

PART ONE

Scriptural Foundations

... since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus....

(Hebrews 12:1, 2)

On more than one occasion the Bible describes the Christian life as a race to be run. The analogy provides us with a good framework within which to set out New Testament teaching on holiness. We will do well to remember that this teaching is given, not in a book of systematic theology in which every thing is carefully packaged and neatly labelled. The writers of the New Testament had more important business in hand than helping their readers 'mug up' for an examination in Christian doctrine! They were, in fact, trying to express the experience of forgiveness and new life which had come to them through Jesus, and to express it in such a way that others would share that experience.

As we seek to interpret their understanding, we will discover truths which, whilst appearing at first glance to be contradictory, are really complementary. The picture of a race provides us with a good example of the kind of difficulties we will meet. The TV commentator tells us that the race has begun immediately after the starter's gun is fired; but the good coach has been telling his

protégé for weeks that, unless he settles well into the starting blocks, the race will be lost before it's begun! It sounds like a crazy contradiction, but anyone who has ever taken part in a sprint knows how true it is.

Since it is highly unlikely that anyone who is not already running the Christian race would take the trouble to read a book such as this, we can be assured that difficulties will become clearer as we run at least part of the way together.

1

Get Set!

Holiness conferred by God

Key words

It can safely be assumed that most of us read the New Testament in English rather than in the original Greek. Whilst we are indebted to scholars who have provided us with the wealth of translations which we possess today, nonetheless, it is inevitable that some things are less clear in translation. There is very rarely a word in one language which corresponds exactly to a word in another language. The task of the translator is to find the best equivalent to express the original meaning. Sometimes he will need to use a whole phrase to capture what is meant by just one word in the original text. Sometimes he will have a choice of English words to choose from, all of which come close, but none of which exactly convey the meaning of the Greek word.

That is one of the problems we face when we come to the study of holiness; and though we have no wish to be unduly technical, it is one with which we must deal immediately, albeit briefly. The English words 'holy', 'holiness', 'sanctification', 'sanctify' and 'saint' are all used to translate a group of words which are much more obviously related in Greek: there is the noun *hagiasmos*, often rendered as 'holiness' or 'sanctification' in English; there is the adjective *hagios*, meaning 'holy'; and there is the noun, always used in the plural in the New

Testament as a name for the people of God, *hagioi*, which older translations have represented by the English word 'saints'. It is that little word which will provide the key to a proper understanding of holiness.

Saints!

'Saints' is the most common word used to denote Christians in the New Testament. Ananias refers to the members of the first church as 'thy saints at Jerusalem' (Acts 9:13); the writer to the Hebrews commends those who have worked for the welfare of their fellow-Christians and acknowledges their efforts in 'serving the saints' (Hebrews 6:10); in Revelation we read of the prayers, faith, patience and righteous deeds 'of the saints' (Revelation 5:8; 13:10; 19:8). Above all it is a favourite word of Paul, who uses it as a greeting with which to begin his letters:

To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints ... (Romans 1:7)

To the saints who are also faithful in Christ Jesus ... (Ephesians 1:1).

To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi ... (Philippians 1:1)

It would be quite wrong to think that Paul was writing only to a select few, or that his words were addressed only to those who were well advanced in Christian living. His readers were, for the most part, relatively new Christians and, as the first letter to the Corinthians makes clear, they often led lives which fell far short of what God intended. Like all other Christians the Corinthians were, in Paul's eyes, 'saints':

To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those [having been] sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . (1 Corinthians 1:2).

A little later he reminds the Corinthian Christians, living as they were in a city notorious for its

paganism and immorality, that they are different. Something has happened to them. Having listed some very unpleasant sins, he says:

And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God ... (1 Corinthians 6:11).

Yet the purpose of Paul's letter to these sanctified saints is to deal with some very serious sins! The church at Corinth was beset by cliques and divisions; some were claiming they were for Paul, others for Apollos, others still for Cephas; Paul has to remind them that the only thing that matters is their common allegiance to Christ (1 Corinthians 1:10-17). This kind of petty quarrelling simply demonstrated the spiritual childishness of the Corinthians; their lives were controlled by their own selfish natures rather than by the Spirit of Christ; they were still 'babes in Christ', fit only for milk and not yet ready for good, solid spiritual food (1 Corinthians 3:1-4). There were instances of sexual immorality amongst the believers which would have shocked even the pagan society around them (1 Corinthians 5: 1).

