

Holiness Associations

It is my contention that the rise of separate "Holiness denominations" was one of the main reasons for the virtual loss of active promotion of entire sanctification. No infrastructure made by mere men endures long. Intentions, no matter how worthy, go astray when they are applied by those whose hearts are yet carnal. There is a war on and the pure in heart and skillful in the arts of war are few:

"My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body." James 3:1-2

"Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh. Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom.

But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

I Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. James 3:10 to James 4:3

A "Holiness Church" that does not continue to bring the majority of its members into entire sanctification is guilty of fraud: the old bait and switch routine. Tell the people what they want to hear, and then do what you want to do to justify your paid position....

Of course, the promotion of Holiness required some degree of working together by the various sanctified ministries. Sadly, this was often done in spite of local churches, instead of with their help.

A local church has a call to be a help and a spiritual home for any soul whether saint or sinner. It is a place where all can meet and come to know each other and the elementary principles of the gospel.

But those in His Rest need to perform those same functions at a higher level among the pure in heart. They also need to exemplify holiness and the advantages of a pure heart to the membership of the churches, just as unsanctified Christians must reach out to the lost. These functions require the existence of a healthy "Holiness Association" such as our Holiness RoundTable at <http://www.holinessroundtable.com> is becoming.

The officials, programs, committees and funding of a church can never replace the supernaturally unified prayer of many bondservants with pure hearts in persistent prayer that will not quit until their shared desire is met. His Holy servants must work together (though separated by miles) to obtain miraculous results. There is just no other way that works. Earnest Seeker

"The church of this generation is vigorously pushing its work for conquest along different

lines, by organized effort; and more associations are, probably, existing in one branch of the church today (note: “today” is 1897) , than could have been found in the whole of Protestant Christendom seventy years ago. The majority of these associations are the result of individual enterprise and after successful trials, are adopted by the church since they provide the best helps to reach a desired end. This is true, largely, of her official organs, and such associations as the Sunday school and missionary societies. She has also either adopted or approved the Epworth League, the Christian Endeavor, the Young Men’s and Young Women’s Christian Associations, the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, aid societies and associations for the relief of the unfortunate among both men and beasts. Associations are so numerous that the average man must avail himself of the help afforded by the latest cyclopedia, to keep abreast of the advance along this line.

Some of these associations have already effected deleterious changes in the operations of the church, and resulted in worldly and popish (read: Pope –ish) practices, which threaten her spiritual life.

These have, practically, separated the young from the older members in church service, leaving the children and younger people to the care of inexperienced teachers, and excusing them from the greatly needed help of gospel preaching. The church prayer meeting is regarded as a secondary consideration and the class meeting well nigh forsaken.

These associations are so numerous and their demands have become such a tax on physical endurance, that the Sabbath, into whose hours the work is crowded, is, to many, the hardest day of the week, affording no time for reading the Holy Scriptures, secret prayer, and the quiet hour of introspection and communion with God, which brings a measure of rest to the soul and gives inspiration for the spiritual conflict which we are certain to meet.

Yet against these are raised no notes of alarm -no official voices of warning. But, when a few men and women who love God, combine in the study of the Scriptures that they may become holy, and “incite others to do so,” immediately an authoritative halt is suggested, lest this dangerous element which has entered the fold, distract the flock and devastate the heritage of God.

A number of earnest Christians, moved by a Divinely begotten thirst for holiness, unite in employing some minister who is able and willing to tell them how they may obtain the experience, and hearing, they comply with the conditions and at once enter into:

The land of rest from inbred sin,
The land of perfect holiness.

The rest they obtain is so glorious that they immediately decide, and rightly so, that the light must be diffused by preaching, testimony, holiness literature, and holy living; and lo, an association for the promotion of Christian holiness is organized!

“History repeats itself,” and the student of Methodist history will discover that, in all essential characteristics, the holiness movement in America is a repetition of the holiness movement in Europe, with its center at Oxford, a century ago. Let us recapitulate.

The movement in Europe originated in inquiries after holiness that met no sympathetic

response from the church. The leaders were all loyal members and ministers of the church. The church regarded and treated them as its most dangerous foes. The spiritual condition of the church was such that the holiness revival was a necessity to save her masses of communicants from infidelity and ruin. No special gift is needed to discern how perfectly each one of these conditions is reproduced in the present holiness movement in America; but as history demonstrates the fact that the English church was saved through the agency of the holiness movement, we thank God and go forward; trusting that some future historian will record that by the blessing of God, our labor was not in vain, but aided in effecting the same glorious result to the church in America.

