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Chapman

WHAT WE EXPECT OF OUR SEMINARY

After one of his notable battles, Napoleon had a special commemorative coin minted for gifts to his veterans. At the top on the front of the coin was the name of the battle, and at the bottom were the words, "I was there." And those of us who are here tonight for this Convocation and formal opening of the Nazarene Theological Seminary will always have reason to say in times to come, "I was there." For this is indeed a memorable occasion. It marks a distinctly new epoch in the history of the Church of the Nazarene. In time to come it may be we shall find such expressions, "Before the Seminary was founded," and "After the founding of the Seminary."

This institution is not an after thought, not even a recent thought. Those familiar with the history of education in the Church of the Nazarene and in the Holiness Movement of which our church is a part, will bear witness that from the beginning the purpose - the most frequently expressed purpose in the founding and fostering of our schools of whatever type and grade - was that of preparing men and women for the ministry and for foreign missionary work. And in all the schools the theological department was the one most frequently

mentioned, and the training of leaders was the ground of appeal for support from our people.

In the beginning it was not clear what type of school was best suited to our purpose. And in order that we might cover the ground, whatever the need might be, we founded "The Texas Holiness University," "The Central Holiness University," "The Illinois Holiness University," "The Southwest Missouri Holiness University," and "The Nazarene University" of Pasadena. But the idea that we could develop and maintain schools that would do creditable work in the grammar school, the high school, the College of Liberal Arts and the various professional schools had to be abandoned. And in keeping with this change in concept, the names of such schools as were able to weather the storms were also changed. The scope of work undertaken was even and anon curtailed both by the leaving off of grammar and high school branches and by the elimination of professional schools. It is now quite well established that the school best adapted to our purpose as a church is the college, and all the institutions of our church are pretty well on the road to preparing for creditable work within this scope.

The last point to be established by means of our experiments was what to do about the special training of

our ministers. For a time it was believed that we might be able to do what is required by developing seminaries in connection with our various colleges. To this end the schools developed theological faculties and appealed to our people to help in the matter of libraries and endowments. But it became evident that this plan was not practical from either the economical or efficiency approach. Even the minimum equipment for such work is too great a task for a college to undertake, and the presence of a graduate school on a campus with the usual college community was found to be a problem too great to permit of practical solution. Our colleges have their task well outlined for them, and they are doing a creditable job in the effort to make good our expectations of them. And there is no group in the church that is more enthusiastic in their support of our college program than this group that has met here tonight. We are dependent on our colleges, even as all our people are, and in a more critical sense than the most. If our colleges do well, we shall have need of the Seminary. If they do not do well, the Seminary will perish for want of material.

But for a number of years, dating back at least to the General Assembly of 1932, there has been talk of a Nazarene Theological Seminary. And the interest in such an institution increased from year to year, until

at last a Commission was appointed to draft plans and make recommendations. And the General Assembly of 1944 adopted the idea of a Seminary, elected trustees, and set in motion forces which have brought about the organization of a faculty and administration. A catalogue of courses has been published, the classes have been set up, and here we are in the midst of the formal Convocation and formal opening of the Nazarene Theological Seminary. "Hitherto the Lord hath helped us." "Here we raise our Ebenezer, hither by Thy help we've come."

There are of course those who hold to doubts concerning the usefulness of the Seminary. And we all admit that the course we have chosen is fraught with many possible pitfalls and dangers. Whatever is capable of much good is pregnant with potential danger. Fire is a wonderful servant, but a destructive master. But we would not abolish fire. Rather we would control it. Likewise, education is potential power-destructive if undirected, constructive if driven by proper motive.

