SCRIPTURAL HOLINESS AND WESLEYAN HOLINESS
Nancy R. Bowen
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Introduction

This paper arises from my work in recent years on Ezekiel where the categories of holy/profane and clean/unclean are a central focus. I've identified certain ethical issues stemming from these categories that seem, to me, to be problematic for any understanding of ecclesiology, mission, or vocation. Therefore, these ethical issues deserve attention in relation to theme of the Institute. Since holiness/sanctification is also a central focus in the Wesleyan tradition I wondered whether the same ethical issues and problems exist in Wesleyan understandings of holiness.

Although definitions of the key terms are important, my interest is in the *dynamics* of holiness and related word groups and with how that dynamic is expressed in the Bible and in Wesley's writings. I am especially concerned with the ways I see the biblical dynamic expressed historically in the church, as well as in contemporary faith and life. I will not attempt to reconcile the many contradictions and tensions in both Testaments that vex discussion on this topic. I recognize that by attending to broader categories that other texts and traditions may stand in tension with, or even contradict, the views I express here. This paper is less about arriving at a certain destination, and more about the journey that thinking about this topic has taken me on.

Scriptural Holiness: First Testament

The primary conceptual framework of the holiness is structured around the opposed pairs of holy (ק[ו]שׁ/profane (חל/חלל) and clean (ט[ו]ר)/unclean (טמא/טמאה). The pairs are distinct from each other, yet overlap in significant, if not always comprehensible, ways. One complication is the numerous ways the Hebrew is translated in English. Multiple English words translate the same Hebrew root and the same English word is used to translate different Hebrew roots. In the NRSV verb and noun forms of קדשׁ are translated "sanctify," "sacred," "hallow," "consecrate," "holy," and "holiness." Forms of חלל are

translated "profane," "common," and "defile." Forms of טהר are translated "clean," "cleanse," "purification," and "purify." Forms of טמא are translated "defile" and "unclean(ness)" (rarely as "pollute"). For clarity I will use: "holy"/"holiness" for adjective/noun and "sanctify" for verb forms of קדש; forms of "profane" for חלל; "clean" and "cleanse" for טהר; "unclean(ness)" for adjective/noun and "defile" for verb forms of טמא.[1] This framework is found primarily in priestly sections of the Pentateuch.[2]

Clean (with its opposite, unclean) categorized the normal state of human existence. It was not the same as modern understandings of clean/dirty or sanitary/unsanitary, nor was moral stigma attached. Persons or objects were "clean" when they existed within the proper boundaries established by God, and whose own external boundaries were whole and intact. Something "unclean" was out of what seemed to be its proper category or niche, out of bounds, or anomalous. Some objects, like animals, could not move from one condition to the other. They were permanently clean or unclean. But persons could and did change condition. The action of defiling moved a person from the condition of clean to unclean. Rituals of cleansing moved a person in the opposite direction. The various "purity laws" in the legal codes were concerned with the distinctions between clean from unclean. These laws were primarily concerned with food, sex, and bodily fluids, especially as they related to religious activities. Unfortunately, distinctions were not always obvious, rational, or consistent.

There were different degrees of uncleanness, which are usually labeled today as "minor" and "major." Minor uncleannesses were not considered contagious; uncleanness could not be communicated to another person. They were also easily cleansed, usually be bathing or washing clothes and a brief lapse of time, such as "until evening." Examples include touching a carcass or person with a discharge (Lev 11:24-28; 15:7) and intercourse (Lev 15:18). Major uncleannesses were considered

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1   A more thorough discussion would include consideration of related terms such as sin (חטא/חטאה) and pure or upright (תמם). And similarly with the ST.
2   The description that follows summarizes material in Frymer-Kensky 1983, 399-414; Jensen 1992, 40-55, 88-148; Nelson 1993, 17-38.

contagious, uncleanness could be communicated to another person. These were also easily cleansed, although it took longer and might involve a ritual conducted by a priest. Examples include having a discharge (Lev 15:13-15) and childbirth (Lev 12:1-8). Both minor and major uncleannesses were essentially "curable."

But there was another degree of uncleanness, which was caused by the performance of certain deeds that could not be eradicated or cured by cleansing rituals. The only way to cleanse a person or object so contaminated was through some kind of purging or other catastrophic event (Frymer-Kensky 1983, 399). These were essentially "incurable" uncleannesses. When the land was so defiled, the catastrophic retribution was to purge the land of the inhabitants who defiled it (Gen 6:11-13; Lev 20:23; 26:34-35, 43; Deut 9:4-5). The catastrophic retribution for individuals who had become "incurably" unclean was to be "cut off" from the community (Lev 7:20-21; 20:5-6, 17-18; 22:3).

