

A WHITE PAPER ON ARTICLE X

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Introduction: The Challenge

The celebration of the centennial of the Church of the Nazarene in 2008 is a salutary reminder that, with the passing of the generations, Christian fellowships and traditions face the danger of “drifting from the things which we have heard” (Heb. 2:1). However, there is also the opposite danger: that a tradition petrifies and lives in a time warp as an irrelevant antique. What were once *movements* become bureaucratic *machines* and end up as dead *monuments*. In order to avoid the dangers on both sides and remain a *living* tradition, a faithful holiness *movement* and not a mere *monument* to former glories, the Church of the Nazarene along with its sister holiness denominations must constantly learn to re-express the message of holiness (a) in faithfulness to those who have gone before us, but (b) in concepts and thought-forms that will speak to the present generation in a constantly changing multi-cultural environment.

The Board of General Superintendents made the point well in 1988 in their foreword to Dr H. Ray Dunning’s *Grace, Faith and Holiness*:

It is imperative that these theological expressions [of doctrine] be stated in the language and thought forms of every new generation if the life of the church is to be nurtured and sustained. While Christian truths remain constant, their mode of presentation varies and the means of comprehending them must be current in order to be relevant.

We are not of course the first to attempt to re-express our tradition in contemporary thought-forms. We have a clear example from our own history in those leaders of the nineteenth-century holiness movement who re-expressed the eighteenth-century Methodist emphasis on Christian holiness for their own times. They re-expressed the doctrine in ways shaped by the philosophical and psychological thinking of their day. This is seen particularly in their strong certitude about their own spiritual experience, a way of thinking shaped by the then-dominant philosophy of Scottish Common Sense Realism and by the strong cultural influences of pragmatic individualism. And of course their re-expression of the tradition was not monolithic: there were differences of emphasis, concepts and language even among Wesleyan holiness people.

In our day then, we too must express the doctrine of Christian holiness for this generation. Vast changes have taken place in philosophy and psychology, and theology too has seen great changes and developments. These include, for example, the recovery of the structure of New Testament eschatology or the much greater focus on ecclesiology, the doctrine of the Church, or the deepening understanding across the Church of the vital importance of Trinitarian thought for our life together .

Re-expressing a tradition is no easy task, for both dangers must be kept constantly in mind – the danger of drifting, and the danger of petrifying. We must neither lose the doctrine of Christian

holiness we have inherited, nor allow it to become an irrelevant antique. And we must not be so lacking in confidence in the truth we proclaim that we think that it must be expressed with a monolithic uniformity. There must be an underlying unity, but any living, growing, tradition thrives on different perspectives which stimulate thought and deepen understanding.

The challenge of re-expressing our tradition calls for the most careful theological consideration. As biblical scholars and historical theologians, we must strengthen our roots so that we remain firmly grounded in Scripture and ensure that new language and thought-forms are true to what Wesley called ‘the oracles of God’. As philosophical theologians and students of contemporary cultures, we must seek new ways of conveying the unchanging message. As practical theologians, we must listen to the pragmatic and doctrinal questions of today’s generation, and speak to the questions that they are asking. And as systematic theologians we must bring all this together in faithful but creative ways into a coherent, relevant and challenging formulation of doctrine.

This is an ongoing task which will never be finished until the kingdom comes in power and glory. But we see the invitation from the Thought Partners of the Board of General Superintendents to examine the wording of Article X of our Nazarene Articles of Faith as an opportunity to re-state the doctrine of sanctification concisely in faithful and creative language that will promote clear proclamation, deeper pragmatic understanding and enthusiastic identification with the message we were raised up to preach and embody.

We are conscious, however, that the present centennial publishing initiative of NPH is producing a whole new library of works of biblical studies and theology, and it may be that a finally satisfactory re-writing of Article X will come best *after* the thought stimulated by this new generation of publications. But we are happy in response to the request of the Thought Partners at least to begin discussion of the wording of the present article.

The Contents of this Paper

In response to the specific requests made by the Thought Partners, this paper seeks to address the challenge in the following ways:

1. First of all we shall analyze the problems and inadequacies which are widely seen in the present wording of Article X.
2. Secondly, we shall look at the two versions of our tradition, the ‘classic Wesleyan’ and ‘American holiness’ versions and seek a synthesis where possible by addressing the question whether there is an underlying unity behind the differences.
3. Thirdly, we shall address the supremely important question of positioning the doctrine of entire sanctification on the most solid exegetical foundation possible.
4. Fourthly we shall try to provide better understanding of the doctrine expressed in Article X by looking at it within the broad context of other historic church traditions and sources.

5. Fifthly, we shall look at varying ways of formulating the doctrine in the Articles of Faith of sister denominations.
6. Finally we shall present a draft of one way in which we could reformulate our own article more biblically and comprehensively.

I. Problems in the Present Wording of Article X

A survey of opinion among colleagues in Nazarene colleges has indicated that a number of theological, biblical, linguistic and structural problems are seen in the current wording of Article X, and that this is damaging our preaching of, and witness to, entire sanctification. The problems of language and structure may be summarized in three points.

1. Throughout the article there are somewhat dated and quaint words and phrases which are not biblical and which could be better expressed: e.g. “entire devotement”, “provided”, “wrought”, “state of grace”. The article could be made much more persuasive to loyal Nazarenes and to skeptics alike if it made *biblical language* primary. The language level should strive for clarity and avoid obscure and archaic scholastic phraseology, but it should also reflect the fact that Articles of Faith are theological statements fully within the broader Nicene tradition. It therefore should aim primarily at biblical and theological precision and accuracy, and secondly at clarity for the theologically informed reader, and, if possible, for the less informed reader or new Christian. Ease of understanding for the last group is important, but not of the first importance and if necessary must give way to the other requirements. It would also be an improvement to take the phrases in the article which are listed as synonymous with ‘entire sanctification’ and integrate them into the logic of the article.
2. The later additions (in 1928 and 1976) of the wording now in paragraph 14 make the idea of ‘growth in grace’ appear to be an afterthought. They leave the article as a whole begging un-useful questions and a re-draft of the article could give the statement of the doctrine a much tighter logic and greater clarity. Instead of beginning with entire sanctification and adding the later paragraph on other aspects of sanctification, a much clearer and more persuasive statement of the doctrine would result from beginning with the doctrine of *sanctification as a whole* and presenting *entire* sanctification within that wider context. To move from *initial*, to *gradual*, to *entire* sanctification would surely make the doctrine clearer to the reader and would facilitate the proclamation and teaching of the doctrine .
3. In the first sentence of paragraph 13, entire sanctification is defined first in negative terms (“made free from original sin, or depravity”). A more *positive presentation* which presented the doctrine first as “entire devotement to God” etc. would surely be preferable, although that rather odd word (“devotement”) could be replaced by more biblical language.

The following four points are of more theological substance:

4. First, it is not always clear from the present wording of the article how the doctrine of sanctification is related to other doctrines within a coherent theology. There is some reference to the doctrines of Original Sin, the Holy Spirit, and the Atonement, but it would help to make the presentation of this doctrine more persuasive if it could be shown to be integral to Christian theology as a whole, particularly doctrines such as Christology, Justification, Eschatology, the Holy Trinity, and Ecclesiology. Without being any longer, the article could be much richer and “thicker” in its resonances to the many aspects of the doctrine, and thereby much more persuasive.

5. In the second sentence of paragraph 13, the issue of the “baptism of the Spirit” arises. Little or no support can now be found among Nazarene biblical scholars or theologians for the “Oberlin” view of Charles Finney and Asa Mahan (adopted into the Wesleyan holiness tradition by Phoebe Palmer and later Daniel Steele) that the Pentecostal “baptism of the Spirit” in Acts 2 can be regarded as the *exact* equivalent of the entire sanctification *of the individual*. This issue is identified by Mark Quanstrom as crucial to the division between the “classic Wesleyan” doctrine and the “American holiness” doctrine. Whatever the views in the denomination at large, our scholars no longer view the American holiness hermeneutic of the “baptism of the Spirit” as exegetically tenable. At the very least it is problematic. Yet the baptism of the Spirit on the historic Day of Pentecost is still essential to the doctrine for the fact that “the Comforter has come” makes possible entire sanctification today. Further, the same sentence states that the baptism of the Holy Spirit brings about “the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit”, and so seems to imply that the Holy Spirit does not dwell in all the regenerate. Some amendment to the article is therefore necessary in order to bring our tradition under the authority of Scripture. However it must be emphasized that relinquishing the problematic interpretation of Acts 2 *does not mean abandoning the Wesleyan doctrine of entire sanctification* since the doctrine is built on much more secure biblical exegesis throughout the whole sweep of Scripture.

