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**A Non-Legal Doctrine of Sanctification:
Christian Failure and Christian Growth**

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Introduction

Charles Spurgeon once said, “When a Calvinist says that all things happen according to predestination of God, he speaks the truth, and I am willing to be called a Calvinist. But when an Arminian says

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that, ‘when a man sins, the sin is his own; and that if he continues in sin and parishes, his eternal damnation will lie entirely at his own door’, I believe that he speaks the truth, though I am not willing to be called an Arminian. The fact is there is truth in both these systems of theology.”²

Literature review on the doctrine of Sanctification indicates that discussions on the subject tend to divide along doctrinal differences between Calvinism and Arminianism. A closer examination of both these two schools of thought, however, would review that they are much closer and one would tend to agree with Spurgeon that there is truth in both.

There seems to be two extremes regarding sanctification. On the one hand the view that insists on trying harder and putting more effort to be holy (sanctified) this could be termed as the legalistic approach and on the other hand the non-legalistic extreme view that posits that holiness is all dependant on God, almost to the point of making human beings robots purely dependant on what God does. This extreme runs the danger of being fatalistic. Neither of these two extremes seems to do justice to the cumulative teaching in scripture on the doctrine of sanctification. In this article we would steer the middle ground and seek to draw the balanced teaching on the doctrine of sanctification and how it impacts on Christian growth and failure. We would highlight the various definitions and the major doctrinal tenets on sanctification. We would briefly explore the means by which sanctification is achieved and high light the significance of the doctrine of sanctification by showing how it has been a catalyst to church growth in the spread of the holiness movement. We would make some critique before we make some concluding remarks and recommendations.

By “non- legalistic doctrine of sanctification” we aim to focus on Christian Growth and cause of failure in sanctification and to elucidate on the means and the process by which sanctification is attained. The doctrine of Sanctification is interrelated to two other doctrines: on one hand the doctrine of original sin or human depravity and how regeneration is attained and on the other hand the doctrine of

² Charles Spurgeon quoted in *Credenda Agenda* Vol. 5 number 2 p.3 from Tom Carter, *Spurgeon at His Best*, Baker, 1988, p.14.

predestination, the relationship between grace and free will. We would explore the means of grace and whether sanctification is dependent on good works or dependent on faith of the recipient alone. We would also examine whether the life of sanctification created by the gift of grace is depend on human merit of obedience to the Law of God or does man earn something by his obedience in grace? Is sanctification purely dependant on human obedience? Those who answer these last two questions with unqualified affirmative would espouse a legalistic approach to sanctification. In this paper we would try to demonstrate the answer lies in “in both and” rather than in either or.

“Christian Orthodoxy throughout the history of Christianity has always maintained that the initiative to sanctify is always taken by God but humanity has to give a response and take responsibility for the continuance of the relationship”³. This is what we mean by both and approach. The pivotal issue regarding sanctification seems to hinges on God’s sovereignty and human response.

I. Definitions

Exploration of the definitions for the word sanctification seems to fall into two categories: non-biblical and biblical definitions.

A. Non-Biblical Definitions

The non-biblical include definitions like: “a religious ceremony in which something is made holy”⁴. “An ancient concept widespread among religions that refers to anything blessed or set apart for special purposes, from totem poles to temple vessels, to the change brought about in a human believer”⁵. “Made or declared or believed to be holy; devoted to a deity or some religious ceremony or use; "a consecrated church"; "the sacred mosque"; "sacred elephants"; "sacred bread and wine"; "sanctified wine”⁶. “Growing in the Lord, becoming holy in life, sanctification is living every day in light of who we are in Christ. It is practiced purity- a challenge, especially in

³ Encyclopaedia Britannica, 5:401b.

⁴ wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn.

⁵ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanctification.

⁶ wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn.

the culture in which we live”⁷. “A Christian term which refers to the process by which the Holy Spirit helps a born-again Christian to grow spiritually, become more Christ-like, and abandons sinful behaviours”.⁸ The key thought in what I am referring to as non-biblical definitions is that sanctification in some of the context has no ethical overtones. For instance in 2Kings 23:7, the prostitutes who were connected with pagan temples as a way of serving the god or gods of fertility were called “holy ones” or “the sanctified ones” meaning set apart to a special use for the gods. In Phenomenology of Religions, the ideas of Rudolph Otto⁹ developed non biblical notions of sanctification. According to Methodism Catechism, sanctification is “the act of divine grace whereby we are made holy”¹⁰. For John Wesley, sanctification “is an instantaneous deliverance from all sin, and includes an instantaneous power then give always to cleave to God”¹¹

B. Biblical definition

One of the most comprehensive Biblical definitions describe sanctification as “an operation of the Spirit of God (Rom15:16; 2Thess. 2:13; 1Peter 1:2) on those who are already in Jesus united to Him by faith (1Cor 1:2) by which they are rendered increasingly holy, dying to sin and living to God, to righteousness and to holiness (Rom 6:5,11,13,19; 1Thess5:23; 1Pet. 2:24”.

This is the definition in American Encyclopaedia¹². In the Bible, the words translated “sanctification” etymologically come either from Latin or Greek. In New Testament the Greek word translated sanctify is ἁγιάζω the principal meanings of this in original Greek is usually translated into English as “wash” or “cleans.” “to make holy” could also mean to “purify”. It also means to “separate to God’s use” as used in John 17:19 also alluded in 2 Cor 5:21. It also has connotation of “cleansing from original sin” as used in John 17:17 and in Mat 6:9

⁷ www.12ordinarymen.com/dictionary.htm.

