”
- .334 Self-selected religious identity “Fundamentalist”
- .323 19th Century Traditional definition of entire sanctification
- .627 Not self-selected religious identity “Nazarene”
- .552 Not image of entire sanctification as “God-like”
- .500 Not “do not understand entire sanctification”
- .376 Not image of entire sanctification as “sin cleansed”

Wesleyan image of “holy,” they do not embrace the *Manual* compromise view which sees sin as cleansed in entire sanctification.

Again, while they embrace some of the traditional Nazarene language of holiness and sanctification, they do not have a Nazarene self-identity. Instead, they embrace self-identities like “Fundamentalist” and “Evangelical.” And, somewhat ironically, even though these Nazarenes mix images and definitions, they are clear about what they believe.

Type 3 Evangelical, Wesleyan and Traditional¹⁸

We can see in the religious identities of these Nazarenes another example of a composite of holiness narratives. While rejecting the Fundamentalist label, and identifying themselves as “Wesleyan-holiness” and “Evangelical,” they embrace the traditional 19th century definition of entire sanctification. At the same time, they do not employ images of eradication that might be associated with this way of thinking about holiness. Also, in spite of having a more Wesleyan identity they do not use the Neo-Wesleyan definition of entire sanctification even though they depict the sanctified person as “holy.” Like other Nazarenes, in spite of the fact that they choose images and themes

¹⁸Factor 3 accounted for 11% of the variation among the data. Factor loadings:

- .648 Self-selected religious identity “Wesleyan-holiness”
- .517 Image of entire sanctification as “sin cleansed”
- .440 Do not understand entire sanctification
- .379 Image of entire sanctification as “holy”
- .375 Self-selected religious identity “Evangelical”
- .344 19th Century Traditional definition of entire sanctification
- .495 Not Neo-Wesleyan definition of entire sanctification
- .473 Not self-selected religious identity “Fundamentalist”
- .342 Not image of entire sanctification as “original sin eradicated”

offered to them, this cluster does not fully understand entire sanctification.

We see in Southside's traditional congregation holiness biographies that reflect the influence of Pentecostal and Neo-Wesleyan influence. Other Southside participants, however, are more traditional, drawing on images and themes from both the 19th century and *Manual* compromise narratives. Also, while not predominant, aspects of an Evangelical narrative are evident in some of these religious biographies.

Southside Contemporary

The following three types were identified in the contemporary congregation at Southside Church of the Nazarene:

Type 1 Evangelical, Neo-Wesleyan and Pentecostal¹⁹

These Southside Nazarenes in the contemporary congregation differ from those in the traditional service both in self-selected identity and the kinds of images they employ in describing the sanctified person. For example, there is a strong Evangelical identity in this cohort, but neither the Nazarene identity nor the Wesleyan-holiness identity is selected.

¹⁹Factor 1 accounted for 12% of the variation among the data. Factor loadings:

- .641 Self-selected religious identity "Evangelical"
- .626 Neo-Wesleyan definition of entire sanctification
- .602 Image of entire sanctification "filled with the Holy Spirit"
- .376 Image of entire sanctification "baptized with the Holy Spirit"
- .315 Image of entire sanctification "holy"
- .491 Not image of entire sanctification as "like Jesus"
- .431 Not image of entire sanctification as "love"
- .388 Not Evangelical "Growth" definition of entire sanctification
- .323 Not image of entire sanctification as "obedient to God"

The Neo-Wesleyan influence can be clearly seen as they embrace entire sanctification as both instantaneous and processive. And, even though these Nazarenes have a strong self-identity as Evangelical, they do not employ the Evangelical notion that sanctification is growth in maturity.

Also, the more Pentecostal-inflected image of sanctification figures very prominently – the sanctified person is one who is filled with the Holy Spirit. Yet the traditional image of baptized with the Holy Spirit is also used, as well as that of “holy.” It is curious that other images such as “like Jesus” and “love” are not used by this cohort since these have been a central part of the Wesleyan tradition.

Type 2 Traditional Nazarene²⁰

Like other clusters, these Nazarenes construct holiness identities from multiple narratives. In this cluster a Nazarene self-identity is prominent, but they also see themselves as Evangelical and do not embrace the label “Liberal Christian.”

Their Nazarene identity is closely associated with both the *Manual* and the 19th century narratives of sanctification, which play an important role in their religious

²⁰Factor 2 accounted for 10% of the variation among the data. Factor loadings:

- .568 *Manual* Compromise definition of entire sanctification
- .483 Self-selected religious identity “Nazarene”
- .414 Image of entire sanctification as “God-like”
- .379 Image of entire sanctification as “original sin eradicated”
- .367 Self-selected religious identity as “Evangelical”
- .361 19th Century Traditional definition of entire sanctification
- .334 Image of entire sanctification as “holy”
- .310 Image of entire sanctification as “like Jesus”
- .477 Not self-selected religious identity “Liberal Christian”
- .343 Not image of entire sanctification as “sin cleansed”

biographies.

Multiple images, drawn from an array of narratives, are used to depict the sanctified person. The sanctified person is “God-like” and “holy.” While the *Manual* compromise narrative is the primary narrative of sanctification, the image, “cleansed,” which is often associated with it, is not used. Instead, eradication language is employed along with more Neo-Wesleyan images.

Type 3 Liberal Christian and Evangelical²¹

In this cluster we see the influence of other unofficial themes and images that are integrated into their holiness identities. Even though individuals in this cohort are affiliated with the Church of the Nazarene, they do not describe themselves by using the “Nazarene” label. Nor do they see themselves as “Mainline Protestant.” Rather, they use the unusual label “Liberal Christian” as a way of describing their religious identity. But the more official Wesleyan-holiness label also applies to them.

The definition of sanctification, for this cluster, is also drawn from an unofficial narrative. They understand sanctification as it gets expressed in the Evangelical “Growth” narrative, as growth toward maturity. Images of holiness and the sanctified

²¹Factor 3 accounted for 8% of the variation among the data. Factor loadings:

- .582 Self-selected religious identity “Liberal Christian”
- .517 Evangelical “Growth” definition of entire sanctification
- .336 Image of entire sanctification as “devoted to God”
- .333 Image of entire sanctification as “obedient to God”
- .332 Self-selected religious identity “Wesleyan-holiness”
- .452 Not self-selected religious identity “Nazarene”
- .435 Not “do not understand entire sanctification”
- .407 Not image of entire sanctification as “love”
- .404 Not self-selected religious identity “Mainline Protestant”

person, while certainly part of the holiness tradition, are more generic in describing the sanctified person. The sanctified person is depicted as being devoted to God or obedient to God. Images like eradication and cleansing, which envision a more radical response to original sin, are not utilized.

While other clusters exhibit a sense of uncertainty about what they believe about holiness, this is not true for these “Nazarenes.” On the contrary, they are much more certain about their holiness beliefs.

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The following three types were identified in Easton Church of the Nazarene:

Type 1 Neo-Wesleyan and Traditional²²

Among members of this cluster we clearly see the Neo-Wesleyan influence. Both a Wesleyan-holiness self-identity and the Neo-Wesleyan definition of entire sanctification are central to the holiness identity of these Nazarenes. They consider themselves to be Evangelical, too.

But the Neo-Wesleyan influence does not extend to the images employed to

²²Factor 1 accounted for 19% of the variation among the data. Factor loadings:

- .718 Self-selected religious identity “Wesleyan-holiness”
- .693 Neo-Wesleyan definition of entire sanctification
- .506 Image of entire sanctification as “devoted to God”
- .431 Image of entire sanctification as “original sin eradicated”
- .363 Self-selected religious identity “Evangelical”
- .312 Image of entire sanctification as “sin cleansed”
- .306 Image of entire sanctification as “eradicated”
- .848 Not Evangelical “Growth” definition of entire sanctification
- .603 Not image of entire sanctification as “love”
- .505 Not image of entire sanctification as “obedient to God”

depict the sanctified person. For example, images like “love” and “obedience,” integral to a more Wesleyan understanding, are not used. Instead, we find a mixture of images drawn from the *Manual* compromise and 19th century narratives. Devotement²³ language is used alongside cleansing and eradication. While these Nazarenes see themselves as Evangelical, they do not embrace the Evangelical narrative that sees sanctification as ongoing growth to maturity.

Type 2 19th Century Traditional²⁴

In this cluster we see one of the clearest examples of a holiness identity that is not a composite. Beliefs about holiness images and themes correspond to those found in the 19th century traditional narrative. This group embraces language of eradication, and a Nazarene identity is clearly prominent. They clearly are not Neo-Wesleyan. Neither the way of viewing sanctification, nor the depiction of the sanctified person as “holy” or “obedient to God,” are used.

Type 3 Evangelical Holiness²⁵

²³The word “devotement” is used in the *Manual* of the Church of the Nazarene to describe an attitude of being devoted to God.

²⁴Factor 2 accounted for 14% of the variation among the data. Factor loadings:

- .802 Image of entire sanctification as “God-like”
- .798 19th Century Traditional definition of entire sanctification
- .606 Image of entire sanctification as “sin eradicated”
- .480 Self-selected religious identity “Nazarene”
- .400 Not Neo-Wesleyan “Corrective” definition of entire sanctification
- .379 Not image of entire sanctification as “obedient to God”
- .322 Not image of entire sanctification as “holy”

In this group we see the mutual interaction between Evangelicalism and the holiness traditions. For example, members of this cluster have a clear Wesleyan-holiness and Nazarene identity, but where we would expect a narrative of sanctification that reflects one of these traditions, instead we find that the Evangelical story of growth is embraced.

Images of holiness describe the sanctified person in different ways. The believer is one in whom original sin is eradicated, who is made obedient to God, and who is filled with the Holy Spirit. Traditional images are mixed with the more Pentecostally-inflected image in these religious identities. Yet, not all the traditional images are embraced. Neither “holy” nor “sin cleansed” are used.

Conclusion

What can we say about the comparison of holiness identities among these three Nazarene churches and the influence of conduits of identity? It seems clear that the social context contributes to the composite nature of lived religious identities, but only in a minor way. In spite of the many local differences in characteristics, demographics,

²⁵Factor 3 accounted for 12% of the variation among the data. Factor loadings:

- .454 Self-selected religious identity “Wesleyan-holiness”
- .412 Self-selected religious identity “Nazarene”
- .402 Image of entire sanctification as “obedient to God”
- .364 Image of entire sanctification as “original sin eradicated”
- .356 Image of entire sanctification as “filled with the Holy Spirit”
- .255 Evangelical “Growth” definition of entire sanctification

- .865 Not image of entire sanctification as “holy”
- .586 Not image of entire sanctification as “sin cleansed”

worship, preaching style, and pastor's narrative all three congregations in this study reflect a similar range of religious narratives. There are few, if any, lived religious biographies which are shaped exclusively by any one of the official denominational narratives. Neither is there, however, a clear instance of an Evangelical holiness narrative. Rather, the lived religious identities that we do see are a "pastiche,"²⁶ a composite of images and themes drawn from the three official Nazarene stories and the unofficial Evangelical story.

Two other characteristics elucidate the composite nature of holiness identity construction. First, the result of identity construction in these churches is the production of many clusters of like-minded Nazarenes who share common ways of thinking about holiness, yet none have a large social presence. And in all three churches, the resulting combination of identities, images and stories is nearly unlimited. It is this phenomenon that may have given the impression to researchers such as Ron Benefiel and others the impression that Nazarenes have a common core of beliefs and practices, but also exhibit signs of fragmentation.

Second, the impact of the Evangelical holiness narrative is clear. This research validates concerns about the growing influence of the Evangelical narrative that depicts sanctification as growth toward maturity. This narrative, and the images associated with it, has a significant presence in all three Nazarene churches, among laity and clergy alike.

²⁶The term is derived from Danièle Hervieu-Léger. See her *Religion as a Chain of Memory* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2000). Ammerman reminds us that even this metaphor may be too static to really describe contemporary identity construction. See her "Organized Religion in a Voluntary Society," *Sociology of Religion* 58 (1997): 203-215.

Many of the conduits of identity are means by which this narrative enters local congregations.

Implications for Identity Change among Nazarenes

Nazarenes *are* undergoing an identity shift. Holiness beliefs and practices have changed over time. Until recently, those changes generally correlated with theological changes in the history of the denomination. The shift from a more insular Nazarene world in the early 20th century to a more diverse and pluralistic one can be seen in the differences in religious identities of generational cohorts. For example, we find the traditional 19th century narrative mostly among those over age 65. And, the Neo-Wesleyan narrative is mostly carried by the baby boom cohort.

Today, however, the situation is different. Competing religious narratives, such as Evangelicalism and liberal Protestantism, have entered the religious landscape of Nazarenes. Baby boomers are the primary carriers of Evangelicalism. More of them see themselves as Evangelical, and more embrace that sanctification narrative than among other cohorts.

Younger Nazarenes show more diversity. While all the official religious narratives are represented, along with the Evangelical one, two differences characterize this cohort. First, a large minority do not know what they believe about sanctification. Also, whatever influence liberal Christianity might have among Nazarenes is found in this younger cohort.

Alternative religious narratives enter Nazarene congregations as boundaries between social enclaves become more permeable. The transposibility of narratives

suggests the possibility that unofficial religious narratives enter the local congregation as individuals import them from other social contexts. For example, Nazarenes read more generic Evangelical authors far more often than they read Nazarene ones. Thus Evangelical views of sanctification are integrated into their personal religious biographies.

Switchers, too, are carriers of alternative religious narratives. While there does appear to be a mutual influence between switchers and their new-found congregation, many switchers who affiliate with the Church of the Nazarene retain their previous religious identity. Switchers are the primary source of Fundamentalism in these congregations. Also, switchers are a source of pluralism, as they bring alternative narratives with them. Yet, this relationship is reciprocal for many switchers – they embrace and integrate themes from Nazarene stories into their lives, too.

In the previous chapters, drawing on Nancy Ammerman's sociological theory of narrative identity, I explored the process of holiness identity formation in three Nazarene churches. I argued that explanations about religious change must consider that the process of contemporary holiness identity construction is a matter of understanding the relationship between agency and structure. I depicted Nazarene holiness identity as a narrative construction in which individuals engage in an ongoing negotiation between public and biographical narratives. I argued that narratives of secularization and sect-church theory do not adequately explain religious identity change in the Church of the Nazarene. Instead, I discovered that the reason for belief change within the churches in the study could be attributed to two primary causes. First, different generations told

different holiness narratives. The effect was that there are currently three competing denominational holiness narratives at play that inform holiness identity. No one of the three holiness narratives effectively shapes holiness identity for the majority of Nazarenes. The effect has been that individuals take upon themselves the task of appropriating religious narratives from the surrounding social context and integrate them into their own autobiographical narrative. Second, the theological vacuum created by the loss of a dominant denominational narrative created space for alternative narratives to emerge. Other narratives, such as forms of Evangelicalism and liberal Protestantism, in many ways antagonistic to the Wesleyan-holiness moral vision, are beginning to be integrated into the live religious lives of many Nazarenes, creating holiness identities at odds with the goal of the denomination. In the following chapters I explore how theology might suggest a constructive proposal to respond to the dilemma of identity construction in these three local congregations of the Church of the Nazarene.

CHAPTER 6

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE “SANCTIFIED PERSON”

Introduction

The focus of this practical theological study has been to investigate the construction of religious identity, and in particular, holiness identity, in three local congregations of the Church of the Nazarene. At the heart of Nazarene identity is the theological vision of a particular identity, the “sanctified person.”¹ An investigation into lived religion, and the kinds of holiness identities constructed there, has posed several issues that prompt theological reflection. The goal of the following chapters is the reconstruction of a theology of entire sanctification that might address some of the practical problems posed by lived religion.

In this chapter, I show that following the demise of the 19th century holiness model in the mid-Twentieth century, Nazarenes generally attempted to view the construction of the sanctified person as a *social* identity, particularly by drawing on relational categories and developing a relational ontology. More recently, scholars have extended that work and have attempted to reconstruct the sanctified person as an *ecclesial* identity. I argue that a theological construction of the sanctified person as an ecclesial identity is a helpful way to address the contemporary problems that arise in lived religion.

¹All three of the major Nazarene narratives reviewed in earlier chapters have this as a common goal.

But, in my review of current Nazarene theological construction, I suggest that that theological work is incomplete.

In the following sections, I employ a sociological theory of narrative identity to help the theologian understand how social identities are constructed. I then offer a theological analysis of lived religion highlighting several assumptions and key theological questions that emerge. Finally, I review the theological proposals following Wynkoop and ask if they offer sufficient theological resources for the social construction of sanctified persons.

Theology and Religious Identity Theory

Theology has in mind the production of particular Christian identities. Recent theological work reorienting a theology of sanctification toward a social and ecclesial framework is an important development in Nazarene theology. This theological work relies on sociological assumptions that are mostly left implicit, however. First, religious identity is a social construction, the result of a social process. Second, individuals are embedded in particular social locations. Christian identity emerges out of the social location called the *ecclesia*. Third, religious identity is somehow related to social practices. While these sociological assumptions do contribute to theological construction, without an explicit theory of religious identity formation the construction of the sanctified person as an ecclesial identity is unable to emerge, and is left incomplete.

In previous chapters, I have been arguing that understanding religious identity requires that we be attentive to the relationship between agency and structure. In this section, I review aspects of Nancy Ammerman's narrative identity theory and argue that

she offers important insights which might be applied to a contemporary theological construction of sanctification.

At the heart of Ammerman's theoretical approach lies the notion that identity is a narrative construction. Narrative takes the events of our lives and makes them parts of a plot. For Ammerman the process of emplotting does not need to be a conscious process. On the contrary, she writes, "The process of emplotment need rarely be conscious; internalized narratives guide most action through habit" (Ammerman 2003:213). As agents, then, action is guided usually by narratives that have been so internalized as to guide action by "settled dispositions" (Ammerman 2003:212).²

Following Somers, Ammerman identifies four types of narratives which function as resources for identity construction: autobiographical narratives, public narratives, metanarratives, and conceptual narratives. Autobiographical narratives are those internalized narratives that guide most day to day action. Persons understand themselves as characters capable of acting in certain ways. It is the autobiographical narrative that makes possible the predictability which gives our identities a sense of integrity and enables others to place trust in our actions (Ammerman 2003:214). Public narratives are "publically constructed and shared, existing beyond the agency and consciousness of any single individual" (Ammerman 2003:214). These narratives offer corporate ways of giving account for one's behavior that identify where one belongs, what one is doing, and why. A great deal of a person's identity and action is guided by these community narratives. Religious narratives, such as denominational narratives, are examples of such

²Later in this chapter I employ Pierre Bourdieu's analogous concept of *habitus*.

public narratives. Religious identity emerges, as Ammerman says, at the “intersection of autobiographical and public narratives” (Ammerman 2003:215). Individuals integrate publically available religious narratives into their own personal narratives. Theological narratives which will function as public narratives will include sets of roles, myths, rituals, and behavioral prescriptions that encourage participants to perceive themselves in relation to God.