6. Historically the holiness tradition has commonly regarded Acts 2 as a fundamental biblical warrant for its proclamation of the “secondness” and “instantaneousness” of entire sanctification. John Wesley, on the other hand, believed that entire sanctification was instantaneous, but based that belief on reason (there must be a moment when we die to sin even if the moment of death is not observed, cf. *A Plain Account*, 26), and on experience (that is, his interviewing of hundreds of witnesses). He believed that instantaneous conversion could be established biblically, but he did not believe that Scripture made or provided a theologically or spiritually consistent or compelling case for the instantaneousness of entire sanctification. He also used the word “second”, as in “second blessing”, *but in extremely rare instances* – only half a dozen times in his entire works published over sixty years. For him this was part of the doctrine, but not the heart of the matter. But for the nineteenth-century holiness movement, “instantaneousness” and “secondness” – the “how” and “when” of the doctrine, its “circumstance” - became theologically and thence experientially central. Finney and Mahan thought they could provide the missing biblical proof for “instantaneousness” and “secondness” by their interpretation of Acts 2. Daniel Steele thought that he could provide exegetical proof for a second ‘instant’ from the aorist tense, but biblical scholars today regard this as exegetically problematic.

The current and deepening stand-off between those who insist on Acts 2 as a paradigm for entire sanctification and those who insist that exegetically it cannot be, and between those who anchor their case for instantaneousness (and therefore “secondness”) on the koine Greek aorist and those who say that this is, at best, a weak reed, has contributed to a muting of the proclamation of, and instruction in the doctrine of, entire sanctification for fear of giving offense. Such a situation severely compromises us all at the very point of our vocation as a denomination, for finally, we are “called unto holiness.”

There may be some puzzlement here about why “subsequence” (as in the present wording of Article X) is preferable to “secondness”, and indeed the two concepts are very close. Briefly, the concept of “subsequence” (that entire sanctification comes later than the new birth) is more exegetically defensible as an implication of Scripture. To use the word “second” is to draw attention to the most exegetically weak aspect of the doctrine rather than the “perfect love” or “purity of heart” which is exegetically the strongest.

7. The relation of Article X to the doctrine of original sin also needs to be clarified. We must affirm with Wesley that the doctrine of original sin is an implication of the gospel of grace, and also that entire sanctification is that ‘dying to sin’ in which the “carnal mind” (or better, as in the NRSV, “the mind set on the flesh”) is dealt with. But to use the Augustinian phrase “original sin”, and to say baldly that entire sanctification makes us “free from original sin” (a phrase which Wesley himself never used in this precise context) is to leave ourselves open to the interpretation that we believe that entire sanctification brings “Adamic” or “sinless” perfection. A more nuanced statement of the doctrine is necessary at this point in order to make it clear that the entirely sanctified, while being filled with the Spirit and so delivered from “the mind set on the flesh”, remain fallible creatures in the fallen body while in ‘this present evil age’.

II. Two Versions of our Tradition

Our examination of the wording of Article X takes place against the background of a perceived bifurcation of the theological tradition, documented by Mark Quanstrom in his recent book, *A Century of Holiness Theology: The Doctrine of Entire Sanctification in the Church of the Nazarene, 1905-2004* (Beacon Hill, 2004). We have already referred to these two versions, but we turn now to a fuller investigation of these two positions and their underlying unity, noting that this is a *different* exercise from articulating a Wesleyan doctrine of Christian holiness from first principles. The latter is the real theological task, but the task of understanding the two positions, “classic Wesleyan” and “American holiness”, and investigating whether they are compatible has been presented to us as what might be called an ecclesially necessary task which needs also to be undertaken.

Despite the impression that these two versions of our tradition are incompatible, analysis suggests that there are five major points of agreement. As we examine them we may also investigate the differences between the two versions and ask whether these differences have any *theological* significance.

It is our conviction that, while there are real differences between the two versions of our tradition, the differences have been exaggerated. We suggest:

- That much more unites these two versions of the tradition than divides them.
- That the difference between them is a difference of language rather than substance
- That it is a difference of emphasis rather than of outright contradiction

That may be a somewhat different perspective than that presented in his book by Mark Quanstrom, but Quanstrom gives us a close-up shot. If we stand back and take the larger perspective of the whole spectrum of Christian theology, then we have to say that these two are so close together that you can hardly insert a credit card between them! Much more unites them than divides them.

If we take the consensus of nineteenth-century holiness leaders in the Wesleyan tradition, then we can say that both Wesley and the nineteenth-century holiness leaders believe in Christian Perfection, understood not as flawlessness, but as “perfect love”. Both agree that this perfection is reached through entire sanctification. There is no disagreement about that. Both Wesley and the nineteenth-century leaders believe that entire sanctification occurs in an instant. Both believe that it is the work of the Holy Spirit and write of it as being “filled with the Spirit”. Both Wesley and the nineteenth-century leaders believe that entire sanctification includes “death to sin”, understood as death to an aspect of original sin. Both agree that entire sanctification follows and is followed by a gradual growth in sanctification which begins at regeneration. So there are five points of substantial agreement to investigate further.

(1) Christian Perfection, understood as Perfect Love

That Wesley understood Christian Perfection as Perfect Love hardly needs to be documented here. He inherited the language of ‘perfection’ from the Old and New Testaments, from the Great Tradition of the Church catholic, the Fathers of east and west, and the Medieval theologians (with some demurring on the part of the magisterial Reformers who were reacting against the distortion of “perfection” in the late medieval period). Wesley’s characteristic definition of Christian holiness and Christian Perfection is “loving God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength”.

But it is also clear that the formative thinkers of the American holiness movement accept this language too. Mahan, for example, endorses this focus on the Great Commandment on the first page of *Christian Perfection*. Although in some traditions stemming from Finney purity is subordinated to power, leading figures in the Wesleyan holiness movement, such as J.A. Wood and George Peck, put the emphasis on perfect love.

(2) ‘Perfect love’ results from ‘entire sanctification’ which occurs in an instant and is subsequent to regeneration

Although some Wesleyans may play down the ‘instantaneous’, this is Wesley’s clear position. The way we state the point here makes clear the subtle difference between Christian perfection and entire sanctification (on this see further Dr Bassett’s treatment in *Exploring Christian*

Holiness, Vol. 2, pages 19 and 20). The two are interdependent. Sanctification is “to make holy” (*sanctum facere*), and the result of being made entirely holy in “entire sanctification” is to love God with all the heart, soul, mind and strength (“perfect love”). But equally it is loving God with all the heart, soul, mind and strength which effects entire sanctification. For Wesley, this occurred in an instant, however it is important to realize that he regarded this as a corollary which was implied, not the essence or focus of the doctrine. He accepted that entire sanctification occurred in an instant first on the grounds of experience since he found this to be the case among his flock. Secondly, he accepted it on the grounds of reason, as a reasonable inference. The logic is simple: that if once a person did not love God with all the heart, soul, mind and strength, but now does, there must have been a moment when this was first the case. However Wesley did not believe that he could establish the instantaneousness of entire sanctification from Scripture. (He had been convinced by Peter Böhler that conversion was instantaneous in the New Testament).

So there is a second formal point of agreement here between Wesley and the American Holiness movement, namely, that entire sanctification occurs in an instant and that this comes subsequent to the new birth. However, here is the difference of emphasis: that with the American Holiness movement, this becomes central rather than peripheral. Formally, the American holiness movement made Wesley’s logical inference into a necessary temporal sequence. That involves several points. First, entire sanctification (the “how”) becomes central rather than consequence of perfect love (the “what”). Secondly, the use of the terminology of “sanctification” more often than the terminology of “love” places the focus on what we are sanctified *from* (cleansing from sin) rather than the life we are introduced *to* (the life of perfect love). But thirdly, the focus on the “means” rather than the “end” is accompanied by a much stronger emphasis on the instantaneous nature of this event. Wesley believed that entire sanctification occurred in an instant, but he was not prepared to insist that everyone had to accept this for he did not think that the point could be established from Scripture. He allowed difference of opinion. In the American Holiness movement “instantaneousness” became an essential part of the doctrine. A new terminology was coined, the “crisis experience”, a phrase which Wesley never used. Using the word “experience” as a noun (which was not characteristic of Wesley’s usage) focused the attention on the event and carried the danger of encouraging seekers to seek the “experience” (i.e. the psychological or spiritual event) rather than seeking God. (See Al Truesdale, “Reification of the Experience of Entire Sanctification in the American Holiness Movement,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 31:2, 95-119.) And another phrase, which Wesley used but in extremely rare instances, the “second” blessing or work, became the central and defining terminology for many. The use of the adjective “second” accentuated the comparison of entire sanctification with conversion or the new birth as a “second crisis experience” or a “second definite work of grace”. At the same time, Phoebe Palmer’s advocacy of the “shorter way” carried the danger of premature profession leading either to hypocrisy or disillusionment. (See Wes Tracy’s foreword to H. Ray Dunning, *A Layman’s Guide to Sanctification*, Beacon Hill, 1991.)

