

## FOREWORD

*Gregg A. Chenoweth*

**P**ull up to the kitchen table. Let me introduce you. You don't know each other, but should. It's not because those across this table are famous. They have no posse, no brand. You won't see them on an infomercial. But you still ought to know them for an important reason: They are your family. Reader, meet writer. Writer, meet reader.

The church kin may be spread across generations, cultures, and nations, but they are grafted onto the same vine, sharing the same work, representing the tribe—your tribe—in places beyond. This family is not new or small. The Church of the Nazarene is now a century old with 1.7 million members in 160 nations, a denominational diaspora.

The family keeps learning. Since its birth, the denomination established schools everywhere, more than ten in the first decade. The man who titled the denomination “Nazarene” was a dean at the University of Southern California, and a Harvard University panel concluded that the denomination's churches are “inconceivable” apart from its schools.<sup>1</sup> Today, more than 50 educational institutions dot the globe, serving more than 30,000 students.

A little heads-up here: families worry about each other. In the beginning, we were small, strong on mission, but weak on credentials. By age 100, one wonders if we have so credentialed ourselves we've lost the founders' passion. Other denominational schools have gone that way before us. It's legendary. People sometimes lose their faith but keep their jobs.

Concerns abound these days. Consumerism in higher education chips away at our liberal arts' ideals. Theological fundamentalism and theological liberalism encroach on some academic areas. The andragogy demanded for adult student programs rubs against a historic practice with traditionally-aged, residential students. Costs are putting a Nazarene higher education out of reach for too many.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Gregg A. Chenoweth, Ph.D.

Vice President for Academic Affairs  
Olivet Nazarene University

Dr. Chenoweth served an education missions assignment in Korea; is an accreditation consultant and ordained minister; and has written for the *Chicago Tribune*, *Christianity Today*, *Inside Higher Ed*, and academic journals.



Under such strain, some detect a fearsome beast: Secularization. Some defend their territory, blasting away with neo-conservatism. Others domesticate the monster, trying to make peace, by changing the proportion of lay and clergy trustees; decreasing the number of general education credits in theology; making chapel optional; loosening campus behavior covenants; or hiring people with stronger paper credentials than testimonies.

So, in December of 2009, a group of chief academic officers—aunts and uncles on the family tree, as it were—decided we ought to have a family meeting, via text, anyway.

This enterprise attempted to articulate the common “center pole” around which we stand, those theological and pedagogical commitments drawing us together. We decided against a focus on the “fence,” those tribal in-group and out-group markers. Once one knows the center, everyone can determine his or her proximity from it.

The result rests in your hands. It’s a family values document for our educational institutions, produced and reviewed by 51 faculty at 16 institutions from six countries. We certainly made use of volumes on the family mantel: a Core Values document for the Church of the Nazarene; a statement from the *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene* on higher education; a “key documents” collection of about 50 items in the blogosphere by Dr. E. LeBron Fairbanks, Educational Commissioner of the Church of the Nazarene; and several other thought groups’ documents and books. This manuscript widens our collection with a multi-institutional, multi-national declaration of educational aspirations.

It is named *telos* for the Greek term used in the New Testament to address the perfect end, or destination, for which Christians are designed. As Heb. 6:1 says, leave elementary things and go on to *telos*! We achieve this when we are perfectly aimed by God. His anointing completes our consecration and maturity in the faith.<sup>2</sup> As such, *telos* is unhampered by the limitations of the natural world because it is realized only by God’s grace.<sup>3</sup> You might say life is validated by the worthiness of its destination.<sup>4</sup>

So, church family, aim well—end well! We’re not made

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for academic puzzles alone, because that ends in pluralism. Students would receive diplomas without becoming disciples. And we're not aimed for Christian environment alone. That ends in fragmented learning, where students graduate without adopting the Great Commandment to love the Lord with their mind. If we aim toward "faith integration" alone, which faith, which creed, which doctrine? That ends in generic curricula, curricula that "value values," without creed or anchor.

The church manual calls for its educational institutions to produce students with a coherent Wesleyan understanding of life, through all its disciplines. Wesleyanism has been described as *content*—such as prevenient grace, free will, entire sanctification, perfect love—and *process*, those interactive features of scripture, tradition, reason, and experience.<sup>5</sup> The pages further illustrate a *telos* focused on

- God's kingdom now, not remanded only to some abstract, future hope;
- The Holy Spirit's activity in course materials, people, and institutions, not confined to "religious" initiatives;
- Sacred and secular domains held by our omnipresent God;
- Co-laboring with God for an optimism of grace in students—a transformed nature—not forgiveness alone, which focuses on the pessimism of sin;
- Acceptance of the tensions of wide learning, not for mere "engagement" with knowledge, but Christian maturity.

So, the family is talking about where we're headed. It is our aspiration. The conversation itself is a "ministry of imagination,"<sup>6</sup> hopeful, connected, compassionate talk that practices the presence of God in every situation, on every topic.

The volume is organized into three sections. The first provides theological and epistemological foundations. The second illustrates how those commitments are applied to particular academic disciplines. Finally, four Nazarene educators from various parts of the world balance these North American views with cultural commentary. ■

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#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Jerry T. Lambert, Al T. Truesdale, and Michael W. Vail, "Identity and Relationship: Emerging Models in Higher Education, Church of the Nazarene" (conference presentation, Future

of Religious Colleges sponsored by Program on Education Policy and Governance, Harvard University, October 2000).

<sup>2</sup>W. T. Purkiser, Richard S. Taylor, and Willard H. Taylor, *God, Man, and Salvation* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1977), 480.

<sup>3</sup>Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1972), 293.

<sup>4</sup>H. Ray Dunning, *Grace, Faith & Holiness: A Wesleyan Systematic Theology* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1988), 500.

<sup>5</sup>Timothy J. Crutcher, *The Crucible of Life: The Role of Experience in John Wesley's Theological Method* (Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2010), 216.

<sup>6</sup>Robert H. Woods Jr. and Paul D. Patton, *Prophetically Incorrect: A Christian Introduction to Media Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2010), 28.

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- Crutcher, Timothy J. *The Crucible of Life: The Role of Experience in John Wesley's Theological Method*. Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2010.
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