

The Evidence  
for Entire  
Sanctification



By R. David Bloomfield

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Rev. R. David Bloomfield



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# **The Evidence for Entire Sanctification**

by  
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## Preface

I love the subject of entire sanctification. I love to hear about it, talk about it, read about it, discuss it, analyze it, meditate on it. I want to know all I possibly can about it. Most of all, I love the God who graciously sanctifies wholly, making it possible for you and me to know him in this way, and to grow in this grace throughout eternity.

I have written this book for one reason—to convince as many persons as possible of its truth and assist them toward the living, working reality of entire sanctification. I believe this is the message God wills. This is the message the church needs. This message, when wholeheartedly embraced, will conform us to the image of Christ. Allow me make this even more emphatic ⇒ We ought to be in travail to see Christ formed in our people! The apostle Paul was (cf. Galatians 4:19). Indeed, Christ-formation is both the outcome and the orbit of entire sanctification. What more could any Christian want than to be like Christ—a *Christian* in the fullest possible earthly measure?

“O to be like thee! Blessed Redeemer,  
This is my constant longing and prayer.  
Gladly I’ll forfeit all of earth’s treasures,  
Jesus, Thy perfect likeness to wear.”<sup>1</sup>

Entire sanctification will purify the individual from sin, endue him with power from the Holy Spirit, stabilize him in the faith, and ignite him with holy ardor for the things of God. Churches filled with wholly sanctified people will be galvanized in unity and peace (cf. Ephesians 4:3, 13).

This is God’s plan to make us truly a reflection of Christ to the world. We can be what God designs us to be. Is this claiming too much? Assuredly it is not! This is no more than a biblically-grounded optimism concerning the possibilities of grace!

Such a presentation, of course, has been made many times before. Many learned and capable writers have preceded me in this sacred endeavor. Obviously, I am dependent on them. I stand on their broad shoulders. I am not carving out new territory. I am simply offering what I hope will be a fresh presentation of the grand old truth. I do *not* presume that my particular exposition of the doctrine is the most conclusive or convincing one that can be made.

<sup>1</sup> From the hymn by Thomas O. Chisholm.

Nor do I presume to be the best person to take up such a task. Why, then, this book? I fear that the doctrine is being increasingly neglected and minimized. Think of me as a concerned citizen.

I direct my words primarily to those unfamiliar with the doctrine. On the one hand, I do not have a scholarly audience in mind. On the other hand, nor have I made any effort to tailor the material for popular consumption. Instead my objective has been to create a format that will stimulate more interest in the subject among astute laity who hunger and thirst for righteousness (regardless of their theological tradition), and to present evidence that will convince all fair-minded readers (academician or not).

I have taken the liberty of presenting my case as if I were a defense attorney. If you pick up this book and read it, you become part of the jury. I love the line from *To Kill A Mockingbird*, when Atticus Finch finalizes his closing statement before the jury with the impassioned plea,

“In the name of God, do your duty!”<sup>2</sup>

I believe it is every Christian’s duty to “search the Scriptures,” to “study to show oneself approved.” Like the fictional Mr. Finch, I am trying to persuade the jury (hopefully with different results). At times, my words may seem like an impassioned plea. But isn’t that as it should be (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:20)? So long as it is not “zeal without knowledge” (cf. Proverbs 19:2)?

More importantly, however, I rely on God’s word to persuade you. God’s word informs. It transforms! The Holy Spirit uses his word to break through deep misunderstandings and biases. His word can overpower sin and bring about saving and sanctifying faith (cf. Romans 10:17; Hebrews 4:12)! I have prayed that God will imbue this work with “the Spirit’s power” (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:4), in spite of its human deficiencies.

After a careful review of the evidence, my earnest prayer is that you will reach the same verdict I have—that entire sanctification is a grand biblical doctrine to be embraced and lived. If this book assists you to that end, it will have achieved its purpose.

Something else motivated me to pen these words, namely, a deep sense of need. My years in ministry have led me to wonder if the doctrine is still our “watchword and song.” Are we failing to preach the doctrine with firm con-

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<sup>2</sup> Harper Lee, *To Kill A Mockingbird* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1960), 218.

viction and anointing? “Great doctrines do not need protection as much as they need proclamation.”<sup>3</sup> The anointing comes from God; the conviction comes from being sure of your ground. Merne A. Harris used this expression when he wrote, “To the holiness preacher who is sure of his ground and is willing to press that advantage there is the distinct possibility of success.”<sup>4</sup> But it is important for the laity to have the selfsame conviction. The grace of entire sanctification is for all Christians!

In my experience, a few laypersons sigh a great relief to hear the old holiness truth sounded. “It’s been too long since I last heard this,” they sometimes say. They know how important it is to have solid biblical teaching on entire sanctification.

Sadly, others appear indifferent or bored with the subject. Increasingly more persons seem surprised to hear it preached at all. The perception frequently prevails that talk of entire sanctification is hopelessly unrealistic and wrongheaded. Some say, “Come, come now, you don’t honestly believe in *entire* sanctification,” as though the idea is offensive or insulting to their intelligence. Whoever you are, whether you fit one of these categories or not; if you want all that God wills for you, I ask you prayerfully to weigh the evidence with an open heart and mind.

Some are already open-minded to the doctrine, but exclaim that they “just can’t understand entire sanctification” or “just can’t quite buy into it.” Still others want to believe, but say that they “just can’t seem to obtain the experience, or live the holy life.” If you belong to one of these categories, or if you’re not sure, read on. Maybe this book will help. If it does not satisfactorily answer all your questions or concerns, I urge you to keep searching. I don’t have all the answers, but God does! If you hunger and thirst for righteousness, God will see to it that you are filled (cf. Matthew 5:6).

In the pages that follow, I seek to clarify the issues, and to bring the doctrine and reality of entire sanctification more readily into the grasp of thoughtful and devout laypersons. I want you to see how sure is the foundation upon which the doctrine is constructed, how solidly the doctrine is erected on that base, and how possible it is to enjoy this marvelous grace of God here and

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<sup>3</sup> Kenneth Geiger, compiler, *Insights Into Holiness* (Salem, Ohio: Schmul Publishing, 1989; reprint of 1963 original), 5.

<sup>4</sup> Merne A. Harris, “The Carnal Nature,” *Ibid.*, 36.

now. While the correct creed is indispensable, the experience of true sanctification is of paramount importance. Creed and experience must be linked. An entirely sanctified church is the aim, not merely a church that safeguards the creed. This aim only requires general agreement on the truth of the doctrine in the broad biblical sweep, not precise agreement in every particular. If we look closely, as I will attempt to show in my opening statement, I think we will find the holiness movement (as it currently exists) has the general consensus needed. But if we are not vigilant, we may eventually lose that consensus.

Originally, this study took the form of a sermon which I entered in a homiletics contest while in Bible college (1981). Twelve years later the same sermon, in updated form, was published in the March/April/May 1993 issue of *Preacher's Magazine*. Over the years, I have often preached the sermon as a series during the course of pastoral ministry. Recently, God impressed me once again to revise the message into the form it takes in this book. The material is now arranged as a series of addresses to the jury, beginning with five addresses designed to lay a proper foundation for the case. It is best, but not essential, to read the first five addresses before moving on to the subsequent material. I have tried to write so that any particular address may profitably be read in isolation from the rest. Readers who are interested in getting right to the heart of the matter may want to skip over the material that concerns laying the proper foundation, and go directly to the sixth address entitled "calling the witnesses." It is here that I do just that—call expert witnesses, who provide compelling testimony concerning entire sanctification. In the seventh through ninth addresses, I proceed to the heart of my exposition. At that time I will present a positive case for entire sanctification under the three headings: the prescription for entire sanctification, the provision for entire sanctification, and the possession of entire sanctification. After this, substantial space will be given in the tenth address to cross-examination (i.e., answering common questions). Finally, I will summarize and conclude with a closing argument.

A quarter century has passed since I first penned the sermon. I have added to it and made changes, but the core message, the truth of the message, and the urgency of the message have not been altered. As a lifelong member of the holiness movement and a minister in that tradition for over twenty-five years, I am more aware now than ever of the great need for clear articulation of the doctrine of entire sanctification among the churches.

God's plan for the church rises to majestic heights. Jesus Christ gave himself for this very reason:

“to make [the church] holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless” (Ephesians 5:25-27).

When God cleanses away depravity and imparts perfect love, the church begins to radiate like she was designed to do. Let us not settle for less!

## Reflection of Heaven

As a church we've been divided by so many different things,  
We've let points of contention become our philosophies;  
Now the time has come to lay aside our manmade hopes and dreams,  
To become the very church that God intended us to be.

We're all created in God's image and he loves us each the same,  
He makes us brothers of his promise when we call upon his name;  
We all have gifts and talents, giving each a special part,  
We're much stronger together than we could ever be apart.

Let's be a candle in the darkness, a light for all to see,  
To become the very church that God intended us to be.

It's God's will to make us holy by removing all our dross,  
He provides the purging power through the merits of Christ's cross;  
Clean hearts become the vessels of his love set all ablaze,  
Conforming to Christ's pattern more and more all our days.

A reflection of heaven, a mirrored image of God's plan,  
Where others see the face of Jesus in the face of mortal man;  
May we be his hand extended so the world will understand,  
That what they see could only be a reflection of heaven.

—Terri Schneider and Lori Ranfield  
(all except the third quatrain)

—Third quatrain by R. David Bloomfield

## **OPENING STATEMENT**

### **The Case in a Nutshell**

## ***“Identifying Holiness Orthodoxy”***

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, my objective is to present compelling evidence for the truth of the biblical doctrine of entire sanctification. My role here is that of advocate. In performing this role, it is my responsibility to do everything in my power to convince you that my position is biblical and solidly true. As I give my best effort to fulfill that responsibility, sometimes passionately, I expect you to review the testimony *dispassionately* and with intellectual honesty. When you have finished deliberating, I expect you to arrive at the verdict warranted by the evidence.

### **Definition and Scope of the Subject**

Webster’s dictionary defines sanctification as “the act of making holy.” This act occurs two ways: a) setting apart as holy, or consecration, and b) making free from sin, or purification. Therefore, when we speak of *entire* sanctification, we are speaking of something *wholly* consecrated to a holy purpose and/or we are speaking of something cleansed of *all* sin.

My addresses will be limited to the Christian conception of entire sanctification as discussed in the Bible, particularly the New Testament. All Christians believe sanctification is part of God’s plan of salvation, and occurs at some point along the salvation continuum. My position, however, is a particular theological understanding that holds steadfastly to the belief that the Bible teaches entire sanctification as a real, personal, earthly privilege for Christians. It is this specific understanding that I will attempt to set forth in the addresses that follow.

### **Contemporary Theological Context**

My theological persuasion is unabashedly Wesleyan-holiness (also called Wesleyan-Arminian), or that tradition which follows the path initiated in modern times by the eighteenth century reformer John Wesley in England and America. However, let me make clear at the outset that even among Wesleyan-holiness people there is no unanimity of opinion concerning every aspect or nuance of the doctrine. In fact, according to a recent study by Mark Quanstrom, two definitions of entire sanctification are competing currently for acceptance in the Church of the Nazarene, one of the largest denomina-

tional bodies in the Wesleyan tradition.<sup>5</sup> One definition is the traditional or classical interpretation rooted in the explications of the nineteenth century American holiness movement and the majority of holiness writers since. The other, what might be termed a relational view of entire sanctification, seeks to go back to the eighteenth century and point out the areas in which John Wesley himself differed in his interpretation from that of later holiness writers.<sup>6</sup> These interpreters believe a “return to Wesley” is necessary in order to make the doctrine of entire sanctification more credible and less confusing, believing that the traditional view has tended to be overly extravagant in its claims. There is little doubt that some writers have indeed exaggerated the doctrine and experience of entire sanctification. Quanstrom’s book chronicles many of these excesses, especially certain writers from the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In spite of these excesses, however, I contend that the holiness classics were essentially correct. They emphasized entire sanctification as an instantaneous experience subsequent to regeneration which cleanses the heart from Adamic depravity,<sup>7</sup> perfects the heart in love, and is wrought by the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

On the other hand, according to Quanstrom, writers holding to the relational view emphasize the gradualness of sanctification and hesitate to link entire sanctification with the baptism with the Holy Spirit. They adopt “a relational model of ontology” and strongly warn against “substantive modes of thought” (i.e., that sin is a “thing” or entity or substance to be removed).<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Mark Quanstrom, *A Century of Holiness Theology: The Doctrine of Entire Sanctification in the Church of the Nazarene, 1905-2004* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2004), 11.

<sup>6</sup> Not everyone agrees that Wesley’s understanding of entire sanctification and that of classical holiness writers is markedly different. The extent to which interpreters on either side of this issue remain “true to Wesley” is open to healthy debate (e.g., J. Paul Taylor, *Holiness: The Finished Foundation* [Winona Lake, Indiana: Light and Life Press, 1963] vigorously defends the classical view as being more true to Wesley), and while this is not an unimportant concern, the extent to which we remain “true to Scripture” is obviously of far greater importance.

<sup>7</sup> I am following J. Kenneth Grider, *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1994), 277-278, in using the term Adamic depravity. I will consistently use this term throughout the present volume, for the reasons Grider cites.

<sup>8</sup> *Op. cit.*, Quanstrom, 160, 168-169. Proponents of the traditional view have also frequently warned of the dangers inherent in a substantive theory of sin {e.g.,

They insist that sin must be defined more in terms of marred relationship with God, since humans are essentially interpersonal beings. Thus they see sanctification as the whole redemptive process, and not so much a decisive epoch. Accordingly, they believe the sanctifying process gradually corrects that marred relationship.

At this point, we may set the emphases of the classical holiness view alongside those of the relational view (as I understand it), so that the members of the jury make an informed judgment regarding them.

Classical View

1. Instantaneous Crisis
2. Wrought by the Baptism with the Holy Spirit
3. Cleanses from Inward Sin

Relational View

1. Gradual Process
2. Wrought by the Holy Spirit, but not equated with Holy Spirit baptism
3. Renews in the image of God

In brief, the traditional holiness view sees entire sanctification as a “second definite work of grace,” while the relational view minimizes (though not necessarily dismissing completely) the importance of “entire-ness” and “sec-

W. T. Purkiser, “The Carnal Nature and Its Crucifixion” [Reprinted from *Sanctification and Its Synonyms*], *Our Holy Faith: Studies in Wesleyan Theology*, compiled by T. M. Anderson (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1965), 251-262; and W. T. Purkiser, Richard S. Taylor, and Willard H. Taylor, *God, Man, and Salvation: A Biblical Theology* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1977), 299, n. 27}. Of critical importance in this case is the proper distinction between the denotative (explicit signification) and connotative (suggestive association) meanings of such words. The New Testament writers often use metaphorical language in this regard, and in this writer’s opinion, we should not hesitate to do the same if it helps people understand the truth about sin and sanctification. For example, there is no reason why I should be reluctant in urging Christians to submit themselves “to the Divine Fuller who will cleanse away the stain of sin” (cf. 2 Corinthians 7:1; Ephesians 5:26-27; 1 John 1:9). This is a biblical metaphor, not intended to be interpreted denotatively (i.e., that there is a literal “stain” somewhere inside us that can be “cleansed” away). Careful exposition will make the transition from the metaphor to the relational-ethical reality in the hearts and lives of the hearers, who will understand that cleansing from sin is a spiritual event that occurs at the level of our moral nature, and in connection with the need for our fallen *imago dei* to be restored. An ethical view of sin and metaphorical language that appears superficially to support a substantive theory of sin are neither necessarily mutually exclusive nor necessarily confusing. I grew up hearing about “digging out the root of sin” and “death to the carnal self,” etc., but I don’t remember ever being confused into thinking these expressions were denotative.

ond-ness,” stressing instead the process of sanctification as renewal in the image of God.

I should hasten to add that the two views are not mutually exclusive, at least not in the broader brush strokes. Proponents of a more relational view may believe in a second crisis, while emphasizing the process. Proponents of the traditional view have no quarrel with the idea of process, if defined carefully, but see the second definite crisis as the crux of the matter.

A guest missionary, speaking once at a church where I was pastor, rued the fact that some people in Wesleyan-holiness circles had come to think of entire sanctification as a mere “bump in the road” (as he put it). He voiced an opposite concern from that of the proponents of a relational view, namely, that the doctrine and experience of entire sanctification were being watered down instead of exaggerated. Bearing in mind that neither exaggerating nor short-changing either the doctrine or the experience is acceptable, nevertheless I humbly ask (along with the missionary): Is not radical transformation part and parcel of entire sanctification? Isn’t entire sanctification, at the very least, a “lane change” on the highway of holiness, and not merely a bump in the road?

Another way of looking at these “competing” views involves again the matter of emphasis. All writers in the holiness movement recognize both a positive and a negative aspect to salvation. As H. Ray Dunning notes, “The positive side is the infusing of love, and the negative is the eradication of sin.”<sup>9</sup> Whereas neither view emphasizes completely one aspect to the exclusion of the other, it may fairly be said that the traditional view tends to emphasize the negative side—the eradication of sin, while the relational view tends to emphasize the positive side—the infusing of love. Dunning elaborates further,

“When the positive side is stressed, the continuity of the Christian life from its origin in the new birth to final salvation comes most clearly into view. It is when the negative side is emphasized that the instantaneous moment of entire sanctification becomes most obvious. This implies, not

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<sup>9</sup> H. Ray Dunning, *Grace, Faith, and Holiness* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1988), 479. It is interesting that Dunning, writing this recently, decided to use the word “eradication” since that term has elicited so much ado in the church of the Nazarene. Quanstrom devotes a section of his book to the controversy surrounding the word eradication and the quest to remove it from the Nazarene Articles of Faith, *op. cit.*, 137-141.

that there is not a definite moment in both movements, but that it is more easily recognized in one than the other.”<sup>10</sup>

I think back with fondness to a retired elder who was a tremendous encouragement to me before his passing a few years ago. On one occasion, after hearing an exposition on entire sanctification, he spoke wistfully of his younger days when “we” boldly preached eradication. He believed a return to that emphasis would be productive. He also lamented our too common reticence to boldly preach perfect love. He feared we were drifting away from our goodly heritage. I share his concern. It seems to me that he held the negative and positive aspects in proper balance.

Would not a conscious, deliberate, even-handed emphasis on the cleansing of sin and the infilling with perfect love be the truly biblical approach, the one in everyone’s best interest?

Thus we see that at least two positions exist under the Wesleyan-holiness banner.<sup>11</sup> I do not propose to enter into that debate or argue any further the merits of one over the other. Instead I will simply point out that the classical view is the one that all Wesleyan-holiness groups have adopted as their official position. Both “camps” are populated by earnest seekers of holiness who share far more common ground than uncommon. Indeed, even a cursory examination of selected statements of faith demonstrates universal agreement among Wesleyan-holiness groups regarding the doctrine of entire sanctification. Moreover, those same statements of faith indicate that the classical holiness view *is* their common ground. Official creeds, which attempt to present the doctrine in microcosm, clearly align with the classical holiness explanations, showing that the core beliefs of the holiness movement have remained fundamentally unchanged up to the present time.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Everett L. Cattell, “Appraisal of the Keswick and Wesleyan Contemporary Positions,” *op. cit.*, *Insights into Holiness*, 263-280, makes the case for two parallel holiness “movements” (corresponding to the titles Keswick and Wesleyan), not just competing definitions. He pleads for careful definition of terms, careful distinctions between concepts that are easily confused, and most importantly, realization that saints of differing opinions are both sincerely striving after holiness, and when we sort through the terminology, we may discover that the differences are more perceived than real. In any event, we ought to manifest sanctified love for one another.

The Articles of Faith (Article X) of the Church of the Nazarene touch on the key issues as follows:

“We believe that entire sanctification is that act of God, subsequent to regeneration, by which believers are made free from original sin, or depravity, and brought into a state of entire devotement to God, and the holy obedience of love made perfect. It is wrought by the baptism with the Holy Spirit, and comprehends in one experience the cleansing of the heart from sin and the abiding, indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, empowering the believer for life and service.”<sup>12</sup>

The Articles of Religion (Article XII) of the Free Methodist Church read very similarly:

“Entire sanctification is that work of the Holy Spirit, subsequent to regeneration, by which the fully consecrated believers, upon exercise of faith in the atoning blood of Christ, are cleansed in that moment from all inward sin and empowered for service. The resulting relationship is attested by the witness of the Holy Spirit and is maintained by faith and obedience. Entire sanctification enables believers to love God with all their hearts, souls, strength, and minds, and their neighbor as themselves, and it prepares them for greater growth in grace.”<sup>13</sup>

The Articles of Religion (Article XIV) of the Wesleyan Church strike the same fundamental chords:

“We believe that sanctification is that work of the Holy Spirit by which the child of God is separated from sin unto God and is enabled to love God with all the heart and to walk in all His holy commandments blameless. Sanctification is initiated at the moment of justification and regeneration. From that moment there is a gradual or progressive sanctification as the believer walks with God and daily grows in grace and in a more perfect obedience to God. This prepares for the crisis of entire sanctification which is wrought instantaneously when believers present themselves as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, through faith in Jesus Christ, being effected by the baptism with the Holy Spirit

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<sup>12</sup> *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 2001), 30-31. The portion cited here is not the complete text of Article X, but rather the first two paragraphs of section 13. The exact wording may also be found in H. Orton Wiley, *Christian Theology*, vol. 2 (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1952) 466-467. See also the link at [www.nazarene.org](http://www.nazarene.org). See Quanstrom, op. cit., *A Century of Holiness Theology*, 185-201, for a historical review of the amendments to the Articles of Faith from 1905-2001.

<sup>13</sup> See the link at [www.freemethodistchurch.org](http://www.freemethodistchurch.org).

who cleanses the heart from all inbred sin. The crisis of entire sanctification perfects the believer in love and empowers the person for effective service. It is followed by lifelong growth in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The life of holiness continues through faith in the sanctifying blood of Christ and evidences itself by loving obedience to God's revealed will."<sup>14</sup>

More tersely, the statement of the Evangelical Methodist Church echoes the same essential notes:

"We believe in entire sanctification following regeneration, whereby the believer is cleansed from the pollution of sin, saved from its power, and enabled through grace, to love God with all his/her heart."<sup>15</sup>

The Churches of Christ in Christian Union employ a helpful format:

#### "The Bad News

Sin is two-fold: 1. Willful disobedience to God's known law. 2. The evil twist and corruption in human nature. So all men, Christ excepted, are sinful by nature and sinners by practice, and therefore are in need of redemption since 'the wages of sin is death.'

#### The Good News

Salvation has been made possible by Christ's atoning death on the cross of Calvary. By his death and resurrection Christ has won a four-fold salvation for us: 1. Regeneration in which we are forgiven of all sins and baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ. 2. Entire sanctification in which we are baptized with the Holy Spirit and cleansed from the carnal mind. 3. Growth in grace after sanctification in which we walk in new light as it is given and are made more and more like Jesus. 4. Immortality of body and soul."<sup>16</sup>

The Wesleyan Theological Society words its doctrinal position as follows:

"We believe in the salvation of the human soul, including the new birth; and in a subsequent work of God in the soul, a crisis, wrought by faith, whereby the heart is cleansed from all sin and filled with the Holy Spirit; this gracious experience is retained by faith as expressed in a constant

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<sup>14</sup> See the link at [www.wesleyan.org](http://www.wesleyan.org).

<sup>15</sup> See the link at [www.emchurch.org](http://www.emchurch.org).

<sup>16</sup> See the link at [www.cccuhq.org](http://www.cccuhq.org).

obedience to God's revealed will, thus giving perfect cleansing moment by moment (1 John 1:7-9), as taught by John Wesley."<sup>17</sup>

### Common Threads

In the preceding doctrinal statements the following tenets consistently emerge:

1. Entire sanctification is subsequent to regeneration. It is for Christians only.
2. Entire sanctification is a crisis experience (i.e., instantaneous event), and is preceded by and followed by growth in grace (i.e., the maturing process).
3. Entire sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit. It is effected by the baptism with the Holy Spirit.<sup>18</sup>
4. Entire sanctification is received by faith in the finished work of Christ, which includes complete consecration.
5. Entire sanctification is the earthly (i.e., it does not occur at death) completion of what the Holy Spirit began in regeneration (i.e., initial sanctification).<sup>19</sup>
6. Entire sanctification cleanses the heart from original sin, or Adamic depravity.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 26/1, Spring 1991, inside back cover. Interestingly, this statement directly attributes the "subsequent-ness" (or second-ness) and the "crisis" nature (or instantaneousness) of the experience to John Wesley's teaching, though choosing not to use the term "entire sanctification." In this regard, the Society's statement clearly aligns with the classical holiness view. World Gospel Mission uses this same statement almost verbatim. See the link at [www.wgm.org](http://www.wgm.org).

<sup>18</sup> All of the six statements cited refer to the Holy Spirit in connection with the experience of entire sanctification, but only three of the six statements use the specific language "baptism with the Holy Spirit."

<sup>19</sup> Regeneration is not viewed by Wesleyan-holiness people as "incomplete" in its own right. On the contrary, regeneration is complete *in its scope*. That is, regeneration fully avails for pardon of actual sin and cleansing of acquired depravity. Only in this sense does entire sanctification "complete" the work of regeneration, in that it targets Adamic depravity and regeneration does not. This is why a subsequent crisis is needed.

<sup>20</sup> Even though the word "cleansing" seems to suggest a substantive view of sin, it is nevertheless a biblical word and therefore must not be rejected. It may help to conceptualize this cleansing as the removal of a "bend," "twist," "infection," or "corruption" in our moral nature (i.e., Adamic depravity or carnal-mindedness), not the removal of a "thing" or "substance."

7. Entire sanctification perfects the heart in love toward God and neighbor, empowering the Christian for service and greater growth in grace.<sup>21</sup>

These points were consistently set forth in the holiness classics.<sup>22</sup> More to the point, since there exists ubiquitous mutual consent among Wesleyan-holiness groups *today* concerning these particular propositions, I will tentatively refer to the above synopsis as *Wesleyan-holiness orthodoxy* with regard to entire sanctification.<sup>23</sup> With this orthodoxy I heartily concur! Since my pur-

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<sup>21</sup> Again, the word “perfects,” though it seems to suggest something unrealistic, is nevertheless a biblical word and therefore must not be rejected. The Greek word (τελος) has in view the “designed end,” or “mature completion” of something.

<sup>22</sup> It is beyond the scope of this work to defend this claim. Readers who are interested in pursuing this issue may study the writings of John Fletcher, Adam Clarke, Phoebe Palmer, B. T. Roberts, John Miley, George Peck, Daniel Steele, Beverly Carradine, and Martin Wells Knapp, to name a few, and make up their own mind. While these writers do not agree on every point, and in some cases may need correction on certain points, they nevertheless hold consistently to the fundamentals of holiness orthodoxy.

<sup>23</sup> Other examples, all of whom belong to the Christian Holiness Partnership and all of whom use language in their creed which aligns more closely with the classical or traditional view than the relational view, include the following:

American Rescue Workers – “We believe that the Scriptures teach and urge all Christians to be cleansed in heart from inbred sin, so that they may walk uprightly and ‘serve Him without fear in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our lives.’” See the link at [www.americanrescueworkers.org](http://www.americanrescueworkers.org).

Association of Independent Methodists – “Reaffirming John Wesley’s traditional twenty-five articles of belief, we believe as independent Methodists that ... the believer can be cleansed from all sin through the sanctifying power of the blood of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit.” See the link at [www.aim2020.com](http://www.aim2020.com).

The Bible Holiness Movement – “They insist that it is the duty and privilege of every believer to be sanctified wholly, and to be preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Everyone who is received into full connection, either professes to enjoy that perfect love which casts out fear, or promises diligently to seek until he obtains it.” See the link at [www.bible-holiness-movement.com](http://www.bible-holiness-movement.com).

Congregational Methodist Church – “We believe and preach the basic, fundamental doctrines of the historic Christian faith within the framework of traditional Methodism ... \*Entire sanctification as the second definite work of grace subsequent to regeneration.” See the link at <http://congregationalmethodist.net>.

Primitive Methodist Church – “We believe in sanctification by the Holy Spirit, producing holiness of heart and life.” See the link at [www.primitivemethodistchurch.org](http://www.primitivemethodistchurch.org).

Salvation Army – “We believe that it is the privilege of all believers to be wholly sanctified, and that their whole spirit and soul and body may be pre-

pose is to help laypersons, it seems wise to focus my presentation of the evidence for entire sanctification on these points of common agreement. In essentials, unity! Regardless of whether one favors the classical holiness view or the relational holiness view, we ought to be mindful of our common Wesleyanism. It seems to me that many contemporary Wesleyan writers are seeking to embrace the best elements of both “competing” views.<sup>24</sup> In the interest of unity, it is good to celebrate our broad common ground. Holy people must be vigilant against unfairly pigeonholing one another. Holy people should recoil in dismay at the thought of defending the doctrine of perfect love *un- lovingly*! I offer my version of the evidence for entire sanctification with the solicitous prayer that, with the Holy Spirit’s guidance, it will measure up to this standard.

### Summary

So, then, what are the essentials around which the holiness movement should be unified? It is evident that, by codifying movement-wide the tenets of the classical view, either the holiness movement in the main is a repository of truth about entire sanctification; or virtually the entire holiness movement is off track regarding entire sanctification, and instead should be uniformly espousing a strictly relational (or some other) view. I believe we must continue to agree that classical holiness orthodoxy is the center around which the holiness movement should be unified. Only then will we truly be able to spread Scriptural holiness throughout the world in the twenty-first century with compelling conviction and have the impact that accompanies a message backed by biblical authority.

Implicit in these seven points of holiness orthodoxy<sup>25</sup> is the fact –

served blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” See the link at [www.salvationist.org](http://www.salvationist.org).

<sup>24</sup> For example, Dunning affirms, “In renewing man in His image, God’s great goal of the total salvation process, one must take account of both sides, the negative and the positive.” Op. cit., *Grace, Faith, and Holiness*, 479. Another example is William Greathouse, *From the Apostles to Wesley: Christian Perfection in Historical Perspective* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1979), 114, who says, “Christian Perfection has its beginning, on the human side, in a *moral crisis* which Wesley called a death to sin, and its continuance in a *maintained relationship* of obedient trust” (emphasis his). Notice his emphasis on both crisis and relationship.

<sup>25</sup> J. Paul Taylor, op. cit., *Holiness: The Finished Foundation*, who confidently says his analysis is true to Wesley and the early period of Methodism, names

⇒ that entire sanctification is God's idea, God's will, God's redemptive purpose for his people. All legitimate discussion of entire sanctification begins with this premise.

What logically follows, then, is explicit –

⇒ that God has made provision for a complete and personal sanctification for his people. Would it not be nonsense to maintain that entire sanctification is God's will and at the same time deny that God has provided for our possession of it in this life?

This question provides the bridge to the third logical point –

⇒ that God expects us to take possession of his gracious provision by faith.

### **Irreducible Definition**

For purposes of my presentation, I have attempted to reduce this orthodoxy to the simplest possible terms. Stated as succinctly as possible, the biblical doctrine of entire sanctification is:

#### **◆ God's will to make earnest Christians wholly holy now!**

Let us break this statement down into its component parts:

- 1. God's will** – entire sanctification is a divine desire and imperative. He wills, he calls, he prescribes. It is part of *the* plan of salvation.
- 2. To make** – entire sanctification is a divine act. Only God sanctifies. Entire sanctification is no more a human achievement than is regeneration. It is wholly by grace.
- 3. Earnest** – entire sanctification requires human cooperation. God's people must fully consecrate themselves by faith. No one is entirely sanctified without wholeheartedly seeking God for this grace.

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(instead of my seven) ten "foundation stones" of the doctrine that correspond precisely with the Free Methodist Article of Faith. They are: 1) entire sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit, 2) entire sanctification is subsequent to regeneration, 3) entire sanctification is obtained by the fully consecrated believer upon exercise of faith in the atoning blood of Christ, 4) entire sanctification cleanses from all inward sin, 5) entire sanctification cleanses "in that moment" of consecration and faith, 6) entire sanctification empowers for service, 7) entire sanctification is attested by the witness of the Holy Spirit, 8) entire sanctification is maintained by obedience and faith, 9) entire sanctification enables the believer to love God with all the heart, soul, strength, and mind; and his neighbor as himself, 10) entire sanctification prepares for greater growth in grace.

4. **Christians** – entire sanctification is for those already saved. It is subsequent to regeneration.
5. **Wholly** – entire sanctification is entire. God’s purpose is to cleanse fully, to purge thoroughly, to fill completely, to saturate totally.<sup>26</sup> It is whole sanctification for the whole person.
6. **Holy** – entire sanctification is both the negative remediation of Adamic depravity and the positive impartation of true holiness. It is not merely a position or a process or a counteraction; it is a divinely imparted state from which holy living proceeds as a natural consequence. Real, personal holiness of heart and life is the result of entire sanctification. Biblically, this holiness is best understood as blamelessness before God on the one hand, and wholeness in Christ on the other hand. Entire sanctification is wrought by the *Holy Spirit*.
7. **Now** – entire sanctification is the present privilege of God’s children. God is ready, willing, and able to grant this grace now. He only waits for the Christian to fully yield by faith.

### **Fundamental Propositions**

The heart of my case further reduces Wesleyan-holiness orthodoxy to three simple points. I attempt to incorporate all crucial elements of the orthodoxy into my exposition of these three propositions:

1. God has *prescribed* entire sanctification for his people.
2. Through Jesus Christ, God has *provided* for the entire sanctification of his people.
3. By God’s grace, Christians may *possess* the experience and life of entire sanctification.

Prescription corresponds with the first two words of my definition – “God’s will.”

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<sup>26</sup> Because the doctrine is so often misunderstood at this point, a crucial distinction must be made. A person can be *wholly* holy, while still not being as holy as he can be or will be. A simple illustration will suffice to prove this point. A bridegroom can wholly love his bride on their wedding day, while still not loving her as much as he can or will over time. Just as his capacity for love will expand as their relationship matures, so an entirely sanctified person’s capacity for holiness will expand as he grows in grace! A pure heart does not preclude growth in grace!

Provision corresponds with the second part of my definition – “to make.”

Possession corresponds with the remaining five parts of my definition – “earnest Christians wholly holy now.”

Here one discovers the logical movement of God’s saving activity ⇒ prescription, provision, and possession.

God prescribes.

God provides.

We possess.

Interwoven throughout the development of these three fundamental propositions will be the following facts, for which I will seek to provide positive proofs:

1. God’s prescription calls for *entire* sanctification, never merely a partial or progressive sanctification; and God’s provision is sufficient for the same.
2. God’s prescription calls for *personal* sanctification, never merely a positional sanctification; and God’s provision is sufficient for the same.
3. God’s prescription calls for the *present* possession of this kind of sanctification; and God’s provision is sufficient for the same.

In this second list, one discovers the character of entire sanctification itself.

It is complete.

It is real.

It is contemporaneous.

These points will be emphasized over and over throughout my presentation of the doctrine.

Ladies and gentlemen, my defense consists of a series of addresses. The first five addresses attempt to lay a proper foundation for the case, though I will only scratch the surface of possible discussion in these areas. Conceptually, the foundation must be constructed under two broad categories, namely faith and practice (or, doctrine and experience). The first three addresses discuss issues that are foundational to a correct understanding of the *doctrine* of entire sanctification. The basic issue before us in these first three addresses is doctrinal truth. The basic questions are: What is the source of that truth? How do we get it right? What safeguards are there against getting it wrong? And, what can we learn from the historical variety of attempts to get it right? Consequently, I will discuss the biblical-hermeneutical foundation, the historical-theological foundation, and the tradition-theological foundation.

In my presentation of the biblical-hermeneutical foundation, I will seek to offer a valid interpretive basis upon which to build the biblical data into a solid doctrinal structure, by searching for a hermeneutical key that the Bible provides for itself. In my presentation of the historical-theological foundation, I will attempt to link the doctrine of entire sanctification to the apostolic teaching and the early period of church history, thereby certifying its orthodox character. In my presentation of the tradition-theological foundation, I will discuss and critique the variety of historical and contemporary understandings of the doctrine.

The next two addresses concern the issues that are foundational to a correct understanding of the personal *reality* of entire sanctification. Consequently, the fourth address will focus on the diagnostic foundation, and the fifth address will center on the experiential foundation. In my presentation of the diagnostic foundation, I will briefly examine the problem of sin in the human condition and how this reality is the logical ground for two epochal works of grace. In my presentation of the experiential foundation, I will set forth my understanding of the character of the first work of grace, known variously as Christian conversion, justification, regeneration, and the new birth; for entire sanctification as a second definite work of grace builds on the bedrock of a genuine first work of grace. If we correctly interpret the biblical data, certify that we are firmly rooted within the boundaries of the historic Christian faith, accurately sort out the truth about entire sanctification from its false conceptions, know why such an experience of grace is experientially necessary, and truly grasp the nature of its experiential prerequisite, then and only then will we be able to make a compelling defense of entire sanctification.

The heart of my defense will begin in the sixth address when I call the expert witnesses. Please examine their testimony carefully. I believe you will find the testimony to be credible and convincing.

I will then argue the case in the seventh through ninth addresses, by using the medical metaphor referred to a moment ago. I will liken God to a physician who prescribes a specific cure for a dreaded disease. In the analogy, Jesus Christ himself is the medicine! He is the blood donor, the provider of the medication. The patient, then, is left with no other logical alternative but happily to possess the remedy, which, of course, cannot be done apart from the special aid of the Holy Spirit, the pharmacist, the dispenser of the medication. Again,

succinctly stated, entire sanctification is prescribed by God, provided for by Jesus Christ, and must be possessed by the Christian.

Naturally, questions may arise in your minds as you consider the implications of the various addresses. The tenth address attempts to answer as many of those questions as possible, before I conclude the defense with my closing statement.

# **Part One**

## **Laying a Proper Foundation**

In the five addresses that make up this part of my evidence, I will argue first that all attempts at accurate doctrinal definition of the Christian faith, especially the soteriological core, must adopt as a conceptual framework the covenantal synergism<sup>27</sup> which was set in motion by the sovereign God himself at the time of the creation of humanity and is operative throughout Scripture.<sup>28</sup>

I will further contend that, if we begin with this premise and our vision is not obstructed (with the help of the Holy Spirit)

by inaccurate sight lines or angles,<sup>29</sup>

by unorthodox positioning,<sup>30</sup>

by foreign objects in our eyes,<sup>31</sup>

by deliberately closing our eyes,<sup>32</sup>

by misunderstanding the nature of the sinful human condition,<sup>33</sup>

or by misunderstanding the God-ordained salvation sequence,<sup>34</sup>

then we should see the truly biblical doctrine of entire sanctification. Stated in reverse, when our understanding of the doctrine of entire sanctification is viewed through this lens, we will stand on solid theological ground.

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<sup>27</sup> I use the term synergism to refer a particular kind of relationship between God and humanity, which requires the active participation of both in order for salvation to be personally actualized (except in the case of irresponsibles or unaccountables). I use the term covenantal to refer to a particular kind of synergism. This is explained in more detail later in the present address.

<sup>28</sup> It would require a full-length study to document the claim that covenantal synergism is operative throughout Scripture. I can only hope to buttress the claim with the sampling of Scriptures analyzed in more detail throughout this book.

<sup>29</sup> Faulty hermeneutics.

<sup>30</sup> Not true to apostolic teaching.

<sup>31</sup> Theological bias.

<sup>32</sup> Unwillingness to submit to biblical authority.

<sup>33</sup> The two-fold nature of sin (we are sinners by condition and by choice); or the three-fold nature of sin (we are sinners by condition and by choice; and we suffer from the scars of sin as long as we are on earth) .

<sup>34</sup> Two epochal works of grace that correspond to the two-fold nature of sin (initial sanctification and entire sanctification); or three epochal works of grace that correspond to the three-fold nature of sin (initial sanctification, entire sanctification, and glorification).

## **FIRST MAIN ADDRESS TO THE JURY**

### **Laying a Biblical-Hermeneutical Foundation for the Case**

## ***“In Search of a Truly Biblical Perspective on Entire Sanctification”***

The jury has the right to know the hermeneutical principles that guide me, and the ones I believe should guide them. So I ask, is there a way to ensure my defense accurately presents the facts? Is there a way to be certain I emerge with the correct interpretation in the end? At the risk of badly oversimplifying the matter, I will devote some space to this concern now.

Thoughtful interpreters from various theological traditions claim to present “biblical” truth. Often, however, we can only conclude that someone must be wrong, because diametrically opposed positions frequently come to the fore.

Unfortunately, this problem touches not just the periphery of Christian doctrine (non-essentials), but also strikes at the heart of fundamental Christian teachings. My presentation dives headlong into some of these areas of dissent. For example, some traditions teach (as biblical truth) that sin is ultimately irremediable in this life. The Wesleyan-holiness tradition strenuously disagrees, boldly asserting that a complete remedy for sin is at the very core of Christ’s atoning provisions. Some traditions object to any talk of *entire* sanctification in this life. By contrast, the Wesleyan-holiness tradition holds the belief that entire sanctification is not only thoroughly biblical, but exactly the kind of gracious work we should expect from a holy God who purposes to have communion with his holy people. Some traditions presuppose the impossibility of perfect love (in spite of explicit Scriptural testimony). The Wesleyan-holiness tradition not only embraces the possibility, but urgently presses its constituents to receive this grace by faith.

How did Christian theology arrive at such an impasse? It would be difficult to blame laypersons for finding this situation inexcusable, or for asking, what should I believe? The present address is my modest attempt to give laypersons a ray of hope toward resolving this problem.

First, it will be helpful to realize that some degree of disagreement is inevitable in the interface of human relationships (especially theological discussion). At best, we can only hope to minimize it. Second, it may also be helpful to consider the possibility that some disagreement, within orthodox parameters, may actually be a good thing. It fosters a spirit of investigation. We are more inclined to examine our own position carefully because of the challenge presented by an alternate one. Aside from this, two rays of hope shine: 1) the discipline of hermeneutics—the art and science of literary interpretation,

aided, of course, by the Holy Spirit; and 2) the study of church history, especially the early period when the infant church, superintended by the Holy Spirit, codified Christian orthodoxy. The present address will attempt to poke a hole in the clouds that obscure the first of these rays of hope. The next address will attempt to do the same for the second ray of hope.

The pursuit of truth has certain “ground rules” (hermeneutical principles) which honest and sincere interpreters of the sacred text agree we must conscientiously try to obey. The ground rules are determined by the nature of literature itself. The Bible is literature. Granted, it is *unique* literature because it is the word of God. But it is literature nonetheless. It is the Word of God in the words of men. Therefore, good literary technique must be applied when interpreting the text of Scripture, combined with a reverence for and a willingness to come under its divine authority. A proper approach to Bible study should lead us to embrace the truth.

Having said that, I do not wish to give the impression that only a trained specialist in hermeneutics can get the job done. I would not put myself in that category, even though I have some training in that discipline. I prefer to style myself a “student of the Word.” At the same time I am also a “student of the Word *in-the-making*.” We can know the truth while still pursuing the truth.

Nor do I wish to give the impression that a highly trained specialist in hermeneutics will necessarily get the job done. Sometimes the specialist gets it right, while the layperson gets it wrong. Sometimes, however, it’s the other way around. In that sense, even the untrained can get to the truth if they will follow the rules and submit to biblical authority. But even then, both the trained and the untrained must take great care not to err. The Word is holy. It breathes the breath of God.

The truth, especially essential redemptive truth, is marked by its simplicity and perspicuity. I have made every effort to present my evidence in such a way that laypersons may readily recognize it as plain scriptural truth, and in such a way as to dispel any doubts that may have existed previously in the mind of the reader. This does not mean that my findings are not subject to fine-tuning, or even correction. And I make no claim to have spoken the final word on the subject. The Bible does that. Remember, I referred to myself as a Bible student still *in-the-making*. Nevertheless I hold the conviction that the present study conveys momentous biblical truth.

### *Biblical Authority*

The Bible is the supreme source of Christian doctrine. All other sources are secondary and answerable to the Bible. Indeed, we can correctly assert that the Bible is the *only* source of Christian doctrine. While we may supplement biblical study with an appeal to various other disciplines (e.g., theology, literature, linguistics, logic, history, philosophy, psychology, sociology, science, etc.), the Bible alone is the written Word of God, and will forever remain so. In its pages we find the truth about God's will and the drama of redemption. At their best, other sources or scholarly disciplines can only provide categories or techniques which can assist us in uncovering the truth of the Bible.

They can be useful tools in the right hands. But we must never forget that God designs to communicate the good news with fallen humanity. Whatever is important for us to know, God communicates in the Bible. And He communicates it clearly enough for a child to understand and be saved from sin. Whatever is not important for us to know, God has shrouded in mystery. He knows best.

All sincere theologians and Bible scholars, regardless of their frame of reference, recognize that some points of Christian doctrine are relatively clear and comprise areas of general agreement (for this we may rejoice!), while other points are not as clear and subject to healthy debate. The doctrine of entire sanctification is of crucial importance because of its inextricable relation to the broader categories of hamartiology (the doctrines related to sin) and soteriology (the doctrines related to salvation). There can be no doubt that these doctrines are important for us to know. These are not side issues.

Even if we speak of them often, we are not "majoring on minors" or harping on a "pet" doctrine. These are theological matters of primary importance. And what we "know" must be correct. It must be correct because it's biblical, not biblical because it's "correct." This principle forms the working basis for the present study in its entirety. I believe entire sanctification (as codified in Wesleyan-holiness orthodoxy) is correct, because it is biblical!

An important question arises at this point, namely, "Which should be our chief concern—orthodoxy or hermeneutics?" ⇒ If the answer is orthodoxy, then we already know the truth as handed down to us in the accepted creeds of Christendom. Our forebears in the faith have already gone through the rigorous process of pounding out the propositional truths which constitute essential Christian doctrine. In that case, all we need to do is recite the creed and believe from the heart what we speak.

⇒ If the answer is hermeneutics, then we rely on proper interpretation of Scripture to provide us with the truth. We turn to the Bible and there discover the things which constitute acceptable Christian belief. Having discovered the truth, we embrace it, whether it agrees with the creeds or not.

In order to get the reader to think through the issue carefully, I have purposely phrased the preceding two paragraphs as if it were an either/or matter. Actually, however, I believe it is a both/and matter. That is, the two go hand in hand. But how can that be if Scripture is the only source of doctrine? Let me try to explain.

Yes, Scripture takes priority over the creeds, but the crafters of the creeds would have agreed that it does. Because of the earliest Christians' historical proximity to Jesus Christ, they were uniquely qualified to articulate the essentials of Christianity. The leaders received the teaching of Jesus directly. They received his invested authority directly (cf. Matthew 28:18-20). Thus, apostolic authority had the stamp of divine authority. In the apostolic period, doctrinal disputes could be settled by appealing to the apostles directly. The Jerusalem council in Acts 15 is a good example. Those wise and holy men decided to write a letter and send it to the appropriate parties. Notice the first line,

“We have heard that some went out from us *without our authorization* and disturbed you ...” (15:24).

But who could the church appeal to when the apostles were all dead and gone? In the post-apostolic period and subsequent generations, formulating the orthodox creeds became even more necessary because it did not take long for a variety of interpretations of the authoritative materials to arise, some of which were utterly false and had to be repudiated. Formulating the orthodox creeds, then, was necessary because of the constant threat of heresy from within and without. Historic Christian belief (i.e., true Christianity) had to remain uncorrupted in order to pass it on to future generations without admixture of error. The early Christians recognized the peril of allowing even a tinge of corruption to infiltrate the apostolic teaching, remembering with the apostle Paul that “a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (1 Corinthians 5:6, KJV). A slight deviation might seem innocuous at first, but eventually, if left uncorrected, could lead to full-blown and deadly error. Paul himself was so adamant about preserving the gospel message inviolate that he anathematized anyone who preached a different one:

“But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!” (Galatians 1:8-9).

Paul’s insistent tone has a ring of intolerance that the modern mind disdains as “hateful.” Quite the contrary, however, Paul’s insistence betrays an unwavering love for Christ and that those who embrace Christ do so in truth. Note carefully Paul’s words in 2 Thessalonians 2:13:

“... God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.”

This can only happen if the truth is faithfully preserved.<sup>35</sup>

Therefore, the creeds serve the vitally important function of *safeguarding* us against hermeneutical, and therefore, doctrinal error! Orthodoxy is a sort of guardrail (or corrective) erected to keep us from going over the cliff and plunging into all manner of false doctrine because our hermeneutics were bad.

Scripture is the *source* of doctrine, the only source. There is no other. It is thoroughly orthodox to affirm this! Orthodoxy itself is not a source of doctrine; it is rather a *statement* of doctrine. Without biblical hermeneutics, orthodoxy is ungrounded and lifeless. Without orthodoxy, biblical hermeneutics is at risk of running amok.

In the foregoing section, I said all this to say that my study, as my analysis of many biblical texts throughout the pages of this book demonstrates, assumes the authority of Scripture as the only source of truth regarding what we should believe about entire sanctification. In a corroborative way, orthodoxy (or, apostolic teaching) is appealed to only to show that my interpretation is not askew of the historic Christian faith. That is to say, I have not gone over the cliff and crashed into error. The guard rail of orthodoxy has kept me from doing that.

### **Substitutes for Biblical Authority**

The Bible is often called “the sole rule of Christian faith and practice” (i.e., what we should believe and how we should conduct ourselves) or “the

<sup>35</sup> Cf. also Jesus response to the Sadducees in Matthew 22:29, “You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God,” which also links these two elements.

final court of arbitration.” Therefore, the Bible always shapes the contours of Christian theological history, to one degree or another. In some cases, however, the Bible assumes a secondary role in actual practice.

There are two principal ways this happens (or has happened).

One way this happens is for *particular traditions* to become elevated to a position greater than or equal to the Bible in authority. In this instance, the Bible is not, in the final analysis, the sole shaper of theology. It would be more precise to say, in this case, that specific (erroneous) *interpretations* of the Bible, or specific constructs placed over the Bible as an interpretive grid, often develop into doctrinal traditions. A theological construct insures that the Bible “says” what the interpreter “wants it to say.” Many interpreters do this without even realizing it. All interpreters must be aware of the danger and cautiously seek to avoid it. I must carefully try to avoid it. It is possible *in theory* to esteem the Bible as the final arbiter, while *in practice* espousing doctrines that are not actually rooted in the Bible and cannot be supported by sound hermeneutics.

With the passage of sufficient time, almost imperceptibly, a doctrinal tradition may elevate to a status equal in authority to the Bible, even if it has strayed far from the Bible and from apostolic teaching.<sup>36</sup> In actual practice, the tradition may even outrank Scripture. The tradition then becomes a theological provincialism, widely believed and jealously guarded (as “truth,” even when it isn’t) from one generation to the next. Once this status has been reached, a person’s theological bias usually becomes an impenetrable fortress of protection for the doctrine. Sadly, no amount of plain Scriptural testimony to the contrary will move such a person out of his entrenched position. Indeed, persons in this category will frequently say something like, “The Bible *clearly* teaches this doctrine.” Oddly enough, the “clarity” isn’t always so clear to everyone. This has happened often, although few within those borders will admit it.

Biblical authority also is usurped when people elevate religious experience to the highly authoritative position it does not deserve. Throughout church history, religious experience has been notoriously unreliable as a guide for faith and practice, especially when it is highly emotive or esoteric.

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<sup>36</sup> I am assuming that a valid hermeneutic seeks to ascertain the author’s original intent.

Frequently in Christian and pseudo-Christian circles people will exclaim, “I know what I saw,” or “I know what I felt,” or “I know it was real.” The only basis for such alleged “knowing” is the experience itself. There is a strong tendency here to use the subjective experience as a starting point, and then go to the objective word of God for support. At this point, the interpreter’s mind is already so biased in favor of the experience, he is likely to authenticate it in the Bible somewhere, somehow. Usually, once this has occurred, the interpreter’s mind is irretrievably made up. No amount of biblical evidence that militates against the belief or the religious practice will be persuasive. Neither will it matter if someone demonstrates a total lack of biblical evidence to support the belief or practice. The gravity of these errors is incalculable.

### **Getting It Right**

In order to get it right, we must pay attention to the two components mentioned earlier: biblical hermeneutics and early Christian orthodoxy. The remainder of the present address will give heed to the first of these. We must be willing to place ourselves under the authority of Scripture (correctly taught) and allow it to be a solemn corrective to what is false. Paul admonished Timothy,

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15, NKJV).

This verse teaches at least three things:

1. The Word can be either rightly or wrongly divided—we must get it right!
2. Getting it right brings God’s approval and the interpreter bears no shame.
3. Getting it right requires diligence. Study is hard work.

If we are to arrive at the correct teaching of the Scripture, rigorous study will be required. But there is a flip side to this coin. We must be willing to let the Word of God “sink down into our ears” (Luke 9:44, NKJV). Not only must we diligently study the text, we must also allow the text to diligently study us. As one scholar of hermeneutics put it, “The texts must translate us

before we can translate them.”<sup>37</sup> We must be willing to ask, “Living and Eternal Word, what truth are you trying to *teach* me here? What attitudes, beliefs, or practices are you trying to *rebuke* here? What attitudes, beliefs, or practices are you trying to *correct* here? Am I correctable? Am I teachable? Will I allow you to *train* me in righteousness?” (2 Timothy 3:16). But I repeat, all of these questions must be grounded in an honest effort to recover the author’s original intent—the *correct* teaching, not what we assume, what we think, what we feel, or what we wish.

We must be willing to change from an incorrect doctrine to a correct one. And if and when we do change, it must be for one and only one reason—the Bible, speaking for itself and correctly understood, demands it!

Ask yourself, am I willing to submit to biblical authority? If the Holy Spirit speaks divine truth through the Bible, will I walk in that light or not?

### **The Importance of Our Starting Point**

A person’s starting point largely determines the rightness or wrongness of his theology. All interpreters have presuppositions (starting points) which tend to color their findings to one degree or another. Some interpreters go astray because they were off course from the start. Others get closer to the truth because they began closer to the correct starting point. We could call the starting point a “lens” through which biblical data is viewed. The best lens, the most accurate lens, the correct lens, is the one the Bible itself provides. What I mean by this last statement is this ⇒ we must interpret the Bible as the Bible intends itself to be interpreted (or, as God intends it to be interpreted!). Only then will we have the correct meaning, the truly biblical meaning. If we are going to recover the original truth, the genuine Christian doctrine, the apostolic teaching, the correct interpretation of the Bible, then we must have a sound method for doing so.

It would be fair to ask at this point, on what basis can anyone know how God wants the Bible to be interpreted? Paul prescribed to Timothy the principle of overarching importance: *correctly handling the word of truth* (2 Timothy 2:15). The Greek word translated “correctly handling” (NIV) or “rightly

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<sup>37</sup> Ernst Fuchs, “The Hermeneutical Problem,” cited by Anthony C. Thiselton, “The New Hermeneutic,” in *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1977), 313.

dividing” (KJV) is ὀρθοτομουντα. The root of this word signifies something “straight” and as a verb literally means “cut straight.”<sup>38</sup> In order to cut straight, one must have the right tools and use them rightly.

But that presents a problem. Even if I am using good method, how can I see which lens the Bible is providing, if I am already looking through a lens of my own—one that may blur my vision of the one the Bible is providing for me? Let me ask the same question more pointedly, how can I see what the Bible really teaches about entire sanctification, if I am already predisposed to see it through the lens of Wesleyan-holiness orthodoxy? Unless my Wesleyan-holiness lens focuses at the same setting as that of apostolic teaching (the correct setting), then my vision of the biblical data will be blurred (even though I may not realize it). It is not easy to do (some would even say it is impossible), but each interpreter must attempt to get as “unobstructed” a view of the biblical data as possible. This is the only way to get at the true biblical perspective on a subject. Let me try to illustrate.

Suppose you wrote an important book. You, the author, had a message to communicate. Yours is the true message of the book. An interpreter may exclaim, “I think this is the message of this book.” But if you were consulted, you might say, “No, that is not the message.” Who is right? Of course, you are! It’s your book! You did your best to make that message as clear as possible. You did not want to be misunderstood. However, in the course of your writing you made statements in different places that on the surface appear to be contradictory. You do not necessarily bear responsibility for this. If interpreted correctly, it will be clear that the alleged contradiction is only superficial. In fact, you did not contradict yourself at all. However, the nature of language makes it possible for your words to appear that way. Or, at least they lend themselves to more than one possible interpretation. It is possible that some readers will take your words and twist them to mean something entirely different than what you intended. They, too, may have done this inadvertently. Perhaps they simply had the wrong frame of reference, or lens, from the start.

This is not so much a problem of your writing as it is a problem of *their* interpretation. You know what you meant, but the members of your reading

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<sup>38</sup> W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell, 1966), 1:327. See Proverbs 3:6 and 11:5 where the verb is used in the Septuagint.

audience are left to determine your meaning on their own. How should they go about it?

The answer takes us back to the discussion of the lens. The readers should try to discover *your* lens. Otherwise, viewing only through their own lens, they may “see” in your writing things you didn’t really say and “understand” things you didn’t really mean. Their starting point will cause them to end up with a message you did not intend to communicate at all—a false message. As a serious author, you would not appreciate that outcome.

A fair and objective interpreter should be able to find your lens, probably at or near the beginning of your book. You probably made it easy enough to ascertain. Your assumptions, your purpose, your methodology, your guiding principles, and your fundamental propositions are probably open to plain view.

### **Good Hermeneutical Method**

Your readers can best go about determining your meaning by employing a method of interpretation that will direct them to it. Of course, the direct approach would be to consult the author personally. If that is not possible, the interpreter must simply become as thoroughly familiar with the author’s writings as possible. The more time one spends with that writer’s words, the more likely he is to understand how that writer intended his words to be understood. In the case of the Christian interpreter and the Bible, this direct approach is also possible. The problem is, many persons claim to have received their message directly from God, but they are obviously wrong (e.g. David Koresh, the false prophet/“messiah” of the Branch Davidians). Good hermeneutical method requires us to do more than claim a direct pipeline to God. The Bible itself admonishes “*study* to show yourself approved” (2 Timothy 2:15), and Jesus himself instructed his listeners to “*Search* the Scriptures” (John 5:39, KJV). Good hermeneutical method is often circular, or spiraling. The method leads to a discovery of the author’s lens. Then, when the data is viewed through that lens, the interpreter discovers the author’s intended meaning. The discovery of the author’s meaning sharpens the focus of the lens, leading to deeper insights into the author’s message. The more time a serious interpreter spends immersing himself in the biblical text and in prayer, the more likely it is he will accurately understand what God intended.

Let us attempt to organize a good hermeneutical approach to Scripture. Here is one possibility:

Step One: Pray for divine guidance. God is the author. He knows what his Word means. It is his meaning we want, not our own or some other. This step could be called **communion with the author**. Once this interpersonal relation is established, it should be maintained throughout the whole process.

“When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth”  
(John 16:13).

Step Two: Do your best to study the Word (the written word) accurately. In this step the Bible student is the subject; the Bible is the *object* of scrutiny.

