

CHAPTER

3

## *Spirit of the Founders*

### **Introduction**

The founders shaped the Church of the Nazarene's initial trajectory. Their vision brought the church into existence, their energies propelled it forward for a generation, and their values were enshrined in its doctrine and structures. But is their vision still relevant to our time and culture? To answer that, we must ask questions: What did the founders intend? What were their principal concerns? What methods did they use?

Their fundamental purpose was to attain unity in holiness. To achieve this, they promoted the religion of the heart by emphasizing Christian conversion, the sanctification of believers, including their entire sanctification, and faithful discipleship. To support this fundamental purpose, they also believed that the Church of the Nazarene should preserve an apostolic ministry inclusive of women, be in active ministry to the poor, and be committed to carrying out a mission to the world. They agreed that these aims were best accomplished through a structure adapted from Methodism that had been democratized and reformed.

The founders differed widely in temperament and abilities. Phineas Bresee was noted for the power of his preaching and his dignity. He inspired confidence in his ideas, whether theological or organizational. He endowed the Church of the Nazarene with a specific frame of government adapted from the Methodist Episcopal Church, in which he labored for over 35

years. Hiram F. Reynolds was noted for his passion for world evangelization and his great endurance as the most widely traveled of all the founders. He helped stamp the church with its missionary character and laid the foundations for its international development. William Howard Hoople was not known as a great preacher, but *he was known as a great pastor*. His enthusiasm never failed to rally the people, and he lifted his melodious voice in song whenever the worship service lagged, raising the spirits of his congregation. C. W. Ruth was a national Holiness evangelist whose vision for uniting the different Holiness groups was born out of his wide personal travels and contacts. C. B. Jernigan began his Nazarene years as a bi-vocational district superintendent with five churches on his Oklahoma-Kansas District. For the first year, he traveled the district with a tent, used his camera to take people's portraits during the day, and preached revival services at night. He organized a church if there was sufficient interest. His passion for church planting and rugged determination quickly gave Oklahoma a larger concentration of Nazarenes than any state except California. Mary Lee Cagle planted over 20 churches. Behind the pulpit, she had a dignified bearing and "preached with tears." She inspired dozens of women to enter the Nazarene ministry. George Sharpe entered the Methodist ministry in America but returned to his native Scotland, where his unswerving commitment to the Wesleyan-Holiness message gave rise to a new Scottish denomination that merged with the Nazarenes in 1915. He gave strong support to the pioneer medical ministries of his daughter and son-in-law, Kanema and David Hynd, in Swaziland.

The founders had various strengths, but all were committed to establishing a denomination in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition. Every Nazarene generation since then has stood on their shoulders.

### **Fred Hillery** ***New England Roots***

On March 13-14, 1890, representatives from several churches and local Holiness associations in southern New England met at Rock, MA. They agreed upon some basic principles, pledged themselves "to promote scriptural holiness by united and concerted action," and thereupon launched the Central Evangelical Holiness Association as a regional organization. Of the seven parent bodies that pre-dated the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene of 1908, the Central Evangelical Holiness Association arrived first

on the scene. It preceded by over five years all but one of the others.

The leading lights of the New England organization included two of its original officers: Fred A. Hillery, vice president; and C. Howard David, secretary. Hillery's story illustrates the spirit that motivated the New England Holiness Movement.

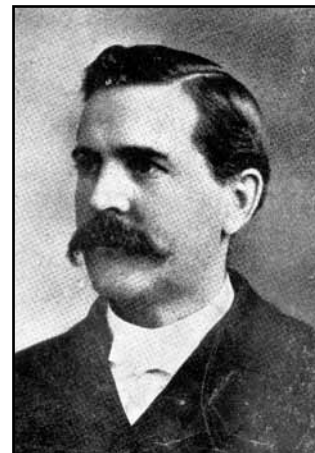
A printer by trade, Hillery was Sunday School superintendent in St. Paul's Methodist Episcopal Church of South Providence, RI, when a struggle ensued in the congregation over the doctrine and nature of entire sanctification. Hillery and others eventually withdrew. In July 1887, they organized the People's Evangelical Church with 51 members. The church was incorporated the following year. Hillery was the congregation's spiritual shepherd from the beginning, and, in 1889, he was ordained to the ministry in an impressive service conducted by 13 independent Holiness ministers from around New England. He remained pastor of the People's Church until 1904.

The 1895 *Manual* of the People's Church shows that it observed a strict rule designed to create a disciplined and faithful community. Among the grounds for admonition and church discipline were "neglecting family prayers" and "unnecessary absence from class or communion." Primary concerns were reflected in the church's administrative structure, which had five committees: Sunday School, the Sick and Destitute, Care of the Church, Finance, and Baptism.