⁸ godswings.wordpress.com/religious-word-glossary.

⁹ Rudolph Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, 1908, p.6; 25.

¹⁰ J B Chapman, *The Terminology of Holiness*, Kansas, Beacon Hill Press; p104.

¹¹ *Ibid.* p.104.

¹² American Encyclopaedia as quoted in J B Chapman, *The Terminology of Holiness*, Kansas, Beacon Hill Press p.104.

“hallowed be thy name” gives the meaning of “set apart from and above everything else”. It is out of this principal meaning that we find in Bible Dictionaries, sanctification described as “the state of growing in divine grace”; “to set apart for holy purposes”; “the process of being made holy resulting in changed life style for the believer”. The most comprehensive that incorporates most of these concepts defines sanctification as follows: “The work of God’s grace by which the believer is separated from sin and becomes dedicated to God’s righteousness. Sanctification is accomplished by the Word of God and the Holy Spirit, and results in holiness, or purification from the guilt and power of sin. Sanctification is instantaneous before God through Christ and progressive before man through obedience to the Holy Spirit and the Word.”¹³

The English word “sanctification” is derived from the Latin noun *sanctificatio*. Its most generic Latin meaning is “to separate and set aside.” The Latin root tends to take on whatever meaning it is given by the religious context within which it is used and accounts for what we referred above as non-biblical definitions. In the Old Testament the Hebrew word usually translated sanctification is the word “holiness,” “*kedushah*” (קדושה); “**separateness**.” It appears about 830 times in OT and its root meaning has connotation of, “set apart”; “separation”; “cut off”; “elevate.”

In Christian history, the doctrine of sanctification is attributed to John Wesley as his most distinctive contribution to Christian faith¹⁴. Linking the Reformation and Wesleyanism, Grider sees sanctification as “the teaching which peculiarly completes Martin Luther’s 16th Century attempt to reform Christian doctrine according to its New Testament pattern.” He goes on to say, “while it belonged to the man from Wittenberg to re-establish the doctrine of justification by faith, it belonged to the man from Epworth, Mr. Wesley, to re-establish the doctrine that once justified by faith believers may be sanctified wholly by faith instantaneously and in this life”¹⁵. According to

¹³ *Hayford’s Bible Handbook* by Jack W. Hayford and Charles F. Stanley, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996.

¹⁴ J K Grider, *Entire Sanctification: The distinctive Doctrine of Wesleyanism*, Kansas City, Missouri, Beacon Hill Press p.11.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.12.

Wesley “entire sanctification expelled original sin”¹⁶. Grider asserts that “the doctrine of sanctification is Methodism’s *raison d’etre*”; “the grand deposition which God has lodged with the people called Methodists”¹⁷.

Philip Schaff describes sanctification “as Methodism’s last and crowning doctrine”¹⁸. Nolan B Harmon says “it has been the one specific doctrinal contribution which Methodism has made to the church universal...the glory of Methodism”¹⁹

II. Doctrinal Tenets of Sanctification

The main contention revolves around three questions. The first: is sanctification post conversion experience ongoing process through human merit? In order to deal with this question, one would need to distinguish between sanctification and two other doctrines: redemption and justification. The second: is entire sanctification possible in this life and if so is it instantaneous or on going process of God’s grace? In order to deal with the second question one needs to understand the doctrine of the Holy Spirit (Pneumatology). Is entire sanctification (perfectionism) achievable in this life? In order to deal with the third question one would need to discuss the doctrine of grace. It is germane in all three questions to discuss other doctrines in order to elucidate the meaning of sanctification. The scope of this paper does not allow us to delve in details in either of the mentioned doctrines that are tangential with the doctrine of sanctification, albeit a brief resume would be given to advance our discussion in regards to distinction between justification and sanctification

A. Is Sanctification a Reward for Human Merit?

As in the doctrine of justification, sanctification through human merit can be traced back in Augustinian thought in the middle ages. According to Augustine “God makes us holy and then accepts us on the basis of that holiness”²⁰. This notion developed into doctrine of righteousness through good works in the middle ages, which was

¹⁶ Ibid.. p.13.

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 13.

¹⁸ As quoted in John L. Peters *Christian Perfection and American Methodism*, New York, Abingdon Press, 1956, p.196.

¹⁹ Grider, op.cit.

²⁰ H. Ray Dunning, *Sanctification*, Kansas City, Beacon Hill Press p.36.