- A. The starting point for accurate study is **observation** of the text itself. In the observation stage, the Bible student is attempting to answer the basic question, “What does the text say?” There are two things to look for:
1. Content – “What does it say?” This is grammatical analysis. What are the actual nouns, verbs, etc., and what is their grammatical identification? We must identify number and cases of nouns, for example; as well as tenses and moods of verbs, among other things. We must also be aware of key phrases and other larger blocks of material.
  2. Structure – “How does it say what it says?” This is syntactical and literary analysis. How are words being used in this context? What is the relationship between words and phrases and paragraphs, and even parts of the book-as-a-whole? Does the author use contrasts or comparisons? Cause and effect? Repetition? Other literary or structural laws?
- B. The next stage of accurate study is **interrogation** of the text. Interrogation of the text is the link between observation and interpretation. Observation is the task of seeing what’s there and how it’s there. Interrogation is the task of asking the key questions that arise from the observation. Who? What? What does it mean? What does this imply? When? Where? Why? How? How much? How long? To what extent? Etc. Interpretation (the next step), then, is the task of answering the questions that have been raised. The importance of good and proper interrogation is stated in the maxim, “To get the right answers, one must ask the right questions!”
- C. The third stage in accurate Bible study is **interpretation**, answering the questions raised earlier. The basic question at issue here is “what *did* it mean?” In the interpretation stage, we are only interested in the original intent. What did the author mean when he wrote this? What did it mean to the original audience? Only then can we make proper application in the present.

1. To a large extent, the observations made previously, if done well and done thoroughly, will provide the answers.
2. Bible dictionaries, atlases, concordances, and other reference works will also answer many questions.
3. Inferential reasoning (logic) will also enable the interpreter to arrive at proper conclusions (answers).
4. Whenever multiple interpretations are possible, a proper hermeneutical hierarchy must be employed:
  - a. Words, sentences, and paragraphs (contexts) are the primary carriers of meaning. Therefore, the plain obvious sense of the text should be primary. Language intended to be taken literally should be taken literally. Language intended to be taken figuratively (or in some sense other than literal) should not be taken literally.
    - (1) The purpose must be taken into consideration. Did the author clearly state his purpose? Look for statements like, "The objective of this book is ..." or "The reason I am writing this is ..."
    - (2) The literary genre must be taken into consideration. Why did the author use this style?
    - (3) The historical background must be taken into consideration. What was happening in the historical era being discussed?
    - (4) The sociological background must be taken into consideration. What was it like to live in those times?
    - (5) The intended audience and their relationship with the author must be taken into consideration. Who is being addressed? What do we know about them?
    - (6) The life situation must be taken into consideration. What situation produced this text? What issue is being addressed, and why?
    - (7) The character and personality of the author must be taken into consideration. It is safe to assume that serious authors report information truthfully.
  - b. Whenever alternative interpretations emerge from two or more passages, we must recognize that no serious author deliberately contradicts himself. Priority should be given to the passage which is literal. If both are literal, priority should be given to the passage which is most clear, most unambiguous, most unity-friendly to the

piece of literature being studied, and best explains the other. Priority should be given to the text which precludes the other possible interpretation, especially when the alternate interpretation does not preclude the first interpretation.

- c. Words are best understood synchronically, not diachronically. That is, words should be interpreted in accordance with the way they were used at particular points in time, not according to the etymology of the word. Did the author define his terms? If not, does the context clarify the meaning?
- D. The fourth stage is **evaluation**. Not all biblical material is applicable in the present. Evaluation determines the applicability of the material. Questions at issue here include: Is this truth trans-chronic (true across periods of time, or in different eras)? Is this truth trans-cultural? Is the author intending to convey truth that is applicable at all times and in all places by all persons? Is this repeatable?
- E. The fifth stage is **application**. The question at issue here is “What *does* it mean?” And, “How should this truth be applied in contemporary life?” After determining the original meaning and the applicability of the text, the final step is to apply it to contemporary life.
  1. Is there a one-to-one correspondence between the historical application and the contemporary application? That is, does the original meaning have precisely the same application now as it did historically? Can the actual *practices* of the text be repeated today? Should they be repeated?
  2. Does the application not have a one-to-one correspondence? That is, do we have solid reason to believe the precise original application should not be the current application? If so, are there biblical *principles* that apply in lieu of the actual practices?
- F. A sixth stage could be called **doctrinal definition**. At this stage the guiding question is, “What beliefs and practices should I hold as truly biblical, and therefore truly Christian?” “Do my findings align with apostolic teaching, and therefore with true Christian orthodoxy?” If not, one should go back and try to ascertain where he may have went askew in his hermeneutical application.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Teachers of the so-called prosperity gospel and the word-of-faith movement would do well to heed this dictum.

Step Three: Deliberately place yourself before the Word (the Living Word, Jesus Christ). In this step the Word is the subject; the Bible student is the object of scrutiny.

This is what I call *subject—object reciprocation*. At this point the Bible student asks, “Lord, what are you trying to say to me here?” “What attitudes, ambitions, and/or actions do you want to shape or transform here?” “What changes do you want in my life?”

“What do you want me to do in response to this text?” As you meditate on the Word, permit God to study you and show you his will. Here is where good hermeneutical method comes full circle. It begins and ends with author-interpreter communion. The interpreter’s message should be the same as what the author intended. When the more objective and the more subjective aspects of the hermeneutical process are held in proper balance, extremes in interpretation are more likely to be avoided.

Step Four: Bring yourself under biblical authority. Obey the clear voice of the Lord. Live out the meaning and the full implications of the Word. Pray for divine help. Commit yourself to daily application of Scriptural truth.

Proper hermeneutical technique will enable the interpreter to get closer to the *author’s lens*, and avoid the pitfalls associated with reading the text through his own. We must reject as illegitimate any method that disdains original intent,<sup>40</sup> or knowingly places over the text any *a priori* theological grid.

One more point deserves brief consideration. The biblical authors were uniquely and divinely inspired. All other authors are not. The Bible is God-breathed. It is what God wants to say to us. Therefore, it is all the more important that we accurately recover the words of the biblical authors and correctly interpret their message.<sup>41</sup> Briefly stated, good hermeneutics will enable

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<sup>40</sup> In this category is any Bible study that concerns itself only with the question, “What does this mean *to me*?”

<sup>41</sup> At this juncture, it may be helpful to point out the *integrity* of the transmitted biblical text. We do not have the originals (or autographs). We have copies. Indeed, we have copies of copies of copies of copies of copies. Nevertheless, the science of textual criticism has shown convincingly the text “as we now have it” to be so accurate as to justify the assertion that, “in effect, we *do* have the original text before us!” Readers who are interested in pursuing this topic may read Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1977), and J. Harold Greenlee, *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977).

us to discover the true biblical lens ( or get very close); then, when we view the data through that lens (while continuing to employ good hermeneutical technique), we will be able to identify correct biblical teachings. This, in turn, will help lead us toward accurate doctrinal definition, because then we will be viewing the data from the perspective God intended.<sup>42</sup>

## **In Search of the Biblical Lens**

Since the Bible, as God’s written revelation to humanity, is a unified whole, I am presupposing the existence of an overarching lens, or hermeneutical key, for the Bible as a whole. I believe this is true, even though particular portions of the Bible may require a specific perspective somewhat different from another particular portion. For example, the book of Revelation requires the interpreter to view the data through a specific lens that is different than that required when interpreting the book of 1 Chronicles, because the two books represent different literary genres written to different audiences and for different reasons. Nevertheless, both Revelation and 1 Chronicles have this much in common—they are both in the Bible (i.e., they are both part of God’s written revelation), and therefore, should be interpreted as part of the unified whole. That is to say, the interpreter should expect there to be a biblical “worldview” that should be applied to both. I begin the search now.

### **Genesis 1:1**

God wants us to study diligently, but he did not give us the Bible with the intent of keeping us in the dark, especially as it relates to his plan of salvation. It stands to reason therefore, that, if we observe carefully, the Bible will show us its own hermeneutical keys. And it also stands to reason that we won’t have to look far before we begin to find them; because, as I said, the author has a message to communicate. And he wants us to get it right, so he did not disguise his message as a puzzle or brain teaser.<sup>43</sup>

The first verse begins pointing us in the right direction:

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<sup>42</sup> I am aware of the dangers involved in claiming too much here. However, it is crucial to become sure of the ground on which we stand if we are to provide a compelling witness for Christ and his truth.

<sup>43</sup> Jesus spoke in parables, and sometimes his disciples did not understand, but the use of parables primarily served the purpose of illustrating or revealing the truths of the kingdom of God, not disguising them.

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

It should be clear to any interpreter the first verse:

1. Assumes the existence of God and makes no effort to explain it.
2. Explicitly identifies God as the Creator.
3. Assumes its readers will take these facts for granted.

Therefore, we must, at the very least, interpret the biblical data through the glasses of theistic creationism (i.e., God is, and God is the Creator), if we are to be true to the text itself (i.e., interpret as the author intended).

### Genesis 1-4

The first chapter of the Bible goes on to describe the six day creation, culminating on the sixth day with the creation of humankind (1:26-30). Several observations will assist us in moving from the theistic-creationistic base to a more well-defined biblical lens.

God's Design. Let us observe, in the first place, that God gave special attention to the creation of humankind. These points may be noted:

1. Only of the creation of humankind did God say, “Let *us* make man in *our* image, in *our* likeness...” (1:26). In the first chapter, the author allows us to look through a window into the one God's plural nature. If this were all of the Bible we had, a doctrine of the Trinity would be impossible to formalize. But since the Bible is a unity and the triune nature of God is clearly taught many other places, it is not a reach to understand this as a support for the same. What else could it be?
2. Most things were created by fiat, but humankind was “made” (1:26), or “formed” (2:7, cf. also the beasts of the field and birds of the air, 2:19). But only humanity has the “breath” of God in it: “the LORD God ... breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.”
3. Humankind was the last of God's creative acts, indicating that humanity represents in some sense the “pinnacle” of God's creation.
4. God gave humankind “rule” or dominion over the rest of creation, specifically “over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground” (1:26).

5. Most importantly, God created humankind “in his own image.” The text adds this description three times, and once adds the parallel phrase “in our likeness.”

The Image of God. In the second place, let us elaborate on the fact that Adam and Eve (male and female, 1:27) were created in the image of God. Because God subsequently issued a moral command to the humans (2:16-17), we are safe to conclude that “the image of God” has something to do with humanity’s ability to relate to God on an interpersonal, ethical level. They could either obey or disobey.

The animals were not created with this provision. They do not have personhood, moral awareness, or the ability to process information outside the boundaries of their own life span. A chicken does not know it is a chicken; it simply behaves like a chicken. A chicken does not ask itself, “Would it be right or wrong for me to do this or that?” It simply does what chickens do instinctively. A chicken does not have any knowledge of the history of chickens, or have any well-defined aspirations for its own future or of the future of chickens as a species or a “civilization.” Its life and actions, as with all animals, are based on God-given instinct alone. It behaves as it does because it is “wired” to do so. It is not “free” to be otherwise. God issued animals no moral commands. They do not sin. They cannot sin.

Humans, on the other hand, were created with an ability for relationships and self-awareness that other creatures did not receive. In their “wiring,” humans were created with a capacity for moral choice. This distinction between humans and animals, implicit in the text of Genesis 1, is extremely important, because it shows us that God wanted to create *persons* whose relationship with him would have ethical value! Except for humans, all living things function strictly according to the decree of their Creator. The relationship is monergistic. The creatures’ actions are automatic, not ethical.

Not so with humans. In God’s plan, humans, though infinitely and eternally below God ontologically, would possess the capacity to apprehend him in his holy self-disclosure. Only humans pray. Only humans can *commune* with their Creator.

Original Holiness. Let us observe, in the third place, that Adam and Eve were created good. God saw that it was so (Genesis 1:31). By itself, this fact does not distinguish humanity from the rest of creation, because God’s appraisal applied to “all he had done.” However, “goodness” combined with the “image of God” produced a created state for humanity which Richard S.

Taylor terms “sub-ethical” holiness.<sup>44</sup> By this Taylor means that their holiness was *imposed*, not chosen. Consequently, their holiness was absent the moral component that would elevate it to the level of being “fully ethical.” Human holiness could only transition from sub-ethical to fully ethical if it were volitional. Though perfect in its own right, the created holiness of Adam and Eve did not have the moral value God ultimately desired. Taylor explains,

“Ethical holiness is to the greater glory of God. For man to be tested and in the test confirm his choice of God would have immeasurably enriched the relationship ... For God to create a human who loved Him naturally and spontaneously was a wonderful thing, but *how much more* would God be magnified for this pair to choose to love Him.”<sup>45</sup>

The desirability of ethical holiness is the ostensible reason God gave a prohibition and demanded the compliance of the man and woman. Interestingly, only one tree was restricted. Adam and Eve were free to eat from all other trees, showing that God “tipped the scales” extraordinarily toward grace as opposed to law. Nevertheless, the prohibition was absolutely necessary. Indeed, even the prohibition reflects God’s grace because it demonstrates his wish that humanity experience the highest and best holiness possible.

Human response could not be automatic. The relationship had to be *synergistic*. This was the only way their holiness could be tested and become fully ethical.<sup>46</sup> Even though God already fore-knew the outcome and already had planned for sin’s remedy (cf. e.g., Ephesians 3:11; Revelation 13:8), the Edenic drama was neither manipulated nor predetermined by divine decree. Adam and Eve had to be free to embrace holiness by obeying God. They also had to be free to reject it by disobeying God. As Taylor says, “A decision by man *not* to accept God’s offer has the backing of God just as much as has a decision to accept it.”<sup>47</sup> God’s goal appears to have been a sort of synthesis of holiness and freedom.

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<sup>44</sup> Richard S. Taylor, “The Theological Formulation,” *Exploring Christian Holiness*, vol. 3 (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1985), 37-38. Hereafter, volumes in this series will be abbreviated *ECH*.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 38-39 (emphasis added).

<sup>46</sup> This is why we must reject any view that sees primitive holiness as fully ethical. For further discussion, see H. Orton Wiley, *Christian Theology*, vol. 2 (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1952), 39-50.

<sup>47</sup> *Op. cit.*, *ECH*, vol. 3, 26 (emphasis his).

The holiness could only come from himself, the Creator. The holiness had to be a gift (or impartation), because the humans (being creatures) could not create it for themselves.

The freedom (also a gift, something the humans could not have had otherwise) made possible that the holiness would have the ethical quality God designed. The freedom meant that God was compelled (by the demands of his own holy perfections and purposes) to permit the humans to respond either way. This is what I mean by synergism.

God, in the ways that were necessary and that only God could, had to act. But also, the humans, likewise, had to act. It is a specific kind of synergism. It is not an interaction between equals. Instead, it is more akin, though not exactly, to the ancient Near Eastern suzerainty treaty (a covenant relationship between a king and a subject). God is the Creator, the source of holiness, the giver of holiness, and the one who points us in the direction of his will for us—ethical holiness. The humans must respond to the saving initiatives of God, in order for God's will to be actualized. If God made the decision for us, our holiness would have no ethical quality.

The foregoing observations lead me to conclude  $\Rightarrow$  God rejected monergism as his sovereign *modus operandi* in his dealings with humankind. That is, God chose not to be the only actor in the drama of redemption. Holiness could not remain imposed; it must be freely embraced.<sup>48</sup> This means God chose instead to relate to humanity on the basis of some sort of synergism.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> *Theoretically*, on the basis on sovereign prerogative, God could have chosen to operate within a monergistic construct; but *practically* (or in actual practice), he could not, because to do so would have violated (or contradicted) his own holy purposes.

<sup>49</sup> Logically, monergism does not allow for degrees. Because there is only one actor, monergism by its very nature is absolute. There could be no such thing as partial monergism, for that would mean the lone actor performs that function only some of the time. But if that were true, then he would not be the only actor the rest of the time, and in that case you would have synergism, not monergism. Therefore, if monergism were true of salvation, this means God is the only actor from beginning to end. Humans have nothing to do with their salvation *at any time*, because they are completely passive at all times. Under this system, salvation can be nothing more than imposed. It can never have moral value. Therefore, it is inconsistent with the biblical data as found in Genesis 1-3. Synergism, on the other hand, does allow for degrees. There can be varying degrees to which the actors on either side are fulfilling their roles. Moreover, synergism also allows for the possibility that the nature of the actions on either side are of a

That is, both God and humanity (in some sense) must become actors (or active participants) in the drama of redemption, if human holiness can ever be what God desires. God willingly and purposefully limited the exercise of his sovereignty by giving man the right to choose. Thus, even before the fall of humanity into sin, we see that holiness was the divine attribute that motivated and determined the contours of the plan of salvation. The human pair was already holy, but not because they chose to be. In Genesis 2:16-17, God was, in effect, already saying, “Be holy, because I am holy” (cf. Leviticus 11:45). By their obedience, the human pair would choose to be what they already were—like God. So we see that Genesis presents us with more than a Creator who reigns over the affairs of humankind. We read about a God who reigns over a humanity who have the power, *by his choice*, to either accept or reject his reign. In other words, for humanity to have free will is included in his sovereignty. And only he could have so chosen.

He was not required to do so, except in the sense that his own holy nature requires him to act as he does. It is not possible that God could act in any other way. The moment he acted in a way inconsistent with his holiness and all the perfections of his unitary nature, he would cease to be what he is. That is impossible! God is still absolutely sovereign.

To say that God chose to reign in some sort of synergistic way only means that, if the humans were to be holy in the way God desired, they had a *necessary* role to play in obtaining that holiness. This point is very important for doctrinal definition.

All Christians should agree on the following facts:

1. God is the Creator.
2. The Creator possesses the sovereign right to choose the way in which he will relate to humanity.

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wholly different character. For example, a king can offer a gift to one of his subjects, the benefits of which will only be realized if accepted. Both the king and the subject must *actively and freely* participate in the drama, *prior to* the realization of the benefits, but the king’s actions and the subject’s actions are hardly equal. This means we can logically say, “all merit in the drama of redemption belongs wholly to God, and yet humans are still responsible for their own salvation.” This statement embraces synergism, but rejects Pelagianism (the heresy of works righteousness). There is no contradiction here.

3. In the garden of Eden story, one can discover God's sovereign pattern set in motion.

However, disagreement arises when we move beyond these fundamental assertions. A vitally important question must be raised at this point. Did the fall of humanity into sin force God to change his pattern? Having once established his chosen mode of operation in relating to humanity, will God have to change it in midstream? If not, then we should expect to find the same pattern throughout the Scriptures, including those passages that may appear on the surface to run counter to it (but, in fact, do not). If so, then the paradigm of Genesis 1-3 does not necessarily apply in all cases. In order to answer this question, let us first analyze the Genesis account of the fall, and then look briefly at the various theories that have been advanced.

### **The Fall**

In Genesis 2:16-17 God declared,

"You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

The command begins with the positive affirmation "you are free." The emphasis is on God's gracious provision, which consisted of the humans' *freedom* to eat from the many trees in the garden, including one of the two trees in the middle of the garden—the tree of life (2:9).

The second part of the command adds a single prohibition, and a statement concerning the consequences of disobedience. The prohibition centered on the other tree in the middle of the garden—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The consequence of eating from it was "you will surely die." Thus we see that God set before them two trees in the middle of the garden: the tree of life and the tree of "death" (cf. Deuteronomy 30:19).

The human pair already had knowledge of good. God was good. God's creation was good. God's provision was good. The humans themselves were good. The relationship between God and the humans was good.

If they partook of the forbidden tree, then they would have knowledge of good and *evil*. Evil already existed, but not in their experience. It could have stayed that way only by not eating the forbidden fruit.

The Temptation. Genesis 2:19-24 provides the circumstances surrounding God's creation of woman. The chapter ends with the description,

"The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame" (2:25).

Then, abruptly, the serpent is inserted into the narrative as the most “crafty of the wild animals the LORD God had made” (3:1). In Hebrew, the word “naked” (עֲרוּמִים) in 2:25 comes from the same root as the word “crafty” (עָרוּם) in 3:1. The narrative of Eve’s creation is thus linked paronymously with the narrative of the temptation and fall into sin.

The author sets forth the “naked innocence” of Adam and Eve in deliberate contrast with the “malevolent brilliance” of the serpent,<sup>50</sup> setting the stage for what follows. The serpent is purposely introduced as the intelligence who is the source of “the knowledge of evil.” The serpent is differentiated from all other animals as a *personality* in at least four ways:

1. He is *more* crafty (i.e., his craftiness has in it an element that other animals’ does not) (3:1).
2. He speaks audibly in the same language as humans (3:2).
3. He dialogues with the woman (3:1-5).
4. He, ostensibly, is aware of God’s prior command in Genesis 2:16-17 (i.e., that there is a moral or ethical quality involved) (3:1).

The serpent is cast as a distinctively *evil* personality in at least six ways:

1. He casts doubt on the authenticity of God’s word (3:1). “Did God ... say?”
2. He casts doubt on the seriousness of God’s word (3:1). “Did God *really* say?”
3. He misquotes and distorts God’s word (3:1). “You must not eat from any tree in the garden?” The serpent represented God’s command as nothing more than a negative forbidding to eat from *any* tree. In truth, as already noted, God’s command was primarily a positive sanctioning of their freedom to eat from *all but one* tree.
4. He casts doubt on the consequences of disobeying God’s word (3:4). “You will not surely die.”
5. He directly contradicts God’s word, in effect calling God a liar (3:4). God said they would surely die.

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<sup>50</sup> See Ronald B. Allen, “עָרוּם,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 2 (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 698, who cites Derek Kidner’s translation of Genesis 3:1. Hereafter the volumes in this series will be abbreviated *TWOT*.

6. He questions God's motives (3:5). "For God knows that ... "

The Path to Sin. Clearly, the serpent's intent is to entice the human pair to disobey God, thereby leading them to experience "the knowledge of evil." Eve is "dragged away" (cf. James 1:14) by the serpent's trickery. Eve made the following tragic errors:

1. She tried to converse with the serpent on a level of trust. Because of the gracious provision of God in her behalf and the glory-covered communion she experienced with God, as soon as the serpent cast doubt on God's word, Eve should have known the serpent was operating in a deceitful manner.
2. She misrepresented God's word.
  - a. God did not prohibit touching the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, only eating from it (cf. 2:17).
  - b. She did not specify which tree was prohibited.
3. She looked at the restricted tree lustfully—"the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life" (cf. 1 John 2:16).
  - a. She saw that it was *good for food*. She didn't need it for food. There was an endless supply of acceptable trees that were "good for food."
  - b. She saw that it was *pleasing to the eye*. She didn't need it for beauty. There was an endless supply of other trees that were "pleasing to the eye."
  - c. She saw that it was *desirable for gaining wisdom*. She didn't need it for wisdom. God had already given them dominion over all the earth. They already had the image of God. They already experienced perfect fellowship with God. They knew nothing but good. They knew no shame. There was no reason to desire any further gain of wisdom.

The Act of Sin. The most disastrous moment in all history is recorded in Genesis 3:6. There we read the sordid tale of humanity's fall into sin in a few short words:

"She took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it."

They did precisely what God commanded them not to do—they ate it! All the pain and suffering of the ages trace back to that moment. The woman and the man succumbed to the serpent's temptation and partook of the forbidden

fruit. At that precise moment, death fell on them. The aging process, and with it the dying process, began.

The whole creation groaned as the effects of sin fell on it as well. Everything changed. Deterioration set in. Pain and suffering became the norm (cf. John 16:33). And most importantly, the glory of God that formerly clothed humanity departed and in its place depravity (as a racial corruption) entered the picture—spiritual death.

***The Consequences of Sin. The text says,***

“Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, ‘Where are you?’” (3:7-9).

At least seven observations can be made about the immediate results of sin:

1. The serpent was right about their eyes being opened. Though the text does not tell us the details surrounding the serpent’s origin and how he came to be evil, it seems fair to surmise that the serpent predicted this accurately, because the same thing had happened to him!
2. The serpent was wrong (and he knew it, being the liar he is) about them becoming like God, knowing good and evil, if they ate of the forbidden tree.
  - a. God knows only good (cf. 1:31). He knows *about* evil, but he doesn’t know evil (i.e., experientially).
  - b. They were already like God (cf. 1:26, “in our likeness”). Before, they knew only good. Now, they know evil (experientially).
  - c. Sin didn’t make them like God. It made them like the serpent!
3. The awful realization must have closed in on them—our innocence is gone. Purity became impurity. Holiness became un-holiness. The glory had departed.
4. They immediately felt shame (cf. 2:25, “they felt no shame”).
5. They tried to cover their shame.
6. They tried to hide from God’s presence.

7. God confronted, “Where are you?” (i.e., spiritually!). God knew which tree they were hiding behind, and he knew where their relationship now was, but Adam and Eve needed the confrontation.

All orthodox Christian theologians concur that the fall resulted in total depravity. The corruption of human nature was so thorough that we are inclined only toward evil, and that continually (cf. e.g., Genesis 6:5; Romans 3:9-18; 7:18-20). The sad, post-fall reality is that humans possess no ability to turn from evil and turn back toward God. Humanity is dead in trespasses and sins, and needs to be saved. But that is where the agreement ends.<sup>51</sup>

Broadly speaking, there are two schools of thought. One says, if humans are to be saved, God must act alone toward that end. There are three major subdivisions under this monergistic category.

1. Supralapsarianism. This view is sometimes called hyper-Calvinism. According to this understanding, God decreed everything from eternity, including humanity’s fall into sin and every individual’s eternal destiny. This is theology taken to its logical conclusion when one begins with a monergistic premise. However, the premise is inconsistent with the data from Genesis 1-3. Why would God tell Adam and Eve they were *free* to eat from any tree in the garden, including the restricted one, if he had already decreed the entire scenario, including their choice? If the Sovereign had decreed the outcome, then the human decision to disobey was not truly free. Absolute decree (on the sovereign side) and true freedom (on the human side) are mutually exclusive. The interpersonal nature of God and his desire for ethical holiness in humans is the baby thrown out with the bathwater in this view.
2. Modified Supralapsarianism. This view is sometimes called moderate or mild Calvinism. In this understanding, God predestined the elect to eternal salvation and “those passed over go to eternal hell—because that is their just deserts, since they sinned in a real way when Adam sinned.”<sup>52</sup> This position is not as logically consistent with its

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<sup>51</sup> I offer a Wesleyan-holiness diagnosis of the sin problem in the fourth address below, pp. 127ff.

<sup>52</sup> Op. cit., Grider, *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*, 247-255.

monergistic base as its progenitor. It attempts to remove the unpalatable implication that God's eternal decree could be in any sense arbitrary or unfair. But serious problems remain:

- a. The idea that God, in the act of electing, "bypassed" certain persons, lacks biblical support. Nowhere does the Bible say this or necessarily imply it, so far as I can see. The texts that speak of "the elect" do not require us to understand that those not in this category are there because God (alone) did not elect them.
- b. The idea that God bypassed certain persons flatly contradicts specific Bible passages. Most notably, John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that *whoever* believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." In this context and many others, the "whosoever will" reach of God's grace is utterly emptied of any serious meaning if we adopt a supralapsarian premise.
- c. The idea that God bypassed certain persons reflects poorly (and inaccurately) on his holy character. The Bible makes God's impartiality explicit in a number of places (e.g., Acts 10:34-35; Romans 2:11). If God elected certain people and "passed by" others, how could that be anything but showing favoritism? Especially when both groups (the elected and the non-elected) are equally undeserving? Usually, theological expressions coming out of this tradition will utilize the language of Ephesians 1:3-6, and say that God elected simply "in accordance with his pleasure and will, to the praise of his glorious grace." The idea seems to be that the Sovereign, acting according to his own good pleasure, which is always and only absolutely holy and righteous, elected some to be saved and bypassed others; and that this is not favoritism if it results in his glorious grace being praised. But such a construct still begs the question: What is God's good pleasure? To bypass some? Assuredly not! What brings praise and glory to God for his riches of grace? To elect only some and bypass others? Theological and biblical nonsense!
- d. The idea that God bypassed certain persons is inconsistent with the data from Genesis 1-3. If the data from Genesis 4 is included, the idea is flatly contradicted. The text says, "The LORD looked with

favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor” (4:4-5). But when Cain reacted angrily, the text records the LORD saying, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted?” (4:6-7). The text clearly indicates that Cain’s (and Abel’s) acceptance was conditional!

3. Sublapsarianism. A proponent of sublapsarianism would say Adam was free in his choice to sin, but having once sinned, then God had to act alone in the process of salvation because the nature of total depravity (utter human inability to move toward the good) made it necessary. In effect, the sublapsarians only change the order of God’s decrees. That is, they postulate the decree of predestination occurred *after* the fall, whereas the supralapsarians postulate the decree of predestination occurred before the fall.<sup>53</sup>

Briefly summarizing these three theories, we see that the supralapsarians believe in a strict monergism, attributing everything to divine decree, even the eternal destiny of the eternally condemned; the modified supralapsarians also hold to a strict monergism except that they believe God did not decree the destiny of the eternally condemned (rather he merely passed them by and let them suffer the just outcome of their own sin); and the sublapsarians also believe in a strict monergism as the only possible ground of salvation after the fall, though they seem to allow for some sort of synergism for Adam and Eve in their pre-fall state. I would suggest that the utter improbability of these three views should be regarded by Christians as axiomatic.

The other school of thought (conditional predestination)<sup>54</sup> says, if humans are to be saved, they now must be *enabled* to respond to God’s saving initiative. Depravity makes humans unable to respond, but grace makes humans (even in their post-fall state of total depravity) able to respond. In this case, God’s *modus operandi* remains the same, just as we would expect from One who is immutable in his nature.

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<sup>53</sup> See Ibid., 247, and H. Orton Wiley, *Christian Theology*, vol. 2 (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1952), 349.

<sup>54</sup> See op. cit., Grider, *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*, 248-255. See especially the discussion of his own view, which he calls “temporal predestination.”

God created, not because he needed to, but because he wanted to. Creation is for his own glory. And that is a good thing! When God is glorified, the beauty of his holiness is on display. God's goal for humankind is ethical holiness, because that goal, when actualized, redounds most to his glory. But ethical holiness is not possible in a monergistic scheme, whether humanity is in a fallen state or not. Therefore, God's sovereign plan has always included synergism, or the need for free human response to his saving initiative.

The fall, therefore, results in a rather curious dilemma. If the human race is now so thoroughly corrupted by sin that it *cannot* turn from sin and toward holiness, but God still desires (and requires) a fully ethical holiness in humans, which by the very nature of the case requires a free moral choice and forbids imposition or coercion, then how can this ever come to pass? Humanity cannot turn. But in order to be obtain fully ethical holiness, humanity must turn. Freely!

What is the solution? A process of elimination will point us in the right direction. It is clear from Genesis 1-3 that, prior to the fall, God related to Adam and Eve within a synergistic construct. There is no other way to make sense of God's command in Genesis 2:16-17. Therefore, we can rule out either form of supralapsarianism. After the fall the question is, does the fall and its resulting total depravity mean that God must now operate according to a monergistic construct (sublapsarianism), or is it still possible to operate within a synergistic construct (i.e., both God and humans must be actively involved, in some sense, in the process of salvation)? Because of the fall, must God change his chosen mode of operation? If we say yes, then we eliminate the possibility of ethical holiness, which is impossible without some kind of synergism. Since we cannot dismiss the possibility of ethical holiness (for to do so would be tantamount to disdaining God's will), we can also rule out sublapsarianism as a valid biblical theory.

But can we find positive support for post-fall synergism in the Genesis material? Remember that we are in search of the biblical lens. We want to emerge in the end with *the biblical solution!*

### **The Plan of Salvation**

Let us proceed on the basis of this foundational axiom  $\Rightarrow$  Holiness is the aim of the divine plan for humanity. My brief analysis of the Genesis account seems to support this unabashed assertion. Moreover, Old and New Testaments both unmistakably agree on this point elsewhere.

“The LORD said to Moses, ‘Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: “Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy”’” (Leviticus 19:1-2).

“But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do, for it is written, ‘Be holy, because I am holy’” (1 Peter 1:15-16).

Let us add a second foundational axiom  $\Rightarrow$  God is the source of all holiness. Holiness belongs to the essential nature of God. He is inherently holy. God’s holiness is non-derivative, and neither diminishable nor increase-able. It is absolute. It knows no degrees. A. W. Tozer points out that God did not command us to be holy *as* he is holy, for that would be demanding the impossible.<sup>55</sup> No, we are to be holy *because* he is holy.

Human holiness can only be derivative and relative. God created pristine man holy. God wants to spiritually *re-create fallen man* holy. As it turns out, the re-creation is greater in one sense—when God makes fallen man holy it is always ethical in nature because fallen man must consent to the re-creation, whereas pristine man was made holy without his consent and therefore his created holiness was sub-ethical in nature.

God’s holiness is among his communicable attributes, those he designs to share in some measure with humans. That is, he graciously imparts holiness to his children. Now we must ask, how has God chosen to actualize his purpose that fallen humanity become holy? To this I now turn my attention.

### **The Path to Restoration.**

I remember occasions when, putting my small children to bed and turning off the light, I would return a few minutes later to find the light back on. Something about the darkness and the fear it elicited compelled the child to seek an immediate remedy. Sin is like that. It is askew God’s creative design. It, too, must be remedied. But, in order to understand the problem, we need to reverse the analogy. A small child is doing nothing morally wrong to be afraid of the dark. He must simply grow up. However, a criminal wants the darkness (cf. John 3:19), because he is morally wrong. The light will only expose his sin. He doesn’t want the light turned on; he wants it off. In his case, the solution would be to extinguish the light. If there is no way to accomplish this, he

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<sup>55</sup> A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1961), 113.

must cover up his sin and shame. The alternative—judgment—is fearful and unthinkable.

### **The Inadequacy of Fig Leaves.**

When they realized they were exposed, Adam and Eve first “sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.” The key words are “for themselves.” The fig-leaf aprons represent man’s best effort to save himself from sin. They did the sewing; they made the coverings. They did not seek *God’s* salvation. One wonders why, having experienced firsthand the creative power of God and the ineffable joy that accompanied it, the man and woman did not immediately seek the *re-creative* power of God after falling into sin. This fact gives us a glimpse into the nature of the depravity that infected their hearts when they fell. They had no impulse to even seek the good. Instead, spurred by their own initiative, they sought out the material with which to create their own covering for sin. Alas, what a feeble effort!

### **God Comes Calling.**

If Genesis 3 teaches us anything, it teaches us that the salvation of fallen humanity must be initiated by God. The first thing God did was to confront the man. He asked him, “Where are you?” God’s purpose appears to be to convict Adam of his sin, that is, bringing the man to the point where he must come to grips with the awful reality of his alienated relationship with his Creator. Already we see evidence of a certain kind of post-fall synergism. Adam was unable to move in a God-ward direction, so God moved in a man-ward direction. But it was absolutely necessary for Adam to respond.

The interrogation, though confrontational, reveals *prevenient grace*. God immediately engaged Adam in a divine-human nexus that would eventually lead him to redemption. Notice that Adam did not directly answer the question (3:10). He didn’t say, “Right here, Lord.” But he did indirectly answer. He possessed the ability, ostensibly because of *prevenient grace*, to admit four things:

1. He heard God in the garden.
2. He was afraid.
3. He was naked.
4. He hid.

So, though Adam had no impulse to move toward God, he was enabled to take a step in the right direction by admitting his nakedness, and in effect, identifying his *spiritual* location—exposed, ashamed, and alienated from God.

At this point, God further interrogates by asking a two part question (3:11):

1. “Who told you that you were naked?” In other words, what is the source of this knowledge? How did you come to know this?
2. “Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?” In other words, did you sin *against me*? Didn’t I tell you, that the day you eat from that tree, you will surely die?

God knew that, by confessing his sin, he would be taking a second step in the direction of salvation. At first, Adam did not take this needful step. Instead this interrogation is followed by a pitiful sequence of finger pointing. First, Adam blamed Eve (and God!), referring to her as “the woman you put here with me” (3:12). How quickly Adam forgot that, at the moment sin occurred, he was “*with her*” (3:6). In modern legal terms, he was an accessory before, during, and after the fact! They were equally culpable. It probably should have occurred to Adam that God was holding him accountable in some primary sense, because God confronted him first. Whether it did or not, Adam’s response was certainly irresponsible.

God then confronted the woman with the question, “What is this you have done?” (3:13). Following her husband’s example, Eve tried to evade responsibility by blaming her action on the serpent’s deception.

Then God pronounces judgments on the serpent, the woman, and the man, in that order. The judgment on the serpent contains in it the first biblical glimpse of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus, which was to come in the fullness of time.

### **The Proto-Evangel**

Genesis 3:15 is well known as the first Messianic promise in the Bible. It appears in the midst of God’s curse on the serpent. Verse 15 reads as follows:

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers: he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

Clearly God is forecasting a future battle between the offspring of the serpent and the offspring of the woman, who is identified by the singular “he” in

the next line. It is equally clear that God is pronouncing doom on the serpent, for the future offspring of the woman will “crush his head,” while the serpent will only go so far as to “strike his heel.” The woman’s offspring will be the decisive victor in this epic struggle.

The importance of this prophecy for the present study is in the fact that, in the immediate aftermath of the human pair’s catastrophic fall, God reveals the source of the salvation that will restore fallen humanity.

Little argument can be advanced against the identification of the woman’s offspring as Jesus Christ, our blessed Savior and Sanctifier. This early glimpse into the gospel of Jesus Christ may be discussed under two headings provided by the text itself.

1. His suffering. The prophecy says the serpent will strike his heel. O how he was stricken! One can almost hear the mournful lament as the prophet describes it in Isaiah 52:13-53:12:

“See, my servant will act wisely;  
he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted.  
Just as there were many who were appalled at him—  
His appearance was so disfigured  
Beyond that of any man  
And his form marred beyond human likeness—  
So he will sprinkle many nations,  
And kings will shut their mouths because of him.  
For what they were not told, they will see,  
And what they have not heard, they will understand.  
Who has believed our report  
And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?  
He grew up before him like a tender shoot  
And like a root out of dry ground.  
He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him,  
Nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.  
He was despised and rejected by men,  
a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering.  
Like one from whom men hide their faces  
He was despised, and we esteemed him not.  
Surely he took up our infirmities  
and carried our sorrows,  
yet we considered him stricken by God,

smitten by him, and afflicted.  
But he was pierced for our transgressions,  
he was crushed for our iniquities:  
The punishment that brought us peace was upon him,  
and by his wounds we are healed.  
We all, like sheep, have gone astray,  
each of us has turned to his own way;  
and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.  
He was oppressed and afflicted,  
Yet he did not open his mouth;  
He was led like a lamb to the slaughter;  
and as a sheep before her shearers is silent,  
so he did not open his mouth.  
By oppression and judgment he was taken away,  
And who can speak of his descendants?  
For he was cut off from the land of the living;  
for the transgression of my people he was stricken.  
He was assigned a grave with the wicked,  
And with the rich in his death.  
Though he had done no violence,  
nor was any deceit in his mouth,  
Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him  
and cause him to suffer.  
And though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering,  
he will see his offspring and prolong his days,  
and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.  
After the suffering of his soul,  
he will see the light of life, and be satisfied.  
By his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many,  
and he will bear their iniquities.  
Therefore I will give him a portion among the great,  
and he will divide the spoils with the strong.  
Because he poured out his life unto death,  
And was numbered with the transgressors.  
For he bore the sin of many  
and made intercession for the transgressors.”

## 2. His victory.

These two headings correspond perfectly with the two central facts of the Christian gospel:

⇒ Jesus died for our sins.

⇒ Jesus rose from the dead on the third day.

In the crucifixion, Jesus was stricken beyond human description. He was beaten, scourged, mocked, whipped, and humiliated more than any man ever was. He was poured out as an atoning sacrifice.

It was my sin that put him there! And yours! The weight of the world was on his shoulders. He carried it to the cross. He fell beneath the load of the horrible weight of sin I caused him to carry. The cumulative weight of the sin of all humanity was laid on him. All the pain, all the heartache, all the guilt, all the brokenness and suffering caused by human sin was put on the only One without sin.

“Guilty, vile, and helpless we;  
Spotless Lamb of God was He!”

But he did not stay down. He rose! Hallelujah! He rose!

True, the serpent struck the heel of the Savior, and knocked him down. But in his resurrection, Jesus struck the decisive blow. He crushed the serpent’s head. Satan was knocked out. Though Satan still roams to and fro throughout the earth, his defeat has already been procured and his eternal doom is already certain (cf. Revelation 20:10).

Jesus’ decisive blow gained the victory over the serpent’s twin offspring: sin and death. The two are inextricably linked. God said, “When you eat of it, you will surely die” (Genesis 2:17). Sin leads inexorably to death. The apostle Paul said, “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23).

Sin and death originated with the devil. They are his works. Because of his deeds and the human will to become complicit with him in the knowledge of evil, humanity is infected with sin and death. But God had a plan to remedy this. The apostle John states it plainly:

“The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work” (1 John 3:8).

### **The Adequacy of Blood Sacrifice**

Blood sacrifice was God’s way of atoning for sin and thereby destroying the devil’s work. There is no other way (cf. Hebrews 9:22). But the sacrifice had to be a spotless lamb. Only Jesus was qualified to accomplish this feat

once and for all time, because only he was sinless (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 9:26-28).

In the immediate aftermath of the fall, the text of Genesis 3 hints at this blood motif. God's saving initiatives included making "garments of skin for Adam and his wife" and clothing them (3:21). In the context of the chapter, this act stands in stark contrast to the pathetic and utterly ineffective self-saving initiatives of Adam and Eve.

The text records their attempt at self-salvation this way,

"They sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves" (3:7).

But God's saving activity, namely, making coats of skins, required the shedding of blood (at least in symbol).<sup>56</sup> All the while God knew that the Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world, would someday appear on the stage of redemptive history and give his blood for the sins of the world.

And perhaps most significantly, for purposes of this presentation, Jesus accomplished a thorough remedy, a complete cure for sin. He did not die merely to cover our sin (like a coat). He died to "make the people holy through his own blood" (Hebrews 13:12). This bloody provision amounts to no less than the possibility of cleansing from *all* sin (cf. 1 John 1:7, 9). No less than the complete recovery of our fallen moral image, by transforming it into the image of Christ. With the hymn writer, let us all pray:

"Stamp thine own image deep on my heart."<sup>57</sup>

### **God's Purpose Symbolized**

Before we leave behind the garden of Eden narrative, there are a few more points worthy of our consideration, especially as it relates to the subject of sanctification.

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<sup>56</sup> Some commentators are reluctant to make this connection, because the text does not demand an interpretation involving blood shed. However, since God had already completed his *ex nihilo* creative works, it seems perfectly proper to me to see this as the first animal sacrifice, used in this case as a covering for their sin. The erstwhile glory that made it possible for them to be naked but unashamed was now gone. God initiated his saving work, Adam and Eve's reclamation, by providing them with re-coverings, anticipating the finished work of Christ, which would be accomplished in the fullness of time.

<sup>57</sup> Same as footnote 1.

### The Tree of Life Banned.

God's next move was to banish the human pair from Eden and its "tree of life," a tree which heretofore was not banned. The reason this was necessary was because they "must not be allowed to reach out ... and take ... from the tree of life and eat, and live forever" (i.e., in that condition, 3:22). Salvation must be actualized first. Fallen, unholy humanity must be restored to holiness first.

### The Tree of Life Guarded.

God's final move in the Eden narrative was to guard the tree of life (3:24). Not only must humanity be banished from the tree of life, they must be prevented from returning to it by any unauthorized route. God's prescribed route is symbolized by the guards he posted there. Some years ago, while meditating on this passage, it occurred to me that the guards were not posted there simply to prevent humanity from returning to partake of the tree of life, but also to represent the only possible way to regain access to it. In order to partake again from the tree of life, we must go by way of the cherubim and the flaming sword.

1. The Cherubim. The cherubim are most closely associated with the mercy seat atop the ark of the covenant. Whenever Yahweh would come in shekinah glory to dwell in the Holy of Holies, it was specifically "between the cherubim" that God chose as the place for his dwelling (cf. e.g., Exodus 25:22; Numbers 7:89; 2 Kings 19:15; 1 Chronicles 13:4; Psalm 80:1; 99:1; Hebrews 9:5). It was the holiest spot on earth. The all-holy God is offended by sin and intolerant toward it. Sin carries with it the penalty of death. The death penalty can be abrogated, but only by an acceptable blood sacrifice that atones for the sin. In order for us to return to the tree of life, atonement must be made in this venue. But how can this happen?
  - a. Under the terms of the Old Covenant, the high priest entered the Most Holy Place once a year on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), to atone for his own sins and the sins of the people with a sacrifice of blood on the golden altar of incense, adjacent to the ark of the covenant.
  - b. Under the terms of the New Covenant, Christ entered the Most Holy Place for us! He is both High Priest and Sacrificial Lamb.

- c. The important distinction between the two covenants is described beautifully in Hebrews 9:1-14:

“The first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. A tabernacle was set up. In its first room were the lamp stand, the table and the consecrated bread. This was called the Holy Place. Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place, which had the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered ark of the covenant. This ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron’s staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant. Above the ark were the cherubim of the Glory, overshadowing the atonement cover ... When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. The Holy Spirit was showing by this that *the way into the Most Holy Place* had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing. This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until the time of the new order.

“When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!”

The key distinction between the two covenants has to do with the phrase “the way into the Most Holy Place.” Christ’s high-priestly ministry has provided a greater sanctification, an internal cleansing of “our consciences,” rather than a mere external and ceremonial

cleansing. The sanctifying work of Christ in the Most Holy Place provides the way for us to return to the tree of life with our moral image of God restored.

2. The Flaming Sword. God placed a flaming sword at the entrance to Eden, flashing back and forth, to guard the way to the tree of life. The flaming sword also represents the path we must follow in order to return to the tree of life. This metaphor combines two symbols that are used often in the Scriptures.
  - a. The sword clearly symbolizes the word of God (cf. Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12). Jesus said, "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth (John 17:17). God's word is the sword of the Spirit, which penetrates deep into our fallen nature and cuts away the cancer of sin, sanctifying us so that we may stand before God, renewed in the image of his Son.
  - b. The flame represents the refining fire that always accompanies the presence of the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit comes to apply the sanctifying benefits of Christ's atonement, the consecrated Christian passes through the flame and is purified of all sin (1John 1:7, 9). The contagion is purged! This glorious work of God (a "re-creative" work, if you please) makes it possible for humanity to get back to the tree of life. O to partake of that blessed fruit, and live forever in the beauty of holiness.

### **God's Chosen Mode of Operation**

As a prerogative of his sovereignty, God chose the *modus operandi* for accomplishing salvation. I have already called attention to the only two theoretical categories: monergism and synergism. Monergism means only one person acts; synergism means both parties to a relationship must participate. From these two categories, we can identify four theoretical possibilities from which God could choose. As I briefly discuss these four possibilities, consider with me which makes the most sense as the one the Sovereign LORD would choose, assuming he were guided by the demands of his own holy character and purposes. Let us also consider which one is consistent with the biblical data, especially Genesis 1-3 where God established the pattern.

1. Divine Monergism – God alone acts to bring about salvation. According to this model, since fallen humanity is incapable of choosing holiness, God must make the decision in their behalf. God acts solely on

the basis of his own good pleasure. By the very nature of the case, this means humans do not cooperate with God; indeed, they are utterly passive, even robotic. Any human response to God's free grace is wholly after the fact of salvation and not in any sense a pre-condition. Indeed, human response is not free at all, since it is entirely orchestrated by God. Salvation is 100% the work of God on those whom he unconditionally elects, and this grace is irresistible. On Calvary, Christ did not merely *provide* atonement for the past, present, and future sins of the elect. Instead, the atonement *secured* and made certain their salvation. Hence, those who are once saved are also unconditionally and eternally secure in their salvation. Since they had no part to play in obtaining their salvation, they also have no part to play in retaining their salvation.<sup>58</sup> Many sincere theologians and grass-roots Christians adopt this viewpoint, at least in creedal form.<sup>59</sup> However, we must reject this view because it makes God's desire for ethical holiness impossible.

2. Human Monergism – Humans alone act to bring about salvation. This theory views salvation as entirely a human achievement. God is uninvolved. Humanity must construct a "stairway to heaven." Obviously, it is impossible to take the Bible seriously, or be Christian in any meaningful sense, and hold to this view.
3. A Co-Meritorious Synergism. In this paradigm salvation depends on the *accomplishments* of both God and humanity. Thus one might see salvation as 50% the work of God and 50% the work of humanity, or 99% the work of God and 1% the work of humanity, or some other combination. Because man to some extent man earns his own salvation, there is no escaping the fact that such a construct is tantamount to works righteousness. Clearly, therefore, this theory must be rejected as biblically untenable (cf. Ephesians 2:8-9).

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<sup>58</sup> Historically, this view stems from Augustinianism, which was a reaction to Pelagianism. Augustine made total depravity "the foundation of his entire system of theology. The fall having bereft mankind of all capacity for good, salvation must be solely of grace without any admixture of human co-operation." Op. cit., Wiley, *Christian Theology*, vol. 2, 348.

<sup>59</sup> E.g., the famous Westminster Confession of Faith; pertinent portions may be found in *Ibid.*, 350.

4. A Covenantal Synergism. In this paradigm salvation belongs to the covenant model. Salvation depends on the fulfillment of the proper *roles* of both God and humanity.<sup>60</sup> In the Bible, of course, God's covenant faithfulness is everywhere assumed. Only human faithfulness is ever uncertain. Salvation is 100% the result of divine initiative and gracious accomplishment. Yet salvation is also 100% the result of appropriate human response, or willing cooperation. God does what only God can do! Humans do what only humans can and must do.<sup>61</sup> The merit belongs all to God, but humans must freely meet God's conditions. Left alone, humanity would be unable to do so, but the grace of God mitigates human inability (total depravity) and enables persons to respond to his saving initiative.<sup>62</sup> Therefore, without any logical inconsistency, we can say salvation is *sola gratia* (by grace alone), and salvation is also *sola fide* (by faith alone)!

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<sup>60</sup> In general (not in every detail) this model compares to that of the ancient Near Eastern suzerainty treaty, a covenant between non-equals. The king graciously offered certain benefits to his subject if the individual met certain conditions. Notice that, in such a relationship, the subject contributed nothing meritorious, even though he did have a necessary role to play in obtaining the benefits of the covenant.

<sup>61</sup> For example, God does not have to repent or exercise faith! Yet these acts are absolutely essential in order to be saved (cf. e.g., Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 16:31). The proponent of divine monergism must say that such human responses occur *after* salvation, but the verses just cited (and many others) do not allow for this interpretation. Jesus did not say, "After God has graciously saved you and you are no longer in danger of perishing, then repent." Paul and Silas did not say to the Philippian jailer, "Since you are already saved (i.e., elect from eternity by divine decree, and regenerated at this very moment in time), also believe on the Lord Jesus."

<sup>62</sup> This sentence is a statement of the Wesleyan doctrine of prevenient grace. Wiley defines it as "that grace which 'goes before' or prepares the soul for entrance into the initial state of salvation. It is the preparatory grace of the Holy Spirit exercised toward man helpless in sin." Op. cit., *Christian Theology*, vol. 2, 345-346. Wiley also points out that Augustine "overlooked apparently, the fact that the first benefit of the atonement was coextensive with the ruin of man, and that universal grace *mitigated* depravity and *preserved* the freedom of the will;" Ibid., 349.

### *Total Depravity and Prevenient Grace*

Let us look at this issue from another angle. Throughout the New Testament, God calls persons to meet certain conditions *in order to be saved*.<sup>63</sup> As it relates to the doctrine of total depravity, this fact presents us with the same four theoretical possibilities, which can be re-stated as follows:

1. Even though God demands the meeting of certain conditions, we must understand these demands as applying only after salvation, because the doctrine of total depravity denies humans any ability to meet those conditions. Fallen humanity must be regenerated first; then and only then will they be enabled to meet those conditions.<sup>64</sup> The problem with this view is that the conditions cease to be conditions at all. They are not met in order to be saved, but only because one is already saved. The biblical order is reversed.
2. God doesn't really have any conditions. Humanity is not really fallen. God is aloof. Man will have to save himself.
3. Since God demands the meeting of certain conditions, the doctrine of total depravity is either untrue or does not apply to humanity's innate ability to meet those conditions. That is, the fall was not totally debilitating. Fallen humans are just as capable of choosing the good (meeting the conditions) as they are the evil (refusing to meet the conditions).
4. Since God demands the meeting of certain conditions, but fallen humans have no ability to meet those conditions, God must mitigate that disability with prevenient grace (enabling grace that goes before salvation). In a very real sense, God must *re-create* a situation where humanity is enabled to choose freely (cf. Acts 11:18; God *grants* repentance, but does not do the repenting).

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<sup>63</sup> E.g., Matthew 11:28; Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 16:31; Romans 10:9-10, 13; 2 Corinthians 7:10; 2 Peter 3:9; 1 John 1:7, 9.

<sup>64</sup> Understand that if you say this, you can never have anything more than sub-ethical holiness. It will do no good to say that the holiness is happily chosen after the fact of regeneration, because underlying this view is the assumption that the regenerate could not and would not do anything else. Thus the choice is not truly free.

The first possibility is divine monergism, historically beginning as Augustinianism and systematized much later as Lutheranism, Calvinism, et. al. The second is human monergism, which could be anything from legalism to antinomianism to secular humanism. The third is a co-meritorious synergism, the heresy of Pelagianism. The fourth is a co-operative synergism, historically beginning as Arminianism and later systematized as Wesleyanism. The fourth best fits the biblical data for the following reasons:

1. *Ethical holiness is still (after the fall) the divine purpose for humanity!* The Bible is replete with references to God's demand for fallen humanity to meet certain conditions.
2. The plain meaning of these conditions is that they must be met in order to be saved. They are *pre-conditions* of salvation. Therefore, humanity must cooperate with God; and no matter how unpalatable that may be to one's theological tradition, there is no escaping the fact of some sort of synergism.
3. The Bible is replete with references to God's redemptive activity in awakening and drawing fallen humanity toward salvation. This divine activity is what Wesleyans call *prevenient grace*.
4. It is equally clear that not everyone will be ultimately saved. This means one of two things: either the will of God can be thwarted by human *non-cooperation*, or God wills for certain people to be ultimately lost. The former we deduce from a synergistic framework; the latter from a monergistic one.<sup>65</sup> Only the former is consistent with the biblical data, and therefore should be regarded as the true biblical lens through which we should view the subject of sanctification.

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<sup>65</sup> The monergistic possibility is in direct contradiction to verses like 1 Timothy 2:4 ("[God] wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth;" and 2 Peter 3:9 ("The Lord ... is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance"). Some scholars who embrace a monergistic construct (modified supralapsarianism) vainly attempt to skirt this problem by saying God did not choose anyone to be lost, but rather that he merely passed them by (e.g. Robert Lightner, *The Death Christ Died* (Regular Baptist Press). But it doesn't wash. As Richard S. Taylor points out, if you say "he merely left them to the just outcome of their own wickedness, ... when you boil it down, the meaning is the same" (i.e., as saying God chose them to be lost). *What Every Christian Ought to Know* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2002), 46.

### Summary Propositions Regarding the Biblical Lens

1. God is holy.
2. God created man as a free moral agent.
3. God created man holy.
4. God desires a synthesis of these two created features—freedom and holiness, resulting in ethical holiness. Then his children will be like him.
5. God’s desire for ethical holiness could only happen within a synergistic framework. God graciously wills to grant true holiness. Man must freely cooperate with God.
6. God graciously bestowed on man an abundance of trees in the garden of Eden, with only one being prohibited. Man’s voluntary compliance with God’s will concerning the restricted “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” would transform original holiness into ethical holiness. Man’s voluntary rejection of God’s will would result in spiritual death.
7. Man fell.
8. Man’s fall was total, rendering him unable to meet God’s holy demands. The spiritually dead have no ability to move toward the spiritually good.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> It is vitally important that we express this issue carefully. H. Orton Wiley points out that prevenient “grace is needed, not to restore to the will its power of volition, nor thought and feeling to the intellect and sensibility, for these were never lost; but to *awaken* the soul to the truth ...” Op. cit., *Christian Theology*, 357. The Holy Spirit’s role in awakening sinners is fundamental to the Wesleyan (and I am sure, the biblical) way of thinking. Against this, theologians in a more Augustinian mode of thinking say that the spiritually dead must first be *resurrected* before they can be awakened. But this way of formulating the issue is fraught with at least three critical problems: 1) it derives from a view of total depravity which denies free will to fallen humans, and thus treats them more like physical corpses rather than creatures with a body-soul unity who still have the God-given power of volition, 2) it must create an artificial, unbiblical distinction between “common grace” (that given to all humanity, making possible things like philanthropy among the unregenerate) and “efficacious grace” (that *arbitrarily* given to the elect for salvation), rather than a continuity of grace (all God’s grace is qualitatively the same – prevenient grace, saving grace, sanctifying grace, keeping grace, and glorifying grace – and provisionally available to all humans equally), and 3) the monergism inherent in this construct means that humanity cannot meet God’s pre-conditions for salvation or ever obtain a fully

9. Man's fall did not change God's desire for ethical holiness. Therefore, God's plan of salvation must take this into account. God's plan must still operate within a synergistic framework, because ethical holiness is impossible without it.
10. This creates a dilemma, at least from the point of view of human understanding. If we are incapable of responding, how can God insist that we do?
11. God, of course, is up to the challenge. He graciously created man as a free moral agent in the first place. He can also graciously enable fallen man to function as a free moral agent, thus preserving his created power to choose either the good or the evil.
12. God bestows prevenient grace on fallen humanity, thus enabling them to act in faith. This grace does not guarantee the choice will be good any more than grace guaranteed Adam and Eve's choice would be good prior to the fall.
13. God still calls people to freely meet his conditions. When they do, this is synonymous with "acting in faith." The act of faith is not itself the saving power; rather it is the key that unlocks the door to God's saving power. God's prevenient grace provides us with the key, but he will not put the key in the lock and open the door for us. By God's own design, only we can do that.
14. To those who do, God gives saving grace. This is how God has designed to actualize holiness in fallen humanity ⇒ prevenient grace, justifying-regenerating grace, sanctifying grace, keeping grace, and finally—glorifying grace. All grace is qualitatively the same.

### *Conclusion*

The Bible's own hermeneutical key, as seen in Genesis 1-3, includes at least the following four components:

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ethical holiness. See Wiley, 344-357. Correctly understood, prevenient grace makes it possible for fallen humans to awake to their lost estate and exercise their volitional powers appropriately in response to God's demands for repentance and faith. Then God quickens their dead spiritual state in the glorious act of regeneration!

- Theism (specifically, triune monotheism): The existence of one God, plural in person, is assumed.
- Creationism: That selfsame God is the Creator, who alone created all things for his own glory and purposes. He was well pleased with his own creative work.
- Ethical Holiness as God's design:
  - Humanity was God's special creation, as indicated by the repeated description "in the image of God."
  - God issued humanity a moral command, which they were free to either obey or disobey. By obeying they would be ethically holy.
- Covenantal Synergism as God's *modus operandi*:
  - Preventive Grace is God's way of enabling fallen humanity to actualize the goal of ethical holiness. This is seen in embryonic form in the Proto-Evangel of Genesis 3:15, and in the immediate, post-fall, redemptive initiatives of God.
  - Blood was shed in order to provide coats of skin for Adam and Eve, to serve as a satisfactory "covering" in place of their own aprons of fig leaves.

God banished them from Eden so that they could not eat from the tree of life and live forever (in their fallen condition!).

- God placed cherubim and a flaming sword between them and the tree of life, symbolizing the route they would have to take in order to get back to the tree of life: the Holy of Holies and cleansing through the Word
- Humanity must freely (enabled by preventive grace) meet the condition of faith. The divine/human relationship operated on this basis prior to the fall; the evidence suggests that God did *not* alter this basis after the fall.

Christian theologians of all traditions interpret through the aperture of the first two components. But the last two components narrow the focus of the biblical lens toward a Wesleyan perspective on entire sanctification.