The quality of worship had deteriorated in the Corinthian church, since, in their immaturity, these 'saints' had gone overboard in their assessment of the relative importance of the gift of tongues – a gift which Paul insists has a proper place, but one which must be subject to strict and sensitive control (1 Corinthians 14). To cap it all, heresy had crept into the thinking of many; they were insisting that there was no resurrection of the dead, an assertion which, if true, would destroy the heart of the Christian faith (1 Corinthians 15).

So how, we might well ask, can Paul possibly think of these immature, quarrelsome, sinful, mixed-up folk as 'saints'? They are far from being stained-glass window figures; they are a long way from the top of the class in Christian living. What is it that makes Paul call them 'saints', 'holy people'?

Old Testament roots

The answer—and it is an essential one for all who seek to live and understand the life of holiness — lies in the fact that Paul, as a good Jew, knew his Old Testament. And what he must have learned from that Old Testament was this: the Hebrew word *qadosh*, for which our word *holy* is the English equivalent, was not in the first place a word to describe good men; it was a word to describe a great God. It denotes his mysterious majesty, all that makes him different from men. It speaks of his 'otherness', his 'separateness' from mere mortals. It highlights that indescribable sense of utter awe which human beings experience in his presence, that sense of wonder and worship to which the psalmist gives poetic expression:

The Lord reigns; let the peoples tremble!
He sits enthroned upon the cherubim;
let the earth quake!
The Lord is great in Zion;
he is exalted over all the peoples.
Let them praise thy great and terrible name!
Holy is he! (Psalm 99: 1-3).

The word 'holy' is, one might say, a shorthand word standing for the might and majesty and power of God—everything which sets him over and above, finite man.

When the Old Testament does use the word 'holy' to refer to people or places or things, it is not saying, in the first place, that they are 'better than' other people, places or things. Rather, it is saying that they have been 'separated', 'set apart' by God for his use, and that, in consequence, they have become 'charged' with his holiness – just as an ordinary copper wire which possesses no electrical power in itself will glow with power when linked to the electricity supply. So we read that the Ark of the Covenant in which the books of the law are carried is holy (2 Chronicles 35:3); the sacred vessels to be used in the Temple are holy (1 Kings 8:4); the ground where Moses sees the burning bush and

becomes aware that God's presence is holy (Exodus 3:5); those who are chosen to serve God in the priesthood are holy (Leviticus 21:6); the Sabbath day is holy since it is a day separated to God (Exodus 20:8). Just as the copper wire becomes a conductor of electrical power, these objects, places, people and times become conductors of the holiness of God. Something of his mysterious power and nature is conferred on them.

Such a divine power would, however, be lethal in the hands of unscrupulous men if they could grasp it and harness it to their own ends. But that is not the case: holiness is conferred by God; it cannot be captured by man. There are a number of Old Testament stories which tell of the sudden and terrible retribution which fell on those who were presumptuous enough to attempt to grab what could only be given. Even those who were closely related to Moses himself suffered the fate of all who treated the holiness of God carelessly:

Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu, each took his fire-pan, put live coals in it, added incense, and presented it to the Lord. But this fire was not holy, because the Lord had not commanded them to present it. Suddenly the Lord sent fire, and it burnt them to death there in the presence of the Lord. Then Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the Lord was speaking about when he said, 'All who serve me must respect my holiness'" (Leviticus 10:1-3, Good News Bible).

All of this may seem a long way from the tender love of Jesus who loved his enemies and died for them. It may appear to present a picture of God which is primitive and harsh. A moment's thought, however, will help us appreciate that it must be set in the context of God's progressive revelation of himself to his people, and will enable us to see the vital truths which such a picture enshrines. Only God is holy; his holiness is awesome, a power beyond any natural force which man can harness to his own ends; such a power can never be grasped or

'worked up' by any man, however good or clever he may be; it is conferred only on those who, at God's initiative, are separated for his purposes.

That such an apparently harsh and primitive idea is capable of development into something greater still is clear from the Old Testament itself. There are glimpses of truths which come to full fruition only with God's perfect self-revelation in Jesus. It was through the prophets – those inspired men who delivered the word of God to his people – that Israel came to realise more and more that God's holiness lay not simply in his mysterious power, but in his goodness and righteousness. That was the revelation which came to Isaiah during his unforgettable vision of God in the Temple. His awareness of God's holiness was heightened by the chanting of the angelic creatures over the throne of the Lord:

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory (Isaiah 6:3).