Whereas clean/unclean pertained to the human world, holiness (and its opposite, the profane) pertained to the divine world. The only thing inherently holy was Yhwh. To be holy, therefore, was to be in the divine world or in close proximity to it. Thus, in Yhwh's presence a place became "holy ground" (Exo 3:5). Profane was non-holy, or the absence of holiness. Synonyms are "common" and "ordinary." Objects and persons became holy through the ritual actions of sanctification, which transferred something from the condition of profane to the condition of holy. The action of profaning moved something in the opposite direction. One can think of sanctification as the addition of some intangible, but real quality called holiness and profaning as draining a holy thing of its holy character (Nelson 1993, 21).

There were also grades of holiness. That gradation was most evident in the structures of the tabernacle and temple. The most holy, "the holy of holies," was in closest proximity to Yhwh. The nearby area for the altar and sacrifices was the next most holy. The outer areas were profane and contained no holiness. There was also a gradation of holiness among persons, which resulted in a religious social

hierarchy. The high priest was the most holy, then the priests and Levites. The people of Israel contained some general holiness since they belonged to God (Exo 19:5-6; Lev 11:44-45; 20:26). Non-Israelites were profane. Holiness was also contagious and could be transmitted through touch or proximity (2 Sam 6:6-7; Ezek 44:19; 46:20).

The pairs were opposites; one participated in only condition at a time. One could be holy *or* profane, clean *or* unclean. The normal state for persons was profane and clean. One could also be profane and unclean. Clean was a necessary condition for approaching the holy. Thus one could be holy and clean. The only condition not possible was holy and unclean. This was the dangerous encounter. When the unclean came into contact with the holy, it profaned the holy. The contact was viewed as similar to a "fusion reaction" that could kill the individuals involved and endanger the welfare of the whole nation (Nelson 1993, 34). Therefore the holy had to be protected from being profaned, which was accomplished by measures, such as the legal codes, to prevent contact between the holy and the unclean.

Maintaining the boundaries between these categories was therefore critically important for Israel's continued relationship with Yhwh. Thus it was essential to distinguish between the holy and the profane, and between the clean and unclean (Lev 10:10; Ezek 22:26; 42:20; 44:23). As long as the minor and major uncleannesses were cleansed or cured, the relationship was protected. The danger was the accumulation of uncleanness "beyond the level of tolerance, when a cataclysm becomes inevitable" (Frymer-Kensky 1983, 408).

Ezekiel used this basic framework to explain the exile, but with his own variations and permutations. Sometimes one can find connections between definitions of what constituted unclean or defiling in Ezekiel and in legal codes, but not always. Ultimately, for Ezekiel, what was clean (in bounds) was covenant obedience. Therefore, any act that could be construed as violating the covenant was unclean. Therefore, even acts (or sins) not normally identified as unclean were defined as such by

Ezekiel (e.g., 14:11; 5:11; 20:30; 22:3; 36:17). Ezekiel argued that <u>all</u> the people were unclean, even the priests. And all that uncleanness came into contact with the sanctuary, the city, and the land, which were all holy due to their proximity to or ownership by Y<small>HWH</small>. The result was that everything holy was profaned: Y<small>HWH</small>'s sanctuary, Y<small>HWH</small>'s name, and Y<small>HWH</small>'s land. Since all the people were unclean, there was no possibility for Y<small>HWH</small>'s presence among them. The departure of Y<small>HWH</small>'s glory from the temple, the city, and the land in Ezek 8-11 signifies that they have all been emptied of holiness. The uncleanness had built up and ultimately reached a point "beyond the level of tolerance, when a cataclysm becomes inevitable." The exile was that cataclysm.

In order that Y<small>HWH</small>'s glory might again dwell in their midst, the people must be entirely cleansed (36:16-38). In addition, Ezekiel envisioned a future that ensured that the cataclysm would never repeat. Therefore, the cleansed people will be given a new heart and new spirit to ensure obedience to the covenant. This obedient people will carefully observe the new boundaries of holy and profane, clean and unclean (Ezek 40-48). When the necessary condition of clean is attained, then Y<small>HWH</small> will again approach and dwell within the temple. And the name of the city will forever be "The L<small>ORD</small> is there," because "they shall never again defile themselves with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions" (37:23).

