

**An Address
to Nazarene College Presidents**

**by
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In his lead editorial in the November 2 issue of Christianity Today Editor Kenneth Kanzler recollects that Christian colleges have confounded the predictions of gloom and doom about the decade of the 70s. Not only have they survived, but enrollment has increased ahead of the national average and the ink on the books has changed from red to gray to black.

This brought back memories of Bethany's crisis 7½ years ago which left her perilously close to bankruptcy. Today she is in the strongest financial condition in her history. Our two new colleges have not only survived their first decade but are in an excellent fiscal position and are leading the way in enrollment increases. The Bible college is no longer on probation, having justified its existence as a non-baccalaureate professional training institution for ministers.

But certainly this must not lull us into a false security about the 80s. The battle for survival may wax even hotter. I appreciate your alerting your constituents at district assemblies to the economic and enrollment facts of life for the immediate future. We must be honest and objective at this point. It is our hope and prayer that all of our schools will survive the coming decade. But confidentially, the Board of General Superintendents has requested Dr. Mark Moore to make a feasibility study and draw up a contingency plan for Nazarene higher education if worse should come to worst. We are certainly not broadcasting this information, but it is only the part of wisdom to have a back-up plan in case of emergency. However, on the positive side, there is already strong evidence that there are enough deferred giving dollars in Nazarene pockets to bridge the growing gap between maximum tuition, and church budget levels and the necessary minimum operational and capital financial needs of our schools. Your shared investment in the work of our

stewardship field men is greatly appreciated and will yield an eventual, if not immediate, dividend. And there are enough potential Nazarene students to adequately stock the enrollment pool if we make full use of our recruiting opportunities.

But institutional survival, per se, must not be our final goal. Only as it fulfills its institutional purpose does the Nazarene college merit survival. This means more than just being an evangelical Christian college. It involves keeping faith with those who sacrificially founded it as a Christian holiness college. The church will not (and should not) pay the price for maintaining institutions of higher education unless they are openly and unashamedly committed to this purpose.

It is the strong consensus of the Board of General Superintendents that the next five years may very well be the most determinative quinquennium in our denomination's history. If "Celebrating Christian Holiness" does not become a revitalized obsession with Nazarenes at every level of church life, there is real question whether we will still be in business as a distinctively Wesleyan church by the time the twenty-first century dawns. And if we betray our trust to the truth of full salvation, we have no real reason to survive!

I need not remind you that as presidents of our educational institutions you will play a key role in the shaping of our denominational destiny in this crucial period. Allow me to make a few practical observations in this regard.

- 1) Will you personally take responsibility for making the quinquennial theme "Celebrating Christian Holiness" the dominant thematic emphasis on your campus for the next five years? If the specific commitment to Christian holiness higher education does not have "up front" prominence in your statement of institutional purpose, will you have your board

of control adopt a revised statement which will put the spotlight on it? Since the effective date for each year's emphasis is September 1, it would be most appropriate if you would launch the theme with a presidential chapel address early next fall.

2) The first year's thrust -- "The Year of the Minister"

(Celebrating the Holiness Ministry) -- lends itself beautifully

to a high-profile focus on the traditional role of Nazarene

colleges in ministerial training. It would be appropriate for the religion

faculty to do a self-study (perhaps with input by perceptive ministers

from the zone) on the effectiveness of their preparation of future holiness

preachers. I have been troubled recently by the report that in a fall

revival effort on one of our campuses the students gave strong support

but some members of the religion faculty were conspicuous by their

lack of both interest and attendance. The Manual clearly states that

all Nazarene college faculty members should be "in full accord with

the doctrine of, and in the experience of, entire sanctification and . . .

in full agreement and sympathy with the Bible doctrines and usages

held by the Church of the Nazarene" Paragraph 348.1. Those entrusted

with the training of our ministers should certainly be exemplars of

this qualification. Earned doctorates are important, of course. But

they must not be prioritized ahead of spiritual and ecclesiastical credentials.

The General Superintendent advisor to your institution will be available

to visit your campus this year to implement the theme. We welcome

this exposure and will do our best to cooperate with your wishes in

this regard. And, of course, your assistance with the staging of

PALCON II in the summer of 1981 is absolutely essential.

3) The succeeding annual emphases will also lend themselves to adaptation and implementation.

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| 1981-1982 | The Year of the Layman "Celebrating Holiness Adult Ministries" |
| 1982-1983 | The Year of the Young "Celebrating Holiness Youth Ministries" |
| 1983-1984 | The Year of Diamond Jubilee "Celebrating Our Holiness Heritage" |
| 1984-1985 | The Year of Church Growth "Celebrating Holiness Evangelism" |

I recently received (as no doubt all of you did) a prepublication copy of Jeremy Rifkin's book The Emerging Order -- God in the Age of Scarcity. Granted that he has probably overdrawn the picture for effect, the predictions concerning America's economic future are sobering if not downright frightening. The depletion of our natural resources coupled with the inevitable de-emphasis of technological and scientific advancement would seem to indicate that our society is headed for a dramatic change of life-style. This bad news is followed by rather well documented good news about the climate for a genuine evangelical revival.

If all this be true, as it well may be, the challenge to Nazarene colleges was never greater. What could be more relevant in a decade when young people will be searching for a dynamic alternative to materialism than liberal arts education from a Christian perspective? And what biblical truth can relate more practically to youth in quest of a cause than Christian holiness with its call to total commitment to Christ with the resultant wholeness of perfect love and the purity and power of the Spirit's fullness?

I am firmly convinced that the decade of the 80s may well constitute
holiness higher education's finest hour. God being our helper, may we
maximize the opportunities which will be ours.