But what overwhelmed him was not simply his sense of awe in the presence of infinite power and majesty, but his sense of sin in the face of such perfect righteousness:

Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts! (Isaiah 6:5).

The result of Isaiah's vision is not, however, his destruction, but his cleansing. God confers his own holiness on the prophet:

Then flew one of the seraphim to me, having in his hand a burning coal which he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth, and said: 'Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin forgiven (Isaiah 6: 6,7).

Isaiah's vision encapsulates the great truth which was borne in on the people of Israel through their encounter with God: God who is holy and righteous chooses his people, separates them from all others, not that they might enjoy a position of

privilege, but in order that they too shall be holy ;and demonstrate his character to the world. As Israel reflected on her escape from Egypt under the hand of God, she became more and more convinced that this gracious act by a holy God had been done for a purpose, the purpose which God revealed to Moses on the holy mountain of Sinai:

Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples ... and you shall, be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exodus 19:5, 6).

The nature of that holiness and how it is to be expressed is outlined in the commandments that follow; holy people obey the will of a holy God and act righteously towards their fellow-men:

You shall have no other gods before me.
You shall not make for yourself a graven image ...
You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain ...
Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy ... Honour your father and your mother ...
You shall not kill.
You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal.
You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.
You shall not covet ... (Exodus 20:3-17).

We are holy — now!

It was this background of Old Testament teaching — God confers his holiness on those who are separated to his purpose — that enabled Paul to refer to his fellow Christians at Corinth and elsewhere as 'saints'. The full truth of his Jewish heritage had dawned on Paul only after he met the risen Christ on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-9).

Prior to that moment, his life had been one long struggle to become holy through his own efforts to fulfil the demands of the law (Philippians 3:4-8). It had all been a dismal failure (Romans 7:17-23). Then

he met the risen Jesus and took hold of the truth which was to change his entire way of thinking. He was, like all men, a sinner, far short of the holiness which God requires (Romans 3:22, 23). But God had acted through the death of Jesus to rescue him; all he had to do was to trust God's love as it is shown on the cross; he was like a guilty man, fully deserving a sentence of death, who walks free from a court of law because the judge is generous and forgiving; he was, to use one of the great phrases of the New Testament, 'justified by God's grace', accepted as a righteous man because of the love and mercy of God shown at Calvary in the sacrificial death of Jesus (Romans 3:23-25). But more than this, his whole life, to use another of Paul's favourite expressions, was now lived 'in Christ', and the Spirit of Christ lived in him. That, and that alone, made Paul, as it makes all Christians, holy.

Paul's new experience of life in Christ shed new light on the Old Testament truths he had long known but only dimly apprehended. Holiness is not, in the first place, what we do; it is, above everything else, what we are – men and women separated to God in and through Jesus Christ. It is not something for which we must search; it is not something to which we attain by dint of hard struggle; it is not something to be discovered at the end of the Christian life. It is ours here and now. It belongs to us from the moment we accept Jesus Christ as Saviour and acknowledge him as Lord. Paul, and his fellow-writers in the New Testament, spell out that truth again and again:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing . . . that we should be holy . . . (Ephesians 1:3 4).

[God] is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification . . . (1 Corinthians 1:30).

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ. To the exiles of the Dispersion . . . chosen and destined by God the

Father and sanctified by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1: 1, 2).

The starting point for the life of holiness is well expressed by J. K. S. Reid:

Holiness ... is not something that is worked up, but something that is rather sent down-conferred upon those ... persons [who] are brought into a relationship with God. Nor is holiness a quality naturally possessed but one supernaturally granted from the underived holiness of God . . . it is less an activity than a status. (A Theological Handbook of the Bible).

To return to our analogy of a race, we can say that every Christian is like the athlete set to go on the starting line. The race can only begin from that point. A runner can run until he drops, but if he's begun from the wrong point on the track, or if he's on the wrong track altogether, his efforts will be wasted. The holy life is possible only because God has conferred his own holiness upon us. We are set to live the life God has planned for us, the life which reflects his own character.

2

Go!

