

CARLA D. SUNBERG
EDITOR

WHY HOLINESS?

*The Transformational
Message That
Unites Us*



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WHY HOLINESS?

CARLA SUNBERG



When's the last time you had a conversation with someone about your faith in Jesus Christ? There are those who may be curious as to why, in this age of authenticity and rationalism, someone would choose to follow Christ. The circle of questioning may even expand, questioning the place of the church in the life of faith. Further reflection may leave one wondering why—in a world teeming with non-denominational Protestantism and a more generic Christianity—there is a segment of Christianity that chooses to emphasize holiness.

Reaching back into history, we find our spiritual and theological father, John Wesley. This man, who helped lead a religious revival in eighteenth-century England, had an optimistic faith in the transformational work of the Holy Spirit to bear witness to salvation in Christ and the promise of living a sanctified life in the already present kingdom of God. The ministry of the early Methodists literally transformed English society and then made its way to the shores of the newly minted United States. There, circuit-riding ministers passionately carried on with Wesley's message of "scriptural holiness" as they pressed into the frontiers of this new nation. Wesley believed that scriptural holiness was the message to which he was

called; therefore, he and the Methodist societies kept this as the central focus of their mission as long as he was alive.

Nearly one hundred years later, a young Methodist minister by the name of Phineas F. Bresee was impassioned by the call to preach scriptural holiness. While he began his life in New York, he later traveled west, spending time in Iowa and eventually ending up in southern California. There were others who were sure that the message of holiness was exactly what the world needed, and suddenly camp meetings began to spring up across the country: groups gathering to make sure the message of holiness as preached by John Wesley would not be lost in the rapid expansion of the church across the face of America. Camp meetings and revival meetings that focused on the message of holiness dotted the countryside, with thousands coming to know Christ. Churches were planted as a result, and all were united in the message of holiness. Pastor Bresee was part of a movement that stretched from the east coast to the west, from the upper midwest and deep into the south.

The focus on holiness created tension among some of the Methodists who had now progressed past their founder and no longer found it vital to preach holiness. Pastor Bresee would call it the push and pull of holiness: the sense of being pushed out of his influential positions in the Methodist Church and the pull of the holiness camp meetings and the optimistic message being preached. He eventually felt God draw him to the down-and-out communities of Los Angeles, preaching the message of holiness that he believed would set the people free. He expanded slightly on Wesley's mantra, believing that this new group, identifying with Jesus as Nazarenes, should preach scriptural holiness and minister to the poor. At the center of it all was holiness—the hope and promise of transformation by engaging in the very present kingdom of God.

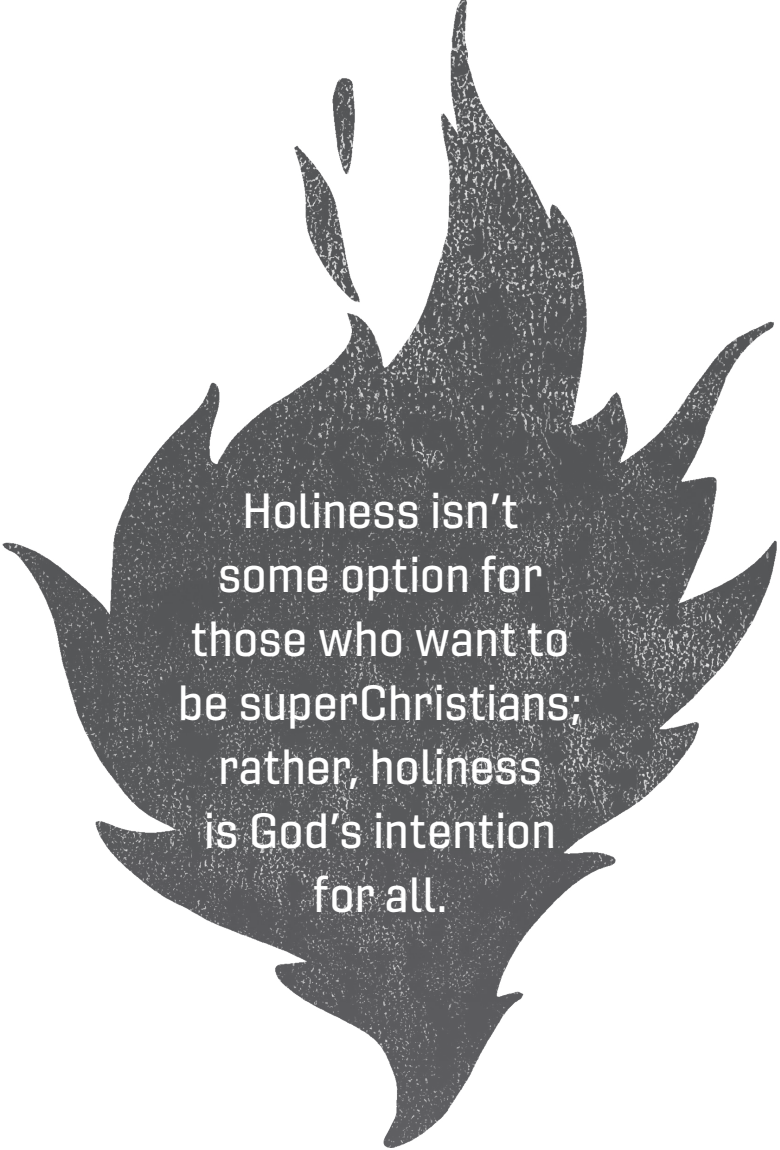
A couple of years ago I read a book by Simon Sinek called *Start with Why*, which is a secular book that doesn't speak about the church yet is extremely relevant. Every day, organizations spend time and

energy on doing their business. Much of the time the emphasis is on the *what* (what it is that they do) and the *how* (how it is that the work gets done). I'm sure the church has provided us with similar experiences as we have attended numerous workshops and seminars that tell us *what* we ought to be doing and *how* we should get it done. This may relate to our personal spiritual lives or to the work of the church at large. I would argue that we have been inundated with the *what* and the *how* and that we may have grown weary along the way.