## **SECOND MAIN ADDRESS TO THE JURY**

### **Laying a Historical-Theological Foundation for the Case**

## ***“In Search of the Apostolic Teaching”***

Now the question arises, “What is Christian orthodoxy?” Thomas C. Oden asked this question in his pacesetting 1979 book *Agenda for Theology*. Oden answers in the words of Vincent of Lerins, “that which has been everywhere and always and by everyone believed.”<sup>67</sup> Oden takes this to mean, “the faith generally shared by all Christians, especially as defined in the crucial early period of Christian doctrinal definition.”<sup>68</sup> Oden rightly takes us back to primitive Christianity and points out that Christian orthodoxy was not arrived at by individuals, but instead was “hammered out by synods, councils, and consensual bodies” who sought “to express the universal consent of Christianity to the *apostolic teaching*.”<sup>69</sup> Heresy, then, is “any contravening faith or any opinion contrary to the apostolic teaching.”<sup>70</sup> Usually heresy is not so much “a challenge from some source outside the church, but from within it, in which some dimension of Christian truth is overemphasized to the neglect of the balance and wholeness found in the delivered tradition.”<sup>71</sup> Oden informs us, “one of the commonest definitions of heresy in the early church was ‘that which we have *invented*’ in contrast to ‘that which we have *received*.’”<sup>72</sup>

This discussion raises one more important question for the present case. As it relates to the doctrine of entire sanctification, “Does Wesleyan-holiness orthodoxy match with Christian orthodoxy in general?” I will devote brief space to this question in the present address. The remainder of my presentation will concern the question, “Does Wesleyan-holiness orthodoxy match with Scripture?”

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<sup>67</sup> Thomas C. Oden, *Agenda For Theology* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979), 34. If this definition were applied by many popular Bible teachers, perhaps they would refrain from making some of their dogmatic assertions. For example, in a recent series of messages on his radio program (“Grace to You,” January 2005), John MacArthur minced no words in assigning the belief in the perseverance of the saints, which he unequivocally takes to mean “once saved, always saved,” to the category of absolutely essential doctrine.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. (emphasis added).

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 99 (emphasis added).

### *Recovering the Apostolic Teaching*

From time to time God raises up a prophetic voice who calls the church back to the plain, unvarnished teachings of the Bible and their pristine expression in the apostolic age. Most Christians will agree that the nearer we approximate *this* doctrine of the New Testament church (not necessarily its culturally-conditioned polity or customs), the nearer we are to truth. Just prior to His ascension Jesus said,

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and *teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you*. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:18b-20).

It seems safe to assume that those eleven disciples, especially given the divine empowerment they received on the day of Pentecost, made every effort to transmit faithfully “everything Jesus commanded” to the early church in Jerusalem and beyond. We need not search the Scriptural record long before we find evidence that this transfer of truth from Jesus to the apostles occurred successfully. Immediately after Peter’s Pentecost sermon, the text says,

“Those who accepted *his* message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to *the apostles’ teaching* and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:41-42).

Jesus’ teaching became the apostles’ teaching. And the apostles’ teaching became the Jerusalem church’s teaching. And later, the Jerusalem church’s teaching became the Antioch church’s teaching. And the Antioch church’s teaching became ... ? We can only trace the transmission so far, before the story starts becoming somewhat fuzzy.<sup>73</sup> In various ways and with the passage

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<sup>73</sup> It would be a mistake to think the church in the apostolic age was monolithic. Not long after Pentecost, almost from the earliest times, factions arose within the ranks, some promulgating and practicing dangerous errors (cf. Acts 15). At the risk of oversimplifying the situation, I point out that already in the New Testament epistles we see the apostles engaging and battling some of these factions, including Paul against the Judaizers and John against those with Gnostic tendencies. Moreover, the apostles did not employ the silly reasoning, “I dare not rebuke these teachings and practices, on the chance that they might really be from God, and I don’t want to be found fighting against God or denying a true movement of the Holy Spirit.” They knew the truth, and spared not a holy rebuke of those who were bent on falsifying it.

of time, regrettably, the original teaching became diluted, compromised, rationalized, marginalized, expanded, distorted, and/or contaminated by those who lost their point of reference, just as the Israelites had done at various times in their history for almost two millennia previously, before a God-called prophet pointed them back.

Only when we accurately transmit through time the unchanging truth<sup>74</sup> of the Bible for the church, when we truly communicate the teachings of Jesus and the apostles, is there no need to be pointed back. In that case, we are already there. On the other hand, when traditions veer away from this epicenter, God calls a great reformer (or group of reformers) to steer them back. The happy note is this: the truth is still there for us to see. Not everyone strayed. The apostles were already in their own lifetimes correcting error and calling the church back to the truth of the gospel. But that's just the point—there is one true gospel. They knew it. We should know it. The truth has been recoverable in every generation. And it is recoverable today ... in the Bible! But it is hard work!

The prophetic life is not a glamorous one. The genuine prophet never discovers new truths, but *recovers* old ones. In so doing, the prophet exposes layers of cherished, manmade, false “doctrines.” Thus, the prophetic ministry elicits the ire of many people who treasure their theological tradition more than they treasure truth, who love their province more than they love the church as a whole, who cherish their esoteric experience more than they cherish what the Bible teaches as normative, who love an idol more than they love God. Consequently, God sometimes uses the prophetic voice of a reformer to beget a *new movement* that rescues the *old truth* for that time and place.<sup>75</sup> John Wesley was just such a prophetic voice by calling the church back to age-old truth concerning entire sanctification. At the beginning of this new century, we ought to pray for God to raise up an army of like-minded prophetic voices.

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<sup>74</sup> The truth is ontological (not existential), absolute (not relative), Christocentric (not humanistic), and in its application, trans-chronic (valid across time or historical eras) and trans-cultural (valid across cultures).

<sup>75</sup> Not everything that purports to be a new movement from God actually is. The authenticity of the movement's teaching and practice must be determined on the basis of conformity to biblical truth, assuming the use of a valid hermeneutic. The apostolic teaching forms the boundaries beyond which no authentic Christian doctrine can go. True movements from God, whether new or old, never claim to offer *new* truth.

## **Searching the Sources of the Apostolic Teaching**

The earliest expressions of true Christian teaching are in the Bible itself. Sermons, personal testimonies, prayers, hymns or liturgical material, creedal statements, summaries, and formulaic statements all indicate the specific content of early Christian doctrine. Later, in the post-apostolic age, primitive Christianity sought further to codify the central tenets of Christianity as a way to keep the true faith on the right course and safeguard it against the constant threat of error within and without. The subject of entire sanctification (or one of its synonymous expressions), either by direct reference or by implication or by symbolism, appears often enough in these sorts of early Christian materials to justify its inclusion under the rubric of apostolic teaching. Let us now briefly outline some of these early theological statements.

### **Peter's Pentecost Sermon (Acts 2:14-39)**

The postscript to Peter's sermon reveals its crucial importance. The narrator says,

“Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day” (2:41).

The content of Peter's sermon is identified as *his message*. Moreover, since the sermon was an integral part of the Pentecost Day activities resulting from the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, it seems fair to say that Peter's message was the *Holy Spirit's message*. And the next verse shows that it also was the *apostles' teaching*:

“They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (2:42).

Let us look, then, at Peter's sermon, in order to discover the apostolic teaching. The following elements seem clear:

1. The apostolic teaching is thoroughly Scriptural, firmly rooted in the Old Testament. Specifically, Peter said the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit fulfilled Joel's prophecy (2:15-21, cf. Joel 2:28-32).
2. The apostolic teaching is thoroughly Christocentric. After connecting the Pentecostal event with Joel's prophecy and thus authenticating it, Peter moves immediately to Christ as the focal point of his appeal (2:22-36). The Christocentric nature of the apostles' teaching can be seen from the following emphases of Peter's sermon:

- a. The historical earthly life and ministry of Jesus. He was commonly known at the time as “Jesus of Nazareth” (2:22). Jesus’ earthly ministry demonstrated the power of God and the authenticity of his Messiah-ship (2:22).
  - b. The crucifixion! Peter said Jesus’ death occurred as part of God’s purpose and foreknowledge (2:23). Jesus was literally nailed to the cross (2:23). There is not the slightest question about the fact that he died. He did not merely swoon. He did not merely “seem” to die (the view of Docetic Gnosticism).
  - c. The resurrection! Peter said God raised Jesus from the dead. Peter further says “it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him” (2:24), a statement of Christ’s divinity and personal power over death. There is not the slightest question about the fact that he arose. The apostles were all eyewitnesses (2:32). His body was not thrown into a ditch and eaten by wild animals. His body was not secretly stolen away at night. He was dead, and He is now alive!
  - d. The lordship (or, kingship) of Christ!
    - (1) Jesus was in the Davidic line (2:30).
    - (2) Jesus is superior to David. David’s body is still in the grave; Jesus rose bodily (2:29-31, 34).
    - (3) Jesus’ resurrection was the greater fulfillment of the promise made to David in Psalm 16:8-11 (2:31).
    - (4) Jesus is now exalted at the right hand of God’s throne (2:33).
    - (5) Jesus has poured out the Holy Spirit (2:33).
    - (6) God has made *this* Jesus (the same historical person who was crucified and resurrected) both Lord and Christ. He is Savior (Messiah) and King (Lord).
3. The apostolic teaching is thoroughly Spirit-anointed. The hearers were “cut to the heart” by Peter’s words and cried out, “What shall we do?” (2:37).
4. The apostolic teaching is thoroughly evangelistic.
- a. Peter urged the people to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins (2:38). Repentance is a voluntary turning to God, an act of faith that receives the saving provisions of Christ’s death and res-

urrection. Baptism is a testimony, a public identification with Christ (i.e., “in the name of Jesus Christ”) and his followers.<sup>76</sup>

- b. Peter also said the people “will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (2:38-39). Years later, the apostle Paul said to the Romans, “If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ” (Romans 8:9). Therefore, receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit is in some sense concomitant with the forgiveness of sins. However, in the context of Acts 2 there is reason to believe Peter’s statement refers to a second work of grace, namely, the baptism with the Holy Spirit (or, entire sanctification).
- (1) Peter seems to be comparing the experience of the apostles earlier in the chapter to the possibilities available to his hearers. In this case, the force of his words would be, “and you, *too*, will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” If this is true, and if it is true that the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit was for the apostles a *second* definite work of grace equating with entire sanctification, then Peter’s words can be understood as a promise to his hearers of the further work of entire sanctification available to those who receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
  - (2) At the Jerusalem council in Acts 15, when Peter recounted the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the house of Cornelius (Acts 10), he compared it with what happened to the apostles on the day of Pentecost with these words, “God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith” (15:8-9). Since, according to Peter, there is a one-to-one correspondence between the two episodes, and since the household of Cornelius received

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<sup>76</sup> Even though Peter’s formula, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins,” appears to link baptism with repentance as prerequisite to the forgiveness of sins; this cannot be for at least two reasons. First, in the context, persons were baptized only after accepting the message (2:41). Second, Peter makes the same appeal in the next chapter but leaves out baptism, “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out ...” (3:19). If baptism were necessary in the same way as repentance, one would expect it to be linked again with the appeal to repent.

purified hearts, we can say that the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit also resulted in entire sanctification (i.e., purification of the heart). Therefore, Peter's appeal regarding receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit must signify the grace of entire sanctification available to those who respond in faith to the gospel.

I conclude, therefore, that entire sanctification was part of both the apostolic experience and teaching from the earliest moment of church history – the day of Pentecost! In fact, it was the goal of the apostolic teaching to lead the early Christians into the experience of all possible grace!

### **Paul's Personal Testimony (Acts 26:12-18)**

Paul included the following elements in his personal testimony:

1. A description of his encounter with the risen Lord on the Road to Damascus (26:12-14).
  - a. He saw a light from heaven.
  - b. He heard a voice from heaven.
2. A recounting of his dialogue with the risen Lord (26:14-18).
  - a. Jesus called him by name: "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads" (26:14).
  - b. Paul answered: "Who are you, Lord?" (26:15).
  - c. Jesus identified himself: "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting" (26:16).
  - d. Jesus commissioned Paul as an apostle. Jesus called Paul to three specific tasks in his mission statement (26:17-18):
    - (1) To open the eyes of both Jew and Gentile.
    - (2) To turn them from darkness to light.
    - (3) To turn them from the power of Satan to God.
  - e. Paul's mission contained the following statement of purpose (26:18):
    - (1) That they (i.e., all whom Paul ministered to) may receive forgiveness of sins.
    - (2) That they may receive a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Christ.

The significance of Acts 26:18 can hardly be overestimated. The words come directly from the resurrected Lord, thus giving them ultimate authority. That Paul recounted them in his testimony also makes them part of the apostolic teaching.

The Christ-appointed objective appears to endorse two distinct works of grace: forgiveness of sins and sanctification by faith. Thus we see that, from the earliest period of church history, the apostolic ministry called persons to receive both forgiveness and sanctification by a specific act of faith in Christ. The phrasing is similar to that of Acts 20:32, “a place (or, inheritance) among all those who are sanctified.” Neither text speaks explicitly of *entire* sanctification. However, “those who are sanctified” (τοις ἡγιασμενοις) in both texts has reference to all true saints (holy ones), and includes the whole process of sanctification, from the moment of regeneration (initial sanctification) onward. Certainly the goal of *entire* sanctification was in view when Jesus uttered these words, for he himself had shed his blood to make his people holy (Hebrews 13:12), not in part but wholly (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Jesus paid the debt *in full* on the cross (John 19:30). His agent on earth, the Holy Spirit, purposes to apply his saving work *in full* in the lives of individuals (2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2),<sup>77</sup> and the apostolic teaching purposed to present every person complete (or perfect, τελειον) in Christ (Colossians 1:28-29).

### **Paul’s Codification of the Gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-8)**

This passage is perhaps the earliest creedal expression of fundamental Christian belief, dating to within a few years of the resurrection. Paul calls this the “gospel” which he preached. It recited the central historic facts associated with the Christ’s saving work. Two facts make up the heart of the gospel:

1. Christ died for our sins (15:3). This historic fact is authenticated two ways:
  - a. The Scriptures (i.e., Old Testament Messianic prophecy – see Isaiah 53:1-12).

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<sup>77</sup> Would it make sense to say that Christ “paid the debt in full” (the true meaning of “It is finished,” Τετελεσται), but the Holy Spirit only applies the benefits of his atonement in part?

- b. He was buried (i.e., his body, confirmed dead, was placed in the tomb).
- 2. Christ was raised on the third day (15:4). This historic fact is also authenticated two ways:
  - a. The Scriptures (i.e., Old Testament Messianic prophecy – see Psalm 16:8-11 and cf. with Acts 2:25-31).
  - b. He appeared physically to over 500 persons (15:5-8). The truth of his identity cannot be denied, because this many reliable sources cannot be discredited. The tomb is empty!

Again there is no explicit reference to entire sanctification, but we can establish in the context of the epistle that such teaching is part of “the gospel” which Paul preached, which the Corinthians received, and by which the Corinthians were saved.

At the outset of the epistle, Paul identified the addressees as “the church of God in Corinth, ... those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy” (1:2). Yet, Paul admits that he could not address his Corinthian brothers “as spiritual, but as worldly (carnal-minded)” (3:1). Therefore, anyone who *truly* belongs to the church of God is sanctified to some degree, but not necessarily entirely. Paul pressed this point precisely because the Corinthians’ condition did not reflect the full possibilities of sanctifying grace. The true gospel expects more than they had.

To be sanctified in part means to remain carnal-minded. How could the gospel of Christ’s death and resurrection be satisfied with this status quo? Especially when we stop to consider the deplorable state of affairs in which it resulted: sectarianism, jealousy, quarreling, immorality, selfishness, apathy, carelessness, childishness, impropriety, etc.?

No, Christ died for our sins (15:3)! He aims to take sin away (cf. John 1:29). Perish the thought that he died only to sanctify in part! Such could not be the good news. Such was not part of the apostolic teaching, and should not be part of any creed.

### **Paul’s Prayer for the Ephesians (Ephesians 3:14-19)**

An apostolic prayer also reveals apostolic teaching, because it shows how the apostle wanted the merits of Christ’s saving work applied to individuals and churches. This particular prayer shows the depth of Paul’s concern that the church be sanctified wholly and made complete in love.

The prayer does not explicitly speak of entire sanctification (the negative aspect of heart cleansing), but rather addresses the positive side of the second work of grace—perfect love. If we link the prayer to Paul’s teaching in 5:25-27 (regarding making holy, and cleansing from every stain), then we may reliably see in this prayer an implicit concern for the negative side of the second work of grace as well—entire sanctification.

We may deduce from the content of this prayer that perfect love was an integral part of the apostolic teaching. Paul wanted the Holy Spirit to empower their inner being, and he wanted them to know the love of Christ to such a degree that they would “be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God” (3:19). A work of the Holy Spirit that extensive can scarcely be less than the most love God’s grace makes available. In a strikingly similar statement only fifteen verses later (4:13), Paul even uses the word “perfect” (τελειον): “until we all ... become *perfect, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*” Perfection (or, Christian completeness, or maturity) is equated with conformity to Christ.

Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians may be divided into two requests. Each portion of the prayer is structured according to the law of instrumentation. The two requests may be outlined as follows:

<u>Means</u>	<u>End</u>
1. Out of the Father’s glorious riches he may strengthen them with power through his Spirit in their inner being.	1. That Christ may dwell in their hearts through faith.
2. (a) That they may be rooted and established in love.	2. That they may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.
(b) That they may have power (together with all the saints) to grasp the love of Christ:	
(1) How wide.	
(2) How long.	
(3) How high.	
(4) How deep.	
(c) That they may know this love that surpasses knowledge.	

The two purpose clauses which control the prayer appear to incorporate two epochal works of grace. The first results in Christ dwelling in your hearts

through faith. The second results in being filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Thus we can affirm with certainty that Paul's teaching included perfect love (which is synonymous with conformity to Christ, and co-extensive with entire sanctification) as the goal of the gospel.

**The "Kenosis" Hymn (Philippians 2:5-11)**

Most scholars recognize the liturgical nature of this passage. For example, Ralph Martin states, "The passage is an early Christian hymn, composed ... in praise of the church's Lord."<sup>78</sup> The poetic portion (2:6-11) is introduced by the exhortation:

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus (2:5, KJV).

Conformity to Christ, then, is the stated objective; which, as we saw in the previous section, is another way of talking about entire sanctification. Conformity to Christ (or, having the same attitude as Christ) consists of the following character qualities:

1. A non-grasping mentality. By this is meant a willingness to deny oneself his rightful claims. A non-grasper is devoid of selfish ambition or vain conceit (cf. 2:3). Dennis Kinlaw reduces it to ordinary terms by pointing out that the mind of Christ does not ask, "What's in it for me?"<sup>79</sup>
2. A self-emptying mentality. This point is so closely related to the last as to be almost inseparable. By this is meant a voluntary self-limiting of the exercise of one's privileges. In the case of Jesus, he did not empty himself of his divinity. God cannot cease to be God! Rather, in his incarnation, he voluntarily limited the exercise of his divinity. Sometimes he exercised his divine power fully (e.g., raising Lazarus); sometimes he did not. He willingly left the glory he shared with the Father in heaven, and while on earth, with few exceptions, shrouded that glory in his humanity for a redemptive purpose.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Ralph P. Martin, *A Hymn of Christ* (Downer's Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1997), xlvi.

<sup>79</sup> Message preached in

<sup>80</sup> During the transfiguration episode (Matthew 17:1-8), Peter, James and John were afforded a temporary glimpse of Christ's "un-shrouded" glory.

3. A servant mentality. The non-grasping, self-emptying mentality goes hand in hand with the heart of a servant. Jesus voluntarily took upon himself the form (μορφην) or “very nature” (NIV) of a servant. By this is meant a willingness to put the needs and interests of others ahead of one’s own (cf. 2:3-4). Kinlaw further points out that the mind of Christ does not ask, “How will I look?”<sup>81</sup>
4. A humble mentality. Jesus taught his disciples, “Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted” (Matthew 23:12). Jesus did not teach in precept what he would not demonstrate in practice. No one ever humbled himself like Jesus: “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9).
5. An obedient mentality. The holy mind of Christ led him to be obedient to the maximum extent – obedient unto death. And not just any death, but death on a cross! Kinlaw shows that, in this last case, the mind of Christ does not take the position, “I deserve better than this.”<sup>82</sup> Such an attitude precludes arguing and complaining (cf. 2:14). In short, the mind of Christ precludes selfish ambition. Jesus minced no words with his disciples on this matter when he told them, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Matthew 16:24). When this fully obedient attitude exists, God’s children are “blameless and pure, ... without fault in a crooked and depraved generation” (2:15). Here Christ-likeness is linked with blamelessness and purity of heart, viz., entire sanctification!

Thus we see that entire sanctification was part of Christian celebration from the earliest period.

**Paul’s Summary Teaching Concerning the Grace of God (Titus 2:11-14)**

This summary is bracketed by two similar comments. The last phrase of 2:10 says,

“So that in every way they will make *the teaching* about God our Savior attractive.”

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<sup>81</sup> Same as note 73.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

Then the first phrase of 2:15 says,

“These, then, are *things you should teach*.”

The material between this inclusio constitutes “the teaching,” and is therefore of vital concern.

Paul’s starting point is the grace of God (2:11). He says two things about it at the outset:

1. The grace of God brings salvation.
2. The grace of God has appeared to all men.

The first proposition identifies the grace of God as the source of salvation. The second proposition identifies its universal manifestation. He then says that “it” (i.e., the grace of God) *teaches* us certain fundamental truths. Paul enumerates those fundamentals in 2:12-14:

1. The grace of God teaches us righteousness. This truth is expressed in both a negative and a positive way:
  - a. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions.
  - b. It teaches us to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.
2. The grace of God teaches us patient endurance (“while we wait”).
3. The grace of God teaches us the blessed hope (“the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ”).
4. The grace of God teaches us the benefits of the atonement of Christ:
  - a. He redeems us from all wickedness.
  - b. He purifies for himself a people that are his very own, who are eager to do what is good.

The salvation provided by Christ is all-encompassing. He provides a complete antidote to sin. He redeems and purifies. Notice the language of Titus 2:14. He redeems from *all* wickedness. He *purifies* for himself a people. Is it not safe to say, on the basis of this evidence, that he saves and sanctifies wholly? This is the sound doctrine the apostle said we *should teach*.

### **Early Christian Liturgy in the Post-Apostolic Period**

Paul M. Bassett has contributed much to our understanding in this area with his careful study. Therefore, I need do no more than briefly quote his summary in order to accomplish my purpose:

“What the evidence seems to show is a *very early* practicing of a twofold ritual in baptism for which the theology became increasingly clear. By the mid-third century, that theology was rather well fixed in the West, if not in the East as well. What was symbolized by the mid-second century, if not much earlier, had full intellectual articulation a century later. God’s grace was seen to grant *two essential boons*: regeneration and the presence of the Holy Spirit in His fullness to direct the regenerate one in a holy walk. The baptismal liturgy would seem to show not only a distinction between the two but also an insistence that they were intimately related. Certainly the explications of the Fathers, from late in the second century onward, show both sides of this.”<sup>83</sup>

### **Early Church Fathers**

In this section I will quote from studies by Bassett and William M. Greathouse.

#### 1. Apostolic Fathers (second century).

- a. Ignatius of Antioch. “The Epistles of Ignatius speak again and again of a perfect faith, of a perfect intention, and of a perfect work of holiness.”<sup>84</sup>
- b. Clement of Rome. Clement wrote, “Those who have been perfected in love, through the grace of God, attain to the place of the godly in the fellowship of those who in all ages have served the glory of God in perfectness.”<sup>85</sup>
- c. Polycarp. “Speaking of faith, hope, and love, [he] wrote: ‘If any man be in these, he has fulfilled the law of righteousness, for that his love is far from sin.’”<sup>86</sup>
- d. Shepherd of Hermas. “In the Shepherd ... what is clear is the expectation that purity or perfection, both ethical and motivational, is expected of the Church and of each believer. It is not merely an ideal; it is the norm.”<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> *ECH*, vol. 2, 43 (emphasis added).

<sup>84</sup> William M. Greathouse, *From the Apostles to Wesley: Christian Perfection in Historical Perspective* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1979), 34.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> *Op. cit.*, Bassett, *ECH*, vol. 2, 34-35.

2. Irenaeus (died circa A. D. 200). “Perfection is for believers. For Irenaeus, however, this perfection is not completed when one is converted or baptized, nor is it imputed.”<sup>88</sup> “What we have in Irenaeus ... is what we have in the New Testament—the exciting tension between the ‘already’ and the ‘not yet’ ... as late as Irenaeus the word is still clear: *there is a consummation of perfection awaiting us in this life*.”<sup>89</sup>
3. Clement of Alexandria (died before A. D. 220). “Clement retains ... what some Christians already by his time were losing; that is, confidence that deliverance from sin and sinfulness is not deferred but may be a present reality for the believer.”<sup>90</sup> In Clement, “this perfection is instantaneously received, and it appears to be given subsequent to regeneration.”<sup>91</sup>
4. Origen (died A. D. 254). “What is clear is Origen’s concern to declare the possibility of spiritual purity in this life.”<sup>92</sup>
5. Macarius the Egyptian (circa A. D. 300 to 390).
  - a. In an important paragraph Bassett summarizes: “entire sanctification is, for Macarius, a distinct work of grace, necessarily subsequent to conversion, but it is also totally dependent upon it. Life as a converted person should bring increasing awareness of three factors: 1) the depth and pervasiveness of sin in the human character; 2) the command and promise of God that all sin be cleansed away by the Holy Spirit; and 3) the fact that this can and should be done in this life by definite commitment to it on the part of both the Spirit and the believer. It is not reached by growth in grace alone, for growth in grace prior to entire sanctification is also growth in the awareness of one’s distance from all that is being commanded and offered. It is certainly not reached by ethical discipline, though failure to enter upon such discipline will not only shut the door on the kind of maturity and self-awareness necessary to precipitate the leap

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 50 (emphasis his).

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 64.

into the arms of the sanctifying Spirit, as it were; it will also lead to the rescinding of conversion, the surcease of regeneration.”<sup>93</sup>

- b. Bassett further observes of Macarius’ view: “Entire sanctification is an act of divine grace, and while it has an ethical dimension, especially at the point of a fundamental transformation of motives from egocentrism to pure love, it is not essentially ethical but religious. It is not basically behavioral but relational, as touching communion with both God and humankind. In this way, Macarius preserves the twofold nature of entire sanctification, that is, its character as both an act and a process admitting of growth.”<sup>94</sup>
  - c. In one more significant passage, Bassett concludes: “Here ... is a victory that more than matches the defeat in Eden ... Purity is granted at the point of recognizing and accepting total dependence, human limitation. Maturity develops as one learns to express the fruits of the Spirit with that dependence ... While the entirely sanctified Christian will express that sanctification ethically and behaviorally, according to Macarius, the basic goal will not be ethical or behavioral perfection. Christlikeness, or, as Macarius sometimes puts it, likeness to the Spirit or the image of the Spirit, that is the only aim of the authentic Christian.”<sup>95</sup>
6. Gregory of Nyssa (circa A. D. 330 to 394). “By the middle third of the fourth century, a strong current was ready to deny any authentic entire sanctification to the believer except as Christ’s holiness might be imputed to that believer. Here, the sacraments of the church were seen as the principal vehicles of imputation. Gregory holds out for an authentic sanctification of the believer in which the believer is *made* righteous, not merely *declared* righteous.”<sup>96</sup>

The evidence warrants a confident affirmation, that significant authorities from the first four centuries of the church age continued to herald the possibility in this life of grace resulting in perfection in love, purity of heart, or entire sanctification.

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 86 (emphasis his).



## **THIRD MAIN ADDRESS TO THE JURY**

### **Laying a Tradition-Theological Foundation for the Case**

## ***“A Variety of Views on Sanctification – Which Shall We Believe?”***

### ***A Parable***

There were seven men infected with a deadly illness. Each visited his doctor.

The first man was told he had been inoculated as an infant and given periodic boosters during childhood. Therefore he should simply ignore the symptoms. The sick man had a sort of blind allegiance to the doctor and committed himself to the belief that his prior vaccinations were efficacious, so he followed the doctor’s advice. However, he often wondered why the symptoms never abated. He never sought a second opinion, and his illness continued without relief.

The second man was prescribed the medication he desperately needed. When the sick man got to the pharmacy, the pharmacist informed him that no such medicine existed—the remedy was unavailable. The pharmacist *could not* provide what had been prescribed. The sick man walked away wondering why the doctor prescribed it in the first place. His illness continued without relief. Until he died.

The third man was prescribed the same medication. The doctor instructed him to go have it filled immediately, and follow the directions on the label. The sick man went to the pharmacy, and the pharmacist refused to provide the medicine. The pharmacist *would not* provide what had been prescribed. The sick man walked away wondering why the pharmacist would not provide the remedy if it were so readily available. His illness continued without relief. Until he died.

The fourth man was prescribed a weaker medication that would only soothe the symptoms of the disease, even though another medication was available that would completely cure the man’s illness. The fully efficacious medicine cost no more than the weaker one and had no adverse side effects. The doctor gave the weaker prescription anyway. The sick man went to the pharmacy, had the prescription filled, and returned home. He took the *inadequate* medication and felt some temporary relief, but the sickness came back over and over again. He often wondered why the doctor didn’t prescribe the medication he really needed. This pattern continued to plague him throughout life. Until he died.

The fifth man was prescribed the needed medication. But the sick man doubted whether the doctor knew what he was talking about. The pharmacist was ready to fill the order, but the sick man didn't believe the medicine was actually available or that it would work even if it were. He figured death was the only way he would ever be rid of his disease. After all, sickness is an inevitable part of being human. So the sick man didn't even go to the pharmacy to have it filled. His *unbelief* caused him not to possess the health he could have had. His illness continued without relief. Until death cured him.

The sixth man had been through this process before, on a prior visit to the doctor. The doctor had prescribed medication, the pharmacist had provided it, and the man had experienced relief from the symptoms, for which he was thankful. He was *pronounced* well. The doctor told him this second trip was quite unnecessary, and that the patient should simply accept the pronouncement and leave it at that. The man knew, however, that he was not fully healed. So he sought out the most reputable doctor available for a second opinion. The second doctor offered him the medication that would cure the illness, but for some strange reason, the man vacillated between the two opinions, ostensibly preferring to remain sick rather than try the second doctor's advice. So he refused to go to the pharmacy. His *resistance* caused him not to possess the health he could have had. His illness continued without relief. Until he died, that is.

Finally, the seventh man's doctor happily informed his patient that medication was available to fully cure him. The sick man trusted the doctor and went right away to the pharmacy. The pharmacist took great delight in providing him with the medicine. The seventh man, too, had been to the doctor on a previous visit and had received the help he needed. But because the sick man committed himself completely to the care of his physician, he took the second medicine also and was completely cured. Afterward he enjoyed a long and productive life.

If you had to be one of these seven men, which would you choose to be?

### **The Objective of This Address**

I contend that a complete cure for the fallen human condition is readily available, that the doctor (God) has already prescribed it, and that the pharmacist (Christ) has already provided it. Our only reasonable response is to possess it.

Often, an effective way to make a case for one point of view is first to refute the alternatives. Then, after this process of elimination, a positive case

can be presented for the correct view. I will employ this technique in the present address, where I attempt to refute what I believe are false views of sanctification. Then, afterward, I will set forth a positive defense of the Wesleyan view of entire sanctification.

### **False or Inadequate Views of Entire Sanctification**

Over time, various doctrinal traditions developed which slowly but surely veered away from the biblical and apostolic epicenter, and denied the possibility of a genuine entire sanctification in this world. Still, however, all Christian traditions teach sanctification. Clearly, if they are to maintain any pretense of being biblical, they must!

But *how* are they teaching it? Unfortunately, many seem unwilling to embrace the full-orbed biblical revelation on the subject. Many, influenced by their tradition, look through an unbiblical lens and thus emerge with a misinterpretation of the biblical data. Many teach an erroneous view of sanctification that sees it as a work of God that can only be experienced in this life to a degree less than the Bible admits, or a view that sees it as a kind of illusory work of God, a sanctification that is not personal and actual. Many are adamant in their repudiation of the notion that sanctification can be *entire* in this life. At this point, the words of 1 Thessalonians 4:8 serve as a solemn warning:

“Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.”

Please notice that this verse follows immediately after a verse where Paul categorically states that God has called us to holiness, and only five verses after Paul’s direct assertion that our sanctification is God’s will.

“For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness” (4:7, KJV).

“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification ...” (4:3, KJV).

Paul strategically placed this verse, because, undoubtedly, he knew the strong tendency of people to rebel against personal holiness, so he sternly warned that any such rebellion is against God directly.

For at least two reasons, everyone who takes the Bible seriously will agree that holiness is required:

1. Because it is God’s will. Note again the verses just cited, this time given in the NIV.

“It is God’s will that you should be sanctified”  
(1 Thessalonians 4:3).

“For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life” (1 Thessalonians 4:7).

2. Because it is necessary to meet the biblical standards for admission into heaven.

“Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14).

“Nothing impure will ever enter it (the new Jerusalem), nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (Revelation 21:27).

Everyone will admit that sanctification must at some point (prior to entering heaven) be entire (because no trace of sin will enter heaven). There is no disagreement here. However, a sharp point of departure occurs whenever the following question is asked: “*When* does entire sanctification take place?”<sup>97</sup> Correspondingly, theological debate also concerns the question, “*To what extent in this life* does sanctification take place?”

As I see it, there are four basic views that have been advanced through the course of church history and remain popular to some degree yet today:

1. Entire sanctification occurs at confirmation – the Roman Catholic view.
2. Entire sanctification occurs simultaneously with justification/regeneration – the Moravian view.
3. Entire sanctification occurs at the time of death. This idea has at least five further subdivisions:<sup>98</sup>
  - a. The Lutheran view.

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<sup>97</sup> An excellent presentation of the various views is given by Donald S. Metz, *Studies in Biblical Holiness* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1971), 147-173. For a thorough historical analysis of the doctrine, see Bassett and Greathouse, *ECH*, vol. 2.

<sup>98</sup> There is some overlap in these five subdivisions, which is to be expected. For example, many Bible teachers would say that they embrace both progressive and positional sanctification. The thing they all have in common is the notion that sanctification (in the sense of moral transformation) can only become entire at the time of death.

- b. The Calvinistic view.
  - c. The Reformed (progressive) view.
  - d. The positional (moderate Calvinism) view.
4. Entire sanctification occurs subsequent to regeneration and should (or, may) happen before death, as a second epochal act of divine grace whereby the heart is thoroughly cleansed of Adamic depravity and filled with perfect love by the Holy Spirit. This is the most common expression of the Wesleyan-holiness view (also called Wesleyan-Arminian), as shown in my opening statement.<sup>99</sup>

I will argue that numbers one, two and three have elements of truth in them, but also elements of serious error.

Number four, the Wesleyan-holiness view, stands in bold relief from the others. It offers a thoroughgoing biblical basis, in addition to being true to historic Christianity, completely logical, and true to Christian experience. It heralds an optimism of grace that glorifies God and gives hearers hope where they need it most—deliverance from sin. The remainder of the present address will offer a critique of the first three, as well as a brief analysis of aberrant positions that offshoot from number four. In so doing, I hope to set forth the theological context in the mind of the jury for a proper understanding of number four.

Let us now look at those views (and their subdivisions) which I believe to be either inadequate or outright unbiblical.<sup>100</sup> In discussing these views that I

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<sup>99</sup> Pentecostals generally fit under this rubric as well, although their tendency is to err in one of two ways: One is to separate entire sanctification from the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Thus they tend to make the latter a *third* epochal work of grace, an error leading to all sorts of mischief in both doctrine and practice. Or, if they do not separate the two, their tendency is to minimize or ignore the importance of heart cleansing. Either way they favor the unbiblical emphasis on external signs such as tongues-speaking as the evidence of being baptized “in” the Holy Spirit. The baptism “with” the Holy Spirit is the correct biblical wording (e.g. Matthew 3:11; Acts 1:5). See Grider, *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*, 370, 374, 459.

<sup>100</sup> Metz points out, “that in most cases they [i.e., the false views] are mutually exclusive. That is, to accept any one of the[m] means the rejection of the others. So no one group can be commended for being more tolerant nor be condemned for being more dogmatic than the others.” Op. cit., 147-148.

believe are erroneous,<sup>101</sup> there is no desire to cast aspersions on anyone who embraces any of them, understanding full well that there are earnest Christians in each category, many of whom manifest the fruit of entire sanctification in practice without holding to it in precept. I am not trying to belittle, be unnecessarily harsh, or be offensive in any way. In the spirit of perfect love, I ask the reader to forgive me if I have failed in any of these aspects. I am simply speaking with conviction concerning what I believe to be the truth. For purposes of presenting this case, the discussions that follow are necessarily brief. I have endeavored to portray accurately the positions of each, and touch on the central issues only.

### **The Roman Catholic View**

Roman Catholics teach that “God forgives the guilt of original sin in baptism<sup>102</sup> and forgives the guilt of committed sin by absolution, based on personal confession.”<sup>103</sup> Then, at the time of confirmation (perhaps ten years after infant baptism), a person is purified from sin when he receives the Holy Spirit. Regeneration occurs at the time of water baptism, and something analogous to Spirit baptism (entire sanctification) occurs at the time of confirmation.<sup>104</sup>

Catholics may be commended for recognizing the logical necessity of two works of grace, and that they may be experienced in this life. Historically, however, the Catholic view tended to make sanctification dependent on the meritorious good works of the individual, and made justification subsequent to sanctification. Several objections to their view may be listed:

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<sup>101</sup> The survey of various views on sanctification that follows depends to some extent (though not exclusively) on Metz, 147-170. The first point follows Grider (see note 102). Metz’s order has been slightly altered, and the discussion has been adapted at certain points.

<sup>102</sup> Some have taught that Catholics believe in a post-mortem entire sanctification, including myself when my sermon was published in *Preacher’s Magazine* in 1993, but J. Kenneth Grider, *Entire Sanctification: The Distinctive Doctrine of Wesleyanism* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1980), 144, refutes this commonly held misconception. See also Grider, *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*, 456-457. I am happy to make the correction here.

<sup>103</sup> Op. cit., Metz, 148.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Grider, *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*, 378, 457.

1. There is no biblical support for the notion that sanctification in any sense occurs at the time of either water baptism (guilt of original sin, or regeneration, or initial sanctification) or confirmation (purification from sin, or Spirit baptism, or entire sanctification).
2. It is contrary to spiritual principles.<sup>105</sup>
  - a. There is no good reason to think that such purifying grace (initial sanctification) would occur at the time of infant baptism, unless one views personal consecration and faith as irrelevant. Many Scripture references contradict such an idea (e.g., Luke 24:49; Acts 15:9; 26:18; Romans 12:1; 2 Corinthians 7:1). There is also no good reason to think guilt for original sin accrues to infants. Since original sin (Adamic depravity) is *inherited*,<sup>106</sup> one only becomes guilty for its presence when the divinely provided remedy is willfully neglected or rejected.<sup>107</sup>
  - b. It is built on the false view that infants can receive regeneration. Regeneration requires the meeting of certain conditions which infants obviously cannot do (i.e., confession, repentance, faith).

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<sup>105</sup> I am borrowing this point from Metz., 150, even though he uses it with respect to a post-mortem view of entire sanctification. The same point applies here.

<sup>106</sup> Grider argues against the notion that depravity is biologically inherited, preferring instead the representative theory, which views our entering the world with depravity as the result of our solidarity with Adam in his federal headship of the human race. He says, "Scripture nowhere teaches that this racial detriment is ours because of our parents," *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*, 277. It seems preferable to me, however, to think in terms of genealogical transmission (a term Grider thinks is misleading) because of verses like Psalm 51:5, which specifically refers to the time of conception, and Romans 5:12, which specifically refers to the effect of Adam's sin (i.e., death) spreading throughout the whole human race. Somehow Adamic depravity transmits or spreads to the entire race. Also take note of Genesis 5:3, which tells us "Adam ... begat a son in his own likeness, after his image ... (KJV)." Adam had been created in God's image, but when he sinned the image of God was marred. When Adam procreated he passed on to Seth the fallen image. Thus Paul can say "we ... were by nature the children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3, KJV). We may not be able to explain *how* individuals are depraved from the time of conception, but we can say *that* they are. See the discussions by Wiley, op. cit., *Christian Theology*, vol. 2, 118-119; and William M. Arnett, "The Wesleyan Arminian Teaching on Sin," op. cit., *Insights into Holiness*, 66-67.

<sup>107</sup> See Article V, paragraph 5.2, in the *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 2001), 28.

Infants who die (along with all other “unaccountables”) are taken to heaven on the basis of justification or positional sanctification, which is provided for by the atonement of Christ in such cases. Therefore, since entire sanctification presupposes true regeneration, the Catholic view cannot be correct.

- c. It seems to ignore the need for complete consecration by placing the time of Spirit baptism at confirmation. Though it is certainly not impossible for children to make a complete consecration and be entirely sanctified, it is presumptuous to think it will automatically happen at a pre-determined time such as confirmation.
3. It encourages a lax attitude toward sin.<sup>108</sup> Since Roman Catholic teaching has historically tended to remove “personal sanctity from the realm of everyday living,”<sup>109</sup> there is a strong corresponding tendency for the church’s constituents to be careless about sin.

#### *The Moravian (Simultaneous) View*

This is the view that one is sanctified at the same time as justification or regeneration, the time of Christian conversion. This sanctification is not followed by a second definite work of grace. It is already as entire as it will ever be on earth. A Christian simply grows in the grace of regeneration throughout the rest of his earthly life. Historically this position is associated with the Moravians, led by Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, who taught that, at the time of justification, one is not only freed from the guilt of actual sin, but also from the *presence* of original sin.<sup>110</sup> Properly conceived, regeneration and entire sanctification both belong on the continuum of real changes wrought by God in the human heart in the redemptive process. Therefore, it is correct to say that sanctification *begins* with regeneration. To this extent the Moravian view has an element of truth in it. But it is incorrect to say that *entire* sanctification occurs at that time.

This position may be objected to on the following bases:

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<sup>108</sup> Same as note 105.

<sup>109</sup> Op cit., Metz, 150.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 151-153. See also T. M. Anderson, “Erroneous Theories Concerning Deliverance from Sin,” in *Our Holy Faith: Studies in Wesleyan Theology*, compiled by T. M. Anderson (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1965), 263-272

1. It ignores important biblical evidence. Wesleyans agree that sanctification begins with regeneration. This is usually called *initial* sanctification. It is the holiness that coincides with being made a new creation in Christ. Biblically speaking, it is indisputable that one is set apart as holy, and made holy, at that time. This is why Christians are called “saints” (i.e., holy ones). The Corinthians certainly had this degree of sanctification (1 Corinthians 1:2), but it is equally clear that they were still carnal (1 Corinthians 3:1-3). Paul chides them for their failure to appropriate the higher spiritual state that is the opposite of carnal-mindedness. The case of the Thessalonians, as we shall see later, is even more compelling.
2. It does not take seriously the two-fold nature of sin. Since we are sinners *both* by nature and by deeds, it is reasonable to think that the divine remedy would treat each aspect separately. This is analogous to the difference between a doctor treating the symptoms of an illness, and effecting a cure to the same illness. The physician must act to provide a complete cure (if one is available) – the symptoms will be alleviated, and the root cause of the illness will be decisively remedied.
3. It is contrary to Christian experience. Christians do not experience a complete cleansing of Adamic depravity at the time of regeneration. Their common experience subsequent to regeneration is that the “bend-to-sinning” remains and causes them discouraging setbacks. In almost all cases, they only realize at a later time that sanctifying grace is able to make them every whit whole.
4. It is contrary to the principles contained in God’s plan of salvation. For example, the writer of Hebrews urged his readers to “go on to perfection” [τελειότητα] (Hebrews 6:1). In that same passage, he identifies “repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God” as the “elementary teachings” that are to be left. If persons were already sanctified wholly at conversion, there would be no need to leave these things behind. They would already be Scripturally perfect. Because the Greek word is a noun, it is clear that the Hebrews were admonished to go on to a completed state.
5. As John Wesley noted, “It has been observed before, that the opposite doctrine, that there is no sin in believers, is quite new in the church of Christ; that it was never heard of for seventeen hundred years; never

till it was discovered by Count Zinzendorf. I do not remember to have seen the least intimation of it, either in any ancient or modern writer; unless perhaps in some of the wild, ranting Antinomians...I can not, therefore, by any means, receive this assertion, that there is no sin in believers from the moment they are justified; first, because it is contrary to the whole tenor of the Scriptures; secondly, because it is contrary to the experience of the children of God; thirdly, because it is absolutely new, never heard of in the world till yesterday; and lastly, because it is naturally attended with the most fatal consequences; not only grieving those whom God hath not grieved, but perhaps dragging them into everlasting perdition.”<sup>111</sup>

### **Entire Sanctification Occurs at Death**

It can be a slippery matter to try to distinguish between the various viewpoints fitting under this category, because there is considerable overlap between the subset views, and because I will surely fall short of expressing them as well as their proponents would like. But this much they all have in common: each denies the possibility of personal, complete sanctification in this world. This should be kept in mind above all. Wesleyans can happily admit that the concepts of alien holiness, imputed holiness, progressive holiness, and suppression all have a place in the discussion of sanctification. There is no quarrel with the idea that sanctification *may* become entire in some sense at the time of death. The quarrel is with the notion that it *must* occur at that time. The idea that entire sanctification can only occur at death sells short the true biblical gospel at best and grossly distorts it at worst. For one thing, true entire sanctification has an unmistakable ethical quality which would not be possible at the time of death when our volitional capacity is not fully engaged.

### **The Lutheran View**

Both Luther and Calvin believed that Adamic depravity continued as long as one remains in the body. It was Luther who gave voice to the expression, “*simul justus et peccator*” (simultaneously just and sinner). According to Bassett, Luther separated entire sanctification, theologically, from perfect

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<sup>111</sup> John Wesley, “On Sin in Believers,” *The Standard Sermons of John Wesley*, ed. Edward H. Sugden (London: The Epworth Press, 1921), 369-370.

love.<sup>112</sup> Luther was only comfortable speaking of sanctification in the sense of “alien” holiness, or Christ imputing his own holiness to us.<sup>113</sup> Luther could not bring himself to embrace the idea of entire sanctification as a moral transformation resulting in perfect love in this life.<sup>114</sup>

In the same vein, one modern Lutheran scholar expresses his discomfort with the whole subject of sanctification by contending that sanctification is simply “the art of getting used to justification.”<sup>115</sup> He apparently supposes this way of stating the case dismisses any notion that humans have something to do with their own sanctification. But in so doing, he empties the word sanctification of any serious meaning. As the reasoning goes, the acceptance of one’s simultaneous sinfulness and imputed (divinely declared) righteousness is the only safe starting point for discussion about sanctification.<sup>116</sup> Then and only then will we avoid the trap of “practical Pelagianism,” the attempt to contribute something to our sanctification. According to this view, the struggle with Adamic depravity continues unabated throughout life. This view may be objected to on several grounds:

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<sup>112</sup> Op. cit., *ECH*, vol. 2, 163.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 152-164, especially p. 164.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 164.

<sup>115</sup> Gerhard O. Forde, “The Lutheran View,” *Christian Spirituality*, ed. Donald L. Alexander (Downer’s Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1988), 13.

<sup>116</sup> The illogic of the Lutheran position can be seen in Forde’s statement. He is at pains to avoid any language that suggests human cooperation, yet he makes the patently unbiblical assertion that sanctification is the art of getting used to justification. The Bible nowhere says this or anything like it. It is self-evident that, if I am to “get used to something,” I must be actively involved in the process, at least at that point. Forde’s worry is that talk of sanctification leads to the idea that humans must do something in order to be sanctified (what he calls practical Pelagianism), but he ends up saying that humans must do something – namely, get used to their justification. Thus, his whole argument is self-defeating. A simple illustration will show what I mean. My children can “get used” to my unconditional love for them only through the active involvement of their wills in cooperative response – they must embrace it in order to get used to it! My computer, on the other hand, is a completely *passive* participant in my relationship with it. Even if I had some sort of “affection” for my computer, it still would respond as it does only because it can do no other, not because it is “getting used” to my affection for it.

1. It lacks biblical support.
  - a. Belief that entire sanctification (as moral transformation) can only occur at death is a theological contrivance not a biblical idea. Metz observes, “Nowhere does the Bible state that death is the gateway to purification. The reverse is true. The Bible regards death as the last enemy to be overcome (1 Corinthians 15:26). But if death brings about purification and restores one to the image of God, then death is man’s greatest friend. Also the Bible presents death as a point of character fixation, not of character transformation (Luke 16:24; Revelation 22:11).”<sup>117</sup>
  - b. If sanctification were nothing more than alien holiness, or simply the art of getting used to justification, one would expect to find biblical references to support the idea. Instead, it appears to be nothing more than an attempt to view the topic through an *a priori* theological lens. The biblical language speaks of sanctification as cleansing, purification, crucifixion, separation, etc.
  - c. The Bible *links* entire sanctification and perfect love, or blamelessness (e.g., cf. Matthew 5:8 with 5:48; Ephesians 5:25-27; 1 Thessalonians 4:3,7; 5:23; cf. 1 John 1:7,9 with 2:6: 4:12, 17-18; and especially 2 Corinthians 7:1, where cleansing from all filthiness and perfecting holiness are brought together in the same verse).
2. It has a mistaken view of Adamic depravity. This stance “appears to incorporate the ancient Gnostic (or Platonic) idea that sin is resident in the physical body.”<sup>118</sup> This is a decidedly unbiblical notion. Humanity was created holy and good. Adamic depravity is the result of the fall of the human race. The corruption is in our moral nature, not in our physical bodies. God’s redemptive plan involves the restoration of our fallen moral image. Obviously, this does not have to be postponed till death. I will return to this point in the discussion of positional holiness below.
3. It diminishes the atonement of Christ. There is no adequate explanation why the finished work of Christ is unable to effect a cure for Adamic depravity prior to death. It is psychologically unsound to view

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<sup>117</sup> Op. cit., 163.

<sup>118</sup> Op. cit., Metz, *Studies in Biblical Holiness*, 163.

death as the necessary *portal* to entire sanctification or to view the sanctifying provisions of Christ's atoning work as applicable only at the *time* of death.<sup>119</sup> The present reality of sin dictates that we need entire sanctification now.

### *The Calvinistic View*

Calvinism has much in common with Lutheranism. Both tend to focus on imputation, which is seen as the answer to the dilemma ⇒ How can we, being irremediably infected with sin in this world (so they believe), meet the biblical demands for holiness? But Calvinism also diverges from Lutheranism at certain points. Whereas Luther tended to make a sharp disjuncture between law and gospel, Calvin understood the law to be "in continuity with the gospel."<sup>120</sup> Consequently, Calvin viewed holiness as part of the "package" of electing grace.<sup>121</sup>

Another difference lies in their respective views of the nature of the believer's holiness. Luther did not accept the idea that holiness is both imputed and imparted, both alien and personal; or as Bassett states, "he separates perfection in love and entire sanctification."<sup>122</sup> In contrast, Calvin believed the holiness imputed to us became the source of our holiness.<sup>123</sup> In fact, Calvin believed Christians are *entirely* sanctified at the level of imputed holiness, but not at the level of personal holiness.

Calvinism is on the right track by diverging from Luther at these points, viz., by insisting that holiness brings about a moral transformation.<sup>124</sup> However, Calvinism errs in denying a second definite epoch of grace (moral transformation) that delivers from sin and produces greater holiness. Instead, Calvin insists that holiness (the holiness resulting from justifying/regenerating grace) delivers only from the *guilt* of sin; and that holiness produces moral transformation, in that order, and that this moral transformation cannot be completed in this life.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Op. cit., Bassett, *ECH*, vol. 2, 167.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 168-169.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 177.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 175-177.

These points may be enumerated in critique of the Calvinistic view:

1. It has an unbiblical concept of sin. Sin is defined too broadly. In fact, Calvin viewed “refusal to accept the broadest possible definition of sin—that is, sin as any hindrance to righteousness—[as] a sign of reprobation.”<sup>126</sup> Indeed, seeing sin through this lens was considered by Calvin “a continuing necessity in our sanctification.”<sup>127</sup> When sin is defined in this way, the biblical standard of discontinuing acts of sin falls to pieces (cf. Romans 6:1-2; 1 John 3:6, 9; 5:18).
2. The biblical terminology with respect to sin is rejected. The language of the New Testament in particular is insistent that sin can be taken away, removed, crucified, done away with, etc. The Christian can be set free from sin, purified in heart, cleansed from all sin. Proponents of Calvinism deny this in principle. They are only willing to say that sin can be *covered* by the righteousness of Christ. It is difficult to see why they ignore the specific New Testament terminology.
3. It tacitly minimizes the power of God’s grace by elevating the stranglehold of sin on the human race. Stated another way, this view has no radical optimism of grace, but instead has a radical pessimism toward sin. By contrast, for example, a central thesis of the book of Romans is: “where sin increased, grace increased *all the more!*” (Romans 5:20, cf. also James 4:5-6).<sup>128</sup> Calvinism gives people no bright hope where they need it most—deliverance *from* sin. Instead they teach the oxymoronic view that God’s solution is deliverance *in* sin.

### **The Reformed (Progressive) View**

The progressive view of sanctification attracts a wide following among evangelical Christians today. In a nutshell, the Reformed view says “Christ is

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> In their speaking on the subject, many modern Bible teachers (who follow one of the views in this category) will frequently laud the triumph of God’s grace over sin, but to them this never means contemporaneous entire sanctification. I am compelled to ask, If God’s grace is truly triumphant, then why not accept it as decisively remedial with respect to sin here and now? Why laud the triumph of grace out of one side of the mouth, and bemoan Adamic depravity as “incurable” (until death) out of the other side?

our sanctification.” And, of course, it is correct to say this (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:30). But we must be careful what meaning we pour into this fundamental truth. On the human side, Reformed theologians say sanctification results from union with Christ, which results from justification by faith, regeneration, and baptism with the Holy Spirit occurring simultaneously.<sup>129</sup>

Simply stated, this is the view that we grow into or toward entire sanctification. Obviously, all will agree that growth is an important element in Christian living. An emphasis on progress is commendable as far as it goes. The fatal flaw in the progressive view, however, is that it hopelessly confuses purity of heart (as a finished work) with growth towards maturity (an ongoing work). We should have no quarrel with the idea of progression *per se* (as an element that exists both prior to and subsequent to entire sanctification). Rather, it is the idea that sanctification can never be anything more than a process (or the denial of entire sanctification as an instantaneous completed work in this life) with which we should take issue.

Following the Westminster Catechism, proponents of this view believe sanctification is a process (and nothing more) throughout one’s earthly life. Throughout this process, God’s grace continually renews us after His image and enables us “more and more to die unto sin and live unto righteousness.”<sup>130</sup> This view sounds attractive to many people, and in their judgment, is true to human experience. In this view, Adamic depravity is never fully and decisively purged in this life. Instead, a Christian moves increasingly upward along the scale of growth toward entire sanctification, but never quite gets there as long as he is physically alive. One cannot be *entirely* sanctified until he is with Christ in heaven. Meanwhile, no one is ever sure exactly where he is on the scale of growth. Is he 50% sanctified? Is he 75%? 99%?

Several objections may be lodged against the progressive view:

1. The most serious weakness of the growth into sanctification view is its lack of biblical support. “Biblical terminology does not support the idea of a lifelong growth, with a gradual and prolonged subjugation of sin.”<sup>131</sup> According to the Bible, God’s plan is to *do away with* the body

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<sup>129</sup> See Sinclair B. Ferguson, “The Reformed View,” in *Christian Spirituality*, ed. Donald L. Alexander (Downer’s Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1988), 52.

<sup>130</sup> Charles Hodge (noted Calvinistic theologian), cited by Metz, *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

of sin (Romans 6:6; cf. also Galatians 2:20). God's plan is to *cleanse* us from all sin (2 Corinthians 7:1; Ephesians 5:26; James 4:8; 1 John 1:7, 9). God's plan is to *purify* our hearts (Matthew 5:8; Acts 15:9; Titus 2:14; Hebrews 9:13). God's plan is to *purge out* the old leaven of sin (Psalm 51:7; Isaiah 6:7; Matthew 3:12; John 15:2; 1 Corinthians 5:7; Hebrews 9:14). God's plan is to *sanctify* his people, or make them holy (Romans 15:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 13:12; 1 Peter 1:2). All of these terms signify "a contemporary state resulting from an act, not ... a lifelong struggle with sin."<sup>132</sup> This is decisive Scriptural testimony. These are not just isolated verses pulled out of context. Contextual and grammatical analysis seals the fate of the progressive view. We must bring ourselves under the authority of the Word of God.

2. The nature of Adamic depravity makes the progressive view impossible. Donald Metz points out, "Spiritual depravity is not an *act*."<sup>133</sup> I might add, nor is it a series of acts, that can gradually be ceased or brought under control. It is an infection in our nature. As a condition of our inward nature, depravity is not like the wildness of an untamed horse. The process of taming a wild horse is a matter of taking what is innately good and channeling it toward constructive purposes. Adamic depravity, by contrast, is thoroughly wicked and hostile to God (Romans 8:7). It cannot be tamed. It cannot be gradually conquered. It cannot be progressively brought into compliance with God's will. It is not subject to improvement. It is utterly incapable of being rehabilitated. It must be unceremoniously put to death! Metz correctly states, "Depravity is not eliminated gradually any more than sins are forgiven gradually."<sup>134</sup>
3. The nature of sanctification makes the progressive view untenable. I know it sounds like a broken record, but I repeat, sanctify means "to make holy" or "to purify."

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 160.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

- a. It is the fiery work of the Holy Spirit. Fire purges. It is a state of being into which God brings a person.<sup>135</sup> True, the divine act of purification has a component that may be called the refining process, but the process is not an end in itself. Rather the fire is relentless in pursuit of purity. The fire kills impurities. The state of purity does not exist until the last trace of impurity has been purged. But this is precisely the point. The fire inevitably purges out all dross. The fire does not burn indefinitely without accomplishing the end of purification.
- b. To use another analogy, imagine the act of cleaning. One does get cleaner and cleaner, but not just that. He gets clean. Washing must be thorough, not merely progressive.
- c. To use another analogy, imagine the act of pulling weeds. The roots must be completely extracted. True, they will only come out reluctantly, but the greater power exerted by the weed-puller inexorably applies force until the roots are gone.
- d. To use yet another analogy, imagine a doctor surgically removing a cancerous tumor. Of course, there is a surgical process, but the surgery does not last indefinitely. Surgery moves unalterably toward a decisive moment when the tumor is completely excised.

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<sup>135</sup> Representative of those Wesleyan-holiness scholars who hold to a more relational view (see opening statement above) is Mildred B. Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1973), 81, who seems to reject the idea of holiness as a “state.” She says, “Holiness is not a thing, a new mechanism, which is implanted into the sum total of personality after the subtraction of sin has been accomplished” She prefers to conceive of holiness as a “religious relationship,” apparently for the purpose of maintaining the dynamic and interpersonal nature of sanctification (as opposed to static and impersonal). However, it seems to me that this is tantamount to throwing out the baby with the bathwater. Whatever else “being cleansed from all sin” means, it is more than just a religious relationship. It includes (at the very least) the remediation of Adamic depravity. Does not purification require the prior existence of something (impurity) that needs to be purified? And does not the word “purify” or “cleanse” (unless we empty it of its obvious semantic value, even if taken metaphorically) imply “subtraction” or “removal”? In our haste to avoid a substantive theory of sin and preserve the dynamic and relational nature of sanctification, we must be careful not to reject the biblical terminology, which itself suggests the idea of subtraction. The subtraction of sin is a spiritual matter; it occurs at the level of our moral nature. It is the cleansing away of an inherited infection, the removal of our bent toward sinning, the expelling of all evil tempers and desires. It is, as Wesley said, “love *excluding* sin”!