In spite of the confederated opposition of the church and her ministers, earnest multitudes gathered around the Wesleys, in search of spiritual truth, and they were compelled, against all previous plans and prejudices, to make some provision for the oversight of those thus thrust upon their care by the hand of God. We, at this remote date, can understand that it would have been impossible for them to retain and care for the multitudes brought to pardon and purity by their ministry, without some organization. Hence, the societies and bands--not churches--of the Wesleyan revival.

The experience of a century teaches us that we do not need more churches, but more salvation in those now organized. Under great pressure, new churches have been organized in the name of holiness in some localities, but God has not prospered them, and they have hindered rather than advanced the work. On the other hand, the work of the association, when rightly directed, has widened and given perpetuity to holiness teaching. Do you say the church antagonizes associations? We respond, her history proves that she not only approves them, but advocates their continued increase. Her ministers and members by the ten thousand, hold vital relation to unnumbered associations, from those formed to advocate Christian missions, down through all the ramifications of secretism and worldly fraternities. Against these, she utters no word of protest, but through her members, pours out millions of treasure to sustain them. In each decade she increases the number of associations within her own limit, thereby testifying to her approval of them. She cannot, therefore, antagonize Holiness Associations, unless she be opposed to the object for which they are formed.

We are in the advocacy of holiness associations--National, International, State, County, and District, till every populated part of the earth is covered by them. Many reasons could be given, but the following must suffice:

1. We seek, through these associations, to diffuse throughout Christendom, the doctrine and experience of holiness as set forth in the Holy Scriptures and taught by John and Charles Wesley.

Surely, if their teaching was of God, it cannot be wrong for His people to combine in its advocacy.

We make a simple, doctrinal statement, embodying the Wesleyan theory of repentance, and an act of faith for pardon and regeneration; entire consecration, and an act of faith for complete sanctification, to be adopted by all.

This brings within the reach of the earnest multitudes into whose hearts God has put the longing for His wondrous grace, complete salvation, not as the result of human development, but as the free gift of his love.

2. These organizations are necessary, because of the almost universal opposition to the teaching of sanctification as an experience received by faith, subsequent to conversion. That such opposition is official and all-pervading in the Calvinistic churches, will hardly be questioned. That this teaching meets bitter antagonism in the strongholds of Arminianism, let those who have definitely and persistently preached it, testify!

In these Christian bodies are thousands who are under Divine conviction for this experience. Their inquiries meet rebuff, opposing theory, and continued discouragement, with rarely an encouraging word relating to their convictions. Through the association, such may be plainly taught and completely sanctified, as other thousands have been, and still retain their church relations. As the association is not denominational, the way is open for all the people of God to approach it with equal freedom. If all Methodist ministers were to preach holiness faithfully, it would be recognized as only a Methodist doctrine, and shunned because of sectarian prejudice. If all Methodism were true to the Wesleyan teaching, still one half of the Protestant world would have no practical knowledge of holiness; hence, the imperative duty of those who have this truth, to disseminate it.

3. The association is necessary to guard against error. Experience proves that the best available restraints are necessary to keep the majority of human beings from error. It is true of persons in the experience of holiness, that mentally, they could be led astray. In all moral reformation and scriptural revivals there have sprung up erratic and hare-brained persons, who abound in new discoveries, and visionary notions, and special revelations, which, in their own judgment, pre-eminently qualify them to lead. Such have, in every age, obstructed every special effort that God has prompted for the emancipation of the race: and there is no lack of them in the holiness movement. Against the satanic subtleties introduced by these persons, a multitude of innocent souls needs the defense and safe guards afforded by the confederated wisdom of the association. Without it, it would be impossible to prevent such agencies from distracting the work, introducing error, bringing in side issues, and leading to the ruin of souls.