The various *Manuals* and *Disciplines* of other churches in the Central Evangelical Holiness Association show that they, too, were committed to a style of churchmanship that emphasized an integral relationship between the "visible church" and Christian ethics and spirituality. Among those congregations were: the Bethany Mission Church (Keene, NH), the Mission Church (Lynn, MA), the People's Mission Church (Central Falls, RI), the Independent Congregational Church (Rock, MA), the Emanuel Mission Church (North Attleboro, MA), and others.

In 1888, Fred Hillery was founding editor of *Beulah Items*, a paper published on behalf of the People's Evangelical Church. By 1892, when its name changed to the *Beulah Christian*, the paper reported on happenings throughout the Central Evangelical Holiness Association.

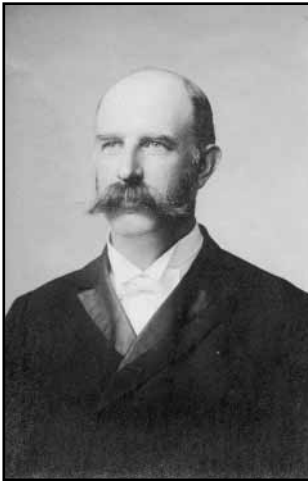
In 1896-97, a merger united the bulk of the Central Evangelical Holiness Association with the Association of Pentecostal Churches of America, the latter begun in 1895 under the leadership of William Howard Hoople of Brooklyn, NY. The name of the newer body was retained as that of the unified body. Hillery's *Beulah Christian* became the APCA's official



Fred A. Hillery

organ. Later, from 1907-11, it was an official paper of the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene, serving the constituency in the eastern United States. Hillery published it until 1915.

**William Howard Hoople**  
***The Association of Pentecostal Churches of America***



William H. Hoople

To *Christian Witness* readers, William Howard Hoople described himself, in 1895, as a Congregationalist who had “embraced Methodist doctrine,” and this logic lay behind the churches he shepherded in Brooklyn, NY. He rejected American Methodism’s episcopal system, but, as an adherent of “Methodist doctrine,” was unwelcome in the Calvinistic church that nurtured his early faith in Christ.

Hoople was born in Herkimer, NY, in 1868 to Canadian immigrants. They moved to Brooklyn shortly thereafter. His father, a wealthy leather merchant, exerted a Christian influence, and Hoople was converted as a young man. He followed his father into business and prospered. He married Victoria Crawford in 1891. They had a daughter and five sons.

His conversion to “Methodist doctrine” occurred after he began attending a prayer meeting at John Street Methodist Church in Manhattan. There, he met Charles BeVier, choir director at a large Methodist church in Brooklyn and an ardent exponent of Wesleyan-Holiness experience. Hoople soon testified to his own experience of sanctifying grace and joined forces with BeVier to open a mission to the poor at 123 Schenectady Avenue on January 4, 1894.

By June, it was a full-fledged church of 37 members with Hoople as its pastor. A sanctuary “in a new and rapidly developing part of the city” was dedicated on June 15. The participation of the Rev. D. V. Gwilym, “the High Church” rector of a nearby Episcopal congregation, signaled community favor.

The Utica Avenue Church was but the first in a new denomination that Hoople and BeVier fostered. Other churches soon appeared in the city. Hoople, ordained in late 1894, planted Bedford Avenue Pentecostal Church in east Brooklyn in early 1895. John Norberry became its pastor. The Emmanuel Pentecostal Tabernacle soon followed, organized on Labor Day.

In December, church representatives organized the Association of Pentecostal Churches of America. The name reflected a national vision

at the outset, and through merger and aggressive evangelism, the denomination stretched from Nova Scotia to Iowa within a decade.

A church was organized in Cliftondale, NY, in mid-1896 after a camp meeting revival. H. F. Reynolds, a visiting Methodist from Vermont, decided to unite with the small denomination during that revival; he claimed that God had clearly called him to do so. Susan Fitkin, A. B. Riggs, H. N. Brown, and other New England Holiness stalwarts soon did the same. Reynolds brought solid experience as a pastor and evangelist—and connections throughout the Holiness Movement in the Northeast. Meanwhile, BeVier organized the John Wesley Pentecostal Church in Brooklyn in October. He was ordained and called as its first pastor.

Reynolds was only one factor in the union of the APCA and a New England denomination, the Central Evangelical Holiness Association founded in 1890. Another was the *Christian Witness* of Boston, which published frequent reports from churches and ministers in both groups. Long before Hoople met his New England counterparts, they had read of each other's work.