The whole focus and emphasis of Wesley’s doctrine had therefore shifted from holiness understood as love to sanctification understood as cleansing, from the “what” to the “how” and the “when”. If we ask why these changes took place, historically the answer probably lies in American church culture, specifically, the Puritan, Calvinist tradition of New England. In that

theological tradition it was vitally important that the next generation should have definite and clear and datable conversion experiences. The one who had a definite conversion experience was saved from time and eternity: “once saved, always saved”. Under Finney, the open invitation to the mourner’s bench was therefore the appointed means to ensure that this crisis experience occurred clearly and “definitely”, and that one was numbered amongst the elect. The “crisis experience” was vital. Coming out of this originating crucible of American revivalism, Finney and Mahan carried over this practice into the “second work of grace”. Their heritage from Calvinism therefore encouraged and shaped the view, even when it was not explicitly voiced and defended, that the “crisis” was vital: there had to be “second definite work of grace”. The actual “crisis” and its “secondness” became much more essential to the doctrine than it ever was for Wesley, and it was linked liturgically to the new American institution of the altar call. The practice shaped the doctrine: believers were urged to receive “the blessing” *now*. It must be said that there was spiritual value in encouraging believers to be “definite” about their experience and to know exactly where they stood before God.

However, despite these differences of emphasis, there is formal agreement between the two traditions on this second point. Wesley and the formative leaders of the American holiness movement agreed that perfect love began with entire sanctification which occurred in an instant, and matured from then on. And there is clear agreement too between the two versions of the tradition that entire sanctification takes place *subsequent* to the new birth and growth in grace. However our modern Western exactitude about concepts such as “instant” and “crisis” which are “definite” would have puzzled the people of eighteenth-century England and nineteenth-century America, and such exact thinking is foreign to most world cultures today.

(3) This is the Work of the Holy Spirit and may be equated with being ‘filled with the Spirit’

The Holy Spirit is the agent of sanctification in every Christian tradition. The very name makes the connection with “holiness”, for while He is the loving Spirit, the enlightening Spirit, the inspiring Spirit, the life-giving Spirit, He is pre-eminently the “Holy” Spirit. Given that we can be sanctified at all (for God alone is holy), what else would we expect but that the *Spiritus Sanctus* is the one who “sanctifies”? For Wesley too therefore, at the moment the “relative” change of justification takes place, so too does the “real” change of regeneration – being born of the Spirit – which he sees as the initiating of sanctification. In the moment that justification takes place, he writes, sanctification “begins”. He also refers occasionally to the later entire sanctification as the “filling with the Spirit”. However, he did not accept the usage of his colleague John Fletcher that this could be called the “baptism of the Spirit” because “baptism of the Spirit” implied the initial reception of the Spirit and that clearly took place at the new birth.

So here once again we have a difference of emphasis within a point of agreement. But is it more than a difference of emphasis? Is there a point of actual *disagreement* here – a point-blank contradiction? Is there a substantial point of difference in saying that the entire sanctification of the individual Christian is also his baptism in/with the Holy Spirit? What actual difference does it make?

That really depends on what the difference of usage is taken to imply and why it was introduced. For John Fletcher, calling entire sanctification the “baptism in/with the Holy Spirit” was linked to his dispensational teaching. For Finney and Mahan it was part of the general awakening of interest in the Spirit that began in the 1820s and 1830s. They equated the “baptism of the Spirit” with what Wesley called “Christian perfection”, but for them (unlike Wesley) this equation provided knock-down proof (or so they thought) for the “secondness” of the second blessing. If Wesley did not think that the instantaneity of the “second blessing” could be proved from Scripture, they thought it could. “Have you received the Holy Ghost *since* ye believed?” (Acts 19:2, KJV) was one of Mahan’s great proof texts. They set up the model of the apostles (considered as *individuals*) who must have been regenerate before Pentecost and who therefore were baptized with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost as their second work of grace, which must also have been their entire sanctification. This new hermeneutic was accepted by the influential Phoebe Palmer and later by the Methodist biblical scholar, Daniel Steele, though with some qualifications in the interpretation of Acts.

One of the reasons for this new equation then was that it claimed to give the scriptural exegetical basis which Wesley lacked for the instantaneity of what was now described as a “second crisis experience”. And if it was exegetically based, it could be regarded as essential to the doctrine and not (as Wesley saw it) a logical and experiential extension. The revivalist then had a basis for calling people to the altar not only to lay themselves on it as sacrifices but to expect the “baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire”.

This understanding of the “baptism of the Holy Ghost” was sometimes taken to imply that it was the *initial* reception of the Spirit. Later Wesleyan holiness people insisted that it was not, but the problem with the “baptism” language was that it carried that implication. Had it simply implied a dipping or bathing or outpouring of the Holy Spirit so that the Christian was filled with the Spirit, that implication might not have been drawn. But the concept of baptism is too closely linked to *initiation* and so was too often taken to imply the *initial* reception of the Spirit. The first blessing was popularly linked with Christ and the cross and brought justification, forgiveness for *acts* of sin: the second blessing was linked with the Holy Spirit and Pentecost and brought sanctification, cleansing from *inbred* sin. This was a simple formula, easily communicated at the popular level, but a severe and misleading oversimplification of Wesleyan doctrine.

Was this a difference in substance from Wesley’s doctrine? Interpreted in the manner just noted, it clearly was. There was a tendency to ignore and even to deny the initial reception of the Holy Spirit and the initiation of sanctification at regeneration. The temptation was to de-value regeneration and to make it merely the forgiveness of acts of sin (that is, solely justification). And along with that went a tendency to deny what Wesley called the “gradual work” of sanctification. The focus was all on the great crises (particularly the second) through the revivalist drama of the altar call. Daniel Steele added a second exegetical basis for a second crisis when he developed the proof from the aorist tense eventually presented by Dr Olive Winchester in *Crisis Experiences in the Greek New Testament*.

If the American holiness version of our tradition holds on to these aspects of the nineteenth-century development, then one has to say that there is a fundamental incompatibility with the

Wesleys and indeed with the theologies of most of the Christian Church apart from traditional Pentecostalism. Not only so, but the American Holiness version is in deep trouble exegetically, for contemporary exegesis generally cannot support the late nineteenth-century exegetical arguments regarding religious crises. Neither the interpretation of Pentecostal baptism of the Spirit nor the use of the proof from the aorist has any significant support among Wesleyan biblical scholars. And these two arguments for “secondness” were not part of Wesley’s doctrine. Indeed he explicitly repudiated the first. He *allowed* his followers to use the Pentecostal language, but he insisted that it was not strictly correct to call the entire sanctification of the individual his or her “baptism in the Spirit”.

But there is common ground. The whole of sanctification, from regeneration (initial sanctification) up to and including entire sanctification and beyond, is the work of the Holy Spirit insofar as he is the One who unites us to Christ. And although Wesley rejected the “baptism” language, he did accept that entire sanctification could be referred to as being “filled with the Holy Spirit”.

(4) This Implies and Includes a Death to the “Carnal Mind”

Wesley quite clearly taught that entire sanctification brought a “death to sin”, by which he meant (he said) “inbred sin”, although he never in this context used the term “original sin”. Richard Watson was probably the first Methodist theologian to use the phrase “original sin” here. Perhaps Wesley was aware that original sin was a much wider and multi-faceted concept. He specified the aspect of original sin he had in mind when he wrote that being made “perfect in love” involves the death of the *phronema tes sarkos* (Rom. 8:7). This is one of the places he actually quotes the Greek in his published sermons. For him then, loving God with all the heart, soul, mind and strength means the “death” of the *phronema sarkos*, the “carnal mind” according to the KJV, the “mind set on the flesh” according to the helpful translation of the RSV/NRSV. Wesley himself was clear that this was not the ending of original sin in all its aspects for it did not mean a return to Adamic perfection. In his later sermons he is particularly clear that we still “have this treasure in earthen vessels”, namely our fallen bodies, and that for want of perfect bodily organs (particularly our “disordered brains”) even the holiest are guilty of thinking and doing what is wrong. William Burt Pope of Didsbury College was later to make clear in his *Compendium of Christian Theology* (Vol. 3, page 47) that Wesleyan doctrine did not imply the end of original sin in all its aspects, and that original sin as “belonging to the [fallen] race” (that is, in its corporate dimension) remains “till the time of which it is said, ‘Behold, I make all things new.’”

Were these subtleties not missed in the popular preaching of the American holiness movement? Our present rather bald statement in Article X that “believers are made free from original sin, or depravity” does surely tend to convey to non-Wesleyans that we believe in “sinless perfection”.