Theology is the queen of the sciences. It is even the foundation of all properly organized knowledge. In its various divisions, as Theology proper, Anthropology, Christology, Soteriology, Eschatology and Ecclesiology it is as challenging to the understanding of men as

Biology, Physics, Chemistry or Astronomy. To be properly taught it makes the same demands upon both pupil and teacher that are made in the pursuit of any branch of human knowledge. The idea that theology comes by revelation is within itself an error, and deserves to be classed in the category of fanaticism, since it utilizes the thought of results without due attention to adequate causes. The revelation of God to the world in the Bible is in line with the revelation of God in nature. That is to say, the Bible contains the raw material for theology just as the forest contains the raw material for botany. But the classification and logical arrangements of the facts are subject to the laws of pedagogy. The only question at all is whether it is useful for those who are set to teach religion should know their subject matter in correct form or not. To be afraid of truth lest it upset our theories is to plead guilty to intellectual suspension. If there is any thing inconsistent in any thing we believe, we should be glad to have that inconsistency pointed out. What we are after is truth, not some cultish interpretation of it.

From the beginning, the preservation and propagation of Christianity have depended upon three factors or means. These are: miracles, influence through example, and

doctrine. In the first section of the era, miracles had the principle sway. We need not enlarge upon what seems to us to be the reason for this. But it might be useful to summarize in the statement that miracles make their appeal to the senses of men, and are especially adapted to an age when there was for want of time but little knowledge of the Christian tenets. Influence through example is of course timeless, and has been and now is a major means for making Christ known. But both miracles and influence are dependent upon doctrine for their effectiveness. In fact, miracles are not miracles unless they are wrought to prove some message as divinely given or some messenger as divinely sent. Otherwise they are simply wonders to no great purpose. Likewise influence through example can point men to Christ only when accompanied by the Christian testimony and some elementary doctrine relating to God and the Christian experience with God. The conclusion, therefore, is that historically, currently and prophetically the major means for preserving and promoting Christianity in the earth is that of doctrine. The Great Commission was couched in terms agreeable to this thesis in that it said, "Go ye and teach all nations." The content of the Christian message is basis for the force of the

message. It does make a difference what men believe, and it is important that they know what they believe and why they believe it. It is not compliment to one for him to be convinced on insufficient evidence, even as it is blameworthy for him to doubt when the proof is good. Both superstition and skepticism are unscientific and irreligious. We are to believe, but we are to believe because the evidence is convincing. We are not only to believe that we may know, we are also to know that we may believe. It is not easy for us to judge the quality of faith, but surely we are justified in concluding that faith based upon sound examination of the evidences is better than faith based upon assumptions, even though in the end those assumptions should be found to be in line with truth. The man who knows and knows that he knows must surely be better than the man who does not know or even than the man who knows but does not know that he knows.

The creed of the Church of the Nazarene is not a cult. Or if it is so in any particular, we are not aware of it. We, like John Wesley, do not consider ourselves inventors of any essential truth. If we have any thing distinctive in the matter of tenets of faith, we acknowledge only that we are discoverers. We sincerely believe that

what we believe and teach was believed and taught by Jesus of Nazareth, Paul of Tarsus, Peter of Galilee and John of Ephesus, as well as by Polycarp, Origin, Augustine, Justin Martyr, John Huss, Savanarola, Martin Luther, Madam Guyon, John Calvin, George Fox, John Bunyon, John Wesley, Adam Clarke, General Booth, Dr. Bresee and H. Orton Wiley in such various terminology as suited the times, but always with a content agreeable to the original thesis. We glory in the apostolic succession of our faith, and scruple not to say "What is true is not new, and what is new is not true" in the things pertaining to the Christian experience and life. We have nothing to fear from epistemology. We stand upon the rock of historic orthodoxy. All those who have given their efforts to dislodging that rock have wasted their time. The rock still stands, and behind it and beneath it is the Rock of Ages. "On Christ the solid Rock I stand, All other ground is sinking sand."

We well say in the Manual of our church that "the doctrines upon which the Church rests are brief;" for there is not a large bulk in that irreducible creed that one must hold in order to exercise saving faith in Christ. But this irreducible minimum is the only boundary there is, for the heights and depths and lengths of the knowledge of God are infinite, even as are the measurements of grace.

And if there is any employment to which a mortal man can give his time that can outrank an effort to apprehend his God, I cannot think what it might be.