Holiness claimed by the believer

A problem

If it is true, as we have concluded in the previous chapter, that all Christians are, by definition, holy people, then immediately we must face a very real problem. Why do saints so often fail to live in a saintly manner? It is all too obvious in any group of Christians that most of the difficulties arise from this apparent contradiction. As we have seen from the Corinthian Christians, it is a problem which is as old as the Church. What is there missing from the lives of holy people who have 'every spiritual blessing' in Jesus Christ?

The inevitable 'therefore': holiness is a response

Remember our athlete. We left him crouched on the starting line, fit and ready for the race. Now the crowd is hushed, the starter fires his pistol. . . and our highly-trained, superbly fit athlete doesn't move! He totally fails to respond. And that, according to the New Testament, is what causes so many failures in the life of holiness. Believers, made holy by God, do not respond to all he has done for them in his love and mercy. They never get started. They are rather like the small boy about whom a famous evangelist used to tell. The youngster had fallen out of bed during the night, and in the morning his parents teased him by saying, 'You fell asleep too near to where you get out'. But the little lad's

appraisal of the mishap was far more accurate. 'Oh no,' he replied. 'I fell asleep too near to where I got in!'

Words like 'therefore' sound throughout the letters of the New Testament like the crack of a starting-pistol to wake Christians up and get them running the race. The first 11 chapters of the letter to the Romans, for example, contain a careful exposition of all that God has done for sinners, justifying them through the death of Jesus, reconciling them to himself, and giving them his own Spirit. Then the pistol goes off:

Therefore, my brothers, I implore you by God's mercy to offer your very selves to him: a living sacrifice, dedicated and fit for his acceptance. . . (Romans 12:1, NEB).

The 'separation' to God, which is the heart of holiness, must be made actual in the life of the Christian. He must respond to God's gift of holiness by giving himself unreservedly to God. If he fails to do that he will, like the unresponsive athlete, stay on the starting line.

The same pattern is found in the letter to the Ephesians. The readers are reminded of God's gift of life to those who were spiritually dead. The climax comes at the end of the third chapter with a prayer and a promise, a prayer that we might be so strengthened by the indwelling Spirit of God that Christ himself will 'make his home' in our hearts, and a promise that God can, 'by the power at work within us . . . do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think'. And again the pistol sounds:

I, therefore . . . beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called (Ephesians 4:1).

God's purpose in making us holy is that we should actually start to live holy lives. Without that proper response there will always be the problem of unsaintly saints!

Be what you are: holiness is a 'realisation,

To put it another way, the Christian must realise — using the word in the double sense of 'apprehend with the mind' and 'make real in fact' — what is true about him potentially. Again, it is the letter to the Romans which brings this out most clearly. Firstly, Paul refers to the outward rite of baptism as an expression of the inner realities of Christian experience. Immersion in water symbolises death to the old life: emerging from the water is a dramatic representation of the fact that the believer has risen to new life in Christ:

By our baptism, then, we were buried with him and shared his death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from death by the glorious power of the Father, so also we might live a new life (Romans 6:4, Good News Bible).

Then he shows how the cross of Jesus is not simply a historical event but, through faith, a reality in every Christian's experience:

And we know that our old being has been put to death with Christ on his cross, in order that the power of the sinful self might be destroyed, so that we should no longer be the slaves of sin (Romans 6:6, Good News Bible).

Those two pictures of baptism and crucifixion tell the truth about the Christian: his old sinful nature is dead; he is a new person in Christ. But that truth must now be realised: it must be grasped with the mind and put into practice in everyday life. What is true about us spiritually must be made true practically in our thinking and living:

. . . you are to think of yourselves as dead, so far as sin is concerned, but living in fellowship with God through Christ Jesus (Romans 6:11, Good News Bible).

The moment a couple are pronounced man and wife they are married in the eyes of the law, with all the rights and duties of a married couple. They do not then leave the church and return to their parents! They claim those rights and privileges and begin to

make real in daily life that new union which they make together. Just so in the Christian life: what is conferred by God is claimed and realised by man.

Take what you're given: holiness is a re-clothing

G. K. Chesterton once warned his readers not to believe anything that could not be told in pictures! The most important truths are not those which we grasp with the mind alone, but those which take hold of our imaginations too. When Paul wrote to the early Christians to encourage them to begin living the holy life, he knew the value of a good word-picture. More than likely he recalled how Isaiah's poem describing the Servant of the Lord had spoken of God's gift of salvation as a magnificent robe:

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord,
my soul shall exult in my God;
for he has clothed me with the garments of
salvation,
he has covered me with the robe of
righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels
(Isaiah 61:10).