Scriptural Holiness: Second Testament

The corresponding word group in Greek is: holy (ἅγιος/ἁγιάζω); profane (κοινός/βέβηλος) clean (καθαρός/καθαρίζω); unclean (ἀκαθαρτος). There are similar problems with English translation. For example, "profane" is often translated in NRSV as "unclean" (cf. Rom 14:14; Rev 21:7). Another complication is that the pairings are sometimes not as distinct as in the FT. This is especially evident in Acts. In the story of Cornelius' conversion Peter protests, "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is profane (κοινον) or unclean (ακαθρτον)" (Acts 10:14). From a FT point of view it's hard to know exactly what that means since the kosher laws never refer to animals as

"profane." And eating sanctified food (sacrifices) is more often problematic (cf. Lev 7:20-21; Matt 12:4). Similarly, the declaration, "What God has made clean (ἐκαθαρσιν), you must not call profane (κοινου)" (Acts 10:15; 11:9) negates the possibility of the state of "profane and clean." In this instance, "profane" seems to mean "unclean."

Even with these problems, the ST essentially maintained the dynamics found in the FT. Holiness pertained to the divine world. To be holy, therefore, was to be in the divine world or in close proximity to it. Since God was holy (e.g., John 17:11; Rev 4:8), both Christ (e.g., Mark 1:24; Luke 1:35; Acts 3:14) and the Spirit (e.g., Matt 3:11; Luke 4:1; John 14:26; Rom 5:5) were holy by virtue of their association with God. Profane is not often used, but where it does occur it stands as the opposite of holy (cf. Acts 21:28; Heb 9:13). It is possible to move from one state to the other. Objects and persons became holy through the action of sanctification, which transferred something from the condition of profane to the condition of holy (e.g., Acts 26:18; Rom 6:19; 15:16; 1 Cor 6:11; Heb 9:13). This action seems to occur by placing oneself in proximity to the holy, such as through faith in Christ or as an action of the Holy Spirit. The action of profaning moved something in the opposite direction (Heb 10:29). It is not clear to me whether sanctification is still viewed in the ST as the addition of some intangible, but real quality called holiness and profaning as draining a holy thing of its holy character.

The idea of clean and unclean as being within proper boundaries or out of bounds is evident is the idea that illness, such as leprosy, rendered a person unclean (e.g., Matt 8:1-3; 10:8; Luke 17:11-19). For the most part references are to "curable" forms of uncleanness and are often accompanied by cleansing rituals (see also Mark 1:44; Luke 2:22). One of the most frequent references to unclean is to "unclean spirit(s)." An "unclean spirit" seemed to be an "incurable" form of uncleanness. The restoration to the state of "clean" could only be accomplished by a catastrophic purging in the form of exorcism, or casting out the unclean spirit (e.g., Mark 1:23-26; 5:1-13).[3]

The major shift in the ST appears to be redefining the *content* of what is considered to clean and

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3   It is therefore not surprising that the English word, "catharsis," is derived from the Greek for "cleanse" (*katharidzo*)

unclean. This happens in several areas. In light of the Gentile mission, Gentile was given the status of clean instead of unclean (Acts 10). A similar shift occurred with the removal of various restrictions on the consumption of foods that would have otherwise been considered unclean (e.g., Mark 7:14-19; Acts 10:12-15; 1 Cor 10:12-27). The most significant redefinition of clean was a shift to an inward or spiritual definition of clean in the sense of moral purity (e.g., Mark 7:20-21). In contrast, unclean was defined as moral impurity, which consisted of such sins as licentiousness, greed, and fornication (e.g., Rom 1:24; 2 Cor 12:21; Eph 4;19; 5:5). Although the content of clean/unclean was redefined, it was still necessary to undergo some sort of "cleansing" in order to move from the category of unclean to clean. The means of cleansing took a number of forms. One form was that of Christ's sacrifice as the supreme cleansing (e.g., Titus 2:14; Heb 9:13-14; 1 John 1:7).[4] The ritual of baptism functioned as a means of cleansing (e.g., Eph 5:26; Heb 10:22; 1 Pet 3:21). Sometimes cleansing seemed to be self-referential; one cleansed oneself (e.g., 2 Cor 7:1; 2 Tim 2:21; Jas 4:8). Cleansing could also happen "by faith" (cf. Acts 15:19).

What still seemed to be the case was that holy and unclean was still a dangerous encounter, which meant that the unclean could have no contact with the holy (e.g. 2 Cor 6:14-7:1; Eph 5:3; 1 Thess 4:7; Rev 21:27). The ST concepts seem to create a paradox. Unlike the FT where the normal condition of persons was clean, in the ST the normal condition was unclean. The later development of the doctrine of "original sin" attests to this difference. Humanity was now by nature unclean. Only be being brought into contact with the holy, that is, Christ, could one change their condition from unclean to clean. The paradox is that the unclean were to kept away from the holy, but only by being brought near the holy could one become clean.

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4   Wesley identified that at times Christ functions as the priest who offers the sacrifice necessary for cleansing (cf. Heb 1:3), and at other times Christ *is* the sacrifice necessary for cleansing (cf. Heb 7:27).