Simon Sinek suggests that every great organization starts with *why*. Those who know *why* they do what they do find it much easier to develop their *what* and their *how*. For great organizations, the focus is always on the *why*, and most every member of a great organization can tell you their *why*. Wesley and Bresee both knew their *why*: to preach scriptural holiness. Preaching scriptural holiness was at the very core of the Methodist movement and the birth of the Church of the Nazarene. These people passionately understood the *why* of everything they did. Every activity, every ministry, every *what*, and every *how* was completed in light of their *why*, which was holiness.

About a generation ago, I believe we became confused about our *why*. We began arguing about categories and whether we were American Holiness or Wesleyan. Was holiness about purity and following a set of rules, or was it about love? Somehow we thought we had to choose one or the other. In our disagreements, something got lost. Instead of wrestling with our *why* and allowing it to remain our driving force, it became easier to teach about the *what* and the *how*. We established conferences to teach the latest techniques when it came to the attractional church, building a Sunday school, or how to facilitate small groups. We became obsessed with style of worship and whether (and how often) to celebrate the Lord's Supper. Somewhere along the way, we may have forgotten about asking *why*.

I didn't attend seminary until I was nearly forty. By the time I was able to go and sit in classes, I was hungry to learn more about this church of which I had been a part since my birth. Day after day, whether in class or soaking up the reading assignments, I was en-



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lightened about our understanding of holiness. I will never forget studying the Trinity in my systematic theology course and, there, finding a God of love existing in holy fellowship—to which I was invited. It was an overwhelming thought that only continued to build as I discovered that Christ’s incarnation created a pathway for humanity to be restored in the image of God. Here was God’s idea all along—that all of humanity would be holy, just as God is holy. Then I experienced my “aha” moment: the discovery that holiness isn’t some option for those who want to be superChristians; rather, holiness is God’s intention for all. Holiness is at the core of everything that is God and is revealed in Christ. Suddenly I wasn’t just in the church because I had been born into it. Instead, this was a theology that resonated deep in my heart and soul. Our message of holiness satisfied my own spiritual hunger.

As a holiness church, the Church of the Nazarene and its sister denominations have an incredible birthright that comes with responsibility. We are the heirs of those who were called to preach scriptural holiness, and we are to be stewards of that calling. Everything we do should be defined by our *why*—and that is holiness. The beauty of this message of holiness is that it has the potential of resonating with the needs of our world. Holiness draws us into relationship with our transcendent God, a place of mystery that is beyond our ability as humans to define. This place is where we learn that we can live victoriously, beyond the sin that so easily entangles—because the love of a holy God can set us free. Holiness invites us into daily living where love of God and love of neighbor provide the impetus for all of life. It is an invitation into participation in Christ and active engagement in the kingdom mission. It is a place of *via media*, a place of tension found in the middle that refuses to be drawn to the extremes. Holiness binds us to the mind of Christ, uniting us until we are one in him.

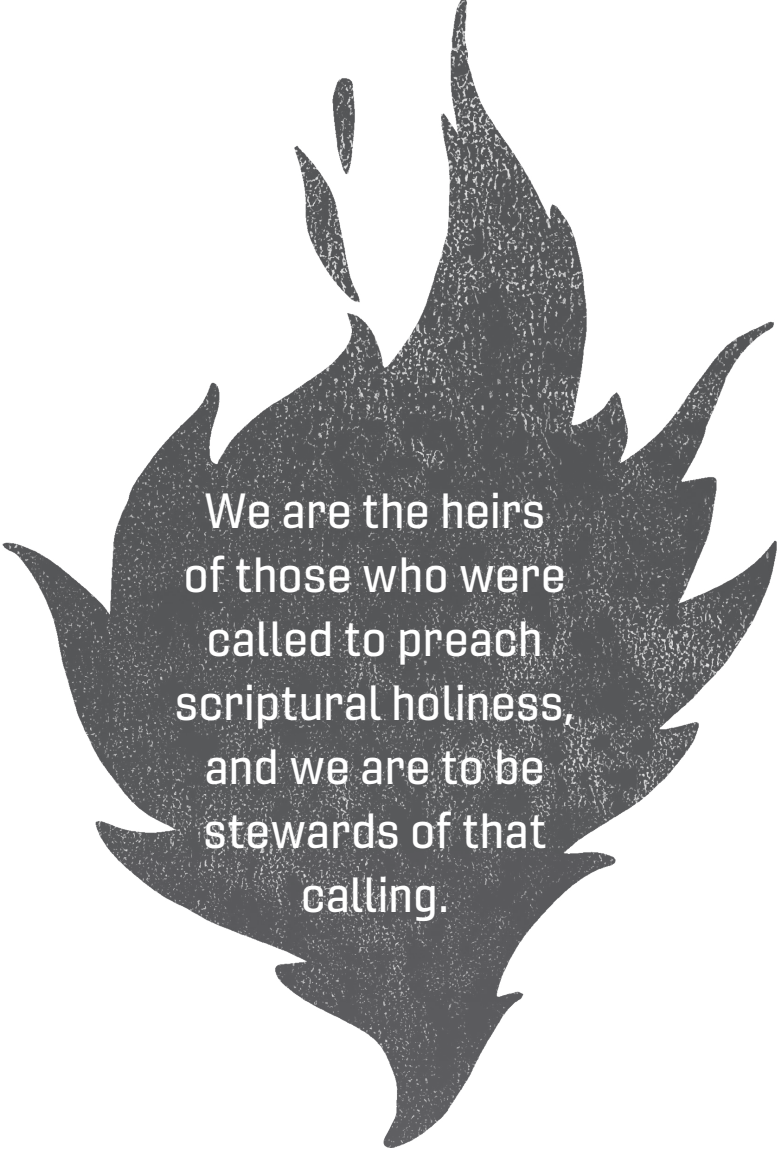
We are truly a Wesleyan-Holiness people who bring together the best of what the church has had to offer. Instead of being afraid of the holiness discussion, it’s time for us to again embrace the im-