What better picture could there be? The old sinful life with its evil habits must be discarded like soiled clothing, and the nature which God creates in our lives through his Spirit within us must be put on like a clean, fresh garment:

But now you must get rid of all these things: anger, passion, and hateful feelings. No insults or obscene talk must ever come from your lips. . . for you have taken off the old self with its habits and have put on the new self. . . . So then, you must clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. . . (Colossians 3:8-10, 12, Good News Bible).

Anyone who reads that passage carefully will notice how naturally Paul combines the two ideas of holiness as something God confers on us ('you have

taken off the old self. . . and have put on the new self'), and something which must also be claimed ('now you must get rid of all these things. . . you must clothe yourselves with. . .'). It seems to be a contradiction, but it isn't difficult to understand. There are thousands of men who leave their new jerseys, lovingly given to them by their wives, hanging in the wardrobe, and go on wearing their old shabby pullovers! They protest that they feel more comfortable in clothes they've got used to. Alas, there are too many Christians who do the same thing with the new life God has given. They fail to take that decisive, spiritual step to claim what rightly belongs to them. Until they do there can be little spiritual growth. As Samuel Logan Brengle used to say, you can't grow into holiness any more than you can grow into your jacket. You have to put it on, then you'll begin to grow in it. But that brings us to another aspect of New Testament teaching on holiness.

3

Run, run, run

Holiness. a continuing exercise

The trouble with a race is that it's hard work! Once you've begun, there's a long way to run. When Paul wrote to the Philippian church he shared his hope that one day God's work in his life would be completed. But he knew that there was still a lot to be done. The words he uses in his personal testimony are taken, not from the theological academy, but from the athletics track:

I do not claim that I have already succeeded or have already become perfect. I keep striving to win the prize for which Christ Jesus has already won me to himself. Of course, my brothers, I really do not think that I have already won it; the one thing I do, however, is to forget what is behind me and do my best to reach what is ahead. So I run straight towards the goal in order to win the prize, which is God's call through Christ Jesus to the life above (Philippians 3:12-14, Good News Bible).

Holiness, it is clear, is the continuing, strenuous exercise of a lifetime. In order to understand the nature of that exercise we must pause to examine two important words.

'Hagiasmos': the process of holiness

One of the group of words at which we looked briefly in the first chapter was 'hagiasmos', usually translated as 'sanctification' or 'holiness'. It is characteristic of Greek words ending in 'asmos' that they refer to a process rather than a once-for-all

action. Holiness, therefore, having been conferred by God and claimed by the believer, must then become an ongoing exercise. What we are in Jesus Christ must be expressed in the way we live. We are not, of course, to think that God makes us holy as a reward for our efforts or that holiness lies only at the end of the race; it is only because God has made us holy that we can live the holy life, however falteringly and imperfectly. To translate *hagiasmos* as 'the road to holiness', as one translator does, is as mistaken as saying that the athlete who sets off in response to the starter's pistol is 'running to the race'. He is, rather, 'running in the race'. Just so, the Christian, on whom God's gift has been conferred and by whom the blessing has been claimed, is on 'the road of holiness' rather than 'the road to holiness'. Sanctification is a present reality, although, like the race, it needs continuing effort and awaits final completion.

Pneuma: the power for holiness

The second word calling for our attention is the Greek word *pneuma* which is rendered as 'Spirit' in English. As with the idea of holiness which concerned us in chapter one, it will be helpful to consider briefly the developing revelation of the Spirit of God in the Bible. The basic concept of the Spirit in the Old Testament is that of God's divine energy breaking into the world. Both *pneuma* and its Hebrew equivalent *ruach* can equally well be translated as 'breath' or 'wind'; the Spirit is the power of God, invisible, yet undeniably present with life and force. The Spirit is evidenced whenever individuals act with skill or courage or strength or insight beyond that which is normally found among men (see, for example, Genesis 41:38; Micah 3:8; Judges 15:14). However, as Israel's history unfolded, the nature of God was increasingly understood and the failure of his people to live holy lives was continually lamented by the prophets. There was only one hope for Israel; prophets like

Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Joel began to look beyond God's judgment to the day when he would enable his people to obey his will by pouring out the Spirit, not just on individuals with a particular task to fulfil, but on all Israel:

Thus says the Lord God. . . I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, . . . I will take you from the nations, . . . and bring you into your own land . . . and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses. . . . A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; . . . I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances (Ezekiel 36:22-27).