The Ethical Issues of Scriptural Holiness

One of the key aspects of scriptural holiness is the need to protect the holy from coming into contact with the unclean and therefore being profaned. The most problematic aspect of this is that, at its most extreme expression, violent, even lethal, measures are used to protect the holy. At the international level, protecting the holy becomes the rationale for "ethnic cleansing," the claim that the only way a group can maintain their ethnic "holiness" is by killing those believed to be profaning it.

This finds expression in the FT in many places, but two examples will suffice. One is in reference to the land. Because YHWH is understood to be the owner of the land, it is holy. Therefore, it must be protected from being profaned. Both Deuteronomic and Priestly writings attest that Israel's right of possession came about because God displaced (i.e., exterminated) the previous inhabitants on account of their misdeeds. These deeds were so defiling that YHWH, in effect, cleansed the land of the unclean inhabitants (cf. Lev 20:23; Deut 9:4-5).[5] Israel's possession of the land became contingent upon the land remaining holy. Wrong acts by Israel could also defile the land. If Israel performed the same misdeeds as the previous inhabitants, then God might displace them from the land (Deut 18:9-12; Lev 20:22-25). Whether or not the land remained holy thus became a matter of national survival.

This is part of Ezekiel's rationale for the exile. Because the people had defiled the land, thereby profaning it, the land must be cleansed (Ezek 22:1-16). Just as God previously dispossessed the inhabitants of the land because their sins had defiled the land, God dispossessed the current inhabitants of the land by scattering them among the nations and dispersing them through the countries. In this way YHWH would "purge your filthiness (טמאה) out of you." The antecedent to the "your" and "you" is the city (Jerusalem), which means this is not about removing the uncleanness from the people, but about removing the people from the city. God's judgment is to rid Jerusalem of its defiling contents.[6] The cleansing of the land in Joshua and Ezekiel are both forms of ethnic cleansing, in the first instance of

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5   The flood story is also an account of the catastrophic cleansing of the land due to defilement.
6   The "profaning" of God's holy name is Ezekiel 20 is another argument for the exile.

the Canaanites and in the second instance of the Israelites.

Another form of ethnic cleansing that resulted from the need to protect the holy from being profaned was the removal and exclusion of foreign wives in Ezra. The language of holiness is explicit. "For they have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and for their sons. Thus the holy (קדש) seed has mixed itself with the peoples of the lands, and in this faithlessness the officials and leaders have led the way" (Ezra 9:2). The solution was to "send away" all of the foreign wives along with their children (Ezra 10:1-44, esp. vv. 2-3, 10-11, 44; cf. Neh 10:30). The way the "holy seed" was protected was by complete separation from anything "foreign," which was defined as unclean.

Even if not as lethal or catastrophic, the same dynamic is evident in the attempt to protect the holy space of the altar. The Hebrew noun, "altar," from the verb, "to slaughter," was the place where sacrifice occurred. The basis of Israelite sacrifice was the concept of *transfer*.

> Biblical sacrifice was a system of interacting with God, which involved, at least in part, a transfer between the ordinary human world and the sphere of the holy. The gift or victim moved from [human] space and ownership, as it were, into God's space and ownership.[7]

That transfer occurred on the altar, which was the intersection of human and divine space. "Sacrificial movement, then, occurred along a route that led from human space to God's space via the transfer station of the altar. A change of ownership took place when a sacrifice was performed. What had been human property was now God's."[8] Sacrifice and altar were thus holy places that must be protected from being profaned. In the legal codes and in Ezekiel that protection was accomplished in part through physical boundaries and in part through social boundaries. The physical boundaries restricted people from entering the holy area of the temple (including the more holy areas of the sanctuary and holy of holies). The graded holiness of people provided the social boundaries. Only the priests, who became holy through the ritual of consecration (קדש), were permitted access to the holy areas and all others

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7 Nelson, 1993, 60.
8 Ibid., 61.

were excluded (cf. Lev 8:12, 22-30; Ezek 44:9-27).

With its own nuances, similar concerns about protecting the boundary of holiness are evident in the ST. Second Temple Judaism maintained both physical and social boundaries around the holy. References to "chief priests" and "the high priest" attest to the social boundary. The Court of Gentiles was a physical boundary that functioned to prohibit Gentiles access to the inner courts of the temple–under penalty of death.[9] Even the suspicion that this boundary was crossed was cause for violent reaction (Acts 21:27-31).