Following her account of the types of narratives available for identity construction, Ammerman offers an important reminder, one that has theological significance. The role of the body, and embodied practices, is an essential, but often neglected, aspect of religious identity formation. For Ammerman, the physical self as agent is a critical part of defining identity and membership. Embodied practices, then, are essential to identity formation. Narratives are enacted by “actual physical bodies in material environments” (Ammerman 2003:215). By embodied practices she means “[g]estures, postures, music, and movements” that tell the story and signal our location in it. The danger of not considering the body in identity construction is that it reduces social identity to the function of “texts and words.” A theology that is not attentive to these narrative embodied practices misses an important aspect of how everyday religious lives are shaped. In the following chapters, I suggest that a theological reconstruction of entire sanctification needs to take seriously the notion that narrative embodied practices within an ecclesial context are critical in shaping holiness identities.

I take it that the theological task, then, is to offer individuals a structured, multi-layered religious biographical narrative – the sanctified person – “within which the

actor's own autobiographical narrative can be experienced."³ This narrative will include both beliefs and embodied practices that enable the person to participate in his or her own construction of holiness identity, but also to develop deeply embedded habits that shape and guide religious action.

Ammerman's theoretical proposals are a helpful reminder to theological analysis regarding how social identities are formed, but additional theoretical insights regarding the role of social practices in the formation of identity can be gained by thinking about identity emerging out of a social *habitus*. *Habitus* may be understood as what Stone calls a "group habit." He describes *habitus* as "a socially constructed way of living, knowing, and valuing received and internalized by the individuals within that group in a dynamic unity of 'objectivity' and 'subjectivity'."⁴ Thus, the social identity designated as "sanctified person" emerges out of a social context, in this case the *ecclesia*, which is characterized by a narrative that embodies this identity. The church's *story*, then, nourishes and legitimates a "social imagination" out of which individuals are able to "see" themselves as sanctified persons. This social imagination is "a cluster of common assumptions about the way things are and the way things ought to be."⁵ Stone elaborates:

It [social imagination] is embodied in a complex set of social habits, relations, and patterns that habituate us (often unconsciously) into ways of living and acting that come to be understood as not only possible but natural and right.⁶

³Ammerman, "Religious Identities and Religious Institutions," 217.

⁴Stone relies here on the view of Roger Haight. See Stone, *Evangelism After Christendom*, 25.

⁵Stone, *Evangelism After Christendom*, 173.

⁶*Ibid.*

The result, for Stone, is the formation of a “public” out of a “creative framework within which we construe space and time, our relation to others, our sense of common agency, and our relation to power.”⁷

Practices are an essential part of a *habitus*. A *habitus*:

provides the unconscious structures by which practices are generated and organized coherently and consistently in response to individual and unique situations but “without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them” (Bourdieu 1990:53).⁸

“Practices,” according to Volf and Bass, can be understood as “patterns of cooperative human activity in and through which life together takes shape over time in response to and in light of God as known in Jesus Christ.”⁹ *Christian* practices, then, according to them, are “things Christian people do over time to address fundamental human needs in response to and in the light of God’s active presence for the life of the world.”¹⁰ They highlight key aspects of Christian practices. For them, Christian practices are constitutive of a way of life lived in response to the grace of God. Thus, an emphasis on practices turns our attention to the way God’s grace *actually* takes shape in the midst of human life together. Practices “require and engender” knowledge on the part of practitioners which deters the separation of thinking from acting. They are social, suggesting the communal aspect of the Christian life. People across generations engage in these practices.

⁷Stone, *Evangelism After Christendom*, 173.

⁸Ibid., 25.

⁹Volf and Bass, *Practicing Theology*, 3. They are indebted to Alasdair MacIntyre’s concept of “social practices” as set forth in his *After Virtue*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984).

¹⁰Ibid., 18.

Practices are rooted in the past, but are adaptable to new cultural and social contexts.

Finally, because everyday people are not professional theologians, “practices articulate wisdom that is in the keeping of practitioners.”¹¹

This way of thinking about practices is also sensitive to the current social context in which identity is formed. Volf and Bass recognize the tension inherent in contemporary identity construction and which I identify in lived religion:

So long as social change continually destabilizes both beliefs and practices, and so long as habituation and institutionalization tug to keep them in stasis, Christian living involves the whole community in ongoing theological work.¹²

Practices work to stabilize identity by offering structured social processes by which individuals are formed in the Christian way of life.

There are at least two reasons this emphasis on practice may address theological concerns in Nazarene identity construction. First, practices are social. Practices are “done together and over time.”¹³ Thus, practices can be constitutive of holiness because they are shared together forging communal ties and contribute to establishing a social identity. Second, practices are both *means* and *ends*. Not only do these practices offer the opportunity to be shaped by God’s grace, but the practices are what holiness looks like. Holiness then may be seen as a way of life constituted by narrative practices.

¹¹Volf and Bass, *Practicing Theology*, 6.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Dorothy Bass, “Introduction,” in *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life* edited by Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 6.

A contemporary reconstruction of holiness theology, then, might conceive of God working through Christian practices to shape believers in the *habitus* of the Christian faith. The identity of the sanctified person would emerge out of a particular social location, a social *habitus* shaped by an “identity-constituting” narrative¹⁴ and guided by particular narratively shaped embodied practices that are constitutive of a way of life that is characteristic of holiness. I consider this to be the description of an “ecclesial holiness.” In the following sections, I place this theory of religious identity formation in dialogue with both lived religion and selected resources from the Nazarene theological tradition.

The Sanctified Person in Lived Religion

An analysis of lived religion suggests that the *habitus* out of which the identity of the sanctified person could emerge is being lost or distorted as competing denominational narratives and alternative religious narratives, such as Evangelicalism, emerge. The result is the formation of an alternative *habitus* which produces religious identities that are in many ways antagonistic to the Wesleyan-holiness moral vision.

In this section, I reflect theologically on lived religion. The holiness identities constructed by everyday Nazarenes may be seen to have both structure and content. By structure I mean the way identities are formed and the shape they take in lived religion. By content I mean the specific beliefs and practices that constitute identity. Theological

¹⁴The phrase comes from Stanley J. Grenz, “The Social God and the Relational Self,” in *Personal Identity in Theological Perspective*, 92.

analysis of both raises critical questions to be answered by a contemporary theological construction of sanctification.

Structural Characteristics

Structurally, the identities constructed in these Nazarene churches have a composite nature. That is, individuals include aspects from multiple religious narratives into their own personal biographies. Multiple definitions, themes, and images depicting sanctification are mixed and mingled together. In addition, individuals integrate themes and plots from alternative religious narratives, such as from Evangelicalism. And finally, individual Nazarenes have their own unique interpretations of the religious life and they employ their own language to depict the sanctified person. From an “official” denominational perspective there appears to be little coherence in these lived religious identities.

As I have already noted, this situation is brought about by a number of factors. First, the pluralistic context of the contemporary world ensures that multiple religious stories will be available to everyday Nazarenes. Social life in the congregation does not wholly shelter believers from alternative depictions of human life because social boundaries are permeable. Second, choice plays an increased role in peoples’ religious lives. The implication of a voluntaristic religious world is that no single organizational or belief context can explain any person's actions.¹⁵ Individuals take advantage of this situation to construct religious identities by choosing images and themes from multiple

¹⁵Ammerman, *Everyday Religion*, 6.

sources. Third, the theological vacuum in the Church of the Nazarene allows competing religious narratives to emerge and exist unchallenged.

If we think of religious identity as shaped in social contexts by narratives that supply structured religious biographical narratives, then does not the fact that there are composite identities emerging out of these churches point to a critical problem? Not necessarily. Ammerman, for example, suggests that religious identities in lived religion probably always have been characterized by some measure of hybridity.¹⁶ But, the difficulty in this case arises due to the *nature* of the composite identities, which signals a deeper problem – a genuine confusion about the nature and characteristics of holiness and sanctification. The multiple, and in some ways competing, Nazarene holiness narratives at play in these churches, instigate an uncertainty in the minds of many Nazarenes about what holiness really means.

The situation is more critical, however, due to the theological vacuum created by the loss of a primary denominational narrative. Alternative and competing religious narratives emerge. One of the most significant is the story many Evangelicals tell about sanctification and holiness. For example, evangelical James Leo Garrett suggests that all Christians are only holy *positionally*.¹⁷ This is evident, says Garrett, in that the Apostle Paul designates all Christians as “saints.” Thus he castigates the “Perfectionist Protestant” for teaching that not all Christians are saints. For Garrett, Perfectionists

¹⁶See her “Organized Religion in a Voluntaristic Society.”

¹⁷James Leo Garrett, *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Theological*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 367.

suggest that there are less sanctified persons than there are justified persons. He denies that the New Testament allows such an interpretation:

Even when such teaching [Perfectionist] allows for a positional sanctification that precedes entire sanctification, the emphasis still remains on entire sanctification, an event that, it is said, has not yet been experienced by all those who have been justified. Does the New Testament afford any basis for teaching that the number of sanctified ones is fewer than the number of justified ones? Ought we to separate these two important terms so as to make one to refer to a distinct act of grace and the other to refer to an altogether separate act of grace?¹⁸

Garrett denies such a distinction. On the contrary, “The claim to realized perfection stands in marked contrast to the claims of some of the most devoted followers of Jesus Christ throughout the centuries who in the times of their spiritual triumphs have not hesitated to declare, as did Paul (Phil. 3:12-14), that they had not yet reached the ‘mark,’ or the goal of Christlikeness.”¹⁹ Garrett attributes the error Perfectionists make to “a lowered or more constricted concept of sin” which obscures “a deeper involvement of human beings and human society in sin.”²⁰

Garrett repeats Martin Luther’s dictum with praise, the Christian person is “*simul Justus et peccator* (at the same time a justified person and a sinner).”²¹ Garrett appeals to striving-like language to describe the Christian life, “The justified person is not completely free from the reality of sin and that he/she must struggle against sin in this

¹⁸Garrett, *Systematic Theology*, 366.

¹⁹Ibid., 367.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

present life.”²² But, the same is true for the sanctified person. The Christian is “*simul sanctificatus et peccator* (at the same time a sanctified person and a sinner).”²³ For Garrett there is positional sanctification, progressive sanctification, and absolute sanctification. The last is an “eschatological reality” and only attainable in or after death.

Donald Bloesch, another evangelical theologian, echoes Garrett’s theological vision when he writes:

Our peace and confidence are to be found not in our empirical holiness, not in our progress toward perfection, but in the alien righteousness of Jesus Christ that covers our sinfulness and alone makes us acceptable before a holy God.

This Evangelical holiness narrative is one that more and more Nazarenes are telling about themselves. The construction of contemporary holiness identities is made problematic due to the eroding effects of Evangelicalism. The impact of Evangelical narratives on everyday Nazarenes is complicated. At least two issues emerge. First, Evangelicalism radicalizes the emphasis on individualism inherent in the 19th century holiness narrative. Evangelicalism emphasizes individual faith and the individual’s relationship to Jesus Christ to the virtual exclusion of communal relationships. Second, Evangelicalism problematizes the emphasis placed on growth and crisis in Neo-Wesleyanism. While Neo-Wesleyan theology emphasizes growth in grace both before and following a crisis experience, Evangelicalism influences Nazarenes to neglect the crisis experience. Evangelicalism, in its emphasis on continuous growth, engenders skepticism in Nazarenes about the possibility of any real transformation in this life.

²²Garrett, *Systematic Theology*, 367.

²³Ibid.

Content Characteristics

Not only do contemporary holiness identities manifest mixed, hybrid structural characteristics, they also include matters of content. In this section, I identify four issues that emerge out of lived religion.

First, Nazarenes employ a cluster of images to describe the process of sanctification and to depict the holy life. For example, the sanctified person is described as being like God, being like Jesus (Christ-like), perfect, holy, loving, devoted to God, baptized with the Holy Spirit, filled with the Holy Spirit, or one in whose life original sin is either eradicated or cleansed. To a large extent these ways of thinking about sanctification are not mutually exclusive. What is missing, however, is a concrete description of the kind of life related to these images. While such images as these are critical for understanding the nature of sanctification, without a specific social context, a way of life, that gives meaning to these terms, they remain ambiguous and are unable to guide religious behavior. The practical effect is that sanctification is reduced to merely an internal experience with little outward social expression. “Love,” the heart of entire sanctification, remains nothing but an internal feeling or emotion, rather than a concrete way of life exemplified by the sanctified person.

The second theological issue is that the role Jesus plays in holiness identity formation is ambiguous in the minds of many everyday Nazarenes. Many Nazarenes depict the holy life in terms of Christlikeness or being like Jesus and, when asked, emphasize the centrality of Jesus Christ for Christian life. Yet, two problems arise. First, in spite of the fact that Christlikeness has played a significant role in each of the three

holiness narratives in the denomination, there is little agreement on what that means in lived religion. Second, Evangelicalism carries within it a certain tension in its conception of holiness, which is influencing contemporary Nazarenes. Ironically, many of those who did identify themselves with Evangelicalism also suggested that holiness meant to be like Jesus, but they were deeply skeptical about the possibility of attaining such a goal. The ambiguous role Jesus plays in contemporary identity formation is a theological question that a contemporary reconstruction of holiness theology should address.

Third, as Nazarenes are increasingly influenced by the Evangelical narrative there is a growing sense of skepticism about the possibility of living out holiness in this life. This skepticism gets expressed in everyday religion in the language of “striving.” Individuals shaped by the Evangelical holiness narrative talk a great deal about striving for holiness. But this view carries with it an inner tension, which is endemic to the Evangelical holiness narrative. On the one hand, holiness is understood as being like Jesus and is portrayed as the goal of Christian faith, but on the other hand, it is believed that it is impossible to be like Jesus. Yet, in spite of the impossibility, Christians still understand themselves to be commanded to strive for it. Two problems arise. First, no way to measure spiritual progress is offered. With no specific content associated with Christlikeness, there is no way to know that one is in fact becoming more like Jesus. Second, this tension appears not to be a problem for many everyday Nazarenes. Ironically, many Nazarenes assume that spiritual growth will be “automatic.” There is the sense that “somehow” God will make them holy. The practical impact of these beliefs is that striving is ineffectual toward becoming sanctified.

Yet, language of striving must not be dismissed too quickly. For when associated with particular ecclesial practices and interpreted communally this is a valuable theological insight. Many individuals within these three holiness communities, especially those who use primarily Wesleyan language, recognize that there is a “human” component in the formation of holiness identity. Thus striving language, which might be analogous to obedience language, is important, but this communal wisdom needs further theological work.

Associated with the question of striving is the question of “means.” For example, some Nazarenes assume that the *telos* or goal of the Christian life, however depicted, is the result of a striving or human moral effort. For others, it is the result of a supernatural, direct and unmediated act of God within the human person (heart or soul). But, implicit in both these views is a focus on the “individual.” Few, if any, everyday Nazarenes discuss how participation in the church, or corporate life, contributes to or counts as the formation of holy lives.

Finally, the overwhelming predominance of Spirit language among Nazarenes is important, particularly the image of being filled with the Holy Spirit. Everyday Nazarenes correctly recognize that holiness is the result of the influence of the Holy Spirit and describe the sanctified person as one who is filled with the Holy Spirit. Yet, again, beyond this simple assertion, there is little expression of what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit. No common practices are attached to this belief, nor do they relate the work of the Spirit to the existence of the community of faith. The language of practice and practices, even as it gets expressed as sacraments or means of grace, is not

essential language for most everyday Nazarenes. And, neither is there understood to be a connection between sacraments, means of grace and sanctification. Few, if any, participants in focus-groups or in-depth interviews utilized this kind of language when they talked about their understanding of holiness or described their experiences of sanctification.

The problem of constructing holiness identities in lived religion prompts a renewed investigation into the sociological assumptions underlying the theological task of forming sanctified persons. Several questions arise. First, how should theology conceive of the relationship between the individual and community? In what way is the individual an agent in the creation of his or her own holiness identity? How does theology address the issue of choice in religious identity construction? How can personal freedom and communal responsibility be understood as essential components of sanctification? Second, what is the place of the life and teaching of Jesus in a reconstructed theology of sanctification? What does Christlikeness mean and how can images such as this be given concrete expression so that individuals can see how they apply in real life? What is the relationship between being a disciple of Jesus and ecclesial practices? Finally, what is the role of social practices in the formation of sanctified persons? How are ecclesial practices related to the work of the Holy Spirit? Does the assumption of divine action that God works in a supernatural, direct and unmediated way help or hinder the construction of the sanctified person as an ecclesial identity?

The Sanctified Person in the Tradition

Theological constructions since the critique of the 19th century holiness narrative by Wynkoop have attempted to address the challenges of lived religion. There have been generally three strategies to deal with the practical problems of constructing sanctification identities in lived religion. First, theological language is understood in relational terms. Second, sanctification is interpreted in the social context of ecclesiology. And, third, sanctification is reconnected with morality and ethics. While these are important insights, theological reconstructions since Wynkoop do not take them far enough and their constructions of holiness fall short.

If the current religious situation in the Church of the Nazarene is ripe for a reconstruction of holiness, why not a return to the 19th century construction of holiness as some pastors and theologians like Donald Metz and Keith Drury argue? In the next section I review J. Kenneth Grider's contemporary re-articulation of 19th century holiness theology. What is interesting about Grider is that he writes in light of the theological turn to a relational ontology in Wynkoop and Dunning. Is Grider able to overcome the Neo-Wesleyan critique? Does he offer sufficient resources for the social construction of the identity of the sanctified person?

Before assessing Grider's reconstruction it may be helpful to review again Wynkoop's critique of traditional holiness theology, particularly her exposition of the so-called "credibility gap" which is the "practical" problem lying close to Wynkoop's theological construction. Grider may be seen as a contemporary response to the

Wynkoopian relational formulation of holiness which we find later in the work of H. Ray Dunning.

Mildred Bangs Wynkoop and the Nazarene “Credibility Gap”

Wynkoop opens her book with a grinding indictment of the practice of traditional holiness theology as it stood in the middle of the Twentieth century:

Our problem is a credibility gap. Of all the credibility gaps in contemporary life, none is more real and serious than that which exists between Christian, and particularly Wesleyan, doctrine and everyday life. The absolute of holiness theology may satisfy the mind but the imperfection of the human self seems to deny all that the perfection of Christian doctrine affirms. We seem to proceed from a different world of thought when preaching doctrine than when we preach “practical” sermons. The practical sermons “pulls the stinger” out of the doctrinal presentation. This has created a vast and disturbing dualism between idea and life, between profession and practice. Such a dualism fosters either bewildered dishonesty (in the interest of loyalty) or abject discouragement. The ultimate result is rejection of the Christian message as unrealistic and unbelievable if not actually false.²⁴

In Wynkoop’s mind the 19th century holiness narrative had contributed to a crisis in practice. What is the “gap”? Wynkoop hints at two particular problems. First, she seems to have in mind the perpetual gap that lies between the divine will and human life, the holiness of God and the vicissitudes of human life. This gap exists in any encounter between the divine and human. But, the gap which is primarily in view for Wynkoop is the second. Here she has in mind a “moral” problem instigated by the “rationalistic” bent of the 19th century holiness theology as it had developed, by the mid-twentieth century. A logical distinction was being drawn between justification and sanctification, or “two

²⁴Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1972), 39-40.

works of grace,” apart from the living dynamic of “love.” For Wynkoop, traditional holiness theology had developed a practical and ethical disjunction between belief in an absolute and abstract notion of eradication of the sinful nature and the realities of the dynamic and relational character of human life. The only way conceivable, by holiness advocates, to bridge them, she argues, was an emphasis on what appeared to be a “hyper-supernatural,” nearly-magical, religious experience in which God “rooted out” some “thing” that lay hidden deep below the human psyche that caused human beings to incline towards acts of sin and, once “eradicated,” freed the believer to live in obedience to God. In effect, this caused a disconnect between what many in the tradition “professed” about their religious experience and the quality of moral life that they actually lived out.