passioned call of Wesley and of Bresee to preach scriptural holiness. This is our *why*, and we shouldn't be afraid to rediscover this driving force. Every *what* and *how* of the church should be defined by our *why*, which is holiness.

The Church of the Nazarene has now become a truly global church. Throughout our missional history, the Holiness Movement has always made theological education a priority. Now, as we take time to emphasize our *why*, we have the privilege of inviting new voices into the conversation. In this volume we will hear from theologians from the Philippines, England, Mozambique, Russia, and the United States who will help us start with *why*.

We are ushered into the conversation by Rev. Dr. Dick Eugenio, who is a professor of theology at Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary in Manila, Philippines. He helps us wrestle with why we should reflect God by way of understanding of the Trinity and how God's triune nature provides us with a greater understanding of holiness. Eventually Eugenio brings us into a powerful understanding of the refiner's fire, how impurities are finally removed and we are left clearly reflecting our holy God. The mission statement of the Church of the Nazarene is "to make Christlike disciples in the nations." This can only happen when we know our *why* because Christlikeness is the reflection of our holy, incarnate God.

Rev. Jacob Lett—professor of theology at MidAmerica Nazarene University in Olathe, Kansas, and doctoral student at Nazarene Theological College and the University of Manchester in the UK—helps us understand the need for and role of spiritual formation in the life of a believer. We begin to see holiness as the cooperation of humans with divine grace in the formation of holiness. Examining the letters of John Wesley, Lett helps us understand how Wesley instructed and disciplined those who were part of his Methodist societies. He wanted them to understand that they could be entirely sanctified through a simple act of faith and that they were to "expect to be made perfect and to expect it now." This cultivation of holiness is to be lived out in the life of the individual who practices spiritu-



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al disciplines. We are to fill our minds with Scripture and become so engaged in kingdom activity that we are transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2). This understanding of holiness should be foundational to all discipleship.

One of the features of the American Holiness Movement was the camp meeting and, added to that, revival services. While revivals and camp meetings were primarily about providing opportunities for people to come to know Christ, there was also something more. The idea of “revival” is to revive something that already had life. Maybe the American Holiness Movement understood that even those who have been following Christ already need to continually be encouraged to deepen their walk with Christ. One of the misconceptions of holiness has been that there is no need for spiritual growth after entire sanctification—that, somehow, we have to claim perfection in that moment and that any confession of infirmities after that moment might somehow mean we are not sanctified anymore. So why the need for revival? Because we have had an incomplete understanding of perfection. To be perfect is to be God’s holy people because that’s what we were created to be. That’s Jesus’s understanding of perfection: for something to fulfill the purpose for which it was created. We are to participate with God on the journey, drawing ever closer to Christ. The reality is that, from time to time, we may all need revival because life can get in the way of our spiritual growth and development.

Rev. Dr. Filimao Chambo—a general superintendent in the Church of the Nazarene and biblical scholar who is originally from Mozambique—reminds us of the need for revival. Here we find the voice of those who are preparing the way for the Lord, a call to return to the “fullness of life found in the covenantal relationship with God.” We are to be the voice that proclaims the hope that is found in the holiness of God, and Dr. Chambo issues us a call to revive our hearts to be refocused entirely upon God.

The condition of the heart influences our actions. Rev. Dr. Diane Leclerc—professor of historical theology at Northwest Nazarene

University in Nampa, Idaho—reminds us of the need for *orthokardia*, or a right condition of the heart. A right condition of the heart is vital if we are to have any discussion of a holiness ethic or Christian action. Leclerc reminds us that any activity in the life of the believer or in the church must be filled with the energy of love that flows from a right heart.

As the heart is made right before God, so we fall deeply in love with our Creator God. When that happens, we participate in fellowship with God, and suddenly our hearts begin to break for the things that break God's heart. Ultimately, Rev. Dr. Deirdre Brower Latz—principal and lecturer at Nazarene Theological College in Manchester, England—reminds us that holiness will always result in an outward focus. This reality has practical implications for the ways in which we live our lives. We must treat people with dignity, for that is holy. We respond to people's needs deeply and compassionately because we are in Christ. The result is a community of faith that is always looking outward, for opportunities to minister. This is the holiness message of Phineas Bresee, who reminded us to preach scriptural holiness and minister to the poor. For him, the two were inseparable, for he understood his *why*.

Rev. Danny Quanstrom, pastoring in Hastings, Michigan, helps us consider the reality of our current context. We are now in uncharted territory, a wilderness where life has become uncertain. The *what* and *how* that we learned just last year will no longer provide us with the necessary paradigms. In the wilderness, we must draw upon the holy practices of worship, which lead us into communion with the transcendent God. Somehow, in that place, we find comfort in that which is beyond our understanding. Worship becomes the place of practice where we learn how to love God and others through the love of Christ.