The tearing of the curtain that protected the holy of holies (Matt 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45) has traditionally been defined in Christianity as abolishing such physical and social boundaries of holiness and, therefore, as allowing all people access to God. In addition to this truth, the ST also redefined the holy area from the physical space of the temple, to the interior space of the individual soul (Rom 12:1; 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16) and, more broadly, to the social space of the gathered church (cf. 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:21), and even more broadly, to heaven. All of these places are *holy* because of their association with and proximity to what is ultimately holy, God/Christ. The need to protect *these* holy spaces from being defiled or profaned is also evident. The individual is to both pursue that which would keep the inner soul holy/clean and refrain from that which would defile that inner temple, including separating oneself from unclean persons (e.g., Matt 15:16-20; 1 Cor 3:17; 2 Cor 6:14, 17; Col 3:5; 1 Thess 4:3; 2 Tim 2:20-23; Jas 4:8). The holy, catholic church is protected by excluding of all those who have not associated themselves with the holy one, Christ (e.g., Matt 7:21-23; 1 Cor 5:1-12; Eph 5:5; Heb 13:4) Final judgment is the ultimate experience of the exclusion or destruction of the unclean. Only those who are holy will get into heaven (Matt 18:3; Acts 13:46; 2 Thess 1:9; Rev 19:1-3; 21:8; 22:14-15).[10] Although removed in time (eternity) and space (heaven/hell) from the more temporal and earthly texts of Joshua and Ezekiel, final judgment is also an extreme and

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9   Johannes Munck, *The Acts of the Apostles* (AB 31; Garden City, NY; Doubleday & Co., 1967), 214.

10   In all these cases there may be other texts that exemplify both the inclusion of the holy/clean and the exclusion of the unclean/profane.

deadly form of ethnic cleansing, only the *ethnos* is redefined. Instead of Canaanites or Israelites, it is non-Christians who are removed. In heaven, nothing unclean will ever profane the holy people.[11]

Christianity dispensed with physical sacrifices of animals and other offerings upon the altar. But the idea of the altar as a holy place was retained due to the idea of Christ as the sacrificial lamb (e.g., 1 Cor 5:7; Heb 2:17; 1 John 2:2; 4:10) and the representation of that sacrifice in the ritual of Eucharist. Therefore, one was not to approach communion "in an unworthy manner" (1 Cor 11:27). Even though it doesn't appear in the ST, the church has historically used the rationale of protecting the holy from the unclean as the basis for the exclusion of various groups from ordination, the ritual that confers the authority to approach the holy altar. Those defined as "unclean," such as persons of color, women, and those with various disabilities, were refused ordination. Although recognized as belonging to the covenant community, they were not, and never could be, the "holy" priests. To become the "priest" was to cross the boundary protecting the holy from being profaned, which would result in (often unspecified) dire and life threatening consequences. Therefore, those responsible for guarding the boundaries of priesthood and the altar had to use all means necessary to prevent the excluded from ever being included. More recently, queer people have been barred access to ordination when they are identified with the "fornicators" who are to be forever excluded from the holy realm.

The underlying issue that I see in scriptural holiness is the creation of a binary system of conditions, holy/profane and clean/unclean.[12] Generally in this binary system you are either one or the other and, as with most binary systems, one condition is good (holy/clean) and the other is bad (profane/unclean). Therefore you have to make sure that you participate in the good condition and not the bad. That is usually accomplished by (a) eradicating the bad (such as ethnic cleansing) or (b) various protective measures and separation (such as not ordaining women). The underlying assumption is that sacredness or holiness must be "protected" from the unclean and drastic, even violent or lethal,

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11 The conception of "saints" (αγιοι) in this regard deserves further exploration.
12 Perfect/imperfect could also be included as another binary system.

measures may be required.

I don't see this assumption limited to Christianity or even to religious issues, though I will maintain those limits for the purposes of the Institute. The question I have, and that is the point of this paper, is this: If international law has declared that ethnic cleansing is too high a price to pay for national purity, are there prices that are too high to pay to maintain religious purity? Should the sacredness or holiness of one's religion and beliefs be of greater value than those who might "defile" it by their words, actions, or being? Are there lengths to which one should not go to maintain the holiness of the interior temple?[13] Should we view the defense of sacredness—at all costs—as a good thing, something to be valued positively? What if we think that the damage done to human life in order to preserve the sanctity of faith or community is too costly?

Having confronted this question in my work on Ezekiel, I wondered if similar dynamics existed in John Wesley's conception of holiness, with the attendant need to protect the holy at all costs. I now turn to Wesley's views.

Wesley's View of Holiness

One of the problems with wrapping your mind around Wesley is the overlap of terms: holiness, perfection, and sanctification. At times these seem interchangeable, at other times there are nuances and distinctions among them.[14] Another problem is how to correlate Wesley's terminology and usage with biblical terminology and usage.[15] Because of the focus on holiness, I will primarily refer to holiness or sanctification instead of perfection.