The groundwork of union was laid in November when Fred Hillery (Providence, RI), C. Howard Davis (Lynn, MA), and other New England pastors met with leaders of the New York movement in Hoople's parlor. A plan of union was approved after two days of discussion. The Association of Pentecostal Churches of America's name better reflected their common purpose and became that of the united body. A snag developed: several New England churches refused to enter the union. Most CEHA churches united anyway. Hillery brought a paper, the *Beulah Christian*, into the union, and it was adopted later as the official publication.

The APCA grew steadily from 1897 to 1907 as churches were added in New England, the Middle Atlantic states, the District of Columbia, Canada, and the Midwest. Reynolds organized churches in Oxford and Springhill, Nova Scotia, in 1902. Others pushed the boundaries westward. A congregation in Pittsburgh led by John Norris united in 1899. By 1907, there were churches in Illinois and Iowa.

Schools and missions were the critical elements in the church program. Pentecostal Collegiate Institute, now Eastern Nazarene College, was founded in 1898. It struggled in its early years at Saratoga Springs, NY, and North Scituate, RI, finding stability only after E. E. Angell became president in 1907.

World missions were a distinctive aspect of the APCA and its primary gift to the broader Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene. Five



William H. Hoople and John Norberry



John Norberry



John C. Dias

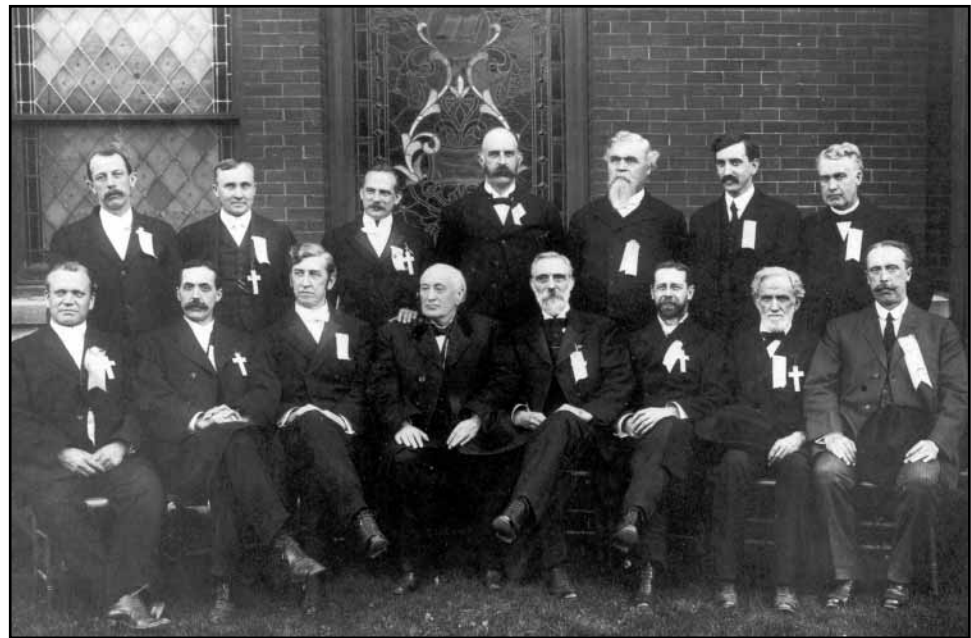


William H. Hoople

missionaries were sent to India in 1898, the year Reynolds assumed full-time responsibility for promoting home and foreign missions. Eight others went to India in 1904 and 1905, including L. S. Tracy and Gertrude Perry, who soon married. John Dias, an immigrant from Cape Verde, was sent to his land of origin as a missionary in 1901. The administration of the missionary program was complicated by the independence of some pastors, but Reynolds' efforts were decisive in nurturing the vision of a missionary church.

The union of the Association of Pentecostal Churches of America and the Church of the Nazarene derived its initial impetus from C. W. Ruth, a National Holiness Association evangelist and the assistant general superintendent of the Church of the Nazarene. In 1906, Ruth conducted revivals in the East and was invited to an APCA meeting, where he proposed merging the two denominations. Cautious enthusiasm prevailed. Eastern pastors A. B. Riggs, John Short, and H. N. Brown—dubbed the “three wise men”—toured the Nazarene churches in the west that fall and favorably impressed Nazarene leaders.