4. If there really were such a thing as a scale of growth toward sanctification, of course it would matter greatly where a person is on the scale,<sup>136</sup> because it is God's will that we be sanctified (the aorist tense of the Greek indicating a completed action).<sup>137</sup> But therein lies the problem, in the progressive scheme of things, a person cannot possibly know where he is. Though he may know that he is closer than he was at a previous time, he still cannot know precisely how near he is. Instead he can only know that he has not obtained, nor will he ever obtain in this life, the completed state of sanctification to which God has called him. A strange dilemma—God has called him to be what he cannot possibly be.
5. Though it purports to be the work of God's free grace, the growth into sanctification view is fraught with the tendency toward works-righteousness.<sup>138</sup> Of course, the proponents of the view vehemently deny this aspect, but the emphasis on progressiveness lends itself to this criticism nonetheless. If sanctification is a divine act, then there is no good reason to view it as solely progressive, since God is able to do it instantaneously, and the biblical terminology indicates that is exactly how he does it.<sup>139</sup> If, however, one insists that sanctification is progressive, and

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<sup>136</sup> On one occasion, when preaching this message, I made the point that the growth toward sanctification view makes it impossible for us to know where we are on the scale of growth. A layman asked aloud, "Does it matter?" I replied, "Since it is God's will that we be sanctified, it certainly matters greatly how near we are to obtaining that goal!"

<sup>137</sup> There has been much scholarly debate over the value of the aorist tense as an evidence of the instantaneousness of entire sanctification. As I see it, the heart of the matter is this: Greek grammarians uniformly identify the aorist tense as indicative of punctiliar action. Context is always the primary determinant of meaning, but punctiliar action refers to action as "having occurred" at a particular point in time without regard to its duration. Grider offers an excellent synopsis, concluding that "even when all due allowances are made for other possible significations of the aorist tense, it is still *an* exegetical support of the instantaneousness of entire sanctification in various contexts." *Op. cit.*, *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*, 397 (emphasis added). I take the same position, namely, that the aorist tense is *a* support. The classical holiness position does not stand or fall on this issue.

<sup>138</sup> Metz says the progressive view is "essentially humanistic." *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>139</sup> As Wesley reminds us, "Admitting, therefore, that 'with men it is impossible' to 'bring a clean thing of an unclean,' to purify the heart from all sin, and to fill it with all holiness; yet this creates no difficulty in the case, seeing 'with God all things are possible' ... if God speaks, it shall be done." "The Scripture Way of Salvation," *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, vol. 2, ed. E. H. Sugden (London: Epworth Press, 1921), 457.

progressive only, then I am hard-pressed to see how this is not tantamount to seeing sanctification as either a human achievement or an outright denial of God's sanctifying power.<sup>140</sup>

6. A comparison with regeneration disproves the notion of progressive sanctification.<sup>141</sup> In some cases there may be a prolonged period of labor pains before new birth (regeneration) occurs. In other cases the birth pangs may be short lived. In either case the process itself leads most assuredly to a climactic moment when new birth occurs. At that very moment God calls into being a new spiritual nature out of the dead spiritual state that previously existed. Beyond all question, regeneration is an instantaneous work of God, and all Christians agree with this. There is no logical reason, therefore, to think that entire sanctification should not be equally an instantaneous work of God, even though Adamic depravity may stubbornly resist perishing for an extended period of time leading up to that moment of its death. The length of time it takes for the carnal mind to die varies according to the circumstances that are unique to each individual (e.g., theological, psychological, and emotional "baggage," and temperament type), but we must be extremely careful that we do not use these factors to limit God's power or to make excuses.
7. As previously stated, the fundamental fallacy of the progressive view is its confusion of categories. The Bible nowhere says or implies that God calls us merely to *pursue* holiness.<sup>142</sup> Rather, he calls us to *be* holy.<sup>143</sup> Entire sanctification is the act of God whereby Adamic

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<sup>140</sup> Note that Wesley also said, "He [God] cannot want more time to accomplish whatever is his will." *Ibid.*, 458.

<sup>141</sup> See Metz, 160-161.

<sup>142</sup> Hebrews 12:14 exhorts us to "pursue" peace and holiness, but in this verse and the surrounding context the end result of "seeing the Lord" depends on the *possession* of holiness. The pursuit is not an end in itself! Cf. Richard S. Taylor's comments in W. T. Purkiser, Richard S. Taylor, and Willard H. Taylor, *God, Man, and Salvation* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1977), 471 (he emphasizes the word *pursuit*).

<sup>143</sup> In an effort to justify a progressive sanctification viewpoint, the verb in 1 Peter 1:16 is sometimes interpreted to mean "be becoming holy" (i.e., be in an ongoing, never-ending-in-this-life process of becoming holy). However, the verb is not an imperative but a simple future tense with the force of an imperative ("You will be holy because I am holy" or simply "Be holy because I am holy"). The first half of the statement is substantiated by the second half. In the second half of the statement God exists in a state of holiness, not in a never ending pro-

depravity is cleansed and the heart is made pure. This can happen in the heart of a child. Growth in grace is a separate category. Sanctification is qualitative in nature; growth is quantitative.<sup>144</sup> A pure heart is obtained in an instant. A mature Christ-like character is obtained by a process of growth over a period of time.<sup>145</sup> The opposite of holiness is impurity, not immaturity. One does not grow into sanctification; one must grow *in* sanctification. There is a big difference.

8. The example of Jesus discredits the progressive view. In His incarnation, as a boy, Jesus “grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor [χάριτι, grace] with God and men” (Luke 2:52). Even Jesus grew in grace, “but this can hardly be construed as an improvement in His holiness.”<sup>146</sup> Clearly the New Testament teaching is that growth occurs *within* the state of holiness, and not *toward* its attainment.<sup>147</sup>

### **The Positional (Moderate Calvinism) View**

This is also a view with a very wide following among evangelical Christians today. The strength of the view is that the demand for holiness is taken seriously. The debilitating weakness of the view is that it makes sanctification nothing more than a *standing* rather than a *state*.

Proponents of the positional holiness view, like the proponents of the other subsets of category number three, believe that Adamic depravity is inextricably part of fallen human nature throughout the whole of one’s earthly life, even as a Christian. The total depravity resulting from the fall is so thoroughgoing, they say, that sin is a weight from which a human cannot be unburdened as long as he is in the flesh. The majority of today’s popular Bible

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cess of becoming holy. We should expect the first half to have the same meaning. Therefore the parallelism between the two parts of the statement suggests that we should understand the verb, not from the progressive sanctification point of view, but rather as indicating a completed holy state into which God expects us to enter.

<sup>144</sup> I do not mean that spiritual growth can be precisely measured or quantified in the same way physical growth can. Growth in grace is a biblical metaphor that implies an “increase” in the sense that one may be more mature (or wise, or knowledgeable, or cultured, etc.) one day than he was the day before. This does not mean that he is more sanctified or more pure.

<sup>145</sup> See Article X, paragraph 14, in op. cit., *The Manual of the Church of the Nazarene*, 31, for an excellent statement on this.

<sup>146</sup> Richard S. Taylor, op. cit., *God, Man, and Salvation*, 471.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, (emphasis added).

preachers and teachers sound this cacophonous refrain. The unavoidable implication of this view is  $\Rightarrow$  even God cannot (or chooses not to) completely unburden us from this horrible weight.

The positional argument follows lines like this: Since it is impossible to actually be free from sin in this life because of total depravity, then actual personal holiness is not fully obtainable. But since it is acknowledged that holiness is required, the solution to this dilemma is seen in the perfect life of Christ. He lived the perfect life that we could not live. In this view it is the perfect righteousness of the life of Christ that is imputed (or credited) to the Christian. Consequently, the highest level of holiness obtainable in this life is that of being “holy in Christ” or positional holiness. That is, one is holy because of his position in Christ, not because he is actually holy either in his inner moral character or in his life’s conduct.<sup>148</sup> Or, if it is admitted that he is actually holy, then regrettably it must be admitted that he is actually unholy also, and this situation is both unavoidable and irremediable. According to this view, positional holiness is obtained at the moment of justification, and there is no subsequent epochal work of grace prior to glorification.

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<sup>148</sup> It should be noted that one cannot have his cake and eat it too on this matter. If one holds to the positional holiness view *as the pinnacle* of obtainable holiness in this life, then he is required by the very nature of the case to reject the concept of any sort of real, personal holiness, either in inner character or in outward conduct. If one does not want to reject the idea of a real, personal holiness, then he must reject the idea that positional holiness is the highest level of holiness obtainable in this life. Logically, the two notions are mutually exclusive. Think of it this way: Imagine a person convicted and proven guilty of a crime beyond all reasonable doubt. Now suppose, under the circumstances of the case, there is a provision in the law for the judge to pardon the criminal, and the judge does so, even though the guilt of the criminal is never questioned and most observers are certain he will return to his life of crime. Now further suppose there is a provision in the law, that if the criminal shows proper remorse, experiences a complete change of heart and fully commits himself to abide by the law, his criminal record may be expunged and he can immediately be set free to live the life of a law-abiding citizen. The second scenario encompasses the first and reaches to an even higher level. In that case, the criminal has experienced both a relative change—a change in his standing, and a more profound *real* change—a change in his state. But if a person believes the first scenario (positional holiness; holy in the eyes of the law, but not holy in reality) is the highest level of remedy that the law provides for, then he must *of necessity* reject the possibility described in the second scenario (actual holiness). The second can include the first, but the first cannot include the second.

The death of Christ is seen as the full payment of the debt of sin, but is not seen as a provision for a state of complete cleansing, except at the time of death. The person's sins—past, present, and future, are all covered efficaciously at the moment of justification. Adamic depravity is removed entirely only at glorification. Those of us who believe in a contemporaneous entire sanctification are viewed as well-meaning but sadly misguided.

This opinion may be justly criticized on several counts:

1. Because it has an unbiblical view of sin, tacitly endorsing the philosophical view that matter is evil. Ancient Gnostics viewed the body as evil and therefore, someone confined to the flesh is irreconcilably evil. By contrast, the Bible views evil as an intrusion into the created order. Sin is not endemic to humanness. All have sinned—Yes! All must *of necessity* remain sinful while still in the flesh—NO!
2. Because, by the very nature of the case, it tends to minimize the benefits of Christ's atonement.<sup>149</sup> Jesus *died* for our sins. His death and resurrection became the focal point of the apostolic preaching in the book of Acts. The earliest creedal formulations in the Bible (e.g. 1 Corinthians 15:3-8),<sup>150</sup> and later the *Apostle's Creed*, also show this.<sup>151</sup> Further-

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<sup>149</sup> There exists in the church a sort of folk theology that says we have two choices: we can either live the perfect life ourselves or we can accept (by imputation) the perfect life of Christ. Since the former is obviously impossible, it logically follows, according to this view, that the latter is our only viable option. At first glance, it sounds completely reasonable, but this view is seriously flawed. For one thing, it carries the assumption that living the perfect life *by itself* would be an adequate satisfaction of the demands of a holy God for the punishment of sin. Biblically speaking, this is obviously erroneous. Someone trying to be his own Savior, even if he were able to live the hypothetical perfect life, would still need an unblemished atoning sacrifice for sin. Only Jesus Christ was uniquely qualified to be the once-for-all Passover Lamb, and therefore only he can be Savior and Lord. A second flaw is that this view incorrectly identifies the two options. The Bible never presents us with these two choices or anything like them. The two choices are repent or perish!

<sup>150</sup> The essence of the gospel, according to Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, is the death and resurrection of Christ. His burial confirms the fact of His death, and His post-resurrection appearances confirm the fact of His resurrection. Paul specifically makes the point that Christ died *for our sins* (v. 3; cf. also Galatians 1:4). It is the death of Christ that was vicarious.

<sup>151</sup> This was the purpose of His perfect life. He was born to die. He lived to die. And He died for our sins. His life was perfect so that His death would be perfect. In his sermon "The Scripture Way of Salvation" Wesley names "the *blood*

more, Jesus died to *make* his people holy (Hebrews 13:12), not merely to *consider* them holy.

4. Because positional holiness is an inadequate view, even for the first work of saving grace—regeneration. Seeing sanctification through the lens of imputed righteousness reduces regeneration (because it is the beginning of sanctification)<sup>152</sup> to the positional level as well. Even if one could rightly reject the doctrine of entire sanctification, the positional holiness view would still be a bad stance to take. It tends to emphasize justification to the neglect of regeneration. Regeneration means more than imputation of a forensic, foreign righteousness. It is so radical a change that a person is instantly transformed from death to life. Every Christian is made actually holy at the time of the new birth, including those who are not yet entirely sanctified. Regeneration is the impartation of a real, personal righteousness. Entire sanctification, at a subsequent moment, is also the impartation of a real, personal righ-

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*and righteousness of Christ*” as “the meritorious cause of our justification; cf. E. H. Sugden, ed., *Wesley’s Standard Sermons*, vol. 2, 445. It is the first advent of Christ in its totality that is vital, the whole Christ-event—his birth, life, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension.

<sup>152</sup> A word of clarification may be helpful here. I have attempted to be consistent on this matter throughout this volume. When I say that regeneration is the “beginning” of sanctification (or initial sanctification), I do not mean that this sanctification is incomplete or even inferior. Nor do I mean that sanctification itself grows or increases. The sanctification of regeneration is complete in the sense that it fully accomplishes its goal—cleansing from actual sin and acquired depravity. It is only the “beginning” in the sense that it is the first step. There is another goal that it does not accomplish—cleansing from Adamic depravity. An appropriate analogy is that of a doctor providing medication for the symptoms of a disease at one time (this would correspond to the “beginning” of healing or regeneration, even though this first step is complete in its own right), and providing medication or treatment that effects a cure for the disease at another time (this would correspond to the “completion” of healing or entire sanctification). The medical patient first obtains complete healing from the symptoms. Between this time and the final cure that occurs later, the patient does not grow “into” the final cure. He grows “within” the state of health he has thus far fully obtained. The symptoms will continue to resurface because the root cause still exists. The patient then obtains complete healing from the root cause. Likewise, he grows “within” this state of complete cure, even though he must do so in an environment of viruses that conceivably could cause the symptoms to reappear at a later time. Therefore maintaining his state of complete cleansing (proper hygiene, cleanliness, etc.) is also important.

teousness. What was begun in regeneration is completed in entire sanctification. The doctrine of positional holiness errs in its incompleteness or imbalance. It imagines that a legal salvation is all that is possible (imputed holiness). Wesleyans are happy to agree that justification is positional, but insist that salvation goes deeper than that. God is able to provide a real salvation (imparted holiness). While it is true that a Christian is holy in Christ (justification), it is also true that Christ is holy in the Christian (the regeneration—entire sanctification continuum). In short, the Bible is insistent that God’s saving and sanctifying grace effects actual change in the heart of persons. And since saving and sanctifying grace effects *actual* change and not merely *positional* change, the positional holiness view must be rejected.

5. Closely related to the last point, because the doctrine of positional holiness, as Richard S. Taylor has decisively shown, teaches “that the atonement of Christ does not so much change the nature of the Christian in relation to sin as it changes the nature of sin in relation to the Christian.”<sup>153</sup> Dr. Taylor further explains that, in this false view, “the Christian is not delivered from sin, his nature is not fundamentally changed by a complete cleansing, but the nature of sin is changed so that it is no longer deadly. In other words, the sinner sins and is damned forever, but the Christian, who has been converted, may thereafter commit the same sins, but is ... taken home to heaven!”<sup>154</sup> It is hard to believe any carefully thinking Christian would endorse such a view. Isn’t it patently obvious that God’s plan is to change the nature of persons, and not to change the nature of sin itself? There can be only two possible reasons to embrace the positional theory: either God is unable to effect a complete and actual cure for sin in this life, or God is unwilling to do so. If He is unable, then He is not omnipotent and the atonement of Christ is inadequate. If He is unwilling, then He does not love us as much as we supposed, the call to personal holiness is meaningless, and the Bible is explicitly in error for saying otherwise (e.g., 1 Thessalonians 4:3, 7; 5:23; Titus 2:14; Hebrews 13:12; James 1:4; 1 John 1:7, 9).

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<sup>153</sup> Richard S. Taylor, *A Right Conception of Sin* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1945), 17.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

## *Aberrations from the Wesleyan-Arminian Position*

### *The Keswick (Counteraction) View*

This is also sometimes called the suppression theory of sanctification.<sup>155</sup> There is essential agreement between Wesleyans and Keswicks on many points. “Keswick teaching stresses the practical life of holiness.”<sup>156</sup> They also insist that holiness must be personal and not merely positional, and that such holiness is the direct result of the baptism with the Holy Spirit. With these points most Wesleyans heartily concur.

However, the counteraction view has serious difficulties to which Wesleyans strenuously object. Metz summarizes it well in the following paragraph:

“The method for realizing personal holiness, according to Keswick teaching, is through personal consecration, personal appropriation, and personal trust. Thus ‘the child of God ... grows by the daily mortifying of the deeds of the body, and the daily vivifying of the Spirit through Christ Jesus: the daily putting off the old man of sin, the daily putting on of the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.’”<sup>157</sup>

As far as it goes, there is little to dispute in the preceding statement. No less a figure than Wesley himself urged Christians to make their consecration complete in this way. In his sermon “The Scripture Way of Salvation,” considered to be a reflection of Wesley’s mature thought, he states:

“But what good works are those, the practice of which you affirm to be necessary to sanctification? First, all works of piety; such as public prayer, family prayer, and praying in our closet; receiving the supper of the Lord; searching the Scriptures, by hearing, reading, meditating; and using such a measure of fasting or abstinence as bodily health allows. Secondly, all works of mercy; whether they relate to the bodies or souls of men; such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, entertaining the stranger, visiting those that are in prison, or sick, or variously afflicted; such as the endeavoring to instruct the ignorant, to awaken the stupid sinner, to quicken the lukewarm, to confirm the wavering, to comfort the

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<sup>155</sup> Counteraction and suppression can be separated into separate views, but for my purposes they are so similar that I have decided to consider them as one view.

<sup>156</sup> Op. cit., Metz, 165.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 164-165.

feeble minded, to succor the tempted, or contribute in any manner to the saving of souls from death.”<sup>158</sup>

However, consecration alone does not equal sanctification. Otherwise, sanctification would be a human achievement. Wesley goes on to say, “This is the way wherein God hath appointed his children to *wait* for complete salvation.”<sup>159</sup> And again, a few paragraphs later, he contends that such consecration is not necessary “in the same degree” as faith:

“... these fruits are only necessary *conditionally*, if there be time and opportunity for them; otherwise a man may be sanctified without them. But he cannot be sanctified without faith.”<sup>160</sup>

To avoid this implication of works righteousness, Keswicks teach “suppression” of Adamic depravity. Speaking of overcoming the burden of sin, one Keswick scholar states that the Christian is victorious by ‘letting Christ have the whole weight of our load, which He *counteracts* by His superior power.’ Man is never free from original sin, for ‘it is constantly there,’ says the Keswick teaching. The Christian, however, may experience ‘perpetual deliverance from it’ by a moment-by-moment cleansing by the atonement of Christ.”<sup>161</sup>

There would also be little to dispute about the suppressionists’ understanding if they were only applying it to the way one who is already entirely sanctified should live. Because sanctification does not dehumanize us, daily mortification is important. This is what Paul meant in 1 Corinthians 9:27,

“No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”

The objections to the counteraction view may be delineated as follows:

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<sup>158</sup> Op. cit., 455-456.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 456.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 164-165 (emphasis added). See his citations of Keswick authorities. I am compelled to ask, If man is never free from Adamic depravity, and if counteraction is the God-ordained solution, then how can Keswick teachers contend for a perpetual *deliverance* from it by a moment-by-moment *cleansing*? Is this use of words a tacit admission that counteraction is an unbiblical view? The words deliverance and cleansing signify more than counteraction. Logical consistency with their position would demand that a Keswick teacher say, we may experience perpetual *victory* by a moment-by-moment *suppression* of original sin.

1. It seriously weakens biblical terminology. Metz comments astutely on this point, and I quote him at length,

“The biblical terms used in relation to holiness are much stronger and more inclusive than the Keswicks indicate. For instance, the word *destroy* is sometimes used to denote *inoperative* or *put out of order*. But authoritative lexicographers translate the word as used in Romans 6:6 to mean *remove* or *to be done away with*, and place it under the general meaning of *do away with, annul, abolish*. Similarly, the word *cleanse* and its cognates mean ‘to free from the defilement of sin and from faults; to purify from wickedness.’ In the physical sense, to cleanse means ‘to remove something by or for the purpose of purification.’ In the moral and religious sense it means to ‘cleanse, purify.’ Again, the word sanctification in 1 Thessalonians 4:7 is presented as indicating ‘the removal of existing impurity.’ Thus sanctification is a state, not a process: ‘Sanctification is not moral action on the part of man, but a divinely effected state.’ Biblical terminology, from the standpoint of context as well as syntax, shows that holiness is a state of spiritual purity brought about by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>162</sup>

2. It confuses consecration with sanctification. This leads to the serious tendency toward works-righteousness. The Keswick theory encourages people to seek holiness by means of self-mortification. As Metz observes, such persons “appear to have periodic bursts of spiritual interest, only to relapse in a short time into the routine of ineffective and frustrating religious living.”<sup>163</sup> Wesley’s view is more logical and biblical. We should engage in self-mortification (works of piety and works of mercy) as a means of *waiting* on God for entire sanctification. Consecration is necessary and must be complete, but it is not sanctification. Consecration is the act whereby we place ourselves in position to be entirely sanctified. But only God sanctifies wholly!
3. It limits the power of God.<sup>164</sup> Metz’s remarks here are especially cogent: “There is no biblical or logical reason why, if God can give power to *paralyze* sin, He cannot *remove* sin from the life completely.”<sup>165</sup> This is the decisive weakness of the Keswick position.

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 166-167. See his citations of lexicographical authorities.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., (partial emphasis added).

### *The Pentecostal View*

See footnote 99.

#### *Summary Observations Concerning Erroneous Views*

Are there common threads of error that run through all these views? Yes, there are at least three threads that seem to emerge throughout the foregoing discussion:

1. There is a pervasive failure to take biblical terminology seriously. Sometimes there is little or no biblical basis at all for the erroneous doctrinal position. Sometimes certain aspects of biblical truth are taken seriously, while other, less palatable, biblical teachings are summarily discarded or twisted due to obvious theological prejudice. Sanctifying grace purifies the heart (Acts 15:9), destroys the body of sin (Romans 6:6), cleanses from all sin (1 John 1:7, 9). God sanctifies thoroughly (1 Thessalonians 5:23).
2. There is a radical pessimism toward the presence of sin as long as one remains in the flesh. Many people act surprised that anyone would have the audacity to believe that God's plan includes a decisive remedy for sin. This produces a rather shocking pessimism toward God's saving and sanctifying grace. By contrast the Bible exudes a bright hope for complete deliverance from sin, a radical optimism of grace!
3. There is a consistent habit of confusing categories. The difference between entire sanctification and justification is sometimes confused. The difference between entire sanctification and regeneration is sometimes confused. The difference between entire sanctification and growth in grace is sometimes confused. The difference between entire sanctification and entire consecration is sometimes confused. The difference between entire sanctification and glorification is sometimes confused.



## **FOURTH MAIN ADDRESS TO THE JURY**

### **Laying a Diagnostic Foundation for the Case**

## ***The Three-Fold Nature of Sin***

If we can correctly diagnose our condition, we will be able to correctly understand and embrace the cure.

### ***Diagnosis of Our Pre-Christian Condition***

Every human being is born with three spiritual problems to be solved. The first and most obvious one is environmental. We are born into a world of sinful people and corruption. We must face the harsh realities of hard work, sickness, pain, infirmity, death, injustice, oppression, etc. These are the residual effects of the fall. We are born into a fallen world full of thorns, thistles, and troubles of various kinds. Jesus said,

“In this world you will have trouble” (John 16:33).

We almost instinctively long for a perfect world. The only solution to this problem is to be lifted out of this world and taken to a perfect one. But the second and third problems must be solved in order to make this possible.

The second is this: every human being is also born with a depraved nature that manifests itself in a propensity to sin. No child has to learn to do wrong; all must be taught to do right.

The third is this: every human being commits sin, and incurs the guilt and penalty coinciding with such an act. Thus, we see the need for three works of grace (or two, if one prefers to think only in terms of epochs that should occur in this life). A work of grace is a saving work that comes from God, because a human is unable to do it for himself or herself.

The first is justification/regeneration (also called the new birth, adoption, being saved, etc.), which provides forgiveness and cleansing from a person's acts of sin. The second is entire sanctification (also called baptism with the Holy Spirit), which provides cleansing from our depraved nature, our sinful condition. The third is glorification, which occurs at death when our bodies are transformed into the likeness of Christ's glorious body. This provides us with deliverance from the earthly environment of sin, and takes us to heaven, where we will never have to deal with the problem of sin again.

### ***The Issue of Accountability***

“Each of us will give an account of himself to God” (Romans 14:12).

But make no mistake, some will be held to a different standard of accountability for sin than others. Jesus said,

“That servant who knows his master’s will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded, and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked” (Luke 12:47-48).

So we see that knowledge affects accountability. Therefore, it is safe to say that infants, and the mentally incapacitated, for example, will not be held accountable in the same way others will. They are covered by the justifying benefits of Christ’s blood. The vast majority of us, however, will be responsible for the great amount of light we have received (or had opportunity to receive), and for how we have exercised our free wills toward it. In a pre-Christian condition, we are lost in sin and headed toward hell. Unless we respond in obedience to God’s saving initiatives, including the light of truth he has shined on us, then we are blameworthy before God, because our actions are then justly considered willingly wicked (i.e., we have set our will against God’s). As long as we remain in this condition, our eternal destiny remains unchanged.

#### **Diagnosis of Our Condition Subsequent to the First Work of Grace**

In the first work of grace, our sinful choices are forgiven and cleansed, and we are transformed into a new spiritual creation.

But our inward sinful condition remains. When the initial euphoria of the new birth wanes and we face the reality of our situation, it won’t be long until we realize that there is still a depraved nature within that manifests itself in a propensity to sin. This will cause us to be up-and-down in our experience, being victorious one day and defeated the next. Nevertheless, an earnest seeking after God will lead us to lay hold of his best for us—a thorough cleansing of our Adamic depravity with his perfect love diffused in our soul in its stead. This is entire sanctification, a dynamic experience of growth in Christ-likeness, empowered by the gracious Holy Spirit.

#### **Diagnosis of Our Condition Subsequent to the Second Work of Grace**

At this point a person has reached the highest state of grace possible on earth. Sinful choices and sinful condition have both been remedied. But the sinful environment remains. And a person remains on probation, and therefore responsible to walk in the light on a daily basis; indeed, on a moment by

moment basis. This is a glad responsibility for the entirely sanctified. The commandments of the Lord are not grievous (cf. 1 John 5:3).

After entire sanctification, one becomes more of a target for the devil's temptations. The bullseye becomes larger, so to speak (cf. Ephesians 6:16). The devil considers it a great coup whenever he can facilitate a Christian's demise, but especially one who has received this high state of grace.

Life is still hard. This world still is full of trouble, but the entirely sanctified are enabled to live optimistically, victoriously, in moral conformity to the law, and above the impulse to sin.

What do the entirely sanctified still need? They need God's keeping grace. They need justifying grace for the many ways in which they still fall short of the glory God, short of a perfect keeping of the law. They need to grow in grace and in conformity to the image of Christ. They need to continue adding virtue upon virtue as long as they live.

## **FIFTH MAIN ADDRESS TO THE JURY**

### **Laying an Experiential Foundation for the Case**

## ***“The Prerequisite For Entire Sanctification”***

The objective of this address is to set forth a biblical understanding of the first work of grace and establish this blessed salvation as the foundation upon which both a proper doctrinal conception of entire sanctification and the actual experience of entire sanctification are built. Hopefully, much confusion will be avoided by laying this foundation well.

The question before us here is, what do we mean by “the first work of grace”? What happens? How is it obtained? What are the results? And what is the relationship between the first and second works of grace?

### ***The Purpose of God***

Salvation is God’s idea. He is a saving God! According to 1 Timothy 2:4, “[God our Savior] wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”

Just prior to Jesus’ birth, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph and announced,

“Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

Jesus described his mission in similar words,

“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:10).

God created us holy and good, in his image. Yet something went badly wrong. Humanity fell into sin. The wages of sin is death, and therefore we need to be saved. There is something greatly amiss that must be corrected. The image has been marred. Our need of salvation could not be more desperate.

God’s works are always perfect. His plan of salvation is perfect. We cannot improve it; we can only embrace it. The holiness of God determines the contours of the plan of salvation, just as it did the original creation. God’s design in the beginning was to create humanity for ethical holiness. God’s design in the plan of salvation is to *recreate* the fallen moral image of humanity for ethical holiness. God’s design is as immutable as he himself. God’s plan includes everything necessary to bring about his designed end.

Salvation is a comprehensive term referring to the whole panoply of God's saving activity, even though in certain contexts its meaning may be more narrow. *Historically*, salvation was accomplished by Jesus Christ. Everything relating to his first advent was important in the salvation scheme of things (i.e., the virgin birth, Jesus' perfect life, his teaching, his miracles, etc.). The heart of the gospel, however, focuses on his death and resurrection. Early Christian preaching (*kerygma*) always centered on these historical facts. This gospel message was codified within a few years of the historical events themselves. Paul speaks of this in 1 Corinthians 15:3-5a,

"For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance; that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared ..."

Paul said this "gospel in a nutshell" was truth "*of first importance*." He identifies Christ's death and resurrection as the two central elements of the message. His death was confirmed by his burial. His resurrection was confirmed by his post-resurrection appearances to over 500 people.

*Contemporaneously*, in the life of an individual, salvation refers to the continuum of God's saving activity from the beginning spark of divine awakening to the glorification of the body in the final resurrection. Everything from beginning to end is part of what it means for God to save us from our sins.

### **What Happens in the First Work of Grace?**

At some point in every (accountable) person's life, a realization dawns that he or she is a sinner, alienated from God. God's prevenient grace awakens the individual to his lost state, and begins to draw the individual lovingly and patiently toward himself. God convicts the awakened soul of sin with an intensity that almost defies description. At this stage, a person may lose sleep, tremble, recoil in anger, or generally despair of the weight of eternal condemnation. Nevertheless the individual remains free to surrender to Christ or stubbornly resist. If the individual surrenders to Christ by faith and receives pardon for his sins, he is **justified**. Justification is God's legal declaration that the individual is accounted righteous (Christ's righteousness imputed to the individual). This is a relative change, viz., a change in the person's *standing*. Simultaneously, God begets a new holy nature within the individual. When God calls this new creation into being, the individual is **regenerated**. Regen-

eration is God's birthing of new spiritual life from the dead spiritual state that formerly existed. This is a real change that makes the person actually righteous, viz., a change in the person's *state* (Christ's righteousness imparted to the individual).

Taken together, the gracious acts of justification and regeneration constitute the *sine qua non* of what it means to become a Christian, to experience a genuine Christian conversion. This is the so-called "first work of grace," or being "saved." Until a person experiences such a conversion, he remains pre-Christian or pre-salvation, and without any hope of heaven. During the pre-Christian period there is no saving crisis (or instantaneous change), only a process leading toward the first one.

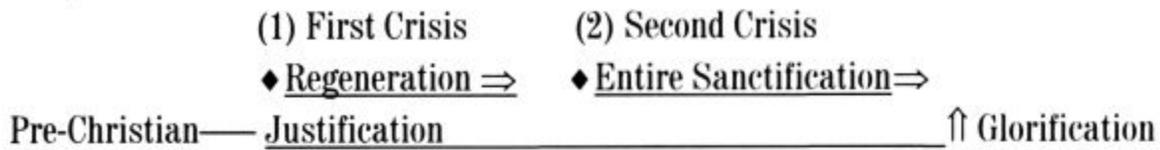
It may be helpful to conceptualize justification and regeneration as two parallel lines on the overall salvation continuum. These parallel lines begin at the moment of the first crisis. Justification is  $\Rightarrow$  God's way of providing us with a sort of legal safety net, because it frees us from the experiential necessity of perfect conformity with the law. Christ has done that *for* us! Perfect conformity includes the absence of all transgression, whether voluntary or involuntary. Regeneration is  $\Rightarrow$  God's way of enabling us to maintain a moral conformity with the law. Christ has done this *in* us! Moral conformity refers to the absence of willful or voluntary transgression of known law. Only this kind of non-conformity (voluntary transgression) is properly called sin.<sup>166</sup> Regeneration so changes our nature that we discontinue voluntary transgressions—sinning (1 John 3:6, 9; 5:18). Our voluntary failures are eliminated by regeneration. Our *involuntary* failures are caught in the justification net. Therefore I prefer to think of the justification line below the regeneration line. The top line is the continuum of real change. The bottom line is the continuum of relative change. Since entire sanctification is a real change, it occurs along the top line subsequent to regeneration.<sup>167</sup> The entirely sanctified are still sub-

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<sup>166</sup> As stated elsewhere in this book, the reason for this is clear. In the Bible, sin is something that can, indeed must, be discontinued. Since involuntary transgression is inextricable from human fallenness, involuntary transgression cannot be included in a biblical definition of sin. Nonetheless, involuntary transgressions still need the atoning blood of Christ—thus the importance of justification by faith in Christ. Biblically, however, sin can only be defined as that for which are accountably wrong before God and volitionally able to discontinue.

<sup>167</sup> Though we sometimes hear that entire sanctification is the completion of what God began in justification, it seems preferable to me (for the reasons cited

ject to involuntary failures, and therefore still need justification. Thus, both lines must continue through the end of our probation. God’s perfect design requires both lines, because we must have Christ’s merit operating both *in* us and *for* us.



The diamonds (◆) represent the “crisis” experiences—the two works of grace. The arrows pointing to the right symbolize the need of ongoing growth in grace. The arrow pointing upward symbolizes the end of probation. No one is saved (truly Christian) until the first diamond, the first crisis (justification and regeneration taken together and occurring simultaneously). No one is *unconditionally* secure until the upward arrow, glorification.

**The Results of the First Work of Grace**

Justification is essential because only Jesus Christ could and did measure up to God’s perfect standard of legal righteousness. Since God, in a legal sense, requires a perfect keeping of the law, we would all be hopelessly doomed without the grace of justification. We never cease needing justifying grace, because we continue to fall short of God’s perfect standard throughout probation, regardless of the degree of regenerating or sanctifying grace received. We can properly speak of the sanctification of the justified, and also of the justification of the sanctified.<sup>168</sup>

Regeneration is essential because only a real righteousness has moral or ethical value; otherwise God merely plays make-believe with our salvation. Such a state of affairs is unacceptable to God. Since God, in an ethical sense, requires us to discontinue sin, we would all unavoidably remain active sinners (and thus hopelessly doomed) without the grace of regeneration. Remaining in our sins is a situation God cannot and does not stamp with approval. The solution is a radical change!

It is the change from a sinner to a saint!

It is the change from sinning to not sinning!

above) to say that entire sanctification is the completion of what God began in *regeneration*.

<sup>168</sup> Cf. W. E. McCumber, *Holy Living For All Our Days* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1989), 28.

It is the change from death to life!  
It is the change from lost to found!  
It is the change from blindness to sight!  
It is the change from alienation to reconciliation!  
It is the change from slavery to freedom!  
It is the change from wretchedness to blessedness!  
It is the change from being hell-bound to heaven-bound!

The change is so radical as to be analogous to the New Jerusalem. Observe carefully the language (especially the italicized words) of Revelation 21:3-5,

“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Now the dwelling God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for *the old order of things has passed away.*’ He who was seated on the throne said, ‘*I am making everything new!*’ Then he said, ‘Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.’”

Now compare this with the language of 2 Corinthians 5:17,

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; *the old has gone, the new has come!*”

The stark contrast between the way things are under the old order of things (earth) and the way things will be under the new order of things (heaven) is staggering. How can we possibly imagine the wonder of living in a perfect world, with no death, no pain, no tears, no evil?

Biblically, we are to understand regeneration in similar terms. Old things pass away! All things are made new! The unregenerate man is without Christ; the regenerate man is *in Christ!* The other side of that same coin is, Christ is *in the Christian* (Colossians 1:27)! Gloom and doom is changed into an inexpressible and glorious joy (1 Peter 1:8). Hopelessness is changed into hope (Romans 5:2)! Guilt before God is transformed into peace with God (Romans 5:1)! Condemnation is canceled; pardon is pronounced (Romans 8:1)! Filthiness is washed away; cleanness is made a reality (Revelation 22:14)! The power of sin is broken (Revelation 1:5)! The practice of sin is ceased (1 John 5:18)! The prisoner is set free (Galatians 5:1)! Citizenship in heaven is granted (Philippians 3:20)! Eternal destiny is changed (John 3:16)!

Hallelujah!

### **How is the First Work of Grace Obtained?**

By Grace through faith! The synergy of divine and human roles is beautifully yet succinctly described in Ephesians 2:8-9,

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”

Salvation is first of all by grace. It comes from God’s initiative and provision. Salvation, however, is also through faith. There is no monergism here. But take care. The synergism is carefully restricted. Human cooperation, though absolutely necessary (except in the case of “unaccountables”), carries with it no merit whatever, nothing of which we can boast. Neither is it completely self-generated or self-directed. There is no Pelagianism here.

The Scriptures are replete with references to both the divine and human elements. I will list some of these now.

#### **Divine:**

We are saved by grace (Ephesians 2:5).

We are justified by grace (Romans 3:24).

We are saved by the gospel, the power of God (Romans 1:16;  
1 Corinthians 15:2).

We are birthed by the Word of God (1 Peter 1:23).

We are birthed by the will of God (John 1:13).

We are birthed by the Holy Spirit (John 3:5, 8).

We are saved by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit  
(2 Thessalonians 2:13).

We are saved by mercy (Titus 3:5).

We are saved by the washing of regeneration (Titus 3:5).

We are justified by the blood of Christ (Romans 5:9).

We are redeemed by the blood (Ephesians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:18;  
Revelation 5:9).

We are reconciled to God by Christ’s death (Romans 5:10).

#### **Human:**

We are saved by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31).

We are saved by confessing, “Jesus is Lord” and believing in our heart that God raised him from the dead (Romans 10:9-10).

We are saved by calling on the name of the Lord (Romans 10:13).

We are justified by faith (Romans 3:28; 5:1; Galatians 2:16; 3:24).

We are saved by hope (Romans 8:24).

We are saved by godly sorrow that brings repentance (2 Corinthians 7:10). We are saved by love of the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:10).

God's role encompasses his eternal will, his historical provision, and his contemporaneous application. God's eternal will never changes. He is not willing that anyone should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). God's historical provision was fully accomplished in the person of Christ (John 19:30). God's application of Christ's historical provision occurs every time the Holy Spirit enacts saving power within an individual. The word "grace" sums up the divine role. Salvation is *sola gratia*—by grace alone!

The human role is, of course, strictly contemporaneous. We have accomplished nothing of saving power historically, nor do we accomplish anything of saving merit now. At a specific moment in our lifetime, we can only embrace (happily and thankfully receive) the divine provisions. How? The word "faith" sums up the human role. Salvation is *sola fide*—by faith alone! But faith must be proactive. It cannot be mere intellectual assent to the truth, because even the demons have that (James 2:19). Consequently, *saving* faith requires action that demonstrates its authenticity—genuine repentance. Repentance is genuine if it includes godly sorrow for sin (contrition), humble admission of need, confession of sin, forsaking sin, and a radical change of mind. Repenting "as deeply as we have sinned" is the kind of preaching I heard in my youth.

Sarah Cooke said, "I began earnestly to seek the Lord. For one month I drank deeply of the gall and wormwood of a genuine repentance."<sup>169</sup> However long it takes, repentance must probe into every nook and cranny of our rebellion, and surrender fully to Christ. If a life of obedience to Christ does not follow, there was no real or thorough repentance.

The question remains, where does saving faith come from? If we say it comes from God in a monergistic sense, then faith has no moral value. If we say it comes from within ourselves, then faith is humanistic. Neither is biblical.

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<sup>169</sup> Sarah E. Cooke, *Wayside Chats* (Salem, Ohio: Schmul Publishing, 1983 reprint), 12.

Saving faith comes as a gift of God's prevenient grace, enabling us to freely act in obedient response to his saving initiative and provision. This we must do! This is covenantal synergism.

### ***What is the Relationship between the First and Second Work of Grace?***

Sequentially, the first is prerequisite to the second. The second is subsequent to the first. However, it is preferable that we not think of one as superior or inferior to the other. It is better to think of each as having a specific target, or a specific aspect of the overall cure in view. Each work is complete and glorious in its scope.

Experientially, we often hear that entire sanctification completes what was begun in the first work of grace. This is true if we carefully define the meaning. It does not mean that the first work is incomplete in its own right. It does mean that the first work does not accomplish all that is needed to effect a complete cure. It is better to say that entire sanctification cures what the first work did not target.

Perhaps an illustration will help. A person suffering from an attack of kidney stones has a single-minded immediate concern—pain relief! This corresponds with a sinner seeking deliverance from guilt for sin. Concomitant with pain relief is the attempt to flush out the stone, which is the immediate cause of the infirmity. This corresponds with a sinner seeking deliverance from the power and practice of sin. Kidney stone pain is relieved with medication, which has similarity to justification (something done for us). The stone itself is flushed out by drinking water or some direct medical procedure (e.g., lithotripsy), which has similarity to regeneration (a cleansing done in us). Each aspect of the treatment has a specific target and is designed to be complete in its scope. However, in order to prevent future kidney stones from forming and the accompanying pain from occurring again, a deeper cleansing is needed. It is not deeper in the sense that it more completely flushes out the stone—the target of the former cleansing. On the contrary, it is deeper in the sense that it cleanses the whole system from the remote cause of the stones, the infection that causes kidney stones to form in the first place. This is similar to entire sanctification. Anyone unfortunate enough to have experienced kidney stones can attest to the joy of having the pain alleviated and to the joy of passing the stone from the body. The instant relief feels like a new lease on life. Beyond that, however, comes an intense desire for a complete cure. Who wants to go through that again? Likewise, the recipient of justification experi-

ences great joy for his newly found peace with God. The recipient of regeneration experiences great joy for his clean new life in Christ. Listen to Sarah Cooke's description of her moment of conversion,

"The Lord revealed himself to me as Savior, saying to my inmost being, 'Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven.' Oh, the ineffable joy! I had passed from darkness into light, from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of His own dear Son. I do not know that I closed my eyes in sleep that night; the joy was unspeakable and full of glory."<sup>170</sup>

Nevertheless, the Christian soon feels an intense desire for a deeper (or further) cleansing of his whole spiritual system, one that targets the root cause of his trouble—the contagion of Adamic depravity. The saved, but not yet entirely sanctified, Christian has been cleansed of actual sins and acquired depravity. In this sense he is made a new creation. But he still has inward sin, the depravity with which he was born. He has been made holy, but he is also still unholy. The new Christian nature will conflict with the old sinful nature. Most Christian theological traditions agree with this.

Without the deeper cleansing of entire sanctification, however, the conflict will rage on and on with varying degrees of intensity from day to day. Without the deeper cleansing of entire sanctification, new "kidney stones" will form and the new pain that comes with them. God is the Great Physician. Biblically, when we call him a saving God, we are in the same breath calling him a sanctifying God. In the plan of God, saving includes sanctifying. Initial sanctification coincides with the first work of grace. It is the sanctifying God's cure for acquired depravity. Entire sanctification is the sanctifying God's cure for the deeper infection of Adamic depravity. Entire sanctification is the treatment that makes it improbable that new kidney stones will form. Entire sanctification is the Entire Sanctifier's way of putting an end to the conflict.

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<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

# **Part Two**

## **Making the Case**



## **SIXTH MAIN ADDRESS TO THE JURY**

### **Commencing the Case**

## ***“Calling the Witnesses”***

It would be possible to expend a great deal of time and space calling witnesses and reviewing their testimony, for they are many and their testimony is voluminous. For purposes of this case, however, I will limit my presentation to the best biblical witnesses only, and limit them to two or three examples each of their most compelling accounts.

### ***The Chief Witness – Account #1 (Regarding Entire Sanctification)***

My star witness is none other than Jesus Christ our Lord. The teaching of Jesus is the authoritative zenith for determining sound doctrine (cf. Matthew 28:18). The record shows that Jesus prayed for the sanctification of his disciples,

“Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified” (John 17:17-19).

Jesus is the ultimate unimpeachable witness. No one disputes this fact. Therefore, if we can accurately ascertain Jesus’ meaning, we will stand on the surest possible ground.

### ***What Jesus Did Not Mean?***

First, we can safely say that Jesus did not refer to a sanctification that occurs at the time of death or the resurrection. Edward F. Walker states, “The Bible never uses the word sanctification to express the processes of development experienced by the spirit after its severance from the body, nor the reuniting of that glorified spirit with the glorified body at the resurrection.”<sup>171</sup> In verse 15, Jesus says his prayer is not that the Father take them out of the world, but that he protect them from the evil one. And in verse 18, he points to the fact that he sent them into the world. Therefore, the context of Jesus’ prayer clearly places the time of the prayed-for sanctification in this life.

Second, we can safely say that Jesus did not refer to a process of sanctification. The imperative “sanctify” is in the aorist tense, “which is never used to

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<sup>171</sup> Edward F. Walker, *Sanctify Them: A Study of the Lord’s Prayer for His Disciples* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, originally published 1899, revised 1968 by J. Kenneth Grider), 18.

express gradualness.”<sup>172</sup> Walker astutely clarifies the relationship between sanctification and growth in grace,

“Certainly there is a dying to sin and living to righteousness, more and more. Though made blameless, the sanctified one grows in faultlessness; less and less like his sinful self, more and more like Christ. Less and less does he leave undone those things which he ought to do; more and more he does those things which he ought to do. Gradually he does ‘grow in grace, and in the knowledge [experimental] of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,’ and thus holiness develops and ripens into Christian maturity (2 Peter 3:18). Increasing in grace is one of the benefits which accompanies or *flows from* sanctification. Every true saint grows upward in heavenly-mindedness, downward in humility, inward in spirituality, outward in a holy life and active usefulness. He is forever in the order of holy improvement. He flourishes like the palm tree and still brings forth fruit in old age. But though our Lord may have had this in mind as an accompanying objective, it cannot be what he prayed for when he said, ‘Sanctify them.’ He besought the Father to perform a distinctive work of grace in them, a work as distinctive as justification: sanctification, a work done in them; justification, a work done for them.”<sup>173</sup>

Third, we can safely say that Jesus did not refer to forensic or imputed righteousness (what Walker calls “a reckon-so sanctification”). This we know for at least two reasons. For one, the verb usually denotes the act of *making* holy and the context here supports this meaning. In verse 19 Jesus said, “For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be *truly* (not reckoned) sanctified.” The second reason is linked to the first: the disciples were already justified or reckoned as sanctified. They already had received an initial cleansing (John 15:3); hence Jesus must be referring to a deeper work of inner cleansing.

Fourth, we can safely say that Jesus did not refer to the sanctification that coincides with regeneration, because these men were already his disciples. In verse 16 Jesus said,

“They are not of the world.”

They were already separated, set apart as holy to God. They were initially sanctified, but Jesus still prays for a further work of sanctification to occur in them. To argue that the disciples were a unique pre-Christian dispensational

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 19-20 (emphasis added).

case is dubious, because Jesus immediately follows in verse 20 with the words,

“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message.”

The same prayer applies to *all subsequent believers!*

Fifth, we can safely say that Jesus did not refer to personal consecration. Jesus directs the prayer to the Father. The prayer speaks of a sanctifying *work of God* wrought upon individual believers.

Sixth, we can safely say that Jesus did not refer merely to an official or religious sanctification.<sup>174</sup> This prayer was not part of an ordination service. Since the disciples had already been called, separated, and ordained for ministry, “Jesus cannot have been praying to the Father to sanctify them to their office.”<sup>175</sup> True, Jesus refers to having sent them into the world (v. 18), but the aorist verb refers to completed action in past time.

Therefore, the imperative “sanctify” in the preceding verse could only refer to their prior ordination retroactively, or to another commissioning yet to come. Both possibilities must be rejected, because there is no evidence that sanctification ever applies retroactively, and the context does not refer to a future commissioning.

Walker offers an excellent summary of what Jesus did not mean when he prayed for the sanctification of his disciples,

“Our blessed Lord does not here pray either that the disciples might be converted, ordained to sacred office, accounted and treated as righteous, hallowed in name, grow in grace, be freed from the mortal coil, or be glorified in body and spirit. It is evident that in none of these senses does he here use the word *sanctify*. He must mean something else.”<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> This appears to be the interpretation of George R. Beasley-Murray, who says the verb has “in view a separation from the world’s ways to God, and so for a life of conformity with his revelation in Christ and to dedication to his service. Precisely because the consecration of the disciples is for the service of God in the discipleship of Jesus, they are sent into the world as Jesus was sent by the Father.” “John,” *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 36 (Waco: Word Books, 1987), 300.

<sup>175</sup> Edward F. Walker, *Sanctify Them*, 22-23.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 24 (emphasis his).

### *What Jesus Did Mean?*

After thoroughly analyzing the semantic range of the verb “sanctify” (ἀγιάζω), George A. Turner concludes that Jesus’ prayer refers to “inward cleansing.”<sup>177</sup> With this all the lexical authorities agree. The word means “to separate,” “to make holy,” “to purify from defilement,” “to set apart or devote to God.” These ideas all fit the context.

Therefore, we can safely say that Jesus prayed for the Father to provide at least four things for his disciples:

1. A *personal* experience. Jesus prayed that the sanctifying power of God take effect *within* the disciples.
2. A *purging* experience. Negatively, Jesus prayed that God would purify their hearts. Such divine action, by its very nature, would have to be *thorough*. Jesus had in mind the completion of the redemptive work already begun in them, since they were already his disciples.
3. A *perfecting* experience. Positively, Jesus prayed that the disciples would be brought to complete unity and love (cf. verse 23).
4. A *present* experience. Jesus’ prayer had a specific fulfillment in the *earthly life* of the disciples (cf. Acts 15:8-9).

One other thing is crucial to note here. Jesus prayed that the disciples’ sanctification would be patterned after his relationship with the Father. He said in verse 21,

“Just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be *in us* ...”

Thus we can say that Jesus prayed for the disciples to experience the internalization of the divine life. As Walker says, “One is sanctified only in so far as he is *Christed*.”<sup>178</sup>

Walker’s summary of Jesus’ intended meaning is succinct, direct, and potent:

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<sup>177</sup> George A. Turner, *The Vision Which Transforms* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1964), 116. Turner follows the analysis of J. H. Thayer in his lexicon, who cites John 17:17 as an example of the meaning “to purify internally by reformation of soul.”

<sup>178</sup> Edward F. Walker, *Sanctify Them*, 31 (emphasis his).

“Perfect purity plus perfect love in the heart by the person of Christ and the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit equals personal sanctification.”<sup>179</sup>

### **By What Means Did Jesus Say We Are Sanctified Entirely?**

According to Jesus, we are sanctified through the word of God, the word of truth. God’s word stimulates faith. “Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17). God promises to sanctify his people, and God is as good as his word. God’s word has power—power to quicken; power to destroy—power to make holy and power to cleanse away sin. Jesus himself said that we are sanctified by faith in him (Acts 26:18). Sanctifying faith must be centered in the person of Christ (his meritorious provision) and in the word of Christ (his magnanimous promise). In the final analysis, we are entirely sanctified only when God *speaks*, “Be clean!”

### **The Chief Witness – Account #2 (Regarding Purification from Sin)**

The record also shows that Jesus pronounced the most sublime of all the beatitudes,

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God” (Matthew 5:8).

The law of cause and effect controls the verse.<sup>180</sup> “Seeing God” is the cause; blessedness is the effect. But why will they see God? Because they are pure in heart! Purity of heart is the cause; seeing God is the effect. Seeing God is first an effect; then it becomes the cause of the further effect—blessedness.

When we continue to probe in the reverse direction, we realize there must be something that caused the purity of heart to begin with. Thus the question remains, “What did Jesus mean by heart purity? And what did he not mean?”

### **What Jesus Did Not Mean**

Jesus refers to the pure in heart as presently existing. He says, “Blessed are the pure in heart,” not “Blessed are those who will be pure in heart.” Jesus follows this pattern with all the pronouncements. The various categories of blessed ones all denote persons who presently exist in that state. Moreover,

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>180</sup> Actually, the structure is effect and cause, in that order. This is the law of substantiation, as opposed to causation, which is cause and effect, in that order.

purity of heart precedes seeing God; thus purity of heart must be a state possible to obtain in this earthly life. Therefore, the heart purity Jesus mentions cannot be the purity that occurs at the time of death or the resurrection.

For the same reasons, Jesus does not refer to a process of heart purity. The language itself precludes that possibility. He did not say, “Blessed are those who are striving to be pure in heart.” He also did not say, “Blessed are those who are 99.4% pure in heart.” Purity is a state, not a process. If purity exists, it exists completely. Something 99% pure is not yet pure! Yes, there is a refining or purging process whereby all dross is removed. But during the refining process, purity does not yet exist. When the refining is complete, purity then and only then exists. One cannot become more pure if he is already pure.

The purity of heart in Matthew 5:8 also cannot be an imputed purity, unless one is willing to ascribe imputation to all the other beatitudes as well. He did not say, “Blessed are those whom God reckons as pure in heart.” Each of the beatitudes is stated matter-of-factly to describe a real condition. The poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the peacemakers, and those who are persecuted because of righteousness, all describe real categories of actual earthly persons. It would be absurd to lift the pure in heart out of this context and say that they alone, among the blessed ones, are only so in an imputed sense, in a gradual sense, or in a strictly eschatological sense.

This purity also cannot refer to ceremonial purity or personal consecration, for the very simple reason that it is purity *of heart*. It is an inward purity, a purity that influences the thoughts and attitudes of the mind, the intentions and affections of the soul and spirit, the inmost nature of the being. God looks at our hearts (cf. 1 Samuel 16:7). The theme of heart purity controls the whole sermon (Matthew 5-7). Throughout his sermon, Jesus expresses concern for the heart. Adultery can be committed in the heart (Matthew 5:28). Our heart will be wherever our treasure is (Matthew 6:21). False prophets are false precisely because of what they are *inwardly*, not their outward appearance (Matthew 7:15). Purity of heart makes a person right in the sight of God. Purity of heart means a person will not go wide of God’s mark—he will not sin inwardly.

### **What Jesus Did Mean**

In the context of the sermon, purity of heart corresponds with true righteousness. The motif of righteousness occurs in two of the beatitudes. Those

who hunger and thirst for righteousness are blessed (5:6), and those who are persecuted because of righteousness are also blessed (5:10). Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness become those who are persecuted because of it. Righteousness is first eagerly sought for, and later, when found, may become something for which the righteous are persecuted. In the sequence of the beatitudes, purity of heart occurs between seeking after righteousness and being persecuted because of it.

Unless righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and scribes, we certainly will not enter the kingdom of heaven (5:20). The unacceptable kind of righteousness is superficial, the performance of “acts of righteousness” for the purpose of being seen by men (6:1). The merely external nature of this “righteousness” makes it false in the eyes of God. It derives from *impurity* of heart. By contrast, the surpassing kind of righteousness strikes at the heart. True righteousness must be internal before it can be external. If the heart is pure (or right), then the disciple’s life will produce salutary effects similar to those of salt (5:13). If the heart is pure, then the disciple’s life will shine with the light of true righteousness (5:14). External deeds will glorify the Father (5:16), and will be done from a desire to be rewarded solely by him (6:4).

Some reasonable conclusions can be drawn from these observations regarding the source of heart purity. Purity of heart can be earnestly sought but cannot be attained by human effort. If it could be achieved by works, then the Pharisees surely would have had it. As with all internal “right-ness” the source is the grace of God sanctifying the waiting heart. Purity of heart is obtained by those who ask, seek and knock (7:7-8; cf. Luke 11:13).

Purity of heart means one’s priorities are in order. The highest priority for the pure in heart is to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness (6:33). The songwriter Jennie E. Hussey understood this when she said,

“King of my life I crown thee now.”<sup>181</sup>

Seeking his kingdom and righteousness flows naturally from a heart where he is enthroned as king! The pure in heart can honestly pray, “Your kingdom come” (6:10a). The pure in heart can honestly add, “Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (6:10b). The pure in heart realize that only those who do God’s will can enter the kingdom of heaven (7:21). The pure in heart want only God’s will, not their own.

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<sup>181</sup> From the hymn “Lead Me to Calvary” (copyright 1921).

The pure in heart do not verbalize a false profession. The pure in heart are devoid of such rank hypocrisy. They do not merely say, "Lord, Lord" (7:21-22). The pure in heart know him as Lord and are known by him (7:23). They not only hear Jesus' words; they obey them (7:24).

The pure in heart have perfect love (5:44-48). The love of God has been made complete in them (cf. 1 John 2:5; 4:12, 17-18), enabling them to love enemies and neighbors alike (5:44-47). In this way they are perfect like God is perfect (5:48). Thus they manifest themselves as true children of the heavenly Father (5:45). Similarly, love for others motivates the pure in heart to observe the golden rule, the others-oriented precept that sums up the Law and the Prophets (7:12). Heart purity brings about the internalization of the Torah (Jeremiah 31:33; Ezekiel 36:27). Such a person rejoices in God's law as a blessing (Psalm 1:2; 119:97).

### **The Chief Witness – Account #3 (Regarding The Crucifixion of the Sinful Self)**

In the synoptic Gospels, a particular conversation at Caesarea Philippi proved to be pivotal in Jesus' relationship with the disciples. Matthew 16:13-17 records the exchange as follows:

He asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven."

Taken together, Peter's confession and Jesus' reply constitute strong evidence that Peter was already in a regenerate state. He had already left all to follow Jesus (Matthew 4:20). He publicly confessed Jesus as the Christ (cf. Romans 10:9). Jesus pronounced a beatitude on Peter, and said this insight (concerning Jesus' true identity) was given to Peter by divine revelation (cf. Galatians 1:12).

Moving forward in the narrative, we discover that Jesus used the occasion to explain to his disciples for the first time the true nature of his mission. Jesus foretold his suffering, crucifixion, and resurrection (16:21). In sharp contrast with the immediately foregoing conversation (16:13-19), Jesus' way of thinking on this issue did not match Peter's way of thinking at all. Peter thought Jesus would be a political messiah; Jesus knew he was the Lamb of God who

would take away the sin of the world. Peter dreamed of overthrowing the Romans and their oppressive regime; Jesus was single-minded in his determination to seek and to save lost souls. Peter longed for the kingdom to be restored to Israel (cf. Acts 1:6); Jesus sought only to establish the kingdom of God within the hearts of his followers.

Entire sanctification equates precisely with the kingship of God being established in our hearts. The remainder of the narrative touches on this issue. Peter, though a devout disciple, had not yet fully yielded to God's kingship. Peter wanted to hear nothing about suffering, crucifixion, and resurrection. Judging from his reaction, it seems he did, in fact, hear nothing about resurrection. That part must have sailed right over his head! If he and the other disciples had really grasped the significance of the resurrection, they would have realized that such power was far preferable to an exhibition of political might.

It seems Peter only heard the part about suffering and dying. Immediately after Jesus foretold his suffering, death, and resurrection,

“Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ‘Never, Lord!’ he said. ‘This shall never happen to you!’ (16:22).

How astonishing when the disciple is so self-absorbed that he assumes the right to rebuke his Lord! How appalling when he deposes his Lord, ascends the throne himself, and dictates to his Lord how things are going to be! How unholy when the disciple elevates his own will over his Lord's will!