challenged by Luther and by Calvin asserting that justification precedes sanctification and that God accepts us as we are, through Christ's sacrifice, human beings trust God and accept their acceptance by God, thus justification is by grace through faith. According to Reformed theology God accepts mankind on the basis of His mercy and love and He begins to transform them into the kind of persons He intends them to be. According to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, however, mankind become ethically righteous in order for God to accept them. But according to Reformed Theology, God accepts the ethical righteousness of Christ as substitute righteousness and treats them as if they were righteous when they really are not. John Wesley refuted this view on the basis that God does not fool Himself and does not treat us as other than we really are. "We do not earn God's favour by what we do neither qualify on the basis of some kind of ethical holiness within. We simply take God's gracious gift of forgiveness and acceptance. After having received us "just as we are", God begins the process of transforming us into the kind of person He intended us to be. That is what sanctification is all about"²¹ Louis Berkhof makes the assertion that sanctification and good works are most intimately related. Just as the old life expresses itself in works of evil, so the new life that originates in regeneration and is promoted and strengthened in sanctification, naturally manifests itself in good works ²². He then goes to describe sanctification as "the work of the triune God, ascribed more particularly to the Holy Spirit according to Rom 8:11; 15:16 and 1Peter 1:2. He stresses that "God and not man, is the author of sanctification, it is the fruit of justification for neither is possible without the other and both are fruits of God in the Redemption of sinners"²³ He defines good works as works that are essentially different in moral quality from the actions of the unregenerate, and that are the expressions of a new and holy nature as the principle from which they spring. These are works which God not only approves, but in a certain sense also rewards²⁴. According to Berkhof "man is

²¹ *Layman's Guide to Sanctification*, Kansas City, Beacons Hill Press p.38.

²² Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*.

²³ Bibleteacher.org by Louis Berkhof.

²⁴ Ibid.

privileged to cooperate with the Spirit of God – only in virtue of the strength which the Spirit imparts to him from day to day. The spiritual development of man is not a human achievement, but a work of divine grace. Sanctification takes place in the subconscious life it is effected by the immediate operation of the Holy Spirit”²⁵ In contrast to Berkhof’s views on human merit, Charles G Finney, champion of the Holiness Movement, although he taught moral inability apart from God’s grace, was weak in his emphasis on original sin and on entire sanctification, he tended to be Pelagian in his teaching that “the human will is free, therefore men have power or ability to do all their duty”²⁶. In this respect Finney was accused of being “volitionalist” – expecting man to be able to do whatever he wanted to do”²⁷ Roman Catholics, Armenians, Pelagians, Wesleyans, Quietists and Quakers all agree that Sanctification is attainable in the present life, but they differ in agreeing the means by which it is attainable. Pertinent to their views on sanctification is their belief on original sin which tends to define their view on sanctification. For instance, Pelagians would deny inherent corruption of mankind and quote 1Pet 1:16, Mt5:48, James 1:4, 1Pet 2:21 arguing that if mankind was inherently corrupt, there would be no Biblical injunctions such as “to be holy” or “to follow the example of Christ” as is the case in scriptures quoted. These passages Pelagians would argue imply man’s ability to be holy or attain perfection through exercise of self free will. After weighing all the evidence it seems safe to conclude that trying to achieve sanctification as a reward of human merit would lead to Christian failure that the Apostle Paul alludes to in his exposition of Romans chapter seven.

B. Is Sanctification Simultaneous with Salvation?

There are those who would define justification as another word for salvation²⁸. According to this view, the question we are asking

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Charles G Finney, *Lectures on Systematic Theology*, Oberlin, Ohio, E.J. Goodrich 1887, 1851 p.325 also see Grider, op cit p.21.

²⁷ A. M. Hills *On Life of Charles G. Finney*, Cincinnati: Revivalist Office, 1902, p.224.

²⁸ Bob McCluskey, “A Biblical definition of Sanctification,” in *Renewal-journal.com*, 28 January 2010.

then is: Does sanctification take place at the same time as Justification. McCluskey, says that “sanctification occurs as a result of salvation”²⁹but he does not attempt to address the question as to whether they are simultaneous or subsequent occurrences. He makes the distinction that “sanctification does not stop with salvation, but rather it is a progressive process that continues in a Christian’s life³⁰. He goes on to describe sanctification “as an inward spiritual process whereby God brings about holiness and change in the life of a Christian by means of the Holy Spirit”³¹. Although McCluskey defines justification as another word for salvation, he makes a distinction between justification and sanctification. “Justification is an instantaneous occurrence with the result being eternal life. Sanctification, on the other hand, involves the work of the person. But it is still God working in the believer to produce more of a godly character and life in the person who has already been justified (Phil. 2:13). Sanctification is not instantaneous because it is not the work of God alone. Significantly, sanctification has no bearing on justification. That is, even if we don’t live a perfect life, we are still justified. While justification is a legal declaration that is instantaneous, sanctification is a process. While justification comes from outside of us, from God, sanctification comes from God within us by the work of the Holy Spirit in accordance with the Bible. In other words, we contribute to sanctification through our efforts. In contrast, we do not contribute to our justification through our efforts”³². Abraham Kuyper advocates a sharp distinction between sanctification and justification. According to him, “sanctification must remain sanctification. It may not arbitrarily be robbed of its significance, nor be exchanged for something else. It must always signify the making holy of what is unholy or less holy. Care must be taken not to confound sanctification with justification”³³ He Bases his distinction on Romans 4:19 that says “yield your members servants to righteousness” he suggests fourfold difference: “First,

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ *Abraham Kuyper, The Work of the Holy Spirit* (1888; American edition 1900) vol. 3, chapters 3-4.