In turn, Phineas Bresee and several associates visited the APCA's annual meeting in the spring of 1907, where the principles of merger were hammered out and union was proclaimed under the name Pentecostal



Legislative Commission at the First General Assembly, Chicago, 1907



Church of the Nazarene. The APCA brought to the union 2400 members and 45 churches, many in major eastern cities such as Pittsburg, Providence, Manchester, Saratoga Springs, Washington, and several in greater Boston, including the university city of Cambridge.

In October, the First General Assembly of the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene met in Chicago. H. F. Reynolds was elected as the general superintendent from the east and also continued as missionary secretary for the united body. He “retired” in 1932, but carried out the tasks of a general superintendent for several more years.

Charles BeVier had died at a relatively young age in 1905, with no inkling of the outcome of his labors on behalf of the Association of Pentecostal Churches of America. The tall, genial Hoople became New York District superintendent, serving until 1911 while pastoring the John Wesley church, which grew to 350 members under his ministry. His doubts about the Pentecostal Nazarenes uniting with the southern Holiness Church of Christ evaporated at the Pilot Point General Assembly, in which he participated. Hoople became a Y.M.C.A. worker during World War I and was sent to France to provide wholesome entertainment and spiritual guidance to U. S. soldiers. His health was undermined after breathing poisonous gas. He was stationed later in Italy and Germany, and visited his daughter, a Presbyterian missionary in Peking, China, before returning to America. He died in 1922.

**Phineas F. Bresee**  
***Pastor to the People***

The intrepid Methodist circuit riders who traveled the highways and rugged trails of New York’s Catskill Mountains made an indelible impression on Phineas Bresee. His ancestors had been committed Calvinists—French Huguenots who fled Catholic France for refuge in Holland. The records in the Dutch Reformed Church in Albany, New York, attest to the family’s persisting loyalty to Calvinism several generations later. However in America, the family story intersected that of global Methodism and its message of free grace, empowered free will, and holy living. Some of the Bresees shifted allegiances. With no hint of irony, Phineas Bresee later referred to Methodism as the “faith of my fathers.”

Bresee was born in a farmhouse on New Year’s Eve in 1838. His parents were Phineas Phillips and Susan Brown Bresee. While he was still



Phineas Bresee



Phineas and Maria Bresee

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“The first miracle after the baptism of the Holy Ghost was wrought upon a beggar. It means that the first service of a Holy Ghost-baptized church is to the poor; that its ministry is to those who are lowest down; that its gifts are for those who need them the most. As the Spirit was upon Jesus to preach the gospel to the poor, so His Spirit is upon His servants for the same purpose.”

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young, they moved to a farm on the edge of West Davenport, New York. The Methodist societies ringing West Davenport maintained the religion of the “warmed heart” and provided structure to Bresee’s spiritual development. At 16, he knelt at the altar rail of the Methodist church, afterward professing a personal faith in Christ. The year was 1856. Soon, he felt promptings to enter the ministry, and he received a Methodist exhorter’s license.

Bresee’s ministry was pursued in an arena strikingly different from New York however. In 1857, his father moved the family to Iowa, in the central United States. The mountains of New York were now far behind. The Iowa terrain was nearly all prairie. After helping his family settle, he entered the Methodist ministry as an assistant preacher. He received his own circuit of churches the next year.

The Methodist Church also provided a bride, Maria Hebbard, daughter of Horace Hebbard, a long-time Methodist class leader near Bresee’s childhood home. Bresee married her in New York in the summer of 1860, then took her west to share his new life on the prairie. Four sons and three daughters were born to them.

In 1859, Bresee was ordained a deacon by Bishop Matthew Simpson. Bishop Simpson was one of the great bishops—great enough that he preached at the funeral of Abraham Lincoln in Washington, D.C., and again at Lincoln’s funeral in his hometown of Springfield, Illinois. Simpson was one of Bresee’s personal heroes. Two years later, after further demonstration of his worth as a pastor, Bresee was ordained an elder by Bishop Levi Scott.

Bresee’s ministry grew varied. He served in rural pastorates with two- and three-point charges—the Pella and Galesburg circuits for example, which had multiple congregations under his responsibility. Then he was pastor of larger single churches in Chariton, Red Oak, and other growing communities, and in the urban centers of Des Moines and Council Bluffs. Bresee also served as a district superintendent, as a delegate to his church’s General Conference, and he devoted many hours to Simpson College, one of Iowa Methodism’s four schools. For many years, he served as a trustee of Simpson College; and when the school was threatened with extinction from lack of proper financing, Bresee was given the task of drawing up the plan to save the school financially, and then given the responsibility for executing his own plan. His plan was successful. The college was saved from financial ruin, and today is the leading Methodist college in Iowa.