A number of conceptual errors contributed to the credibility gap. I include only a few here. The first lies in a misunderstanding of the relationship between “supernature and nature,” in which the Holy Spirit is “conceived as being added numerically and substantially to the human spirit in the ‘baptism of the Holy Spirit’” (215). Wynkoop explains:

So long as the human will invites the presence of the Holy Spirit, the divine nature is imposed on the evil human nature so as to control it. Suppression is a key word in such a position. . . . Christian life, then, is a divine bondage in which all human powers must be curbed and the real self denied.²⁵

For Wynkoop, this view suggests that the Holy Spirit is able to “subdue” the self, but cannot “reform” it. The resulting relationship between God and person is not truly a “moral” relation, but, rather, “an armed truce” (216).

²⁵Wynkoop, *Theology of Love*, 215.

The second conceptual error is to conceive of “sin” and the “image of God” in “substantial” ways rather than “relational.” For Wynkoop, both terms, “sin” and “image of God,” are “relational” and, therefore, personal (105). Regarding sin she writes:

[O]riginal sin is not “deeper down and further back” than our moral responsibility. It is not a thing, but a commitment of the self to a controlling center, always itself personal.²⁶

Using “substance-like” language for these notions has the potential to cause much confusion. She writes:

The substance theory is based on the idea that something in man can be identified as the image of God. The “image of God in man” is the typical expression. Then, either a corporeal substance, or some function of the human person (such as reason, a divine spark, creative ability), or being in possession of a spirit as well as a soul and body, distinguishes man from nonhuman beings.²⁷

Wynkoop suggests that, the practical implications of this theoretical approach to the Christian life, which the holiness movement often seems to emphasize, obviously leads to the “credibility gap.” She continues:

The most serious problem is that some sincere Christians expect a real numerical addition to personality, either a new “spirit,” or the Holy Spirit. Out of this a nest of problems arises relative to when this occurs, how one knows it has occurred, the relation of sinful humanity to the new addition, and the status of the person before God.²⁸

The image of God as a moral category, as love, has the advantage of avoiding these issues, and resolving the credibility gap.

²⁶Wynkoop, *Theology of Love*, 150.

²⁷Ibid., 105.

²⁸Ibid.

The third lies in the nature of ceremonial language, such as “cleansing,” to depict the religious effect on original sin. Wynkoop highlights the dilemma the holiness movement got itself into by pressing too close a relationship between cleansing and a particular experience associated with it. She states:

To holiness theology, cleansing takes on a particular significance because it shares in the heavy emphasis on “experience” in this tradition. It is said to be related to sanctification in a way not universally considered essential to the meaning of that term. Holiness theology traditionally makes a point of stressing two aspects of sanctification as different things of equal importance, namely, *setting apart* or consecration, and *making pure*. When this dual emphasis is made, questions immediately arise as to the specific meaning of purity in distinction from consecration.²⁹

Wynkoop’s primary thesis is that the notion of love, drawn out of the theological work of John Wesley, is a dynamic and relational image that is able to resolve the tension between the theoretical and the practical because it is a “moral” category. Thus, the primary problem of the 19th century configurations of holiness and sanctification doctrine is that they drove a wedge between religious experience, conceived as “ceremonial cleansing,” and ethical transformation.

Wynkoop’s reconstruction of the theology of sanctification yielded several important theological developments only some of which are continued in subsequent theological constructions. Later theologians embrace and perpetuate the understanding of the construction of the identity of the sanctified person in relational terms, which opens the way for a social interpretation of holiness. But, a relational ontology does not guarantee that the identity of the sanctified person will be understood as an ecclesial

²⁹Wynkoop, *Theology of Love*, 250.

construction. As we shall see, a relational interpretation of holiness can be framed in an individualistic manner. Also, one theological insight that is not taken as seriously as it could be in later constructions is Wynkoop's critique of the supernaturalistic assumption in 19th century holiness understandings of sanctification. In spite of attempts to frame sanctification as an ecclesial process, retaining the supernaturalistic ("hyper-supernatural") assumption actually hinders the theological attempt to imagine the construction of the sanctified person as a fully ecclesial identity.

J. Kenneth Grider's Reconstruction of the Traditional View of the Sanctified Person

Grider may be said to be a contemporary defense of the 19th century formulation. At the heart of his theology of holiness lies a reaffirmation of entire sanctification as a particular "experience," which he calls a "second work of grace." He writes, "This second work of grace is obtained by faith, is subsequent to regeneration, is occasioned by the baptism with the Holy Spirit, and constitutes a cleansing away of Adamic depravity and an empowerment for witnessing and for the holy life."³⁰

Like the 19th century holiness theologians before him, Grider argues that in order to understand what God does in entire sanctification, one must have a proper understanding of sin. To end rightly, in holiness, he argues, one must begin rightly. For him, sin must be understood as both a state and an act. Viewing sin as an act Grider repeats with appreciation Wesley's dictum that "sin is a voluntary transgression of a

³⁰J. Kenneth Grider, *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1994), 367.

known law of God.”³¹ Grider argues that sin is also a state brought about by a “radical defect” in the human heart, which inclines human beings to sinful acts. This “Adamic depravity” is universal. It is inherited from Adam and affects every person. Each person who comes into the world is in a state of sinfulness “because Adam had been chosen as our representative and because our representative sinned against God.”³² But, it is his view that the transmission of sin is “genetic” that contributed to the interpretation by Wynkoop and others that sin is depicted as “substantial.” Grider quotes with approval Richard Taylor’s view that “original sin, in the sense of moral depravity, is transmitted from Adam to his posterity by natural generation.”³³

Grider responds to Wynkoop’s criticism that 19th century holiness theology errs because it tends to see sin as substance-like by denying that he sees sin as something that can be “weighed or measured physically.” For him, her criticism does not mean that sin cannot be a state. Grider counter-attacks by arguing that the “relational” view of sin does not seem to “say nearly as much as Paul does about our existing in original sin due to Adam.”³⁴

If original sin is a state caused by inherited Adamic depravity, Grider argues, then it must be purged from the human heart. This view of sin sets the stage for a theological understanding of two works of grace. In the first work of grace the guilt of sin is taken

³¹Grider, *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*, 292.

³²Ibid., 279.

³³Ibid., 286.

³⁴Ibid.

away. He writes, “The acts of sin, acts of disobedience against God’s known will, are forgiven in the first work of grace – justification. God as Judge pardons us.”³⁵ But, because sin is of two sorts – act and state – a second work of God is necessary, a work of God subsequent to justification. Adamic depravity is “cleansed away” in a second work in which the state of sin is destroyed.

This “cleansing,” for Grider, is both instantaneous and occasioned by the “baptism with the Holy Spirit.” He argues that the various symbols used in scripture to depict entire sanctification imply an instantaneous experience. It is a “baptism,” it is a “sealing,” and, it is a “circumcision.” In supporting the instantaneous nature of entire sanctification as a cleansing Grider draws an analogy with regeneration. Regeneration is an instantaneous experience in which God renews us when we have faith and believe. If regeneration is by faith and is instantaneous, then sanctification is also instantaneous, because it, too, comes by faith.

After having described the nature of original sin, and showing the provision God makes for its cleansing, Grider offers practical advice for attaining this experience. First, the believer must understand what is offered and that there are “two types of sin, sin as committed act and sin as Adamic racial detriment, the economy of redemption includes two special stages in which the two types of sin are rectified: the acts are forgiven, and the state is cleansed away.”³⁶

³⁵Grider, *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*, 380.

³⁶Ibid., 405.

Second, the believer must prepare for the experience by reading scriptures that speak of the experience as well as read Holiness literature, but most importantly the believer must remove all hindrances to the experience. Primarily the believer must be convinced of the need for the “Adamic-sin purging.”³⁷ The third step in receiving entire sanctification is consecration. Consecration is “yielding ourselves to God to be used where, how, and with whom He wills.” It is a “whole response” to God.³⁸ Consecration is preparatory for entire sanctification and is our work which sets the stage for sanctification which is God’s work.

The final step is faith. While the experience of entire sanctification is instantaneous, the faith which procures it is not. Grider elaborates on faith as a condition for the experience of entire sanctification:

The faith that procures entire sanctification is durative. Faith is an expectant, plunging, obedient trust that, when God sees that we have met the conditions He [sic] sets, He will sanctify us wholly.³⁹

The believer must be prepared to continue to believe until God sanctifies.

What is the relationship between holiness and *ecclesia*? For Grider, the church is the body of Christ in which “a person will receive nourishment, instruction, hallowing worship experiences, and satisfying evangelism experiences.”⁴⁰ Central to life in the body of Christ is the keeping the sacraments and the means of grace. The sacraments are

³⁷Grider, *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*, 406.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid., 407.

⁴⁰Ibid., 470.

necessary “to focus our faith and to make it plain to people.” Grider refers to the “enacting” function of the sacraments. The sacraments, for him, “express the core meanings of the Christian faith in extra-language, acted-out ways.”⁴¹ Baptism symbolizes initiation into the body of Christ. It is that act by which God enters into covenant relationship with us. The Lord’s Supper, the other sacrament, “interprets the importance of the true paschal lamb, Christ.”⁴²

Grider says little explicitly about the relationship between the sacraments and holiness. He offers a clearer connection between holiness and the means of grace, more broadly construed, however. It is through the means of grace that spiritual growth occurs. The means of grace, as practices of the church, function in two ways in relationship to holiness. First, the means of grace function to prevent the believer from “falling from grace.” Second, they function as disciplines to holy living. In entire sanctification the heart is cleansed and made pure. In the means of grace the sanctified person receives grace to continue to live the type of life commensurate with a holy heart. Thus, the means have a maintenance function, to enable the sanctified to remain sanctified. “Direct” means of grace channel God’s grace immediately. The direct means are necessary to “maintain our redeemed status and if we are to live holy lives.”⁴³ Direct means of grace include such practices as prayer, Lord’s Supper, Bible reading, worship (especially hearing Christian preaching) and the like. “Indirect” means, such as Christian

⁴¹Grider, *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*, 492.

⁴²Ibid., 505.

⁴³Ibid., 511.

discipline, Christian service, and Christian suffering, are helpful only when they are “done by the help of the direct means of grace.”⁴⁴

Grider, in his re-affirmation of 19th century holiness theology, continues the traditional emphasis on the individual. Entire sanctification is an instantaneous religious experience, occasioned by the baptism with the Holy Spirit, in which Adamic depravity is cleansed from the heart and the believer is empowered for witnessing and for the holy life. The role of the church is to help the believer maintain sanctification through the sacraments and the means of grace.

Central to Grider’s holiness narrative is his understanding that the work of God in entire sanctification is supernatural, direct, and unmediated. This theory of divine action I take to be a general assumption underlying the 19th century holiness narrative. The human preparation for entire sanctification is consecration, but entire sanctification is understood wholly as a work of God. Yet, one could ask why the separation? Why is consecration to be understood as distinct from sanctification? Is this not an artificial distinction? Are they not both works of God?

Another problem arising from Grider’s construction relates to the relationship between entire sanctification and the sacraments and means of grace. Grider’s depiction of the role of the sacraments and means of grace falls short of the kinds of ecclesial practices we are looking for. For example, while the believer is sanctified by God through faith, sanctification is “maintained” through ecclesial practices that engender faith. Why limit the role of the church and practices to maintenance only? Could they

⁴⁴Grider, *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*, 511.

not be understood as formative of faith as well? Why is divine action primarily a matter of engendering faith? Is it not possible to shift the focus of divine action? The question arises, how could an ecclesial interpretation of entire sanctification understand ecclesial practices as morally formative and as a work of the Holy Spirit?

H. Ray Dunning: Towards Entire Sanctification as a Relational and Social Identity

A second theological possibility is to continue to affirm the Neo-Wesleyan relational theology illustrated in the work of H. Ray Dunning. As the 19th century saw its theology as an improvement on Wesley, so Dunning's theology may be viewed as a reconstruction that is a "corrective" of the 19th century. Dunning writes out of the practical theological concerns to address the "credibility gap" which was highlighted by Wynkoop. He takes seriously her concern that interpreting original sin and *imago Dei* and viewing human persons as dualistic led to and accounted for the community's experience of moral crisis in the mid-20th century. Wynkoop suggests that the separation of theory from practice led to a "magical-like" religious and spiritual process in which God reached into the human psyche and took out ("eradicated") original sin in a particular religious experience called "entire sanctification." Her "relational" theology emphasizing the moral nature of sanctification is echoed in Dunning's theological construction.

The theological and practical crisis of the mid-twentieth century instigated again the question of the nature of holiness. What is holiness and how does a human being become holy? For the 19th century holiness advocates it was a total and complete work of God. There was a clear separation between what human beings do and what God does.

All humans could do was to “prepare” for God’s work. Thus, it made a distinction between consecration and sanctification. The one is what humans do to prepare for what God will do, to sanctify individuals instantaneously and miraculously cleanse the heart of all sin by means of the purifying fires of the baptism with the Holy Spirit. One of the primary problems with the 19th century holiness advocates, argues Dunning, is that they had become fixated on a particular, “culturally and historically conditioned form of spiritual experience.”⁴⁵

Dunning attempts to offer a view of holiness that avoided the weaknesses of the 19th century formulation. First, to correct the emphasis on “substantial-like” categories, Dunning frames holiness within a relational ontology. Thus, language of “*imago Dei*,” “original sin,” and “holiness” are interpreted as relational terms. Second, to correct an over emphasis on the monergism of the Spirit, Dunning frames holiness as a “synergistic” process which is a “division of labor between the Spirit and the human subject, so that one does not need to explain all Spirit-induced phenomena exclusively in supernatural terms (if not magical).”⁴⁶ Third, to correct the disjunct between sanctification and the moral life, Dunning frames holiness through-and-through as an ethical process. Fourth, to correct the over emphasis on the individual, Dunning (ultimately inadequately) attempts to recapture a notion of holiness as a “social” category by drawing out the social implications of sanctification for ethics. He also does this by placing greater emphasis on ecclesiology and the means of grace.

⁴⁵See H. Ray Dunning, “Christian Perfection: Toward a New Paradigm,” *WTJ* 33 (Spring 1998): 151.

⁴⁶Dunning, *Grace, Faith, and Holiness*, 429.

The first aspect of Dunning's reconstruction is his use of a relational ontology. Related to this is his concern that in the traditional formulation of holiness theology there seemed to be a lack of appreciation for theological language as "analogical." The "biblical realism" of Grider, and others in the tradition, tended to depict the work of God with a simple realism that worked to minimize the "mystery of God" (1988:120). The result was that earlier proponents of holiness theology tended to *equate* certain language with spiritual reality. The "substantial" nature of language tended to give the impression that language implied the presence of substance categories. Viewing religious categories in relational terms would do much to avoid this error.

Dunning first applies this relational ontology to the notion of *Imago Dei*, which lies at the heart of his holiness theology. Restoration of the *Imago Dei* is depicted as a work of God, grounded in the three-fold atoning work of Christ, brought about by the synergistic work of the Holy Spirit, and appropriated by individuals by faith. Dunning, like Wesley before him, affirms that the purpose and goal of redemption is the restoration of the image of God in human beings.⁴⁷ He writes:

The total process of sanctification from its beginning in the new birth, its "perfection in love" at entire sanctification, and its progressive development toward final salvation has as its objective the restoring of man to his original destiny.⁴⁸

Dunning acknowledges, however, that use of *Imago Dei* is not without problems. What constitutes the *Imago* has been a major point of contention in theology. And there

⁴⁷H. Ray Dunning, *Grace, Faith, And Holiness: A Wesleyan Systematic Theology* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1988), 478.

⁴⁸Ibid.

have been serious debates over the degree to which the *Imago* can be restored. The biblical picture of humanity portrays human beings as “both having lost and retained the image at one and the same time” (1988:157). In order to avoid “Calvinistic” implications that the *imago* is totally obliterated, Dunning appeals to the notion of “prevenient grace.” Drawing on the analogy of a mirror, Dunning suggests that prior to the Fall humans both had the capacity and actually reflected the image of God. But, after the Fall, humans no longer actually reflected the image of God, but “retain[ed] - by grace - the capacity to reflect that image once again” (1988:159). Ultimately, for him, this is a “relationship of grace.” Thus human beings are “essentially good but existentially estranged” (1988:160).

Dunning begins his theology of redemption with the affirmation that “the essential nature of God is holy love” (1988:192). As God, who is holy, God is capable of personal relations that involve volition and freedom. In this sense the notion that God is “righteous” has important practical implications in that it becomes the basis for the Scriptural appeal for righteousness among God’s people.

The notion of the image of God, for him, cannot be understood apart from a consideration of original sin. Dunning understands original sin as “a perversion of humanity’s original condition of being rightly related to God.”⁴⁹ What was that original condition like? He suggests that this “original righteousness” is constituted as a fourfold freedom: freedom for God, freedom for the other as *Imago*, freedom from the earth as *Imago*, and freedom from self as *Imago*. Freedom here must be understood properly, though. Both freedom as power and freedom to choose are lost in the Fall. Restoration

⁴⁹Dunning, *Grace, Faith, and Holiness*, 277.

of freedom in redemption is not a freedom for myself, but for the “other.”⁵⁰ Original sin, then, is understood as “loss of relation” in that all four relationships mentioned above were disrupted.⁵¹ The loss of relation resulted in “a positive perversion of human nature.”⁵² This loss of relation, and positive perversion of nature, becomes the source of acts sin.

Redemption, then, is the restoration of the human being to this four-fold relation through the atoning work of Jesus Christ, and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. The atoning work of Jesus, understood as expressed in his threefold office as Prophet, Priest, and King, is the “objective ground...which guarantees the availability of the sinner’s acceptance with God and the possibility of the believer’s perfection in love.”⁵³ While atonement has an objective side, it also has a subjective side. Subjectively, the three offices speak to a threefold need in human beings, the need for knowledge of God, the need for a mediator (between us and God) and the need to be free from our own passions and desires.

Redemption is not a unilateral act of God; the individual, too, is an “active participant.” Dunning does not mean that the individual “contributes anything to his own salvation,” but, rather, that the individual simply responds in obedience. The individual “appropriates” the benefits of the work of Christ as “Prophet, Priest, and King” by faith,

⁵⁰Dunning, *Grace, Faith, and Holiness*, 278,

⁵¹Ibid., 290.