Finally, we are invited into a conversation with the past. Dr. Olga Druzhinina—director of Russian literature for the Church of the Nazarene and professor of theology—encourages us to mine from the past and allow it to influence our current understanding of

holiness. As the Church of the Nazarene continues to spread globally, we are encountering cultures with a long and rich heritage. There we find that there are intersections, or places of dialogue, with the past that make our understanding of holiness richer and fuller. We know that John Wesley spent time reading the early church fathers and that they informed his understanding of holiness. Today we are blessed by new theologians from within our holiness tradition who are able to draw from their own cultural heritage to bring additional colors to the palette of our theological canvas. Rev. Dr. Druzhinina invites us to see holiness within the context of Russia. She reminds us, however, that when we engage with a different culture, or with the past, we have to guard our holiness message. We can't allow it to be misinterpreted by culture because of potential false assumptions. At the same time, we have the opportunity to engage with the past and have theologically coherent discussions while not allowing ourselves to be limited by the traditions of the past. Finally, we are reminded of a vitally important truth, and that is that we must all find ways to start with *why*, and we must live a holy life within every culture we may intersect. We have to find appropriate ways to model holiness before the people to whom we may be sent.

So, why holiness? Because we have been entrusted as heirs of this transformational message that, when preached, has ignited the world. We are to be stewards of the beautiful gift that has been handed to a new generation. There are times when we need to talk about the *what* and the *how*, but may we never, ever forget our *why*.

1

WHY REFLECT GOD?

A Trinitarian Theology of Holiness

DICK O. EUGENIO



When I entered Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary as a first-year student in 2003, I was asked to stay in the newly assigned men's dormitory on campus. The building had been the women's dormitory the year before, which helped explain why, upon arriving, I found my room filled with posters of flowers, dogs, and other stereotypically feminine decor. I removed all of the existing decorations except one—a small poster of a dog and a cat hugging each other with a caption that read, “We are so different from each other that we have so much to share.”

Such a striking caption proved to be true over my next two years at the seminary, as I interacted with my international roommate and other peers and professors who were different from me. The wisdom of the poster, however, became much clearer to me when I was in Manchester, England, immersed in the doctrines of salvation and the Trinity for my doctoral studies. It struck me how the study of the triune being of God is beneficial to Christian practical spirituality and missions. John Wesley was right: “The knowledge of the Three-One God

is interwoven with all true Christian faith, with all vital religion.”¹ In particular, as a Christian who grew up in the Nazarene Church, I was so thrilled about the relationship between the doctrines of holiness and the Trinity. This excitement was further fueled by my conversations with my doctoral advisor, Dr. Thomas A. Noble. Since then, I have become convinced that a proper *theo*-logy of holiness needs to be grounded in the being of the *Theos*.² Our theology of holiness needs to be God-centered. The command “Be holy, for I am holy” (Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7; 1 Pet. 1:16, NRSV) spells in bold letters that holiness is not an abstract concept or a legal command; rather, it is the call to imitate and reflect the character of God.

The beauty of understanding holiness in light of the being of the triune God can be especially appreciated in the context of the local church, with all the dynamics of leadership, ministry involvement, and multifaceted relationships. In the body of Christ, the Christian life is not an individualistic journey of Christians who meet on Sundays solely to recharge and receive guidance through the pastor’s sermon in order to make progress in their private holiness quests. Holiness is also not exclusively a moral goal comprised of perfect outward performance based on what the pastor preaches for and against. Holiness is communal-relational. The church—as a body with all of her members—is called to be holy just as her Lord is holy. She is God’s “holy nation” (1 Pet. 2:9), a community of faith called together from darkness to light in order to participate in God’s divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4).

So how does the church as a body appropriate to herself the divine command to “be holy, for I am holy?” The command gives an obvious hint that God himself is holy. Although we can affirm that God’s holiness refers to God’s character and attributes, perhaps it

1. John Wesley, “On the Trinity,” in *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 2, *Sermons II*, 37–70, ed. Albert C. Outler (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985), 385.

2. For a more elaborate treatment of this topic, see the excellent work of T. A. Noble, *Holy Trinity: Holy People: The Theology of Christian Perfecting* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013).

is even better to say that God's holiness is God's nature or essence. The ensuing question, thus, is: What is the nature of God?