The writers of the New Testament are convinced that these prophecies have been fulfilled, that the Spirit of God has come upon his people through Jesus Christ. The gospels record the testimony of John the Baptist, the last and greatest of the prophetic line, that the ministry of Jesus would contain a dimension which his own call to repentance lacked:

After me comes he who is mightier than I, . . . I have baptised you with water; but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:7, 8).

In the fourth gospel Jesus himself promises the disciples that God will send the Holy Spirit to be with them in his place:

But the Counsellor [literally, 'the One called alongside to help'], the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you (John 14:26).

The Acts of the Apostles records the fulfilment of that promise; the Christian Church, through faith in Jesus Christ, is the new Israel, the new people of God, filled with his Spirit:

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. . . . And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. . . (Acts 2:1,4).

Peter's reference to the words of Joel at the

beginning of his sermon immediately following the coming of the Spirit is a claim that the new age of the Spirit has dawned (Acts 2:16-21). The gift of the Holy Spirit is for ever inseparably linked with forgiveness of sins for all who will accept Jesus as Saviour:

Repent, and be baptised everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children. . . everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him (Acts 2:38, 39).

Two vital truths for the study of holiness emerge from the Early Church's experience of the Spirit; they are implicit in Paul's words to the Romans:

. . . you are in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although your bodies are dead because of sin, your spirits are alive because of righteousness (Romans 8:9, 10).

The first truth is that the Spirit indwells every Christian- 'anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him'. The Spirit is the dynamic of the Christian life. The possession of the Spirit is not an optional extra. It is the identifying characteristic of the Christian, and the ongoing life of holiness is possible only because the Spirit has given us new life.

The second truth is this: the Spirit who infills every believer is the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Notice how Paul uses the phrases 'the Spirit of God', 'the Spirit of Christ' or simply 'Christ' interchangeably. These are simply different ways of describing the same reality. For, if it is true that in Jesus Christ 'all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell' (Colossians 1:19), then he must have perfectly embodied the Spirit of God. To be indwelt by the Spirit, therefore, is to be indwelt by the very nature of Christ; or, to express the same thing in another way, the Spirit makes Jesus Christ a living reality within the Christian. That is why the Spirit could

not come in fulness until after the completion of the earthly ministry of Jesus (John 16:7). His perfect revelation of the nature of God makes it possible for us to recognise the Spirit within. What the Spirit reveals to us, where the Spirit guides us, will correspond to the life and teaching of Jesus. If I begin to believe things which are contrary to the teaching of Jesus, if I begin to live in a way which is opposed to the way Jesus lived, then I can be sure that it is not the Spirit who is guiding me. All this means that the life of holiness must be a process of living ever more like Jesus, a process made possible by the power of the Spirit.

Now that we have a perfect picture of the holy life in Jesus, and a dynamic for holy living in the indwelling Spirit, we must consider how it is realised and expressed in thought and action.

Continuing co-operation

There is never any teaching in the New Testament to the effect that Christians cease to be frail human beings with the capacity to sin. The holy life becomes a reality only insofar as we co-operate with the Spirit and reject our own sinful, selfish desires:

. . . walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace (Romans 8:4-6).

The word 'flesh' translates the Greek word, *sarx* and means far more than simply our physical bodies. It refers to our total human personalities infected as they are by sin. The choice Paul outlines is the choice every Christian faces every day. Either we can co-operate with the Spirit of God continually prompting us to Christlikeness, or we can live on the level of our merely human nature with all its selfishness and pride. There must be a

moment-by-moment process of continuing co-operation. That is why the Christian life – as in the passage above – is so often described as ‘walking’ (see also Ephesians 5:2; 1 John 2:6; Colossians 1:10). It is a step-by-step progress which cannot be rushed. The moment you cease stepping you cease walking; the moment you stop co-operating with the Spirit you cease to make any advance in holiness

All of this is, however, far more than a weary trudge in response to the Spirit’s urgings. For the Spirit empowers as well as prompts. The effort must be ours, but the energy is his:

. . . work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure (Philippians 2:12, 13).