⁵²Ibid., 294.

⁵³Ibid., 333.

enabled and moved by the Holy Spirit. He says, “The atoning work of Christ becomes efficacious for us only to the extent that we appropriate it by faith.”⁵⁴ Dunning refers to this as “identification with Christ,” who “becomes the Head of a new race of redeemed humanity, a ‘new Adam’.”⁵⁵ Thus, redemption has a social ontology. To be “in Christ” is to be “incorporated in this new, corporate man.” Ultimately, Dunning sees human being as a social being,

What is the role of the Holy Spirit in the process of redemption? Dunning’s second aspect of his reconstruction depicts relationship between “the Spirit and the human subject.” “The divine-human relation is synergistic in nature,” he says. Synergism is a “division of labor” so that “one need not explain all Spirit-induced phenomena exclusively in supernatural terms (if not magical).”⁵⁶ The Holy Spirit works throughout the process of redemption. For example, the Holy Spirit works even before the individual is redeemed in that the Spirit “awakens.” “The first step,” Dunning says, “is self-awareness, and this is created by the Spirit.”⁵⁷ Yet, this is not to be understood in a Pelagian or Calvinistic way. On the one hand, human beings are not capable apart from grace of turning to God. On the other hand, the Holy Spirit does not constrain. The Spirit continues to work in the individuals by “convincing the unbeliever of his sin in

⁵⁴Dunning, *Grace, Faith, and Holiness*, 384.

⁵⁵Ibid., 385.

⁵⁶Ibid., 429.

⁵⁷Ibid., 431.

relation to the crucified Christ.”⁵⁸ This “convincing” has three components. First, the Spirit convinces the individual of the need for salvation. Second, the Spirit convinces the individual as to the source of salvation, Jesus Christ. And, third, the Spirit convinces the individual of the possibility of salvation. The response to the convincing work of the Spirit results in repentance. The Holy Spirit uses the “instruments” of law and gospel in the awakening process.

Dunning speaks of the “transforming” work of the Holy Spirit in the process of salvation, by which he means regeneration and entire sanctification. In redemption there is a “real change” that is effected by the Holy Spirit. In regeneration the individual is given “new birth” and becomes “a new creation in Christ.”⁵⁹ Dunning writes:

He has experienced a radical reorientation of his whole being, a reversal of values, so that what he once loved, he now hates, and vice versa. This new life in regeneration involves a dying to an old way of life and the adoption of a new way of life. Such a transformation of one’s value system is possible only through the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.⁶⁰

The “real change” of the work of the Holy Spirit understood as sanctification is continued in “entire sanctification,” by which Dunning means, “that work of the Holy Spirit in the believer that ‘cuts short His work in righteousness,’ delivers from all sin, and creates a relation to God that can be referred to as perfection.”⁶¹ For Dunning, sanctification is a “process of developing love that moves along in part by way of

⁵⁸Dunning, *Grace, Faith, and Holiness*, 434.

⁵⁹Ibid., 449.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid., 449.

definable stages.”⁶² Entire sanctification, then, is the “instantaneous moment in the process that may be called perfect love, . . . perfect in the sense that it is unmixed.”⁶³ In this “moment” love so fills the heart that “sin is expelled.”

What is the means by which one attains this? Dunning identifies three factors. First, one must repent. This repentance, however, is not the same as repentance at salvation, which pertains to the guilt of acts of sin. Rather, this repentance “involves the realization of one’s utter helplessness to deliver oneself from inward sin.”⁶⁴ The second factor is mortification, which is “a synergistic operation and is the gradual dimension of the work of sanctification.” It is this aspect of sanctification that captures the balance between the “gradual and instantaneous” elements of the process. Mortification refers to a dying to sin. This accentuates the ethical nature of sanctification. The third factor is faith. Dunning writes, “Faith here is the confidence in the promises of God to deliver from inward sin. Knowing we cannot free ourselves from the inherent corruption of nature (which has the character of incomplete or perverted love), we wait in patience for God’s action within us.”⁶⁵

Dunning summarizes this redemptive process:

The New Testament and John Wesley speak with one voice in proclaiming that the great purpose of redemption is to restore man to the image of God. This is the “end of religion.” Salvation is defined as “the renewal of our souls after the image of God.” The total process of sanctification from its beginning in the new

⁶²Dunning, *Grace, Faith, and Holiness*, 465.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Ibid., 466.

⁶⁵Ibid., 467.

birth, its “perfection in love” at entire sanctification, and its progressive development toward final salvation has as its objective the restoring of man to his original destiny.⁶⁶

Redemption, then, affirms a “perfection” in terms of love, whose goal is the restoration of the *imago Dei* in us. It is accomplished through the work of the Trinitarian God who, through the three-fold office of Christ as Prophet, Priest and King, aspects which have both an objective and subjective side, applies the benefits of Christ’s atonement to individuals who appropriate them by faith, enabled and empowered by the Holy Spirit, to live lives of faithful obedience.

The third aspect of Dunning’s reconstruction affirms that holiness and sanctification have ethical implications. He writes:

Too often a discussion of Christian ethics is treated as almost an addendum to Christian theology. It is not integrated into the structure of the theology. But in Wesleyan theology the ethical emphasis is implicit in the total structure, since sanctification, inseparable from all theological considerations, is through and through ethical.⁶⁷

Renewing human beings in the image of God involves a four-fold relation: to God, to other persons, to the earth, and to self.⁶⁸ Repentance restores human beings to the favor of God, but it is God’s intention to bring them to the “appointed destiny” embodied in the image of God. Dunning follows John Wesley in depicting this ethical goal as Christlikeness, which exhibits a “teleological” character. The *telos* is “a constant ruling habit of soul, a renewal of our minds in the image of God, a recovery of the divine

⁶⁶Dunning, *Grace, Faith, and Holiness*, 478.

⁶⁷Ibid., 498-9.

⁶⁸See his *Reflecting the Divine Image: Christian Ethics in Wesleyan Perspective* (Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 4.

likeness, a still increasing conformity of heart to the pattern of our most holy Redeemer” (1988:502). This gets translated in the mission of the church as a means of bearing witness to the Kingdom of God by living the Kingdom life, which is nothing more or less than Christlikeness.⁶⁹

The fourth aspect of Dunning’s reconstruction is the retrieval of ecclesiology and the means of grace. First, Dunning attempts to emphasize the corporate nature of ecclesiology as a way of offsetting the impact of radical individualism. He does this by emphasizing the social and corporate nature of life in the *ecclesia*. The social nature of the church as community of saints is prominent in this theology. The primary element is the “corporate nature of biblical faith” (1988:506). The social character of human existence is indigenous to the creature made in the image of God. The social nature of the image of God gets expressed in the “body of Christ” symbolized by baptism. He writes:

There were no “free-lance” believers. When a person became a believer in Christ, he was therewith incorporated into the community through the rite of baptism.⁷⁰

Dunning thinks Wesley’s ecclesiology is a happy balance between the competing views in his day: the Catholic, the classical Protestant, and the free church. Wesley captures the Catholic emphasis on “the objective holiness of the church and the presence of Christ maintained in the church through the sacraments” (1988:524). He captures the classical Protestant emphasis on “the necessity for the church to be created by the event of the preaching of the Word” (1988:524). And, he captures the emphasis of the free

⁶⁹Dunning, *Grace, Faith, and Holiness*, 517.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 506-7.

church on “the personal experience and holiness of individual believers who then constitute the church” (1988:524).

Second, Dunning attempts to retrieve the value of the means of grace for religious and ethical development. Means of grace, for Dunning, are “those symbols by which the body of believers appropriates its history and the sources of its life” (1988:539). They are “vehicles by which grace is mediated.” Dunning highlights two of the means of grace: the sacrament of baptism and the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, both of which are “symbols,” which mediate and share in the reality to which they point. Thus, they are the means by which the “Holy Spirit applies the atonement of Christ in all its ramification” (1988:541). They have both an objective side and a subjective side. Objectively they witness to the redemptive work of God. Subjectively, they point to the “existential appropriation of the saving event” (1988:543).

Baptism signifies many things. It signifies that repentance has occurred. It also signifies identification with Christ. Dunning writes:

It is actually a declaration of intent to “put to death” everything in one’s life contrary to the will of God or antithetical to Christlikeness.⁷¹

As the “Christian counterpart to circumcision,” it also signifies being initiated into the body of Christ. And, it also signifies the reception of the Spirit.

The Lord’s Supper signifies the continuance of the relationship signified by baptism. The Lord’s Supper has many “functions.” First, it is a “remembrance.” But, Wesley goes beyond the mere “memorial” of Zwingli, for he makes it a “dynamic drama”

⁷¹Dunning, *Grace, Faith, and Holiness*, 545.

in which the believer “enters vicariously into the suffering of Christ and leads to the awareness of the love of God. Second, it is the atonement applied. It is a true “communication,” in which individuals appropriate the benefits of Christ’s atoning work. Third, it is a pledge of glory to come. There is a future dimension to the Lord’s Supper. It is a “confirming seal” of God’s pledge to keep His word to redeem us. Fourth, it is a sacrifice. It “shows forth” the death of Christ.

Dunning is concerned about what he calls “two extreme positions” on the sacraments and the means of grace. The first is to deny the means of grace altogether as some “enthusiasts” do (Dunning 1988:541). They look for an “immediate” experience of God. The second danger is “sacramentarianism,” which turns the means into ends. Following Wesley, Dunning denies any “intrinsic” power to the sacraments or means of grace (54).

Dunning’s construction of holiness theology is an important theological contribution. His attempt to address the issue of the relationship between the individual and community through a relational ontology and a social ecclesiology is a valuable insight. It has the practical effect of enabling practical reason to see itself in the context of a larger “ethical” community and in some way to be formed by that community, is a valuable insight. He demonstrates the significance of Jesus for ethical reflection and action by making Christlikeness, understood as a “ruling habit of soul” the *telos* of the restored *imago Dei*. And, ecclesiologically, he follows this up with an interpretation of the church as “body of Christ.” This “body politic” refers to the fact that “the risen Christ gathers his disciples to himself in such a way that they are called by him to continue in

history the work of his incarnate life. They are his body for his work in the world” (1988:514). Again, the practical effect is to engage practical reason in a public expression of the Kingdom of God. He also attempts to place practical reason in the context of social practices such as the means of grace, especially baptism and the Lord’s Supper, which function to shape individuals.

Dunning’s reconstruction of holiness goes a long way toward resolving the three theological problems that I suggest are implied by what we discovered about lived religion. However, in the final analysis, his reconstruction fails to offer a holiness narrative sufficient to create a *habitus* for the production of sanctified persons. There are three reasons why I take this position. First, in spite of his attempt to frame sin and *imago Dei* language in relational terms, he never quite overcomes the individualistic implications in his theology of redemption. Second, he does not sufficiently connect the concrete way of life Jesus called his disciples to with the notion of Christlikeness which becomes the focus of the restored *Imago*. It is difficult to see the relationship between Christlikeness as “a ruling habit of soul” and the “political” expression of the *ecclesia* in the world. While Dunning suggests that the church is the body of Christ for the work in the world that work is left without concreteness in a way of life that is shaped by specific practices.

Third, he does not fully escape the “supernaturalistic” (what Wynkoop calls the “magical”) interpretation that Wynkoop critiques in the 19th century formulation. This assumption continues to underlie his theological construction of the role of the sacraments and the means of grace. They are vehicles of grace, but, Dunning’s fear of

“sacramentarianism” prohibits him from seeing ecclesial practices as truly ethical responses to the Gospel or ethically formative in any way. In effect, then, without the supernaturalistic assumption, they are neither truly means nor ends.

Nazarene Theology in Transition: Toward an Ecclesial Identity

There is the perception among some that the 19th century and the Neo-Wesleyan are the only two theological possibilities in the Church of the Nazarene.⁷² This is not true. In the following section I survey several examples of recent constructive work in Nazarene holiness theology and highlight important theological developments. I argue that contemporary Nazarene theological work attempts to depict the identity of the sanctified person as an *ecclesial* identity in a way that serves as a response to the perceived problems of religious identity formation in contemporary society.

In the first, the formative power of narrative plays a central role. Michael Lodahl emphasizes the fruitfulness of story or narrative for holiness theology and highlights the formative nature of narrative, “One of the strengths of the approach of narrative theology is that, when it is effective, it calls and challenges its readers and hearers to locate themselves in the Story.” Thus, through narrative we “read” ourselves into God’s Story. When we read the story of Adam’s (“humanity’s”) fall, we are reading our own story, because we recognize that we too are sinners. As we exercise our agency disobedience is always a lively possibility for us.

⁷²At least this is implicit in Quanstrom’s work *A Century of Holiness Theology*, 6.

Lodahl continues to employ the relational language proposed by Wynkoop and later developed by Dunning to refer to sanctification and sin. Sin, in this understanding, is a “shifting of attention from the Creator to the creation.”⁷³ It is also a matter of asserting “self-sovereignty” over and against God. But, there is also a “social-corporate” dimension. Human beings are interrelated, therefore we “are Adam and Eve to one another.” Sin is a breaking of relationship and an attempt to hide from responsibility. Finally, all relationships are affected by sin. It affects our relationship with God, ourselves, our fellow human beings, and with the earth.

Yet, while sin is relational, the effect of sin results in a “distortion of our very being.”⁷⁴ This is true precisely because we are relational and social beings. We were created for relation, therefore, a turn from our Creator is a corruption of our very being.

In *The Story of God*, Lodahl makes an interesting and helpful theological decision to deal with sanctification under the section heading “Living in God’s Story: The Doctrine of the Church.” Lodahl’s strategy has the effect of making sanctification an “ecclesial” matter. Lodahl writes that including doctrines such as salvation, faith, entire sanctification and ethics in the section on ecclesiology “reminds us that the Church as God’s society of the redeemed provides the proper context for considering all issues related to *soteriology* (doctrine of salvation), particularly in light of an overemphasis

⁷³Michael Lodahl, *The Story of God: A Narrative Theology*, 2nd edition (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 2008).

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 79.

upon the concept of the individual in modern Western societies.”⁷⁵ While not denying that there is a sense of a personal and individual nature to our relation to God, the relation must be interpreted in light of the body of Christ.

Sanctification, then, and entire sanctification in particular, is a communal, ecclesial experience. It is a process which occurs in the context of the church, and carries with it the notion of solidarity. We, together, are being sanctified. For Lodahl, sanctification is the “overall work of God, the process whereby we are being made increasingly in the likeness of Jesus.”⁷⁶ Thus, Christlikeness is the goal of sanctification.

One of the significant contributions of Lodahl is his emphasis on the “body” in sanctification. He recognizes those scriptural passages that refer to the giving of the physical body in sacrificial service to God. But, even here we see the communal emphasis. Individual bodies are offered up collectively as “one body” to God (Romans 12). The offering up of the body to God is our consecration. The Holy Spirit’s work is to sanctify that offering.

Lodahl reiterates the relational turn when he suggests that sanctification is “a life filled with love for God and neighbor.”⁷⁷ Sin is not a “thing” or a “substance” which God uproots or takes out of us. Sin is “lovelessness,” “a lack or privation of authentic, loving relations to God and neighbor – including the stranger and the enemy.”⁷⁸ When we are

⁷⁵Lodahl, *The Story of God*, 165-66.

⁷⁶Ibid., 194.

⁷⁷Ibid., 195.

⁷⁸Ibid.

brought into proper relation to God in reconciliation, we are at that point sanctified, set apart by God in Christ Jesus. We are then “saints,” says Lodahl. “Our sins are forgiven (justification), we are given the Holy Spirit (regeneration), and that same Spirit bears witness that we are now God’s children (adoption).”⁷⁹

What, then, is “entire sanctification?” Lodahl agrees that we are initially sanctified in regeneration. The “secondness” of entire sanctification refers to a “deeper relation to God that flows from the nurturing, transforming love of God in the depths of our lives.”⁸⁰ God’s love calls us to entire consecration, which is the offering of ourselves (together with the Church) as a living sacrifice. As long as the believer continues in that relation, empowered by the Holy Spirit, he or she is entirely sanctified. This is captured in Wesley’s statement, “Love excluding sin.” Entire sanctification is a commitment of love to God and neighbor. Therefore, if sin is understood to be the absence or rejection of that deeper relation of love, and sins are understood to be attitudes or actions contrary to love, then entire sanctification is the antithesis of sin. And as one walks in sanctification one is free from sin.

Yet, for Lodahl, sin is not a substance-like thing. Since entire sanctification is framed in relational terms, there is no reason why original sin cannot return. He suggests that “there is no absolute guarantee that the ‘bent to sinning’, or carnal nature, cannot

⁷⁹Lodahl, *The Story of God*, 195.

⁸⁰Ibid.

return. After all, it is not a thing that is taken out of us in such a way that it cannot return.”⁸¹

The sacraments are important social practices for Lodahl. An essential part of ecclesial life is to engage in sacramental practice. Sacraments are the means by which God’s Story is reenacted. They are enacted events that “help us to relive, and to physically experience, those redemptive historical events in this world.”⁸² This “sacramental theology” affirms that “God not only creates the material world, but also works in and through it, blessing it through the presence of the Word.”⁸³ For Lodahl, Christianity is not merely a set of ideals or a list of spiritual principles, but involves “recitation and celebration of particular events in our world in which we believe and confess that God has acted decisively for the salvation of the world.”⁸⁴ Participation in these ecclesial practices is a means by which God’s grace is received. Baptism is a sacrament in which the believer signifies identification with Christ. Jesus identified with sinners on the Cross, so we identify with Jesus in baptism “where indeed we have discovered grace and forgiveness for our sin, and divine empowering to die to its power as we in turn identify with this crucified Messiah.”⁸⁵ The Lord’s Supper is the sacrament of sustenance and nurture of Christian life. It is a reliving of, and giving thanks for,

⁸¹Lodahl, *The Story of God*, 196.

⁸²*Ibid.*, 177.

⁸³*Ibid.*

⁸⁴*Ibid.*

⁸⁵*Ibid.*

Jesus' suffering and death. The Lord's Supper is both a remembering of the past, and a looking forward to his return. But, it is more than that - it is a celebration of the "present presence" of Jesus who is Lord of the Kingdom of God.

Lodahl offers some significant theological movements toward an ecclesial interpretation of entire sanctification. How has he furthered Nazarene holiness theology? First, by combining a relational understanding of sin and holiness with an emphasis on narrative affirms the power of narrative to shape human beliefs and actions among individuals. Second, his emphasis on sacraments as communal expressions of ecclesial life which celebrate God's redemption is an important extension of narrative theology. Third, his appropriation of the body as an essential component of a theology of sanctification is critical.

There are significant drawbacks in Lodahl's construction, however. For example, while he frames sanctification in relational terms, and emphasizes the communal nature of sacraments, he never overcomes the individualistic assumptions that beleaguer earlier constructions. Also, Lodahl never challenges the supernaturalistic assumption, which could open the way for a true ecclesial interpretation of the identity of the sanctified person. I suggest that a more explicit integration of these components is necessary. For example, wouldn't the construction of communal practices as intrinsically ethically formative be an important advance toward a Nazarene construction of entire sanctification as an ecclesial construction?