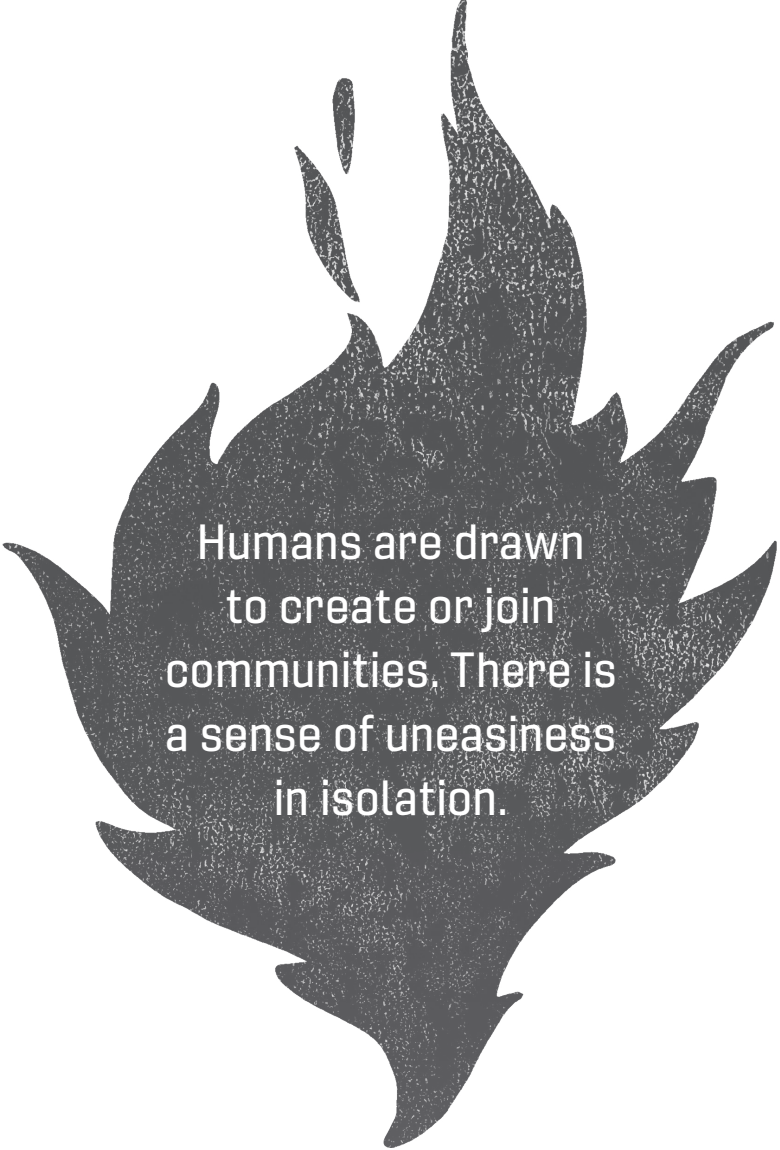
Community of Persons

"In the beginning was the Word [God]," John writes in his Gospel (1:1). Before time and space, God was. Because God is triune, therefore, the communion of Persons—the triune God—represents what eternal reality is. Leonardo Boff rightly asserts that "community is the deepest and most fundamental reality that exists."³ Since the 1950s, the revival of Trinitarian studies has corrected the mistaken perception of God as an aloof, poker-faced deity, advocated since the Middle Ages' insistence that God was the unmoved mover. Since God is triune, God is primarily a communion rather than a solitude. Borrowing from the Eastern Church, particularly the Cappadocian Fathers, many started to advocate for "social Trinitarianism," asserting the social dimension of God's being.⁴ When we think of God, we should think of the Three-in-One and One-in-Three.

The implications of our view of God on our understanding of earthly realities are staggering. For example, we may pause a bit and ask: if we are created in the image of God, who is a communion of Persons, are we not also called to be a communion of persons as human beings? In the movie *I, Robot*, Dr. Alfred Lanning asks a series of questions that can be posed regarding humans as well: "Why is it that, when robots are stored in an empty space, they will group

3. Leonardo Boff, *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*, trans. Phillip Berryman (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 4.

4. For those who strongly adhere to this idea, see Cornelius Plantinga Jr.'s "Social Trinity and Tritheism," 21–47, and David Brown's "Trinitarian Personhood and Individuality," 48–78, in Ronald Jay Feenstra, Cornelius Plantinga, eds., *Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement: Philosophical and Theological Essays* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989); see also Cornelius Plantinga Jr., "Gregory of Nyssa and the Social Analogy of the Trinity," in *The Thomist* 50, no. 3 (July 1986): 325–52; and Miroslav Volf, "'The Trinity Is Our Social Program': The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Shape of Social Engagement," *Modern Theology* 14, no. 3 (July 1998), 405–23.



Humans are drawn
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together rather than stand alone? How do we explain this behavior? Random segments of code? Or is it something more?” Humans are drawn to create or join communities. There is a sense of uneasiness in isolation. Our “bumping” with one another is not accidental but is an integral part of our creaturely codes. Holiness cannot be separated from our relational and community-seeking nature as human beings.⁵ We are called to be in relationships, vertically with God and horizontally with others.

Sin should be understood as the *corruption* of our relational nature and purpose. As Mildred Bangs Wynkoop writes, sin “is a rupture of fellowship with God.”⁶ Sin is the *negation* or absence of relationships. It is to be an individual. It is alienation caused by selfishness. Individualism is the direct opposite of being a person because it means “creating distance . . . [which] ultimately leads to death.”⁷ Humans are not like territorial animals who growl at others trying to enter their spaces. Instead, we are created in the image of the triune Persons who initiate and invite others into relationship. “God created man in his own image,” Karl Barth writes, “in correspondence with his own being and essence . . . God is in relationships, and so too is the man created by him. This is his divine likeness.”⁸ The life of holiness, therefore, means experiencing a change from an individualistic orientation to becoming a loving and embracing person,

5. Whether we care to admit it, there is a connection between the renewal of awareness of the doctrine of the Trinity in the 1950s and the relational emphasis on holiness in the succeeding years.

6. Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1972), 156.

7. Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 81. Colin E. Gunton offers a related comment: “Space is the problem: individualism is the view of the human person which holds that there is so much space between people that they can in no sense participate in each other’s being.” See Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 2nd ed. (London: T&T Clark, 1997), 109.

8. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation*, 3:2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1960), 324.

regardless of differences. It is to live in such a way that our being is not one of opposition but of communion.

The communion that God is, furthermore, is not inward-looking. We stand in awe of the fact that God created beings other than himself to be welcomed into the already perfect communion. God is not aloof and distant but a fellowshiping God, “free to go outside of himself, and to share in the life of his creatures and enable them to share in his own eternal life and love.”⁹ It is not enough to say that the Trinity is a community; it is “an open, inviting, uniting, and integrating community”¹⁰ that is open for all. In this light, the parallel between the triune communion and the church is striking. As the community God established on earth, the church mirrors God as a communing and inviting fellowship. The church is called not only to gather but also to reach out to the other. The embracing inclusiveness of God in creating even his opposite (i.e., Creator-creation, Infinite-finite) for the sake of communion is reflected in his command to love the other, even our enemies. This, for Jesus, is what it means to be perfect just as the heavenly Father is perfect (Matt. 5:48). The holiness and mission of the church are inseparable.