justification works *for* man; sanctification *in* man. Secondly justification removes the *guilt*; sanctification the *stain*. Thirdly justification imputes to us an *extraneous* righteousness: sanctification works a righteousness *inherent* as our own. Fourthly justification is at once *completed*; sanctification increases gradually; hence remains *imperfect*³⁴. Both these scholars make clear distinction between justification and sanctification and although they do not directly address the issue it seems by silent argument they assume both justification and sanctification to be simultaneous of which justification is instant and sanctification an ongoing process but both beginning at the same time. According to Berkhof, “Sanctification is usually a lengthy process and never reaches perfection in this life”³⁵. The Reformers made a clear distinction between justification and sanctification, regarding the former as a legal act of divine grace, affecting the judicial status of man, and the latter, as a moral or re-creative work, changing the inner nature of man³⁶. Justification is at once followed by sanctification, since God sends out the Spirit of His Son into the hearts of His own as soon as they are justified, and that Spirit is the Spirit of sanctification³⁷. The cumulative evidence therefore points to the fact that sanctification and salvation occur simultaneously and that they are both achieved by grace through the work of the Holy Spirit. In terms of how they relate Berkhof puts it this way “Justification precedes and is basic to sanctification in the covenant of grace”³⁸ in other words, they are integral part and parcel of each other. They are like Siamese twins they go together and it is impossible to envisage having one without the other hence simultaneous.

C. Is Entire Sanctification Achievable in this Life?

Entire sanctification is the teaching that Christians once justified in Christ can attain complete sinlessness thus attaining ultimate sanctification in this life before death. The evidence is that God views the Christians as being perfectly holy in Christ and because God

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Bibleteacher.org by Louis Berkhof.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

transforms a Christian's life to yield the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) and not fruit of the sinful nature (Galatians 5:19-21). In other words, Christians are entirely perfect (sanctified) because of their position in Christ. The key verse used is 2Corinthians 5:17 (ὥστε εἴ τις ἐν Χριστῷ, καινὴ κτίσις· τὰ ἀρχαῖα παρῆλθεν, ἰδοὺ γέγονεν καινά·) “if any one is in Christ is a new creature, the old has passed away behold new has come” Simply stated, “entire sanctification is attainable now and by simple faith”³⁹

Scholars are greatly divided on this view. On the one hand there are those who say, entire sanctification (perfection) is achievable through human cooperation with the work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification. On the other hand there are those who strongly see it as impossible to achieve given the nature of human sinful nature and the inner struggle with the new Spirit-lead nature alluded by Paul in Galatians 5:17: "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish"⁴⁰ also Romans chapter seven. Berkhof objects the theory of Perfectionism based on scriptures he says, “in the light of Scripture the doctrine of Perfectionism is absolutely untenable”⁴¹ and goes on to name four reasons. First the Bible is very definite that there is no one on earth who does not sin, (I Kings 8:46; Prov. 20:9; Eccl. 7:20; Rom 3:10; Jas. 3:2; I John 1:8). Secondly according to Scripture there is a constant warfare between the flesh and the Spirit in the lives of God’s children (Rom 7:7-26,) where Paul gives a very striking description of this struggle in a passage which certainly refers to him in his regenerate state also in (Gal. 5:16-24) he speaks of that very same struggle as a struggle that characterizes all the children of God. And in Phil. 3:10-14 where Paul speaks of himself, practically at the end of his career, as one who has not yet reached perfection but is pressing on toward the goal. Thirdly the fact that in scripture, Confession of sin and prayer for forgiveness are continually required and especially in the Lord’s Prayer for deliverance from temptation and from the evil one (Matt. 6:12,

³⁹ John Leland Peters, *Christian Perfection and American Methodism*, Francis and Taylor Publishing, 1985 p.189.

⁴⁰ McCluskey, op. cit.

⁴¹ Berkhof op.cit.

13). Also (I John 1:9) and other passages where saints are constantly represented as confessing their sins, (Job 9:3, 20; Ps. 32:5, 130:3; 143:2; Prov. 20:9; Isa. 64:6; Dan, 9:16; Rom 7:14). Fourthly he cites inconsistency in those who espouse the doctrine of perfectionism and accuses them of “lowering the standard of the law to externalize the idea of sin, in order to maintain their theory”⁴².

The doctrine of sanctification that stresses a post conversion experience has since the 19th century been responsible in generating the Holiness Movement. “The numerous holiness churches that arose during this period vary from quasi-Methodist sects to groups that are similar to Pentecostal churches”⁴³ The Holiness Movement has its origins in John Wesley the founder of Methodism of whom according to John Wesley “perfection should be the goal of all those who desired to be all together Christian, it implied that the God who is good enough to forgive sin (justify) is obviously great enough to transform the sinner into a saint (sanctify), thus enabling him to be free from outward sin as well as from “evil thoughts and tempers” in short, to attain to a measure of holiness”⁴⁴. The Holiness Movement arose in order to facilitate the proclamation of a second-blessing experience of sanctification – a life of separation and practical holiness”⁴⁵. It needs to be pointed out that the Holiness Movement influenced by the 19th century Pietism and Revival movement has tended to gravitate towards Fundamentalism than its Methodist Antecedents. The Holiness Movement has been different from John Wesley in “identifying entire sanctification with a baptism of or with the Holy Spirit. Quoting from 1Thessalonians 5:23-24, it is argued that “entire sanctification is essentially defined as an instantaneous cleansing from Adamic sin, and an empowerment, which Christian believers may receive, by faith, through the baptism of the Holy Spirit”⁴⁶. In his earlier teaching Wesley’s view echoed those of the Holiness Movement as it is today, there seems to be a paradigm shift of thought towards progressive sanctification. “Wesley changed