Jesus would have none of this. He quickly set the record straight with Peter when he said,

“Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men” (16:23).

Let us briefly examine the three main parts of this response. First Jesus said, “Get behind me, Satan.” Bear in mind that shortly before this Jesus called Peter “Blessed.” Now he is addressing “Satan.” That is to say, Satan was the driving force behind Peter's reaction. One minute Peter was blessed to Jesus; the next minute he was satanic! Clearly something in Peter is still badly wrong that needs divine correction. Jesus summarily removed the presumptuous usurper from the throne with the first part of his response. Then he said, “You are a stumbling block to me.” In his “satanic” frame of mind, Peter was a hindrance to Jesus, an offence, an obstacle. In the course of fulfilling his divine mission, Jesus was tripping over Peter. He is essentially saying to Peter, “Get out of my way. I am the Lord; you are the disciple. You are supposed to be following me, not obstructing me!”

Jesus then addressed Peter's central problem with the third part of his response. Peter did not have the mind of God. Instead he had the mind of men. It should not go unnoticed that "having in mind the things of men" is synonymous in this verse with Satan standing in Jesus' way. How ironic that true disciples can have the mind of God when it comes to Jesus' identity, but be so absent the mind of God when it comes to Jesus' ways! Here is a follower of Jesus with the mind of men, trying to combine commitment with self-interest. The decisive turning point in the life of a Christian disciple occurs when the mind of God displaces the mind of men within him. Jesus now proceeds to pour specific meaning into the mind of God. He said,

"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it" (16:24-25).

Here is commitment with no self-interest! This is how complete consecration should be defined. When this happens, entire sanctification will soon follow. Jesus now is saying, "O. K. men, you obeyed my call to discipleship. You left all to follow me. That is good! I thank God for you. You have followed me this far. However, the time has come for something more radical. You are committed, but are you *fully* committed? If you want to continue following me, you must give up your self-interested ambitions, hopes, and dreams. You must deliberately deny yourself all these things. But that is not all. Brace yourselves! The most radical thing of all is this—you must take up your cross and follow me."

The disciples must have been aghast at the idea of Jesus taking up a cross, not to mention they themselves doing so. No one who took up a cross and started down the road ever came back alive. What kind of cause had they committed themselves to? Taking up the cross meant saying goodbye to everyone and everything in this world. Taking up the cross meant certain death. They must have been thinking, "Jesus, you can't mean it." But he did say it, and he did mean it! That is the shocking paradox of true Christianity. Wanting to save your life means you will lose it, but losing your life for Jesus' sake means you will save it.

Crucifixion awaits those who take up the cross to which Jesus referred. Taking up the cross and walking to Calvary is a complete consecration by faith. Jesus led the way. He did not ask the disciples to do what he was not willing to demonstrate. Not long after the Caesarea Philippi episode, Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane praying,

"Not my will, but yours be done" (Luke 22:42).

There is no self-interest here! For the disciples, this kind of submission to a crucifixion of the mind of man (the carnal mind) would equal entire sanctification itself. Crucifixion is followed by resurrection. Once the unholy intruder has been dealt a death blow, there is only room for the mind of God. The lost life becomes the saved life! This is renewal in God's image, or being renewed in the spirit of our mind (cf. Romans 12:2; Ephesians 4:23)!

### **Corroborating Witness # 1 — Paul**

#### **The Crucifixion of Sinful Self**

In perfect harmony with Jesus' teaching and example, Paul spoke of the crucifixion of the sinful self (Adamic depravity) in at least four places. In each citation the paradox of crucifixion followed by resurrection is clear. Romans 6:6-7 says,

“For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.”

Death to the body of sin is followed by freedom from sin, which leads to holiness (6:19, 22) and the Spirit-filled life (chapter 8).

Galatians 2:20 says,

“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

Paul's crucifixion with Christ is followed by the life of Christ (rather than his own) being lived out in him!

Galatians 5:24-25 says,

“Those who belong to Christ have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”

Death to the sinful nature makes possible living by the Spirit, bearing the fruit of the Spirit (5:22-23). The essence of living by the Spirit is keeping in step with the Spirit (5:25). In order to keep in step with the Spirit, we must be led by the Spirit (5:18), which is the same as having the mind of God (Matthew 16:23).<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Read Acts 13:1-3 and 16:6-34 for real life episodes of people keeping in step with the Spirit.

Galatians 6:14 says,

“May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”

Paul’s death to the world (i.e., the mind of men) delivered him from all trace of self-boasting (self interest, self promotion, or self sovereignty) and freed him instead to boast only in the merits of Christ!

### **Perfection**

Colossians 1:29 says,

“We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.”

The goal of Paul’s preaching was the perfection of his hearers in Christ’s image (cf. 2 Corinthians 13:9)! This was so important that Paul was “in the pains of childbirth” to see it happen (Galatians 4:19).

2 Corinthians 7:1 gives insight into the human side of how this occurs,

“Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.”

Four things may be said about the self-purification of which Paul exhorts. First, it must be thorough. It encompasses *everything* that contaminates. “Everything” takes in both *body and spirit*. Second, contaminants (i.e., anything that defiles) are to be cleansed. Everything contrary to God’s will must be removed, everything that stains us in his sight, everything unworthy of Christ. Third, self-purification is essential to the process of “perfecting holiness” or bringing holiness to completion (i.e., entire sanctification). Fourth, the motivation behind self-purification is reverence for God. When one’s appreciation and respect for the holiness of God is right, it will be reflected in the way he lives.

Titus 2:14 gives us insight into the divine side of how this occurs,

“who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.”

Jesus gave himself for this very purpose—to purify his people. No amount of self-purification, as necessary as it is, will cleanse the contagion that plagues us. Only the blood of Christ, applied to our souls by the Holy Spirit, can accomplish the deep cleansing needed.

## **Entire Sanctification**

Ephesians 5:25-27 says,

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.”

Again Paul uses the expression “gave himself” of Christ’s atoning work. The purpose is “to make the church holy.” This is accomplished by cleansing her. The cleansing must be so thorough that it eliminates all stains, wrinkles and blemishes! How could one hope for a better description of entire sanctification! Holiness is the result of Christ’s cleansing. The moral content of that holiness is blamelessness.

2 Timothy 2:21 says,

“If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.”

In this verse we read of both self-cleansing and divine cleansing. Self-cleansing is a necessary part of the complete consecration that leads to divine cleansing or being made holy (entire sanctification). Entire sanctification itself (the divine cleansing) produces three salutary effects:

1. Entire sanctification makes the Christian “an instrument for noble purposes.”
2. Entire sanctification makes the Christian “useful to the Master.”
3. Entire sanctification prepares the Christian “to do any good work.”

## **Corroborating Witness #2 – The Writer of Hebrews**

### **Perfection**

Hebrews 6:1-2 says,

“Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity (perfection, KJV), not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.”

Perfection is synonymous with entire sanctification in this passage for three reasons. First, Christians must “go on” to it, because it is built on the foundation of elementary teachings about Christ. Therefore it is subsequent to

regeneration. Second, the word for perfection refers to the “end” for which something is designed. Therefore it is a completed state, not merely a process, and cannot refer to a merely imputed perfection. Third, it is urged upon Christians. Therefore it does not have to wait until death.

Hebrews 10:12-14 says,

“But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.”

Verse fourteen holds in harmony two important points. Perfection is both a crisis and a process. Christ has made Christians perfect (perfect tense verb indicating completed action that has continuing significance). Christ is making Christians holy (present tense indicating ongoing action). Christian perfection is complete in one sense—purging from all inward sin and filling with love for God and man. Qualitatively it is entire. Christian perfection is progressive in another sense—imparted holiness is increase-able. Quantitatively it is not entire. We can grow *within* this state.

### **Purification from Sin**

Hebrews 9:26 says,

“Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.”

The context contrasts the sacrifices of the old covenant—the blood of animals, with the sacrifice of the new covenant—the blood of Christ. The former sacrifices had to be performed again and again, year after year. The sacrifice of Christ was once for all time! The former sacrifices atoned for (covered) sin. The sacrifice of Christ *does away with* sin! The former sacrifices accomplished a ceremonial cleansing (9:19-22). The sacrifice of Christ accomplishes an inward cleansing of the sin nature! The word “sin” is singular, referring to the inner condition of sin (cf. 9:28, where Christ’s sacrifice takes away “sins,” referring to outward acts of sin). The better sacrifice of Christ cleanses both sins and sin. Blessed double cure!

### **Entire Sanctification**

Hebrews 13:12 says,

“And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy (“sanctify,” KJV) through his own blood.”

Decisive testimony confronts us here. The sacrifice of Jesus was singularly purposeful—to effect the sanctification of his people. Five important points may be set forth for our consideration:

1. Sanctification is accomplished by divine power. The power is in the blood!
2. “The people” refers to those already belonging to the people of God. Therefore, the sanctification Jesus accomplishes through his own blood must be subsequent to regeneration.
3. The blood of Jesus *makes holy*. It sanctifies! Therefore, the sanctification Jesus accomplishes through his own blood must be real, an imparted holiness. It cannot be a merely imputed holiness. The text does not say, “Jesus suffered . . . to *consider* the people holy through his own blood.”
4. The sanctification Jesus accomplishes must be instantaneous, because the Greek uses an aorist verb (ἀγίαση) to denote this kind of action. The text refers to a decisive, epochal act, and not merely a gradual process of sanctification.
5. The sanctification Jesus accomplishes through his own blood must be expected to happen *now*, since the next verse exhorts, “Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore.” Such an exhortation would make no sense if entire sanctification can only occur at the time of death.

### **Corroborating Witness #3 – James**

#### **Perfection**

James 1:4 says,

“Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete (“perfect and entire,” KJV), not lacking anything.”

The repetition in this verse, though brief, speaks volumes. James does not want the point to be missed. The goal is Christian perfection! Christian perfection equals Christian maturity, viz., obtaining the end for which we were designed. Christian perfection equals completeness, which is defined as “not lacking anything.” The last phrase has a striking similarity with 1

Thessalonians 3:10, where Paul earnestly prayed that his return visit would “perfect that which is *lacking* in your faith” (KJV).

C. L. Mitton writes concerning James 1:4,

“There is no escaping, however disconcerting it may be, this lofty uncompromising summons, sounded here as elsewhere in the New Testament, to what has come to be called ‘Christian Perfection,’ as God’s purpose for His Christian people. James emphasized this call to perfection [τέλειοι, twice in the verse] by adding the word ‘complete’ (όλόκληροι) and the phrase ‘lacking in nothing.’ [τέλειοι] means ‘having reached full development.’ [όλόκληροι] means ‘having no unfinished part.’”<sup>183</sup>

The verse is so emphatic that only a doubter of the double-minded variety (cf. James 1:5-8 with James 4:7-8) would continue in unbelief. The verse twice uses the Greek word for “perfect” or “finished” or “mature.”<sup>184</sup> The Greek word for “complete” is added to buttress the meaning of “perfect.” The final phrase “not lacking anything” is added lastly to dispel all doubt as to James’ intended meaning.<sup>185</sup>

### **Purification from Sin**

James 4:8 says,

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<sup>183</sup> Cited by W. T. Purkiser, “The Biblical Foundations,” *Exploring Christian Holiness*, vol. 1 (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1983), 209.

<sup>184</sup> Mature as used here does not refer to the maturing process or having mature character. Rather the usage is like that applied to a savings bond, for example. When such a financial instrument (or other similar product) reaches “maturity” it has reached its completed state or full development.

<sup>185</sup> There are those who, because of the emphasis on perseverance in this context, speculate that this state of completeness refers only to an eschatological perfection—that belonging either to death, to the *parousia* (second coming of Christ), or to the resurrection. There is an eschatological element in the passage (e.g., 1:2-3, 12), but there is also an undeniable, even stronger, emphasis on the need to live at this level of pure religion here and now (e.g., 1:26-27; 4:7-8). Moreover, James 1:4 itself reads as if “being” perfect and entire is a present state to be enjoyed. The next verse confirms this by linking it with the “lacking” motif when it enjoins: “If any of you *lacks* wisdom, he should ask God...” Since the goal is to be “not lacking anything,” and James immediately follows with the exhortation directed toward anyone who lacks wisdom to ask God for wisdom, it seems fair to conclude that the “perfecting of the lack” is expected to occur now (or at least should be understood as *possible* to occur now). Asking God for whatever we lack can only occur in this life!

“Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.”

Two aspects of self-cleansing are admonished in this verse. The first has to do with washing the hands; the second has to do with purifying the heart. This pairing bears a striking resemblance to Psalm 24:3-4,

“Who may ascend the hill of the LORD?  
Who may stand in his holy place?  
He who has *clean hands* and a *pure heart*,  
Who does not lift up his soul to an idol  
or swear by what is false.”

The command to wash your hands is directed to “you sinners,” lending credence to the idea that this washing refers to the first work of grace. The command to purify your hearts is directed to “you double-minded,” which could refer to doubting Christians or those not yet entirely sanctified (cf. 1:8), and therefore could refer to the second work of grace. The distinction between “hands” and “hearts” strengthens this association.

Hands symbolize life conduct, which is cleansed by the first work of grace. “Your hearts” is metonymy for the inward nature, which is cleansed by the second work of grace.

Care must be taken here, as with similar references, to distinguish between self-cleansing and divine cleansing. James 4:8 speaks of self-cleansing only, which does not equate with entire sanctification. It is the necessary human *preparation for* entire sanctification! Two verses earlier James cites the Old Testament principle that is operative here:

“But he gives us more grace. This is why Scripture says,  
God opposes the proud  
but gives grace to the humble”  
(James 4:6, cf. Proverbs 3:34)

Two verses later James gives us the long and the short of the matter:

“Humble yourselves before the Lord, and *he will lift you up*” (James 4:10).

A humble, complete consecration of our whole selves *to God* will lead inexorably to the much needed “giving of grace” *by God* (cf. 4:6).<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Bear in mind that the humble, complete consecration itself is enabled by the prior giving of grace by God—prevenient grace and regenerating grace.

## Corroborating Witness #4 – Peter

### Purification from Sin

Acts 15:9 records Peter's words at the council of Jerusalem,

"He [God] made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith."

Peter recalls two specific events. The immediate reference is to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the household of Cornelius as recorded in Acts 10. Peter likens the circumstances there to what happened on the day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2. Peter was present on both occasions. Though the narrative of Acts 10 says nothing about heart purification, Peter's theological reflection of the episode centers on this incendiary aspect of the Holy Spirit's work. Peter's definitive statement teaches us at least seven crucial points:

1. Heart purity is the most significant and abiding result of the baptism with the Holy Spirit. It is the work of God. "He purified."
2. Heart purity is obtained "by faith." There is a definite human role.
3. Heart purity is obtained instantaneously, not progressively or gradually. The experiences of both the apostles and Cornelius were instantaneous.
4. Heart purity apparently is obtained subsequent to regeneration, since the apostles were devout followers of Jesus prior to Pentecost and Cornelius is similarly described in Acts 10:1-2.
5. Heart purity is obtained in this life. Peter's statement indicates that it was a completed event. It need not wait till death.
6. Heart purity is a real sanctification. It is not an imputation or a counteraction.
7. Heart purity equals entire sanctification, because anything less would not properly be called "purity."

### Entire Sanctification

1 Peter 1:2 says,

"who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood."

Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit. As the Executive of the Godhead, it is the office work of the Holy Spirit to apply the merits of Christ's sac-

rificial death (“sprinkling by his blood”) to the hearts of those who meet God’s conditions (“obedience to Jesus Christ”). In this context, sanctification has in view the whole scope of gracious activity within the life of an individual, from beginning to end. It includes both the process and crises of sanctification. As Greathouse says, “‘Sanctification’ is ... the moral description of ‘salvation.’”<sup>187</sup>

2 Peter 3:14 says,

“So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.”

This verse complements the one we just observed. Persons must respond appropriately to the sanctifying work of the Spirit. The proper response has three parallel goals in view:

1. To be found spotless – this speaks of heart purity, cleansed from all sin.
2. To be found blameless – this speaks of moral conformity to the will of God, actualizing the life of holiness.
3. To be at peace with God – this speaks of freedom from fear of judgment, which comes as a result of the heart made perfect in love.

Greathouse defines Wesley’s understanding of entire sanctification in precisely these terms – “heart purity and entire conformity of the believer to the character of God.”<sup>188</sup>

The eschatological context of the passage controls Peter’s thought. Notice the phrase that introduces his exhortation – “since you are looking forward to this.” Looking forward to what? The coming of the day of the Lord, in which the present heavens “will disappear with a roar” and the present earth “will be destroyed by fire” (3:10). These will be replaced by “a new heaven and a new earth” (3:13). Peter’s exhortation is essentially this ⇒ The way you want God to find you then is the way you ought to be living now!

### **Corroborating Witness #5 – John**

#### **Purification from Sin**

1 John 1:7 and 1:9 both speak of purification from “all” sin (1:7) or unrighteousness (1:9). However, because the intervening verse is so com-

<sup>187</sup> William M. Greathouse, *Wholeness in Christ: Toward a Biblical Theology of Holiness* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1998), 128.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

monly misinterpreted, I will treat these verses as they should be understood within the full immediate context.

1 John 1:5-2:1 says,

“This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives. My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.”

The thrice repeated clause “if we claim ...” indicates John is addressing a particular problem in his audience, namely Gnosticism. Fully developed Gnosticism emerged in the following century, but was already present in incipient form at the time of John’s writing. Each of these clauses introduces a hypothetical claim, but one that had a basis in reality among the Gnostically-inclined members of John’s audience.

Each possible claim is preceded by a bold assertion which gives rise to the claim, and each claim is followed by John’s appraisal and authoritative response to it. The bold assertions, the possible claims, and the corresponding responses are thus inter-linked. 1 John 2:1 is added because it contains the key to a proper understanding, not only of the immediate context but also of the whole epistle. It may be helpful to chart the passage as follows:

**Bold Assertion #1:** “God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.”

**Possible False Claim #1:** To have fellowship with God, while simultaneously walking in darkness (continuing to sin). Gnostics believed they were endowed with special knowledge (gnosis). In their view, gnosis exists on the spiritual plane, which is the only realm that is “real.” They believed physical matter, which includes the body, is evil. The particular strain of Gnosticism John’s polemic addresses is called Docetism. To a Docetic, the physical world only “seemed” to be real (the Greek word for Docetic comes from the verb meaning “to seem”). Therefore, this school of Gnostic thought that

infected the Johannine community saw no incongruence between having fellowship with God and being licentious, because this “did not affect the soul, which is all that counts.”<sup>189</sup>

John’s Appraisal of this Claim: The person making this claim lies and does not live by the truth.

Bold Assertion #2: “If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.” True fellowship with God and God’s people comes only as a result of walking in the light (discontinuing sin). When this condition is met, the blood of Jesus keeps on purifying us from all sin. The verb is present tense (i.e., “keeps on purifying”). The noun is singular (“sin”), and refers to inward sin as a condition. 1 John 1:7 does not speak of instantaneous sanctification, but of continuous sanctification that is afforded by the blood of Christ and is conditioned on discontinuing sin, or “walking as Jesus walked” (cf. 2:6).

Possible False Claim #2: To be without sin. Following immediately on the heels of John’s concluding words in the preceding verse, the claim is to be without inward sin as a condition. That is, the claim is to be without sin *to begin with!* Since he believed he was without a sin nature in the first place, the Gnostic thought he had no sinning to discontinue.

John’s Appraisal of this Claim: The person making this claim is self-deceived and the truth is not in him. This point is crucial ⇒ the person who is self-deceived and devoid of the truth is the one who claims to be without sin to begin with, not necessarily the one who claims to be without sin *presently*. This is the meaning of 1 John 1:8 in the context!

Bold Assertion #3: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” A

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<sup>189</sup> A. T. Robertson, *Epochs in the Life of the Apostle John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), 114.

true understanding of our sinful condition will lead us to confession of our sinful acts. John's statement is essentially this  $\Rightarrow$  If we understand our situation correctly, we understand that we are indeed sinful to begin with, and that, because we are sinful to begin with, we have all been sinners in actual practice. Having this understanding, our only reasonable course of action is to admit it humbly and penitently. When this condition is met, our faithful and just God will forgive our sinful acts, and purify us from all unrighteousness. The verb is aorist tense (i.e., "purification as a completed event"). The noun is singular ("unrighteousness"), and, as with verse seven, refers to inward sin as a condition. Therefore 1 John 1:9 speaks of two distinct works of grace, forgiveness of actual sins and complete cleansing from inward sin. The second work of grace is an instantaneous entire sanctification.

Possible Claim #3: To have not sinned. This claim follows logically on the heels of John's words in the preceding verse. The claim is to be without any actual past sins to confess.

John's Appraisal of this Claim: The person making this claim makes God out to be a liar and God's word has no place in him.

### **1 John 2:1 – The Exegetical Key to the Context**

John's purpose for writing the epistle is clear  $\Rightarrow$  so that his readers will not sin. This stated purpose is utterly illogical unless sinning is discontinuable. Therefore the standard for the Christian life is discontinuity of sin. The standard does not deny the possibility of sin, for John says, "If anybody does sin." Nor does it deny a remedy if sinning does occur, for John says, "We have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ." However, a recognition of the continued possibility of sinning does not mitigate the standard, namely, the expectation that Christians will not sin!

Sinning is cast only as a possibility, not an expectation or an unavoidable certainty. The expectation for Christians is *non-sinning*!

1 John 2:1 is a sort of hinge between the preceding material (discussed above) and the material that follows (2:2-6). What comes before and what follows bears striking similarity. For example, 2:3 says "We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands." This is the same as saying, we

truly have “gnosis” (knowledge) of God if we are walking in his light (obeying his commands).

Another example is 2:4, which says, “The man who says ‘I know him’ [something the Gnostic claimed], but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” The language here is almost identical to phrases from 1:6, 1:8, and 1:10.

Another example is 2:5, which says, “If anyone obeys his word [i.e., if anyone walks in the light], God’s love is made complete in him [i.e., he is cleansed from all sin, leaving room only for God’s love]. This is how we know we are in him.” The language here is similar to phrases from 1:7 and 1:9.

1 John 2:6 sums up the matter, “Whoever claims to live in him [i.e., whoever says he knows God, whoever says he has fellowship with God, whoever says he is in the light of God] must walk as Jesus did [i.e., he must obey God’s commands, he must not be sinning].”

What does all this have to do with entire sanctification? Four things:

1. Discontinuity of sin is the result of initial sanctification (the first work of grace or being born of God, cf. 3:9). Confession of sin leads to forgiveness of sin. Forgiveness of sin must result in discontinuity of sin (walking in the light).
2. Discontinuity of sin is the *evidence* that authenticates the first work of grace, that one truly has fellowship or knowledge of God. John makes this point over and over in the immediate context.
3. Discontinuity of outward sin is the *prerequisite* for purification from inward sin. Discontinuity of sin releases the continuous cleansing power of Christ’s blood – the process of sanctification that begins with the first work of grace.
4. *Deliverance* from inward sin completes the divine remedy. Growth within the state of initial sanctification should lead inexorably to entire sanctification, the second work of grace, an epochal cleansing from all unrighteousness.

### **Perfection**

1 John 4:12, 15-18 says,

“No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us... If anyone acknowledges that Jesus

is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.”

Four times in the epistle John used the verb “made complete” or “made perfect” (τελειω), all in the perfect tense (2:5; 4:12, 17, 18). The force of the Greek verb in this tense works like this: “His love *has been perfected and is now perfect* in us.”



## **SEVENTH MAIN ADDRESS TO THE JURY**

### **Making the Case – Part One**

## ***“The Prescription For Entire Sanctification”***

Having now laid the foundation for a proper understanding of entire sanctification, and having heard the testimony of unimpeachable witnesses, let us proceed to the heart of the defense. I will joyously proclaim that God is able to save to the uttermost. I will triumphantly herald that God’s amazing grace goes deeper than the stain of sin. I will also be very careful not to confuse any categories. I will explain what entire sanctification is, and what it is not. I will share the truth regarding entire sanctification, and I will speak as though I expect you to respond in obedience to the Holy Spirit as he speaks to you through his Word.

Prescription presupposes the existence of an illness.

In order to achieve my goals, I will turn my attention now to Paul’s first epistle to the Thessalonians, and analyze it in some detail.

The epistle seems to pivot around 3:10-11.

Paul profusely praises the Thessalonians for their Christian faith in the first half of the epistle (1:1 - 3:9). A simple list will suffice to prove this point.

### ***Proofs the Thessalonians were already Christians:***

1. They belonged to the church in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (1:1).
2. They had a work produced by faith, a labor prompted by love, and an endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ (1:3).
3. Paul knew God had chosen them and loved them (1:4).
4. They became imitators of the apostles and of the Lord (1:6).
5. They welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit (1:6).
6. They became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia (1:7).
7. They rang out the Lord’s message (1:8a).
8. Their faith in God became known everywhere (1:8b).
9. They had turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God (1:9). They had obviously repented.
10. They were waiting for God’s Son from heaven (1:10). They had a sense of expectation (Maranatha).

11. They received the word of God, not as the word of men, but as the word of God (2:13a-b).
12. The word of God was working in them who believed (2:13c).
13. They became imitators of God's churches in Judea (2:14).
14. They were Paul's glory and joy (2:20).
15. Timothy brought Paul good news about their faith and love (3:6).
16. Paul was encouraged by news of their faith, that they were standing firm in the Lord (3:7-8).<sup>190</sup>

### **1 Thessalonians as a Treatise on Entire Sanctification**

The second half of the epistle (3:10 - 5:28) is a treatise on entire sanctification, in which every aspect of holiness orthodoxy is authenticated. I am scarcely using hyperbole to say that Paul leaves no stone unturned in making the case for entire sanctification. Three cardinal points come to the surface and demand our attention. As noted in my opening statement, these three points describe the logical movement of God's saving activity:

- The prescription for entire sanctification
- The provision for entire sanctification
- The possession of entire sanctification.

The present address treats the first point, while the second and third points form the basis for the next two addresses to the jury.

#### **The Prescribed Nature of Holiness**

For a proper understanding of this subject, as it applies to us, it is crucial that we are first aware of **the prescribed nature of holiness**. Paul knew entire sanctification was lacking in the Thessalonians' faith (3:10). Entire sanctification is God's will! (4:3). He has called us unto holiness! (4:7). He is the Physician who prescribes the needed medication.

Analysis of 1 Thessalonians 3:10. "Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith" (3:10). This verse catches us somewhat by surprise. Paul has been so lavish in extolling the Thessalonians' virtues that we hardly expect to hear him say anything

<sup>190</sup> Hiram Sanders, "Sanctified in 2003," Message preached in the Strickland Chapel at Nazarene Bible College, Colorado Springs, January 24, 2003. Dr. Sanders enumerated twelve points. I have modified his list slightly.

is lacking in their faith. But something was lacking, and Paul knew exactly what it was. And Paul knew it could be supplied (“perfected,” KJV) when he visited them again.

The Greek word for “supply” is *καταρτίσαι*, an aorist infinitive signifying completed action. The word itself has the basic meaning “to adjust thoroughly, to unite completely.” In noun form, it means “complete adjustment.” Is this not another way of saying “entire sanctification”? And does not “complete adjustment” clearly refer to a real sanctification, not an imputed one? And, if Paul hopes to accomplish this goal when he “sees them again,” is this not proof that the experience is obtainable in this life? This was Paul’s stated purpose, the intense object of his earnest prayers. Paul could only have this aim if he knew full well that entire sanctification was God’s will for the church!

Analysis of 1 Thessalonians 4:3. “It is God’s will that you should be sanctified.” Here Paul makes the point in the most direct manner! The verse uses the Greek word *ἀγιασμός*, the ordinary noun meaning sanctification (or moral purity). Literally, the verse reads, “This is God’s will—your sanctification.” The grammatical form indicates that this is a real state to be entered into, and not merely a process. If we take this seriously, then we must abandon any view that dismisses the instantaneousness of sanctification (i.e., that it is meant to reach completion at some point in this life). The Greek noun is modified by the possessive pronoun *ὑμῶν*, which means “your.” Sanctification, therefore, is personal and real. If personal sanctification is a completed state that God wills for his people (as this text clearly indicates), then there must be a specific point in time when that state becomes complete.

To illustrate, let us suppose the text said, “This is God’s will—your marriage.” Even though a process of courtship precedes the marriage, there can be no doubt that marriage is a definite, completed state into which one enters at a specific moment in time. The grammatical form of the word marriage (i.e., a noun) makes any other interpretation preposterous. The meaning would be altogether different if we supposed the text said, “This is God’s will—that you be considered married” (even though you’re not really); or if we supposed it said, “This is God’s will—your continuous, never-ending process of getting married.”

As another example, let us again consider the analogy with regeneration and suppose the text said, “This is God’s will – your regeneration” (the Bible does say almost exactly this in 1 Timothy 2:4). Everyone will admit there is a

process before and after regeneration, but no one denies that regeneration is essentially an instantaneous event. Would anyone seriously take this positionally, and read it, “This is God’s will – that you be accounted as regenerated”? Or, would anyone seriously take this progressively, and read it, “This is God’s will – your continuous, never-ending process of getting regenerated”?

No, the text compels us to understand God’s will for our sanctification as complete, personal, and contemporaneous. And the fact that our sanctification is God’s will compels us to have a sense of divine urgency for this blessing.

Analysis of 1 Thessalonians 4:7. “For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life.” The verse uses the Greek word *ἁγιασμός*, which is also the ordinary noun form (the same word used in 4:3) in the dative case. Therefore the meaning of the word in verse seven is identical to that of verse three. We are faced squarely with God’s prescription for entire sanctification. It is a completed state God deems necessary for his people.

In the King James Version the verse reads,

“God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness” (1 Thessalonians 4:7, KJV).

The caller is God, the ones being called are Christians, and the call itself is holiness. We must have a clear understanding of all three components—the caller, the ones being called, and the call itself—for this biblical truth to fully impact our lives.

The Greek word under consideration comes from the verb *ἁγιαζω*, meaning “to set apart as sacred” or “to make holy.” Since the same Greek word appears in 1 Thessalonians 4:3 and is translated “sanctification” (or, “be sanctified”) in all the major English versions, we may properly speak of holiness and sanctification as the same thing. Or better yet, we may think of the terms as flip sides of the same coin. Sanctification is the act of God that makes us holy. Holiness (or, sanctity) is the state of being that results from sanctification.

***God is the caller!*** God’s insistence means holiness is not optional. It is not a take it or leave it proposition. Each of us must ask, “Am I willing to come under the authority of God’s Word? Do I dare reject what God plainly says, or disregard his holy mandate?” God has made the case clear enough. It only remains for us to walk in the light of that truth. This does not mean that every

single aspect or nuance of the doctrine will necessarily be clear. But certainly the basic framework is clear, and must be followed.

***Holiness is the call!*** In 4:7 holiness is contrasted with uncleanness or impurity (especially sexual immorality). This means holiness is a synonym for cleanness or purity. It is a clean heart and a clean life (cf. Psalm 24:3-4). The clean heart is inner purity, purity of intention. The clean life is outward purity, purity of conduct. The call to holiness is the call to enter into a state of being (not merely a process) created by God within our hearts, wherein he removes Adamic depravity.

***Christians are the ones being called!*** First Thessalonians (more than any other New Testament book) makes it crystal clear that this call is directed toward the Christian church. This means the call goes out to those who are already saved, already justified, already born again. This means the call to holiness is a second work of grace. It is subsequent to regeneration. It speaks of a definite, completed event that God wills for us. It speaks of an epochal work of grace, and not merely one that is to be often or daily repeated. It is a real cleansing of our nature, a real righteousness that God imparts to us. Never is it merely a standing or a position we have with God. God has willed it. God has called. It is a high and holy call.

### **Correlation Between 1 Thessalonians and Wesleyan-Holiness Orthodoxy**

Already, my observations of these texts lead me to five fundamental assertions regarding entire sanctification, which match precisely with five of the seven points of Wesleyan-holiness orthodoxy, and effectively counterpoint the corresponding false views:

1. Entire sanctification is a *God-prescribed* cure. As a physician prescribes the medicine one needs for an illness, so God, the Divine Physician, has prescribed entire sanctification as the cure for our sin sickness. If it were not needed, God would not prescribe it. Since God did prescribe it, it is obvious that we need it.
2. God prescribes entire sanctification as a *completed* cure. It is not merely a process which never reaches its completion. Therefore any view that insists entire sanctification is nothing more than a process is unacceptable and decidedly unbiblical.
3. God prescribes sanctification as a *personal* cure. That is, God wills that we *be* holy, actually holy. Therefore any view that insists entire sancti-

fication is nothing more than a position (or standing) we have with God is also unacceptable and unbiblical.

4. God prescribes entire sanctification as a *present* cure. That is, if it never reaches completion in this life, it wasn't because God willed it or because it had to be so! That the context shows this to be a "life to be lived" is indisputable. Therefore any view that insists entire sanctification must wait till death is also unacceptable and unbiblical.
5. The prescription is extended to those who are *already Christians*. Therefore the view that entire sanctification is simultaneous with regeneration simply cannot be. God's prescription is directed to those who already have Christian *faith*, but that faith still lacks something that needs to be *supplied*.

### **Why Does God Prescribe Holiness?**

1. Entire sanctification is necessary because of the holiness of God. If we are to have a relationship with God that has moral value, then we must be holy because he is holy. We never more accurately describe God than when we call him immutably holy. Likewise, we never more accurately describe God's design for us than when we say, "God has called us to holiness."
2. Entire sanctification is necessary because of the double nature of sin. We are sinners by choice, and we are sinners by condition. Without entire sanctification, salvation would not offer a complete cure to our sin disease.
3. Entire sanctification is necessary because it equips the Christian to glorify God in the fullest possible way – his God-ordained destiny. Without entire sanctification, Christians will not be as victorious or effective as otherwise.

### **How Should We React to God's Prescription?**

Not only is this sanctified state something that Christians need; it is something they should eagerly *desire*. If you had a deadly disease and you knew the cure was available, would you only seek it because a doctor said you need it? Would you not earnestly desire it?

To desire God is to desire holiness. We must hunger and thirst for holiness (Matthew 5:6). This is synonymous with desiring to be baptized with the Holy

Spirit. He is the Sanctifier! The fire of the Holy Spirit purifies the heart (Matthew 3:11; 5:8). Peter unabashedly identifies this as the inward change of enduring significance from the Pentecostal experience (Acts 15:8-9), for the 120 in the upper room (Acts 2) and for the household of Cornelius (Acts 10). Therefore it is also irrational to hold to the counteraction view of sanctification. Purification is qualitatively distinct from counteraction or suppression. The fact that there were subsequent infillings with the Holy Spirit for the apostles (e.g., Acts 4:31) in no way argues against the fact that Pentecost was for them the exact moment of entire sanctification. It should not be surprising that the Holy Spirit would repeatedly fill pure human hearts. A sterilized glass can be refilled with pure water an indefinite number of times, without needing to be re-sterilized. William M. Greathouse pithily affirms, "One baptism, many anointings—this is the New Testament formula."<sup>191</sup>

### **Moving from Prescription to Provision**

Since God has clearly prescribed holiness, it only makes sense that what He has prescribed, He will also provide. God is never illogical. Why prescribe the impossible? Why prescribe a cure that cannot be had? Or, why prescribe a cure that can only be partially had? Or, why prescribe a cure that is only illusory, one that only deals with the symptoms and never in any real and complete sense remedies the root cause of the illness? Or, why prescribe a cure that only suppresses the infection, but never kills it? This is a curious situation that proponents of the simultaneous theory, the positional theory, the progressive theory, the counteraction theory, and other erroneous views can never adequately explain. As Dr. Hiram Sanders says in commenting on 1 Thessalonians 5:24, "God does not dangle a carrot in front of us that we cannot have!"<sup>192</sup>

John Wesley urged people to "groan after holiness."<sup>193</sup> "There is evidence that when Wesley's 'groan emphasis' began to die, the depths of true holiness began to shallow out proportionately."<sup>194</sup> You will never hunger for food you

<sup>191</sup> William M. Greathouse, *The Fullness of the Spirit* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1958), 37.

<sup>192</sup> Op. cit., "Sanctified in 2003."

<sup>193</sup> Cited by L. S. Boardman, *Scriptural Death-Route Holiness* (Shoals, Indiana: Old Paths Tract Society, 1987), 71.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

don't believe God wants you to eat. You will never thirst for water you don't believe God wants you to drink. You will never groan for this personal holiness of heart and life God has called you to, if you don't believe He has called you to it. You will not groan for holiness if there is no sense of urgency. That God has called you should by itself create that sense of urgency.

“O for a heart to praise my God,  
A heart from sin set free,  
A heart that always feels Thy blood  
So freely spilt for me.

A heart resigned, submissive, meek,  
My great Redeemer's throne,  
Where only Christ is heard to speak,  
Where Jesus reigns alone.

O for a lowly, contrite heart,  
Believing, true, and clean,  
Which neither life nor death can part  
From Him that dwells within.

A heart in ev'ry thought renewed  
And full of love divine,  
Perfect and right and pure and good—  
A copy, Lord, of Thine.

—Charles Wesley

Let this point ring clearly. God wants us to be sanctified. He wants it to be entire. He wants it to be personal. He wants it to be now, in this life!

This is God's will – your sanctification!  
This is God's will – your sanctification!  
This is God's will – your sanctification!

And what God wills, He makes possible. He provides!



## **EIGHTH MAIN ADDRESS TO THE JURY**

### **Making the Case – Part Two**

## ***“The Provision For Entire Sanctification”***

Not only is it crucial to understand the prescribed nature of holiness, it is equally crucial to understand God’s provision for it. This should eliminate any residual doubts as to whether or not this state to which God has called us is obtainable in this life. It should be axiomatic in the theological thinking of all Christians that,

### **God’s Provision is Far Greater than Our Problem!**

Herein lies the inherent winsomeness and radical optimism of grace in the Wesleyan view. We joyously shout,

“Yes! The cure is more radical than the disease! To God Be the Glory!”

This truth should compel the proponents of other views to seriously examine the fatal flaws in their position.<sup>195</sup> This is a common thread of serious error in the fallacious views previously noted—seeing sin as essentially incurable, even beyond the reach of God’s grace. For example, this is the fundamental fallacy in the positional holiness view. In the final analysis, this view minimizes God’s power to cure sin. Instead, it elevates the problem of total depravity to such a level that imputed righteousness is seen as the only possible remedy. This is a curious anomaly, since it is these same interpreters who, with their monergistic presuppositions, purport to be the ones vigorously defending the start-to-finish nature of God’s redemptive activity. Why, then, do they seem to think God’s redemptive power falls short of being able to *cure* sin? Why do they tirelessly promote a medicine that only *soothes* the illness? Why do they proffer an *incomplete* provision? From those who so loudly cry *sola gratia*, why is there such a firm resistance to the sanctifying grace that goes deeper than the stain of sin has ever gone? Alas, they continue on in their ill-conceived theological prejudice.

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<sup>195</sup> Recently, the author heard a prominent radio preacher extolling, along with David in Psalm 51, God’s ability to cleanse from sin and create a pure heart within (Psalm 51:2, 7, 10). He was preaching a wonderful sermon. However, within moments the same preacher made statements that implied Christians will, *of necessity*, carry on a lifelong struggle with the sinful nature. You cannot have it both ways. Either God can cleanse us from inward sin or he cannot. If he can, then logic dictates that there is no necessity of a lifelong struggle with the sinful nature. If he cannot, then the sinful nature is endemic to humanness and beyond the reach of sanctifying grace.

But I ask again, “Is the arm of the LORD too short to save?” (Isaiah 59:1). “Is anything too hard for the LORD?” (Genesis 18:14). P. P. Bliss put it so eloquently when he penned the words to a great hymn:

“Man of sorrows,” what a name  
For the Son of God, who came  
Ruined sinners to reclaim!  
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Bearing shame and scoffing rude,  
In my place condemned he stood;  
Sealed my pardon with his blood.  
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Guilty, vile, and helpless we;  
Spotless Lamb of God was He.  
“*Full atonement!*” Can it be?  
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

### **How Does God Provide for Our Entire Sanctification?**

Theologians have applied the following labels:

1. The Originating Cause  $\Rightarrow$  the Will of God. God has the power to create whatever he wills. The complete sanctification of his people is God’s will. Opposition to the doctrine is, therefore, a folly of unparalleled proportions, because it is tantamount to standing in the way of God’s purpose and God’s creative power.
2. The Procuring Cause  $\Rightarrow$  the Blood of Christ. Christ had the power to procure our complete sanctification by means of his sacrificial death. In Leviticus 16:27 we read, “The bull and the goat for the sin offerings, whose blood was brought into the Most Holy Place to make atonement, must be taken outside the camp; their hides, flesh and offal are to be burned up.” With this Old Testament picture as a backdrop, the writer of Hebrews says, “The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood” (13:11-12). In this case, opposition to the doctrine is tantamount to saying Christ’s

death is unable to effect entire sanctification in the earthly life of his people, a perilous attitude to embrace and one that runs directly counter to the plain sense of Scripture.

3. The Instrumental Cause  $\Rightarrow$  the Word of God.

How does the word of God sanctify? Because God's word is truth, and has creative power, the Holy Spirit uses it to bring about entire sanctification in those who exercise faith for the same.

4. The Efficient Cause  $\Rightarrow$  the Holy Spirit.

How does the Holy Spirit apply the benefits of Christ's atonement to our hearts and effect our sanctification?

His name "advertises his sanctifying ministry. He is the *Holy* Spirit, and the adjective qualifies both his person and his mission. His *is* holy, and he *makes* holy."<sup>196</sup>

5. The Conditional Cause  $\Rightarrow$  Faith.

How does faith appropriate the benefits of Christ's atonement?

In the final analysis, faith is the only condition of entire sanctification, just as it is of regeneration. A complete consecration is evidence of this faith, but in the end the Christian must *believe* that God is as good as his word, that he can and will sanctify through and through.

**Proofs of God's Provision in Christ for Entire Sanctification**

In the analogy used at the beginning of my case, God is the Physician who prescribes the medication, and Jesus Christ is the blood donor who provides the medication. The Holy Spirit is the pharmacist who dispenses the cure.

Because the Bible speaks so clearly on this issue, the burden of proof is on those who deny the possibility of a complete cleansing from sin in this life (cf. 1 John 1:7, 9),<sup>197</sup> not on those who claim it. We who claim this possibility simply take God at His Word.

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<sup>196</sup> W. E. McCumber, *Holy Living*, 27.

<sup>197</sup> It is a serious error to cite 1 John 1:8 (or 1 John 1:10; or 1 Kings 8:46) as though it contradicts the statement just made. The apostle John no less than five times in his epistle (1 John 3:6 [2], 9 [2]; 5:18) makes it incontrovertibly clear that continued sin is utterly incompatible with the Christian life (one who is born of God). In addition to this, John once asserts that Christ appeared to *take away* our sin (3:5) and once asserts that Christ appeared to *destroy* the devil's work (3:8). Furthermore, in its immediate context, 1:8 is sandwiched by verses (1:7,

1. God has prescribed it throughout the Bible. For example, Leviticus 11:44 and 19:2 quote God saying, “Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.” Notice that this is a state of being, and not a standing or a never-ending process. Nor is it merely a ceremonial holiness. In the Old Testament God demanded moral purity. This is cited by Peter in his first epistle (1:15-16). Peter’s reference to the same divine prescription makes it clear that this is truth for all peoples in all times and places—God always expects His people to be sanctified wholly.
2. Over and over again the Old and New Testaments (especially the New) speak of God’s purpose in Jesus Christ to *separate* his people from sin, and to separate sin from his people—*make them holy*. The full biblical teaching is that of removal from sin, taking away sin, purging sin, being made holy, etc. (cf. Exodus 20:20; Deuteronomy 30:6; Psalm 51:2, 7, 10; Isaiah 53:12; Matthew 1:21; 16:24; John 1:29; 12:24; Acts 15:8-9; Romans 5:19; 6:2, 6-7, 11; 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 5:7; 15:3; Galatians 1:4; 2:20; 5:24; Colossians 2:20; 3:3; 2 Timothy 2:11; Titus 2:14; Hebrews 7:25; 9:26-28; 10:11-14, 22; 13:12; James 1:4, 27; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 John 1:7, 9; 2:2; 3:5, 8; Revelation 1:5; 7:14). Jesus Christ is God’s Lamb, provided to take away sin (John 1:29). Jesus Christ provided his own blood to make his people holy, i.e., sanctify them wholly (Hebrews 13:12).

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9) that *both* speak of the possibility of being *purified from all sin*. Also in the immediate context is the very important author’s purpose statement, “I write this to you so that you will not sin” (2:1). John’s purpose statement is meaningless prattle if it is impossible not to continue in sin. The whole tenor of the epistle elsewhere also supports this analysis. It is 1:8 (and 1:10) that must be interpreted in light of the preponderance of evidence elsewhere in the epistle, not vice versa! 1 John 1:8 is simply the apostle’s anticipation of the Gnostic claim to be without sin *to begin with*, i.e., the claim to be without a sinful nature in need of being cleansed. It is this claim that is self-deceptive and utterly devoid of truth, not the claim to be cleansed by Christ’s blood and therefore presently without sin. 1 John 1:10 is simply the equivalent of Romans 3:23, an affirmation that all *have* sinned, not an affirmation that all *are presently* sinning. The same is true of 1 Kings 8:46, where Solomon comments in his temple prayer of dedication, “there is no one who does not sin.” The interpretation cannot be strained to mean that there is no one who does not *continue* sinning, especially in light of the New Testament evidence. Solomon was simply saying there is no one who does not sin *at some time* in his life.

3. The plain sense of many passages indicates that God promises to make his people *completely* holy. Many of the above references state this unambiguously (Romans 6:6-7; Galatians 2:20; 5:24; Titus 2:14; Hebrews 13:12; James 1:4; 1 John 1:7, 9). To these may be added 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13; 4:3; and especially 5:23-24. An unbiased reading of 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 should remove all doubts that the New Testament teaches *entire* sanctification. Paul prays that God will sanctify the Thessalonians *through and through*. What else can this be but entire sanctification? This is God's provision!
4. God's provision is for a *personal* sanctification. Paul prays that God's provision will cause the Thessalonians to "*be blameless and holy*" (3:13).
5. God's provision is for a *here-and-now* experience of entire sanctification. One cannot now be what he can only later be! The proof is so compelling, it is hard to imagine anyone who has been brought face to face with the evidence not embracing it with a full heart of faith. In a beautiful and sweeping summary, Paul is unflagging in his insistence that God both wills it and does it. He prescribes it. He provides it. He performs it.

So I appeal to those who believe in positional or progressive holiness, or counteraction holiness. I appeal to those who follow the thinking of men like Anselm of Canterbury, who said, "You have not yet considered how great the weight of sin is."<sup>198</sup> Convince me that a complete cure for sin is unavailable! Convince me that depravity is so inextricably connected with my humanness that God cannot sanctify me through and through! Convince me that God cannot completely renovate my fallen nature. Convince me that God cannot do it now when I need it most; he can only do it when I die! Convince me that God provides only relief for my symptoms of sin! Convince me that God provides only a pain killer; he never surgically removes the last trace of the cancer itself! Convince me that God only bandages my leprosy; he doesn't disinfect it! Convince me that God only suppresses the sinful nature; he doesn't kill it! Convince me that God is unable! Convince me, if you do not want to say God is unable, that God is then unwilling! Will you ignore the Scripture that says,

<sup>198</sup> Quoted by Sinclair Ferguson, *Christian Spirituality*, ed. Donald Alexander (Downer's Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1988), 125.

“It is God’s will that you be sanctified!”? Or will you ignore the Scripture that says, “May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you *through and through*. May your *whole* spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who *calls you* is faithful and *he will do it*” (5:23-24). Convince me that it is not Christians to whom this call is extended! Convince me of any of this if you can!

The burden of proof is too great! To Anselm and to you I reply, “You have not yet considered how great the provision of Christ is” (cf. e.g., Hebrews 13:12).

No one should think I am saying that our sin condition is not utterly deplorable. It is! We are indeed totally depraved. However, the emphasis here is on God’s provision in Jesus Christ. Even though He must scrape the bottom of the deep miry clay to save me, he can and he does. His saving power far surpasses the scope of my sin. Far surpasses! Far surpasses! Far surpasses! Paul said to the Thessalonians,

“May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May he strengthen your hearts so that you will *be blameless and holy* in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones” (3:12-13).

Literally, in the Greek, the wording is “blameless *in holiness*” (ἀμέμπτους ἐν ἁγιωσύνη).

Notice here that Paul emphasizes the Lord’s ability to do a sanctifying work *in us*, which results in:

1. Overflowing Love
2. Strengthened Hearts
3. Being Blameless

This is heart holiness! In our hearts we can be blameless! How, you ask?

By striving? No!

By growing into it? No!

By settling for imputed righteousness only? No!

By constant lifelong struggle against the sinful nature? No!

By waiting till death? No! There is no need to.

How then? By God’s wondrous provision? Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes!

Yes!

God is able! God is willing! What God has prescribed He has also provided! It is the present inheritance of God’s people!

There is only one thing left for you to do—possess what He has provided. As my former pastor, the late Rev. Roy L. Heimbach, used to say, “If you do not possess God’s best for you, you are living beneath your privileges!”

“Oh, that in me the sacred fire  
Might now begin to glow,  
Burn up the dross of base desire,  
And make the mountains flow!

Oh, that it now from heav’n might fall,  
And all my sins consume!  
Come, Holy Ghost, for Thee I call;  
Spirit of Burning, come!

Refining fire, go through my heart;  
Illuminate my soul;  
Scatter Thy life through ev’ry part,  
And sanctify the whole.”

—Charles Wesley

This is God’s provision—your entire sanctification!  
This is God’s provision—your entire sanctification!  
This is God’s provision—your entire sanctification!

Dear Christian, why would you deliberately choose to live beneath this blessed privilege? The holy God who prescribes entire sanctification for his people, also provides it without fail. It only remains for you to possess it.

## **NINTH MAIN ADDRESS TO THE JURY**

### **Making the Case – Part Three**

## ***“The Possession Of Entire Sanctification”***

In the final analysis, talk of entire sanctification is pointless unless the experience is obtainable. Profession must be authenticated by possession. Paul uses this very word, “possess” (κτάσθαι), in 1 Thessalonians 4:4.

“That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor.”

It is a present infinitive meaning “to possess, take ownership of, to take control of.” The verse speaks of possessing one’s own body in a way that is *holy* and honorable.

### ***The Reasons Why Many Fail to Possess Entire Sanctification***

The reasons correspond to the parable shared earlier (pp. 94-95). It is shocking how many Christians resist possessing a completed state of sanctification. There are many doubts. Satan has been casting doubt into people’s minds ever since Genesis 3:1, and he still does a masterful job of casting doubt today. Doubters on this issue tend to fall into two major camps:

1. Those who embrace *some* doctrine of sanctification, but doubt the possibility of such a state of grace called entire sanctification, or doubt whether or not a doctrine of entire sanctification is truly Scriptural. These persons struggle with either the nagging question of sin’s pervasiveness (i.e., as long as we are on earth, can we ever be so graced as to be purified from sin?), or they struggle with the poor examples of some who testify to such an experience (i.e., is there really anyone who has been cleansed from *all* sin, and can honestly testify to it?). They, therefore, consider talk of entire sanctification as hopelessly unrealistic. They have heard an ear full of teaching that scoffs at the notion of entire sanctification (or Christian perfection), or the notion of living above the level of daily sin.<sup>199</sup> The result of this is that these persons do

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<sup>199</sup> Recently, the author heard another radio teacher scoffing at the idea that Christians can choose not to sin. He said that in his experience such a notion only sets people up for an inevitable fall. He exerted a great deal of effort trying to back up his view with Scripture. Predictably, he ignored the many references that show his view to be utterly inconsistent with the New Testament. To cite just one example, such a position makes nonsense of Jesus’ command to the invalid whom he had healed, “Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you” (John 5:14). A careful observer must ask, if the man could not choose to stop

not possess all that God wills for them. Doubt lowers them to the level of positional holiness, or progressive holiness, or the sad state of waiting for death to accomplish what God could do in the present.

2. Those who accept the reality of the Scriptural teaching of entire sanctification, but doubt that they personally can ever enter into such an experience. They reason that it works for some, but not for them. Their besetting sins seem to them to be truly incurable. It seems too lofty an ideal or too much to ask for them personally. These persons struggle with questions, "What exactly will I be like, or look like, after I have been entirely sanctified? Do I have to act like or look like a super-saint? Can I truly be free from impure thoughts and other besetting sins?" They reason that such an experience is only for a select few preachers, evangelists, or missionaries. Or they struggle with their lack of understanding of all the many and particular nuances of the doctrine; they won't embrace it till they have fully analyzed it and fully understand it. Or they are simply reluctant to make their consecration complete. Or they simply refuse to believe.

It is important to realize at this juncture that God's sanctifying grace is applied to our hearts. God wants to start with our hearts. By this we mean the inward part of our nature, sometimes also called the mind (or heart or soul), where the sinful nature is (original sin or Adamic depravity). This is the sinful condition with which we are born. It is not a material thing. Cut a person open and you will not find it. Rather, it is a corruption or an infection in our nature (God can see it! We can only see the effects of it.)

### **How Does Entire Sanctification Occur?**

The Divine Role – entire sanctification is the gift of God's gracious activity. Unless God sanctifies, true sanctification is never actualized. As with all his saving work, God is active throughout the process. He sheds light, he calls, he woos, he enables us to respond in faith, he sees the depth of our consecration, and most importantly, he does the amazing work of making us holy, restoring our fallen image and recreating it in the likeness of Christ.

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sinning, then why did Jesus set him up for the inevitable fall into sin by explicitly saying that he could choose to stop sinning? Or, is the fall back into sin not so inevitable after all?

The Human Role – Because of God’s sovereign design, the human role is indispensable. God will not impose this blessing on us. We must act in obedience to the light of truth God shines on our way. God’s grace makes possible our free response to his call to holiness. We must consecrate all: our lives, our future, our hopes and dreams, our ambitions, our self-interest, and willingly let Christ be the Lord of our total being. Though this process should not be needlessly delayed, neither should it be hurried. It will take time to surrender all. One man said the process of consecrating himself, was exhausting. He felt like a briefcase God had turned upside down and shaken until everything fell out. When God sees that our consecration is complete, and that we are exercising sanctifying faith, he comes and completes the work.

### *What Does Entire Sanctification Accomplish?*

Negatively – the remediation of Adamic depravity; the dethroning of self  
Positively – the infusion of perfect love; the enthroning of Christ as Lord

“Jesus, priceless treasure,  
Source of purest pleasure,  
Truest friend to me.  
Long my heart hath panted,  
Till it well-nigh fainted,  
Thirsting after thee.

Thine I am, O spotless Lamb;  
I will suffer naught to hide thee,  
Ask for naught beside thee.”<sup>200</sup>

### *Portrait of an Entirely Sanctified Person*

If our hearts are made holy, our lives will also be holy. All areas of conduct will be radically influenced. This is where a holy *body* enters the picture. In the first line of 1 Thessalonians 4:4, Paul speaks of possessing one’s body or vessel in a way that is holy and honorable. Later, in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Paul identifies God as the one who sanctifies **entirely** and Christians as the recipients of this sanctification. The sanctification is “through and through,” that is, whole, complete, entire, total, full. Consequently, our total

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<sup>200</sup> From the hymn by Johan Franck, written in 1653.

being—spirit, soul, and *body*—may be kept blameless until Jesus returns. Notice the order: first the spirit and soul, and then the body.<sup>201</sup> This holiness is so thoroughgoing that it encompasses the *whole* of one’s spirit, soul, and body (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:23; also Romans 12:1)). It is absolutely correct to say that God calls us to be *wholly holy*. It behooves us not to reject this call, resist this call, have hostility toward this call, or be found overtly striving against God’s call (either personally or by influencing others to do so).

Immediately after the verse where he identified sanctification as God’s will for the Christian, Paul follows in 1 Thessalonians 4:4 with a further statement about God’s will, namely, that Christians *possess* a holy body. The one flows naturally from the other. Holiness of heart leads inexorably to holiness of conduct. Holiness of conduct is the evidence and inevitable result of holiness of heart. In this immediate context, Paul names two specific areas in which holiness of heart impacts our life conduct—or our body:

1. Sexual purity/self-control (as opposed to self-indulgence).

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<sup>201</sup> Sinclair Ferguson, *op. cit.*, *Christian Spirituality*, 124, representing the Reformed view, argues that 1 Thessalonians 5:23 should not be taken to teach entire sanctification in this life, but rather that it speaks of the sanctification that will occur at the return of Christ. His basis for this is that Paul includes complete sanctification of the *body* in his concern. Is this not clear evidence that the Reformed position tends to regard the physical body as evil (as did the ancient Gnostics), and that it elevates the problem of sin’s pervasiveness above the level of God’s sanctifying grace? Come, come now. The meaning of the verse is clear enough, and there is no good reason not to take it at face value. Ferguson seems not to have noticed that the body of the Christian is a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19), and that Paul expected Christians to purify themselves “from everything that contaminates **body** and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God” (2 Corinthians 7:1), something which obviously must happen in this life! Why should we think that the Holy Spirit, who *presently resides* within the body of the Christian, cannot take the further step of wholly sanctifying that temple—spirit, soul, and body—so that it becomes a completely holy temple in which He *presently presides* (cf. Romans 12:1)? Where is the necessity that it wait till the return of Christ? The whole tenor of the Thessalonians passage suggests actions that are expected to happen now, in this life (e.g., “be joyful always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances ... hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil” 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, 21-22). Paul mentions the *parousia* (which Ferguson feels is decisive here) because that is when being “wholly blameless” will be most meaningful. Meanwhile, however, we need to “be kept” in this condition. The *parousia* does not effect entire sanctification; the atonement of Christ does! This provision of Christ’s atonement is to be appropriated now by faith.

2. Brotherly love, which is God-taught (meaning that it flows from a holy heart).

It may come as a bit of a shock to modern man to hear that God still expects his people to be sexually pure. However, this is not an outmoded idea, nor an ancient or Victorian inhibition. This is the demand of holiness. The emphasis on sexual purity is strong in the immediate context. Sexual immorality is inconsistent with the sanctified life (4:3). Sexual immorality is tantamount to a lack of self-control (4:4). Sexual immorality is practiced by those who do not know God (4:5). Sexual immorality is effectively “wronging” or “taking advantage of” another person. Notice that Paul said, “*in this matter* no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him” (4:6). Sexual immorality is sin, for which God will surely punish (4:7).

As for brotherly love, Paul makes the point that this is “God-taught.” Paul employs what we today might call an “it goes without saying” expression. He says, “Now about brotherly love *we do not need to write to you*, yourselves have been taught by God to love each other” (4:9). This is a clear New Testament expression of the promise made by God to Jeremiah centuries before:

“The time is coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD.

“This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD. “*I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts*. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more” (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

An entirely sanctified person does not have to be taught to love his neighbor. To do so is as natural for a person with a holy heart as it is for the physical body to breathe. In a very real sense, the actions of an entirely sanctified person are the actions of the Holy Spirit himself. Notice that the last line of 1 Thessalonians 4:8, which immediately precedes the verse about brotherly love, says, “God ... gives you his Holy Spirit.” An entirely sanctified person is controlled by the Holy Spirit (cf. Galatians 5:24-25). Such a person does not stop and ask, “Should I or should I not love this brother, or that sister?”

The Spirit of Christ within simply does, *through the unstained channel of a holy heart*, what Jesus Christ in the flesh would do (cf. Galatians 2:20).<sup>202</sup>

In 1 Thessalonians 5, we are given more specifics as to how this work of God should affect our conduct. Note the following imperatives:

“Live in peace with each other” (5:13).