Unity in Diversity

The church’s calling to embrace the other reflects the unity-in-diversity of the Trinity. The three Persons of God are different from one another. Although they share the same essence, each Person is distinct from the others. For instance, in the work of salvation, only the incarnate Son was crucified and only the Holy Spirit fills humanity. Although they have different roles in salvation, they are united as one in purpose and will. While the Father is not the Son or

9. Thomas F. Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives: Toward Doctrinal Agreement* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 2.

10. Jürgen Moltmann, “Perichoresis: An Old Magic Word for a New Trinitarian Theology,” in M. Douglas Meeks, ed., *Trinity, Community, and Power: Mapping Trajectories in Wesleyan Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 117.

the Holy Spirit, the Son is not the Father or the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is not the Father or the Son, they are one in communion and action.

The many admonitions in the Bible to live in unity and harmony should be considered as the calling of the church to mirror the nature of God. The command to “be holy, for I am holy” can be translated as “be one, for I am One.” The close relationship between holiness and unity is spelled out well in Hebrews 12:14: “Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.” Holiness in this verse is not an individualistic moral quest; it is living in unity and harmony. Holiness is *shalom*. Holiness in the church means harmonious relationships. In fact, according to Elizabeth Achtemeier, righteousness refers primarily to “the fulfilment of the demands of a relationship, whether that relationship be with [humans] or with God.”¹¹ The holy, therefore, is the one who preserves the peace and wholeness of the community. Likewise, the wicked is the one who destroys the community and its harmony by sowing discordant seeds, gossiping, or just plain trouble-making. This is why blessed, indeed, are the peacemakers (Matt. 5:9) because they mediate conflicts and initiate restoration of broken relationships (see Acts 7:26; Eph. 4:3; James 3:18).

We must take note that we are called to “make every effort” to be united (see Rom. 14:19 and Eph. 4:3). Holiness is the gift of God, but it is also our responsibility. “If it is possible,” Paul writes, “as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone” (Rom. 12:18). Certainly, maintaining unity in a congregation with diverse cultural, educational, social, and economic demographics is not easy. The reality is that, while diversity is a beautiful blessing, it exposes the body of Christ to challenges. So what do holiness and unity look like in a church with diverse members? In the church, there are people who

11. Elizabeth R. Achtemeier, “Righteousness in the OT,” in George Arthur Buttrick, ed., *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible: An Illustrated Encyclopedia* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962).

are more educated, more economically well off, or more respected because of their age or achievements. But this reality does not need to be a source of disunity. The Casting Crowns song “City on the Hill” reminds us about what happens when we allow our differences to divide us. The reasons for the tragedy of the church, the song narrates, were that:

The poets thought the dancers were shallow
 And the soldiers thought the poets were weak
 And the elders saw the young ones as foolish
 And the rich man never heard the poor man speak

When our distinctions cause us to be proud of ourselves and we begin to look down on others, we destroy the one body of Christ. Of course, our holiness goal is not flat equality because this is an unrealistic dream. Ellen K. Wondra asserts that all earthly relationships are inescapably asymmetrical.¹² Our goal is not egalitarianism or communism; it is reciprocity.¹³ As the Casting Crowns song affirms, what we need is a culture of reciprocity in which we are all givers to and receivers of each other’s distinctiveness. We need each other, and we grow by relying on the diversity of each other’s spiritual gifts:

It is the rhythm of the dancers
 That gives the poets life
 It is the spirit of the poets
 That gives the soldiers strength to fight
 It is fire of the young ones
 It is the wisdom of the old
 It is the story of the poor man
 That’s needing to be told

12. Ellen K. Wondra, “Participating Persons: Reciprocity and Asymmetry,” *Anglican Theological Review* 86, no. 1 (Winter 2004), 57–73.

13. I have dealt with this idea more fully in “The Church at the Table,” *Didache* 13, no. 2 (January 2014), 1–10.

When we mutually reciprocate with one another in the church, we not only have harmony, but the church is also “built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:12b–13). Diversity in the church may be used for our own advantage. When we help each other, we keep the unity of the body, spur one another to growth, and ultimately mirror the triune God. This is holiness.

Self-emptying and Other-glorifying

“The Trinity,” for Thomas F. Torrance, “is by nature a communion of love in himself, who creates a community of personal reciprocity in love.”¹⁴ This relationship of reciprocity is characterized by a self-emptying mindset and an other-glorifying disposition. We are familiar with the self-emptying of Jesus Christ and his consequent exaltation (Phil. 2:6–11), but we often miss the fact that the other two Persons of the Trinity share the same experience. A macroscopic reading of the Bible reveals that, in the Old Testament, the Father empties himself by creating excitement about the coming of the Son (Isa. 7:14) and by emphasizing the anointing presence of the Holy Spirit (Num. 11:29; Joel 2:28–30); in the Gospels the incarnate Son empties himself and glorifies the Father (John 17:4) and emphasizes the coming of the Holy Spirit who will bring greater things (John 14:12, 16–17; 16:13–15; Acts 1:8); and the Holy Spirit empties himself by glorifying Jesus Christ (John 16:14–15) and highlighting the Father of the children of God (Rom. 8:15). The Persons of the Trinity empty themselves in order to bring glory to each other. They do not fight for supremacy or draw attention to themselves. Rather, in their works, each one hides to make the other two more visible.¹⁵