In his constructive theological work, Sam Powell also sees holiness as an ecclesial reality, but he extends it to stress more explicitly the ethical component of holiness.⁸⁶ Powell begins by recognizing the valuable contribution of a relational understanding of holiness. Unfortunately, in his view, the relationalists have been too narrow in their interpretation. They have described holiness “one-sidedly in terms of love and as a strictly personal relation.” For Powell this misses the biblical view that land, physical things, and days of the week can be holy, too. He begins by turning our attention to the nature of God and God’s holiness. God is regarded in scripture as “an uncontrollable and potentially destructive power.”⁸⁷ The emphasis here is not only on God’s moral character and righteous deeds, but also on the way God is distinct and separated from ordinary things. Approaching this holy God without prior preparation is dangerous, therefore one must make everyday things fit to come into contact with a holy God without fear of destruction. This is consecration. Ceremonies of ritual purification were performed so that one could become pure and stand in God’s presence. Consecration also meant that God claimed someone or something for God’s possession.

Holiness is not only a matter of consecration, but also one of obligation and righteous conduct. Righteous conduct is obedient response to God’s command. While not a requirement of salvation, righteous conduct is a condition for remaining in the presence of a holy God. Righteous conduct culminates in love of neighbor. Leviticus 19 summarizes this ideal as love: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself (v17).” Powell

⁸⁶Samuel Powell, *Holiness in the 21st Century: Call, Consecration, Obedience Perfected in Love* (Point Loma: CA: Point Loma Nazarene University, 2004).

⁸⁷Ibid., 13.

draws out four themes from this as it connects with the New Testament. First, God chose the church to be holy. Second, there is a sense of the importance of consecration. Third, the New Testament presents holiness as righteous obedience to God. And fourth, love is the “perfecting summary of righteous obedience.”⁸⁸

Another theme characterizes Powell’s theological reconstruction. For Powell, not enough was said, in earlier Nazarene constructions, about the fact that holiness is the “full actualization of participation in the trinitarian life of God.”⁸⁹ Love is a trinitarian reality because it characterizes the relation between the Father and the Son. The believer is drawn into this fellowship between the Father and the Son by the Holy Spirit. This participation has a practical dimension. Love is the indication that one has entered into fellowship with God. Powell draws out the implications for holiness, “Holiness, which is the perfection of love, is consequently the full actualization of our participation in God.”⁹⁰

There is another practical dimension of this notion of trinitarian participation. Participation in the trinitarian life of God assures us that holiness is more than merely a human striving. Participation means that God is at work in us, enabling us to will and to please God. Powell writes:

The way of holiness, therefore, is not simply a matter of our striving to achieve moral perfection. Although striving is necessary, the life of holiness is far more than striving. It is abiding in God and participating in the trinitarian life

⁸⁸Powell, *Holiness in the 21st Century*, 16.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 17.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 18.

of love. This abiding and participating enables us to transcend the limits of human morality and to love as God loves.⁹¹

Powell recognizes the need for moral exertion in the life of holiness, but God's grace assures that it is not merely human effort that brings about love, but, rather, God's grace is "a presence that lifts us above our sinful humanity and brings us into the life of divine love."⁹²

There are four aspects of this holiness – calling, consecration, obedience, and love. Participation begins with God's call. God has chosen us "in Christ" and "through Christ" to be holy before God. The goal is to become like the God who called us. Consecration is the response to God's call. It entails a devotion to God that abandons the world of sin and imitates the One who called us. Obedience is an act of faithfulness living out righteous lives. And righteous obedience is perfected in love. Jesus is the exemplar of love.

Holiness has ethical implications, for Powell. God's call to us is to transcend the world, to consecrate ourselves and to bring about an ethical separation between the Church and the world. What does transcending mean? It means to overcome the world by resisting sin and its spiritual distortions of human life. The Church must resist and witness against the evils and sins of the world.

After describing holiness, Powell argues that the doctrine of holiness and ecclesiology are intimately related. The Church is in some sense a collective entity, and individuals cannot stand in relationship to God without membership in this society.

⁹¹Powell, *Holiness in the 21st Century*, 19.

⁹²Ibid.

Numerous New Testament images illustrate the social nature of ecclesial life: chosen race, royal priesthood, holy nation, and God's people. These images point to the social nature of holiness. Powell laments the "excessive individualism" characteristic of modern life. While American individualism does have some benefits, it also can be destructive. "Authority," he says, "no longer resides in the collective wisdom of communities but instead in the private judgment of individuals who have been loosed from social bonds."⁹³ This has implications for salvation and holiness. Little attention is given to the social dimension of the Christian life. To Powell's credit he recognizes that we cannot simply return to the social context of the New Testament, but we can recognize the social nature of Christianity by noticing the ways communities shape us. Communities into which we were born nurtured us and enabled us to become fully functioning human beings. Yet, individuals can exert influence on the community. This mutual relationship applies to holiness, too. Powell asserts this about the church:

It is in and through the Church that the individual is called by God into relationship with God. It is in and through the Church that the individual consecrates himself or herself to God. It is in and through the Church that the individual comes to have the obedient response of faith toward God. Finally, it is in and through the Church that the individual is made capable of loving the neighbor.⁹⁴

The Church, then, as an "ensemble of relationships and mutual influencing, has a sacramental function."⁹⁵ In the Church divine action is joined with human action. God

⁹³Powell, *Holiness in the 21st Century*, 30.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, 32.

⁹⁵*Ibid.*, 33.

uses the Church to lead us into “new creation.” The Church, says Powell, is the usual context and vehicle of divine action.

The means of grace are a necessary function of ecclesial life. Citing John Wesley, Powell argues that not only are there two sacraments which function as means of grace, but many other Christian practices, too, such as all sorts of prayer, studying the scriptures, fasting, mutual counsel, faithful attendance at class meetings, self-discipline, and the arts of holy living. All of these are ways God’s grace is channeled to us. How do the means of grace influence us in holiness? The means of grace mediate truth. God mediates truth to us via physical things. The Incarnation is a foremost example here. The means of grace illustrate the power of example. Life in the Church as a means of holiness lies in the power its members have in shaping each other into holy people.⁹⁶ And the means of grace exercise authority. Powell calls for a renewal of the authority of the collective wisdom and practice of Christians accumulated over time.

How shall we assess the significance of Powell’s theological narrative in relation to ecclesial holiness? Two problems with Powell’s construction keep him from developing a true ecclesial holiness. First, in effect, he separates holiness and ethics. Holiness functions only instrumentally for Powell. One becomes holy and then one acts ethically. Second, the sacraments and means of grace do not function as embodied practices. They are not both means and ends. They are instrumental to holiness, not constitutive of holiness. Finally, Powell, like other theologians before him, fails to take Wynkoop’s critique seriously and continues to affirm the supernaturalistic assumption.

⁹⁶Powell, *Holiness in the 21st Century*, 36.

For Powell, in spite of his desire to link divine and human action, the church is instrumental to God's purposes. In effect, God works outside the ecclesial process, not within it, or through it.

Recent biblical work on the relationship between ecclesiology and holiness furthers the debate over ecclesial holiness.⁹⁷ In *Holiness and Ecclesiology in the New Testament*, scholars argue for the social and ecclesial context of holiness that precedes personal, individual holiness. Arguing that holiness is often reduced to how the individual is related to God, Brower and Johnson *et al*, suggest that “the people of God are expected to embody God's holy character publicly in particular social settings.”⁹⁸ Brower and Johnson describe this “holiness for communal persons”:⁹⁹

God's sanctifying grace calls for and enables an ethical response within an inherently communal framework. That is, God's call to holiness comes to a people/community, not to *isolated individuals*. Holiness is profoundly ethical in character and lived in the public sphere. But this is far more than simply individual ethical living in a societal context.¹⁰⁰

Thus, God's intention is to “*form a people* who would embody God's character.”¹⁰¹ As we shall see, this concern for a “publically identifiable people,” shaped through ecclesial processes resonates well with the kind of ecclesial holiness proposed in these chapters.

⁹⁷Kent E. Brower and Andy Johnson, eds., *Holiness and Ecclesiology in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007).

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, xvi.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, xxi.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, xxii.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*

It is in the work of Powell and Lodahl that the ecclesial character of sanctification is extended.¹⁰² The goal of *Embodied Holiness* is to work out the implications of the body for holiness theology. This turn to the body is an intentional theological response to the challenges of modern notions of the “self.” Intent on constructing the sanctified person as an ecclesial identity these writers intend to avoid the emphasis on the self that fuels much of contemporary individualism and the assumption of the Cartesian split between body and soul that plagues much of modern ethical theories. Thus “embodied” refers to two things: first, the unity of the body suggests that the physical body is implicated in holiness; and, second, it implies the “ecclesial character” of the Christian life, including entire sanctification. “[H]oliness can only be attained in and through the ecclesial body of Christ.”¹⁰³

Central to the exposition in the book is an interpretation of Wesley’s notion of “social holiness.” For Powell, Wesley’s understanding of social holiness suggests that “holiness occurs in and through the church.”¹⁰⁴ This theme is extended by Theodore Runyon who argues that Wesley understood that faith emerges in a social context. Runyon begins by arguing that the notion of *imago Dei* for Wesley was a “relational” image. Like a mirror that reflects back what it receives from God, the *Imago* is “an

¹⁰²Samuel M. Powell and Michael E. Lodahl, eds., *Embodied Holiness: Toward a Corporate Theology of Spiritual Growth* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999).

¹⁰³Ibid., 14.

¹⁰⁴Samuel M. Powell, “Introduction,” in *Embodied Holiness*, 14.

ongoing relation in which humanity receives and gives.”¹⁰⁵ Therefore the image of God is not something the individual *has*. Thus:

it is not a capacity within the creature because a mirror can only reflect something beyond itself. If in salvation the image is being renewed, the essential qualities of the image are to be found not within humanity but in that which humanity is called to reflect.¹⁰⁶

Having established that the *Imago* is a social relation, Runyon moves on to discuss Wesley’s understanding of how God acts on the heart of a person. While God *could* work directly and immediately, God usually uses other persons. Appealing to the Wesley societies, classes and bands as illustration of this, Runyon suggests that Wesley understood God to work primarily within communal settings. “Faith is not only born in...social encounter, it grows and is nourished in community.”¹⁰⁷ Thus, Runyon declares, for Wesley the “conference” was a means of grace as individuals lived out their faith together, deliberated, prayed and studied Scripture together (81). So, the social nature of holiness is evident in the engendering of faith; but it is also seen in its perpetuation. For Wesley, God could do all of this by “fiat,” but chooses not to. Rather:

God seeks to spread his reign through renewing his image in the hearts of human beings. And this requires a social process that without coercion honors the freedom of humans to respond to the promptings of the Spirit.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Theodore Runyon, “Holiness as the Renewal of the Image of God in the Individual and Society,” in *Embodied Holiness*, 80.

¹⁰⁶Runyon, “Holiness as Renewal,” 80.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 81.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 83.

Thus God wishes to perpetuate the Kingdom through ordinary human beings and through ordinary human processes!

The social nature of holiness is also seen in the three aspects of the image of God, which include the natural image, the political image, and the moral image (85). The natural image include those characteristics that make us “capable of God,” that is, to enter into conscious relationship. This includes such things as perception, judgment, discourse, will and freedom. The political image includes those characteristics that enable leadership and management. Central to the political image is stewardship of the blessings God has given. And, the moral image is the primary mark of relationship with God. The moral image is the relational basis on which the political and natural are set (88). For Wesley, says Runyon, it is the renewal of the image of God in all these dimensions that is the goal of Christian Perfection. He writes:

The moral image is basic, and it is the presupposition of the proper practice of the other two. But holiness has been defined too narrowly if we have left out of the configuration the natural and political image. If we include them we include holiness not only of heart but of will and intellect as well, holiness not only of mind but of political and social responsibility and stewardship as well.¹⁰⁹

This exposition of Wesley’s notion of social holiness contributes substantially to understanding entire sanctification in social categories.

Theological work after Wynkoop and Dunning has significantly advanced the theology of entire sanctification. First, the recognition of the formative role of narrative in forming sanctified persons is without doubt a helpful contribution. Second, the depiction of entire sanctification as participation in the trinitarian life of God which

¹⁰⁹Runyon, “Holiness as Renewal,” 88.

includes personal responsibility as striving for ethical expression is valid. Third, the social interpretation of entire sanctification which includes a political, and therefore public, aspect is a substantial advance toward a contemporary reconstruction. Finally, the notion that identity is shaped in social processes by engaging in practices is essential to an ecclesial holiness in the Nazarene mode.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that constructive work in holiness theology has made important theological moves that address the needs of lived religion by framing entire sanctification as a social and ecclesial identity. One of the most significant developments is the appropriation of ecclesiology and ecclesial practices for the formation of sanctified persons. By doing so individuals are encouraged to develop an ecclesial identity and to see themselves as part of the broader body of Christ and interdependent with other Christians. Also, ecclesial practices, such as the sacraments and means of grace, are engaged as essential aspects of the formation of sanctified persons.

While these theological constructions certainly move in the right direction, I conclude that a reconstruction of the sanctified person as an ecclesial identity has not yet fully emerged. There are three unfinished tasks. First, the relationship between the individual and the *ecclesia* needs further clarification. An ecclesial identity should clarify how a person is able to have a say in his or her sanctification. Second, clarification is needed regarding what it is about Jesus' life and teachings that relate to Christlikeness as a way of life. Christlikeness continues to be left as a general principle

to be applied to everyday problems. And, finally, there is the need to show how ecclesial practices, such as sacraments and means of grace, which include the body, are truly formative. How do they function as both means and ends? The sacraments and means of grace are not yet understood to be fully constitutive of the sanctified person.

CHAPTER 7

THE SANCTIFIED PERSON: TOWARD AN ECCLESIAL HOLINESS

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I argued that contemporary Nazarene theological construction has increasingly attempted to imagine entire sanctification as an ecclesial process and the identity of the sanctified person as an ecclesial identity. I relied on a sociological theory of narrative religious identity to ask questions of current Nazarene theological constructions to determine if they offered sufficient resources for the social construction of the identity of the sanctified person. I concluded that those contemporary constructions do not yet allow the identity of the sanctified person to emerge as a fully ecclesial identity.

In this chapter, I offer a constructive proposal for the ecclesial construction of the sanctified person. I look to the thought of John Howard Yoder, Mennonite scholar and historian, for a way to complete the process of constructing a fully ecclesial interpretation of entire sanctification. Yoder offers resources that Nazarenes can appropriate to develop the kind of ecclesial identity they are looking for, and which would address the practical problems of forming sanctified persons by attending to the kind of *habitus* that enables the emergence of sanctified persons. I try to show that Yoder's ecclesial construction of ethics offers to Nazarenes a model for the construction of an ecclesial holiness that is compatible with the sociological assumptions articulated in the previous chapters. In

addition, Yoder's ecclesial construction offers plausible answers to the key theological questions that emerged out of the dialogue between lived religion and the theological resources of the tradition. First, he articulates clearly the relationship between the individual and community so that the individual can be understood as an agent in his or her own sanctification yet at the same time one for whom the church represents a context in which habits of action condition and form that agency. Second, Yoder poses a clear relationship between Jesus and communal practices that gives concreteness to theological language like "Christlikeness." If the sanctified person is depicted as like Christ, then Yoder has something critical to say about reorienting Christian holiness to reconsider Jesus as an essential resource for constructing sanctification. Third, if it is true that social practices are constitutive of ethical life, then Yoder offers us a way of seeing how this is so. Indeed, Yoder's depiction of specific ecclesial practices demonstrates that they function as both means and ends in relation to an ecclesial holiness that is ethical through and through. This means that Yoder fundamentally challenges the supernaturalistic assumption of divine action that God works "outside" the ecclesial process in making persons ethical (or 'holy'). But, in doing so, Yoder also avoids the danger Powell identifies when he argues that such a depiction of ecclesia and action "connect[s] holiness to church in such a way that the Christian life becomes ingrown and the church finds its center in itself. The church could become an enclosed in-group that rigorously separates itself from the world in such a way that a dualism arises – not a dualism of soul and body but a dualism of insiders and outsiders."¹

¹Powell, *Embodied Holiness*, 17.

Of course, Wesleyans may legitimately ask, “Why Yoder?” There are good reasons to be skeptical. For example, Yoder is not a Wesleyan. He draws more deeply from the radical reformation than from the thought of John Wesley. Yet, at the same time, Yoder shares common concerns with contemporary Nazarenes – he, too, worries about how to live out faithfully the lordship of Jesus Christ in our world in a way that avoids the problems of modernity. Another reason Wesleyans may be skeptical about Yoder is that he actually says very little about sanctification. The language of social ethics shapes Yoder’s concerns; but this, too, is not an insurmountable problem, for ethics and holiness have an intimate relationship. For example, H. Ray Dunning calls sanctification the “ethical dimension of Christian life.”²

Ecclesial Ethics

My analysis thus far has begged two very important questions – what is holiness and how does one become holy? The current situation in Nazarene life faces two significant problems following the demise of the 19th century holiness model. First, the current dilemma raises again the question of what holiness is. Traditionally, holiness has been understood as Christlikeness,³ or “love” filling the heart. Christlikeness has been framed in two ways: as a state or condition of the soul,⁴ or as a general principle to be

²H. Ray Dunning, *Reflecting the Divine Image: Christian Ethics in Wesleyan Perspective* (Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 16.

³Or restoration of the *imago Dei* in the likeness of Christ.

⁴See Grider, *Entire Sanctification*, 28.

applied to practical problems in life.⁵ As a state or condition the person is made like Christ or made loving by an act of faith which is received instantaneously by faith through an experience of God's grace. It tends to be individualistic and supernaturalistic. On the other hand, it is often presented as an ethical moral principle that is *applied* to resolve moral dilemmas or to guide moral action.⁶ In both cases, whether understood as a state or principle, the implication is that one "automatically" knows how to act like Christ, or to be loving, or to live ethically.

As an alternative, I suggest that holiness should be understood through and through as an ethical process and that Christlikeness and Christian love takes concrete forms in embodied practices. H. Ray Dunning argues in favor of viewing sanctification in ethical ways as a response to the breakdown of the 19th century holiness model. His reconceptualization drew heavily on John Wesley's notion of sanctification as a "real change."⁷ Viewing sanctification ethically meant emphasizing the "volitional" aspect of the moral relationship between the individual and God. This emphasis on "choice" keeps holiness from being a "magical" process. Unfortunately, Dunning does not conceptualize sanctification sufficiently as an ecclesial process.

Yet, while ethical, sanctification is also a "religious" reality. That is, it is primarily concerned about human relation to God. Unfortunately, the religious aspect was separated from the ethical by the early 19th century proponents of holiness. This

⁵See Dunning, *Reflecting the Divine Image*, 123.