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 6:6:2b.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 6:6:3b.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ J.Kenneth Grider, *Entire Sanctification: The Distinctive Doctrine of Wesleyanism*, Kansas, Beacon Hill Press, p.9.

certain aspects of his entire sanctification in later years which indicate how his understanding had changed, breaking with tradition when the evidence so lead and re-affirming it in areas where needed”⁴⁷. According to Asa Mahan, Wesley did not identify entire sanctification with “baptism with Holy Spirit. God cleanses us from original sin radically”⁴⁸. Wesley spoke of “love filling in the heart, expelling (not just suppressing) pride, anger, desire, self-will”⁴⁹. Earlier teaching of Wesley maintained “love as the sum of Christian sanctification and sanctification as lifelong process that includes a instantaneous moment at which one is perfected in love. The instantaneous moment is entire sanctification or Christian perfection or full salvation. The believer is delivered from all sin. Sanctification is a gradual renewal in the image of God that begins in the new birth and continues until death and beyond”⁵⁰. The whole developmental aspect of sanctification is widely accepted by most scholars, with possibility of deliverance from all sin in this life that though it occurs in a moment of time. In other words instant transformation followed by gradual sanctification or growth in grace, but actual deliverance from inward sin was instantaneous. This suggests definite correlation between process and moment allowing neither to disappear from the life of the believer. In this sense entire sanctification is like a paradox in which the instant of entire sanctification is a point in a life long process. Proponents of entire sanctification acknowledge humankind debility from original sin and faced with the paradox referred above, two schools of thought are developed, suppression and eradication. Some evangelical theologians of the Reformed tradition adopt “Suppressionism” in which they argue that the original sin remains in the believer, but God helps the believer more and more to suppress its outworking⁵¹. In this sense it means in Rom 7:14, 17 & 20, Paul is talking about indwelling sin. The original sin remains but the

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Asa Mahan, *The Baptism of the Holy Spirit*, New York, George Hughes & Co, 1970, p.21.

⁴⁹ John Wesley, *A plain Account of Christian Perfection*, Chicago, The Christian Witness Co., p.84.

⁵⁰ H. Ray Dunning, *A Layman’s Guide to Sanctification*, 1991, Kansas City, Beacon Hill Press, p.72.

⁵¹ Grider, op. cit, p.20.

indwelling Holy Spirit counteracts it not to be expressed. Most scholars who embrace “entire sanctification” seem to support the eradication theory maintaining that cleansing from Adamic sin is through entire sanctification in which sin is eradicated, by which they mean, exterminated, extirpated as expressions of how God’s grace radically deals with original sin. Wood sums it succinctly as follows, “in the grace of justification, sins, as acts of transgression, are pardoned. In the grace of sanctification, sin as a malady, is removed, so that the heart is pure. In the nature of the case, the eradication of sin in principle from the human heart completes the Christian character. When guilt is forgiven in justification, and all pollution is removed in entire sanctification, so that grace possesses the human heart and nothing contrary to grace, then the moral condition is reached to which the scripture give the name of perfection or entire sanctification⁵². Along similar veins Chapman views sin “as virus that can be removed”⁵³ He goes on to say, “the perfect Christian is simply a sanctified Christian, and the sanctified Christian is one who loves God with all his heart and his neighbours as himself, being enabled to do this by the agency and indwelling of the Holy Spirit who sheds love abroad in the heart. Sanctified life is indeed spirit filled life emphasizing the power and unction essential in the experience and life of holiness⁵⁴. He goes on to say, spirit filled life is a synonym of sanctified life. To be filled with the Spirit is to be emptied of sin and being emptied of sin is itself the infilling of the Spirit. Whoever is sanctified wholly is filled with the Spirit wholly. The Holy Spirit cannot indwell a heart in His fullness without at the same time sanctifying that heart⁵⁵ Chapman sees sanctification as a synonym of the spirit-filled life, the more abundant life, the rest of faith, perfect peace, fullness of joy and abiding grace⁵⁶. He strongly argues against the notion of progressive growth in grace as a means of sanctification. He argues that “sanctification, like regeneration, is a supernatural, instantaneous work and not a human, gradual work.

⁵² J. A. Wood, *Perfect Love*, Chicago Christian Witness Co, 1880, p.34.

⁵³ J. B. Chapman, *The Terminology of Holiness*, Kansas City, Beacon Hill Press, 1947, p.27.

⁵⁴ Ibid. p.83.

⁵⁵ Ibid. p.84.

⁵⁶ Ibid. p.84.