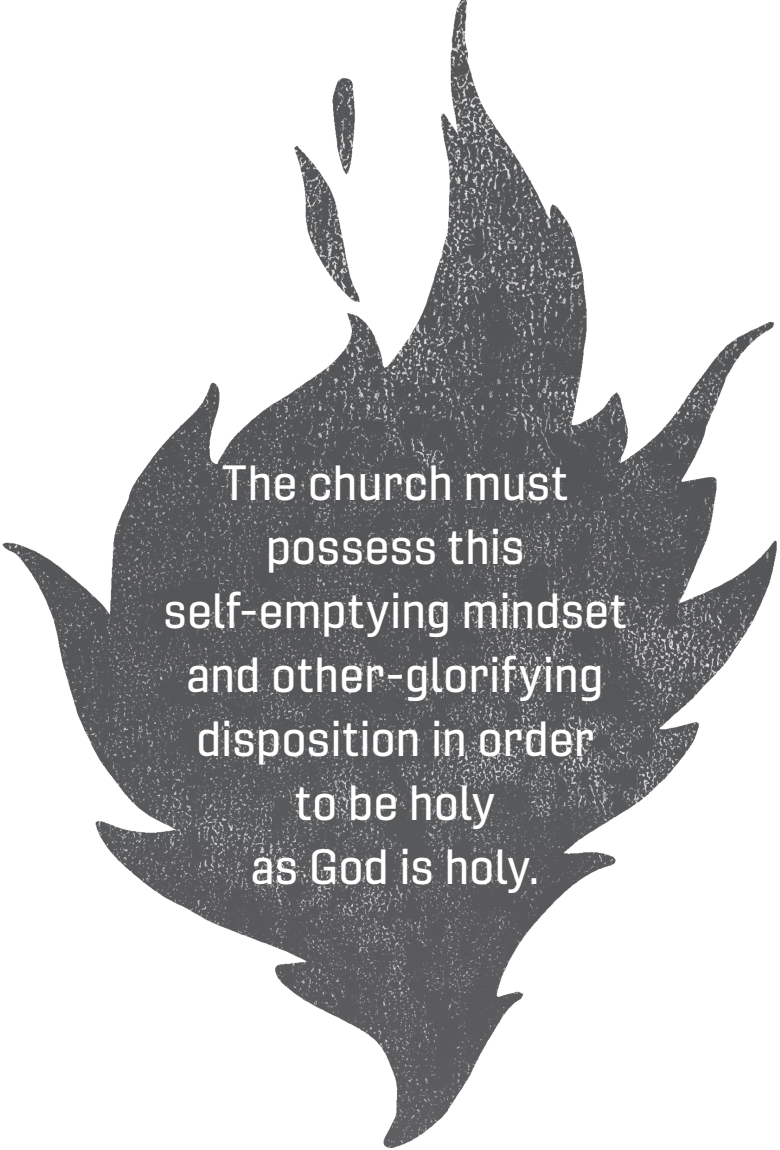
14. Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, 3.

15. The icon of the Trinity painted by Andrei Rublev in the fifteenth century perfectly portrays this remarkable Trinitarian relationship.

The church must possess this self-emptying mindset and other-glorifying disposition in order to be holy as God is holy. Paul was very clear to the Philippians: “In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus” (2:5), referring to Christ’s self-emptying (vv. 6–8). What does this look like in practice? Paul actually elaborates in verses 2 through 4, writing, “Then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.” These verses are admonitions to mirror God’s holy nature in our relationship with one another. Christians in the church are called to imitate the unity and harmony of the triune communion by possessing the same selflessness and other-centeredness of the Persons of the Trinity.

Paul talks about this again in Romans 12. We Nazarene preachers are often misled by the paragraphing of English translations like NKJV, NIV, and ESV. We unconsciously follow their decision to isolate verses 1 and 2 from the rest of the chapter as one distinct thought. We often preach holiness by using these two verses only, which is a big mistake that can lead to broad interpretations of what “renewing of your mind” means. If we read verses 2 and 3 together, the passage reads like this: “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.”

By reading these two verses together, Paul’s intention for the church is revealed in greater clarity. To be renewed in mind is not to think highly of ourselves. To be transformed entails a changing of the mind (Greek *metanoia*, which we often translate as “repentance”) not only about God but also about sin and salvation. It also



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means a change of mind about ourselves. The renewed human mind has the mindset of Christ (Phil. 2:5), which, as Paul writes in Philippians 2:6–8, is to think and act like Jesus Christ, “who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!” Thus, reading Romans 12 actually reminds us of Paul’s primary arguments in Philippians 2 that we should have the same humility and self-emptying mindset of Christ if we hope for one holy church. “The pattern of this world” in Romans 12:2 refers specifically to the world’s standards of self-fulfillment and self-worth. The world’s definition of power and honor should not have a place in the renewed minds of God’s kingdom people.

Continuing on and reading the succeeding verses of Romans 12 brings more clarity. Paul’s desire is for the members of the church to be holy and united, which can be achieved in two ways. First, Christians need to live self-emptying lives that are graced with humility. Second, we need to learn to live as children who encourage one another (see Acts 4:36). If the first movement is for us to think not too highly of *ourselves*, the second movement is for us to think more highly of *others*. The first movement is insufficient on its own, which is why Paul admonishes us to “honor one another above yourselves” (Rom. 12:10). The way the ESV translates verse 10 is even more forceful: “Outdo one another in showing honor.” The only sanctified competition at church is that of outdoing each other in acts of self-emptying and honoring others. Our task is not to destroy one other through gossiping and backstabbing but to build each other up (Eph. 4:29). In the church, the loser is the one who ends up receiving the greatest honor. The first shall be the last and the last shall be the first (Matt. 20:16; Mark 10:31; Luke 13:30). Furthermore, in order to “live in harmony with one another,” Paul makes a plea: “Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position” (Rom. 12:16).