⁶For a clear instance of this in the Nazarene *Manual* see the section entitled "Covenant of Christian Conduct."

⁷Dunning argues this explicitly in "Christian Perfection: Toward A New Paradigm," *WTJ* 33 (Spring 1998): 157.

religio-ethical reality is important because it keeps sanctification from being “merely” ethics. But earlier theological constructions, such as are found in Grider (and even in Dunning), assumed that the ethical followed from the religious. For them, one is made holy so that one can live ethically. For an ecclesial ethics that relationship is held together. Christlikeness then is through and through a religious relation and an ethical process. If holiness is understood as an ethical process, attention can shift to the conditions that promote ethical formation. Ecclesial holiness affirms the primacy of the *ecclesia* as the locus for such transformation.

Second, this shift in understanding holiness as ethics necessitates the question of moral psychology. *How* do persons become holy? We have seen that the supernaturalistic assumption is a central part of everyday religious belief, and the assumption is a central piece of traditional Nazarene theology. Recently, that assumption has been challenged. For example, Randy Maddox recognized this when he argued that the American Holiness movement separated Wesley’s model of spiritual life from his moral psychology. When the Holiness movement opted for an alternative moral psychology it either had to abandon Wesley’s notion of Christian Perfection, or reformulate it. It chose the latter and by doing so set itself on a trajectory towards the credibility gap identified by Wynkoop.

Maddox’s response to the conundrum that the Holiness movement got itself into was to call it back to Wesley’s “‘affectional’ model of heart and life.” In doing so Maddox fundamentally perpetuates the individualistic character of sanctification, even

though he alludes to the communal nature of holiness.⁸ Understanding holiness as ecclesial will make the communal aspect much more prominent.

While I claim that Yoder's construction can be viewed as an example of ecclesial ethics and can inform an ecclesial view of holiness, his is not the only model. Representative examples can be found in the work of Vigen Guroian, Stanley Hauerwas, Reinhard Hütter, and Bryan Stone.⁹ Ecclesial ethicists share a common concern, which is illustrated by Bryan Stone. He points to the fundamental idea of ecclesial ethics when he argues that "Christian salvation *is* ecclesial – that its very shape in the world *is* a participation in Christ through the worship, shared practices, disciplines, loyalties, and social patterns of his body, the church."¹⁰ My appropriation of Yoder's ecclesial ethics enables me to call Nazarenes to view sanctification as an ethical process in which they, in obedient response to the lordship of Jesus Christ, are formed into sanctified persons through participation in particular communal practices that embody holiness, a process which may be seen as the work of the Holy Spirit.

⁸He does this via the "means of grace" as practices of the "community." See Maddox, 42.

⁹Vigen Guroian, *Ethics After Christendom: Toward an Ecclesial Ethic* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2004); Stanley Hauerwas, *In Good Company: The Church as Polis* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995); Reinhard Hütter, "Ecclesial Ethics, the Church's Vocation, and Paracletis," *Pro Ecclesia* 2/4 (Fall 1993): 433-50; Bryan Stone, *Evangelism After Christendom: The Theology and Practice of Christian Witness* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2007).

¹⁰Stone, *Evangelical After Christendom*, 15. In many ways this chapter is an attempt to work out the implications for holiness that are reflected in Stone's chapter "Evangelism and Ecclesia."

Toward an Ecclesial Holiness

“A polity,” says Stanley Hauerwas, “is judged by the kind of people it produces.”¹¹ A particular kind of Christian is shaped in every social manifestation called the “church.” The formation in lived religion of holiness identities, that is sanctified persons, requires communities able to recognize such identities and engage in social processes that produce them.

Holiness, for Yoder, is “the separateness of a called people and the distinctiveness of their social existence.”¹² It is, in effect, participation in a “way of life,” being part of a community that is shaped by a particular narrative and is constituted by particular practices. This way of thinking about holiness stands over and against the notion that holiness centers on the individual. For Yoder, holiness is a communal term. Yoder writes:

Few assumptions have been more widely shared in Protestant thought than the identification of the messages of Paul and Luther with the promise of new hope for the individual in his subjectivity.¹³

But, this assumption is being challenged. Yoder cites the biblical research of his own day, which is discovering a dimension of “peoplehood” underlying the traditional notions of language of “justification” and “sanctification.” He writes:

This assumption [that biblical religion is primarily individualistic] is now being dismantled under the impact of the exegetical theology of this century. Not only does biblical theology in general discover a fuller meaning to the dimension of *peoplehood* in all the working of God throughout the Bible story; not only does

¹¹Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 74.

¹²Yoder, *The Royal Priesthood*, 81.

¹³*Ibid.*, 73.

one find in Jesus' proclamation of the coming of the Kingdom in the Gospel accounts a dimension of genuine social creativity and in the calling of the twelve the nucleus of a new community. Today such scholars as Markus Barth and Hans-Werner Bartsch are finding as well even in the writing of Paul, yea even in Galatians and Romans, a hitherto unnoticed dimension of community extending even into the meaning of such words as *justification*.¹⁴

Yoder takes seriously the Wesleyan notion that there is no holiness without social holiness.

Yoder does not speak much about "sanctification." He begins with the religious significance of baptism. It is there, in repentance and conversion, that one is called to the obedience of faith. From there one lives out in faithful obedience the implications of the cross of Christ. He writes:

The obedience of faith does not make sense apart from the context of faith. The substantial guidance, the experiential and social resources of conversion and membership are presupposed for it to be possible to speak of one's behavior as expressive of faith and obedience. Cross-bearing in the hope of resurrection, enemy-love as reflection of God's love, forgiving as one has been forgiven, behavior change describable as expressing regeneration or sanctification, do not make sense in the context of unbelief.¹⁵

It has become clear that Yoder's theological construction of social ethics places practical reason in a much different social context than we saw either in the religious lives of the Nazarenes in this study, or as portrayed in the theologies of the Nazarene tradition. I draw on Yoder to show that it is possible to understand how practical reason can be shaped ethically in the context of a voluntary association, engaged in social processes to which the believer is called by Jesus, and which engender the ethical way of life of a reconciled community, living out God's peaceable reign before the watching

¹⁴Yoder, *The Royal Priesthood*, 73.

¹⁵Ibid., 110.

world. It is this construction of an ecclesial holiness that might offer a way forward for contemporary Nazarenes.

Aspects of an Ecclesial Holiness: Re-Imagining Agency and Social Context

Yoder's ecclesial ethic represents the attempt to rethink the relationship between social context and practical reason. He is well known for his reconstruction of Christian ethics from the perspective of the Mennonite strand of the "free church" tradition.

Today, however, Yoder's ethical construction is being generally considered in social locations well outside the Anabaptist tradition.

Yoder defines practical reason as "the way people make particular choices which are illumined by their general faith commitments, but which still need to be worked through by means of detailed here-and-now thought processes."¹⁶ Three aspects of this definition are important. First, Yoder underscores the ongoing need to make moral choices in the Christian life. Following Jesus as Lord requires the ability to order one's life in ways that are commensurate with the Gospel. Second, he recognizes that those choices are informed by basic Christian beliefs that function to guide those choices. Thus, the kinds of moral choices one makes emerge out of the narratives one embraces.¹⁷ And, third, moral choices are made at particular historical moments and in particular cultural contexts.

¹⁶John Howard Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics as Gospel* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 17.

¹⁷Yoder does not explicitly employ narrative theology, but he makes frequent reference to the narrative characteristic of Christian faith and ethic. See "The Kingdom As Social Ethic," in *The Priestly Kingdom*, 95.

Thus, in this section, I consider, first, Yoder's attempt to frame practical reason in a "communal hermeneutic." Second, I respond to his call to contemporary Christians to consider the possibility of a "Messianic ethic," that is, to see Jesus as the exemplar¹⁸ of practical moral reasoning. And, third, I present Yoder's synthesis of ecclesiology and ethics in which he depicts the church as a "political" body, that is, as a public embodiment of the Gospel. Yoder identifies five practices that give expression to that corporate embodiment. I depict these as social practices that guide and shape individuals in ecclesial holiness. All told, these three elements help us think of holiness as ecclesial holiness.

Practical Reason Re-imagined: A "Communal Hermeneutic"

The first element of the construction of a theology of ecclesial holiness, informed by Yoder, imagines individuals freely and voluntarily associating with a confessional community and participating in its moral deliberation with the goal of reconciliation. This element addresses the concerns raised in both lived religion and the theological constructions of the Nazarene tradition. In lived religion everyday Nazarenes tended not to draw on the community in making moral decisions. They most often relied on their own personal religious experiences or reasoned through for themselves. And, the goal of moral deliberation was not the reconciling of the community but the maintenance of their own personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Underlying this was the notion that holiness was primarily an internal and individual matter of assessing one's personal

¹⁸Yoder does not use this term explicitly, but he certainly points in this direction. See my comments on Yoder under that heading.

sins. Theological constructions in the tradition, sensitive to the problem of individualism in the American culture, construct holiness in ways that try to ameliorate this tendency in individuals and encourage them to see themselves as members of community.

Unfortunately, they are not always clear about what community is depicted or how the individual is related to that community.

Attempting to reframe practical reason within an alternative social context, Yoder reorients practical reason within a conception of the “voluntary association.” In his *The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics as Gospel* (1984), in the chapter entitled “The Hermeneutics of Peoplehood,” Yoder seeks to draw out the implications of “voluntary association,” the form of congregationalism as conceived by the early Protestants, in the “free church” or “radical Reformation” tradition. Drawing on the sociological insight, particularly informed by Ernst Troeltsch, that “a distinctive stance in social ethics both follows from and contributes to a distinctive social location,”¹⁹ Yoder begins to construct a picture of practical reason functioning within the distinctive social location of the “voluntary association.”

Yoder recognizes that the voluntary association is ubiquitous in the American context, and has become the dominant way religious community gets expressed. Critics of the voluntary association, however, have correctly identified the “atomistic isolation of individualism”²⁰ that is often characteristic of its contemporary form. Yoder does not disagree. His complaint comes when the ecclesiological strategy proposed by those same critics to correct the excesses of voluntary association is some form of authoritarianism.

¹⁹Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom*, 80.

²⁰Ibid., 25.

An authoritarian form of ecclesiology either leverages the authority of the Church (or the tradition), as a way of managing the social impact of individualism. Yoder argues against any form of “establishment”²¹ and suggests that voluntary association has been misconceived, through whatever social and historical processes there were, with the result that practical reason came to be socially expressed as largely an “individualistic” moral process. But, he argues that this is a departure from the kind of ecclesiology sought by the early Protestants.

In contrast to antagonists of voluntary association, who see the only contemporary alternative as the “coercive givenness of establishment,” Yoder begins by framing practical reason in an alternative social context.²² In *The Priestly Kingdom*, Yoder constructs a view of voluntary association that embeds practical reason in a “communal hermeneutic” (28), which recognizes the “corporate dimension” of human nature. Yoder exploits this anthropological insight for theological purposes. There are two implications that follow from this emphasis on the corporate dimension of human nature. On the one hand, individuals require “due process in practical reasoning.” Here Yoder recognizes the individual’s need to participate in the life of the community. This points to the human social need to participate in the direction and order of the social group, to feel like

²¹Establishment is a code word for Yoder. It represents that way of doing social ethics that is closely related to what he calls “Constantinianism,” which refers to the notion that one is considered to be a Christian by virtue of one’s citizenship in the state. This way of viewing Christian identity necessitates a change in ecclesiology, eschatology, truth and metaphysics. See Yoder’s chapter entitled “Constantinian Sources of Western Ethics,” in *The Priestly Kingdom*, 135-147.

²²For two other attempts at similar theological strategies see Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio: A Theological Study of the Sociology of the Church* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1998), and Stanley Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001). It would be an interesting study to compare these theological approaches with Yoder’s.

he or she has a “say” in the process. On the other hand, individuals are in “need of counsel.” Here, Yoder recognizes the propensity of individuals to deceive themselves about the negotiation of moral ends. Dialogue with other Christians can help to minimize this self-deception. According to Yoder, then, human beings need a dialogical community in order to test, survey and critique moral action.

The form of voluntary association that Yoder has in mind affirms the need for individuals to give their consent to authority, to participate freely in the role of responsibility and deliberation; thus, the term “voluntary.” But individuals also find assistance and help in moral deliberation; thus, the term “association.” It is important here to see that for Yoder voluntary association is not merely a form of social contract,²³ but, rather, it is grounded in a particular “confession.” It is a gathering of disciples who confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Yoder is confident that “communities that are genuinely voluntary can affirm individual dignity (at the point of the uncoerced adherence of the member) without enshrining individualism.”²⁴ Thus, the alternative to “establishment” (and the coercion it represents) is not anarchy, but, rather, “freedom of confession.” The alternative to “arbitrary individualism” is not “established authority,” but “an authority in which the individual participates and to which he or she consents.”²⁵

In this way, Yoder is able to keep in balance both the fact that individuals have their own peculiar identity, [in the terms of Nancy Ammerman, “one’s own biography”],

²³See Yoder, *The Royal Priesthood*, 107.

²⁴Ibid., 24.

²⁵Ibid.

and also the recognition that individuals are social beings. Yoder avoids the error of seeing identity as *purely* a social product, that is, that identity is only a result of social forces outside of the individual, and, yet, he also is able to recognize that individuals do not wholly “make themselves” apart from social processes, or apart from the influence of significant others. This balance between individual freedom to consent and the need for social deliberation is seen in Yoder’s comments:

The moral validity of a choice one makes is connected to the freedom with which one has first of all made the choice to confess oneself a disciple of Jesus and to commit oneself to hearing the counsel of one’s fellow disciples.²⁶

For Yoder, communal hermeneutics points to the recognition that moral choices are the result of social processes whose goal is moral deliberation, hence reconciliation. An appropriation of Yoder would suggest that at the heart of an ecclesial holiness would be Jesus’ primary concern for reconciliation. The individual, then, would freely and voluntarily enter into relationship with like-minded believers for mutual benefit. The individual would freely participate in the moral deliberation of the community, but would also acknowledge the need for moral guidance from that community.

Having established the corporate dimension of human nature, Yoder begins to tease out the implications for ecclesiology (the role of the church) and ethical reflection (the place of Jesus in moral deliberation). Placing practical reason in relationship with Jesus as exemplar of moral reasoning in the context of an ecclesiology characterized by voluntary association which is deliberative, dialogical, and communal, “provides resources,” says Yoder, “for practical moral reasoning of a kind which are by definition

²⁶Yoder, *The Royal Priesthood*, 25.

unthinkable where that option is not offered and where the only way to be an individual is to rebel.”²⁷

Jesus as Exemplar of Practical Moral Reasoning

The second element of the construction of a theology of ecclesial holiness clarifies the relationship between Jesus and the community practices which constitute the way of life called discipleship. I have already mentioned the ambiguity that characterized the way Nazarenes understand the relations between Jesus and their own ethical choices. In both lived religion and in the theological sources of the tradition, images such as Christlikeness and love were left unrelated to everyday life. These images were properly depicted as the goal of the Christian life, but they carried little content so that the result was their inability to guide Christian behavior. I call Nazarenes to consider the life and teaching of Jesus as resources for a concrete way of life that gives content to sanctification. Following Jesus as a moral model means seeing his life and teaching as normative for the sanctified life.

Yoder imagines Jesus as the model for the church’s practical moral reasoning. At first this seems obvious, but, as Yoder points out, in modern ethics this has not been the case. In his *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster*, Yoder surveys recent considerations of the relationship between Jesus and Christian ethics. In a chapter entitled, “The Possibility of a Messianic Ethic,” Yoder argues that for mainstream Christian ethics Jesus has been largely “irrelevant” for ethical reflection. He offers six reasons for this marginalizing of Jesus. First, Jesus’ ethic was seen as essentially an

²⁷Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom*, 25.

“interim” ethic. Second, historical reconstructions of Jesus depicted him as “a simple rural figure.” Third, Jesus and his followers lived in a world over which they had no control, thus Jesus did not face problems that we face. Fourth, Jesus’ message was ahistorical by definition. His was a “spiritual” message. He did not deal with social matters. Fifth, Jesus was a radical monotheist. And sixth, Jesus came primarily to “give his life for the sins of humankind.”²⁸

This raises an important question, for if Jesus is not the source of ethics (or holiness), what is? If Jesus is not normative for ethics, says Yoder, “there must be some kind of bridge or transition into another realm or into another mode of thought when we begin to think about ethics.”²⁹ What constitutes that bridge? Yoder describes a number of possibilities, all of which may be summed up as “theology of the natural” - what is “relevant,” what is “adequate,” what is “effective,” or what is “realistic.” According to Yoder, once one rejects Jesus as normative, one must be guided by “common sense and the nature of things.”³⁰ But, what is common sense to one person may not be to another. And, what appears to be the nature of things to one person may not be to another. This view assumes that there is a “public” out there that enjoys a common logic, and that is able to discern what is “common” sense and what is to be understood as the nature of things. Yoder explicitly denies any truth to this claim. He writes:

[E]thics, in the technical sense of our discipline, which analyzes the conditions of validation of dispositions, decisions, and actions, is not an autonomous discipline.

²⁸John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 5-8.

²⁹Ibid., 8.

³⁰Ibid.

It is and always properly should be in the service of some cosmic commitment or other. There is no nonsectarian “scratch” to start from, beneath or beyond particular identities, no neutral common ground which some sort of search for “foundations” could lay bare.³¹

Every ethical perspective is just that a “perspective” viewed from some particular place or stance. Each is itself parochial.

The rejection of Jesus as normative for ethics leads to dangerous conclusions, for Yoder. For example, if Jesus is not authoritative in his humanness, then what is *Christian* ethics? If there is no specific ethic that is Christian, and there is only “natural human ethics,” then this abandonment of Christian specificity applies to all other truth as well. This line of reasoning poses problems for incarnation, too. If Jesus is human but not normative, then does this not lead to the ebionitic heresy? If Jesus is authoritative, but not in his humanness, does this not lead to a new Gnosticism?

Yoder’s primary concern here is that if there is a “universal, general” ethical view which Christians and non-Christians can apply to the “exercise of social responsibility within the power structures,” then this must make Jesus irrelevant. In contrast to this view, Yoder argues that there *is* a specific Christian ethic and it emerges out of a particular social location. He reads the Gospel with this question in mind. His hypothesis in *The Politics of Jesus* is that “the ministry and the claims of Jesus are best understood as presenting to hearers and readers not the avoidance of political options, but one particular social-political-ethical option.”³² The task then is to orient practical

³¹Yoder, *The Royal Priesthood*, 129.

³²Yoder, *Politics of Jesus*, 11.

reason to that “one model of practical reasoning” that we see in Jesus.³³ Thus, we must ask what is that option to which practical reason is oriented?