But although a great deal of clarification is needed on the doctrine of original sin, there is substantial and fundamental agreement here between the two versions of our tradition. There is a great deal of clarifying to do! Dr Richard Taylor’s charge that Dr Wynkoop is guilty of heresy here cannot be sustained, but we need some clear thinking on how the spiritual/psychological dimension of original sin is related to the ontological.

(5) Entire sanctification occurs after a gradual growth in sanctification which begins at the new birth and continues life-long

Admittedly there was a tendency in some quarters of the American holiness movement to deny the ‘gradual’ growth. The tendency was to equate “sanctification” entirely with “entire sanctification” and to reduce everything to the one “crisis”. However, the acceptance of the “crisis” and “process” language (even though these are unWesleyan terms!) made clear a fundamental point of agreement between the two versions of the tradition. Unfortunately, popular Nazarene usage is to speak of “sanctification” when we mean “entire sanctification”, and therefore to speak misleadingly of being “saved and sanctified”. That phraseology encourages the over-simplified two-step approach. Theologically the distinction was better made in the tradition phraseology of “sanctification” and “entire sanctification”, or “salvation” and “full salvation”. In this way it is recognized that to deny the “gradual work”(as Wesley called it) is not true to the Wesleyan tradition nor to Scripture.

Similarly, the denial of the instantaneousness of entire sanctification or its subsequence to the new birth is not true to the Wesleyan tradition. That does not mean to say that one has to insist on a dramatic highpoint or deep psychological “crisis”. In fact in some cases (Wesley admitted) the moment of entire sanctification may not be observable or may not be consciously noted even by the one being sanctified. His or her attention may be so firmly fixed on God that there is no self-observation of any inner change! It may therefore *appear* to be the case that there has been no point of entire sanctification. But although not observed externally or even consciously noted within, there must be a moment when the believer first loves God with all of the heart, mind and strength and the “mind set on the flesh” is extinguished.

Careful use of language is needed to make it clear that sanctification begins with the new birth and that the “gradual work” is pursued by “zealous obedience to all the commandments” until the believer comes to the point of entire sanctification. To deny either the gradual work of sanctification or to deny the moment of “entire” sanctification is in contradiction to the tradition. It is not a matter of “either/or”, but of “both/and”. In fact they are mutually necessary: there is no point of entire sanctification that is not preceded by the “gradual work”, and conversely, the gradual work of sanctification languishes unless the believer is convinced that God is able and waiting to purify the heart. Once that is recognized, it is clear that there is a deep agreement between the two versions of the tradition despite a difference in emphasis.

We conclude therefore that although there are differences of emphasis, and although there is a difference over the interpretation of Pentecost and the language of “baptism of the Spirit”, beneath all that there is a deep underlying unity brought out in these five substantial points.

III. The Strong Biblical Basis for the Doctrine

The importance of a strong exegetical and hermeneutical foundation for our doctrine of holiness has already been noted in this paper. While certain details of the way the doctrine has been presented throughout our history may not find strong biblical support, there is no question as regards the central affirmations that we make with reference to holiness in general and entire

sanctification in particular. The call to holiness is clearly sounded throughout the Old and New Testament, though in a variety of ways and with a variety of terms. The holiness Scripture requires of people is understood in terms of the holiness of God. The holiness taught in Scripture is multi-layered and reveals an ever growing dynamic in the relationship of God and his people.

(1) **The Strong Emphasis in Scripture on Holiness**

The call to holiness does not arise from a few isolated texts of Scripture. Rather it reflects a major theme found in virtually all portions of the biblical canon and interwoven into the assumptions of Scripture from beginning to end. That vision of holiness is portrayed in the narrative texts from Genesis through Acts. In contrast to the fact that “the wickedness of humankind was great,” and “every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually,” (Gen. 6:5), “Noah was a righteous man, perfect in his generation” (Gen. 6:9). Job was also described with the term “blameless” or “perfect” (*tam* in Hebrew) and for all his “imperfections” David was noted to be a man after God’s own heart (1 Sam 13:14). The Lord, speaking to Solomon, described David as one who had walked before him with “integrity of heart and uprightness.” The Hebrew phrase translated “integrity of heart” is *betam-lebab* – literally “with a perfect heart”(1 Kgs 9:4).

The narrative testimonies to holiness continue in the New Testament. Joseph, Zechariah and Elizabeth, and old Simeon are all portrayed as holy people. The climax of the narrative pictures of holiness comes in the book of Acts. Several of the great themes of Acts are summarized in Peter’s defense of evangelizing the Gentiles when he declared, “And God, who knows the human heart, testified to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us; and in cleansing their hearts by faith he has made no distinction between them and us” (Acts 15:8-9).

Beyond the narrative depictions of holy people Scripture is filled with commands to holiness from Genesis to Revelation. To old Abram, God said, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be perfect (*tamim*)” (Gen 17:1). To the people of Israel God commanded, “You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy” (Lev 19:2). The commands to holiness as so frequent in the later part of Leviticus that Lev 17-26 are commonly called “The Holiness Code” by scholars of all theological traditions. Jesus instructed his listeners in the Sermon on the Mount, “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt 5:48). Paul commanded his Roman readers, “You also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Rom 6:11). Two verses later he commands, “No longer present your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness” (Rom 6:13). Peter commands his readers, “As he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct” (1 Pet 1:15) and then validates his call by quoting the Old Testament command from Leviticus, “You shall be holy, for I am holy” (1 Pet 1:16). Revelation concludes with John’s command to the holy, “still be holy” (Rev 22:11).

This breadth of the biblical vision of holiness is matched by the diversity of the language used to describe it. Beyond the direct words of “holy” and “sanctify” is a rich tapestry of metaphors that portray aspects of the holiness to which God calls his people. The language of perfection is used in both testaments to describe the holy life. In the Old Testament perfection (*tam* or *tamim*)

encompasses both cultic and moral elements and is often translated “blameless” though on occasion it can be understood as integrity (as seen above). In the New Testament perfection (usually *teleios* or one of its cognates) denotes the complete fulfillment of God’s purposes when one is or does all that one should be or do. Though the word “perfect” is retained in most translations when referring to God, the majority of modern versions have abandoned the translation “perfect” for *teleios* when the word refers to persons. The most common word used now in such contexts is the word “mature.” While there are advantages to such a translation it disconnects God’s expectation of holiness (perfection) from God’s nature of holiness (perfection) and it leaves our Wesleyan tradition of emphasizing Christian perfection more severed from the Bibles most of our people read.

The language of purification or cleansing is also used in both Old and New Testaments to describe the heart and life of a holy people. The ritual purity required for entrance into the presence of God in the sacrificial worship of the Old Testament lies behind the metaphor but it is clearly extended to the moral realm also. To the question of who may ascend the hill of the LORD (the temple mount) and who may stand in his holy place, the psalmist replies, “The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not set his mind on what is false, and who has not sworn deceitfully” (Psalm 24:3-4). Ezekiel records the promise of God to his people, “I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances” (Ezek 36:25-27). Clearly, even in the Old Testament the concept of purity or cleansing has moved from simply the cultic to the transformation of the human heart and life.

The concept of purity is also used widely in the New Testament. Early in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus speaks blessing the “pure in heart” with the promise that “they will see God” (Matt 5:8). This “moral” understanding of purity is clear in Jesus’ teaching in Matt 15:19-20, “For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile.” John promises that “If we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). Both Old and New Testaments use the graphic metaphor of “circumcision of the heart” to describe the purifying work of God that moves beyond the external to the core of the human will. Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6; and Romans 2:29 make it clear that a circumcised heart, a cleansed heart is God’s expectation for his people.

There are many other expressions used within Scripture to point to the divine desire for human holiness. Within the New Testament, the imitation of God (Eph 5:1), Christlikeness (Matt 10:25); union with Christ (Rom 6:4-5), putting off the old Adam and clothing oneself with the new Adam (Rom 6:6; Eph 4:22-24; Col 3:9-10), transformation into the image of God (2 Cor 3:18) presenting the members of your body to God (Rom 6:13, 19; 12:1), seeking first the kingdom of God (Matt 6:33), and becoming participants of the divine nature (2 Pet 1:4) are only a few of the metaphors that describe the life of holiness. What is clear is that holiness is not an isolated theme nor a marginal concept in the context of Scripture. Rather, holiness is central, pervasive, and deeply rooted as the will of God for his people.

(2) The Substance of Holiness

What is the meaning or content of the holiness that is clearly expected throughout Scripture? If Scripture is clear on the call to holiness, it is no less clear about what holiness entails. The holiness of God is the foundation for the biblical call to God's people to be holy. "Be holy, as I, the LORD your God, am holy" (Lev 19:2) is both the central command to be holy and the basic alignment of human holiness with the holiness of God. The foundational (though not the exclusive) meaning of the Hebrew word used throughout the Old Testament for "holy," *qadosh*, is "set apart" or "separated to."