Life in Love

Paul discusses these same concerns for unity, self-emptying, and other-honoring in 1 Corinthians. But here, he adds and highlights another important component: love. The church of Corinth, although already “sanctified in Christ Jesus” (1:2), is riddled with alarming moral and relational problems. Paul confronts these issues and attempts to solve them by emphasizing love. Shockingly, these problems represent the opposite of what he presents in this chapter as marks of holiness in the church. (There are several issues in the Corinthian church, but we will just deal with those related to our present discussion.) According to Paul, the church is torn apart by divisions (1:10–16; 3:1–9), and they are even taking each other to court (6:1–8). There is discrimination among them, particularly in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, when the rich separate themselves from the poor (11:17–22). Some feel superiority and spiritual pride over others because they believe they have received gifts from the Holy Spirit that display wonders (see chapters 12 and 14). They tolerate the sexual relations between son and mother in their midst, and even boast about it (5:1–5).

Because of all of these things, Paul calls them “worldly—mere infants in Christ” (3:1, 3). They divide themselves continuously through their mindset and actions. Instead of using the gifts of the Spirit to lift each other up, some of them are using them as the basis to affirm and exalt themselves as more spiritual than others. This is why Paul highlights that *pneumatikos* (“spiritual”) really means having received the Holy Spirit, an experience they all share (12:3, 13). The Corinthians basically model what the church should not be. Instead of living in harmony or unity, they are divided; instead of self-emptying, they shamelessly affirm themselves before others; instead of being other-honoring, they put others down.

So what is Paul’s solution to the Corinthian plague? The answer is 1 Corinthians 13, the “love chapter.” This chapter is one of the most taken-out-of-context passages in the Bible. It is read at weddings as if it were about romantic love. The truth is that the chapter must be read

in the context of church divisions. In the midst of all the difficulties in the church, Paul admonishes them to love. It begins with a series of rebukes directed toward people who practice their spiritual gifts to exalt themselves and without love of others: “If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing” (13:1–3).

Then the chapter proceeds to highlight how love should be practiced in the context of social relationships. With the divisions and relationship issues in the church in mind, verses 4–7 narrate what love means in the community that God established: “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.” These short statements admonish us to practice the unity, self-emptying, and other-honoring that should characterize the church as a community mirroring the communion of the triune God. At the very center of the church’s holiness is love—the love of God and the love that is shared by the members of the body. With the same intent and tone found in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 13, Paul also pleads to the Colossians: “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity” (3:12–14).

That the church should be filled with love is proper because God is a communion of love. “God is love,” John writes (1 John 4:8). Augustine famously referred to the Persons of the Trinity as Lover, Beloved, and Love. The church, therefore, can be considered “a created

counterpart or reflection of the Trinitarian Communion of Love.”¹⁶ The earthly community that is the church is the result of the work of God, whose being is love-in-communion. The church is not only God’s creation but also the extension of the perfection and fullness of love that God does not confine within his inner communion. God freely and lovingly moves outward toward others so that they may share the very communion of love, which is God’s own life and being. If creation is God’s loving act of incorporating the other to himself, reconciliation is God’s loving act of re-inviting the other back to union with himself. The church is horizontally a communion of love, a fellowship of reconciliation, a community of the redeemed, and the body whose unity is found outside itself.

Conclusions

A popular sermon illustration narrates a woman’s journey of discovery. She wanted to know what Malachi 3:2–3 meant: “He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.” She called a silversmith and made an appointment to watch him work. She observed how the silversmith was careful and meticulous in every procedure, and she sat silently watching most of the time. Finally, unable to restrain herself, she asked the silversmith, “How do you know when the silver is fully refined?”

He smiled at her and answered, “Oh, that’s easy—when I see my image in it.”

Our calling, both personally and corporately as a church, is to be “transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory” (2 Cor. 3:18). Like silver or gold being refined, such transformation that ultimately reflects God’s holiness may be slow and painful. There is so much we must surrender before God’s pleasing will can be accomplished in us. But at least we now know our goal. We already have a starting line and a vision of the end. God is the communion of love,

16. Thomas F. Torrance, *Reality and Scientific Theology* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985), 186–87.

with each of the Persons active in self-emptying and other-glorifying. Our purpose is to reflect this in all of our relationships. This is what it means to “participate in the divine nature” (2 Pet. 1:4). This is what it means to be godly, to be like Christ, and to live in the Spirit.

It is true that we are all very different from one another, but perhaps this is part of God’s design for us. In the church, everyone is unique. Each member of the body, including the leaders, possesses his or her own idiosyncrasies, preferences, and quirks. By God’s calling, we are all gathered to form the one body of Christ. Because of our differences, we are bound to have divergent opinions on almost everything. But amidst this seemingly chaotic crowd that can produce the craziest swirling vortex of entropy is our holy God, whose grace enables us to understand, tolerate, accept, and forgive in order to become a blessing to others. Only through our Spirit-empowered acts of humility and the prioritization of others may the church be characterized by unity and love. We are not random pieces of broken, colored glass; rather, together we are called to form a beautiful mosaic. We are all different colors and shapes, but we complement and augment each other. The church is one of God’s self-portraits in the world, and in his own wisdom, he chose to portray his holiness in a kaleidoscope using redeemed humanity as the privileged resource. Our prayer as a church is that we would do justice to God’s design for us.

The doctrine of holiness is the essence of all Wesleyan thought. It is the lens through which Scripture is read and from which theology emerges. In recent years, the nuances of this core doctrine have been scrutinized and hotly debated by a new generation of scholars and church leaders.

So, *Why Holiness?* Does this doctrine even matter anymore? Dr. Carla Sunberg and an international group of gifted theologians answer with a resounding yes. Together they explore how practices like intentional spiritual formation, engaging persons on the margins, and dialoguing with the past help us answer the question of why holiness remains essential to the life and health of the church.



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