In my understanding, Wesley views the normal condition of human beings as profane and

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13 Jenny Redding Rhodes ("Anorexics mirror, distort Wesleyan perfection," *United Methodist Reporter* [October 6, 2006] 6b) wrote about how anorexic patients see perfection as flawlessness–both spiritual and physical. "Wesleyan discipline provides a model of sorts for anorexics who starve themselves to achieve the perfect body and relationship with God." Eating disorders, such as anorexia and bulimia, are examples of going to excessive and dangerous lengths to achieve perfection or holiness.

14 One example where they seem the same is: "This it is to be a perfect man (sic), to be 'sanctified throughout'." *plainaccount.stm*, 15.

15 For Wesley's view of holiness I am relying primarily upon discussions by Collins and Maddox and Wesley's "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection," which includes material from his previous writings on the topic (http://gbghm-umc.org/Umhistory/Wesley/plainaccount.stm).

unclean. What moves one to the status of holy is the act of sanctification, which is the grace of God, received through faith. One of Wesley's early statements on this is presented in the minutes of the First Conference, June 25, 1744.[16]

> Q: What is it to be sanctified?
> A: To be renewed in the image of God, 'in righteousness and true holiness.'
> Q: What is implied in being a perfect Christian?
> A: The loving God with all our heart, and mind, and soul. (Deut 6:5)
> Q: Does this imply that all inward sin is taken away?
> A: Undoubtedly; or how else can we be said to be 'saved from all our uncleannesses?'
>   (Ezek 36:29)

Wesley firmly believed that Scripture taught that sanctification meant to be "saved from inbred corruption." Inbred corruption (or inward sin or the carnal nature or original sin) remains in the hearts even of the justified.[17] That inbred corruption consists of "any willful temper, passion, or affection; such as pride, self-will, love of the world, in any kind or degree . . . any disposition contrary to the mind which was in Christ."[18] Sanctification is about removing that inward sin so that we can say we are "saved from all our uncleannesses" (Ezek 36:29). Thus the sanctified/perfected/holy Christian is also "clean." It seems clear from various descriptions of uncleanness that Wesley understood "clean" primarily as a moral and inward condition.

One of the many tensions in Wesley's description of sanctification is that he understood sanctification to be something that is both instantaneous and gradual. Furthermore although it can be attained in life, that normally does not happen until the moment before death. Though even death does not end the process. Even in eternity Christians should continue to grow in grace. There is a beginning point (the moment one is justified) and and end point (that moment of "entire sanctification"). Perhaps because of his view that sanctification was also gradual, Wesley preferred to speak of "entire sanctification."

It seems appropriate to suggest that Wesley believed in a type of "graded holiness." One is in

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16 *plainaccount.stm*, 18. Note that "sanctified," "holiness," and "perfect" are all used.
17 Collins, 157.
18 Outler, *Sermons,* 1:320, "On Sin in Believers," cited by Collins, 157.

some sense "holy" from the moment of justification, but the language of "entire sanctification" suggests a moment when one is most holy. It is the in-between time though that Wesley seemed most concerned with, especially with the implications of sanctification for living the Christian life during that in-between time. The problem seemed to be that despite Wesley's conviction that Scripture promised "perfection," or sanctification, the behavior and attitudes displayed by Christians was for the most part neither very perfect nor very holy. Accounting for this discrepancy is a major aspect of Wesley's arguments on sanctification, as is the case today. Therefore Wesley had a number of disclaimers of what "perfection" is not.[19]

•The sanctified are not perfect in knowledge.

•The sanctified are not free from ignorance, nor from all mistakes (at least in terms of things unessential to salvation). They will continue to err concerning the character of people and in terms of their interpretation of the Bible.

•The sanctified are neither infallible nor omniscient.

•The sanctified are not free from infirmities, which are amoral, temporal limitations expressive of human finiteness.

•Sanctification does not eliminate temptation.

Wesley rejected any notion of static perfection that would not admit of a continual increase and advance as one improves the rich grace of God. What Wesley acknowledges in defining these limitations is human nature. He writes, "Indeed I do not expect to be freed from actual mistakes, till this mortal puts on immortality. I believe this to be a natural consequence of the soul's dwelling in flesh and blood."[20] Wesley did not want to identify these "imperfections" as "sin." And despite these "imperfections," the believer still remains essentially holy. "A thousand infirmities are consistent even wit the highest degree of holiness, which is none other than pure love."[21] In some ways these

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19 Collins, 172-173; Maddox, 181, and in *plainaccount.stm*, 8, 15, 25-26, 43-44.
20 *plainaccount.stm*, 25.
21 Letter to Mrs. Bennis, March 29, 1766 cited by Collins, 173.

imperfections function as "minor uncleannesses."