The holiness of God is his character that is unique among all gods and set apart from all worldly and cultural ways of valuing. The holiness of God's people will be observed in the ways in which they are separated from the values of the world and set apart or devoted completely to God and to his purposes.

In particular, the holiness of God is seen throughout both Testaments by his opposition to sin. Sin is incompatible with the holy God. One might summarize the whole of Scripture as the story of God's plan to rescue his people from the power of sin that has separated them from him. The holiness of God's people is, therefore, incompatible with living under the power of sin. The apostle Paul makes this point most forcefully in Romans 6. "Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it?" (Rom 6:1b-2). "So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore, do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions" (Rom 6:11-12). "Should we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! . . . But now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the advantage you get is sanctification" (Rom 6:15, 22).

John is equally emphatic that sin is incompatible with the Christian life. "If we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. . . . My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin" (1 John 1:7; 2:1). Even more emphatic are his words in chapter 3, "No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him. . . . Everyone who commits sin is a child of the devil; for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The Son of God was revealed for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. Those who have been born of God do not sin, because God's seed abides in them; they cannot sin, because they have been born of God" (1 John 3:6, 8-9). Just as the holiness of God is incompatible with sin, human holiness is incompatible with sin also.

The holiness of God is also characterized by love. The call in Deuteronomy for Israel to be holy is founded on God's love. "For you are a people holy to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on earth to be his people, his treasured possession. It was not because you were more numerous than any other people that the LORD set his heart on you and chose you – for you were the fewest of all peoples. It was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath that he swore to your ancestors" (Deut 7:6-8a). The response that Israel owed God was to love him with all their heart, soul, and might as the *Shema* taught (Deut 6:5). The great holiness chapter that follows the command to be holy in Lev 19:2 reaches its first climax in verse

18 with the command, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD. Thus the Old Testament intertwines God’s holiness with God’s love for his people. It also understands that human holiness finds its most significant expression in love for God and for neighbor.

The integration of holiness and love is even more clearly articulated in the New Testament. Jesus’ command in Matt 5:48 to “be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect,” is the climax of the paragraph teaching love for both neighbor and enemy (Matt 5:43ff). The model of love for both neighbor and enemy is the love of God poured out indiscriminately on the evil and the good, the righteous and the unrighteous (Matt 5:45). Thus the perfection of God that Jesus lifts up is perfect love for all regardless of their response to God. The perfection that Jesus calls for from his followers is perfect love that loves enemies as well as neighbors. The second text of Matthew dealing with perfection, Matt 19:21, also defines Christian perfection in terms of love. When the rich young man declared that he had kept all the commandments, including the command to love his neighbor as himself, Jesus invited him to be perfect by selling all his possessions, giving the money to the poor, and leaving all behind to pursue the life of discipleship. Selling all one’s possessions and giving the money to the poor is a significant expression of love for neighbor.

1 John 4 also directly connects the idea of Christian perfection with love. “If we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us” (1 John 4:12). “God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God and God abides in them. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world” (1 John 4:16b-17). Here again the perfect love of God is the model expected for the love of the followers of Christ. John continues, “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. We love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:18-19). Perfect love is not only assumed to be a possibility for believers but John expects such love as the natural outcome of abiding in God.

The content or substance of holiness can also be described in terms of the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of person or community. Though all the Persons of the Trinity bring about sanctification in the lives of believers, sanctification or making holy is especially the work of the sanctifying Spirit (2 Thess 2:13 and 1 Pet 1:2). The book of Acts gives special emphasis to the role of the Holy Spirit as the means by which God’s purposes are accomplished in and through the lives of believers. The most common phrase in Acts for the experience of the Spirit is to be “filled with the Holy Spirit.” Ten times Acts describes a person or persons as either filled with the Holy Spirit or full of the Holy Spirit. Five times it describes persons as having received the Holy Spirit. Three times the Spirit is given or a gift and twice Acts speaks of the Holy Spirit coming upon people. The language of being “baptized with the Holy Spirit” also appears twice in Acts (referring both times to Pentecost and both times in the future tense). Once Acts speaks of a person being anointed with the Holy Spirit and once it speaks of the promise of the Spirit. The most common effect of being filled with the Holy Spirit is enablement to give witness to the gospel and to faithfully live out the life of discipleship.

Life in the Spirit is also commonly used by Paul to describe the holy life. Rom 8:4 indicates that those who “walk according to the Spirit” are enabled to fulfill the righteous requirements of the Law. It is the mind set upon the Spirit rather than upon the flesh that enables one to please God

according to Rom 8:5-8. It is the mind set on the Spirit – the *phronema tou pneumatos* that replaces the mind set on the flesh – the *phronema tes sarkos* and enables one to live in obedience to God. It is “by the Spirit” that believers are enabled to “put to death the deeds of the body” (Rom 8:13) and thus enjoy life in the Spirit. It is the Spirit that bears witness with our spirits that we are children of God. Paul calls on us to “live by the Spirit,” be “led by the Spirit,” produce the “fruit of the Spirit,” and “stay in step with the Spirit” (Gal 5:16, 18, 22, and 25). 1 John 4:13 tells us that “because [God] has given us of his Spirit,” “we know that we abide in him and he in us.”

The content or substance of holiness can be described in many more ways from the Scriptures. Christlikeness, purity of heart, circumcision of the heart, union with Christ, righteousness in social relationships, and participation in the divine nature all contribute to our understanding of what it means to be holy. However, the clearest connections between the holiness of God and the holiness God expects from his people are in the arena of the incompatibility of holiness and sin and the inseparable connection between holiness and love.

(3) **The Structure of Holiness**

The call to holiness is clear throughout the Scriptures. The content of holiness is clearly and simply taught in Scripture. How one becomes holy or the structure is more complex. Sanctification, the process of becoming holy, is multi-layered and dynamic in Scripture. It resists easy systematization, perhaps because of both the richness of God’s grace and the diversity of human experiences, expressions, and understandings. It is clear that holiness is not limited to a single moment or stage of one’s Christian life. It is the dynamic of Christian living that begins even before conversion and continues throughout the life of obedience.

Sanctification can be normally said to begin at conversion in the New Testament. This truth is expressed in several ways. Paul regularly designates congregations as consisting of holy people even though the letters he writes were designed to urge them on to a deeper reality of holiness in their lives. Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:1; Eph 1:1; Phil 1:1; and Col 1:2 all use the term “saints” or “holy ones” (*hagioi*) to describe believers who are the recipients of these letters. He clearly understands every believer to be holy. This is consistent with Acts 19:2 where Paul is recorded as asking disciples in Ephesus, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?” Though it is technically possible to translate, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit after you believed,” the clear pattern of Acts indicates the expectation that people received the gift of the Holy Spirit at the time of conversion and continued in the life of the Spirit from then on. Peter’s invitation to those convicted by his sermon on the Day of Pentecost was to “repent, be baptized . . . and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

If one were to read the New Testament without awareness of the full extent of the eschatological implications of Jesus as Messiah, it would be possible to assume that the holiness attributed to believers at the time of their conversion was a positional rather than moral holiness. Such a conclusion is impossible in light of eschatological assumptions that frame the teachings of Jesus and the writings of Paul, Peter, and John. Most of the New Testament letters place a significant emphasis on the readers being holy. The language of Paul, Peter, and John does not call their readers to discover and enter the holy life as if they knew nothing of holiness. Rather, the

apostles call on their readers to appropriate and to live out the implications of the holiness that they had received when they first put their faith in Christ. Paul's question to the Galatians, "Having started with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh?" clearly assumes an initial sanctification that now must be followed up in ways consistent with the transformation God had already accomplished within them (Gal 3:3).

The multi-layered nature of sanctification in the New Testament is clear when one realizes that believers are made holy at the time of their conversion but are consistently called upon to be holy and to live out the implications of their initial sanctification. All the commands (and reprimands) of the New Testament letters urging the readers on in holiness were written to believers who were already initially holy. Clearly sanctification was to continue subsequent to regeneration in the lives of the first New Testament readers.

Many texts indicate that this subsequent sanctification is understood as an ongoing and continuous process following one's conversion. Rom 6:11 calls on believers to consider themselves dead to sin and alive to God. The command is in the present, continuous tense suggesting that the life of accounting oneself dead to sin and alive to God is an ongoing and regular part of the Christian life. Rom 8:13 notes, "If you live according to the flesh, you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live." The putting to death of the deeds of the body is a present, continuous action verb. Verse 14 also treats the life of holiness as an ongoing and continuing matter, "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God," and the word "led" is again present tense indicating on-going or continuing action. The call of Rom 12:2 to "not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds," envisions that transformation to be ongoing and continuous. The same is true of the transformation spoken of in 2 Cor 3:18, "all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another." 2 Cor 7:1 calls on us to make "holiness perfect in the fear of God." The verb for making holiness perfect is once again the present, continuous tense. Clearly a number of texts call believers to a life of ongoing sanctification after the initial sanctification that was part of their conversion.