The emphatic thesis in the Nazarene creed, that of entire sanctification as a work of grace wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit subsequent to regeneration, is by no means a detached affair. It is involved in every thesis of the orthodox creed. It is involved in the will of God, "This is the will of God even your sanctification," in the work of Christ, "Jesus also that He might sanctify the people with His own blood suffered without the gate," and in the ministry of the Holy Spirit, "That the offering up of the gentiles may be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost." Our emphatic thesis is inwrought in the structure of the whole plan of salvation, and occupies, along with the other tenets of the creed, the position of a keystone in the arch of revealed truth.

Far from being an isolated or detached thesis, the doctrine of Christian holiness is central to the commands, promises, prayers, exhortations, statements and narratives of the Bible. In the words of Bishop Foster, "It breathes in the prophecy, thunders in the law, murmurs in the narrative, whispers in the promises, supplicates in the prayers, resounds in the songs, sparkles in the poetry,

shines in the types, glows in the imagery, and burns in the spirit of the whole scheme, from its alpha to its omega - its beginning to its end. Holiness! Holiness needed! Holiness required! Holiness offered! Holiness attainable! Holiness a present duty, present privilege, a present enjoyment, is the progress and completeness of its wonderful theme! It is the truth glowing all over and voicing all through revelation; singing and shouting in all its history, and biography, and poetry, and prophecy, and precept, and promise, and prayer; the great central truth of the system. The truth to elucidate which the system exists. If God has spoken at all it is to aid men to be holy."

The doctrine of holiness is like the hub of the wheel in Bible truth, and as such one cannot dispose of it without materially affecting the whole wheel. Toward this thesis all doctrines of Soteriology bend, and in the elucidation of this thesis all revealed truth must be examined. No group in all the world has more reason to give attention to doctrine than we do, for it is by reason of the clarity of our doctrine that we have been able to help more people attain to the fullness of the blessing of the gospel than many others have been able to do.

Doctrine is not a goal within itself. The goal is God and right relations to Him and state before Him. But doctrine is like a highway that leads to the goal. It may be possible for some to reach the goal by way of by-paths, but more will reach it if the road is well-marked. If any think it is easy to give directions that others can follow, then it must be that he has not done a great deal of cross country traveling. My own experience is that there are few that can give intelligent directions, even though they have been over the road many times themselves. The inclination is simply to say, "Go straight ahead. You can't miss it." But here again, I have found that there is usually only one right road and many by-roads, and that it is frequently easy to lose the way. Intelligent direction, must be clear direction. And men who are muddied in their thoughts can scarcely be clear in their language. The first requisite to plain speaking is clear thinking.

The second phase or factor in the preservation and promotion of the gospel is forcefulness. Concerning this, we are sure that the first requisite is the unction of the Spirit. And we mention this first, lest a later putting of it might seem to put it in the class with other requisites. People have not heard the gospel until

they have heard it preached by men anointed by the Holy Ghost. Until the unction of the Spirit is realized, even truth is just abstract truth, and it is only vital truth - truth on fire - that moves the hearts and consciences of men. In the modern church, as in the church of the Apostolic period, the preacher is not prepared to depart from Jerusalem on his world reaching preaching mission until he has been baptized with the Holy Ghost and fire. The symbols of Pentecost are fire for purity, wind for unction, and tongues for proclamation. And with this definition in mind, we boldly say, We need and want Pentecostal preachers in the Church of the Nazarene. We want fire-crowned men. Men of spiritual unction and fervor. Pure-hearted men. Men who know and feel in their hearts the realities of the things they preach. Glory-crowned men. Men who live in the glow of that light that never shined on land or sea, but only in the heart of the sanctified and Spirit-filled Christian. We need preachers of this type. We want, and under the blessings of the eternal God, we shall have them. Such men are not sports or accidents. They are the product of a sanctified and Spirit-filled church. They are streams from a parent river which has its sources in the high hills of holiness. So when we say we shall have

this type of preachers, we mean that we propose to pay the price requisite for the production of such a species.