4. Holiness Associations are needed to save the church from disruption. *War is inevitable between her spiritual and unspiritual elements*, and no amount of ecclesiastical authority can ever extinguish it. The association brings to all who desire it, the untrammelled truth of God relating to holiness, in conventions, camp-meetings and other assemblies that will least conflict with the regular services of the church. Membership in the association is conditioned upon the applicant being a member of some evangelical church, and all its members are advised against unnecessary change in church relation; and while it furnishes the teaching on holiness demanded, it returns the satisfied and happy pupil to his church home, with new light and a greater measure of love, to spread the holy fire among his brethren. The Association discourages withdrawing from the church because of existing persecutions; and encourages its members to retain their church relations, and diffuse their light among God's people where it is needed. This course is in contrast with the teaching of certain churches that insist that, in order to be holy, you must "leave your church, and join us." The existence of an intelligent and organized body of holiness people, including members from all the churches, is the best safeguard against church proselytism in the name of holiness. In view of the two antagonistic elements existing in all great Christian bodies, the Holiness Association is, in

our judgment, a necessity as the arbiter of peace and the conservator of church unity.

5. Holiness Associations are a providential demand. No part of the holiness movement is the result of human foresight. Nobody planned any part of it; but each of its leading features has resulted, largely, from the pressure of an unseen hand. The best evangelists are in the field over their own protest, after much delay and hesitation, having been thrust out to meet the demands of God's hungry flock. Their number has been multiplied beyond all expectation and against much opposition.

Corresponding with this increase in the number of evangelists, are the enlarged multitudes that demand their ministry, and the association is the natural and necessary result.

6. The Association is the least objectionable provisional plan for the care of those thus providentially thrown upon us.

Our brethren may not yet be aware of the fact, but thousands of the people look to the holiness evangelists and ministers for guidance in the things of God. The obligation to care for them has not been sought, but it cannot be shaken off without displeasure to God and the loss of souls. As previously stated, the idea of organizing a new church is repugnant to us, for we clearly see that the crying need is not more churches, *but more holiness in those now organized*. Out of the holiness movement will never come a new church, unless compelled by the action of those now existing. Multitudes come to us to learn how they may obtain complete sanctification. What shall we say to them, or where shall we send them? Shall we mock their hunger of soul by telling them there is no such experience? Shall we send them on through years of vain and wearying effort, to reach by development, an experience that we know can be obtained only by an act of faith, as the gift of God? Shall we encourage them to repeat the failures of their past lives by efforts to reach cleansing by growth -or bring them at once to Christ, to be sanctified wholly? After being led into the state of entire sanctification by faith in Jesus' cleansing blood, they very naturally seek instruction as to the life in holiness from those whose ministry brought them into its possession. Again and again they are instructed to go to their home churches, put themselves under the care of their pastors, witness a good confession in the presence of their brethren and lead a holy life. In compliance with this almost universal order, they go, but return declaring that their testimony is not received, their experience denied, and their profession esteemed a dangerous element by both their pastors and their brethren in the church.

Many of these are the very salt of the earth and the cream of the churches; and their number is daily increasing. Such must have superhuman wisdom and grace beyond measure, if, unaided by right teaching, they are not led into error by either defending their new experience or casting away their confidence under this pressure. To save them and the churches to which they belong, and to spread this holy light, the Holiness Association is the least offensive, most potent and inexpensive agency found among the organizations of men. This is now an offence to some of God's dear servants, but as the years go by, the offence will cease; and when a century has fled, and its harvests have been gathered, history will declare that the Holiness Association was of God.

The above passages were adapted from: THE INHERITANCE RESTORED By Milton Lorenzo (M. L.) Haney (1897)

Yes, History does so declare, but where are these Holiness Associations of 1897? Well, I don't have all the answers, but we know that "Holiness Churches" made up of those that "came out" from other churches multiplied across the land by promising Holiness to their members. The trouble is, that is just not how it works, so the churches were never able to deliver on their promise. Playing church never did sanctify anybody. God must do the saving. Where is God? He is among the pure in heart. Where are they? They are wherever the wind of the Spirit takes them. You cannot bottle and franchise them. Who do they preach to? They preach to those are earnestly seeking His best wherever they may be found...

Just as the saved must be a lighthouse of salvation before the lost, so must those in His Rest stand before the church and the world as beacons of a more complete hope made flesh. Since the newly saved and the newly sanctified arrive lacking adequate knowledge and experience to do their respective tasks, others with greater knowledge and experience must help equip them –or watch them make the same tired mistakes over again. When we are born again, we are born not only as individuals, but also as members. Earnest Seeker

<http://www.EnterHisRest.org>