“Be patient with everyone” (5:14).

“Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong” (5:15).

“Always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else” (5:15).

“Be joyful always” (5:16).

“Pray continually” (5:17).

“Give thanks in all circumstances” (5:18).

“Do not put out the Spirit’s fire” (5:19).

“Do not treat prophecies with contempt” (5:20).

“Test everything” (5:21).

“Hold on to the good” (5:21).

“Avoid every kind of evil” (5:22).

Emphatic in these citations is the completely saturating nature these virtues are to take in one’s life. The following words make frequent appearances in these verses: “everyone,” “always,” “all,” “continually,” “everything,” and “every.” This, then, is what an entirely sanctified person looks like!

### **The Fruit of the Spirit**

There is a remarkable parallel between these virtues in 1 Thessalonians 5 and Paul’s list of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23:

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”

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<sup>202</sup> This should not be thought of in static terms, but in dynamic terms. That is, the Holy Spirit flows through the channel of a holy vessel, and in the process, magnifies Christ through the individual’s unique personality, gifts, and calling. This is why we can detect a Pauline style of writing in the Bible, and a Petrine or Lukan or Johannean style. All of these men were writing as instruments under divine inspiration, and yet their uniqueness is discernible. This is also why there are varying preaching styles yet today (and even varying results), even though the parties involved are all entirely sanctified vessels. The same principle applies to every aspect of life, not just writing and preaching.

Fruit grows on a tree. The tree in this case is the Holy Spirit. What fruit grows on the tree of the Holy Spirit? Notice the singular number of the subject and verb—*fruit is*, not *fruits are*! The singular fruit is holiness (*Holy Spirit*); the virtues listed represent the various outward expressions of true holiness.

1. Holy Love. This is love made perfect (cf. 1 John 4:17). Christ reigning within enables us to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength; and to love our neighbor as ourselves, including our enemies (cf. Matthew 5:43-48).
2. Holy Joy. This is joy made perfect (cf. John 15:11). Christ's joy becomes our joy. It may be described as a deep inward contentment of soul that has Christ as its source, and is neither dependent on nor diminished by external circumstances (cf. Philippians 4:4, 11, 13).
3. Holy Peace. This is peace made perfect (cf. Isaiah 26:3. There is an elevated sense of freedom from condemnation (cf. Romans 8:1), because "the peace of God, which transcends understanding, will keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" (cf. Philippians 4:7).
4. Holy Patience. This is perseverance made perfect (cf. James 1:4). The Holy Spirit helps us to be patient with everything in life: people, circumstances, our shortcomings and inadequacies, and yes, even God, whose timetable often does not match our own (cf. Psalm 27:14).
5. Holy Kindness. This is compassion patterned after the example of Jesus who is enthroned within (cf. Philippians 2:1-4).
6. Holy Goodness. Entirely sanctified persons are full of goodness. It is the fruit of the Spirit of light (cf. Ephesians 5:9).
7. Holy Faithfulness. Entirely sanctified persons have been given a nature like unto that of God himself, who is often extolled for his faithfulness, covenant loyalty, and steadfast love (cf. e.g., Lamentations 3:22-23; 1 Corinthians 1:9; 10:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:24).
8. Holy Gentleness. Paul spoke to Titus of *true* meekness (Titus 3:2), which is the manifestation of the spirit of Christ (cf. Matthew 11:28-30; 1 Timothy 6:11). Meekness is characterized by a happy willingness to submit to the control of a benevolent authority (i.e., the Holy Spirit, cf. Romans 8:5-6).

9. Holy Self-Control. Entirely sanctified persons are self-controlled (temperate) in all things (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:25, KJV).<sup>203</sup>

A Christian before entire sanctification has the Holy Spirit (cf. Romans 8:9). After entire sanctification, the Holy Spirit fully has the Christian.<sup>204</sup> Jesus Christ *resides* (dwells) in the heart of a Christian before entire sanctification. Jesus Christ *presides* (reigns) in the heart of a Christian who possesses the grace of entire sanctification.<sup>205</sup>

The Holy Spirit, who has purified our hearts by faith, fills us with his holy Presence (cf. Acts 2:4; Ephesians 3:19; 5:18). We no longer conform to the pattern of this world's thinking, but instead are transformed by the renewal of our mind (Romans 12:2). Because we have taken up our cross and followed Christ to Calvary to be crucified with Him, the desire for self-sovereignty is dead. Only the complete Lordship of the resurrected and glorified Jesus Christ now matters.

#### *Analysis of 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24*

These two verses, virtually inseparable from one another, make up Paul's closing prayer for the church. Such a prayer means at least three things at the outset:

1. The inspired writer would not have prayed for something that could not happen. He prayed for their entire sanctification. Therefore, the great apostle believed they could and should be entirely sanctified!
2. Paul knew that entire sanctification was the reality lacking in the Thessalonians faith, which he referred to earlier in 3:10).
3. The prayer brings together the vital truths of the doctrine in a few words.
  - a. It is the gracious work of God.

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<sup>203</sup> This does not mean he or she will not show appropriate anger at times. Jesus did! It also does not mean a person with a naturally fiery personality will lose that trait, or one with a reserved personality will become naturally bold. It simply means that holy persons will remain under the Spirit's control, being sensitive to the Lord's redemptive purposes at all times.

<sup>204</sup> Cf. Laurence W. Wood, *Pentecostal Grace* (Wilmore, Kentucky: Francis Asbury Publishing Co., 1980), p. 17.

<sup>205</sup> Cf. William M. Greathouse, *Love Made Perfect: Foundations for the Holy Life* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1997), p. 59.

- b. It is for Christians. It is subsequent to regeneration, a second definite work of grace.
- c. It is sanctification.
- d. It is entire (“through and through”) sanctification.
- e. It is personal, not positional, sanctification.
- f. It is contemporaneous sanctification.

Paul appeals to the “God of peace” for the Thessalonians’ entire sanctification. This was one of his favorite ways to address God, using it no less than five times in his epistles, usually in the concluding section of his letters (Romans 15:33; 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Philippians 4:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; and possibly Hebrews 13:20; cf. also a similar prayer using “God of hope” in Romans 15:13)).<sup>206</sup>

The title “God of peace” is significant for two reasons. First, the consecratory process leading up to entire sanctification is a spiritual battle. The “old man” is reluctant to die. Moreover, Satan loves to put stumbling blocks in the way of a person’s entire sanctification. He would like nothing better than to prevent it, if possible. It takes the God “of peace” (the Prince of Peace) to decisively defeat him and his wicked offspring, thus ending the battle and bringing perfect peace to the heart (cf. Isaiah 26:3). “God is not a God of disorder (confusion, KJV), but of peace” (1 Corinthians 14:33).

Second, in one of the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus to the disciples, he linked his pronouncement of blessing, “Peace be with you!” (John 20:21), with his appeal to “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22). There seems to be an effect/cause relationship at work between the two statements, that results in something like this: “Peace will be with you, after you receive the Holy Spirit.” In like manner, Paul links the God of peace with the experience of entire sanctification.

Two of the other New Testament prayers that use the title “God of peace” also link it with entire sanctification (or, perfection). One is 1 Corinthians 13:11, where Paul includes this exhortation in his closing remarks:

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<sup>206</sup> The authorship of Hebrews has been debated through the centuries. Tradition ascribes it to Paul, but the text itself does not identify the author, which is not what we would expect if Paul were the author, since it was his habit to begin his letters with a salutation. However, since this issue is of no consequence to the present study, I will only add that the use of this expression, common in the Pauline corpus, lends some credence to the opinion that he was the author.

“Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace shall be with you.” (KJV).

The other is in Hebrews 13:20-21, where the writer says,

“Now the God of peace ... make you perfect in every good work to do his will ...” (KJV).

Paul’s prayer for the Thessalonians is specifically that the God of peace will “sanctify” (ἀγιάσαι) them. The aorist verb indicates the completion of the act of making holy. Paul prays, not for God to continue sanctifying them, but to *finish* sanctifying them. F. F. Bruce comments, “It is clear from the context that, if [sanctification] is a process, it is the completion of the process that is in view here, as in 3:13.”<sup>207</sup> The verb alone points to *entire* sanctification, but this fact is made explicit by the adverb ὁλοτελεις (“completely”). The word is a compound of the Greek ὅλος, meaning “whole” or “throughout,” and τελεις, meaning “perfect” or “brought to the designed end or purpose of a thing). The syntax makes the doctrine of entire sanctification emphatic. The verb alone would have made this point, but the apostle joins it to an adverb, which in itself is almost doubly emphatic, giving the sense “sanctify you perfectly wholly.” The thoroughness of the sanctification Paul prays for can hardly be overstated.

The extent to which God designs to go in sanctifying his people is further amplified in the next clause. There Paul prays that God’s work in them will radically impact their whole (ὅλοκληρον) being: spirit, soul, and body. The adjective modifies all three nouns. The adjective is another Greek compound, combining ὅλος, meaning “whole” and κληρος, meaning “part” or “portion.”

The specific prayer in this second clause is that the Thessalonians would be “preserved blameless.” In so praying, Paul has come full circle from his earlier prayer for them in 3:11-13, the last part of which reads,

“To the end that he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God” (KJV). The goal of the gospel is blameless holiness, or as F. F. Bruce says, “Conformity to the image of Christ is the goal and climax of sanctification.”<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> F. F. Bruce, “1&2 Thessalonians,” *WBC*, vol. 45, 129.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

Blamelessness has to do with moral conformity to the law. It has to do with the Christ-Life being actualized within us, so that the holy character and conduct of Christ may be actualized in the way we live our lives. This blameless character encompasses the whole person.<sup>209</sup> Our inner self (spirit and soul) and our outer self (body) can and should be preserved blameless in holiness.

Paul Prays for two distinct but related acts of grace from God, a crisis and a process:

1. That God sanctify them entirely, and
2. That God preserve them entirely.

This is entire sanctification and entire preservation!

There is one other matter that concerns us in this passage before moving on, that being the time element of sanctification. Some interpreters insist that the complete sanctification of which Paul speaks must occur at the time of the *parousia* (second coming of Christ), which is mentioned here and in 3:13. There are a number of reasons why this view should be rejected.

1. The plain sense of the verse does not support it. Paul prayed for God to sanctify them wholly (i.e., now), and adds to this the prayer for God to preserve them blameless (i.e., from now on).
2. The context does not support it. Sanctification is said to be God's will (4:3) and God's call (4:7). It is a dubious position at best to infer that God calls Christians to something they can only experience at the *parousia*, and not in the meantime. The next verse plainly says the caller is faithful, and he will do it (5:24).
3. If Paul wanted us to understand that entire sanctification can only be experienced at the *parousia*, why didn't he emphatically say so, instead of making it sound like a present calling and a present possession?
4. The kind of thorough sanctification Paul writes about is the kind that will enable a person to be physically pure (cf. 4:3), and possess their bodies in holiness and honor (4:4) instead of self-indulgence (4:5). This concern only has relevance here and now, *prior* to the *parousia*.
5. The syntax does not support it. The preposition does not indicate the *parousia* as the time of entire sanctification (*εν τη παρουσια*), either

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<sup>209</sup> The tripartite formula "spirit, soul, and body" is an expression signifying the whole person, and probably should not be taken to mean anything more.

here or in 3:13, where the construction is identical. F. F. Bruce clarifies, “In both places the construction is compendious; the ... prayer is that the[y] may be preserved entirely without fault *until* the Parousia, and be so found *at* the Parousia.”<sup>210</sup>

### Summary

The evidence is decisive in both its quantity and its quality. The evidence not only provides proof beyond a reasonable doubt, it proves the case beyond all doubt!

1. God has prescribed entire sanctification.
2. God has provided for entire sanctification.
3. Christians can possess entire sanctification. Only the regenerate are proper candidates, having already been initially sanctified (set apart as holy). Christians can possess an entire sanctification that is personal. They are to be actually made holy and live holy lives. Christians can possess an entire sanctification that is a present reality. Now is when it is needed.

Once you realize that a holy God is calling you (a Christian) to be sanctified wholly, that He has made provision for you to be sanctified wholly, and that you may possess this privilege here and now, there is nothing left for you to do but obey God with a full heart of faith.<sup>211</sup> It is analogous to the sick man taking the medicine that the doctor prescribed and the pharmacist provided. It is the only wise response.

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<sup>210</sup> Op. cit., “1 & 2 Thessalonians,” 130-131 (emphasis his).

<sup>211</sup> Ferguson, op. cit., *Christian Spirituality*, 124, states, “Although Paul does speak about being sanctified ‘through and through’ (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24), he does not regard this as an experience to be received *by a specific act of faith*” (italics added). It seems apparent, however, that Ferguson’s Reformed bias has blinded him to the biblical facts, in his efforts to explain away the obvious implications of this verse. For example, in Paul’s address to Agrippa in Acts 26:17-18, he recites Jesus’ words to him as follows: “I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins *and* a place among those who are sanctified *by faith in me*.” Paul was also present at the council of Jerusalem and certainly agreed wholeheartedly when Peter said, “He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts *by faith*” (Acts 15:9). It is also worth noting that Paul identifies this as the experiential reality the Thessalonians “lacked” (3:10). They had the faith that justifies and regenerates; they needed the faith that fully sanctifies!

### *What Will Be Left After Entire Sanctification?*

Thus far, I have placed a great deal of emphasis on entire sanctification as a completed *event*, largely because there is so much misinformation and incorrect teaching on this point. However, because we are human and we are not in heaven yet, here is the place for a proper emphasis on progressive sanctification. The words of W. E. McCumber are helpful, “The moral transformation wrought by the Spirit is a *process* as surely as a *crisis* ... As the Holy Spirit reveals Christ to us with ever-increasing clarity, we are transformed ‘from glory to glory.’ This results in an ever-increasing assimilation into ‘the glory of the Lord’ (2 Corinthians 3:18) ... The process is never completed in this present age. No Christian is ever as holy as he ought to be and longs to be.”<sup>212</sup>

Notice the proper distinction. Sanctification is **both** a *crisis* and a *process*. It is entire in one sense; it is not entire in another. Our hearts are made pure, unmixed with alien affections. In this sense it is entire. The quality of our holiness may be perfect, personal, and a present reality.

We may grow within the state of holiness. In this sense it is not entire. Only God has non-derivative and non-increase-able holiness. If we are ever to be holy, it must come from God. Not only that, but once having been made holy, our capacities will and must enlarge. Our conformity to Christ can become increasingly actualized. While the quality of holiness is settled, the quantity of our holiness will need to grow. The holy fruit of the Spirit will be reflected in increasing measure as the entirely sanctified Christian grows in this grace.

There is no contradiction here. Consider again the analogy of marriage. While the quality of love that brings a couple together in the first place may be perfect, no one would argue that that love cannot increase over the years. My parents recently celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary. On March 5, 1954, they loved each other with all their hearts. Their commitment was total. On March 5, 2004, they still loved each other with all their hearts. The quality of their love was complete on both occasions. But of course, the passing of fifty years stretched their hearts to an even greater capacity for love than either could have imagined at the beginning of their long relationship.

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<sup>212</sup> W. E. McCumber, *Holy Living for All Our Days* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1989), 27-28.

Here's another illustration. Thomas H. Hermiz once related the following story in a sermon: While pastoring in Lancaster, Ohio, some years ago, he was planting some flowers in the front lawn of the parsonage on a hot summer day. His little daughter was taking great joy in helping her father dig in the soil. After some time passed, the little girl noticed her father sweating profusely, and asked if he would like her to fetch a glass of iced water. He said, "Yes, I'd like that very much." Off she went, eagerly desiring to please her father. She returned in haste with the water. Dr. Hermiz immediately noticed that she had not washed her hands. The glass was smeared with mud, and a few crumbs of dirt had even fallen into the water. For a split second he thought of scolding her for her carelessness. But just as quickly the Holy Spirit checked him as he looked into her sparkling eyes. Through those eyes he could see a pure heart, a heart whose motives were perfect and whose intentions were spotless, even though the performance was not so. Spontaneously, Dr. Hermiz decided to drink the water, dirt and all. In that instant, the Holy Spirit brought into clearer focus the proper distinction between a pure heart and a mature character. A pure heart can reside in a small child. A mature character is forged over time.<sup>213</sup>

God, too, looks at our hearts and judges us accordingly, patiently molding us more and more after his likeness as we grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.

### **How Do I Possess Entire Sanctification?**

I am using the word possess as a synonym for "receive" or "appropriate" or "accept." In this sense, the "how to" is the same as with Christian conversion. When all other conditions are met, a person must simply embrace God's gift of grace. There are two conditions that precede reception:<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> Author's personal recollection of the sermon. I believe I have correctly recounted the gist of the story.

<sup>214</sup> In a very proper sense, we should say that faith is the only condition, with consecration being the one indispensable proof of that faith's authenticity. Complete consecration corresponds precisely with repentance in this regard. That is, complete repentance is the one indispensable proof of faith's authenticity when we come to God for regeneration. For my purposes here, I am separating them for clarity's sake.

1. Consecration. Consecration corresponds to repentance. Repentance is absolutely necessary as a precondition of regeneration.<sup>215</sup> In order to experience the new birth, one must repent of his actual sins as deeply as he has sinned. In this sense, repentance is bitter-sweet. One must contritely endure the pain of “turning,” knowing that, if he pays the price required by godly sorrow for sin, he will in due course enjoy the freedom of deliverance. Likewise, in order to experience entire sanctification, one must fully consecrate himself. The consecration must be as complete as the sinful corruption is total. Complete consecration is also bitter-sweet. A “name it and claim it” consecration does not measure up to the standard required for entire sanctification. Most of the people who do not receive fully sanctifying grace, do not receive it because they are unwilling to “pay the price” needed. They are not willing to wait on the Lord, to tarry until endued with power from above. They are not willing to endure the bitterness and the pain. The old man is extremely reluctant to die. The weed-roots of the carnal nature only come out reluctantly, by means of superior force. The virus of sin can only be disinfected by strong medicine.

Complete consecration is not unlike a cancer patient climbing on an operating table, and wholly giving himself over to the care of a skilled surgeon. In the experience of entire sanctification, it is the sinful nature that is removed. One cannot repent for a sinful condition; one can only repent for an act, a sinful choice. However, a person can submit their

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<sup>215</sup> There are some who deny this. Reformed theologians, for example, regard repentance as a response to regeneration, not as a necessary precondition. Such a view, however, makes nonsense of Jesus’ words in Luke 13:3, 5, “I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.” With ultimate authority, Jesus speaks to unregenerate people as though perishing is the inevitable consequence of not repenting. How can this be if the person who needs to repent is already saved? Do saved people perish? Obviously not! William M. Greathouse makes this point well when he says, “Repentance clears the way for justifying faith—puts us on believing ground. After warning the Pharisees that the publicans and harlots were entering the Kingdom before them, our Lord explained the reason: ‘For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him; and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, *that ye might believe him*’” (Matthew 21:32). Op. cit., *The Fullness of the Spirit*, 75-76 (emphasis his). Cf. also Acts 2:38 and 3:19 as other examples.

sinful condition to the divine surgeon's knife. Imagine a cancer patient making the following statement to the surgeon prior to an operation:

"Doctor, I'm all yours. Open me up, search anywhere you like, and cut out every last trace of the cancer. Do not stop until you can say without hesitation that the disease is gone. When this is over, I want a clean bill of health!"

That's a complete consecration!

William M. Greathouse invites persons to make John Wesley's prayer of consecration their own:

"O Lord Jesus, I give Thee my body, my soul, my substance, my fame, my friends, my liberty, and my life: dispose of me and of all that is mine, as it seems best to Thee. I am now not mine, but Thine: therefore claim me as Thy right, keep me as Thy charge, and love me as Thy child. Fight for me when I am assaulted, heal me when I am wounded, and revive me when I am destroyed."<sup>216</sup>

Here's another example straight from the Bible. Jesus said,

"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it" (Matthew 16:24-25).

This is an invitation to die, to be co-crucified with Jesus Christ (cf. Galatians 2:20).<sup>217</sup> Only a fool would deny that such action requires a complete consecration! (cf. John 12:24). A person who takes up the cross is already a disciple, a follower of Jesus. A person who takes up the cross is saying goodbye, because he knows he will not return alive. Taking up the cross requires reckless abandon! The same reckless abandon that caused us to follow Christ in the first place!

"We will abandon it all, for the sake of the call;  
No other reason at all, but the sake of the call;

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<sup>216</sup> From Wesley's handwritten prayer journal, cited in op. cit., *Love Made Perfect*, 122. In the same book, see the entire section entitled "How to Receive Sanctifying Grace," 121-124.

<sup>217</sup> William M. Greathouse, *Ibid.*, 64, explains that the Greek verb in Galatians 2:20 literally means "co-crucified." Dr. Greathouse goes on to say that "the end God has in mind in our crucifixion with Christ is *the actualization of the divine self ... Christ-actualization* is the goal of the gospel," 72.

Wholly devoted, to live and to die;  
For the sake of the call.”<sup>218</sup>

Is this not in perfect harmony with the actual example of Christ?

“Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, ‘My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will’ ... He went away a second time and prayed, ‘My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done’” (Matthew 26:39, 42).

2. Faith. This is that gracious gift of God that enables one (with independent free will) to ground himself in God’s integrity.<sup>219</sup> It is an attitude of trust in God—the trust that He is as good as His word. He cannot lie. He cannot under any circumstances fail to keep His promise. No better description is to be found anywhere than that of John Wesley’s four-fold summary, in response to the question, “But what is that faith whereby we are sanctified; saved from sin, and perfected in love?”<sup>220</sup>
  - a. “It is a divine evidence and conviction ... that God hath promised it in the Holy Scripture.”
  - b. “It is a divine evidence and conviction ... that what God hath promised He is able to perform.”<sup>221</sup>
  - c. “It is ... a divine evidence and a conviction that He is able and willing to do it now.”
  - d. “To this confidence ... there needs to be added one thing more—a divine evidence and a conviction that He doeth it. In that hour it is done.”

That entire sanctification is an act of God to be received by a specific act of faith is clear from Peter’s words in Acts 15:8-9:

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<sup>218</sup> From the song by Steven Curtis Chapman.

<sup>219</sup> Prevenient grace makes possible the independent exercise of free will, even in fallen humans. If we say that the exercise of the will is anything less than independent, then we fall back into monergism.

<sup>220</sup> Cited by Richard S. Taylor, “The Theological Formulation,” *Exploring Christian Holiness*, vol. 3 (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1985), 177-178.

<sup>221</sup> Cf. Romans 4:21.

“God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts *by faith*” (cf. also Acts 26:18).

Dr. Lawrence B. Hicks once said to an audience while preaching (circa 1960):

“If you get hungry enough you’ll die out ... and if you don’t get hungry enough for it, you’re not going to die out ... If you get hungry enough you’re going to set your will to get it ... You’ll get sanctified if you get your mind made up ... drape over a mourner’s bench like an owl over a tomb stone on a wet night at midnight. Stay there till the last nail’s driven and the epitaph’s cut on the tomb of the old man!”<sup>222</sup>

Will you respond and be entirely sanctified now? The case has been made. The evidence is overwhelming. God wills it! Christ has provided for it! You must possess it!

“What is our calling’s glorious hope  
But inward holiness?  
For this to Jesus I look up,  
I calmly wait for this.

I wait till He shall touch me clean,  
Shall life and power impart,  
Give me the faith that casts out sin  
And purifies the heart.

This is the dear redeeming grace,  
For every sinner free;  
Surely it shall in me take place,  
The chief of sinners, me.

Be it according to Thy Word!  
Redeem me from all sin;  
My heart would now receive Thee, Lord;  
Come in, my Lord, come in!”

—Charles Wesley

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<sup>222</sup> Cited by L. S. Boardman, *op. cit.*, 70.



## **TENTH MAIN ADDRESS TO THE JURY**

### **Cross-Examination**

## ***“Answering Objections and Questions”***

1. Can you point to Scriptures that prove the Bible teaches the doctrine of entire sanctification?

The Bible explicitly teaches entire sanctification in a number of places, especially 1 Thessalonians 5:23. The following is a partial list of references that to one degree or another prove the doctrine, or some particular aspect of it: Deuteronomy 10:16; Psalm 24:3-4; 51:2, 5, 7, 10; Isaiah 1:25; 6:7; Jeremiah 4:4; Ezekiel 36:23-27; Matthew 3:11-12; 5:8, 48; Luke 24:49; John 17:17; Acts 1:5, 8; 2:4; 8:12-17; 15:8-9; 26:18; Romans 5:1-8:39 (especially 6:6); 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Galatians 2:20; 5:22-24; Ephesians 1:13; 3:20; 4:11; 5:18, 25-27; Philippians 3:12-15; Colossians 1:28; 3:3, 13; 4:12; 1 Thessalonians 3:10, 13; 4:4, 7; 5:23-24; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Titus 2:14; Hebrews 6:1; 7:25; 9:13-14; 10:10, 14; 12:10, 14-15; 13:12; James 1:4, 27; 4:8; 1 Peter 1:2; 3:14; 1 John 1:7, 9; 2:5; 3:3; 4:12, 17.<sup>223</sup> This is not a case that rests on an isolated verse. If it had to, 1 Thessalonians 5:23 would probably be the best candidate. The whole counsel of God, especially the New Testament epistles, supports belief in complete deliverance from sin in this life. Proof texts alone seldom make for a solid case. The whole tenor of Scripture proves the truth of a doctrine. As stated earlier, I believe the burden of proof is on those who deny the doctrine, not on those who embrace it. Nevertheless, I believe the evidence I have presented substantively proves the case.

2. What are some of the Scriptures to which opponents of your view might appeal, and how would you respond to them?

The following list is representative but by no means exhaustive.

- a. Positional Sanctification. Those who regard sanctification primarily as positional point to 1 Corinthians 1:30, “It is because of him [God] that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.”<sup>224</sup> This verse employs one of Paul’s signature motifs, the pithy phrase “in Christ.” The Corinthians, who were previously identified as “sanctified in Christ Jesus” (1:2), are also here said to be “in Christ

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<sup>223</sup> For an excellent treatment of the many passages that may be considered, see W. T. Purkiser, *op. cit.*, *Exploring Christian Holiness*, vol. 1.

<sup>224</sup> Also Philippians 1:1 and Hebrew 3:1 are used in this regard.

Jesus.” Then the apostle states that Christ Jesus has become for us our righteousness, holiness (sanctification), and redemption. The statement seems to imply that Christ is our substitute for holiness, that his holiness is imputed to us (that he is holy *for us*). From this the interpretation arises that our sanctification is positional, that our position in Christ (holy in Christ) constitutes the essence of our sanctification.

There is no quarrel with the idea of positional holiness, so far as it goes. In our justification we are indeed the recipients of imputed holiness. And thank God we are, for with respect to the many ways in which we fall short of God’s perfect standard of righteousness (no matter how high a state of grace we have obtained), only the perfect righteousness of Christ imputed to us makes us worthy of heaven.

But we soon discover that the Corinthians fell far short of God’s desire for personal-ethical holiness. Paul regrets that he had to address them as carnal (fleshly or worldly) instead of spiritual (3:1). They were infantile, clique-ish, and quarrelsome. Paul clearly implies that the category he terms “spiritual” is not only possible, but a higher level of grace that is to be urged upon and expected from Christians who have been in the faith for some period of time. He clearly believed the Corinthians should have been there by that time (3:2). And here is the critical point for our present discussion—the category he calls “spiritual” is a level above that of the positional holiness of justification, for the Corinthians were already in the latter state.<sup>225</sup> It is a level where carnal-mindedness has been remedied. It is not only being “holy in Christ,” but it is also Christ being “holy in you” (in a more complete sense than the initial sanctification the Corinthians already possessed). This can only refer to a real, personal, entire, and contemporaneous sanctification. For this work of grace, Christ is not our substitute, but our *source* of holiness! (Hebrews 13:12). In the final analysis our holiness must be

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<sup>225</sup> I should point out once again that, even with the first work of grace, there is a real cleansing known as regeneration or initial sanctification. The first work of grace does not involve justification only. Thus, even if the second work of grace were disregarded, positional sanctification would be an inadequate view.

personal and real, because holy character is not transfer-able. Our unholy character must be fully *transformed* into holy character.

- b. Progressive Sanctification. 2 Corinthians 3:18 is sometimes used to support the idea of gradual sanctification. It reads, “And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

The verse clearly speaks of a continual transformation into ever increasing Christ-likeness. This is absolutely true and absolutely necessary. There is no debate here. But in the context, this appears to be a growth *within* the state of entire sanctification, not a growth *toward* it. Previously Paul had said, “Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come” (1:21-22). The identical metaphor is used in Ephesians 1:13-14, “And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.” In the Ephesians text it is clear that the “sealing with the Holy Spirit” is subsequent to “having believed.” Thus sealing is shown to be a biblical metaphor for entire sanctification.<sup>226</sup>

Let us not confuse the two categories. Entire sanctification is an epochal transformation, instantaneous and decisive. Maturing in Christ-likeness is a continual transformation, gradual and ever increasing in glory. This is the only logical way to make sense of the fact that some verses clearly speak of sanctification as a completed event or crisis, and other verses speak of the process. We must consider both together. We must not consider one to the exclusion of the other. It is bad interpretation to ignore the texts that clearly speak of instantaneous sanctification and pay attention only to those that

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<sup>226</sup> See Grider, *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*, 383, 388-389.

speak of growth in sanctification. And bad interpretation leads to bad theology.

- c. Counteraction Sanctification. This is the view that we must of necessity endure a lifelong struggle with Adamic depravity (the carnal nature). Galatians 5:17 is used to support this notion,<sup>227</sup> “For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.”

In the context this view cannot be sustained, for seven verses later we read, “Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.” Whatever is crucified is dead. There cannot be an ongoing struggle with something that is dead. The conflict exists only when the sinful nature is not yet crucified.

- d. Speaking in Tongues as a Necessary Sign of Spirit-Baptism. Acts 2:4 mentions speaking in tongues as one of the results of the disciples being filled with the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.” Acts 10:46 and 19:6 are often used to buttress this opinion.

This view cannot be correct for the following reasons:

- (1) If tongues were a necessary sign, it would always follow. But this is decidedly not the case, either in the book of Acts or in church history. In Acts 4:31, 8:17, and 9:17, being filled with the Spirit was not followed by tongues.
- (2) On the occasions when tongues did accompany the baptism with the Holy Spirit, it was not the gibberish of modern Pentecostalism but actual human languages that served the purpose of crossing linguistic barriers for the immediate spread of the gospel. Therefore, if Acts 2:4 is held up as the paradigm for tongues-speaking as a necessary sign of Spirit-Baptism, modern Pentecostals, if they wish to be truly biblical, must cease the

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<sup>227</sup> Also Romans 7:14-25, when the interpreter understands it as a description of Paul as a regenerated man, is often used to support this position.

false practice of unknown tongues-speaking and speak only in actual human languages.

- (3) According to Peter (one of those who experienced the original Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit), purity of heart was the abiding result for those present at Pentecost in Acts 2 and at the household of Cornelius in Acts 10 (Acts 15:9). Tongues was not important enough to mention, even though it happened on both occasions. If tongues were essential, it would have been important enough to mention.
- (4) In all the New Testament epistles, tongues is never mentioned in any context relating to sanctification or Spirit-baptism. If tongues were necessary, it stands to reason that the writers would have said so. In the one epistle that discusses tongues (1 Corinthians), it is in connection with the proper or improper use of spiritual gifts within the body of Christ, not in connection with the experience of Spirit-baptism. And even then tongues-speaking is clearly not a necessary evidence of anything. On the contrary, tongues-speaking is specifically said to be inferior to other gifts.

3. Can you elaborate further on the instantaneous and progressive aspects of sanctification? I find it difficult to get a firm handle on this.

Perhaps the easiest way to grasp this is to think of the marriage analogy, which the Bible itself does (e.g. Ephesians 5:25-27). A man and woman become completely married in an instant of time, but no one except the very naive thinks it's all over in that moment. They are completely married, but there is much growth and progress in love to be made!

4. Why must there be a second work of grace? Cannot God do it all in one work of grace?

The question confuses the issue. God's ability is not being questioned. There is no theoretical reason why the work of sanctifying grace cannot be fully actualized the immediate moment after a sinner receives regeneration. Imagine a sinner who is fully aware of the need for both regeneration and full sanctification. He comes to Christ for forgiveness from the guilt and washing from the stains of actual sins, and by repentance and faith he receives this glorious grace that saves. In a moment

he has passed from death to life, from darkness to light, from blindness to sight, from sin to salvation.

But he knows there is more to God's redemptive plan than the grace that remedies actual sins. There is also that Adamic depravity with which he was born. He knows that this carnal infection will vex him sorely. He knows that his "bend to sinning" will remain, unless it too is dealt with decisively. While still placing himself before God's throne, he rejoices in the knowledge that God's grace abounds *much more* than sin abounds. He invites the Holy Spirit to remove the last trace of depravity, to cleanse him through and through until his heart is pure and clean, to drive the nails until self-sovereignty has breathed its last breath. He further invites Jesus to ascend the throne of his life and become both Lord and Christ (cf. Acts 2:36). He rises from the place of prayer, assured that he has been set free from the law of sin and death, and that Christ now lives *and reigns* in him.

Everything in the preceding two paragraphs *can happen* within a split second of each other. The prayer could be as simple as "Lord, save me and sanctify me wholly!"

But this is a rare case indeed. As a practical matter, actual Christian experience *seldom does happen* that way. It is not that the Divine Physician cannot remedy both aspects of sin at the same time. Again I must insist, the issue here is not God's ability.<sup>228</sup> The reason for the sequence is more psychological in nature. As God's patients, persons generally do not come to Him for a cure for Adamic depravity on the first visit. That is because they usually do not realize the problem goes any deeper than the symptoms, until the symptoms have been treated first and afterward the illness flares up again.

But someone might object by saying, "If God knows we need a cure for both the symptoms and the disease itself, why then doesn't He go ahead and accomplish the complete cure 'on the first visit' whether we ask for it or not (or whether we know at that time or not)?" The obvious answer is that God doesn't save or sanctify anyone against his will, or

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<sup>228</sup> It is those who deny entire sanctification who are actually guilty of bringing God's ability into question.

until the conditions have been met! He does in us only what we ask for by faith.<sup>229</sup>

Having said all that, the chief reason we refer to entire sanctification as a second work of grace is because the Bible portrays it that way. The biblical evidence falls into two main categories:

- a. Explicit references to two distinct works of grace that should be identified as regeneration and entire sanctification respectively. Three examples will be cited:<sup>230</sup>
  - (1) Matthew 3:11 – “I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” Two distinct baptisms are clearly mentioned. One is associated with repentance; the other is associated with the Holy Spirit and fire. This corresponds precisely with the actual experience of the disciples.
  - (2) Titus 2:14 – “who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.” Redemption and purification are presented as distinct acts of God. The pairing of these two acts together by means of a coordinating conjunction buttresses this identification.

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<sup>229</sup> Theologians who view salvation through a monergistic lens see it differently. In this scheme of things, everything is the result of divine decree. A person is only saved by unconditional election. It is redundant, therefore, to say that there are no conditions to be met. In order for this to be true, however, we must throw out many biblical examples, such as that in Acts 16:31. Paul and Silas told the Philippian jailer, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.” If the monergists are right, Paul and Silas should have said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, *because you are already saved by unconditional election of God.*” But no, their words clearly imply that, “*Unless* you believe in the Lord Jesus, you will surely not be saved.” All the circumstances leading up to that moment were the workings of God’s prevenient grace, making the jailer’s faith possible. However, God would not impose salvation on the man against his will. He had to freely choose. Faith was a precondition of the jailer’s salvation, not a result of his salvation!

<sup>230</sup> Grider also lists Romans 5:1-5, 6:6; Ephesians 1:13, 5:25-27; and James 4:8. Cf. *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*, 381-385.

(3) 1 John 1:9 – “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” Forgiveness and purification are presented as distinct acts of God. The pairing of these two acts together parallels that found in Titus 2:14.

b. Implicit references to two works of grace. Again, three examples will be cited:<sup>231</sup>

- (1) The example of Jesus’ disciples. They left all to follow Jesus (Matthew 4:20). They confessed Him as the Messiah (Matthew 16:16). Their names were written in heaven (Luke 10:20). But they were not yet sanctified wholly when Jesus prayed for the same (John 17:17). They were not yet baptized with the Holy Spirit when Jesus urged them to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father (Acts 1:4-8). This actually happened in Acts 2:1-4. In Acts 15:8-9, Peter said it was at that time their hearts were purified by faith. It is abundantly clear that these men experienced two epochal works of grace.
- (2) The example of Paul. He was converted on the Road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-6). He was called “Brother” by Ananias (Acts 9:17), before he had been “filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 9:17). He was filled with the Holy Spirit on the Street called Straight (Acts 9:17-18).
- (3) The example of the Corinthians. They were initially sanctified (i.e., regenerated, 1:2). Paul called them “brothers” (1:10). They were babes in Christ (3:1). But they were still carnal instead of spiritual (i.e., entirely sanctified, 3:1-3).

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<sup>231</sup> See also the example of the Samaritans (Acts 8:12-17), Cornelius (Acts 10:1-2; 44-46), the Ephesians (Acts 19:1-7), and the example of the Thessalonians mentioned several times in the body of the present book. Paul praises the Thessalonians profusely for their authentic Christian faith from 1:1 to 3:9. From 3:10 to 5:28, he speaks of perfecting that which is lacking in their faith, and explicitly identifies it as **entire** sanctification (5:23). There is also the example of the Hebrews (6:1), who, already having experienced the foundation of repentance and faith in God that leads to Christian conversion, were admonished to go on from there to perfection.

5. You cited the Corinthians as an example. Paul calls them babes in Christ. Isn't that a good thing?

Yes. Babies are wonderful. However, no one wants a baby to remain a baby! Paul's problem with the Corinthians was not babyhood, but a *prolonged* babyhood. Paul's words indicate that they should have progressed beyond infancy by then. Entire sanctification would have removed the carnal-mindedness that stunted their growth in grace.

6. But doesn't God, in fact, give grace totally and freely at the outset (i.e., justification)? And doesn't that point out the danger (or, falseness) of a two-stage theory of salvation?

The first question is misleading because it insinuates that grace cannot be given "totally and freely" on more than one occasion.<sup>232</sup> Yes, God does give grace totally and freely at the time of regeneration/justification. But he also gives grace totally and freely at the time of entire sanctification. Support for two distinct works of grace comes from several sources:

- a. Biblical – this evidence, already given in answer to question number four above (though not in its entirety), is clear and decisive.
- b. Theological – the fact of the two-fold nature of sin expects a two-fold corresponding remedy.
- c. Psychological – this refers to the frame of mind with which we approach God for salvation. As a sinner, we come sensing our guilt and need of forgiveness (pardon) for actual sins. As a Christian, we come sensing our need for deliverance from sin as an inward condi-

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<sup>232</sup> This appears to be the view of Gerhard O. Forde. Op. cit., "A Lutheran Response" (to the Wesleyan View), *Christian Spirituality*, 119-122. He claims that God's free grace cannot fit into such a two-stage scheme. But Forde, being a Lutheran, apparently presupposes a monergistic framework. Consequently, the biblical evidence is ignored in favor of his own theological construct. He opposes a two-stage understanding because he must in order to be consistent with his tradition, not because it is unbiblical. It is unarguable, based on First Thessalonians, that the Thessalonians were already justified, but not yet entirely sanctified. Paul's stated objective is that he will be instrumental in "perfecting" what is lacking in their faith (3:10). Paul's specific prayer is that they will be presented to God "blameless in holiness" (3:13), and that God will sanctify them "entirely" (5:23). Contextually, all of this is clearly expected to occur as a second crisis experience in this life (cf. especially 5:24).

tion of the heart. It is unreasonable to think that the unregenerate would ordinarily be able to approach God with both frames of mind.

- d. Logical Analogy – in the same way that a medical patient ordinarily expects a cure for the symptoms and the root cause of a disease at separate times, or as two separate treatments. The root cause will require surgery or some kind of disinfecting agent. Other analogies could include marriage, smelting, weed-pulling, and cleansing (as opposed to mere whitewashing).
7. If a two-stage process of salvation is acceptable, then why not a three-stage? Or more?

The question is misleading, because there is a third stage, called glorification. At this time Christians are delivered from the environmental presence of sin and are safely in heaven forever! However, because the Bible does not call entirely sanctified Christians to another crisis experience *in this life (and because all Christians believe in the crisis experience of glorification)*, we generally speak only of the first two epochal works of grace.

8. But isn't it true that we are cleansed from all sin on a daily basis, even moment-by-moment? Couldn't one therefore argue that there are an unlimited number of stages?

Yes (to the first question), according to 1 John 1:7, there is a continuous cleansing (present tense) afforded by the blood of Christ, conditioned on walking in the light (also present tense). But this is not the same as the *crisis* cleansing from all unrighteousness (aorist tense) in 1 John 1:9. In this important verse, the second crisis cleansing (entire sanctification) is paired with the former crisis of forgiveness of sins, which is conditioned on confession. There are only two crisis cleansings in this life (regeneration and entire sanctification). Both are followed by continuous cleansing.

This should not be surprising. Engagement and marriage are specific events, both of which are followed by the absolute need for ongoing attention to the relationship. There is not an unending series of stages in *becoming* married. Instead, there is an unending series of stages in the life of *being* married.

Likewise in the Bible, we find the 120 being baptized with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:5; 2:4). This was a once-for-all

purification (cf. Acts 15:8-9). But they were also filled (“re-filled”) with the Spirit on subsequent occasions (e.g., Acts 4:31). This is like sterilizing a glass and filling it with pure water over and over again.

9. Doesn't the doctrine of entire sanctification imply that sin will be an impossibility afterward? Isn't it true that Wesleyans teach sinless perfection?

No, to both questions. This is one of the most common objections to the doctrine, and it is extremely unfortunate. A little careful thought will demonstrate the true nature of the grace that entirely sanctifies.

The question presupposes that original sin (Adamic depravity) is the only cause of actual sins, or the only source behind sinful choices, and that if it is eliminated the possibility of sinning will also be eliminated. This is obviously false, since Adam and Eve did not have this depravity before they sinned. The possibility of sin exists because we are free moral agents. Entire sanctification does not remove our free will any more than it removes our humanness. As long as we remain on earth,<sup>233</sup> the possibility of sin will exist. While it is true that the entirely sanctified person is far less likely to sin, he or she is certainly not above the possibility.

John Wesley did not teach sinless perfection, unless no more is meant by this than the fact that the atonement of Christ provides for complete salvation from sin in this life. Wesley avoided the term sinless perfection, because it implies a legal definition of sin (i.e., the perfect law, of which all fall short). Wesley taught that entirely sanctified Christians, in the strictly legal sense, are no different than any other Christian, in that they are “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus ... apart from observing the law” (Romans 3:23, 24, 28). He feared the use of the term sinless perfection would be misunderstood (to imply the impossibility of sinning). John Wesley believed and preached *Christian Perfection*. This is what he termed the experience of which the Bible frequently speaks (e.g., Genesis 17:1;

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<sup>233</sup> Technically, the correct way to say this is, “As long as probation has not ended, ...” Probation is that period of our lives when we are responsible for sin and therefore accountable to God for it. Mental incapacity may mark the end of probation in some cases, before death marks the end of physical life.

Job 1:1, 8; Matthew 5:48; 19:21; 2 Corinthians 7:1; 13:11; Ephesians 4:13; Colossians 1:28; 3:14; Hebrews 6:1; 10:14; James 1:4; 2:22; 3:2; 1 John 2:5; 4:12, 18).<sup>234</sup> We cannot simply ignore these references because we have an aversion to the word “perfect.” That there is such a state taught in the Bible cannot be denied. Exactly what is the content of this state is another matter. John Wesley went to great pains to clarify that Christian perfection is not absolute perfection, angelic perfection, or any such perfection that suggests one is freed from the presence of mistakes, infirmities, errors of judgment, and other residual effects of the fall, which cause us to come short of the perfect law. Therefore Wesley taught that Christian perfection is *perfect love* (1 John 4:17-18). He grounded the concept of Christian perfection in an *ethical definition of sin*. Such a definition means that regenerate persons are enabled to live above *voluntary* breaches of the known law of God, and that entirely sanctified persons are enabled to live above voluntary breaches of the perfect law of love. Wesley taught that Christian perfection is nothing more and nothing less than loving God with all one’s heart, soul, mind, and strength; and loving one’s neighbor as oneself. In his expositions, the term Christian perfection is essentially synonymous with the fullness of the Spirit, perfect love, purity of heart, circumcision of the heart, and entire sanctification. Wesley believed God’s grace made it *possible not to sin*, but not impossible to sin (as long as we remain on earth). This belief is true to the commands of Jesus (John 5:14; 8:11) and to the thought of the apostle John (1 John 2:1). Wesleyans today still avoid the term sinless perfection, because it leads to all sorts of needless mischief. In over forty-five years, I have never heard anyone teach it, preach it, or even infer it. The greater problem is that many Wesleyans (unfortunately) go so far as to avoid any term that includes the word perfection, because of the persistent hostility that it elicits. One wonders, however, if this animosity isn’t itself a manifestation of the sinful mind that is hostile to God (Romans 8:7). There is no need to fear anything the Bible teaches.

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<sup>234</sup> The author understands full well that the words in the original Hebrew and Greek have different semantic ranges, depending on the contexts. The present list is given only to illustrate that something called “perfection” is taught, sometimes even commanded, in the Bible.

10. If a person is entirely sanctified and later sins, does that mean he re-acquires the sinful nature?

No. There are two kinds of depravity: Adamic and acquired. Adamic depravity is inherited. Once it has been destroyed, it cannot be re-inherited.

Acquired depravity, which is cleansed in regeneration, is the “propensity to acts of sin that builds up in us because of the acts of sin we have committed. When an act of sin is done over and over, a momentum is built up. We find it easier and easier to do that act of sin, and we become more and more unconscionable about it.”<sup>235</sup> Since acts of sin are always possible because of free will, obviously acquired depravity can be re-acquired, along with the increasing propensity to sin that comes with it.

But even acquired depravity need not be re-acquired. If an entirely sanctified Christian sins, but runs quickly back to Christ for forgiveness, his relationship to God will remain intact. It is only a willful continuance in sin that causes any Christian (entirely sanctified or not) to forfeit his salvation and re-acquire depravity in any sense.

11. Can a person fall from the grace of entire sanctification without falling from the grace of regeneration? If an entirely sanctified person forfeits his salvation, does he have to re-experience two works of grace in order to be entirely sanctified again?

The question speaks to a possibility (falling from entire sanctification) I personally have never known to happen. And even if it does sometimes happen, it must be extremely rare and barely worth considering. As C. W. Ruth said regarding entire sanctification, “While the possibility of backsliding is not removed, the liability of backsliding is reduced to a minimum.”<sup>236</sup>

Nevertheless, I will attempt an answer. It seems illogical to me to think a person could fall from entire sanctification without also falling from regeneration. How would a person fall from entire sanctification only? One theoretical possibility is by withdrawing his complete consecra-

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<sup>235</sup> Grider, *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*, 363-364.

<sup>236</sup> Cited by Grider, *Ibid.*, 411.

tion? Let us examine three scenarios. First, if the consecration became less than complete but the person had not done so deliberately or knowingly, that would not be a loss of entire sanctification because this would not constitute willful transgression (sin). As soon as the person became aware of his failure, he should simply yield back to God that part of his consecration that he had unwittingly withdrawn. Second, if the person had done so deliberately or knowingly, then that would be willful transgression. But even here the person could quickly repent and run back to Christ for cleansing and thereby maintain the integrity of his experience. So that would also not be a loss of entire sanctification.<sup>237</sup> Third, if the person had done so deliberately and knowingly, and stubbornly persisted in it, then that would be a loss of both entire sanctification and regeneration—complete backsliding. Thus we can say that only a willful continuance in sin would cause a person to forfeit either entire sanctification or regeneration. In either case, therefore, a person would fall into a backslidden state of alienation from God. Regardless of the backslider's erstwhile state of grace, the minimum requirement for restoration is to "repent or perish."

If the backslider had been entirely sanctified previously, he would also have to fully re-consecrate himself (having willfully withdrawn his consecration as part of his having willfully fallen back into actual sin). But re-consecrating oneself is not the same thing as being entirely sanctified again, since entire sanctification involves the cleansing of Adamic depravity, which cannot be re-acquired. In this case, a backslider who repented of his sin would once again be washed clean of his "re-acquired depravity." It seems to me that, with a full re-consecration of himself to the lordship of Christ, he would return to his entirely sanctified state, because he would once again be fully cleansed of all sin. Therefore, in my opinion, a person would never have to re-experience both works of grace.

A strong word of caution is in order here. It is a perilous thing to fall from grace, because to do so a person must turn his back on light, yield to temptation, willfully transgress, and stubbornly continue in that sin.

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<sup>237</sup> What the person in the second scenario could not do is presume that this could happen over and over with impunity.

While it is true that God's mercy is everlasting and He is willing to reclaim backsliders, it is almost impossible to imagine that falling from grace and later being restored could happen more than once, because to do so would require attitudes and practices associated with being reprobate (i.e., callous, unfeeling, having no sensitivity to the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit). I think this is why David, in his prayer for reclamation, expressed such deep remorse for his sin and cried out, "Do not ... take your Holy Spirit from me!" (Psalm 51:11). He had been an eyewitness to Saul's tragic fall from grace, and knew that the Spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul (1 Samuel 16:14). David instinctively knew that the Spirit's departure spelled doom. Therefore, he was at pains to nurture his sensitivity to the Holy Spirit.

12. You used the phrase "maintain the integrity of his experience." Can you elaborate?

Sin is always deadly (cf. Romans 6:23). It always separates us from God. But grace is greater than our sin (cf. Romans 5:20). Forgiving grace is always given when a person humbly and contritely repents and confesses his sin. Grace reconciles us to God. Therefore, if a saved person sins and quickly repents and confesses it (instead of persisting in the error), the relationship is so soon restored that its integrity is maintained. Sin caused severance, but the rift was so quickly repaired that no *alienation* occurred. Such a person is "walking in the light" (cf. 1 John 1:7), and therefore experiences ongoing fellowship with God and the continuous cleansing provided by the blood of Christ. Such a person is meeting the condition required to receive forgiveness (cf. 1 John 1:9). All of this is equally true of an entirely sanctified person who sins.

On the other hand, the saved and/or entirely sanctified person who sins and persists in his sin creates a rift in the relationship that alienates him from God. In this case the integrity of the experience is destroyed by sin. Even here, however, God's grace is sufficient to restore a person to his former state of grace, if the person does not presume the grace of God is given cheaply. Such presumption is inconsistent with true repentance. There is no such thing as true repentance without the forsaking of sin. "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6).

To illustrate, let us again turn to the marriage analogy. It is possible to “sin” against a spouse (e.g., lying about him or her to cast oneself in a more favorable light, or publicly humiliating him or her, or betraying a confidence, etc.), but also possible to immediately awaken to this egregious error and turn to plead sincerely for forgiveness. In a case like this, when that forgiveness is graciously given, the integrity of the relationship is maintained even though it was momentarily shattered.

13. Doesn't the common experience of all human beings indicate that we are hopelessly locked into a state of constant sin as long as we remain in the flesh? And doesn't that therefore prove that entire sanctification is unrealistic, “pie-in-the-sky” theology?

No, to both questions. The questions assume that experience carries more authority than Scripture. They also assume a fact not in evidence. Let us deal with these points in turn. First of all, even if it could be proved that all human beings, regardless of the degree of grace they claim to have received, are fixed in a state of constant sin, that by itself would not show the doctrine of entire sanctification to be in error. Since the Bible teaches it is an experience to be received and a present state to be entered into, we must claim that as the highest authority for our faith and practice. If no one walked in the light of holiness, it would still be the biblical standard.

Second, the belief that all human beings are locked into a state of constant sin is an assumption, not a fact. The Bible certainly does not support that notion (cf. e.g., 1 John 3:6, 9; 5:18). Indeed, the Bible considers such a belief utterly preposterous for any Christian, entirely sanctified or not.<sup>238</sup> Even a cursory reading of the verses just cited will

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<sup>238</sup> This last point is the best evidence that using a legal definition of sin is a serious error. A legal definition of sin is one that defines sin as any deviation whatsoever from the perfect standard of absolute righteousness. In that case, knowledge, responsibility, and the exercise of the will are irrelevant. Here's the crucial point: If it is true that “no one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God” (1 John 3:9); then it is impossible to be biblical while still maintaining that all human beings (including Christians) remain in a state of constant sin. A legal definition of sin and the plain teachings of Scripture (especially 1 John 3:9) are hopelessly irreconcilable. Therefore, since we cannot discard the plain teachings of Scripture, a legal definition of sin must be discarded.

force an intellectually honest interpreter to abandon the notion of unavoidable constant sin. But not only that, the true experience of every child of God is that they have forsaken sin. Beyond that, for those multitudes who know the grace of entire sanctification, it is their experience that God has given them a glorious freedom from sin. Willful acts of sin are still possible, but such acts of sin are much less probable. Far from being pie-in-the-sky, entire sanctification is the normal state (ethical holiness) for which we were designed.

14. But isn't it true that the Bible teaches that all sin daily (i.e., that continuing to sin is unavoidable)?

Emphatically, No! The Bible does, of course, teach that all *have* sinned (e.g. Romans 3:23). And the Bible teaches that all fall short of the perfect standard of righteousness. Only Jesus Christ was perfectly sinless. He not only did not sin, but also never failed to fully measure up to God's righteous standards in any way whatsoever.

Behind the question is a bad definition of sin. If one employs a legal definition of sin, so that every failure to measure up to God's perfect standard of righteousness (a perfect keeping of the letter of the law in total) is sin, then it is obviously true that all sin daily. But this cannot be the proper biblical definition of sin.<sup>239</sup> Jesus implied that sinning can be discontinued (John 5:14; 8:11). Paul implied the same thing (1 Corinthians 15:34). Paul explicitly says a Christian cannot continue sinning (Romans 6:1-2). No less than five times John says a Christian does not or cannot continue sinning (1 John 3:6 [2], 9 [2]; 5:18). John says whoever continues to sin is of the devil (1 John 3:8). John says he wrote his epistle for the expressed purpose "so that you will not sin" (1 John 2:1). This is decisive biblical testimony.

1 John 1:8 ("If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us") is often understood to contradict what I am saying, but this is decidedly not the case for several reasons. First, the overwhelming emphasis of the epistle is just the opposite, as pointed out in the previous paragraph. One verse does not annul the plain

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<sup>239</sup> See W. T. Purkiser, *Conflicting Concepts of Holiness* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1953), 45-62, for a thorough explanation why the legal definition is not biblical.

teaching of many verses. Second, the verses that sandwich 1:8 clearly point to the opposite emphasis. Verse seven speaks of a continuous cleansing from *all* sin afforded by the blood of Christ. Verse nine speaks of a crisis cleansing from *all* unrighteousness. Within the framework of the immediate context, John cannot be saying that a person can be cleansed from all sin in one breath and say that no one is without sin in the next breath. Third, verse eight refers to a hypothetical claim that John anticipates coming from readers who were being influenced by incipient Gnosticism. The anticipated claim was not so much to be without sin *at the present time* (though that would be also be true), but to be without sin *to begin with*. Based on what he said in verse seven, John anticipates that the Gnostically-inclined person will object by claiming to have no sin (inward sin) to be cleansed from. This is the error that he identifies as self-deception and devoid of the truth, not the idea that continuing to sin is unavoidable.

15. I'm still not convinced. I can accept the fact that a Christian will forsake sins such as murder, adultery, and theft, but when you think about all the possible ways we can sin, especially sins of the heart (e.g., greed, malice, impure thoughts, etc.) and sins of omission (e.g., prayerlessness, ingratitude, etc.), I just can't believe any person can go through a day without sinning in some sense or measure. How do you respond to this?

It seems to me that your difficulty stems from two things: the inherent pessimism of your presuppositions, combined with a faulty definition of sin and understanding of the biblical standard. The Bible gives us a profound optimism concerning the possibilities of grace in this world. We read statements such as, "purifies us from all sin," "purify us from all unrighteousness," "go and sin no more," "set free from sin," "whoever is born of God will not continue to sin," "whoever continues to sin is of the devil," etc. You either take these claims at face value and believe them, or you do not.

As I have said before, if you include human error and infirmity in your definition of sin, then you are right—none of us will go through a day without transgressing. Even the most holy person falls short of God's glory and needs justifying grace continually for that reason. But since the Bible presents freedom from sin as a present possibility, such a legal definition of sin is theologically unsound. Many sanctified per-

sons could testify, humbly, that they have not knowingly and willfully transgressed God's law *today*, either outwardly or inwardly, by either commission or omission.

16. I've always heard that all Christians must continue to struggle with the sinful nature their whole life. Isn't this obviously true?

No. Though it is widely taught and believed in Christian circles, this idea is absolutely false. The error here involves confusing the human nature with the sinful nature. If you are looking for something obvious, it is this – that all Christians continue to struggle with their humanness, and with the daily temptations of the devil.

17. What is the difference?

The sinful nature (or, Adamic depravity) is that corruption of our moral nature with which we were all born. As long as we have it, we have a *propensity* to sin. This can be cleansed! This moral effect of the fall is not endemic to humanness (or inextricably part of what constitutes being human), for Adam and Eve did not have it prior to their fall, and Jesus did not have it. It is God's great purpose in Christ to deliver us from it here and now, and restore us to a right relationship with him in the fullest possible earthly sense!

The residual effects of the fall are part and parcel of being human. That is, we will continue to struggle with aging, infirmity, physical and mental errors, lapses in judgment, emotional distresses, etc. Moreover, since Satan is not yet bound in the abyss or cast into the lake of fire, we will continue to face his constant efforts to kill, steal, and destroy. Therefore, we must be ever vigilant, no matter how much grace we have received. One can experience the residual effects of the fall and be mercilessly bombarded by Satan's temptations, and yet have no propensity to sin. Possibility of sinning—yes. Propensity to sin? For the entirely sanctified—no!

18. Is entire sanctification in this life necessary to make it to heaven?

It depends on what one means by this question. In a primary sense, the answer to the question is No. A person is either saved or he isn't! The thief on the cross went to heaven only minutes after receiving Jesus as his Savior. He had the sanctification that comes with regeneration—initial sanctification. It is the first work of grace, Christian conversion, that changes a person's eternal destiny. In cases such as the

thief on the cross or someone who does not have light on entire sanctification, sanctification becomes entire at the time of death, but only because *by the very nature of those cases*, entire sanctification could not have happened sooner.

However, a word of caution should be issued here. The Bible regards “walking in the light” as a condition of continued fellowship and cleansing (1 John 1:7), and therefore there is a danger that willful neglect or rejection of this truth, if stubbornly persisted in, will not only frustrate the grace of entire sanctification from becoming actualized in a Christian’s life, but could also cause him to forfeit the grace of regeneration, and ultimately be eternally lost.<sup>240</sup>

Some people, like the thief on the cross, or one who gets saved on a death-bed, or one who dies before they learn about entire sanctification and understand its importance, will go to heaven on the basis of the holiness of regeneration, and on the justification (positional holiness) that is concomitant with it. It may be true that most of the population of heaven will consist of this category. Nevertheless, it is also true that others who have the privilege of greater enlightenment will need the grace of entire sanctification, because it will have been necessary to live in willful disobedience to God to be without this work of grace. For one person regeneration will be sufficient to go to heaven (entire sanctification occurring at death); for another entire sanctification in this life may be necessary. In either case, the individual must have no trace of impurity in order to enter heaven (Revelation 21:27).