But there is also a human phase to this matter of force. Preachers need to know the rules of logical thinking and logical arrangement of the content of the Christian message. They need to know the language of men, as well as the Word of God. They need to be trained in the detection and direction of the laws of mind - their own minds and the minds of others. They need to know the value and weight of words. They need to be trained as speakers and writers. They need to be Ambassadors in that they are acceptable to both God and the Church - sent by the one and to the other.

Good preaching must be both convincing and forceful. It must be convincing because of its content, and forceful because of its art. There is, in the church and in the ministry, as in other institutions and callings, a tendency to compensate to the disadvantage of the strong element. Let us take ourselves as the example: we sincerely believe we have the best interpretation of the gospel. But often we expect that the excellence of the gospel shall nullify or even utilize poor presentation. We therefore have the spectacle of a good gospel being preached by poor preachers. If we are minded to disparage

the content of the message some others have to give, we are often forced to confess that they deliver it in a manner worthy of a better content. Now what we want is a preacher whose art, as well as his message is good. We want good preachers to preach our good gospel that none of our advantage shall be lost. I could even wish that our preachers might be the best preachers in the land, that they might grace the peerless gospel that has been given to them to deliver. Many a meal of good content has been spoiled by poor serving. And this is as true of the pulpit as of the dining room.

This Seminary is a specialized school. It is really built, speaking from the educational approach, upon our colleges, for the matriculants are required to be college graduates. Those who come here have already been going to school on the average of sixteen years. They have supported their profession of love for learning with extended application, and are here through no compulsion save their own inner urge. It is the obligation of any church to provide for the expert training of its ministers, and the Seminary is the Nazarene answer to this obligation for us. But we do not call people to our ministry. We believe this is a function that God has kept in His own power. And the

requirements we make for initiation into the ministry as represented by our Manual Course of Study are the minimum requirements. The students who come here come because they are stirred by the ideal of becoming not only ministers of Jesus Christ, but GOOD ministers of Jesus Christ. We feel that the Church has met a heavy obligation by providing the Seminary, and we propose that the church will support and strengthen the institution in days to come from its sense of obligation both to its ministry and to its people. The idea that only educated people need a trained ministry is a false one. The fact is that people with few units of comparison require more help in the task of understanding than those of better advantage. It is easier to preach effectively to a college community than to a city mission group or to a crowd of teen agers. This institution is not set to develop a high hat group. We expect that men and women from this place shall go to the most neglected pastorates, to home missionary projects, and to the most challenging tasks presented by our Foreign Missionary enterprise. The acquisition of true knowledge and efficiency ministers to humility. Only the shallow are proud.

We want better preachers. Even though this saying

may reflect upon us all, we repeat it with emphasis - We want better preachers. We are reminded of an experience related by the President of The Southwestern Methodist University at Dallas, Texas. For a good many years a woman had been sending an annual offering for the support of the Theological department. Then when the president found out that she was a poor woman, and that her gift represented sacrifice, he returned her offering one year, accompanying it with a letter in which he commended the woman for her faithful support of the work, but also telling her that he felt she had done her share, and that she should use the money for her own added comfort and let others bear the load. But the good woman sent the money the second time, and accompanied it with a letter in which she said, "As I understand it, this money is to be used in an attempt to give us better preachers, and since our present pastor came to us I have become more interested in producing better preachers than I have ever been before." That is the way the Nazarenes feel. We want better preachers, and we have founded a Seminary in the effort to provide better preachers. May Heaven grant that we shall not be disappointed.

We have a big task, and we want calibered preachers to lead us on in this task. If America calls for men to

match her mountains, calls for men to match her plains, and asks for men with empires in their brains, surely the church has a right to call for men to do her big task. We want preachers who are saved and sanctified, pure in heart and consistent and loyal in conduct. We want preachers who bear heavy burdens for the salvation of men, and who count not their lives dear unto themselves. We want preachers who can be all things to all men that they may by all means win some. We want preachers who are willing to expend the time and effort required to become possessors of the content of our glorious gospel, and who are willing to lay themselves out to learn the preaching art in its best and age-long approved form. We want preachers who can preach. Preachers who will pray. Preachers who obey God, regardless of the consequence. Preachers who are true to the church and ready to bury themselves that she may expand and prosper. We want cultured preachers whose personalities shall not hinder them in being channels for the gospel. We want preachers who can bring heaven and earth together in revivals of old-time religion. We want preachers who can walk with kings without losing the common touch. We want preachers who can be simple enough for the understanding of the children and spiritual enough to minister successfully