It is impossible to say where God’s part ends and ours begins. The two are inextricably bound up together. The Spirit does not extinguish our personalities, but instead brings them to life so full of Christ that we can echo the words of Scripture:

. . . it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me (Galatians 2:20).

Continuing renewal

It is in the nature of our fallen world that everything tends towards decay and death. Those things which survive the ravages of time do so only because they undergo a continuing process of renewal. A perfect illustration is provided by the great railway bridge which spans the Firth of Forth in Scotland. The metal structure is constantly under attack by wind and rain; it would long ago have been reduced to rust were it not for the fact that a team of men are employed to paint the bridge all the year round, year after year. As soon as the job is completed, they start all over again. Because rust and decay are dealt with before they can do any real damage, the structure remains intact. What is true in the physical realm is no less true in the spiritual. The new life of holiness would soon be destroyed by the sin and temptation which

surround us at every moment but for the fact that the Spirit is continually at work renewing the Christian. The moment holiness is claimed by the believer, the continuing renewal of the Spirit begins:

Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life. . . and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:22-24).

It is significant that the commands to 'put off' and 'put on' are in the aorist tense in the original Greek, while the instruction to 'be renewed' is in the continuous present tense. The one denotes a decisive action which is completed in a moment; the other refers to something which goes on happening over a period of time. It is the kind of difference we find between two statements such as, 'Every night he puts the cat out', and 'He always sings in the bath'. Putting the cat out is over and done with in a moment, but singing in the bath lasts as long as bath-time! In the same way, the decision to 'put off' the old nature and 'put on' the new is made in a moment, a decisive, once for all action; but being renewed is an ongoing experience which must continue throughout the Christian life.

This continuing renewal depends on the continuing co-operation we have already considered. If we keep that link in mind we will overcome the difficulty which is often felt regarding those Scripture passages which seem, at first glance, to suggest that to be a Christian is to be beyond the possibility of sinning. Consider, for example, the teaching of John in his first letter. The writer is in no doubt that all are sinners:

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us (1 John 1:8).

But God forgives all who acknowledge their sin and turn to him:

If we confess our sins he is faithful and just, and

will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

And as we go on 'walking in the light', co-operating with the Spirit of God, we go on experiencing the power of Jesus' atoning death:

. . . if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7).

The tense John uses in this sentence is the continuous present tense we have already discussed. Not only were we cleansed from sin when we accepted Jesus, but we go on experiencing his cleansing and forgiveness. It is in this light that we should view the statement he makes later in the letter:

No one born of God commits sin; for God's nature abides in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God (1 John 3:9).

John is not saying that a Christian cannot sin in the sense that sin has become impossible to him. (We have already seen that there has to be continuing submission to the Spirit rather than to the sinful desires of our merely human nature.) Rather he is telling us that for the man who is born of God, on whom God has conferred his own nature, who is co-operating with the Spirit, sin cannot be a habitual thing. When he goes wrong it can be like the rust spot on the bridge which is rubbed off and repainted before lasting damage is done. The Spirit will make him aware of an evil thought or a sinful act; forgiveness and cleansing will be sought and granted; strength for the future will be claimed and renewal will continue.

Continuing growth

The holy life, however, is much more than just the absence of sin. On the positive side, it is continuing growth in likeness to Jesus Christ. The New Testament writers describe that growth either by referring to the development of Christlike qualities within the life of the Christian, or by

speaking of the believer's progress towards spiritual maturity. Both viewpoints on the out-working of holiness contain important insights.

The first is found, for example, in the often-quoted passage from the letter to the Galatians:

. . . the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. . . Galatians 5:22, 23).

The analogy of 'fruit' has several implications: Firstly, these qualities are 'of the Spirit'; we can never work them up by sheer effort, any more than a farmer can make his crops grow by sweating and straining. The process of growth in both the physical and spiritual realms is a mystery of God's power; all that we can do is provide the right conditions. As the farmer waters and fertilises the ground, we must assist the growth of spiritual fruit by using the means God has given us-worship, prayer, the reading of Scripture. If we do our part, he will do the rest.

Secondly, the word fruit is singular. We are not to imagine that we can choose some of these qualities and not others. Indeed, it is no accident that love comes first, for that is the very character of God as revealed in Jesus Christ. Love is the great all-inclusive fruit; every other quality arises out of God's love in our lives. It was Dr William Sangster who pointed out that everyone of the fruits of the Spirit is mentioned either directly or by implication in the supreme analysis of love found in the 13th chapter of the first letter to the Corinthians.