There are also texts which indicate that there is a dimension of sanctification that can be completed subsequent to regeneration. Col 3:5 commands the Colossian readers to "put to death" whatever is earthly in them and then gives a short list of sins that are to receive this death sentence in their lives. The logic of the expression, "put to death," implies a completed act as opposed to an action that is ongoing and continuous. The tense of the verb is aorist. The aorist tense can not be used to argue for instantaneousness, but one may argue that it is used when an author perceives an event as complete rather than ongoing. Rom 6:13 calls on believers, "No longer present your members to sin as instruments of unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness." The command, "no longer present" one's members to sin, is a command to stop the ongoing offering of oneself to sin. The positive command (appearing only once in the Greek text) to present oneself and one's members to God suggests a complete offering of oneself to God. Paul's prayer in 1 Thess 5:23 that the God of peace sanctify his readers also suggests completion. This sanctifying work is to be *holoteleis* which has given rise to various translations: through and through (NIV), completely (New KJV and ESV), in every

way (New Living), wholly (KJV), entirely (NASB95 and NRSV), and perfectly (NAB). This does not suggest ongoing sanctification but complete or entire sanctification.

Not only do some texts describe sanctification in ongoing and continuous terms and others describe it as a complete action, these two perceptions of sanctification come together in many texts. Rom 6:11 points to an ongoing action of sanctification while Rom 6:13 perceives it as a complete action. Rom 12:1 calls on believers present their bodies as a living sacrifice which may be understood as a complete action. On the other hand, Rom 12:2 requires an ongoing life of being transformed by the renewing activity of the Spirit in their minds. At one level it might be possible to understand this conjunction of sanctification both as continuing and as a complete action as evidence that sanctification begins as initial sanctification, continues as gradual sanctification, comes to completion in entire sanctification, and yet continues on as further gradual sanctification. However, this mingling of ongoing and complete sanctification also reflects the eschatological assumptions of the New Testament. Though some have tried to view New Testament eschatology as primarily futuristic and others as primarily realized, the most likely understanding is that of an inaugurated eschatology that affirms both that the kingdom has already come and that it has not yet been consummated.

There are texts in which the perception of sanctification as complete reflects a stronger realized eschatology in which the reign of God has so thoroughly broken into this world that we no longer sin. This is clearly the case in 1 John 3:6, “No one who abides in him (Christ) sins.” However, other texts perceive sanctification through the lens of the still-to-be-consummated kingdom and so look forward to the ongoing and further work of the Spirit in our lives. One can see this in the commands of Rom 12:2, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds.” The word “world” in this text is literally “age” (*aion*) and refers to this present, evil age in which the ongoing and continuous transformation of our minds is required. 1 John 3:2-3 also points to the future sanctification that is yet to take place: “We are God’s children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.” Sanctification begins at conversion, and continues throughout the Christian life; comes to completion in deliverance from the mind-set of the flesh; issues in a life of growth in holiness; and looks forward in hope to the full perfection of the new creation.

The call to ongoing sanctification and the call to a completed work of sanctification in Scripture both subsequent to regeneration is consistent with the Wesleyan Holiness understanding of sanctification as initial, gradual, and entire. There is a multi-layered and dynamic understanding of sanctification at work in Scripture that resists categorization and easy systematization. The ‘already’ of sanctification assures us of the completeness of God’s work for us. The ‘not yet’ of sanctification always invites us into deeper relationship with Christ through the Holy Spirit. Clearly, the scriptural view of sanctification resists any static understanding that there is some state of holiness from which no further growth in grace is to be expected. The invitation of the author of Hebrews, “Let us go on toward perfection” (Heb 6:1) is an invitation to every believer at every stage on the journey of holiness.

IV. Unity and Variety in Christian Tradition

We turn now to the context of the Wesleyan doctrine of Christian holiness within the spectrum of historic traditions and views in the Christian Church, and here it is helpful to see the contemporary variety of traditions as based in the fundamental unity of the Christian tradition as a whole.

The twentieth century saw the revived development of an ecumenical hope throughout the Christian Church. While that sometimes seemed to take the form of compromise for the sake of unity, one of the historic roots of the ecumenical movement was the Student Missionary Movement which was evangelical in origin and dedicated to ‘the evangelization of the world in this generation.’ In an earlier generation, the concern to unite and work together with all true Christians characterized Wesley and Whitefield in the eighteenth century (despite their theological differences) and the nineteenth-century holiness movement. Today, whether we like it or not, Christians are not so concerned with denominational “distinctives” as with finding a church that preaches the one true gospel and wins people to Christ. Around the world many Christians want to focus on what unites them rather than what divides them.

Given this context in which we operate today, it is vital that those who stand in the Wesleyan-holiness tradition understand that their understanding of Christian holiness is not merely a sectarian way of justifying distinct denominations, but is the heritage of the whole Christian Church. Rightly understood, the Wesleyan doctrine of Christian holiness is not merely a denominational distinctive: it is the biblical understanding of holiness which we believe all Christians should embrace. “Perfection in love” is not the property of the Church of the Nazarene or of the holiness denominations together: it is the heritage of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. Only such a perspective can be in accord with Wesley’s emphasis on the “catholic spirit”.

It is important to see then that the Wesleyan doctrine of Christian holiness was not invented in eighteenth-century England. Wesley was re-contextualizing a doctrine of Christian “perfection” which had been part of the theology of the Fathers of the ancient catholic church and of the great medieval theologians and spiritual teachers. But Wesley’s genius was to combine this doctrine of Christian “perfection” with the re-discovery of the gospel at the time of the Reformation. The ecumenical significance of Wesleyan theology is therefore to bring together the evangelical doctrine of justification by grace through faith and the ancient catholic and orthodox understanding of sanctification.

The language of Christian “perfection”, so often misunderstood in the modern era as “perfectionism”, was in fact the common language of the Church for fifteen centuries. Among the ancient Fathers, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Athanasius, and Gregory of Nyssa particularly wrote of stages in the spiritual journey. In every case the highest stage was that of being filled with the love of God. Augustine, holding to his strong doctrine of original sin, denied that perfection in love could ever be reached in this life. But he did give us the profound analysis that the ‘root’ of sin (a metaphor of course) was love wrongly directed to the creature rather than to the Creator, so that Christian ‘perfection’ was to be increasingly filled with love for God. In medieval spirituality, this understanding of perfect love for God as the highest level of Christian holiness was reflected in the concept of the “scale” (or “ladder”) of perfection. Both

Bernard of Clairvaux and Thomas Aquinas combined an Augustinian doctrine of original sin with the teaching of perfection in love. They each taught that although there were levels of perfect love only possible in the life to come, there was nevertheless a level of perfect love possible in this life.

The Reformation re-discovery of “justification by faith” led to a reaction against false claims to holiness in the corrupt Church of the sixteenth century, and a strong suspicion of any idea of Christian “perfection”. Wesley’s unique ecumenical significance is that he is the one leader of a major Protestant tradition who, like Bernard and Thomas, combines the Western, Augustinian doctrine of original sin with a strong belief in the possibility of “perfect love” in this life. But in addition to that, he combines a strong doctrine of the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith with the doctrine of “perfect love”.

The Wesleyan tradition is therefore not to be dismissed as sectarian or peripheral. Coming directly out of the comprehensive Anglican tradition, it is well-placed to dialogue with Lutheran, Reformed, Pentecostal and Anabaptist traditions, as well as the more distant traditions of Eastern Orthodoxy and Catholicism. The denominations which emerged out of the nineteenth-century holiness movement have a particular evangelical and revivalist heritage to bring to the theology, spirituality and mission of the Christian Church in the twenty-first century. We hold in common with all evangelical Protestants the truth of the atoning work of Jesus Christ, of the authority of Holy scripture in matters of faith and practice, and of justification by grace through faith. In common with Pentecostals and Charismatics we emphasize the work and Person of the Holy Spirit, and in common with the wider catholic and orthodox traditions, we proclaim the ‘optimism of grace’ about the life of Christian holiness in this evil age. It is within this context of the historic major Christian traditions that our doctrine of Christian holiness must be seen, not as a sectarian ‘distinctive’, but as a heritage we hold in trust for the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church .

V. Differences in Expression

Next we come to note the different ways of articulating the Wesleyan doctrine of Christian holiness by presenting the wording of the relevant articles in sister-denominations.