to our old people. We want preachers who can measure arms with men in professional and business life, and who can yet measure out the simple gospel to the denizen of the slums. We know well what we want. We have founded this Seminary in the hope that it will help us secure the type and caliber of preachers called for. We do not expect to find these men ready-made. We know we shall have to make them, under God. We know that some wheat is spoiled in the milling, and we shall not be entirely discouraged if some come out of this Seminary book worms and misfits. But we look to the average result. We expect that the men and women who come here will be better preachers than they would have been if they had not come. And a little improvement on the part of many will justify our efforts. From this institution in days to come will come, as we believe, sound, efficient men and women of God to extend the borders of our Zion, to help our church stay orthodox and spiritual, to contribute to our literature, and to give tone and standing to our church everywhere. We are not much interested in publicity and promise just now. Our plan calls for worth and service. Tomorrow will be early enough to boast. Today we are just putting the harness on.

We have given to Dr. Benner and his co-laborers

the highest possible responsibility. Unusually we can speak also of honor. But this is a quality work. It is of necessity without ostentation. It is like the expert's work in the laboratory which not many see and few praise. But we assure Dr. Benner and his staff of our love and confidence and cooperation, and above all, of our sincere prayers. And may the God of the past be our God in days to come and lead us on to the accomplishment of His high purpose in you of the Seminary, and in us who are your beneficiaries.

And now, Dr. Benner, we come tonight to bestow upon you our blessing, even as we hand over to you heavy responsibilities. We rejoice that you have been chosen for this task. It is fitting that one who does this work should have been cradled in a Nazarene home by devout Nazarene parents, that he should have been educated in our colleges and deeply drilled in our traditions, that he should have "come up through the ranks" as a teacher and minister in our church, that he should have himself served in responsible pastorates and other places of leadership, and that he should have been chosen by the unanimous vote of the Board of General Superintendents and the members of the Seminary trustees. It is fitting that he should have proved himself by both testimony and conduct over a period of years, so that we are not taking the chance those take who lay hands suddenly on a man. You have our confidence, not as a matter of hope, but as a matter of proven fidelity.

And now to the solemn responsibilities which we are asking you to assume as president of our Seminary. Among other things, they involve:

1. A prayerful and consistent walk with God.

If all our ministers are required to be examples in prayer, you more who are to become this day

father and example to those who come here to study and to absorb.

2. Unblamable Christian spirit and conduct in all the affairs of your life with and before others. "Sincere and without rebuke," that is the standard for the president of our Seminary.

3. Loyalty to God and the Church which fosters the Seminary. You are not training preachers whom you will expect to direct during their active years, and you must show them by example as well as by precept that cooperation is purchased by cooperation, for these in your care will imbibe your spirit.

4. Wisdom and grace in the selection of your staff always, for your recommendations will be the principle deciding factors. Bring here only men and women whom students can safely follow in matters of thought and conduct.

5. You must be aggressive in procuring the material assets required, but take care not to plunge us into debt or to set up a regime that is more expensive than our resources permit or our purposes require.

6. You must keep in constant touch with the

Seminary with one hand, and with the needs of the church with the other. And always remember that the Seminary is the creature of the church, and not the church the creature of the Seminary. We must not have here any man or any method that is not based first of all upon the glory of God and the good of the church. Questions like Academic freedom do not enter in. Your task is to produce what the church wants, and I know you know that.

And now, I, James B. Chapman, General Superintendent of the Church of the Nazarene, acting upon the authority of the Board of Trustees of the Seminary, do now and hereby install you, Hugh C. Benner, as President of the Nazarene Theological Seminary, and bestow upon you all the rights, privileges and honors, as well as hand over to you the responsibilities, involved in this office.

And now will the members of the staff come here and join Dr. Benner while the prayer of consecration and dedication is offered.