19. In what sense, then, is entire sanctification necessary? Why should the experience be sought? Why is it important? Why should we teach it and preach it?

It is necessary because God wills it and calls us to it. It is necessary because it is our divinely ordained destiny—fully ethical holiness. It is necessary because, as Richard S. Taylor says, “The least acceptable level of holiness is eagerness for the most available.”<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> See Article X, section 14, in *op. cit.*, *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene*, 31.

<sup>241</sup> *Op. cit.*, *What Every Christian Ought to Know*, 100.

Moreover, as stated in answer to the previous question, some people will have to live in willful disobedience to God to be without this work of grace. Entire sanctification is a blessed privilege. Why would anyone deliberately live beneath his privileges? Sanctifying grace enables Christians to enter into a new phase of dynamic growth and empowers them to be more effective witnesses for Christ. Without it individual Christians will exhibit a tendency toward worldliness, spiritual fervor will vacillate accordingly, and spiritual power will atrophy; and the church will be noticeably less effective in fulfilling its mission.

20. Doesn't the miserable failure of some who have testified to the experience prove that the ideal is too lofty?

No. Absolutely not. Scripture is the final authority, not experience. You are safe if you fix your eyes on Christ (cf. Hebrews 12:2) and his holy Word. You are in peril if you keep your eyes on people, no matter how holy they may be or profess to be. It is regrettable that some people do not live up to their profession, but to pass judgment on the genuineness of a doctrine on this basis alone would be a flawed procedure. Some people have a better theology than they live, while others live better than their theology. The biblical ideal is for theology and life to match each other. The best biblical evidence for this is from Ephesians. The first three chapters of Ephesians form one of the most glorious doctrinal expressions to be found anywhere in Holy Scripture. God's call is elevated to majestic heights, concluding with Paul's prayer for the Ephesians to "be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God" (3:19). Then in 4:1, Paul begins a hortatory section that also fills three chapters. Paul said, "I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received" (4:1). The Greek word for worthy means "as worthy as," and is positioned as a link between the words "live a life" and "the calling you have received." The imagery is that of a set of scales, with the calling on one side and the life on the other. The latter should be as worthy as ("on a par with," "a perfect match with," "equal to") the former.

The specific calling the Ephesians received was to "be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God" (3:19). Their matching life would be worthy if they reached maturity, "attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (4:13). These parallel descriptions appear on either side of the proverbial scales, and indicate that the twin aspects of

doctrine and practice should be balanced. If the Ephesians were filled with the Holy Spirit (5:18), they would fulfill their glorious calling. If they were holy and blameless, without any stain or wrinkle or blemish (5:27), that would be the same as being filled to the measure of all the fullness of God or attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. The standard of the glorious and majestic call must not be lowered just because they do not live it. By the same token, neither can the standard of actual holy living be lowered because the call is thought to be too lofty an ideal!

21. But do not the extravagant claims associated with the doctrine of entire sanctification only set people up for an inevitable disappointment?

No, unless the claims go beyond what the Bible teaches. Only then are the claims “extravagant.” If entire sanctification is taught within truly biblical parameters, there will be no disappointment. How can there be any disappointment with results of entire sanctification if it is God’s will, God has provided for it, and God expects us to experience it? We should be more concerned with Christians not obtaining entire sanctification than we are with them obtaining it and then being disappointed because it didn’t measure up to their expectations. Consider what entire sanctification does. The propensity to sin is removed, the heart is made perfect in love, and Christ reigns in us through the power of his Holy Spirit. Surely HE will measure up to our expectations! If these claims are too extravagant, then we might as well discard our Bibles, for these are the biblical claims.

22. John Wesley said, “There is no holiness without social holiness.” What is meant by this?

I think this was Wesley’s way of saying that holiness in theory without holiness in action is not true holiness. Ephesians 4:24 refers to “true holiness,” which implies that there is such a thing as false holiness (or imitation, or counterfeit holiness). One example of false holiness is the attempt to dichotomize between doctrine and life. You can’t have holiness in theory without holiness in practice, and you can’t have holiness in practice without holiness in theory. As with a previous question, call and life must match. Good doctrine without good works is hypocrisy, a sort of empty orthodoxy. Good works without good doctrine is fanaticism, an enthusiastic heresy.

At various times in this study I have referred to entire sanctification as a state. This is very important. But it is also important that entire sanctification be a life. Think of it this way: Entire sanctification is both a noun and a verb.

23. You say a person receives a pure heart at the time of entire sanctification, but I'm skeptical about the possibility of ever obtaining a pure heart in this world. What exactly do you mean by a "pure heart"?

Your skepticism probably arises from the fact that purity is absolute in nature. That is to say, something less than 100 percent pure is not truly pure. Something is pure only if every trace of impurity has been purged. A pure heart, therefore, is one that has been cleansed of all sin. The Bible explicitly refers to this possibility in 1 John 1:7 and 1:9, and other places.

G. A. McLaughlin defines it with simplicity, "A clean heart is one that has nothing in it that ought not to be there ... A clean heart, in other words, is a heart that is the home of every good affection and has none of the evil affections in it."<sup>242</sup> David cried out to God, "Create in me a clean heart" (Psalm 51:10). "It is right, therefore, to pray for a clean heart. And if it be right to pray for a clean heart, it surely must be right to obtain it."<sup>243</sup>

Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God" (Matthew 5:8). If Jesus only had in mind a hypothetical group of people, then we might as well not believe anything in the Bible. You must stop being skeptical about this, and start believing. Meet the conditions and God will give you a pure heart, one that loves God with all your being, loves your neighbor as yourself, and is unmixed with evil affections.

24. Are there people who say they do not believe in entire sanctification in this life (or whose theological tradition rejects the notion of entire sanctification in this life) yet are, in fact, entirely sanctified?

Yes, I'm sure there are millions who fit this category—persons with the pure heart described in the previous answer. It's hard for me to imagine Mother Teresa any other way. It is well known across all

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<sup>242</sup> G. A. McLaughlin, *A Clean Heart* (Salem, Ohio: Schmul Publishing, 1986), 7.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

denominational boundaries how she yielded her life completely to the lordship of Christ, giving herself sacrificially for the poor and needy in India. She is one notable example of a Catholic whose life was poured out like a drink offering in entire devotion to God. Surely this had to be the result of entire sanctification.

It's also hard for me to imagine someone like the late Bill Bright any other way. Dr. Bright spoke and wrote often about being "a slave of Jesus Christ." He also spoke often about the need to be filled with the Spirit, and live a commensurately holy life. He himself was exemplary and above reproach in this regard. Through the organization he and his wife Vonette founded (Campus Crusade for Christ), he may be responsible for either directly or indirectly leading more souls to Christ than any other person in recent history, with the possible exception of Billy Graham.

Another example might be many of the so-called mystics or contemplatives down through the centuries of church history. According to E. Glenn Hinson, "Contemplation has to do with ... loving attentiveness to God."<sup>244</sup> Contemplatives transcend denominational and theological boundaries.<sup>245</sup> This is one of the attractive features of the contemplative way. It is not a deeply entrenched theological provincialism. Hinson identifies the goal of contemplation as "union with God."<sup>246</sup> The key to attaining this goal is purity of heart.<sup>247</sup> But how do we become pure in heart? Hinson answers with a series of injunctions: "surrender, abandon ourselves, submit, yield, humble ourselves, give ourselves over to God."<sup>248</sup> Then, sounding very much like a person who believes in entire sanctification, Hinson (a Southern Baptist) hastens to add, "However ... we cannot transform the impure into the pure, the sinful into the saintly, the unlovely into the lovely. God alone

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<sup>244</sup> E. Glenn Hinson, "The Contemplative View," in *Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification*, ed. Donald L. Alexander (Downer's Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1988), 172.

<sup>245</sup> Sinclair B. Ferguson, "A Reformed Response" [to "The Contemplative View"], *Ibid.*, 193.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*

can do that. God's love alone can perform the miracle required. If we surrender, love will come in and cleanse and purify and transform."<sup>249</sup>

Truth crosses all denominational and other manmade boundaries. God knows if a Christian's consecration is complete, and if the work is done. I will leave it to him to judge. My responsibility is to walk in the light of Scripture. The Scripture is the final authority for determining what I should believe and practice, and the Scripture teaches entire sanctification.

25. These are outstanding examples, but I am also from a doctrinal tradition other than Wesleyan-holiness, and I will surely never reach the level of these great Christians. Can I, too, be entirely sanctified?

Yes, of course. You may remain obscure in the eyes of the world, but in the eyes of God it makes no difference. Biblical truth is for every Christian. "It is God's will that you should be sanctified" (1 Thessalonians 4:3). If you become entirely sanctified and live the holy life in your sphere of influence, it will be just as significant in heaven as those who were well known on earth.

26. Should a person testify to the experience of entire sanctification?

There is no good reason not to, assuming its verity. No one should ever testify to something they don't know assuredly. Assurance in the Bible (and in the Wesleyan tradition) always comes by means of the witness of the Holy Spirit. John Wesley urged the early Methodists to testify to the experience, but advised them "not to speak of it to them that know not God, nor to others, without some particular reason."<sup>250</sup> As with any Christian testimony, the witness should share what God has done in a spirit of humility and gratitude. The testimony should compellingly draw *awakened* sinners to the "fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel's veins, [where they may plunge] beneath that flood [and] lose all their guilty stains."<sup>251</sup> The testimony should compellingly draw Christians to the same fountain for cleansing from all inward sin. In the most winsome way possible, humbly share what God has done in you.

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<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

<sup>250</sup> Cited by Steve DeNeff, *Whatever Became of Holiness* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 1996), 88.

<sup>251</sup> Lyrics from a hymn by William Cowper (1771).

Don't talk down to people. Keep it short and sweet. Be bold, but don't claim more for the experience than the Bible claims.

27. Can a child be entirely sanctified?

Yes, although we should not necessarily expect it to be common. We certainly should not press it upon them or urge them to testify to it if they do not understand it or the implications of it. If a regenerate child has a particularly keen spiritual acumen and possesses a basic understanding of what entire sanctification is, why it is important, how to meet the conditions, and how to receive it by faith; then there is no reason why he or she cannot be entirely sanctified.

In one sense, a child is a good candidate because he is more apt to be humble, sensitive to the Holy Spirit, sensitive to his need, and willing to act in faith.

In another sense, until a child is able to separate the concrete reality of actual sin from the more abstract notion of "an inward depravity," he is not a good candidate. With proper spiritual instruction this will come in time, possibly during childhood but perhaps well into adulthood.

In church youth camps, the subject of entire sanctification can effectively be preached. But, in my judgment, one is being overzealous if his stated goal is to end the camp with 100% of the campers testifying to being "saved and sanctified." Peer pressure and psycho-social expectations could cause some young people to testify to an experience before they are ready, or possibly before they even understand what they are testifying to. They may believe they are entirely sanctified when they are not.

28. Is it necessary for me to understand all about entire sanctification before I can be entirely sanctified?

No. No one understands everything there is to know about entire sanctification. A basic understanding is sufficient, just as it is when coming to Christ for regeneration.

29. What, then, is necessary for me to understand? Can you boil it down to one or two things?

You need to understand that the target of sanctifying grace is your sinful *condition*, or Adamic depravity (what you were born with). Such cleansing is coextensive with the impartation of perfect love. Briefly

stated, there is both a subtraction of the unholy and an addition of the holy. Beyond this, you need to understand that sanctifying grace is received by faith when you consecrate yourself wholly to God. If you understand this much, you can be entirely sanctified.

30. What is mortification? Is mortification the same as entire sanctification? If not, how are they related?

Mortification is not the same as entire sanctification. Mortification is self-cleansing, the putting to death of the works of the flesh. It is prerequisite to entire sanctification as an integral part of making a complete consecration. It is analogous to the role of repentance in relation to regeneration. Repentance authenticates one's faith to be saved. Mortification or consecration authenticates one's faith to be sanctified wholly.

Let us be careful to put this in proper perspective. The framework of covenantal synergism is evident here. Mortification is a human work, though the ability to do it is the result of prevenient grace. That is, God enables us to mortify the flesh. Entire sanctification, on the other hand, is the work of God alone. Theoretically, we could mortify till we are blue in the face and not be entirely sanctified. We are only sanctified entirely when God sees that the condition of faith has been met and *he does the work*.

31. Does mortification have a role after one has been entirely sanctified?

Yes, though the precise nature of it differs. The entirely sanctified, like everyone else, are still on probation. They are not invulnerable. Paul urged the Romans to "make no provision for the flesh" (13:14, KJV). But the entirely sanctified have been cleansed of Adamic depravity, and therefore will not have to mortify fleshly desires arising from it. Instead, mortification for them will take the form of deliberate avoidance of anything that could cause one to stumble, or anything that would be a temptation to sin. Remember, one does not need a sinful nature to be grievously tempted! For example, if, in his past, the entirely sanctified person found drunkenness to be a besetting sin, then he will carefully avoid any situation that might tempt him to return to that scourge. The wise man said, "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life" (Proverbs 4:23). In a context that speaks explicitly of entire sanctification, Paul warned, "Avoid every kind of

evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:22, “avoid the very appearance of evil,” KJV).

32. Are there particular vulnerabilities to which even the entirely sanctified should be especially sensitive?

The apostle Paul seemed to be especially sensitive to the Thessalonians’ need to avoid sexual immorality (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:3-6). Sexual interest is a normal and natural part of our God-created humanness. For this reason, the devil is very successful in perverting it to bring about his evil purposes, particularly in light of the fact that modern civilization has slid far down this slope. Even the entirely sanctified are hard-pressed to avoid the ubiquitous sexual images plastered before society’s eyes. The devil’s constant barrage means all Christians must be continually vigilant against impure thoughts.

Individuals must examine their own hearts, and understand where their particular vulnerabilities may lie. They will vary from person to person. The Spirit knows, and he will help us with our unique needs and infirmities.

33. It seems to me that such an experience could become a source of pride. Is there a danger of spiritual elitism among those who embrace the doctrine and experience of entire sanctification?

Not really, because those who are truly sanctified wholly are well aware of this point ⇒ entire sanctification is the gracious work of God alone. Entirely sanctified persons recognize their unworthiness. Deliberately elitist attitudes and behaviors would be clear evidence that a person has not experienced entire sanctification. Holy people are marked by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). These are traits of humble people, not prideful. If you encounter people with an obnoxiously elitist mentality (such as those who proudly boast that they haven’t sinned for years),<sup>252</sup> they are probably not entirely sanctified

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<sup>252</sup> I have met people whose lives and fruit evidenced such an advanced level of maturity in the state of holiness, that I would not have doubted that they had not sinned for years. Instead, I would have thought that they had found the secret of abiding in the glorious presence of God on a continual basis. But these people would be the last to ever so boast. If a person boasted of having not sinned for a

people. It is possible to have a pure heart and unwittingly exhibit elitism, but impossible to have a pure heart and *deliberately* exhibit elitism. Entire sanctification removes the carnal nature we *inherited*. It does not immediately remove traits, biases, and tendencies that we have *acquired* since birth as a result of our environment, upbringing, or personality. Proper growth in grace will eventually eliminate whatever we have acquired in these areas that is inconsistent with holiness.

34. Is there a danger of minimizing the importance of Christian conversion—the first epochal work of grace, by emphasizing so strongly the importance of entire sanctification—the second epochal work of grace?

Yes, that is a danger. However, if the doctrines are correctly taught, that danger will disappear. George Croft Cell said, “The genius of the Wesleyan teaching is that it neither confounds nor divorces justification and sanctification but places ‘equal stress upon the one and the other.’”<sup>253</sup> Entire sanctification should be urged upon Christians in the same way it was urged upon Christians in the Bible. It is God’s will. It is God’s high calling. A child of God should be eager to embrace fully sanctifying grace as the gift of the Holy Spirit from a loving Father, even more so than a child would eagerly embrace a gift from a loving earthly parent (cf. Luke 11:13). Afterward, the entirely sanctified will be the ones who most eagerly dedicate themselves to evangelism, which is primarily an emphasis on Christian conversion. Here is the point: the more Christians who experience entire sanctification, the greater will be the burden for the lost, and consequently, the greater will be the emphasis on Christian conversion because of evangelistic efforts. A proper emphasis on each creates a cyclical effect. Compelling Christians to be entirely sanctified leads to a greater emphasis on

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specified long period of time, my first instinct would be to doubt it, because boasting would be out-of-character for anyone who had received wholly sanctifying grace—the grace that delivers from sin. If a long period of sinlessness had been true for the hypothetical boaster, he would not have become the hypothetical boaster! More than anyone else, he would know that only “by the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Corinthians 15:10); and that he has nothing to boast about except “the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Galatians 6:14).

<sup>253</sup> Cited by William M. Greathouse, op. cit., *From the Apostles to Wesley*, 108.

and a greater likelihood of successful evangelism. Successful evangelism in turn leads to more Christians who need to be entirely sanctified.

35. Is the doctrine of entire sanctification a theological provincialism?

In some ways, yes, but only because this biblical truth has been neglected by so many branches of Christendom. Historically, it is not. Entire sanctification has become a distinctive doctrine of the Wesleyan tradition only because of its neglect by other traditions. It should not be a provincial doctrine, because it is a biblical doctrine. Every Christian group should be teaching it, preaching it, and urging it upon their constituents. Of all the possible doctrinal emphases that one might have, what could be better than holiness of heart and life? There is nothing in the Bible more emphatic than this.

36. If entire sanctification is indeed “entire,” then where is the need for growth? At that point, hasn’t the Christian reached the highest level of grace possible in this life?

As stated previously, the question confuses categories. Entire sanctification is a qualitative state denoted by the term “purity of heart.” Growth, on the other hand, is a quantitative process. If one is already pure in heart, he cannot become “more pure.” One can, however, become more mature, more cultured, more experienced, better informed, more seasoned, etc. No one is more aware of the need for growth, more hungry and thirsty for growth, or more dynamically equipped for growth, than an entirely sanctified person.

The Bible uses the metaphor of marriage in connection with entire sanctification (Ephesians 5:25-27). This is an apt illustration. At the time of the wedding, a person is entirely married. The next day the person is still entirely married. Assuming there is no divorce and both parties are still living, fifty years later they are still entirely married. But no one in his right mind would argue that there was no growth that occurred within the state of matrimony. They do not become more married, but they do become more mature.

Another point can be made in connection with the metaphor of marriage. At the time when a suitor proposes marriage, he may say to the one who is the object of his affection, “I love you with all my heart.”

And yes, it is possible to know that you do love to that degree (though some express doubt).<sup>254</sup> She may respond in kind. On their wedding day, they will say the same thing, and it will still be true, even though love has increased. Fifty years later, they will say the same thing, and it will still be true, even though love has increased even more. The quality of the love was complete in each case, but the quantity of the love continued to increase as the capacity of the heart for love continued to enlarge. Entire sanctification is indeed the highest level of grace possible in this life, but there is no limit to the growth that can occur within this state of grace.

37. Should an entirely sanctified Christian confess sins?

Anyone who has sinned **must** confess it. No one should be quicker to confess a sin than an entirely sanctified Christian. By the very nature of the case, however, it should be a rare occurrence when this is necessary. Let me explain. According to the Bible, if a person does not discontinue sinning, he has not truly been born of God. Even a regenerate person should not have to confess sins frequently, much less an entirely sanctified person. No matter how difficult a pill that may be for some folks to swallow, it is the uncompromising teaching of the New Testament (cf. especially Romans 6:1-2; 1 John 3:6, 9; 5:18). The apostles Paul and John made no allowance for a sinning religion (or what I've heard some today refer to as constant sin, or sinning in word, thought, and deed every day).

A brief exposition of 1 John 2:1 should suffice.

“My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.”

This verse is key to understanding the first epistle of John, because John states his purpose. His purpose is that they will *not sin*. As W. T. Purkiser observes, this stated purpose “presupposes such a life to be possible and expected. There is no allowance for sin in the Christian life. But if it should occur, there is provision for it. Even the provision,

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<sup>254</sup> Jesus indicates that a willingness to lay down one's life for another is the greatest kind of love (John 15:13). Therefore, we can say that someone willing to die for another loves with all his heart.

however, acknowledges the standard. 'If anybody does sin' is not the same as 'When we sin.'"<sup>255</sup>

Dr. Samuel Young elaborates: "But what does the Christian do who is overtaken in a sin? He turns to God quickly for forgiveness and help... John wrote clearly at this point... (1 John 2:1). This is not a provision for a sinning religion; rather, it is a provision for the cure for sin. John points out that Jesus is the atoning Sacrifice for our sins. He also reveals that what he had written he had done so to keep them from sinning. A man cannot sin every day and repent every night. He will either lose his sincerity (for repentance involves a break with sin) or his sanity (for a man cannot play with his own mind in the turnabout on sin). The whole purpose of God is the gift and death of his Son to save us from our sins."<sup>256</sup>

John maintains the proper tension between twin facts:

- a. Christ appeared to take away our sins (3:5), to destroy the devil's work (3:8). Therefore those who are born of God cannot go on sinning (3:6, 9; 5:18).
- b. The possibility of sinning still exists (2:1). Therefore sin should be confessed if it occurs (1:9; 2:1).<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> Op. cit., *Exploring Christian Holiness*, vol. 1, 223-224.

<sup>256</sup> Cited by W. T. Purkiser, *Ibid.*, 224.

<sup>257</sup> There must be a clear sense in the mind of the confessor that the sin being confessed was willfully and knowingly committed. It is not necessarily a sign of humility to say every day, "Lord, forgive me of my many sins today," as a blanket protection for all so-called sins (sins of ignorance, unwitting sins of omission and commission, every passing thought, every misspoken word, every deed that unintentionally fell short of perfect righteousness), including willful ones. In fact, such a practice could include the sin of presumption (i.e., presuming that God will indefinitely forgive willful sin not accompanied by true repentance), in which case persons are in the curious position of sinning at the same time they are confessing. True repentance implies the forsaking of sin in godly contrition. However, some people seem to think this kind of daily confession is the safe play in our relationship with God, because they begin with the doctrinal assumption that humans are in a state of constant sin, even Christians. If true, this would require the rather absurd necessity of being in a state of continual confession because of the simultaneous state of constant sin. The Bible admonishes us to "pray without ceasing," but it does not tell us to "confess without ceasing." Biblical thought would consider such an idea ridiculous, for the very reason just

38. Is an entirely sanctified person eternally secure?

Conditionally, yes! Unconditionally, no! Though it is widely believed and tirelessly taught by many Bible teachers, there is no such thing as unconditional security at any level of Christian experience before glorification. In fact, unconditional security is impossible. Logically, it is absurd to say that a person is unconditionally secure after either conversion or entire sanctification, because such a notion implies that conversion or entire sanctification destroys free will and marks the end of probation.<sup>258</sup>

The only logical way to embrace the notion of unconditional security is to embrace a philosophical foundation of monergism. Monergism, by definition, views an activity as wholly one-sided. Monergism means that God is the only actor in the drama of redemption. Human beings are elected, saved, and preserved—all as totally passive agents and apart from their free consent. In order to be consistent and logical, an advocate of this construct must say that recipients of salvation had no free choice or response in the matter of obtaining salvation in the first place. The minute you say a person has free will and has some responsibility in the matter of his own salvation (before or after conversion), you have abandoned monergism as a philosophical base and in the process have nullified the validity of unconditional security as a doctrine, rendering continued belief in such a doctrine nonsense.

If it is illogical to infer that conversion destroys free will and makes one unconditionally secure, then it is equally illogical to think that entire sanctification would do the same. Hundreds of Scripture references could be marshaled in support of *conditional* security. Here's one: "Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:10-11). If unconditional security were true, the verses just cited would be meaningless.<sup>259</sup> One can-

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cited—true biblical confession includes repentance. True repentance includes a break with sin.

<sup>258</sup> See Richard S. Taylor, *op. cit.*, *A Right Conception of Sin*, 16.

<sup>259</sup> The reverse is not true. Verses that appear to support unconditional security can be understood even better from the point of view of conditional security.

not make his calling and election sure if it is already as sure as it can get. Why say to people, “If you do these things, you will never fall,” if they won’t fall anyway? An entirely sanctified person is much less likely to fall from grace, but it is not impossible (cf. 2 Peter 3:17, where he warns them not to “fall from your secure position”).

39. What about those Scriptures that seem to imply unconditional security? How do you respond to them? If they apply to anyone, wouldn’t they apply to the entirely sanctified?

Proponents of unconditional security use many verses, but John 10:27-30 is probably considered (by them) the strongest proof text for the doctrine. Let us carefully consider the meaning of Jesus’ words in the context. He said,

“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. I and my Father are one.”

The words “they shall never perish” and the twice repeated “no one can snatch them” seem to cement the doctrine as indisputably true in the mind of those who are already predisposed to believe it (and some who are not). Additionally, if viewed through a monergistic lens, these verses seem to teach unconditional security, because of the twice repeated emphasis on eternal life (or one’s status as a sheep) being a divine gift (unconditional election).

However, a closer look at the passage suggests something altogether different. The passage begins with the assertion that Christ’s sheep listen to him and follow him. This point is shown to be emphatic in the context as well (10:3, 4, 5, 8, 16). The sheep must listen and follow in order for the other facts to be actualized—the gift of eternal life, the promise that the sheep will never perish, and the promise that no one can snatch the sheep out of divine hands. Therefore, the subsequent phrases are constructed on a synergistic foundation, not a monergistic one. God will do his part; the sheep must respond appropriately, and here is the key point at issue—they must *continue* to do so! As long as it is true that the sheep are listening and following, the gift and the promises will also be true. W. T. Purkiser lays out the logic in a syllogism:

“All who are secure are Christ’s sheep;  
None who do not follow are His sheep;  
Therefore, none who do not follow are secure.”<sup>260</sup>

In addition to all this, I would add these points.

- a. Eternal life is a gift. This implies synergism. A gift must be received; otherwise it is not a gift. If it is not a gift, then it is a decree. That would be monergism. The Bible says it is a gift (Romans 6:23).
- b. It is often argued that eternal life is by definition that which can never end. But such reasoning either presupposes the end of probation or denies probation as a valid theological concept. When we enter this world we are under the curse of sin, which is eternal death. No one argues that this curse cannot be abrogated during probation; eternal death is only “that which can never end” when our destiny is sealed at the end of our probationary period. The same thing applies to eternal life.
- c. While it is happily true that no one can snatch the sheep from divine hands, this says nothing about the possibility of the sheep leaving that safe haven of their own accord. These promises, along with similar ones elsewhere (e.g., Romans 8:38-39), affirm the glorious assurance that no earthly power can rob us of our security. In no place does the Bible say or imply that the believer himself does not retain the volitional ability to apostatize, or is no longer subject to the conditions of probation.
- d. The main purpose of the passage is to assert the divinity of Christ, not a contrived doctrine of unconditional security. The Jews demanded a plain declaration from Jesus that he was the Messiah (10:24). Jesus replied that he did tell them but they refused to believe (10:25). They refused to believe because they were not his sheep (10:26). And they were not his sheep because, unlike those

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<sup>260</sup> Op. cit., *Conflicting Concepts of Holiness*, 86. Purkiser also points out that an interpreter cannot say the listening and following are required only to *receive* salvation, not to *retain* it; for if you say that, you are inferring that listening and following equate with faith when receiving but equate with meritorious works when retaining. In this case the interpreter also infers that receiving salvation is built on a synergistic foundation, but retaining salvation is built on a monergistic one. This is illogical.

who are his sheep, they did not listen to him and follow him (10:27). He declares that no one can snatch his sheep from his hands, and affirms the same thing of the Father (10:28-29). In this, he claims divinity by affirming that what is true of the Father's power is also true of him. He seals the deal in verse 30 by summing it all up, "I and the Father are one." The Jews understood full well that this was a claim to be God (10:33).

The broader context also does not support unconditional security, for the following reasons:

- (1) Verse 9 says whoever "enters" through the gate (Christ) will be saved. These words of Jesus imply personal responsibility in the matter of obtaining salvation.
- (2) Verse 10 says "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy." If the sheep are invulnerable to any of these outcomes, then the thief's intentions are irrelevant. However, if we understand Satan to be the "chief thief," then we must reject this idea as being utterly inconsistent with what the New Testament says about him elsewhere (cf. e.g., 1 Peter 5:8-9).
- (3) Verses 37-38, 42 teach that belief in Christ and his works is necessary. Again, these words of Jesus imply personal responsibility.
- (4) In 11:25-26, the conditional nature of security becomes grammatically indisputable. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" The present tense Greek verbs have the force "he who keeps on believing" (verse 25) and "whoever keeps on living and keeps on believing" (verse 26). Therefore, the promise "will never die" is predicated on the believer's continuance in the faith!

40. But isn't it true that the sheep who go astray were not authentic sheep to begin with? Isn't it true that the authentic sheep will never go astray? Though this view is widely believed and trumpeted, it is easily refuted. It is undoubtedly true that many (perhaps the vast majority) who go astray were not genuine Christians to begin with, but it is not always the case. Paul said, "Some have ... shipwrecked their faith" (1 Timothy

1:19), and even named specific persons, Hymenaeus and Alexander (1:20). If they didn't have faith to begin with, there was nothing to shipwreck.

Paul also warns,

“The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons” (1 Timothy 4:1).

One could hardly hope for a plainer statement with which to dispel this myth. Consider these points. First, if the faith were not genuine, there would be nothing to abandon. But the verse plainly says some will abandon the faith. Second, this is a truth the Spirit *clearly* says. The conclusion is inescapable that, if a person does not understand that departing from the faith is a real possibility, that person is not listening to the *clear* voice of the Holy Spirit!

Other Scriptures attesting to this truth include Luke 8:13; Acts 13:43; 14:22; Hebrews 3:12-14; Galatians 5:1-4; Hebrews 3:12-14; 10:26-29; James 5:19-20; 2 Peter 2:20-22.

41. Can you elaborate on the true nature of security?

Absolute safety implies the absence of all danger.<sup>261</sup> As long as we remain on earth, we remain in the presence of danger. We are still in our probationary period. No state of grace short of glorification at the final resurrection removes us from possibility of falling from grace.

A correct understanding of security requires a correct starting point. That starting point is synergism. Every argument put forward by proponents of unconditional security implies monergism, and can be answered by a simple appeal to the true synergistic nature of the divine-human relationship.

For example, I have often heard this mocking analogy: Think of the woman pulling petals from a flower, wondering if her beau really loves her. She says with one petal, “He loves me.” She says with the next, “He loves me not.” In the analogy, the *insecure* Christian pulls the petals and says of God, “He loves me. He loves me not.” The analogy is

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<sup>261</sup> See *Ibid.*, 100-103.

ridiculous because it assumes proponents of conditional security are prone to question the faithfulness of God. This is utterly false. The analogy also assumes the faithfulness of God is the issue at stake, which derives from a monergistic mindset.

Let us briefly examine the way Christian security really works. As stated in my first main address to the jury, at the time of the creation of humanity God established a *covenantal synergism* as his chosen mode of operation in relating to humanity. This means both God and humans have proper roles to play in the drama of redemption. God initiates and provides salvation by grace. Humans must freely respond and possess salvation by faith.<sup>262</sup> The synergistic framework is always operative. In order for a person to become a Christian, both parties must act. God must be faithful to provide the necessary grace. The human must be obedient and exercise faith because covenantal synergism requires it. In order to remain a Christian, both parties must act. God must be faithful to continue providing the necessary grace. The human must continue being obedient and exercising faith. If only God had to act, security would be unconditional because the faithfulness of God is never in question. Since humans also must act, security can only be conditional.

42. How do you avoid the charge of Pelagianism (the heresy of works righteousness), or “practical Pelagianism” as it is sometimes called? Answering this question will entail a fairly lengthy discussion and the reader is asked to follow along carefully. Opponents of Scriptural holiness have frequently laid this charge at the feet of Arminians in general and Wesleyans in particular. This is an utterly baseless accusation.<sup>263</sup> The truth is, John Wesley forged a healthy position somewhere between the extremes of Augustinianism and Pelagianism. Critics of the Wesleyan position have no problem seeing the heresy of

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<sup>262</sup> The exception would involve “unaccountables” such as infants and those with mental incapacity, but this is irrelevant to the present discussion.

<sup>263</sup> See Richard S. Taylor, *op. cit.*, *Exploring Christian Holiness*, vol. 3, 79-80, for a discussion of how both Arminius and Wesley were thoroughly *Augustinian* in at least two respects, yet unwilling to embrace the whole. Neither Arminius nor Wesley were thoroughly Pelagian in any respect. The only thing they shared in common with Pelagius was the rejection of the monergistic aspects of full-blown Augustinianism.

Pelagianism (even where it doesn't exist), but they seemingly fail to see the errors involved in their own Augustinianism.

Augustine (A.D. 354-430), Bishop of Hippo, developed “the doctrines of the sovereignty of God, the total depravity of man, and election and predestination. In his emphasis on man’s inability to achieve righteousness and the truth that man is saved by sovereign grace alone, Augustine made his greatest contribution to the church through the ages, and directly influenced Calvin, Luther, and the other Reformers.”<sup>264</sup>

Pelagius, a British monk, “was a popular preacher in Rome (A.D. 401-409). He sought to stir to earnest moral endeavor lax Christians who sheltered behind the frailty of the flesh and the apparent impossibility of fulfilling God’s commands, by telling them that God commanded nothing that is impossible and that everyone may live free from sin if he will.”<sup>265</sup>

Both Augustine and Pelagius appear at first glance to be on the right track. But their teachings soon took on dimensions that instigated a theological controversy that has raged more or less ever since, sometimes rancorously. Taken to the extreme, full-blown Augustinianism becomes hyper-Calvinism and human beings are utterly passive agents in the drama of redemption. In this scheme of things (completely logical, if every point is embraced consistently), total depravity means that humanity is so thoroughly polluted as to have a “defect beyond the reach of corrective grace.”<sup>266</sup> Original sin is a total proclivity to do evil, removing any inclination or ability to even turn toward God. Total depravity is so total that humanity *cannot at any time during one’s earthly existence* cease doing evil. It is not difficult to see how this view compromises human freedom. It is also not difficult to see how this view of sin leads to the other points of classic Calvinism. If human beings are to be saved, God must do *everything*, beginning with unconditionally electing them, on no other basis than His love and good plea-

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<sup>264</sup> Gregg Singer, “Augustinianism,” *Baker’s Dictionary of Theology*, Everett F. Harrison, ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960), 80.

<sup>265</sup> David Broughton Knox, “Pelagianism,” *Ibid.*, 399-400.

<sup>266</sup> Richard S. Taylor, *op. cit.*, *Exploring Christian Holiness*, vol. 3, 60.

sure. As for those who ultimately are not saved, this is also the result of divine choice.<sup>267</sup> The provision for salvation, then, is also limited in its scope. Since God has only elected some, then it follows that Christ only died for some. It further follows, after this, that God's saving grace is irresistible, because humans are hopelessly unable to respond, or to have any say in the matter. Salvation must be monergistic, that is, 100 percent one-sided from beginning to end. This, of course, in the final analysis, means that those who have been elected unconditionally to salvation are also unconditionally secure in that salvation. Richard S. Taylor explains, "The apparent corollary was fully embraced—namely, that salvation could only be the sovereign action of God upon this impotent will, regenerating it 'out of the blue,' so to speak, thus *creating* both the ability and the inclination to repent, believe, and obey. Since obviously God did not do this universally, the failure to so convert any sinner could only be because God chose not to. So we have predestinarianism as an inevitable further corollary. Naturally the logical extension will demand limited atonement and unconditional security of the elect. It is a perfectly logical, watertight system."<sup>268</sup>

Clearly, Augustinianism is anchored in its particular expression of the doctrine of total depravity. The entire doctrinal superstructure rises or falls here. Since the doctrines of unconditional election, limited atone-

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<sup>267</sup> Moderate Calvinists like to say that God does not *choose* some to be lost, He merely *passes them by*. Cf. e.g., Robert Lightner, *The Death Christ Died: A Case for Unlimited Atonement* (Des Plaines, Illinois: Regular Baptist Press, 1967), 99. Lightner makes a heroic effort to harmonize the foundation of an Augustinian concept of total depravity with an unlimited view of the atonement. But such semantic sidestepping will not wash. If God has unconditionally elected *some* to be saved, then there is no logical way around the fact that God's election has left out others, and this is tantamount to a divine *choice*. If I choose to give candy to one of my children and pass by another one of my children, even though both were equally undeserving, it would be impossible to explain to the child who was passed by that her father's action was not a choice, or that such action was either righteous or fair. That the choice was grounded in sovereign prerogative would not alleviate this difficulty. The choice would have the appearance of being *unholy*, even though it may have been a sovereign right. This is part of the reason why God's holiness should be the keystone of theology rather than God's sovereignty. See Taylor, *Exploring Christian Holiness*, vol. 3, 17.

<sup>268</sup> *Op. cit.*, *Exploring Christian Holiness*, vol. 3, 75-76 (emphasis his).

ment, irresistible grace, and unconditional security are built on this foundation, they come crashing down if the Augustinian concept of sin is in error. And so it is.<sup>269</sup> What this means is that the Augustinian doctrine of grace is also in error. Taylor again helps us understand: “Such is the Augustinian concept of sin and grace: grace totally objective and monergistic, as the necessary counterpart of total depravity. Because it is monergistic, it is necessarily irresistible. Since the operation is on the will, the miracle consists in inclining the will to submit. A *resistant* will would only prove that the miracle had not been performed. Obviously, therefore, a resistible grace would be a contradiction in terms.”<sup>270</sup>

It is those in this Augustinian tradition who insist with determined vigor that salvation, *in all of its aspects*, is utterly of God from eternity to eternity. If logic is upheld, there is not the slightest allowance made for humanity to have any role whatsoever in obtaining salvation, *in any of its aspects*, not even the need to meet the conditions that God has demanded, either before or after salvation. This position is constantly trumpeted by its proponents as a biblical defense of divine sovereignty and free grace, and as a necessary polemic against any form of works righteousness. But is it really necessary? We shall return to this in a moment.

I have now laid a proper foundation for answering the question. Augustine and Pelagius were contemporaries, but it was Pelagius who reacted to Augustine. Let us hear from Dr. Taylor once more: “It was against such a one-sided, closed concept of grace that Pelagius reacted. He thought he saw this as the cause of failure to pursue personal holiness. Many since Pelagius have sensed that those doctrines of sin and grace carried within themselves the seeds of antinomianism (the doctrine that grace frees the believer from any obligation or necessity of keeping the law).”<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>269</sup> Richard S. Taylor, *op. cit.*, *A Right Conception of Sin*, and W. T. Purkiser, *Conflicting Concepts of Holiness* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1953), 45-62, have both demonstrated this most convincingly.

<sup>270</sup> *Op. cit.*, *Exploring Christian Holiness*, vol. 3, 76 (emphasis his).

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*

But Pelagius overreacted. In his earnest desire to repudiate the idea that humans have no responsibility in the matter of their own salvation, he reasoned that persons have “the ability to choose right or wrong. Such ability implied complete freedom, which was not reconcilable with that doctrine of original sin that implied the loss of such freedom. Therefore he repudiated the doctrine of original sin...From Augustine’s absolute divine monergism [Pelagians] swung to an almost equally one-sided *human* monergism, which turned out to be a kind of moralistic humanism. They wanted a moral religion, but their theories resulted in a severance of the moral man from Christ as an absolutely indispensable Savior. This, of course, was far from authentic Christianity.”<sup>272</sup>

In the end, these two historical streams of thought may be summarized as follows:

- a. Augustinianism has a radical pessimism toward the sin problem, and a radical concept of divine sovereignty (divine monergism) as the solution.
- b. Pelagianism has a reactionary optimism toward the sin problem, and a radical tendency toward works righteousness (human monergism) as the solution.

The truly biblical position will forge a healthy position somewhere between the two,<sup>273</sup> which is what we find in Wesleyanism.

- c. Wesleyanism has a carefully and biblically measured pessimism toward the sin problem, and a biblical and radical optimism toward divine grace as the solution. “If the many died by the trespass of one man, *how much more* did God’s grace ... overflow to the many!” (Romans 5:15). Yes, sin has thoroughly corrupted the human race, but “where sin increased, grace increased *all the more!*” (Romans 5:20). Christ “is *able to save completely* those who come to God through him” (Hebrews 7:25).

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<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*, 77 (emphasis his).

<sup>273</sup> It might be better to say that Wesley took what was correct from each and discarded what was incorrect.

This is why one must embrace a qualified *synergism*, or covenantal synergism, as a philosophical construct, in order to have correct theology. This means that there must be<sup>274</sup> free and independent responsibility on both the divine (no one questions this) and the human sides (this necessity is often denied), in order for salvation to be realized. This, of course, does not mean that the roles are equal. It is simply a recognition of the fact that humans have some responsibility in the matter of their own salvation.<sup>275</sup> And properly conceived, it in no way implies works righteousness (or Pelagianism), as I will attempt to show now.

Richard S. Taylor has made a statement that is far-reaching in its theological importance, and well worth memorizing. It will serve well as a proper basis from which to understand these issues:

*"The sovereignty of God is absolute in its prerogatives, but self-limited in its exercise."*<sup>276</sup>

Stated another way, "God can do as he pleases (and nobody can stop Him), but His eternal design allows for the possibility that what actually happens sometimes does not please Him." Part of the self-limited exercise of God's sovereignty is His choice to give humanity free will. This endowment is inexorable and inviolable. God has repudiated a mechanistic or deterministic sovereignty over His creation. The account of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden reveals this fact beyond doubt.<sup>277</sup> As it relates to salvation, God's design is for salvation to be fully ethical (chosen) rather than sub-ethical (i.e., imposed). The only way this would be possible is if humans freely and independently chose it over another option. They had to be free to obey or disobey.

God would not withdraw Himself from tipping the scales heavily on the side of grace, but the human creatures must choose. He would nei-

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<sup>274</sup> The reason that it *must be* is because God would have it no other way! Salvation must be chosen, not imposed. This is part of the self-limited exercise of God's sovereign will and what is demanded by His holiness. Therefore, to insist on a monergistic construct is to think in a way that is in direct contradiction to the will of God.

<sup>275</sup> See note 173.

<sup>276</sup> Op. cit., *God, Man, and Salvation*, 437 (emphasis his).

<sup>277</sup> See Taylor, op. cit., *Exploring Christian Holiness*, vol. 3, chapters 2-3, especially 47-57.

ther force them *nor choose for them*.<sup>278</sup> For example, in the narrative of Genesis 2-3, what we see are the scales tipped heavily on the side of grace. God gave Adam and Eve the whole Edenic paradise to enjoy freely, even the Tree of Life. There was only one prohibition—the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Only one! They had perhaps thousands of other trees to partake of with impunity; only one was forbidden. But without that evil option original holiness would remain forever sub-ethical. Such a deterministic setup God would not allow, because it would be inconsistent with His holiness. He must have people who were holy in the fully ethical sense, that is, because they freely embraced it! So His grace had to be fully resistible. Taylor again skillfully addresses this issue as follows:

“God’s sovereign will *includes* His purpose to grant to man the power to say no. A measure of autonomy in man, with the potential of becoming a focal point of rebellion, is within the total scope of the divine plan. It is God’s will that man should choose in decisive freedom. That he is able to resist God is clear from the Lord’s prayer, ‘Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven’ (Matthew 6:10). Obviously His will is not now being done on earth as it is in heaven. The sad prospect therefore of persistent rebellion on the part of some cannot be interpreted as a failure in the divine sovereignty, if it is seen once for all that this scheme of things is part of that sovereignty. On the side of divine love, which seeks to persuade instead of manipulate, God’s will is frustrated by every lost soul; but on the side of the divine respect for human freedom, His will is inviolable. From the standpoint of what constitutes a demonstration of successful sovereignty, the gospel call and the wooing of the Spirit will pose no problems in relating *call* to *election* if our thinking moves within the framework of a biblical view of sovereignty.”<sup>279</sup>

Now we are ready to give a more direct answer to the question. The answer is found in Wesley’s recovery of the doctrine of prevenient

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<sup>278</sup> This is the fundamental fallacy of Augustinianism: the radical concept of divine sovereignty that says God has made the choice for us, which results in a sub-ethical salvation.

<sup>279</sup> *Op. cit.*, *God, Man, and Salvation*, 437-438 (emphasis his). See also Dr. Taylor’s exposition of Ephesians 1-2 and Romans 9-11, as they relate to this issue, 426-435. This is important because these two passages are often cited in support of an Augustinian framework.

grace. This grace is an *enabling* influence.<sup>280</sup> “The impairment of moral ability in the Fall is sufficiently restored to make the exercise of free agency once again possible.”<sup>281</sup> But Wesley tirelessly insisted that this does not imply human *merit* in any sense. Augustine made no allowance whatever for human responsibility in the process of salvation, because he believed total depravity was so severe that it lay beyond the reach even of God’s prevenient grace. God cannot enable a person to choose freely and independently prior to salvation, so the thinking goes. Meanwhile Pelagius drifted into works righteousness in his reaction to Augustine. Wesley held that God’s prevenient grace enabled humans to respond freely and independently. Therefore, even our ability to respond to God in repentance and faith is a gracious gift of God. This is true even though such grace is not an irresistible gift. God always *initiates* salvation, but He never *imposes* it.<sup>282</sup> Here is the overarching point of critical importance, as it relates to the question before us: Having this God-given ability to respond freely does not equate with human merit or works-righteousness! Works righteousness only enters the picture when the human role is seen as *meritorious* in some sense. In the last analysis, Wesleyans do not have to worry about the charge of Pelagianism, because in the Wesleyan scheme of things, merit is 100 percent of God and His grace. Humanity is also responsible, but there is not the slightest trace of works righteousness contained in that absolutely necessary human role.<sup>283</sup> Everyone must *do some-*

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<sup>280</sup> Richard S. Taylor, op. cit., *Exploring Christian Holiness*, vol. 3, 79 (emphasis his).

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

<sup>282</sup> Op. cit., *God, Man, and Salvation*, 412.

<sup>283</sup> The author has heard R. C. Sproul (on his radio show *Renewing Your Mind*, sponsored by Ligonier Ministries) criticize Billy Graham for allegedly saying that salvation is 99 percent of God and one percent of man. Rev. Graham, according to Sproul, made the remark in the following context: As he is drowning in sin, man reaches out his hand for help as he is about to go down for the last time. This outstretched hand, according to what Rev. Graham is alleged to have said, is man’s one percent. Sproul argues, from the perspective of Reformed theology, that salvation is 100 percent of God and zero percent of man. Using the same metaphor, Sproul says man does not reach out for help. Man is not drowning. Man is dead on the bottom. God dives to the bottom, picks man up in His arms, lays him on the shore, and performs mouth-to-mouth resus-

thing in order to be saved (cf. Acts 16:30), but no one *earns* salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9). The difference between these two statements is infinite.

Taylor summarizes:

- (1) “Pelagianism does not admit the sickness and therefore sees no need for a radical cure.
- (2) Augustinianism affirms the sickness but denies the possibility of a cure in this life.
- (3) Wesleyanism (not necessarily Arminianism) affirms the disease and equally affirms a possible cure.

*In respect to the doctrine of grace, Pelagius insisted on personal righteousness, freely chosen, but in such a way that in the end grace was merely ancillary. Augustine insisted on the supremacy of grace, but in such a way that in the end righteousness was secondary, even dispensable. They were both right and both wrong. The truth must of necessity lie in a harmonizing key that neither one found. That key is the Wesleyan development of the doctrine of prevenient grace.”<sup>284</sup>*

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citation. Man only exercises faith and repents *subsequent* to regeneration. Clearly, Sproul is embracing a monergistic or disjunctive construct of salvation with its radically pessimistic view of total depravity. Sproul and Graham are both wrong. The correct construct of salvation is synergistic or conjunctive—viewing it as 100 percent of God *and* 100 percent human. The *merit* is 100 percent of God. Everything that only God can do is 100 percent of God: the historical provision in Christ and grace in all of its applications—awakening, justification, regeneration, adoption, sanctification, keeping, etc. *Meeting the conditions* is 100 percent of man. That there are conditions to be met *prior to salvation* is incontrovertible in Scripture, and it would be absurd to say that *God* has to meet them or do them for us. The doctrine of prevenient grace shows that humans have been enabled to do this, freely and independently. Everything that only humans are responsible for (and divinely enabled to do) is 100 percent of man: contrition, confession, repentance, faith, reception. The human responsibility to meet God’s conditions is, *in its totality*, free from the stain of works-righteousness. This way of conceptualizing salvation should pose no problem for orthodox interpreters, since we also have the example of the Incarnation of Christ, which is seen as a conjoining of divine and human natures, both 100 percent in substance.

<sup>284</sup> Op. cit., *God, Man, and Salvation*, 80 (emphasis his).

43. Can you explain prevenient grace and give Scriptural support for the doctrine?

Prevenient grace is, literally, the grace that “goes before” salvation. “It is the action of divine grace which precedes any conscious personal experience of the life of grace. Some degree of moral and spiritual good is almost universally diffused among mankind, quite apart from whether men are definite Christian believers. The doctrine of prevenient grace safeguards the position that this good is not man’s natural possession, but is a gift of divine grace. Associated with this is a second aspect. The notion of salvation by grace answers to the idea of the divine initiative in salvation. At every stage of the Christian experience man can only answer the call of God because God has already called him. This process of divine initiative has started long before the awakened soul is found seriously reflecting about sin, repentance, and conversion.”<sup>285</sup>

William M. Greathouse takes the concept a step further, “Holiness has its genesis in prevenient grace, as Simon Peter makes clear when he speaks of ‘the *sanctifying work of the Spirit,*’ who enables the awakened sinner to “obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood’ (1 Peter 1:2, NASB). Furthermore, throughout our pilgrimage, to its very end, the Spirit of God is the sole explanation of any holiness that we may experience. While ‘prevenient grace’ technically refers to the grace of God that comes before justification, it applies to every stage of salvation.”<sup>286</sup>

The following Scriptures, to one degree or another, support the doctrine of prevenient grace:<sup>287</sup>

- a. John 6:44. “No man can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.” Based on this verse, John MacArthur makes the assertion that “Scripture clearly indicates that no ‘free will’ exists in man’s fallen, depraved nature; humans are unable to believe apart

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<sup>285</sup> John Lawson, *Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Wilmore, Kentucky: Francis Asbury Publishing Company, 1980), 214.

<sup>286</sup> William M. Greathouse, *Wholeness in Christ: Toward a Biblical Theology of Holiness* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1998), 129.

<sup>287</sup> The list is by no means exhaustive.

from God's empowerment."<sup>288</sup> MacArthur is essentially correct. However, his use of the term "free will" can be misleading. He should have said, "God's empowerment (prevenient grace) mitigates against our fallen, depraved nature, thus making possible the free and independent exercise of our will in response to God's saving initiative." We are indeed free to embrace Him or to continue rebelling against Him. God the Father "draws." "Drawing" implies resistibility and synergism. He does not "force." "Forcing" would imply irresistibility and monergism.

- b. John 12:32. "But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." This statement indicates the universal reach of prevenient grace. Christ's crucifixion will draw upon all humanity. Again the emphasis is on divine "drawing"—resistible, not irresistible grace. If it were irresistible, then we would have to assume universal salvation, since the verse says he will draw *all* men to himself.
- c. John 16:8-11. "When [the Counselor] comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned." This passage speaks of the Holy Spirit's convicting ministry, clearly a work of prevenient grace.

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<sup>288</sup> John MacArthur, *John*, in *MacArthur Bible Studies* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 2000), 44. MacArthur plainly shows his theological leaning earlier on the same page, when commenting on John 6:37 he says, "'All that the Father gives me will come to me' [is] a clear statement of God's sovereignty in the selection of those who will be saved." Actually John 6:37 is *not* a clear statement of that. MacArthur has forced this text into the monergistic box, by conveniently omitting the last half of the verse—"whoever comes to me I will never drive away." In reality, the verse is a promise of just the opposite truth—that Jesus will under no circumstances turn away anyone who comes to Him. If the coming to Him were not done of free will, there would be no point in Jesus' saying He will never drive them away. It is self-evident that Jesus would not drive away those whom God had sovereignly pre-selected to come to Him. The promise only makes sense if it is assumed those who come to Him do so of their own free will, for it would only be they who need such reassurance.

- d. Acts 7:51. “You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit!” The fact that they are resisting the Holy Spirit reveals two important truths: the Holy Spirit is operating in the realm of prevenient grace, and they have the free ability to resist.
- e. Acts 16:14. “One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message.” The opening of the heart was an act of prevenient grace, a divine enabling to respond freely to the gospel. The Lord only *opened* her heart; He did not respond for her. He enabled her to respond, but she still had to respond *in order to be saved*, not after the fact.
- f. Romans 15:18-19. “I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done—by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit.” The prevenient grace of Christ led the Gentiles to obey God. Of course, the point is that they had to *obey* God—an act that implies free will.
- g. Galatians 2:21. “I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!” Paul’s statement implies the prior working of God’s grace, and that it can be frustrated by the human will.
- h. 1 Thessalonians 1:5. “Our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction.” This verse is a clear exposition of the gracious work of God that precedes salvation, especially when the gospel is proclaimed.
- i. Titus 2:11. “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.” This is perhaps the clearest, most emphatic statement on prevenient grace in the New Testament. Two important facts are transparent: the grace being referred to is clearly prior to salvation, because it *brings* salvation; and the grace is universal in its scope. If one insists on a monergistic construct, then on the basis of this verse, he would also have to be a universalist, because if the grace does more than “bring” salvation (i.e., if it “accomplishes” salvation), the verse plainly declares that it does so *to all men*.

- j. Hebrews 10:29. “How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?” The reference to the Spirit *of grace* may suggest the prevenient grace (as well as saving and sanctifying grace) that led to the salvation that the apostate previously enjoyed.
  - k. Hebrews 11:6. “And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.” Though this verse does not speak explicitly of God’s prior grace, it does speak of the absolute need for faith that appropriates God’s blessings. The verse assumes humans are free to either believe or continue to disbelieve.
44. Isn’t it true that a person is baptized with the Holy Spirit at the time of conversion? What are some Scriptures that are used to support this view and how would you respond to them?
- Many sincere and effective Christians believe this. Some say that even John Wesley believed this.<sup>289</sup> Those who believe the baptism with the Holy Spirit occurs at conversion are correct in the sense that the Holy Spirit is the efficient cause of both regeneration and entire sanctification, and in the sense that the Holy Spirit comes into the life of the individual at the time of regeneration. But I think they are mistaken to use the language of Spirit-baptism in connection with Christian conversion. Some of the evidence for this follows:
- a. Jesus identified two distinct baptisms, one with water associated with repentance and one with the Holy Spirit and fire associated with cleansing (3:11-12; cf. Acts 1:5).<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>289</sup> Not all Wesley scholars agree with this. See Grider, *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*, 426-431, for a more complete discussion of this issue.

<sup>290</sup> This cleansing could be interpreted as that coinciding with regeneration, so that the two baptisms both relate to the first work of grace, but this seems unlikely on the basis of Matthew 3:12, which employs two metaphors more likely to apply to entire sanctification—a thorough threshing of the wheat, and a thorough burning of the chaff.

- b. Jesus said, “Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him” (John 7:38). John narrates in the next verse, “By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were *later* to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified” (7:39). John says the receiving of the Spirit was later than the believing in Jesus.<sup>291</sup>
- c. The experience of Jesus’ disciples seems to disprove it. They left all to follow him (Matthew 4:19-22). They confessed Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God (Matthew 16:16). Their names were written in heaven (Luke 10:20). Jesus said they were already clean because of his word (John 15:3; cf. Ephesians 5:26 and Titus 3:5). In Jesus high-priestly prayer, he said they already belong to God (John 17:9) and they are not of the world (17:16). It is in this context he prays for their sanctification (17:17). In view of all this evidence, one is hard-pressed to characterize the disciples as anything but regenerate men before Pentecost.
- d. In the case of the Samaritan revival (Acts 8:4-25), it is clear that the reception of (baptism with) the Holy Spirit was subsequent to regeneration.<sup>292</sup> The Samaritans believed Philip’s message and were water baptized (8:12). It was reported in Jerusalem that the Samaritans had accepted the word of God (8:14). What else could this mean but Christian conversion, the first work of grace? But after this Peter and John prayed for them to receive the Holy Spirit (8:15), “because the Holy Spirit had *not yet* come upon any of them; they

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<sup>291</sup> This could be understood as a unique pre-dispensational situation, but this seems unlikely to me because Peter equates the disciples’ experience on Pentecost with the later experience of the household of Cornelius, who ostensibly was already a regenerate man (Acts 10:1-2). That is to say, the same thing happened on both occasions—their hearts were purified by faith, even though one group believed in Jesus prior to Pentecost and the other believed in Jesus after Pentecost.

<sup>292</sup> In my judgment, in light of the fact that two distinct works of grace are clear in the Samaritan revival of Acts 8, we ought to interpret similar episodes where two distinct works are not quite as clear (Acts 10:44-48 and 19:1-7) from this vantage point rather than vice versa. That is, we should understand Acts 10 and 19 as also indicating two works of grace. Interpret the unclear in light of the clear.

had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus” (8:16). The words “not yet” are decisive evidence.

Some of the Scriptures used in support of the position (and my response to them) include these:

- a. After his sermon on the day of Pentecost, Peter admonished the crowd, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). In this verse, receiving the Holy Spirit seems to be connected with the first work of grace, because it is associated with repentance, water baptism, and forgiveness of sins. However, it can also be argued that receiving the Holy Spirit is distinctly separated from these in Peter’s words. Peter seems to be saying that, if one repents and is water baptized for the forgiveness of sins, then (i.e., after that) he will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, since both water baptism and receiving the Holy Spirit are mentioned, and since receiving the Holy Spirit in this context is synonymous with “baptized with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:5), it seems unlikely that Peter would confuse the two distinct baptisms (water and Spirit) by inferring that they occur simultaneously.
- b. Saul of Tarsus was water baptized after he was filled with the Spirit (Acts 9:17-18). Later in Jerusalem, when Paul testified to his conversion, he recounts that Ananias said at the time of his water baptism, “Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name” (Acts 22:16). This seems to indicate that he was filled with the Spirit at the time of his conversion. However, it seems clear to me that Saul surrendered to Christ on the road to Damascus three days earlier when he said, “Who are you, Lord?” (9:5; cf. Acts 22:10, where Saul’s own testimony is that he asked, “What shall I do, Lord?”), for when Ananias met him in Damascus three days later he addressed him as “Brother Saul” (9:17; cf. Acts 22:13). Surely this title would have only been used toward another Christian. Saul could not have been water baptized earlier, so there is little evidential value to this point.

- c. The household of Cornelius was water baptized after receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:47-48). And when Peter reported this incident, the Jerusalem church praised God saying, “So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life” (Acts 11:18). This appears clearly to associate the experience of Cornelius’ household with the first work of grace—Christian conversion. Again, it may be pointed out that the household of Cornelius probably could not have been water baptized earlier. In addition to this, the following points should be noted. First, the evidence favors understanding Cornelius to have been a regenerate man already. He was devout and God-fearing (10:2). He gave generously and prayed regularly (10:2). His prayers and gifts to the poor went up as a memorial offering to God (10:4). Surely God would not accept prayers and alms in this way if the man’s religion were less than a state of regeneration. Second, Peter said, “They have received the Holy Spirit *just as we have*” (10:47). If the disciples’ experience in Acts 2 was a second work of grace, then this comparison indicates that the experience of Cornelius’ household was also. As for the reaction of the Jerusalem church, it probably means no more than the fact that the Gentiles can be “Christians” just the same as Jews.
- d. 1 Corinthians 12:13 says, “For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.” This text appears to use the language of Spirit-baptism with reference to the moment of induction into the body of Christ. However, according to W. T. Purkiser, it is truer to the context to render the verse like the New English Bible, “For indeed we were all brought into one body by baptism, in the one Spirit, whether we are Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free men, and that one Holy Spirit was poured out for all of us to drink.” This translation understands the baptism to be water-baptism, and attempts to avoid the “confusion of figures [that] arises when it is suggested that all ‘drink’ of the Spirit.”<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>293</sup> W. T. Purkiser, *ECH*, vol. 1, 159.