But there also seems to be a category of "major uncleannesses" that the sanctified must attend to in the in-between time. It is in this arena that Wesley argues for Christians to strive for perfection.[22] What the Christian is to strive for is to love the Lord her God with all her heart, with all her soul, with all her mind, and with all her strength and her neighbor as herself. God is to be in all her thoughts. Whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are justly of good report, she thinks, speaks, and acts. Her soul is all love and filled with kindness, meekness, gentleness, and long suffering. She is to be freed of evil thoughts and evil tempers.

Therefore Christians should not experience inwardly or outwardly those evil thoughts and tempers. In "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection" the language Wesley uses most often for these evil thoughts, etc. is: pride, desire, self-will, anger, unkindness, contempt, and lust. It seems equally clear that these are incompatible with sanctification. In the illustrative hymns that Wesley cites in "A Plain Account," the imagery attests not only to the incompatibility, but the lengths that are necessary to eradicate or remove these "remnants of sin."

> "unless thou purge my every stain"
> "and change and thoroughly purify"
> "wash me clean"
> "make me pure from sin"
> "Purge me from sinful blot:
> My idols all be cast aside:
> Cleanse me from every evil thought,
> From all the filth of self and pride."
> "the hatred of the carnal mind out of my flesh at once remove"
> "all the devil's works destroy"
> "from this inbred sin deliver"
> "rooting out the seeds of sin"
> "our nature shall no more o'er us dominion have"

Wesley's advice is that "the best means of resisting the devil is, to destroy whatever of the world

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22 Q: How are we to wait for this change?
A: Not in careless indifference, or indolent activity; but in vigorous, universal obedience, in a zealous keeping of all commandments, in watchfulness and painfulness, in denying ourselves, and taking up our cross daily; as well as in earest prayer ad fasting and a close attendance on all the ordinances of God.

remains in us, in order to raise for God, upon its ruins, a building all of love."[23] If inward sin, or unholy tempers, are viewed as major uncleannesses, then similar to uncleannesses in the FT, there appears to be a danger that they might accumulate to such a point as to profane the holy. This seems to be the sense of Wesley's later view that "those who are sanctified, yet may fall and perish."[24]

Wesley recognized some dangers in sanctification. He warned against pride and enthusiasm.[25] He was worried about defining sanctification in such exalted terms, such as "sinless perfection," that one effectively renounced its possible attainment.[26] He considered the inclination to think, "But he does not come up to *my* idea of a perfect Christian," to be a stumbling block.[27] And he warned against setting oneself up for inquisitors-general or for peremptory judge, some who would examine or determine the holiness or perfection of another. He queried, "Are we qualified for the office?"[28] Although he does not name it as such, the danger Wesley sees lurking is a state of hypervigilance, the constant monitoring of one's own behavior and thoughts, as well as the behavior and thoughts of one's neighbor, in order to either prove one's state of holiness or to ensure that holiness is not profaned. This hypervigilance is a form of protecting the holy from being profaned.

Conclusions

What seems to be consistent through both Testaments, and followed by Wesley, is that the primary definition of holy is God. It is by proximity to the Holy One that persons or things take on the character and condition of holiness. What vexes me about the biblical view of holiness, which is evident in both Testaments and followed by Wesley, is the antithetical definition of holy and unclean. The worst thing that can happen is for the holy to be profaned by contact with the unclean and emptied of its holiness. Therefore the holy must be protected, at all costs, from that worst case scenario. The result is that the end (protecting the holy) justifies the means, even means that in themselves would

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23 *plainaccount.stm*, 60.
24 ibid., 47, citing Heb 10:29; 1 John 2:15, 1 Thess 5:16, and Eph 4:30.
25 ibid., 51-53.
26 Maddox, 183.
27 *plainaccount.stm*, 30.
28 ibid., 32.

otherwise be considered defiling and profane. For example, one of Jerusalem's defiling acts that profaned God's name was that they "shed blood" (Ezek 22:1-16). In response, God will shed Israel's blood (courtesy of Nebuchadnezzar's army) in order to "purge your filthiness (טמאה) out of you."

It is when violence and/or coercion are viewed as acceptable, even necessary, in order to protect the holy that I find the cost of this view of holiness to be too high. But if that is the case, then what? Here I have more questions than answers and I look forward to discussion and suggestions from the Working Group.