Both are God’s work, both are instantaneous, both involve human agency, and yet neither is accomplished by secondary or natural causes⁵⁷. Chapman strongly refutes growth in grace as a means of sanctification and presents the following analogies. “Growth in grace has no fixed relation to purity(sanctification), and a believer cannot grow pure, on the same principle that a sinner cannot grow into a saint; growth not changing the nature of things. All the changes made by growth or gradual processes are in size or quantity. Purity pertains to quality, growth to size or quantity. That which is pure or that which is impure may grow and mere growth does not change the one or the other, only in size or quantity. Anything impure is made clean by washing, refining, or purging and not by growth. Trimming a tree, or enriching the soil never changes the nature of its fruits”⁵⁸ Chapman gives his killer punch in his opposition to the doctrine of progressive growth in sanctification in these words: “until the living principle of grace is implanted in the soul at regeneration, no sinner becomes a Christian; and until the remaining opposing principle of inbred sin is removed from the regenerate heart no Christian is entirely sanctified. Seeking purity by a gradual process of imperceptible growth is equivalent to its indefinite postponement”⁵⁹. Another proponent of the eradication theory of the original sin is A.M. Hill, he asserts that “there are twelve verbs in the original in the OT and NT which teach God’s method of dealing with this internal indwelling sin. They all unite in declaring that He will “crucify it”; ”kill it”;; “destroy it”; “eliminate it”, “burn it”, “take it away from the soul”. And what is more, no other kinds of verbs are used when describing God’s method of dealing with this foe of his indwelling in our hearts”⁶⁰. Corlett echoes Chapman in his assertion that “the distinction between entire sanctification and holiness is that entire sanctification is the act of God’s grace whereby the consecrated Christian is cleansed from all sin or made holy and holiness being the state of life in which the entirely sanctified people live”⁶¹. Daniel Steele in support of the

⁵⁷ Ibid. p.97.

⁵⁸ Ibid. p.97.

⁵⁹ Ibid. p.98.

⁶⁰ Ibid. p.109.

⁶¹ Shelby Corlett, *The Meaning of Holiness: Messages on the Wesleyan Doctrine of Entire Sanctification*, Kansas City, Beacon Hill, Press, p.60.

eradication theory simply puts it this way, “there is a fullness of the Spirit which must imply entire sanctification, the permanent gracious presence in the soul of the Holy Spirit in His fullness”⁶². Corlett further points out that “the purpose of God for man in this world is saintliness of life and Christ-likeness in character. Without this work of holiness wrought in the life by Holy Spirit any appreciable progress toward the goal of saintliness is impossible⁶³ Citing Romans 8:2 and Galatians 2:20, Corlett goes on to point out that “holiness is a manifestation of God’s power and not a display of man’s ability. The experience of entire sanctification and the life of holiness does not impersonalize or dehumanize its possessor, rather through cleansing brought by entire sanctification, the true self is free from many former limitations and the result is a truly normal expression and development of the personality”⁶⁴ John Wesley once said that one perfected in love may grow in grace far swifter than he did before, this is echoed by Corlett in these words “a perfect Christian grows far more than a feeble believer whose growth is still obstructed by the shady thorns of sin and by the draining suckers of iniquity”⁶⁵

III. Means of Sanctification

There are four principal ways of achieving sanctification: a) The work of the Holy Spirit b) The Word of God c) Prayer and d) Sacraments.

A. The Holy Spirit.

From the discussion above, there is scholarly consensus that the principal means of sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit. In Luke 4:18 Jesus started his ministry by declaring that the Spirit of the Lord was upon Him having set Him apart for His earthly ministry. Jesus was setting up example in that He was empowered by the Holy Spirit to live a sinless life in order to accomplish our salvation. In His ministry He was dependent upon the power of the Holy Spirit to fulfil God’s perfect will. Jesus demonstrated for humanity that it is

⁶² Daniel Steele, *A Defence of Christian Perfection*, p.110, also quoted in Corlett (Ibid.. p.70-71).

⁶³ Corlett, op.cit p.73.

⁶⁴ Ibid. p.86.

⁶⁵ Shelby Corlett, *The Meaning of Holiness: Messages on the Wesleyan Doctrine of Entire Sanctification*, Kansas City, Beacon Hill, Press, p.97.

possible to defeat Satan if we walk in the Spirit rather than in the flesh. The same Spirit that was given to Jesus so that He could walk in victory is now available to every born again believer enabling holy living and for that matter sanctified life. In the Upper Room John 15:5 Jesus told his disciples “apart from me” and by implication, apart from the Holy Spirit they could do nothing. Thus declaring sanctification is impossible without the Holy Spirit and that the Holy Spirit is the principal means of sanctification.

B. The Word of God

In his prayer for the disciples in John 17:17 Jesus said “sanctify them by the truth your word is truth”. The second most important means of sanctification is the Word of God which go hand in hand with the work of the Holy Spirit because God speaks through the Word and the Holy Spirit works in the believer to apply the Word of God. Louis Berkhof maintains that “the principal means used by the Holy Spirit is the Word of God which presents all the objective conditions and acts to excite spiritual activity”⁶⁶ Berkhof also adds providential guidance as a powerful means of sanctification and cites Ps119:71; Rom 2:4 and Hebrews 12:10

C. Prayer

Jesus depended on prayer. If we accept the Holy Spirit and the Word God are important means of sanctification then we must add prayer. Prayer is defined as a form of religious practice that seeks to activate volitional rapport with God or Spirit through deliberate practice⁶⁷. Prayer is communion with God. Prayer is that act of going into God’s presence to be with the Lord. Prayer is bringing God and His resources into our earthly realities. Prayer is drawing upon divine resources to influence human reality. Prayer is breathing the breath of heaven. Prayer is the master key to everything we have been called to do.

D. The Sacraments

The Roman Catholic Church defines the sacraments as "efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us". The Anglican

⁶⁶ Bibleteacher.org by Louis Berkhof.

⁶⁷ Wikipaedia dictionary.