Ecclesia as Alternative Social Reality: “Voluntary Association” as Dialogical and Non-coercive

Central to my construction of a theology of ecclesial holiness is the notion that the called people of God as the church constitute an alternative social reality. Before discussing the social option Yoder envisions, it is important to note his sociological awareness and its implications for his thought. Out of his reading of Ernst Troeltsch, Yoder came to realize the close association between a social ethic and the social context. He writes, “The years have confirmed the aptness of observing how a distinctive stance in social ethics both follows from and contributes to a distinctive social location.”³⁴ Social processes imply social ethics. This relationship is reciprocal. On the one hand, a social location exhibits a social ethic, but on the other hand, to embrace a social ethic is to change the social location. Thus, a change in holiness requires a corresponding change in social process.

Central to Yoder’s thesis in *The Priestly Kingdom* is the affirmation that the church does not *have* a social ethic; as an alternative social reality it *is* a social ethic. Here, Yoder declares the impossibility of separating social ethics from a specific form of ecclesiology. In fact, for Yoder, ecclesiology, a particular manifestation of the Kingdom of God, *is* a social ethic. By ecclesiology Yoder means “the believing community as an

³³For Yoder’s view of Jesus as model of practical reasoner see *The Priestly Kingdom*, 37.

³⁴Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom*, 80.

empirical social reality.”³⁵ Thus, the form of association, the beliefs and practices of the people of God, constitute the ethic of the church. Yoder frames it this way, “[A]ccess to social ethics should consist in the exemplarity of the church as foretaste/model/herald of the kingdom.”³⁶ The church is a “politic.”³⁷

This vision of the social form of church as public and “visible” makes sense only in a particular social context, in which the church is in the “minority” status, or at least not entangled with the state. The particular social context in which *ecclesia* as social ethic takes place is in a context in which “Christendom” is no longer the case.

Christendom, for Yoder, refers to the Constantinian transformation, extending from before the 3rd century to the 5th, in which there is a fusion of two visible realities, “church” and “world.” Prior to this transformation these two realities were distinct.

Yoder writes:

“World” (*aion houtos* in Paul, *kosmos* in John) signifies in this connection not creation or nature or the universe but rather the fallen form of the same, no longer conformed to the creative intent. The state, which for present purposes may be considered as typical for the world, belongs with the other *exousiai* in this realm. Over against this “world” the church is visible; identified by baptism, discipline, morality, and martyrdom.³⁸

In the pre-Constantinian social context the Christian church manifested its “holiness” in its public affirmation of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The church was identifiably a social reality. It was clearly discernible in its “political” baptism, which signified the

³⁵Yoder, *Politics of Jesus*, 91.

³⁶John Howard Yoder, *The Royal Priesthood: Essays Ecclesiastical and Ecumenical* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1994), 106.

³⁷It is “political” because the church was called to live out publically the ethic of Jesus who was a “model of radical political action.” See Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 2.

³⁸Yoder, *The Royal Priesthood*, 56.

transference of allegiance from the state (“world”) to Jesus Christ. It has a public discipline and morality, visible to all. And, martyrdom symbolized its exclusive commitment to the Lord of the Kingdom of God, even unto death.

But, in the Constantinian social context “the two visible realities, church and world, were fused.” There was no longer anything to call “world.” The church’s social context changed to that of “majority” status, and, thus, there was a corresponding change in its social ethic. Compulsory baptism assured that there would be little difference between Christian and non-Christian. Moral standards were accommodated to the new social reality. Yoder writes:

Since the church has been filled with people in whom repentance and faith, the presuppositions of discipleship, are absent, the ethical requirements set by the church must be adapted to the achievement level of respectable unbelief.³⁹

Due to the transvaluation of ethics, the notion of the “invisibility of the true church” had to be developed to maintain some distinction between belief and unbelief.

The “Constantinian era” is coming to an end, however, and this opens an opportunity for the church to truly be “a people in the world.”⁴⁰ Sociologists, historians, and cultural analysts affirm the demise of the Constantinian synthesis.⁴¹ The church finds itself in a new social context as “minority.” This, for Yoder, opens the opportunity to

³⁹Yoder, *The Royal Priesthood*, 57.

⁴⁰Ibid., 67.

⁴¹Most often this is associated with the “secularization” thesis describing the European religious context.

recover the characteristic of the “otherness” of the church.⁴² Thus, an alternative social ethic emerges as the church lives out its minority status.

This minority status church is characterized by five “notae,” which have to do with the church as a “community” of people. The first nota is holy living. Here, Yoder’s concern lies in the “inner coherence of the Gospel ethic,” to show that the “believer’s church” is a presupposition for “biblical ethics” as its social location. For Yoder, “holiness is the separateness of a called *people* and the distinctiveness of their social existence.” They are to be a reflection of the “social novelty of the covenant of grace.”⁴³

The holiness of the church is also the mission of the church. Its “missionary” function is to be “visible” to the world as a “call” to follow the Christ, who is Lord of the Kingdom. The church is visible to the world as a witness. Yoder elaborates:

If the church is visible in that these people keep their promises, love their enemies, enjoy their neighbors, and tell the truth, as others do not, this may communicate to the world something of the reconciling, i.e., the community-creating, love of God.⁴⁴

Thus, holiness is an essential feature of the visible *ecclesia*.

The second nota is brotherly and sisterly love. It is this that marks the church as “voluntary.” Love cannot be constrained. Individuals must express fraternal love to one another freely and from the heart. Yet, love here is not to be understood as irresponsibility, for love holds persons accountable for their actions. At the core of the community’s love is the concern for reconciliation. One could say that love *is*

⁴²Yoder, *The Royal Priesthood*, 54.

⁴³Ibid., 80.

⁴⁴Ibid., 81.

reconciliation. Love is expressed in the community through the practice of “binding and loosing.” Binding and loosing, as we shall soon see, is the “implementation of the commonly covenanted commitment to a manner of life dictated by grace.”⁴⁵

The third nota is witness. Here the church confesses its Lordship faithfully and publically in the face of hostility from the world. Citing Menno, Yoder emphasizes the endurance of the church:

...that the name, will, word, and ordinance of Christ are constantly confessed in the face of all cruelty, tyranny, tumult, fire, sword, and violence of the world, and sustained unto the end.⁴⁶

Yoder also emphasizes that the church’s witness is not dependent on the subjective response of the hearers. It is irrelevant whether “many will hear and be converted,” or not. The church’s witness stands or falls on its faithfulness to Jesus Christ, not whether or not there are converts.

The fourth nota is affirmation in the cross of Christ. Suffering is the true sign of the missionary congregation. But, suffering must be understood properly. It is not just any suffering, but suffering due to “conformity with the path of Christ.” Thus, cross-bearing is not referring to the burden of living with an incurable illness, or with one’s “accidental” circumstances. Rather, bearing one’s cross is laden with moral value.

Yoder elaborates:

“[T]he cross” is to be understood much more narrowly as that kind of suffering that comes upon one because of loyalty to Jesus and nonconformity to the world.⁴⁷

⁴⁵Yoder, *The Royal Priesthood*, 83.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom*, 87.

But, one may also bear one's cross in the face of a church that is in need of reform. For example, the person who desires a "gradual" reform of the church because of his fear of the animosity of the population or authorities is not "bearing his cross."

The image that captures these notae of the *ecclesia* is "an alternative community." As alternative community the *ecclesia* "discharges a modeling mission."⁴⁸ For Yoder, "The church is called to be now what the world is called to be ultimately."⁴⁹ The church is a "microcosm of the wider society." This modeling function is expressed in many ways. For example, the church, because of its peculiar place as "pedestal or a subculture," can establish "pilot programs" to meet previously unmet needs. It can live out its alternative vision which becomes "enormously more credible and comprehensible if it is tested, confirmed, and practiced by a community."⁵⁰ Its "sacraments," which express the inner body life of the community, show the world what it can be like. Finally, the church can be a foretaste of the "peace" for which the world was made. "It is the proper function of minority communities," says Yoder, "to remember and to create utopian visions."⁵¹ The holiness of a people is evidenced in its way of life as an alternative to the dominant culture.

⁴⁸This is a central feature of Stone's appropriation of Yoder to articulate a revision of evangelism.

⁴⁹Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom*, 92.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 93.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 94.

An ecclesial holiness would emphasize the role of the church as an alternative community and enable participants to engage in practices that constitute it as an alternative to the world.

Corporate Practices of Embodiment: “Sacrament as Social Process”

A third element of this construction of a theology of ecclesial holiness will highlight the communal embodiment of holiness in corporate practices. Following Yoder, I emphasize five practices,⁵² which could be called “sacraments” that “exemplify the link between ecclesiastical practice and social ethics” (holiness).⁵³ It is here that the ecclesiological and ethical aspects of an ecclesial holiness come together to express the fullness of the life of the community of God lived out before the world. For Yoder the five practices function as “social processes” which illustrate the relationship between communal practice and holiness.⁵⁴ This is true in two ways: “What they have in common is that each of them concerns *both* the internal activities of the gathered Christian congregation *and* the ways the church interfaces with the world.”⁵⁵ They are themselves ethical responses to the Gospel, but also *form* ethical lives. That is, one becomes holy in the act of doing them. This will become evident as we look more closely at their details.

⁵²Yoder restates these communal practices in many ways in his writings. Recently, he has published them in *Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community before the Waiting World* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2001).

⁵³Yoder, *The Royal Priesthood*, 361,

⁵⁴ Yoder equates worship and communal practices.

⁵⁵Yoder, *The Royal Priesthood*, 361.

Essential to the understanding of the significance of these practices for Yoder is his belief that as the people of God engage in them, “they do the activity of God.”⁵⁶ God works in and through them. They *are* what God is doing. God works “in, with and under” them.⁵⁷ These divine-human practices are the communal “procedure” for doing the kind of practical moral reasoning Yoder depicts, which has as its goal “reconciliation.”

The first ecclesial practice is what Yoder calls “fraternal admonition.” It is a particular practice that Jesus tells his disciples to carry out and is informed by the rabbinical process of “binding and loosing,” which is a process of moral deliberation whose goal is forgiveness, “remitting” an offense. It is the process of restoring to the community a person who had offended. Yoder believes this rabbinical type of moral deliberation is illustrated in such passages as Matthew 18: 15, 18:

Whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven:
 Whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven.
 ...[I]f two of you agree on earth it will be granted by my Father in heaven.⁵⁸

In rabbinic language, to “bind” is to make something morally obligatory, and to “loose” is to free from obligation. It is, essentially, a conversation between persons who differ on

⁵⁶Yoder, *The Royal Priesthood*, 361. This is peculiarly true for “binding and loosing,” but, for Yoder, applies to the others as well.

⁵⁷As I think about how Yoder depicts these practices as *also* the work of God, I am reminded of the “literalness” with which Yoder takes the image “body of Christ.” The visible church *is* Jesus Christ in the world.

⁵⁸Translation found in Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom*, 26.

a moral issue that is “surrounded by a church which ultimately will ratify either the reconciliation or the impossibility of reconciliation.”⁵⁹

Yoder recognizes that from time to time in communal life there will be moments of interruption which will require the church’s casuistic skills to enable reconciliation among parties who disagree on particular moral issues. The rule of Christ, then, is a “procedure for doing practical moral reasoning, in a context of conflict, right in the situation where divergent views are being lived out in such a way as to cause offense.”⁶⁰ It may be understood as the embodiment of an ecclesial ethic. Yoder summarizes this process:

A transcendent moral ratification is claimed for the decisions made in the conversation of two or three or more, in a context of forgiveness and in the juridical form of listening to several witnesses.⁶¹

This practice lies at the heart of Yoder’s ecclesial ethics. It requires a particular social context in which to function. Yoder writes:

[T]he practice of this discipline was or is at home in a voluntary community whose members have committed themselves to its standards and to its practice, by means of a personal commitment of baptism or confirmation.⁶²

Thus, voluntary association is that social context in which this social ethic can be practiced by the Christian community for the purpose of maintaining holiness. It is, for Yoder, “an alternative both to individualistic intuitionism and to completely objective

⁵⁹Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom*, 27.

⁶⁰Ibid., .

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²John Howard Yoder, *Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community Before the Watching World* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2001), 5.

rigidity.”⁶³ Here the communal hermeneutic is most fully expressed. Ethics and ecclesiology are united in such a way that ecclesial practices embody the church’s ethical strategy. Ultimately, the goal is that the church, publically, live out its ideal of holiness, seeking to be a fully reconciled people living in community as a witness to God’s gracious presence.

According to Sider, Yoder's "communal embodiment of holiness" is also evidenced by the "fullness of Christ (diversity of gifts)" and the "rule of Paul (open meeting).”⁶⁴ The fullness of Christ, or what Yoder calls “the universality of charisma,” describes a “new mode of group relationships, in which each person has “a distinctly identifiable, divinely validated, and empowered role.”⁶⁵ Drawing from I Corinthians 12, Yoder describes the “Spirit-driven unity of the body” of Christ, in which “every member is the bearer of such a manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”⁶⁶

The “rule of Paul,” is closely related to the fullness of the Spirit, but refers more to “the Spirit’s freedom in the meeting.” In this sense, then, the rule of Paul also “instructs [the church] how to hold a meeting in the power of the Spirit” for the purpose of edification, which refers to the moral life of the congregation. Each person, endowed with “charisma,” who has been given something to say by the Holy Spirit, may have the floor. The only criterion is that “prophecy” is given priority, because prophecy seeks “to

⁶³Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom*, 28.

⁶⁴Sider, "To See History Doxologically," 234.

⁶⁵Yoder, *Body Politics*, 47.

⁶⁶Ibid.

improve, to encourage, and to console.”⁶⁷ The others consider what was said and deliberate so that the decision by the church is what “seemed good to the Holy Spirit.”⁶⁸

Each person freely and equally participates in the moral deliberation of the community without coercion or manipulation, which allows them the opportunity to be corrected by the community, but also to feel that their own voice is heard and that they are able to participate in the community’s future.

Yoder makes the case that these three practices – fraternal admonition, universality of charisma, and the Spirit’s freedom in the meeting – all should be considered “sacraments” proper. When we think of sacraments, we usually think of Eucharist and baptism. But, these three participate in precisely the same nature and characteristic relationship between the divine and human. He writes:

I began with these three specimens of apostolically prescribed social process because they do *not* fall within what ordinarily is called “worship,” even less “liturgy.” Yet, why should they not be so designated? Each speaks of practices carried out when believers gather for reasons evidently derived from their faith and capable of being illuminated by doctrinal elaboration. These practices are described as involving both divine and human action and as mandatory. It makes a difference whether they are done rightly or wrongly. Are these not the characteristics of what we ordinarily call “worship”?⁶⁹

Yoder’s argument is sound and well taken; there is no good reason to restrict the notion of “sacrament” to the “traditional” practices. But Yoder makes two very important points regarding sacraments. First, he says that the notion of sacrament over the centuries has become laden with “magical” and “superstitious” notions. The second is related to

⁶⁷Yoder, *Body Politics*, 61.

⁶⁸Yoder, *The Royal Priesthood*, 363.

⁶⁹Ibid., 364.

the first; it is relatively easy to see how practices like fraternal admonition, universality of charisma, and the Spirit's freedom in the meeting are social processes that shape the community. While Yoder emphasizes the sacramental nature of these practices, I am more concerned about appropriating them as practices that shape persons in ecclesial holiness.⁷⁰

The fourth sacrament as social process is Eucharist, which is, for Yoder, “an act of economic ethics.”⁷¹ He reorients the church's understanding of the Lord's Supper by asking again the nature of this “sacrament.” In order to discern the meaning of Jesus' meal with the disciples, Yoder reflects on the words of Jesus, “Whenever you do this, do it in my memory.” The meaning of Jesus' words, “remember me” hinges on what “do this” refers to. Yoder warns against anachronistic interpretations. For example, it cannot mean either “the mass” or “the Lord's Supper” as they have developed over the centuries, because there was no such thing as “mass or “Lord's Supper.” Another possible interpretation is that what Jesus meant was to celebrate the Passover. Jews celebrated the Passover once per year. Yet, it is unlikely that Jesus had in mind a yearly celebration, nor is this how his hearers took him. So, what could Jesus have meant? Yoder explains:

What Jesus must have meant, and what the record indicates that his first followers took him to mean, was “whenever you have your common meal.” The meal Jesus blessed that evening and claimed as his memorial was their *ordinary* partaking together of food for the body.⁷²

⁷⁰Yoder, *The Royal Priesthood*, 363.

⁷¹Yoder, *Body Politics*, 14.

⁷²*Ibid.*, 16.

Jesus had in mind the “common meal” of the day. Yoder appeals to Acts 2 as evidence of his interpretation. Acts speaks of four activities characterizing the disciples’ life together: “remain faithful to the apostles’ teaching, to fellowship, to the *breaking of bread* and to the prayers.”⁷³ The meal was the centre of life together. It was what they all enjoyed “in common.” It was the formation of economic community. The solidarity of the early Christians extended out from table fellowship. The meal was, itself, an act of “worship,” which included meal fellowship *and* thanksgiving. Jesus is, in effect, saying, “When you sit down at your daily common meal, and enjoy fellowship, and share your economic resources with one another, remember me.” Yoder writes:

In short, the Eucharist is an economic act. To do rightly the practice of breaking bread together is a matter of economic ethics.⁷⁴

In an ecclesial holiness the formation of economic community would play a vital role in shaping persons in the life of holiness by enabling them to share their own resources with others as an act of agape love. Here Christlikeness is not abstract, or a general principle to be applied, but, rather, a concrete way of life to which Jesus calls his disciples.

The fifth sacrament as social process is “baptism.” Baptism means, essentially, “induction into the new humanity.” Yoder references 2 Corinthians 5:17, “If anyone is united to Christ, there is a new world; everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!” What is “new”? For Yoder, it refers to a new *people*. Yoder describes the “social functioning” of this scriptural passage:

⁷³Yoder, *Body Politics*, 16.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 21.

The concrete, social-functional meaning of that statement is that the inherited social definitions of who each of us is by class and category is no longer basic. Baptism introduces or initiates persons into a new people. The distinguishing mark of this people is that all prior given or chosen identity definitions are transcended.⁷⁵

Baptism, then, seems to have “political” implications; it effects the merging of the histories of two peoples, Jew and Gentile, into “one new humanity.” Baptism celebrates and initiates a “new social reality,” two divided people become one. Thus, baptism is the church’s political ethic expressed in a fundamental “egalitarianism” that guides the church’s relationship with others.

Yet, this is not always how baptism has been understood. For example, “sacramentalists” worry about the relationship between baptism and “original sin.” And, Baptists, expressing a more Zwinglian understanding of baptism as “signifying” something, understand baptism as signifying the “new birth as an inward individual experience.” While each of these, for Yoder, has significant and troubling theological problems, the real problem is that neither naturally moves toward egalitarianism. Yoder calls for a “sacramental realism”:

[W]e can resurrect a sacramental realism, whereby baptism is the constitution of a new people whose newness and togetherness explicitly relativize prior stratifications and classification, then we need no path to get from there to egalitarianism. We start egalitarian,...⁷⁶

Thus, for Yoder, baptism is the social ethic of “interethnic inclusiveness.” I suggest that Nazarenes too fail to see the political aspect of baptism. For them it is the symbol of the new covenant, but they fail to appreciate its political aspect of interethnic inclusiveness

⁷⁵Yoder, *Body Politics*, 28.