Since all agree that the Holy Spirit resides in the believer from the time of conversion (“If anyone have not the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ,” Romans 8:9), but not all agree that the receiving of the Holy Spirit at the time of regeneration should properly be termed Spirit-baptism ⇒ It is probably better to think of regeneration as *birth by* the Holy Spirit and entire sanctification as *baptism with* the Holy Spirit.<sup>294</sup> In any case, the doctrine of entire sanctification does not stand or fall on the position we take on this issue.

45. Is being “baptized” with the Holy Spirit the same thing as being “filled” with the Holy Spirit or “receiving” the Holy Spirit?

Usually yes. It depends on the context in which the phrases are used. In the book of Acts, a number of phrases are interchangeable, all of which (in my opinion) refer to the second work of grace.

a. Perhaps the best evidence for this is from a comparison of Acts 1:5, 1:8, 2:4, 2:18, and 2:33, which all ostensibly refer to the same event— Pentecost. A simple list will help illustrate this:

- (1) Acts 1:5 – “... in a few days you will be *baptized* with the Holy Spirit.”
- (2) Acts 1:8 – “But you will *receive* power when the Holy Spirit *comes on* you ...”
- (3) Acts 2:4 – “All of them were *filled* with the Holy Spirit ...”
- (4) Acts 2:18 – “I will *pour out* my Spirit in those days ...”
- (5) Acts 2:33 – “... has *poured out* what you now see and hear.”

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<sup>294</sup> See the chapter headings by Richard S. Taylor, *ECH*, vol. 3, 135-166. See especially his comments on “birth by the Spirit” on page 143, and his comments on baptism nomenclature on pages 155-157. Taylor reminds us, “The term *baptism* ... is a model. In this sense any great outpouring of the Holy Spirit, even at conversion, could be called ‘a baptism with (or of) the Spirit,’ just as we speak of ‘a baptism of suffering.’ Yet the New Testament never confuses this sort of baptism with *the* promised baptism with ‘the Holy Spirit and fire,’ experienced on the Day of Pentecost and subsequently. And while the birth of the Spirit could conceivably be called a baptism, the attempt to make the New Testament identify this birth with that baptism which is the peculiar privilege of this dispensation is less than exegetically convincing.” 157, (emphasis his).

- b. In Acts 8:17, the Samaritans *received* the Holy Spirit subsequent to their conversion and water baptism.
- c. In Acts 9:17, Saul of Tarsus is *filled* with the Holy Spirit in the house of Judas on Straight Street, three days after his apparent conversion on the Damascus Road.<sup>295</sup>
- d. In Acts 10:44, 45, and 47, we see three more examples:
  - (1) The Holy Spirit *came on* all who heard the message of Peter.
  - (2) The gift of the Holy Spirit had been *poured out* even on the Gentiles.
  - (3) Peter said of the household of Cornelius, “They have *received* the Holy Spirit just as we have.”
- e. In Acts 11:15-16, we see two more examples:
  - (1) Peter recounts the Acts 10 experience by saying, “As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit *came on* them as he had *come on* us at the beginning.
  - (2) Then I remembered what the Lord had said, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be *baptized* with the Holy Spirit.’”
- f. Finally, in Acts 19:2 and 19:6, we see two more examples:
  - (1) “Did you *receive* the Holy Spirit, having believed (a literal translation of the Greek participle)?”
  - (2) “When Peter placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit *came on* them ...”

Five different expressions are used: baptized with, filled with, received, came on, and poured out. The first three have the Holy Spirit as the object of the action; the other two have the Holy Spirit as the subject. A rich flexibility in the use of these terms is evident in the narratives of the book of Acts.

46. Will there be any physical sign or manifestation that serves as evidence that a person is entirely sanctified or baptized with the Holy Spirit?

No. The evidence that a person has been baptized with the Holy Spirit is nothing more than a holy life with all of its fruit. Jesus’ words to the

<sup>295</sup> As indicated in the previous question and answer, some scholars think Paul was not converted until the episode on Straight Street.

Pharisees and Sadducees should give us pause: “A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign” (Matthew 16:4). Those who seek for a sign place themselves in danger of exalting the “evidence” over the “experience,” or the “present manifestations” over the “manifest Presence.” As one preacher put it, “The gift of the Holy Spirit is the Holy Spirit.”<sup>296</sup> The evidence that one has been sanctified wholly is a purified heart and an empowered witness. Ask this question: Has my own heart been changed (cleansed), and am I equipped to be a change agent (cleansing agent) in the lives of others and in the culture? The abiding presence of the Holy Spirit in all His fullness makes this possible. Look for *change* (authentic change), not stirring. The stirring may not be as authentic as you think. Look for spiritual *fruit* (fruit that will last), not signs. The signs may not be as spiritual as you think.

47. What would you say to those who equate being “Spirit-filled” with speaking in tongues, being slain in the Spirit, fits of laughter, and other phenomena associated with certain quarters of modern Pentecostalism?

The position does not stand the test of biblical scrutiny. No matter how real these experiences may feel (or appear to be), they are decidedly unbiblical. Ultimately, it is only being biblical that matters when testing the truth of a religious experience. Feelings are notoriously unreliable as a guide. It is infinitely more important to *be* holy, *think* clearly, *understand* correctly, and *act* righteously than it is to *feel* good. Because of this, these practices are not to be considered normative for Christians. Indeed, they should be vigorously rejected, because they are false manifestations, not from the Holy Spirit.

To the one New Testament church most prone to stray into such emotionalism and esotericism, Paul insisted “everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way” (1 Corinthians 14:40). This dictum concluded a section where Paul reasoned with the church regarding the proper exercise of spiritual gifts. There are four possibilities, only one of which is acceptable for a true New Testament church. The other three are perilous extremes to be avoided.

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<sup>296</sup> Rev. Joe Jordan (personal recollection of the author).

- a. The first, and only acceptable one, is using true spiritual gifts in a fitting and orderly way. Fitting refers to the accurate prioritizing of the gifts, bearing in mind their usefulness in accomplishing the overarching purpose of spiritual gifts—clear communication of the Word of God and edification of the body of Christ. Orderly refers to the exercise of the gifts in such a way that maintains peace and holy decorum, an atmosphere where the overarching purpose of the gifts can best be achieved.
- b. The second is using true spiritual gifts in an unfitting or disorderly way. Unfitting refers to the failure to keep the gifts accurately prioritized (e.g., giving priority to tongues over prophecy, or preaching the Word). Disorderly refers to the exercise of the gifts in such a way that causes confusion, chaos, lack of clear communication of God’s Word.
- c. The third is using false manifestations in a fitting and orderly way. This refers to the vain attempt to bring false practices into the church with a cloak of respectability around them. False prophets attract large crowds of undiscerning people by this technique. Services may generally be well structured and orderly. The false practices may even appear to be edifying and encouraging to both the individual and church. The false practices may even take up only a small portion of the allotted time. But beware! This may be the most dangerous extreme of all, because it is the most beguiling. Jesus forcefully warned, “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves” (Matthew 7:15).
- d. The fourth is using false manifestations in an unfitting and disorderly way. This category is usually arrived at when either the second or third (or both) deteriorates to even more shameful depths. Sometimes it is because the false prophet in charge has greatly increased in power and wealth, and no longer concerns himself with decorum or with criticism from respected theological or ecclesiastical authorities. The resulting lust for even more power requires the false teacher to experiment with new forms of sensationalism. This situation is compounded by the people’s error. They also crave new forms of emotional release and esoteric spirituality. Often it is a vicious cycle of obsessive-compulsive behavior.

Now I will give brief space to analyze three of the most common phenomena one at a time.

- (1) Being slain in the Spirit – this phenomenon belongs to either the third or fourth category above. There is not the slightest shred of biblical support for this idea. On this basis alone we should condemn the practice and shun those false prophets who endorse it. Beside the fact that it serves no useful purpose,<sup>297</sup> it is openly contrary to everything we understand from Scripture regarding being filled with the Holy Spirit. In the Bible, no Spirit-filled person was ever “slain,” “knocked out,” or “sent into an altered state of consciousness.” Quite the contrary, Spirit-filled persons in the Bible are alert, under control, temperate, and clear thinking. No Christian who is biblical in his thinking and truly led by the Spirit will desire to be slain in the Spirit or have anything to do with the practice.
- (2) Fits of laughter – this phenomenon also belongs to either the third or fourth category. There is also not the slightest shred of biblical support for this idea. This practice and all similar ones (barking, roaring, rolling on the floor, “getting drunk” with the Spirit, hysteria and sensationalism of all forms) should be equally condemned and shunned. It brings a reproach on the body of Christ. Another key principle from Paul to the Corinthians states, “God is not a God of disorder, but of peace” (1 Corinthians 14:33). Truly Spirit-filled Christians do not need a phony laughing evangelist to urge them to let the “joy” bubble out of their bellies, and then manipulate them into a laughing frenzy that does the individual no lasting good and serves no purpose other than to mislead the church into a state of mind more akin to the world of the occult than to that of the New Testament church. Truly Spirit-filled Christians are appalled and angered by the idea of a self-styled “Holy Ghost bartender” getting them “drunk” on the Holy Spirit. Because the Bible plainly **contrasts** getting drunk and being filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18;

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<sup>297</sup> The individual being “slain” may claim to be edified by the experience, but let us be reminded that spiritual gifts are not given for the purpose of *individual* edification. The “church” that endorses it (being in sympathy with the practice) may also claim to be edified by the practice, but this cannot be true. Edification involves being built up in the faith, which requires an increase in understanding of, commitment to, and/or actualization of the true biblical and historic Christian faith. It is impossible for being slain in the Spirit to accomplish this.

cf. Acts 2:15), it is tantamount to blasphemy to knowingly and deliberately *compare* the two!

(3) Speaking in Tongues – now I turn to the most common phenomenon of all—speaking in tongues. This issue must be handled carefully, because there is a true speaking in tongues and a false speaking in tongues, even though the false variety manifests itself far more often. This is not so with the phenomena already discussed, which are always false. Though it is possible, rarely does speaking in tongues belong to category one above. More often, but still infrequently, speaking in tongues will belong to category two or three. The vast majority of tongues speaking, sadly, belongs to category four. Thus speaking in tongues can be a true gift used in a fitting and orderly manner, or it can be a true gift used in an unfitting and disorderly manner, or it can be a false gift used in an orderly manner, or it can be a false gift used in an unfitting and disorderly manner. I will now briefly discuss each possibility:

(a) The true gift of tongues used in a fitting and orderly manner. I will spend more time elucidating this category because doing so will inform our understanding of the other three. In the Bible, tongues-speaking occurred or is addressed almost exclusively in Acts and 1 Corinthians. The primary example in Acts is from the day of Pentecost (2:4). The first thing we must decide is the true nature of the tongues-speaking of Acts 2:4. Is it an example of the true gift of tongues? Or an evidence of Spirit-baptism? Or simply a miraculous historical event that is not necessarily to be considered normative for Spirit-filled Christians throughout church history? We can eliminate the first possibility because there is no indication in the context of Acts 2 (or anywhere else) that Pentecost had anything to do with spiritual gifts. We can also eliminate the second possibility because if it were a telltale sign of Spirit-baptism, it would always follow. But this is clearly not the case. In the book of Acts, there are six examples (2:4; 4:31; 8:17; 9:17; 10:46; and 19:6). Three of these involved tongues-speaking and three did not. Therefore, based on biblical examples alone, we would have to conclude that tongues-speaking may be in evidence on half the occasions of Spirit-baptism (or

Spirit-filling). But even this ratio is brought into serious question when we note that tongues-speaking occurred only on occasions when crossing linguistic barriers was important. When the evidence from church history is added, the likelihood of tongues-speaking as an evidence for Spirit-baptism is seen to be almost non-existent.<sup>298</sup> Therefore, I conclude that the tongues-speaking of Acts 2 was a miraculous historical event that may be repeatable (e.g., Acts 10 and 19, or any occasion when God desires to cross linguistic boundaries by means of this miracle), but is definitely not normative. Our expectation should be that it is likely *never* to happen in our own lifetime or personal experience.

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<sup>298</sup> I will summarize the evidence from church history here. (I have relied heavily in this footnote on information gleaned from Harry W. Lowe, *Speaking in Tongues: A Brief History of the Phenomenon Known as Glossolalia, or Speaking in Tongues* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1965). In the post-Apostolic era, there are a few scattered references to what might be tongues-speaking, but hardly supportive to tongues advocates. The Montanists of the second century are thought by some to have been tongues enthusiasts, but even if so, we need only remind the reader that the Montanists were later labeled a heresy by the church Fathers. Tertullian records the possibility of tongues-speaking among the Marcionites, another heretical group. Origen claimed that certain third century prophets spoke in tongues, but his description sounds more like prophetic utterances and it is unclear whether he referred to "Christians" or followers of another religion. Perhaps most telling are the comments of John Chrysostom in the fourth century, who specifically said that tongues "now no longer take place" (Homily 29). For more than a thousand years after this, there is virtual silence regarding this phenomenon. In the Reformation period, one searches in vain for anything resembling a genuine tongues-speaking. In the post-Reformation period, the phenomenon begins to surface, but in those early days of the modern era the tongues-speaking groups were all recognized as aberrations from historic Christianity (e.g., the Convulsionaries, the Irvingites, the Shakers, etc.). Moreover, it is well known that the early Mormons (universally recognized by respected theological and ecclesiastical authorities as a false cult) spoke in tongues, in addition to many other doctrinal and experiential aberrations (e.g., bigamy). Throughout the twentieth century and right up to the present, tongues-speaking groups have also been widely associated with other aberrations, such as "faith-healing" and snake handling. None of the towering figures from any period of church history either practiced tongues-speaking or endorsed its use. None of the sects or denominations that stand in the stream of historic Christianity either practiced or endorsed it. Therefore, the evidence from church history cannot be said to support the practice of tongues-speaking.

That leaves us to decide the nature of the tongues-speaking of 1 Corinthians 12-14. Is it the same tongues-speaking as that of Acts? Or is it different? If it is the same  $\Rightarrow$  then we have already addressed the issue. In that case, the true gift of tongues used in a fitting and orderly manner would require the following conditions:

- [1] It must be an actual human language.
- [2] It must be clearly understood by the hearers without the aid of an interpreter.
- [3] It must be previously unknown to the speaker.
- [4] It must be used only in a cross-cultural (or cross-linguistic) situation.
- [5] It must serve an evangelistic purpose, clear communication of the wonderful works of God (i.e., the gospel—the death and resurrection of Jesus combined with an appeal to respond appropriately).

That would be a rare case indeed! If true, then modern Pentecostals are clearly in error, for this is not how they practice tongues-speaking.

If it is different  $\Rightarrow$  then we must determine the nature of the difference. The same Greek word is used in 1 Corinthians 12-14 as in Acts 2, 10, and 19. Unless the context clearly shows otherwise, we should expect the word to have the same meaning in both places. And this is exactly what we find, with the exception of 13:1, where Paul mentions the hypothetical possibility of speaking in the language of angels. Therefore, the distinction must not be the difference between actual human languages and some kind of ecstatic utterance.<sup>299</sup> Instead

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<sup>299</sup> Besides 13:1, the Greek word appears in 12:10, 28, 30; 13:8; 14:2, 4, 5, 6, 13, 14, 18, 19, 22, 23, 26, 27, and 39. In every case, the obvious meaning is “other language(s),” meaning actual human languages. Only in 14:2 and 14:14 could one conceivably understand the meaning to be ecstatic utterance, but even here that meaning is not required and not the one that best fits the context of the chapter. In 14:2 Paul says “Anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his

the distinction would have to be the difference between a miraculous historical event and a spiritual gift. The tongues-speaking of 1 Corinthians, then, is the kind of tongues Paul calls a spiritual gift. The context clearly supports this identification, because speaking in tongues is listed among the gifts (12:10, 28), though admittedly it is always listed last; along with its necessary adjunct, the interpretation of tongues. In that case, the true gift of tongues used in a fitting and orderly way would require the following conditions:

- [a] It must be recognized as a spiritual gift. Therefore it only applies to a few persons, and thus cannot be *the* evidence of Spirit-baptism (cf. 12:29-30).
  - [b] It must be recognized as one of the least important gifts and not to be eagerly desired (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:31).
  - [c] Since it must be actual human languages, it would only be necessary or useful in a local church where linguistic barriers might need to be crossed.
  - [d] When necessary and useful for edifying the church, its use must be carefully restricted, though not absolutely forbidden (14:39).<sup>300</sup>
- {1} Only three speakers are allowed in a service, and these must speak one-at-a-time (14:27).

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spirit.” Speaking only to God simply means that God is the only one present who understands that foreign language. Uttering mysteries with his spirit is in parallelism with the previous phrase and simply means the same thing—no one understands him (i.e., his foreign language). In 14:14 Paul mentions the possibility of praying in a tongue, but follows this by saying that such a situation would leave his mind unfruitful. Therefore it doesn’t really matter if “tongue” in this verse means actual human language or ecstatic utterance, Paul disapproves of the practice of praying in tongues. In the next two verses he makes it clear that, whether praying, singing, or giving thanks, the important thing is for both the spirit and the mind to be fruitful (i.e., have understanding). Obviously, this can only occur if both the speaker and hearers understand what he is saying.

<sup>300</sup> The command not to forbid speaking in tongues only applies if all conditions are met for its true exercise. But because those conditions are so rarely met, if that biblical truth were always taken seriously, the phenomenon of tongues-speaking would virtually disappear from the church

{2} If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet (14:28).

I conclude that the true gift of tongues used in a fitting and orderly manner very rarely occurs.

- (2) The true gift of tongues used in an unfitting and disorderly manner. If all the conditions required for the true gift of tongues are met, the user would be unlikely to practice the gift improperly. But if the true gift were being used and the speaker did indeed violate the conditions governing its proper use, then this situation would exist. An example of this would be someone speaking in an actual human language, but in a setting where that language is not understood by the hearers and no interpreter is present. Another example would be the use of real languages in a cross-linguistic context, but with more than one person speaking at the same time.
- (3) A false gift of tongues used in an orderly manner. If all the conditions required for a fitting and orderly use of the spiritual gifts are met, the user would be unlikely to practice a false gift. But if the proper manner of using a spiritual gift were in force, and the speaker did indeed use a false manifestation of tongues, then this situation would exist. An example of this would be someone speaking gibberish, but attempting to do so according to the guidelines Paul established in 1 Corinthians 14. Another example would be someone presuming to interpret gibberish.<sup>301</sup>
- (4) A false gift of tongues used in an unfitting and disorderly manner. It is a disgraceful situation, but this category far outdistances the previous three in occurrences of so-called tongues-speaking. Countless examples could be cited, but suffice it to say that the same phenomenon can be witnessed in almost all false cults and false religions. This last point should turn the heart of anyone away from such arcane religious experience. When we stop to consider the vast riches available to us from the objective Word of God when rightly divided and clearly

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<sup>301</sup> The author personally witnessed this several years ago. Visitors from another church showed up at a revival service of the church I served as pastor. Among these was a woman, who stood up and spoke gibberish for about ten seconds. Immediately thereafter the same woman presumptuously “interpreted” her own unknown tongue. It was surprising to me how few people recognized this as a false manifestation.

expounded in the vernacular, it is shocking how many people are drawn to this kind of empty sensationalism.

48. What, then, does it mean to be Spirit-filled?

Being Spirit-filled means to have the Holy Spirit abide in his fullness within the life of the fully consecrated Christian. Since the chief ministry of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Jesus Christ (John 16:14), this means Christ himself reigns within. In fact, Jesus included Father, Son, and Holy Spirit when he said, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and *we* will come to him and make our home with him" (John 14:23, cf. verse 15). Being Spirit-filled means "you may participate in the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4), letting the divine persons live the divine life through yourself.

a. The Character of the Spirit-filled. Spirit-filled Christians have the character of God as reflected in his communicable attributes. Galatians 5:22-23 calls this the fruit of the Spirit, which is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Fruit is evidence. Fruit sprouts naturally from its source. Fruit grows when it remains connected to its source. Ephesians 5:18-21 describes the habits of the Spirit-filled within the Spirit-filled community. Verse 18 controls the paragraph, where Paul exhorts, "be filled with the Spirit." In the next three verses, four Greek participles follow and provide the key to understanding the meaning of being Spirit-filled. They are:

- (1) *Speaking* to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. "Psalms" suggests the idea of trust in God. "Hymns" suggests the idea of reverence for God. And "spiritual songs" suggests the idea of praise toward God. The speech of the Spirit-filled will be characterized by truth and love (cf. Ephesians 4:15), and holiness, joy and spiritual-mindedness. Paul contrasts this with obscenity, foolish talk, and coarse joking (5:4). None of this is inconsistent with discussion of legitimate mundane interests or with a good sense of humor.
- (2) *Singing and making music* in your heart to the Lord (these are counted as one). Richard S. Taylor says of this, "Christians have

the inner resources for happiness that are not dependent on happy circumstances.”<sup>302</sup> The best example of this is Paul and Silas in the Philippian jail (Acts 16:25). Listen as Taylor describes that night: “With bleeding backs and fiery throbs of pain, gnawed by hunger and thirst, in an agonizingly cramped position, stuck in a foul, clammy, rat-infested cell without light or heat, they began to pray—then burst into song... Their praises were the spontaneous outpouring of persons who knew that their circumstances told nothing of their true welfare. They rejoiced in blessings—right then—that were totally unimaginable by their enemies. Though hurting and bound, they were freer than the jailer, freer than those who arrested them, freer than the magistrates who had confined them. They were free from the guilt of their sins, free from the fear of the future, free from self-pity, free from anger or resentment, free from bitterness, free from doubts and unbelief. So they did what came naturally—they praised God.”<sup>303</sup>

- (3) Always *giving thanks* to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Spirit-filled persons have a spirit of thanksgiving, what is sometimes called thanks-living. The gratitude is directed toward God. The gratitude is “for everything,” which does not mean Spirit-filled people are thankful for every thing that happens (e.g., tragedies), but that they are thankful for God’s sovereign handling of all things (cf. Romans 8:28).<sup>304</sup> Fretting and grumbling are inconsistent with the Spirit-filled life, because the attitudes that spawn them are the exact opposite of thanksgiving.
- (4) *Submitting* to one another out of reverence for Christ. This is perhaps the most significant description of the four. Taylor elaborates beautifully, “Spirit fullness ... is a tone of triumph

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<sup>302</sup> Richard S. Taylor, *What Does it Mean to be Filled with the Spirit?* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1995), 43.

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*, 43-44.

<sup>304</sup> See *Ibid.*, 52-53, for an explanation of the Greek preposition used here (ὐπερ, “above”).

toward life. It is a radical shift of focus from earthly things to heavenly. Moreover, it is a new spirit of humility toward those around us... rigidity is displaced by flexibility. The proud ego is broken, and with the breaking comes a new consideration for others.”<sup>305</sup> Submission is within the community of faith (cf. Ephesians 4:3 earlier in the epistle) and out of reverence for Christ, “because we are members of Christ’s Body, and to disrupt the Body is to dishonor Christ.”<sup>306</sup> Reverence for Christ qualifies the nature and direction of our submission. That is, we should be submissive “when the health and peace of the church will be destroyed by a refusal to submit,” and “when the honor of Christ himself is not at stake.”<sup>307</sup> Taylor also wisely points out, “Some people ... need the Spirit in order to be strong. They are already too submissive to the wrong people, to the wrong influences, about the wrong things, and at the wrong times.”<sup>308</sup>

b. The Priorities of the Spirit-filled. The following list is representative but not exhaustive:

- (1) A truly Spirit-filled person is more interested in being biblical than being emotional. Biblical authority is never made subservient to religious experience (either one’s own or someone else’s who is greatly esteemed).
- (2) A truly Spirit-filled person is more interested in the Giver than the gifts.
- (3) A truly Spirit-filled person is more interested in God’s will than God’s wonders.
- (4) A truly Spirit-filled person is more interested in being holy than being happy.
- (5) A truly Spirit-filled person is more interested in purity than prosperity.

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<sup>305</sup> Ibid., 55-56.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid., 56-57.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid., 61-62.

- (6) A truly Spirit-filled person is more interested in integrity than impressiveness.
  - (7) A truly Spirit-filled person is more interested in being Christ-honoring than self-aggrandizing.
  - (8) A truly Spirit-filled person is more interested in self-denial than self-determination.
  - (9) A truly Spirit-filled person is more interested in being edified (or edifying) than entertained (or entertaining).
  - (10) A truly Spirit-filled person is more interested in living an ethical life than an exciting life.
  - (11) A truly Spirit-filled person is more interested in private devotion than public performances.
  - (12) A truly Spirit-filled person is more interested in denouncing sins than desiring signs.
  - (13) A truly Spirit-filled person is more interested in being fruitful than fanciful.
  - (14) A truly Spirit-filled person is more interested in true joy than jocularly.
- c. The Choices of the Spirit-filled. My comments under this heading would be superfluous were it not for a contemporary climate in some quarters that fosters carnal choices disguised as “Spirit-filled”:
- (1) A truly Spirit-filled person chooses sound doctrine over sophistry.
  - (2) A truly Spirit-filled person chooses solid teaching over sham theatrics. He would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in tongues.
  - (3) A truly Spirit-filled person chooses gospel preaching over gain-saying peddling.
  - (4) A truly Spirit-filled person chooses authentic worship over arcane wheedling.
  - (5) A truly Spirit-filled person chooses faithfulness over frivolity.
  - (6) A truly Spirit-filled person chooses apologetics over aberrations.
  - (7) A truly Spirit-filled person chooses communion with God over commonality with the world.

49. Is there one thing that matters more than anything else to Spirit-filled people?

The Holy Spirit's primary work is glorifying Christ (John 16:14). Therefore, the one thing that matters most to Spirit-filled people is **exalting Christ**. But how is Christ properly exalted? **Truth trumps everything!** This is how we are saved and sanctified in the first place ("God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit *and through belief in the truth*," 2 Thessalonians 2:13), and this is how our allegiance to Christ is authenticated. Even members of false cults and false religions love one another, but it's not *true* biblical love. The same thing can be said of everything. Joy must be true. Power must be true. Worship must be true. Holiness must be true. Interpretation of Scripture must be true (otherwise preaching and teaching will not be true). Paul named the "belt of truth" first among the pieces of the armor of God, which those who are Spirit-filled are to put on (cf. Ephesians 5:18 with 6:10-20). If truth is in place, everything that follows will be true.

50. How do we determine what is true? How do we distinguish between truth and error?

**Scripture is the final authority!** It will serve us well to expound on this point briefly. A subjective basis alone is inadequate:

- a. It is not enough to simply believe something is true or that "God revealed this to me," no matter how sincere that belief. The terrorists who attacked the twin towers of the World Trade Center sincerely believed God wanted them to do it, but their act was still evil.
- b. It is not enough to simply pray about it. I've heard many people (who were clearly wrong) say they prayed about something and that's why they chose a particular course of action.
- c. It is not enough to simply have an emotionally satisfying religious experience. Chanting Buddhists can testify to an emotionally satisfying religious experience, but they are still in grievous error.
- d. It is not enough to simply quote Scripture. Without the proper interpretation according to original intent, the objective basis of Scripture's authority is destroyed.

The objective basis for truth must be appreciated and properly observed:

51. What will the experience of entire sanctification or being Spirit-filled *not* do for a person?

The following is a partial list:

- a. It will not immediately give you the maturity, wisdom, or discernment that can only come with growth in grace over the passage of time. A person can be truly Spirit-filled and temporarily be associated with a church that teaches bad doctrine and endorses false practices, but only so long as he or she is unenlightened regarding these things. However, a truly Spirit-filled person will *not* remain in such an environment over time, because allegiance to Christ demands it (walking in the light). Spirit-filled people *must* leave a “Word of Faith” church, or any church that teaches (or endorses, or promotes) false views of the Trinity, the atonement, religious experience, prosperity, divine healing, etc.
- b. It will not free you from the residual effects of the fall. You will still make mistakes; you will still have errors in judgment; you will still grow weary and get sick; you will still have to work hard to make a living; you will still have days when you feel good and days when you feel bad; you will still have to resist temptation, and you will still be subject to the possibility of sinning.
- c. It will not change your temperament type or personality type. If you were shy before sanctification, you will still be shy afterward.
- d. It will not immediately change prejudices or personal habits you have acquired since birth, as a result of the environment you were raised in. Entire sanctification removes the sinful corruption we inherited. Growth in grace will progressively purge our prejudices and personal habits that are not as consistent with holiness as they should be.
- e. It will not prevent bio-chemically caused reactions that appear to be sinful acts. For example, persons under medication may have side effects that appear to be inconsistent with holiness, but are not necessarily effects over which they have volitional control.
- f. It will not automatically make people appreciate you or treat you well.
- g. It will not make you unconditionally secure, or give you an ironclad guarantee of heaven. You must still persevere to the end in the faith.

52. In an easy to understand format, can you summarize the doctrine of entire sanctification, as taught by those in the Wesleyan-holiness movement?

The doctrine is established on the following foundational theses:

- a. God has called his people to be holy, because He is holy (Leviticus 19:2; 1 Peter 1:15-16). It is God's idea, God's will (1 Thessalonians 4:3), and God's calling (1 Thessalonians 4:7). ***God has prescribed this holiness!***
- b. Only God is holy in a non-derivative sense. We can only be holy in a derivative sense. That is, we cannot be holy unless God makes us holy. This is exactly what he purposes to do through the atoning work of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 13:12). ***God has provided this holiness!***
- c. God's plan of salvation calls for a complete restoration of our fallen moral nature. God's complete restoration includes two epochal works of grace, because the two-fold nature of human sin calls for a double cure. We are sinners by choice (the sinful acts) and we are sinners by condition (the depravity inherited from Adam). Regeneration (initial sanctification, or sanctification begun) is God's provision for cleansing us of our sinful choices and creating a new nature within us. Entire sanctification is God's provision for cleansing us of our Adamic depravity and filling us with the Holy Spirit of love. It might be illustrated as follows:

Sinful Choices ----- Cure: Regeneration

Sinful Condition ----- Cure: Entire Sanctification

- d. It is important to understand the biblical terminology regarding entire sanctification. Several biblical terms all refer to the same experience: perfect love (1 John 4:17-18), heart purity (Acts 15:8-9), baptism with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5; 2:1-4), fullness of the blessing (Romans 15:29), and holiness (1 Thessalonians 3:13).<sup>309</sup>
- e. Several facts about entire sanctification seem abundantly clear:

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<sup>309</sup> Cf. *The Manual of the Church of the Nazarene*, 31.

- (1) It is a second definite work of God's grace. There are biblical examples of this (e.g., the disciples; cf. Luke 10:20 with John 17:17 and Acts 2:1-4; 15:8-9). Over and over the call goes out to those who are *already* Christians (e.g., 2 Corinthians 7:1; 1 Thessalonians 3:10; 4:3, 7; Hebrews 6:1).
  - (2) It is indeed *entire* sanctification (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24). It encompasses the *whole* of one's spirit, soul and body in a state of blamelessness before God. It is a thorough purging of the sinful nature, so that we have pure hearts (Acts 15:8-9; 1 John 1:7, 9). Anything less than entire sanctification would not result in a *pure* heart.
  - (3) It most certainly is a real and personal holiness imparted to the soul of the believer. Never is it merely a positional holiness.
  - (4) It is meant to be a contemporary experience, that is, now! As soon as possible! God wills it, God has prescribed it, and God has provided for it. God calls his people to holiness. For what reason would God do this if He knew such were impossible? Biblically speaking, it is sheer nonsense to think entire sanctification must wait till death.
  - (5) It is not to be confused with growth in grace. Entire sanctification is an instantaneous work of divine grace whereby the heart is made pure. Growth in grace is a gradual work whereby a mature character is obtained.<sup>310</sup>
  - (6) It is also not to be confused with glorification. Entire sanctification results in a pure heart. As human beings, we will still suffer from the residual effects of the fall. It is true that we will no longer be tormented by the proclivities of the sinful nature. But entire sanctification does not result in sinless perfection, freedom from the temptation to sin, freedom from errors in judgment, freedom from infirmities, etc.
- f. There is not the slightest trace of works-righteousness in the Wesleyan-holiness view of entire sanctification. It is accomplished solely on the merits of Christ's death. In fact, of all the historical and current views on sanctification, the Wesleyan-holiness position is the one most thoroughly rooted in God's grace and true to the Scrip-

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<sup>310</sup> Ibid.

tures. However, even a free gift of divine grace must be received with gratitude. *We must possess this holiness!*

- g. Entire sanctification is *obtained*, not *attained*. Cleansing or purification is God's role.
  - h. God grants complete sanctification when a Christian makes a *complete consecration*. This is a condition that must be met. It is not works. It is a response to God's sanctifying initiative. It is not in any sense earning or meriting God's favor. It is obedience. Consecration is the human role. The consecration is complete when nothing is reserved for the sake of self-sovereignty, and when the humble faith of the Christian intersects God's sanctifying grace.
53. Can you condense your description of entire sanctification even further? Can it be condensed into a very brief, positive statement of the experience?

I will do this in three ways.

- a. A brief series of propositions may be advanced as follows:
  - (1) God is holy.
  - (2) God calls his people to be *holy* (1 Thessalonians 4:7).
  - (3) God's grace is sufficient to sanctify *wholly* (1 Thessalonians 5:23).
  - (4) God will do it *now* for all who meet the conditions (1 Thessalonians 5:24).
  - (5) The immediate results will be:
    - (a) Sin will be purged from the heart.
    - (b) Christ will reign as Lord.
    - (c) The Christian will be enabled to live a life of *blameless* holiness before God (1 Thessalonians 3:13).
    - (d) The Christian's impulse to grow in grace will be dynamically energized.
    - (e) The Christian church will be more radiant and the kingdom of God will be more rapidly increased.
- b. Another way to simplify the doctrine would be a simple question and answer approach:

### **Entire Sanctification**

Who? God sanctifies (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Christ sanctifies (Hebrews 13:12). The Holy Spirit sanctifies (1 Peter 1:2).

Whom? Christians may and should be entirely sanctified (1 Thessalonians 3:13; 5:23-24).

What? Entire sanctification is the cleansing of the heart from all inward sin, or Adamic depravity (Acts 15:9; 1 John 1:9), and the perfecting of the heart in love (2 Corinthians 7:1; 1 John 2:5; 4:12, 17).

When? Entire sanctification is subsequent to regeneration and may happen in this life (1 Thessalonians 3:10).

To what extent? Entire sanctification is through and through, a complete cleansing (Matthew 3:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; James 1:4).

Why? Entire sanctification is the will of God (John 17:17; 1 Thessalonians 4:3, 7)

How? Entire sanctification is wrought by the Holy Spirit (the efficient cause) through the blood of Christ (the meritorious cause) and the Word of God (the instrumental cause), when a fully consecrated believer exercises faith for the same (the conditional cause).

- c. Another way of simplifying this message has already been given in my opening statement above, but I will repeat it here. Reduced to its simplest expression, entire sanctification is:

#### **God's will to make earnest Christians wholly holy now!**

- (1) **God's will** – entire sanctification is a divine desire and imperative. He wills, he calls, he prescribes.
- (2) **To make** – entire sanctification is a divine act. God's people must consecrate themselves, but only God sanctifies. Entire sanctification is no more a human achievement than is regeneration. It is wholly by grace.
- (3) **Earnest** – entire sanctification requires human cooperation. God's people must fully consecrate themselves by faith. No one is entirely sanctified without wholeheartedly seeking God for this grace.
- (4) **Christians** – entire sanctification is for those already saved. It is subsequent to regeneration.

- (5) **Wholly** – entire sanctification is entire. God’s purpose is to cleanse fully, to purge thoroughly, to fill completely, to saturate totally.
- (6) **Holy** – entire sanctification is the impartation of true holiness. It is not merely a position or a process or a counteraction; it is a divinely imparted state of being from which holy living proceeds as a natural consequence. Real, personal holiness of heart and life is the result of entire sanctification. Biblically, this holiness is best understood as blamelessness before God on the one hand, and wholeness in Christ on the other hand. Entire sanctification is wrought by the baptism with the **Holy** Spirit.
- (7) **Now** – entire sanctification is the present privilege of God’s children. It does not have to wait till death. God is ready, willing, and able to do it now. He only waits for the Christian to fully surrender.

54. Is there a single factor which more than anything else leads to false ideas about sanctification?

Yes, I believe it is a false idea about God, especially with respect to his holiness and its relationship to his sovereignty. More particularly, error most often derives from a failure to recognize God’s design for ethical holiness in humans and the fact that this requires a covenantal form of synergism, akin to the model of the ancient Near Eastern suzerainty treaty.

55. What should be a Christian’s goal as he or she approaches each new day?

Pray that God will enable you to do three things:

- a. To let Christ reign in you today, thereby reflecting his image in the most winsome and magnetic way possible.
- b. To triumph over sin.
- c. To walk in the light of his Word.

56. How will these goals be actualized differently in the entirely sanctified than in Christians not yet entirely sanctified?

The goal of Christian living should be the same whether a person is entirely sanctified or not. Jeff Glenway hits the target when he says, “For the past several years I have prayed ... almost every morning,

‘Lord, help me to be more like Jesus tonight when I go to bed than I was when I got up this morning.’”<sup>311</sup>

The regenerate person, though born of God and delivered from a life of continued sin, still has Adamic depravity. Therefore, he or she will seek to “avoid” sin in the daily struggle to counteract the sinful nature with the new Christian nature.

The entirely sanctified person has been cleansed of Adamic depravity. Therefore, he or she will not struggle with those evil inclinations, but instead will consistently triumph over the temptations that formerly hindered so easily. The three-fold daily goal of letting Christ reign, triumphing over sin, and walking in the light will more readily be actualized.

57. Describe the way an entirely sanctified person lives a typical day.

In the particulars, the answer to this involves as much variety as there are people. However, in the broad sweep certain attitudes and practices should be evident regardless of the individual:

- a. Worshiping God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).
- b. Total submission to the lordship of Christ, or what the Nazarene Articles of Faith call “entire devotement to God.” Every aspect of life is consecrated as the entirely sanctified Christian eschews self-sovereignty on a daily basis (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:31).
- c. Consistent attention to the means of grace.
  - (1) Fervent prayer and fasting.
  - (2) Studying the Scriptures.
  - (3) Not forsaking the assembly of believers in a healthy, vibrant congregation that is true to the historic Christian faith.
- d. Conscious desire to be fruitful in the Lord’s service.
  - (1) Effective witnessing in both holy living and persuasive testimony.
  - (2) Being salt and light in the culture.

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<sup>311</sup> From an article entitled, “Living with an Open Hand,” in *The Asbury Herald*, volume 115, number 1, winter 2005, on the occasion of Dr. Greenway’s election as Asbury Theological Seminary’s sixth president.

(3) Addressing human need.

58. Can you honestly say that *you* are entirely sanctified? And if you can, what assurance do you have?

This question reminds me of a time a few years ago when my family was visiting in the home of another Christian family in the local church we attended. As we sat in the living room discussing doctrine, the man of the house looked directly at me and asked, “Are you entirely sanctified?” I could tell from the tone that he viewed the doctrine with suspicion and expected that no one could genuinely testify to it. I will share with you now what I tried to say to him back then.

I have endeavored throughout this book to remain true to the Scriptures. That is our highest authority. Anyone’s personal experience, including my own, is at best a confirmation of Scriptural truth. Moreover, everyone’s personal experience is unique and cannot be precisely duplicated. This point is important because it helps us avoid the temptation to think our own experience will replicate someone else’s whom we admire. The general biblical pattern should be evident, but in all the particulars there will be as much variety as there are persons. It is more important *that* people get entirely sanctified than it is *how* in the particulars. My personal experience should not be considered normative, except in the broader outlines in which it follows the biblical pattern. It is that biblical pattern that I wish to focus on in my answer. With those thoughts serving as a guide, I will now attempt to answer the question.

I was raised in a Christian home. We went to church like clockwork, every scheduled service. Both of my parents modeled authentic Christianity before me. They did not go to church merely out of a sense of duty; they went because they loved Christ and His church. Their Christianity was an every day thing, not just a Sunday thing. Because of the prevenient grace of God in my upbringing, I never went into what one might call “deep sin.” I was never sexually promiscuous, never an alcoholic, a drug addict, or a criminal. Nevertheless, I remember what it was like to be a lost soul. Guilt for the sins I had committed seemed to overwhelm me. I knew I had lied, I had deceived, I had been selfish, and a host of other things. I remember the horrifying burden of eternal judgment weighing on me, knowing that I was doomed to hell unless

God rescued me. God graciously saved me from that miserable state on November 21, 1971, at the age of eleven.

Throughout my junior high and high school years God enabled me to maintain a Christian witness, though at times I was living victoriously and at other times I was living in defeat. The carnal nature was still alive. I was even contemplating going to work as an electrician for the rest of my life, even though I knew God was calling me into the ministry. Jesus was my Savior, but He was not my Lord, at least not fully.

After high school I temporarily worked for a man who owned an electrical business. The whole time I worked for him I was miserable, not because of him but because I was not where God wanted me to be. I finally yielded and enrolled at Circleville Bible College to prepare my life for Christian ministry. The atmosphere at the college was conducive to the Holy Spirit's working in my life. The consistency and power of the teaching and preaching on the subject of Scriptural holiness, along with the lives of those who taught it, made a profound impact on my mind. It wasn't that I had not been exposed to the doctrine before or that I was unfamiliar with it. It was simply the merging together of all the factors in my life at that place and time that brought me to the point of complete consecration. Though I cannot pinpoint a precise day, it was during those Bible college days that God sanctified me wholly. There came an assurance that my heart was pure and that Christ was fully Lord of my life, partly because I found myself willing to attempt a variety of ministries that I was too timid to do before. Whatever He wanted to do with me would be allright from that point forward.

I was still young and in need of much growth in the grace of sanctification. The devil knew what things would be the greatest source of temptation. The enemy of my soul has labored tirelessly to kill, steal, and destroy. But the lover of my soul has made His grace sufficient for me to overcome temptation and to live in a state of dynamic victory, even though I have fallen short of being completely Christ-like many times. Dynamic victory does not mean I have never sinned since. What it does mean is that God's sanctifying grace has enabled me to run quickly back to Him for cleansing and thereby maintain an experience of spiritual integrity. There has been a steady, ongoing realization that the old propensity to sin is gone, and that Christ reigns in my life and has equipped me to live consistently and daily above the level of will-

ful sin. He increasingly fills my heart with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

I base my certainty of entire sanctification primarily on the promises of God's Word, secondarily on the completeness of my consecration (Christ may dispose of me as He wills and I can joyfully embrace that will), and finally on the experiential reality of entire sanctification (the impulse to sin no longer exists and seeking *first* God's kingdom is the driving force in my life). I should be quick to point out that this experiential reality may not be obvious to others every single moment. What I mean is this: Humans tend to judge according to the outward appearance, whereas God (Hallelujah!) looks on the heart. Just ask my wife or my children or members of churches I have served. It is not always obvious, based on outward appearance only. Yes, entirely sanctified people are still susceptible to many human infirmities, failures, and shortcomings. I have to apologize to my wife and my children (and others) sometimes. Just as in the marriage relationship, this is part of the process of "growing in grace." But this is not at all inconsistent with the affirmation that "the impulse to sin no longer exists and seeking first God's kingdom (i.e., king-ship) is the driving force in my life."

59. What would you suggest to a person who is earnestly seeking entire sanctification, but just can't seem to enter in?

Don't give up! Take the following inventory:

- a. Am I truly born again? This is pre-requisite. Have I been set free from continuance in willful sin? Do I need to make restitution to anyone for anything? Do I have any un-confessed and un-repent-ed of sins? Do I have any persistent besetting sins that I am either unwilling or unable to stop?
- b. If I can honestly testify to the first work of grace, is my consecration complete? Am I holding anything back? May God use me as he wills? Am I willing to yield myself in reckless abandon to God?
- c. Do I truly believe? Do I still halt between two opinions? Do I have nagging doubts?

Persevere in earnest seeking before God until the work is done! Jesus told the disciples to "stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). For ten days, they "joined

together constantly in prayer” (Acts 1:14). When the day of Pentecost came, “all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:4).

60. Can you elaborate on the “witness of the Spirit” or the assurance of salvation?

This issue is of extreme importance. Since eternal destiny is at stake, we want to be certain of our position on this subject. Naturally, every person who has an interest in their eternal destiny will also have an interest in this crucial point—the assurance of salvation. Almost every person from every denomination and from every church wants to know for sure that they are saved, or wants to know *how to know* for sure that they are saved, and that they will certainly go to heaven when they die (or when Christ returns).

There are many things in life we treat this way. For example, if you are a caring parent, you will want to be certain at all times of your children’s whereabouts and safety, inasmuch as it is humanly possible. You may want to be sure your doors are locked before you go to bed at night. You may want to be sure you have your keys in your pocket before you lock the doors to your car. Otherwise you will be embarrassed to call someone to come and help you. You will want to be sure you have plenty of gas in your car before you head out on a highway where the next gas station is many miles away.

So it is with our salvation, and even more so! We want to be sure, because the alternative is unthinkable—the alternative is hell. And hell will be no party. Hell will be outer darkness, the total absence of light forever. It will be eternal loneliness and isolation. In heaven there will never be a single moment of loneliness. In hell there will never be anything but loneliness. It will be eternal hopelessness and despair. It will be eternal evil and bitterness. Hell will be the absence of God. So we want to be sure we are going to heaven.

The assurance of salvation must be addressed under two main headings:

- a. God’s Role in the Assurance of Salvation. God is the initiator and provider of salvation. He has done and is doing all the things that *only God* can do. For example, only God can awaken a person to his or her need. Only God can draw and convict a person of sin. Only God can forgive sins. Only God can perform the miracle of regener-

ation or new birth. Only God can provide saving grace. Only God can change a sinner into a saint. Only God can grant eternal life.

- (1) We must ask, "Is what God has done sufficient to save?" The rebellious Israelites asked the question, "Can God spread a table in the desert?" (Psalm 78:19). What a horrible question. They should have changed the first two words around and said "God can!" "God can!" "God can!" "God can!" God himself said to Abraham on one occasion, "Is anything too hard for the LORD?" (Genesis 18:14).
- (2) We must also ask, "Is God faithful?" Is he able to keep us in his grace? Is the atoning work of Christ on the cross sufficient to save to the uttermost? To answer wrongly is to cast aspersions on the efficacy of Christ's blood, and the covenant loyalty and love of God. Psalm 136 repeats the refrain 26 times, "His love endures forever!" 1 Corinthians 1:9 and 10:13 both have the statement "God is faithful" prominently inserted into them.
- (3) God has made great and precious promises. God is a God of integrity. He speaks with creative power. He speaks with authority. He speaks and we can count on it. Titus 1:2 says, "a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, *who does not lie*, promised before the beginning of time." Hebrews 6:18-19 says, "God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which *it is impossible for God to lie*, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure."
  - (a) We must identify God's promises. For example, Jesus said, "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12). The Bible also says, "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9).
  - (b) Then we must ask, "Can God lie?" We have already provided Scripture for this point. Let us look at a couple more. Balaam recited the word of the LORD to Barak saying, "God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?" (Numbers 23:19). Again,

Jesus said, "Let not your hearts be troubled. Ye believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:1-3).

There is great consolation for the believer here. Jesus does not want our hearts to be troubled. He wants us to have peace. He wants us to have a steadfast trust in God. He wants us to be assured of his provision and his preparation of a specific place for his people. He said, "If it were not so, I would have told you." On an issue of this importance, he would not have left us in despair. He wants us to be certain. And he wants us to ground our certainty, our faith, our confidence, in his integrity. He said, "If it were not so, I would have told you." You can find a great many people out there who will tell you it isn't so. But you have Jesus' word on it—It's so. "It's so!" "It's so!" "It's so!" "It's so!"

Everything written in his word is so. Every story is so. Every miracle is so. The virgin birth is so. The crucifixion is so. The resurrection is so. The second coming is so. Heaven is so. We all better admit that it's so. The time will come when every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that it's so. Every critic will admit that it's so. Every infidel will admit that it's so. Every atheist will admit that it's so. Every agnostic will admit that it's so. Every unbeliever will admit that it's so. Every demon of hell will admit that it's so. The Antichrist and the False Prophet, as they are being thrown into the lake of fire will admit that it's so. Satan himself, that old serpent and devil, who wreaked so much havoc on earth through the ages, will be forced to admit it's so, as even he is thrown into the lake of fire to be tormented day and night forever.

And finally, at long last, the hope of every believer will be realized as Christ ascends the eternal throne of glory and reigns forever as King of kings and Lord of lords. And there will be peace forevermore. All the former things will have passed away. There will be no more sorrow or crying or pain or death. There will be only joy, as God himself

spreads his tabernacle over his children, and they live eternally under the canopy of his love. Can God lie? No, a thousand times, No!

b. The Human Role in the Assurance of Salvation. There are those who would have you believe that there is no human role. They say it's 100% of God; you have nothing to do with it. This is because they start from the premise that God has decreed from the eternity those who will be saved and those who will not, and that the number is forever fixed and certain. Others say this simply because they are terrified that saying anything else is tantamount to endorsing a form of works-righteousness, or at least teetering on the edge of that precipice. But this is an unnecessary fear. And worse, these assumptions lead inexorably to very dangerous theological errors. Perhaps more significantly for purposes of our understanding here in this answer, these persons adopt a *monergistic* view of salvation. This means that the work is one-sided. According to this view, God initiates, God provides, and God completes salvation. Now that sounds good, and on the surface, most Christians would not disagree. However, what they imply is that salvation is imposed rather than chosen. They may say that you choose it, but the inexorable logic of their premise is that you really had no choice to make that choice! This is obviously a faulty view, and not in keeping with the Scriptures or with the realities of human experience. The correct view is that salvation is the result of a *synergism* of divine initiative and provision, and free human response. It is 100% God and 100% human. Only God does the God things, and only humans do the human things. The fact that there are many who rebel against God in no way reflects negatively upon the efficiency of God's grace. God's real decree from eternity is that humanity has the right to say no. Salvation is never imposed!

(1) Therefore, it is patently obvious that there are conditions that humans must meet in order to be saved. And if there are conditions to meet in order to be saved, there are also conditions to meet in order to remain saved. Otherwise we are left with the rather startling and absurd inference that conversion destroys our free will. The Bible from beginning to end is replete with verses that refer to the conditions of salvation. Some of these

are contrition, confession, repentance, faith, and reception. If these things are necessary for salvation, and the Bible over and over again says that they are, then it is clear that there is a human role in salvation. God doesn't have to be contrite. God doesn't have to confess sin. God doesn't have to repent.

Furthermore, it is clear that these things are prerequisite to salvation, and not responses to salvation (as Reformed theologians, for example, would have us believe). Reformed theologians (among others), for instance, believe that repentance occurs after you are saved, not before. This is easily refuted by Luke 13:3, 5, where Jesus said, "I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish." Jesus' words here are meaningless if perishing is not the inevitable result of not repenting. If repentance is only a response to salvation and not a condition that must be met in order to be saved, then how can Jesus say a person will perish if he doesn't repent? The people in danger of perishing are the unsaved! They are the ones who must repent.

- (2) So we must ask the question, "Have I met the conditions for salvation?" Have I confessed? Have I humbled myself in godly sorrow for sin and repented as deeply as I have sinned? Have I believed? Have I received Jesus Christ as my Savior? Have I given my life to him? All this can be done in the simplest prayer. For example, "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom" (Luke 23:42). Or, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner" (Luke 18:13).
- c. The Witness of the Spirit and the Ongoing Assurance of Salvation.  
John Wesley helped clarify this issue for us with his analysis of Romans 8:16, "The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children."
- (1) First, there is the witness of one's own spirit. "This is the believer's common sense argument that since his conversion he has experienced such a distinct change of inward moral will and outward practical discipline, that it is impossible for him to

doubt that he is the object of God's saving grace"<sup>312</sup> So, we may ask ourselves, "Am I changed person?" "Do I gladly obey his commands?" "Do I have the love of God in me?" "Do I do what is right?" "Do I love my neighbor?" "Do I have a new Spirit in me?" "Am I walking in the light as he is in the light?" "If and when I stumble, do I confess my sins immediately upon knowledge of them, and thereby receive a continuous cleansing from the precious blood of Christ?" "Do I happily walk as Jesus walked?"

- (2) Second, there is the witness of the Holy Spirit. "This is an inward impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God directly witnesses to my spirit, that I am a child of God."<sup>313</sup> So, we may ask ourselves, "Does God speak to me through his word and through holy people and through providential circumstances?" "Is God directing my life?" "Is God working in my life?" "Is God bringing continual joy and fulfillment into my life, in spite of adverse circumstances?" "Does God give me a peace that assures me there is no condemnation because I am presently *in Christ Jesus*, and not walking according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit?"

d. Summary. There are a few basic questions to remember that will help you.

- (1) First, there are those questions that have to do with divine activity.
  - (a) Has God done his part sufficiently and effectively?
  - (b) Is God faithful?
  - (c) Can God lie? Since he cannot, I should ground myself in his integrity.
- (2) Second, there are those questions that have to do with human response:
  - (a) Have I met the conditions?
  - (b) Am I continuing to meet the conditions daily?

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<sup>312</sup> John Lawson, *Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Wilmore, Kentucky: Francis Asbury Publishing Company, 1980), 228.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*

- (c) Does my experience testify to a definite change both inwardly and outwardly, and as a result, does the Spirit of God give me the accompanying peace?

e. Illustrations. I will offer three that might help you.

- (1) Carefully read Fanny Crosby's "Blessed Assurance." Then sing it. Her assurance came from the relationship, the covenantal synergism. She said, "Jesus is mine!" It was personal for her. Is it personal for you?
- (2) During my mother's childhood, her family lived in a rural farmhouse. In those days and in areas like theirs, if houses caught fire, it wasn't uncommon for them to burn rapidly and completely to the ground. Consequently, my grandfather conducted old fashioned fire drills with the children. The children had rooms upstairs; the parents' room was downstairs. Grandfather's instructions were simple. In case of fire, Mom and I will get out and stand under your windows. Starting with the youngest, jump out and I will catch you. Thankfully they never had a fire. But during the drills, each child in turn jumped when Grandpa said, "Jump." They trusted him implicitly. He always caught them! If we trust God in this way, we can be sure He will catch us!
- (3) A particular airplane flight was extremely turbulent and frightening, so much so that almost all passengers believed they would certainly die in a crash, including some who had never flown before and others who had flown frequently. There were two notable exceptions. One was an elderly man of God who remained calm. As he observed all the fear and panic in the other passengers, he noticed to his surprise a young boy who, like him, showed no sign of fear. After working his way through the crowd of terrified passengers to the lad, he asked, "Aren't you afraid? Why are you so calm?" The boy answered, "That's easy! My dad is the pilot!"

61. What should a person do who still does not buy into your view of entire sanctification?

Search the Scriptures for yourself! Let the Holy Spirit guide you. If, after earnestly completing this exercise, you are still convinced of your

good grounds for dissent, then embrace the position you believe to be truly biblical.

Before you do that, however, let me make this suggestion: If you are still inclined to disbelieve the doctrine of entire sanctification, go back to the title page of this paper and take a good long look at the image of the *corpus Christi* being removed from the cross. Then look up to heaven, where He is now seated in resurrected glory at the right hand of the Father, and say it directly to Him, “I do not believe you are willing or able to sanctify me wholly now.”

62. What should a person do who has heretofore embraced an erroneous view of sanctification, but now agrees with your view?

It is not fatal *to have been wrong*; it is only fatal to *remain wrong*. In keeping with the spirit of entire sanctification, the author wishes to avoid the impression that he has spoken the final word on the subject or that he has all the answers. I do not. I still have much to learn about it. What I do have is a firm conviction regarding the truth of this grand doctrine. For that I cannot apologize. However, if I have at any point in these pages erred in a statement, failed to state something as clearly or accurately as it could have been stated, or offended any reader, then I apologize for that. Such a case would only prove that I am still susceptible to the residual effects of the fall.

It is in that spirit of entire sanctification—the spirit of perfect love, that I exhort anyone who fits the category referred to in the above question: Be thankful for the grace of God that saves to the uttermost. Then consecrate yourself fully and wait expectantly for the baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire! When he witnesses to the fact that the work is done, then rejoice in the wonder of the possibilities of his grace.



## **CLOSING ARGUMENT**

## ***“Summary of Evidence”***

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, the pioneers of the modern holiness movement believed God was calling them to follow in the tradition of John Wesley and spread the message of Scriptural holiness around the world in their time. If those same spiritual benefactors could be here today, they would remind us that the world still needs this message in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They would exhort the church to this God-called holiness of heart and life. God is calling Christians to a deeper experience of fully sanctifying grace. This grace will have far-reaching salutary effects both individually and for the church at large, including above all the more rapid advance of the Christian missionary enterprise around the world. Such was the immediate result of this grace in the book of Acts.

### ***The evidence has shown that:***

1. God wills entire sanctification for his saints.
2. God, through Jesus Christ, has provided for the entire sanctification of his saints.
3. Christians, by the gracious help of the Holy Spirit, are expected to possess entire sanctification.

### ***The evidence has also shown that:***

1. Entire sanctification is a second, definite work of God’s saving grace.
2. Entire sanctification is a thorough work of God’s grace, whereby hearts are made pure and filled with the holy love of God.
3. Entire sanctification is a personal work of God’s grace, to be received by a specific act of faith in this earthly life.

### ***Exhortation***

With all this in mind, as you carefully consider the matter, I urge you to yield your all to Christ by faith. When he completes the work, the Holy Spirit will come and witness to your heart that you are completely clean! Wholly His!

## *Chart of New Testament Texts Supporting the Tenets of Wesleyan-holiness Orthodoxy*

<u>Tenet</u>	<u>Scriptural Support</u> <sup>314</sup>
1. Entire sanctification is subsequent to regeneration.	John 17:17; Acts 15:9; Romans 12:1; cf. 1 Corinthians 1:2 with 3:1-3; cf. 1 Thessalonians 1:1-3:10 with 3:11 –5:24; Hebrews 6:1
2. Entire sanctification is a crisis experience.	Romans 6:6; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Galatians 2:20; 5:24; 1 Thessalonians 4:3,7; 5:23-24; Hebrews 13:12
3. Entire sanctification is preceded by and followed by growth in grace.	
4. Entire sanctification is wrought by the baptism with the Holy Spirit.	cf. John 17:17 with Acts 2:1-41 and Acts 15:8-9
5. Entire sanctification is received by faith in the finished work of Christ, which includes a complete consecration.	Acts 15:9; 26:18; Romans 12:1; cf. Matthew 16:24 with Galatians 2:20
6. Entire sanctification is the earthly completion of what the Holy Spirit began in regeneration, cleansing the heart of Adamic depravity.	Galatians 3:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; James 1:4; 1 John 1:7, 9
7. Entire sanctification perfects the heart in love toward God and neighbor, empowering the Christian for service and greater growth in grace.	Matthew 5:44-48; 2 Corinthians 7:1; 1 John 2:5; 4:12, 18;

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<sup>314</sup> This list is representative, not exhaustive. Enough references are given to show that Wesleyan-holiness orthodoxy is in all points solidly based in Scripture.

I rest my case!