Church defines a sacrament as "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us, ordained by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof." According to

Dictionary a sacrament is "a Rite in which GOD (or Gods) is (are) uniquely active⁶⁸. In all these definitions encounter with God is espoused in sacraments. There is divergence of opinion on sacraments as means of sanctification. Sacraments are by definition presented as means of sanctification. To the question, does sanctification depend on grace conferred through sacraments? Encyclopaedia Britannica says that, The Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Anglicans and Lutherans would say yes to this question while the Reformed and Free Church Protestantism including the Baptist and the Reformed Church traditions would insist that participation in grace occurs on the occasions of personal faith and not at all by sacrament observance⁶⁹

IV. The Significance of Sanctification in Holiness Movement

Throughout the history of the church search for holiness or doctrine of sanctification has been a great a significant catalyst in church growth and in charting the course of the church in new direction. Starting with John Wesley whose aim was "not to form a new sect; but to reform the nation, particularly the church and to spread scriptural holiness over the land"⁷⁰. For Wesley, "Holiness is the mind that was in Christ"⁷¹. Between 1880 –1918 numerous number of holiness groups emerged. There were other factors like slave trade, liberation of women, desire to serve the spiritual and social needs of the poor ignored by middle class congregations in the main stream Protestantism, however, the doctrine and experience of entire sanctification has been the chief motivation of the Holiness Movement in America beginning around the middle of the 19th

⁶⁸ Irving Hexham's *Concise Dictionary of Religion*, first published by InterVarsity Press, Carol Stream, USA, 1994, second edition, Regent College Press, Vancouver, 1999.

⁶⁹ Encyclopaedia Britannica, 5:401b.

⁷⁰ Wesley, "Minutes of Several Conversations" Q. p.3 also quoted in David L Cubie, "Separation or Unity Sanctification and Love in Wesley Doctrine of the Church" in *The Church*, eds. Melvin E. Dieter & Daniel E. Berg, Indiana, Warner Press, p.333.

⁷¹ Wesley, Sermon: "The General Spread of the Gospel", 1783 A.M. Sec 13; Work VI, p.281.

century. Sanctification and desire for holiness has and still is of great significance to Christian growth both individually and corporately. It is lack of fervency for holiness that sparks off the dry rot for church decline. Desire for sanctification and holiness has sparked many a Revival and Renewal movements across the world and made the church universal to grow. It was against “bureaucratic denominationalism” and desire for holiness that resulted in The Wesleyan Methodist Church, Free Methodist Church of North America, The Christian Missionary Alliance, The Church of the Nazarene (that now accounts for one third of the Holiness Movement) and the Salvation Army.

This fervency for holiness can be discerned in the Nazarene Articles of Faith (Article V) that states “we believe that through the Fall of Adam, he (man) became depraved so that he cannot now turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength. But we also believe that the grace of God through Jesus Christ is freely bestowed upon all men, enabling all who will turn from sin to righteousness”. This in a nutshell represents most of the believers in Holiness Movement or as Asa Mahan says “it is the baptism of Holy Spirit which effects entire Sanctification”⁷²

To a believer consumed by desire for holiness and sanctification, there is no need for legalism and rules of thou shall and thou shall not. The drive from the Holy Spirit engenders natural spiritual growth. Where there is no such desire, the opposite is the case legalism leading to Christian failure. Pursuit and desire for sanctification is the panacea for Christian growth.

V. Critique

At the beginning of this paper, we warned on the dangers of extremes. As we presented the argument for entire sanctification and whether sanctification is a reward for human merits and whether it is achieved simultaneously with regeneration, these extremes surfaced. Suffice to say, neither of the extremes does any justice to this magisterial doctrine that is so vital to Christian belief. It was obvious to detect that the arguments were polarised along Arminian and

⁷² Asa Mahan, *The Baptism of the Holy Spirit*, New York, George Hughes & Co, 1870.

Calvinist lines. It goes without saying that truth about the doctrine of sanctification does not lie in these two extremes, but is in between.

Ultra Calvinistic views on sanctification put so much emphasis on the sovereignty of God that believers become robots without choice or free will. We know this is not true in scriptural where we find God in trying to cultivate relationship with mankind allows them free will to choose even to disobey. Over emphasis on ultimate sovereignty of God in sanctification impinges on loving relationship between God and believers. Extreme Arminianism, on the other hand emphasizes human free will to the extend that it creates God in man's image making him impotent while it deifies mankind to superman who can do whatever he choose for his free will is paramount. In order to get the doctrine of sanctification right we need the correct balance between the sovereignty of God and the free of mankind. In order to do this we would need to cultivate a theology of both and rather than a theology of either or.

The second extreme that needs to be address is in the area of Biblical interpretation. As one trained in semantics and Biblical Interpretation, I found the application of the Biblical texts in some of the arguments quite disturbing particularly when verses were quoted out of context and applied to support a particular view. There is need to bear in mind that a text without a context is a pretext. The one text that is bashed around out of its context is “ be ye holy because I am holy”. It is used by those who support the concept of eradication of original sin as well as those deny it! Disturbing equally is the lack of humility as found in Apostle Paul who learned as he was and after giving his credentials in Phil 3 could still say, he has not yet achieved it in verse 13, not to mention 1 Cor 13:12 now we see but poor reflection. In handling some of the Biblical texts we need to heed Apostle Paul's advice to Timothy in 2Tim 2:15 to study to show ourselves approved unto God rightly handling the word of truth. We need, that balanced combination in the famous hymn⁷³ “Finish then thy new creation” ;“pure and spotless let us be”; “let us see thy great salvation“; perfectly restored in thee” “changed from glory into glory”; “ till in heaven we take our place”; “till we cast our crowns before thee”; “lost in wonder love and praise”

⁷³ Charles Wesley, *Love Divine, all love excelling* 1707-88.