⁷⁶Yoder, *Royal Priesthood*, 367.

and egalitarianism. An ecclesial holiness, as envisioned here, would call Nazarenes to see baptism as a political challenge to the ethnic divisions that characterize much of contemporary society.

It is important to remember that these five practices are closely associated with and constituted by a particular religious narrative that gives them shape and meaning. The theology of ecclesial holiness constructed here in dialogue with John Howard Yoder imagines a different relationship between individuals and social context than that discovered in lived religion or proposed in the theological constructions of the tradition.

An Ecclesial Construction of the Sanctified Person

This exposition of Yoder's ecclesial ethic offers constructive resources for a theological understanding of the sanctified person as a fully ecclesial identity. The sanctified person has been depicted as one who freely and voluntarily participates in the life of the Christian community engaging in its moral deliberation as it seeks to live out reconciliation before God through the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The sanctified person is depicted as a disciple of Jesus who takes as his or her example of holiness the life of the man Jesus who modeled for us "practical moral reasoning" about life lived in the Kingdom of God. The sanctified person does the things Jesus did. The sanctified person is constituted by social processes, communal practices that derive from Jesus himself. These ecclesial processes are "political" in that they are the public and visible holiness of the church in which the sanctified person participates. The sanctified person participates in processes of reconciliation, mutual moral discernment, sharing of economic resources, living out a new humanity of egalitarianism and ethnic inclusiveness, expressing God-

given gifts for the mutual edification of the body of Christ, and sharing with the congregation that which God has given him or her to speak in order to facilitate proper worship of God.

This model of ecclesial holiness, informed as it is by Yoder's social ethics, is compatible with the sociological assumptions stated in the previous chapter. This model answers the questions left unanswered by recent theological Nazarene constructions. It shows how the sanctified person could be understood as a social construction and is fully the result of social processes. It shows how individuals enter into responsible and accountable dialogue with the community so as to participate in communal life and, at the same time, to be shaped by those social processes into sanctified persons. It shows how individuals are embedded in particular social locations and that the sanctified person emerges out of the social location called the *ecclesia*. It shows how sanctified persons can be understood to be constituted by social practices which are derived from Jesus himself who is a model for such a life. It presents a picture of divine action that sees God working through and through in the *ecclesia*. Finally, it offers the rudiments of a moral psychology by which individuals are shaped into the image of Jesus Christ in community.

Conclusion

This study has intended to be an exercise in practical theology which investigated the problem of changing beliefs about holiness in the Church of the Nazarene. I concluded that beliefs about holiness *were* changing, but the reasons for that change could not be explained by theories of secularization or church-sect differences. Rather, change was more related to the internal religious dynamics of the denomination and to

the local life of the congregation. The Church of the Nazarene had encountered a theological and practical crisis in its understanding of holiness and sanctification when its formative holiness theology “died” in the middle of the twentieth century. Subsequent generations struggled to articulate a renewed vision. Eventually, the inability to achieve consensus on holiness promoted a theological vacuum in the denomination and in local congregations which allowed alternative holiness narratives, such as that proposed by certain forms of Evangelicalism, to emerge. As a result, many Nazarenes, pastor and lay alike, faced difficulties imagining how the sanctified person could emerge in their communal life. I argued that the goal of constructing the “sanctified person” was being hindered because of the changing *habitus* within the local congregation. An alternative *habitus* had been constructed which produced holiness identities shaped more by Evangelicalism than by the Wesleyan-holiness tradition.

The primary goal of this study was to construct a holiness narrative of the sanctified person in response to lived religion, but it could not be a theological construction formed *ex nihilo*. Informed by sociological insights about the social formation of religious identity, I entered into dialogue with the lived religion of Nazarenes in three congregations in the Northeastern U.S., as well as with the constructive resources of the Nazarene tradition. Out of that dialogue, I identified three assumptions that informed contemporary understandings about holiness and sanctification which needed to be challenged: that holiness was primarily about the individual, that the goal of sanctification was Christlikeness understood abstractly as a state or principle, and that sanctification was the result of the supernatural and unmediated work of God in the human soul. Everyday Nazarenes had difficulty seeing

the social aspect of holiness and view holiness primarily in terms of taking account of their own personal sins. It was also difficult for them to see how loving Jesus and being Christlikeness meant being shaped in an ethical way of life modeled by Jesus himself. And, finally, nearly all Nazarenes understood becoming holy as the result of a supernatural act of God in a person's heart. A theological view of holiness informed by these three assumptions worked to hinder the formation of the sanctified person in the local congregation.

Drawing on the thought of Mennonite John Howard Yoder I challenged those assumptions and constructed an alternative holiness narrative that might better promote a *habitus* that would produce the kinds of holiness identities Nazarenes are looking for. This meant that a theological construction needed to take seriously how social religious identities are formed. I imagined the sanctified person as one who is embedded in a religious community for mutual benefit, but who, also, submits to the authority of that community. I imagined the sanctified person as one who lives concretely in community the way of life taught and modeled by Jesus who is Lord of the Kingdom. And, finally, I imagined the sanctified person as constituted by holy practices.

In the beginning of this study I framed the discussion by talking about the changing beliefs about holiness in the Church of the Nazarene. Ultimately, however, it has turned out to be much more than a matter of having different beliefs. Rather, it is about taking stock of the current situation and understanding how the social identity of the sanctified person is formed. I call Nazarenes to consider how their vision of holiness might take advantage of these insights and begin to appropriate them in their local congregations. This intentional call for change is not the result of secularization or

concerns about church and sect. It is not an accommodation to culture or a “falling away” from a pristine core of beliefs. Rather it is a call to a faithful response to the Lordship of Jesus Christ to be sanctified people in the world - to truly be the holy people of God.

APPENDIX A

Nazarene Identity In-depth Interview Question Guide

Religious Identity

1. How do you identify yourself religiously? Are there any labels that describe you well?
2. Do you consider your self a Nazarene?
3. What does it mean to you to be a Nazarene?
4. In your mind, what are the characteristic traits of Nazarenes?
5. Do you think these kinds of labels and differences among Christians are very important these days?
Why or why not?
6. What things do Nazarenes have in common that might make them different from other kinds of Christians?

(Probe) If you met someone for the first time, how would you know if they were a Nazarene? What things would you look for? How would you know if they were not a Nazarene? How would they know of you were a Nazarene? Where are the boundaries?

Do you view Nazarenes as different from Fundamentalists?

Do you view Nazarenes as different from Evangelicals?

Nazarene Identity and Salience

1. The Church of the Nazarene places a great deal of emphasis on “holiness.” How do you understand holiness?
2. Is this doctrine important to you? Why or why not?
3. Do you see yourself as a holiness believer?
4. How are other Christians different from Nazarenes on holiness?
5. How often do you hear sermons or bible studies on this topic at church?

Nazarene Identity and Congregation

1. So what brought you to this congregation?
2. Was it important that it was a Nazarene church?
3. How Nazarene is this place?
4. How important is it to your church to be a member of the Church of the Nazarene?
5. How often do you speak with others in the congregation about being Nazarene?
6. Do you have friends who are members of another denomination?
7. How do you talk with them about your Nazarene faith?
8. What do they think of Nazarene churches?
9. Can you think of any national leaders who represent the kind of Christian you are?

Belief Plausibility

1. How do you know that your Christian faith is true?
2. Have you ever had doubts about your Christian beliefs? (What was happening?)
3. Some people say that knowing there are many different Christian denominations in the world makes them doubt that their own religious faith is the right one. Is that an issue for you? What do you think of other Christian traditions? Are they wrong, or just different?

(Probe) (For college educated) Some people say their education has caused them to have doubts about their faith. How has your education affected your faith? [Find out where they went to college.]

4. When you have doubts, how have you resolved them?

(Probe) Do you talk to others about them? Pray? Or do they simply fade away?

5. Do you believe in hell? (IF YES:) How does your belief in hell shape the way you think about your neighbors, colleagues, other people you know? How does the idea of them maybe going to hell affect your relationship with them in daily life?

(Probe) How do you feel about the fact that there will be a hell for so many people?

Theological Resources

1. Do you read any of the denomination's theological literature?
2. Do you have a copy of the Nazarene *Manual*?
3. Do you have any disagreements with Nazarene belief? Why or why not?
4. Do you read the Sunday School literature or the *Holiness Today (Herald of Holiness)* magazine?
5. Are you aware of any theological debates or discussions in the denomination?
6. Are you aware of the various theological differences in the denomination?

Christian Influence

1. Some Christians like to say that "Jesus Christ is the 'answer' for society or the world's problems today.

As a Nazarene do you agree? If so, what does that mean?

2. Do Nazarenes have solutions for today's social problems? What are those problems? What are the solutions?
3. Should Nazarenes be involved in society to try to exert a Christian influence? Why or why not?
4. Is working for social change in this world an appropriate activity for Nazarenes?
5. In your normal life, do you actually spend much time thinking about these things?

Is this much of a concern for you?

Nazarene Identity Focus Group Question Guide

Religious Identity

1. How do you identify yourself religiously? Are there any labels that describe you well?
2. Do you consider your self a Nazarene?
3. What does it mean to you to be a Nazarene?
4. In your mind, what are the characteristic traits of Nazarenes?
5. Do you think these kinds of labels and differences among Christians are very important these days?
Why or why not?
6. What things do Nazarenes have in common that might make them different from other kinds of Christians?

(Probe) If you met someone for the first time, how would you know if they were a Nazarene? What things would you look for? How would you know if they were not a Nazarene? How would they know of you were a Nazarene? Where are the boundaries?

Do you view Nazarenes as different from Fundamentalists?
Do you view Nazarenes as different from Evangelicals?

Nazarene Identity and Salience

1. The Church of the Nazarene places a great deal of emphasis on “holiness.” How do you understand holiness?
2. Is this doctrine important to you? Why or why not?
3. Do you see yourself as a holiness believer?
4. How are other Christians different from Nazarenes on holiness?
5. How often do you hear sermons or bible studies on this topic at church?

Nazarene Identity and Congregation

1. So what brought you to this congregation?
2. Was it important that it was a Nazarene church?
3. How Nazarene is this place?
4. How important is it to your church to be a member of the Church of the Nazarene?
5. How often do you speak with others in the congregation about being Nazarene?
6. Do you have friends who are members of another denomination?
7. How do you talk with them about your Nazarene faith?
8. What do they think of Nazarene churches?
9. Can you think of any national leaders who represent the kind of Christian you are?

Belief Plausibility

1. How do you know that your Christian faith is true?
2. Have you ever had doubts about your Christian beliefs? (What was happening?)
3. Some people say that knowing there are many different Christian denominations in the world makes them doubt that their own religious faith is the right one. Is that an issue for you? What do you think of other Christian traditions? Are they wrong, or just different?

(Probe) (For college educated) Some people say their education has caused them to have doubts about their faith. How has your education affected your faith? [Find out where they went to college.]

4. When you have doubts, how have you resolved them?

(Probe) Do you talk to others about them? Pray? Or do they simply fade away?

5. Do you believe in hell? (IF YES:) How does your belief in hell shape the way you think about your neighbors, colleagues, other people you know? How does the idea of them maybe going to hell affect your relationship with them in daily life?

(Probe) How do you feel about the fact that there will be a hell for so many people?

Theological Resources

1. Do you read any of the denomination's theological literature?
2. Do you have a copy of the Nazarene *Manual*?
3. Do you have any disagreements with Nazarene belief? Why or why not?
4. Do you read the Sunday School literature or the *Holiness Today (Herald of Holiness)* magazine?
5. Are you aware of any theological debates or discussions in the denomination?
6. Are you aware of the various theological differences in the denomination?

Christian Influence

1. Some Christians like to say that "Jesus Christ is the 'answer' for society or the world's problems today.

As a Nazarene do you agree? If so, what does that mean?

2. Do Nazarenes have solutions for today's social problems? What are those problems? What are the solutions?
3. Should Nazarenes be involved in society to try to exert a Christian influence? Why or why not?
4. Is working for social change in this world an appropriate activity for Nazarenes?
5. In your normal life, do you actually spend much time thinking about these things?

Is this much of a concern for you?

Nazarene Identity Questionnaire

1. Age? under 21 26-34 45-54 65-74
 21-25 35-44 55-64 75 or over
2. Gender? Male Female
3. What is your race or ethnicity? _____
4. Marital Status? Single, never married Widowed
 Separated or divorced Married
5. What is your annual household (family or single living alone) income range?
 Under \$7,500 \$15,000-24,999 \$50,000-74,999
 \$7,500-14,999 \$25,000-34,999 \$75,000 or more
 \$35,000-49,999
6. What is your highest level of formal education?
 Less than high school graduate
 High school graduate
 Some college, trade, or vocational school
 College degree
 Post graduate work or degree
7. What is your present occupation (or what was it before you retired)? _____
8. Employment status:
 Retired Employed part time
 Full time "homemaker" or student Employed full time
9. How many children do you have under the age of 22? _____
What are their ages? _____
10. Are you a member of the Church of the Nazarene?
____ Yes ____ No
11. How long have you been **attending** this congregation?
_____ years.
11. About how many services do you attend at this church during an average month? About _____ services per month.

12. Has your involvement in the church increased, decreased, or remained the same in recent years?

Increased Remained the same Decreased

13. About how much does your household contribute to the church each year?

Less than \$100 \$600-1199 \$1800-2399
 \$100-599 \$1200-1799 \$2400 or more

14. How long does it take you to travel from your home to the church?

5 minutes or less 11-15 minutes 31-4 minutes
 6-10 minutes 16-30 minutes 45 or more

15. Think for a moment of your five closest friends, how many would you say are members of your church?

0 1 2 3 4 5

16. Have you ever belonged to a congregation of a different denomination? Yes _____ No _____

If yes, which denomination? _____

17. How important would you say church attendance is in your own life?

Very important Somewhat important
 Somewhat unimportant Not important Not sure

18. How important would you say your religious faith currently is in your own life?

Very important Somewhat important
 Somewhat unimportant Not very important Not sure

19. Which religious category best describes you? (Check all that apply)

- fundamentalist
- evangelical
- Wesleyan-holiness
- Nazarene
- mainline Protestant
- a theologically liberal Christian

20. If you moved to a new city or town where there were no Nazarene Church what would you do?

- Attend a church of another denomination, and possibly join
- Attend a church of another denomination, but not join
- Find a church of a denomination close to Nazarene belief
- Find a suitable church, the denomination does not matter
- Travel as far as necessary to attend a Nazarene church

21. Which **one** statement best describes you?

- I cannot imagine a time when I will not be a Nazarene.
- I am committed to the Church of the Nazarene but might attend a church in another holiness denomination someday.
- I am committed to the Church of the Nazarene but might attend another evangelical church someday.
- Although I am Nazarene now, I could easily see myself attending a church in another denomination.
- I don't really think of myself as Nazarene.

22. Did you know the denomination's stand on 'entire sanctification' when you decided to join this church?

- Yes No

How important was this question in your decision to join?

- Very important Somewhat important
 Somewhat unimportant Not very important Not sure

23. Which of the following statements do you agree with more?

- The church should emphasize its beliefs more.
- The church should not emphasize its beliefs more.

24. Select the three (3) most important phrases you would use to describe what 'entire sanctification' means to you:

- being filled with love
- being made God-like
- the sinful nature is eradicated
- becoming perfect
- becoming like Jesus Christ
- being completely devoted to God
- becoming obedient to God
- being filled with the Holy Spirit
- being baptized with the Holy Spirit
- cleansed from sin
- becoming holy
- original sin is eradicated
- none of the above
- other _____

25. Which one of the following statements most closely describes what you believe about entire sanctification?

- It is the distinct second work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer in which the old sinful nature is eradicated and the believer empowered for Christian life service.
- It is the distinct second work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer in which the old sinful nature is cleansed and the believer empowered for Christian life and service.
- It is the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer, both gradual and instantaneous, in which the old sinful nature is cleansed and the believer empowered for Christian life and service.
- It is the gradual work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer in which the believer grows in grace and matures in moral character and spiritual wisdom.
- None of the above statements adequately represents what I believe.
- I do not understand entire sanctification enough to reply.
- Other _____

26. Have you ever had doubts about your Christian beliefs?

Never Sometimes Often Frequently Always

27. When you are faced with questions about your faith, what do you do?

Go to my pastor and ask his/her advice
 Read the Bible and determine for myself what to believe
 Use my own religious experience as a guide
 Read denominational material for guidance

28. Which one of the following best expresses your views of the Bible?

The Bible is a valuable book because it was written by wise and good people, but I do not believe it is really God's Word.
 The Bible is the record of many different people's responses to God and because of this, people and churches are forced to interpret for themselves the Bible's basic moral and religious teachings.
 The Bible is the inspired Word of God and its basic moral and religious teachings are clear and true, even if it reflects some human error.
 The Bible is the actual Word of God and is to be taken literally.

29. Do you try hard not to offend people around you with your Christian views, or not?

Yes
 No
 Don't Know
 I do not share my faith

30. Do you think Christians should be trying to change American society to better reflect God's will, or not?

Yes
 No
 Don't Know

31. Which of the following Nazarene books have you read?

- "Entire Sanctification" by J. Kenneth Grider
- "Wesleyan-holiness Theology" by J. Kenneth Grider
- "A Theology of Love" by Mildred Bangs Wynkoop
- "Grace, Faith and Holiness" by H. Ray Dunning
- "Responsible Grace" by Randy Maddox
- None of the above

32. Which of the following authors do you read often?

- Rick Warren
- John MacArthur
- Billy Graham
- John Maxwell
- John Ortberg
- Charles Stanley
- D. James Kennedy
- James Dobson
- Bill Hybels
- Rueben Welch

33. Theologically, I feel that the Church of the Nazarene is:

- Much too liberal
- Too liberal
- About where it should be
- Too conservative
- Much too conservative

34. Should Nazarenes be actively trying to influence society?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

35. If yes, what is the most appropriate *means* by which to influence society?

- political/legislative reform
- religious conversion of individuals
- personal influence of good morals/example on friends, colleagues, acquaintances
- affect widespread cultural change of values, morals, commitments

36. Overall, how closely would you say your beliefs align with the beliefs of the Church of the Nazarene?

- Very closely
- Somewhat close
- Somewhat different
- Very different

37. How important is your family religious background in determining your own religious beliefs right now?

- Very influential
- Somewhat influential
- Not very influential

38. How do you know how God wants you to live?

- From the teaching of my local church
- or, considering Nazarene doctrine and/or consulting the Manual
- or, by consulting with and listening to other Christians
- or, preferably by thinking through the issue
- or, you know in your heart through your personal walk with God
- or, by seeking guidance by searching the Scriptures
- Don't know

39. Which statement comes closest to expressing what you believe about God?

- I don't believe in God.
- I don't know whether there is a God and I don't believe there is any way to find out.
- I don't believe in a personal God, but I do believe in a Higher power of some kind.
- I find myself believing in God some of the time, but not at others.
- While I have doubts, I feel that I do believe in God.
- I know God really exists and I have no doubts about it.

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