1. The official document for the Wesleyan Church, “The Constitution Of The North American General Conference,” articulates the doctrine like this:

“14. Sanctification: Initial, Progressive, Entire

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 his 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 the believer presents himself a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, through faith in Jesus Christ, being effected by the baptism with the

Holy Spirit who cleanses the heart from all inbred sin. The crisis of entire sanctification perfects the believer in love and empowers him 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.

Gen. 17:1; Deut. 30:6; Ps. 130:8; Isa. 6:1-6; Ezek. 36:25-29; Matt. 5:8, 48; Luke 1:74-75; 3:16-17; 24:49; John 17:1-26; Acts 1:4-5, 8; 2:1-4; 15:8-9; 26:18; Rom. 8:3-4; I Cor. 1:2; 6:11; II Cor. 7:1; Eph. 4:13, 24; 5:25-27; I Thess. 3:10, 12-13; 4:3, 7-8; 5:23-24; II Thess. 2:13; Titus 2:11-14; Heb. 10:14; 12:14; 13:12; James 3:17-18; 4:8; I Peter 1:2; II Peter 1:4; I John 1:7, 9; 3:8-9; 4:17-18; Jude 24.”

2. “The Confession of Faith of the Evangelical United Brethren Church,” which was adopted in 1968 by the formation of the United Methodist Church, articulates the doctrine as follows:

“Article XI—Sanctification and Christian Perfection

We believe sanctification is the work of God's grace through the Word and the Spirit, by which those who have been born again are cleansed from sin in their thoughts, words and acts, and are enabled to live in accordance with God's will, and to strive for holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

Entire sanctification is a state of perfect love, righteousness and true holiness which every regenerate believer may obtain by being delivered from the power of sin, by loving God with all the heart, soul, mind and strength, and by loving one's neighbor as one's self. Through faith in Jesus Christ this gracious gift may be received in this life both gradually and instantaneously, and should be sought earnestly by every child of God.

We believe this experience does not deliver us from the infirmities, ignorance, and mistakes common to man, nor from the possibilities of further sin. The Christian must continue on guard against spiritual pride and seek to gain victory over every temptation to sin. He must respond wholly to the will of God so that sin will lose its power over him; and the world, the flesh, and the devil are put under his feet. Thus he rules over these enemies with watchfulness through the power of the Holy Spirit.”

3. This is from the Methodist Articles of faith (the closest thing to entire sanctification present):

“Article 12 — Of Sin After Justification

Not every sin willingly committed after justification is the sin against the Holy Ghost, and unpardonable. Wherefore, the grant of repentance is not to be denied to such as fall into sin after justification. After we have received the Holy Ghost, we may depart from grace given, and fall into sin, and, by the grace of God, rise again and amend our lives. And therefore they are to be condemned who say they can no more sin as long as they live here; or deny the place of forgiveness to such as truly repent.”

4. Here are the articles of faith for the Free Methodist Church of Canada:

“XII. Entire Sanctification

Entire sanctification is that work of the Holy Spirit, subsequent to regeneration, by which the fully consecrated believer, upon exercise of faith in the atoning blood of Christ, is 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 the believer to love God with all his heart, soul, strength, and mind, and his neighbor as himself, and it prepares him for greater growth in grace. (Leviticus 20:7-8; John 14:16-17; 17:19; Acts 1:8; 2:4; 15:8-9; Romans 5:3-5; 8:12-17; 12:1-2; 1 Cor 6:11; 12:4-11; Galatians 5:22-25; Ephesians 4:22-24; 1 Thess 4:7; 5:23-24; 2 Thess 2:13; Hebrews 10:14)”

5. The Statement of Faith of Asbury Theological Seminary has this wording on Entire Sanctification:

“Entire Sanctification: That God calls all believers to entire sanctification in a moment of full surrender and faith subsequent to their new birth in Christ. Through sanctifying grace the Holy Spirit delivers them from all rebellion toward God, and makes possible wholehearted love for God and for others. This grace does not make believers faultless nor prevent the possibility of their falling into sin. They must live daily by faith in the forgiveness and cleansing provided for them in Jesus Christ;”

6. This is taken from *The Book of Discipline* of the United Methodist Church, p. 46-47:

“Sanctification and Perfection: We hold the wonder of God’s acceptance and pardon does not end God’s saving work, which continues to nurture our growth in grace. Through the power of the Holy Spirit we are enabled to increase in the knowledge and love of God and in love of our neighbor.

New birth is the first step in this process of sanctification. Sanctifying grace draws us toward the gift of Christian perfection, which Wesley described as a heart ‘habitually filled with the love of God and neighbor’ and as ‘having the mind of Christ and walking as he walked.’

This gracious gift of God’s power and love, the hope and expectation of the faithful, is neither warranted by our efforts nor limited by our frailties.”

7. The *Discipline of the Evangelical Methodist Church* (page 44) states the doctrine like this:

“XXVI – Perfect Love*

¶46. Perfect Love is that renewal of our fallen nature by the Holy Spirit, received through faith in Jesus Christ, whose blood of atonement cleanseth from all sin; whereby we are not only delivered from guilt of sin, but are washed from its pollution, saved from its power, and are enabled, through grace, to love God with all our hearts and to walk in His holy commandments blameless.

*Explanation: Christian perfection is a state of righteousness and true holiness, which every regenerate believer may obtain. It consists in being cleansed from all sin, loving God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength, and loving our neighbor as ourselves. This gracious state of perfect love is obtainable in this life by faith, both gradually and

instantaneously, and every child of God should earnestly seek to grow in grace. It does not deliver us from temptations, infirmities, ignorance, and mistakes which are common to man. We accept as our doctrinal interpretation, *Wesley's Sermons*, *Wesley's Notes On The New Testament*, *Wesley's Journal*, and *Wesley's Plain Account of Christian Perfection.*"

VI. Drafting a New Article X

In the light of these discussions and this review of comparable articles of faith from sister denominations and institutions, a new, positive, joyfully affirming Article needs to emerge. In concluding this paper then we attempt to draft a new article, suggesting a form of words which takes into account the seven-point critique of our present Article X in Section I of this paper. It attempts to express the doctrine in contemporary form, showing more fully how it is coherent with the major doctrines of the Christian faith:

Article X: Christian Holiness and Entire Sanctification

We believe that the sanctification of the believer is that transformation into the likeness of Christ which begins with regeneration. Being incorporated into the body of Christ, trusting in His Atonement, and becoming children of God the Father in the fellowship of the Spirit, new believers take up the cross and learn to die daily with Christ, living in faithful obedience to the great commandments in the power of the Spirit.

Participating in the means of grace, especially the fellowship, disciplines and sacraments of the Church, the believer grows in grace and in the love of God and neighbor, but yet through this becomes increasingly conscious of a deep need for inward purifying from the persistent and multi-faceted sinfulness of pride, self-centredness and idolatry.

We believe that by such growth in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit brings the believer to the point of entire sanctification, when through faith in Christ who died for our full salvation, the Holy Spirit fills the believer with wholehearted love to God and neighbor, so purifying the heart. Filled with the Spirit of the Risen Lord, who baptized the apostolic Church with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost in fulfillment of the promises of the new covenant, believers are empowered even in their weakness to witness to Him in a life of victory. While awaiting the redemption of the body, believers still confess shortcomings, trespasses and faults, but press on to ever more mature and holy character in the image of God.

A Commentary on this Draft

- We believe* Every article begins with these words.
- That the sanctification* The subject of the new article as a whole is sanctification as a whole. Entire sanctification is better explained within that context.
- Of the believer* Today we want to say much about corporate sanctification, and this re-draft will try to put sanctification in the context of ecclesiology. However, although we must try to get away from *individualism*, we are not free to reject the evangelical and pietistic emphasis on *personal* salvation and sanctification (“for me”) rooted in Paul (Gal. 2:20), and affirmed by significant figures in Christian history including the Wesleys (“that Thou, my God shouldst die *for me*”). The terminology of ‘believer’ which appears in the present Article X is therefore kept.
- Is that transformation* This is a word picked up by present-day Wesleyan theologians to counter the idea that salvation only means forgiveness (justification), but less of a ‘real’ change (sanctification). But the word is also biblical (*metamorphousthe*, Rom. 12:2).
- Into the likeness of Christ* Christlikeness, the goal of the Christian (I Jn 3:2), is one of Wesley’s major ways of explaining Christian Perfection (*Plain Account*, 27: “In another view, it is all the mind which was in Christ, enabling us to walk as Christ walked.”).
- Which begins with regeneration* Obviously, this asserts what Wesleyan theologians call “initial sanctification”, a concept entirely missing from the present article. Exegetical grounds for this could be multiplied. “With” rather than “at” since this is not so much a statement of the “when” as a statement that one dimension of regeneration is initial sanctification.
- Being incorporated into the body of Christ* Here the corporate or ecclesiological context missing from the present wording is asserted.
- Trusting in His Atonement* This connects sanctification as a whole to the doctrine of the Atonement and asserts that even initial sanctification is not our achievement but is through faith in the work of Christ. This terminology is probably preferable today to the phrase later in the present article, “provided by the blood of Jesus”.
- And becoming children of God the Father* Reflecting both Johannine and Pauline doctrine (Jn 1:13, Rom. 8:15 f., Gal. 4:6) that we are drawn into the family of God.