Conclusion

In conclusion in order to do justice to the doctrine of sanctification I would like to make a few suggestions as concluding remarks. Firstly, **acceptance of paradox** just as we accept the doctrine of the trinity as a paradox, may be we should do the same for sanctification rather quoting Bible verses out context to try and support our view or trying to acquiesce to a particular theological stance be it Calvinist or Arminian. Some doctrines that deal with incomprehensible divine truth require both and approach rather than trying to squeeze them to fit the doctrinal formulation of our denomination. Perhaps we could take a leaf from Spurgeon's admission in the first paragraph of this paper.

Secondly, **learning to maintain balance** in two contrasting views for instance, both progressive and instantaneous aspects of sanctification could be held in tension and happy balance rather than falsifying scripture to fit one view. It seems perfectly alright to accept the whole developmental aspect of sanctification accepted by most scholars, but still maintain the possibility of deliverance from all sin in this life through grace occurring in a moment of time. It is also possible to maintain instant transformation followed by gradual sanctification or growth in grace and still accept the actual deliverance from inward sin to be instant. We can also balance belief in definite correlation between process and moment allowing neither to disappear from the life of the believer. The instant of entire sanctification could be a point in a life long process. John Wesley demonstrates how to maintain a proper balance between the process and the moment in his understanding of sanctification. Wesley wrote, "Although we may weaken our enemies day by day, yet we cannot drive them out. By all the grace which is given at justification we cannot extirpate them. Though we watch and pray ever so much, we cannot wholly cleanse either our hearts or hands. Most sure we cannot, till it shall please our Lord to speak our hearts again, to speak the second time, "Be clean"; and then only the leprosy is cleansed. Then only, the evil root, the carnal mind, is destroyed; and inbred sin subsists no more"⁷⁴. This balance is practical liveable and seems most true to scriptures.

⁷⁴ John Wesley, *Standard Sermons*, 2:390, Abingdon, 2003.

A modern expression of the need for this balance was made by Haines when addressing a Conference on Church Renewal in The Wesleyan Tradition. He said “ We must renew our vision of sanctification as both a pilgrimage and an event, as a process and a relationship with a history, a healing and a healthy growth, a quest and a gift. We must not reduce sanctification to a single moment in time. Neither must we forget the importance of such a moment of commitment on our part and the bringing of wholeness on God’s part, allowing all of that to be eroded away in the partial truth of gradual development. The pendulum has swung widely from one extreme to another, and is still swinging at the present time. But if the renewal movement is to be renewed we, must honestly face the paradox of a moment and a lifetime, both of which are necessary if we are to be holy as He is holy”⁷⁵. Another case in point in sustaining balance and paradox is in a paper presented before the Wesleyan Theological Society, that integrated progressive and instantaneous sanctification, highlight three instantaneous points, first at new birth when life of sin is dealt with, starting off the upward progress in Holiness, then it reaches the point when entire sanctification occurs, starting of yet a higher upward progress in Maturity and the final instantaneous point at death when the progressive line attains a perpendicular position as the believer progresses even higher unto the fullness of Christ. This is diagrammatically presented with the first progress on a graph attaining the 45 degree gradient, second point 60 degrees and the final progress 90 degrees. This accommodates both progressive and instantaneous sanctification without arguing against or denying validity of either⁷⁶

To summarize, if we accepted paradox in the doctrine of sanctification and allowed balanced views accepting both and instead of either or, we would avoid the pitfalls of trying to formulate what fits into our belief in entire sanctification a priori and realize the danger of creating religious clones to fit our theory. We would also notice the danger of trivialising the sovereignty of God in so doing,

⁷⁵ H Ray Dunning, *A Layman’s Guide to Sanctification*, Kansas City, 1991, p.74-5.

⁷⁶ Leslie R Martin, “The Crisis Process Issues in Wesleyan Thought: Paper presented before the Wesleyan Theological Society at Olivet Nazarene College, 2 November 1968.

also the failure in taking into account cultural dynamics that often shape religious experiences around the world. We would realize that the Bible does not seem to have such formulation as it has stood the taste of time in dealing with changing mankind and a changeless God. Accepting paradox will help us to understand that sanctification is a life long process as well as an instantaneous experience in which the believer is perfected in love and acknowledge that it occurs in that moment in which God delivers the believer from all inward sin. Accept that it begins at the new birth and continues until death and beyond. We would also accept and hold in happy tension the fact that in experiencing sanctification it is both a pilgrimage and an event. It is also both a quest and a gift. It is both progressive and instantaneous and that it is the paradox of a moment and a life time.

Finally, in order to receive and experience sanctification, we would need a) diligent dedicated complete consecration , b) acceptance that one cannot cleanse one's heart, c) we need constant mortification of fleshly desires d) spiritual disciplines of prayer, Bible Study, worship and sacrament of Holy communion to remind us to constantly desire to be holy as He is as the ultimate goal of sanctification.

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