One possibility is redefinition. The evidence of Leviticus, Ezekiel, the ST, and Wesley is that the definition of "unclean," in particular, is open to negotiation. Access to ordination by excluded groups has been achieved, in part, by redefinition. The definition of "unclean," with respect to ordination, had become associated with categories that were inherent to a person: one's skin color, having a physical handicap, or being female. But these persons have argued that if all are created in God's image, then all partake of God's holiness. Therefore there is no basis for exclusion. Women specifically have redefined menses as something other than "unclean." Since menses are intrinsic to women's bodies they partake of the holiness of creation. Therefore, a menstruating woman is not "unclean" and does not contaminate the holy altar. Will queer people be able to similarly redefine homosexuality as something that does not defile the holy altar?[29]

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29 Ordination, to the extent it is viewed as authorizing access to the holy, raises the same ethical issues. Because of time limitations this paper did not explore Wesley's views of ordination and of the ministerial office. This deserves further study. In a draft report by the Study of Ministry Commission (United Methodist Church) this past spring I couldn't find any reference to *why* ordination is necessary beyond as an historic practice of the church. I did find references to ordination as exemplifying the ministry of "sacrament," or the "priestly" office. And only the ordained may administer the "sacraments" of Baptism and Holy Communion. Do United Methodists believe that ordination is a "transfer ritual" that moves one to a condition of holiness? Is this what authorizes one to administer the sacraments? If so, then why does the ordination of Deacons not confer the same authorization? In what way are the "sacraments" holy? If ordination and the sacraments partake of the holy, must they be protected from being profaned? How could one "profane" the sacraments? Answering some of these questions may help clarify how the United Methodist Church might order ministry.

In the same draft report the Study Commission was also critical of ¶304 on "Qualifications for Ordination," which includes the language of "fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness" and "the practice of homosexuality." The criticism is that terms such as "qualifications," "test of authenticity," and "highest standards" suggest that "the church is less a community of faith than a privileged hierarchy choosing who should get into the inner sanctum." The recommendation is to delete this paragraph and replace it with one titled "Vocation for Ordained Ministry." What are the implications of this shift for a United Methodist understanding of holiness?

Is it possible to redefine holiness? For example, instead of viewing the holy as something that will be profaned by contact with the unclean, one can view contact with the holy as *cleansing*. This is the other half of the ST paradox–that the only way for the unclean to become holy is by faith and through the work of the Holy Spirit, that is, by coming into contact with the holy. Does holy have to have an opposite? Can holy exist without the profane? A move in this direction would essentially view all of life and all of the world as holy, that is, creation partakes of the holiness of its Creator and so nothing is profane. Would viewing the holy as cleansing or all of creation as holy remove the need to protect the holy?

Is it possible to develop a scriptural view of holiness that incorporates an anthropology that does not categorize persons as either/or but as both/and? This anthropology would recognize that persons are holy *and* profane, clean *and* unclean. To put this another way, what does it matter for our relationship with God if we are unclean or profane or imperfect? Can holiness be defined in such a way that not even these "will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord"? If so, then what does it mean to live a holy life?

One of Wesley's primary definitions of sanctification was as "loving God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. This implies that no wrong temper, none contrary to love remains in the soul; and that all the thoughts, words, and actions, are governed by pure love." Similarly, we are to be "perfected in love." Is "love" an appropriate and adequate substitution for holiness? Would being "perfected in love" avoid the ethical problems?

These are some of the queries and suggestions I have. Because this paper is primarily a critique of holiness, I would also welcome hearing how you experience holiness in a positive way.

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Appendix: Some key biblical texts to Wesley's view of holiness

Lev 19:2 Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them: You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.

Lev 20:7 Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy; for I am the LORD your God.

Deut 30:6 Moreover, the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, in order that you may live.

Ps 24:4 Those who have clean hands and pure hearts, who do not lift up their souls to what is false, and do not swear deceitfully.

Ezek 36:25 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.

Ezek 36:29 I will save you from all your uncleannesses, and I will summon the grain and make it abundant and lay no famine upon you.

Matt 5:48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Matt 22:37 He said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.'

Acts 15:9 and in cleansing their hearts by faith he has made no distinction between them and us.

2 Cor 7:1 Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and of spirit, making holiness perfect in the fear of God.

Eph 4:13 until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.

Eph 4:24 and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Eph 5:25-27 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, so as to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind — yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish.

Phil 2:5 Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

1 Thess 5:23 May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Heb 6:1 Therefore let us go on toward perfection, leaving behind the basic teaching about Christ, and not laying again the foundation: repentance from dead works and faith toward God,

Jas 3:2 For all of us make many mistakes. Anyone who makes no mistakes in speaking is perfect, able to keep the whole body in check with a bridle.

1 John 1:7 but 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 2:6 whoever says, "I abide in him," ought to walk just as he walked.

1 John 2:10 Whoever loves a brother or sister lives in the light, and in such a person there is no cause for stumbling.

1 John 3:8-9 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.