

About Mallalieu Wilson's Biography of W.C. Wilson

William C. Wilson bridged many of the contradictions of the early Church of the Nazarene. He bridged its underlying regionalism, knowing well the sectional attitudes of his native South, while growing to appreciate the ethos of early 20th century California. Likewise, he bridged the early denomination's divided mind over ethics, understanding (and for a time preaching) an ethic of legalism, but gradually accepting the view that holiness provides liberty, not law, in the Christian life. He preached the reality of crisis experiences of grace, yet acknowledged that his call to preach was a gradual awareness, not the distinct "voice of God" to which associates sometimes testified. As an early district superintendent, he was pressed into the administrative life of an infant denomination, though his greater love was preaching—a vocation he also awakened in three of his children. Finally, at a point in his life when Wilson could ill afford to make financial sacrifices, he was elected general superintendent of his church, though the office's remuneration barely qualified as supplemental income.

Wilson faced the ironies of his life with exceedingly great grace. He was, above all, a preacher of reconciliation, first between sinners and Divine Grace; secondly, among and between those who confess together their loyalty to Christ and his Church.

His ministry was assisted by wives and children who knew personally the grace he preached. His older children experienced the grief of their young mother's death, the breakup of their home, and the family's resurrection after Wilson's remarriage. Together the Wilson family experienced the helplessness of an infant's death and the tragic loss of a grown child shortly after her marriage. But they also experienced joyous reunions, enjoyed some "good pastorates," and found time in California to spend some happy moments together on the beach.

Only the late Mallalieu Wilson could have written this intimate portrait of his father, W. C. Wilson. Mallalieu Wilson was personally acquainted with many of the founders of the Church of the Nazarene. Indeed, he can be characterized as one of its "founding youths." Born in 1898, he was raised among the Nazarene churches of the the West Coast, where he participated in its pioneer youth programs. He grew up around Phineas Bresee, John Goodwin, Edward F. Walker, A. O. Henricks, E. P. Ellyson, Seth Rees, and others who led the church in Southern California and beyond. He knew these through church, campmeeting, district assembly, and through the intimate community of Pasadena and its Nazarene University (later Pasadena College), where he was a student leader in both the Academy (high school) and the College.

This account reflects Mallalieu Wilson's insight into personalities who shaped the Church of the Nazarene in its formative years. Behind his views, there are sometimes the opinions of his father. But the book is not just about Nazarenes; it also illuminates people and issues significant in the broader Holiness Movement.

Above all, it records the story of William C. Wilson, whose journey of faith led him across the landscape of scattered holiness sects into the Church of the Nazarene, and from

one end of the nation to the other. In the providence of God, Wilson was elected by peers and laity to be one of their general superintendents.

To order William C. Wilson The Fifth General Superintendent (ISBN 083-411-5573)
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