In the fellowship of the Spirit

The word “fellowship” is deliberately introduced here to echo both I Cor. 13:14 and I Jn 1:3. Both references, along with the references in the previous clauses to the Son and the Father, make it clear that the doctrine of sanctification is firmly rooted in a fully relational doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

New believers take up the cross

This phrase reflects the Markan view of the life of holiness as the life of discipleship (8:34).

And learn to die daily with Christ

Pauline phraseology (I Cor. 15:31) echoing Mark’s. This also reflects the long tradition in Christian theology of understanding sanctification and the spiritual journey of the Christian as both *mortificatio* and *vivificatio*, dying with Christ to sin that we might be raised with Him to righteousness (Rom. 6:5-11).

Living in faithful obedience to the great commandments

This emphasizes Wesley’s doctrine that outward obedience and victory over sin begins at regeneration, not at entire sanctification (as a kind of Keswickian doctrine might suggest). Wesley used the phrase ‘zealous obedience’ in his description of how the Christian is to move towards entire sanctification (*A Plain Account*, 19, quoting “Thoughts on Christian Perfection”, 1759), however we have preferred “faithful” and chosen to highlight specifically the great commandments.

In the power of the Spirit

Once again the pneumatological connection is made, this time specifically using the Lukan language of *dynamis* (power).

Participating in the means of grace, especially the fellowship, disciplines and sacraments of the Church

Obviously an attempt to incorporate the corporate, ecclesiological dimension and to put personal growth in grace within that context, particularly Wesley’s emphasis on the means of grace.

The believer grows in grace

Using biblical language (II Peter 3:18) to express what Wesley called “the gradual work of sanctification” (Sermon 43, “The Scripture Way of Salvation”, 1765, *BE* 2:160) in preference to the impersonal and unbiblical language of “process”.

And in the love of God and neighbor

This is the first use of the word “love”, but since it is “growth” in love, then clearly love has been there from the beginning.

But yet

To indicate a tension in the believer between “the already” and the “not yet”.

Through this becomes increasingly conscious

This draws on Wesley’s doctrine of “The Repentance of Believers” as expressed in this passage from Sermon 21, “The Sermon on the

Mount - Discourse 1" (1739?) *BE* 1:482f.; "The conviction we feel of inbred sin is deeper and deeper every day. The more we grow in grace, the more do we see the desperate wickedness of our heart. The more we advance in the knowledge and love of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ... the more do we discern of our alienation from God, of the enmity that is our carnal mind, and the necessity of our being entirely renewed in righteousness and true holiness."

Of a deep need for inward purifying

Despite contemporary criticism of the idea of "inner space" and "the Cartesian self", we must affirm the biblical concept of the inward thoughts of the "heart" or "mind" as part of the concept of "purity of heart".

From the persistent and multi-faceted sinfulness

The phrase is chosen to express the idea of a *condition* which continues in the Christian even after regeneration – a view which is common to all Christian traditions, though emphasized more in the Augustinian west.

Of pride, self-centeredness and idolatry

Rather than using the Augustinian phrase "original sin" it is preferable to use two biblical words (pride, idolatry) and one with a strong basis in Scripture and the literature of Christian spirituality across all Christian traditions. The particular aspect of original sin which is in mind is therefore specified, and other aspects (heredity, original guilt, fallenness, etc.) are set aside here. This sharpens the definition of the doctrine and rules out the idea that we believe that entire sanctification abolishes original sin in all its aspects (and therefore in Adamic or sinless perfection).

We believe

Repeated here since this next distinct paragraph is on *entire* sanctification.

that by such growth in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

The word *such* refers to the previous paragraph making it clear that it refers to what Wesley called "gradual" sanctification, but the biblical phrase, "growth in grace" is preferred and the whole phrase from II Peter 3:18 is included.

The Holy Spirit brings the believer to the point

The phraseology is carefully chosen to bring out the interconnection between gradual and entire sanctification: the word *point* is safeguarding the Wesleyan understanding of entire sanctification as instantaneous, but avoiding psychological language ("crisis") which seems to many to imply that this is *necessarily* a moment of great spiritual drama and emotion. The Holy Spirit is identified as the agent of sanctification.

Of entire sanctification

Wesley's phrase, drawn from I Thess. 5:23 is crucial to this article.

When through faith

The role of faith in sanctification must be stressed in order to scotch the idea that this is a human achievement.

*In Christ
Who died for our full salvation* This makes clear the Christocentric nature of entire sanctification.

This is a kind of commentary on the earlier phrase “trusting in His Atonement”, making clear that trusting that we are saved and sanctified through his atoning work is actually a *personal* trust in *Him*: it also emphasizes that not only forgiveness of acts of sin, but *full* salvation/sanctification is made possible by the atonement. This is phrased deliberately in such a way to be persuasive. Christians of any tradition will find this difficult to deny without casting doubt on the depth and power of the Atonement.

The Holy Spirit fills the believer

In the construction of the whole sentence the Christological and pneumatological aspects are brought into the closest connection. There is obviously too a reference here to the Lukan language of being “filled with the Spirit”.

with wholehearted love for God and neighbor

The Lukan language of being “filled with the Spirit” is deliberately conflated with the language of the two greatest commandments (Deuteronomy and the Synoptics), which Wesley put at the heart of his doctrine of Christian perfection. The word “wholehearted” is selected as a common word which best conveys Wesley’s concept of “unity of intention”, “unity of affection”.

Purifying the heart

Clearly a biblical phrase which is not only on the lips of Jesus in Matt. 5:8, but is also well based in the teaching of the Wisdom literature about *inner* purity of motivation. The repetition of the word ‘purifying’ makes it clear that the believer’s heart is purified from the “sinfulness” to which we have just referred.

Filled with the Spirit of the Risen Lord

The Lukan language of being “filled with the Spirit” is now given its full Pauline meaning that it is the same Spirit who raised Christ from the dead who now fills us.

Who baptized the apostolic Church with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost

Using the language which refers specifically in the Gospels and Acts to the historic day of Pentecost, this phrase emphasizes that all the benefits of the Atonement became available when the Risen Lord sent His Spirit on the gathered apostolic Church, and that that particularly included the being filled with the Holy Spirit.

In fulfillment of the promises of the new covenant

This phrase, with its reference to Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36-37, and the interpretation of those texts in the New Testament, implies that now that ‘the Comforter has come’, the Pentecostal baptism of the apostolic Church with the Holy Spirit means that believers today within this one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, may experience all His blessings under this new covenant, particularly the blessing of a clean heart.

Believers are empowered even in their weakness to witness to Him in a life of victory

The Lukan and language of “power” was emphasized in the nineteenth-century holiness movement and (along with “victory”) carries great meaning in the Church around the world today. But to rule out worldly and sensationalist ideas of power it is defined as Christ-centred and therefore paradoxically (as Paul reminds us) the power of those crucified with Christ, who are strong only in their weakness.

While awaiting the redemption of the body

This puts the doctrine in the eschatological context of the already/not yet and gives that biblical perspective as the basis for what Wesley called the “imperfections of the perfect”. It is fully in accord with his emphasis in Sermon 129, “Heavenly Treasure in Earthen Vessels” (1790) *BE* 4: 165, that “false judgements...and wrong inferences...and from these innumerable mistakes...mistakes in judgement...mistakes in practice...wrong words or action...wrong tempers....error in ten thousand shapes” necessarily arise from life in the still fallen body and especially from the “disordered brain”. This biblical language is preferable to confusing scholastic distinctions between “the carnal nature” and “human nature”, but it is the same point.

Believers still confess shortcomings, trespasses and faults

There is a reference here obviously to the Lord’s Prayer and the place of continuing confession in the life of the holiest Christian is asserted without falling into the trap of condoning a “sinning religion”.

But press on

Reflecting Paul’s language in Philippians 3:14.

To ever more mature and holy character

Language with a strong basis in Scripture and the tradition of Christian spirituality and which is currently being emphasized in Christian Ethics.

In the image of God

The language of the *imago* was important to Wesley to express the goal: it connects his doctrine of Christian perfection once again with the doctrine of God.

Essential Reading

Informed discussion of the issues in this paper demands a familiarity with (at least) the following select bibliography, which includes works of both historical and contemporary significance. This is of course a very small selection of the sources necessary to inform understanding.

Books

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