Thirdly, fruit does not grow overnight. It takes time to reach full growth and become ripe. God has given us his Spirit, we have claimed the gift of holiness, but the full development of the Christlike character will take a lifetime. We must never despair about ourselves-or anyone else, for that matter- if progress seems slow.

The second viewpoint on growth in Christlikeness – seeing the holy life as progress in spiritual maturity – brings us to a word which has

caused more than a little difficulty for exponents of the doctrine of holiness. It is the Greek word *teleios* and it is used about a dozen times in the New Testament with reference to people. The Authorised Version of the Bible translates it as 'perfect' and, on the basis of this, John Wesley and others have described holiness as 'Christian perfection'. As we will discover in the second section of this book, that phrase caused all sorts of problems; for, in normal English usage, perfect means 'so good that it could not possibly be better'. Clearly, no Christian could use the word, in that sense, to describe either himself or anyone else. In the Greek, however, the adjective '*teleios*' is derived from the noun *telos* which means 'end' ; to describe something as *teleios*, therefore, is to say no more than it serves the end for which it was intended. The idea is not one of absolute perfection, but rather of functional perfection.

Two simple illustrations will help us to see how we should understand Christian perfection. I once tried to remove my car headlamp using an ordinary screwdriver. A friend of mine who is far more technical than I am came along, had a chuckle, and gave me a Philips (cross-headed) screwdriver which fitted exactly into the screw and made the job much easier. I remember saying, 'That's perfect.' I didn't mean that I thought this particular screwdriver was better than any other, or that it could not be improved. I meant simply that it did the job for which it was obviously intended. Christian perfection similarly means living as God intended we should.

When one of our children was just a few weeks old we were very concerned about the shape of her right leg, which seemed to be twisted. So we took her to our doctor who examined her thoroughly and then said, 'There's nothing to worry about. It's just how she's been lying in the womb. She's perfect.' He didn't mean that our daughter was better than every other baby he'd seen, or that she was the

ultimate example of babyhood. He meant simply that she was what she should be at that stage of her development. If we had taken her back to him two years later and she had still been at the same level of physical and mental maturity he would certainly not have used the word 'perfect' to describe her. Similarly, the New Testament used *teleios* to denote the proper spiritual development of the Christian. This is why most modern translations avoid misunderstanding by substituting the word 'mature' in place of 'perfect'.

With all this in mind, we can understand why Paul, having written the words we considered at the beginning of this chapter, confessing that he had not yet been brought to final perfection, goes on to say that his remarks are addressed to those who are 'perfect' (Philippians 3:15, A V). To be 'mature', as the Revised Standard Version puts it, for example, is to realise the need for continuing growth.

We can also begin to understand the 'hard saying' of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount:

You have heard that it was said, 'Love your friends, hate your enemies.' But now I tell you: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may become the sons of your Father in heaven. For he makes his sun to shine on bad and good people alike, and gives rain to those who do good and to those who do evil. . . . You must be perfect— just as your Father in heaven is perfect! (Matthew 5:43 – 45,48 Good News Bible).

Christian perfection — though, all things considered, it is probably better not to use that phrase — does not consist in reaching the place where we never make a mistake. Indeed, it is not, in the first place, an absence of sin. It would be possible to keep the law but to be along way short of Jesus' idea of perfection; earlier in the same chapter he warns his disciples that unless their righteousness exceeds that of the legally scrupulous scribes and pharisees they will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 5:20). We are called not to a negative

avoidance of sin, but to a positive expression of God's loving character in the way we live. We must live like Jesus did, showing love to good and bad alike. The life of holiness, in essence, is being as loving as we can, by God's grace, at every moment. The more we live like that, the greater will be our capacity for such living. Today's maturity will lead us on to the greater maturity of tomorrow. And those who live in this way are in the process of becoming sons and daughters of a heavenly Father. The end result of such living adds yet another dimension to our understanding of holiness.

4

The finishing line!

Holiness: the promise of completion

Sometimes Christians are criticised for looking beyond this life to the life to come. Such thinking, it is argued, represents either a morbid fascination with death or pointless speculation on matters beyond human experience and ability. Those who argue in this way, however, do not understand the nature of the Christian life. Nobody would criticise the athlete who looks forward to the moment when he will breast the tape and win the race. It is the thought of crossing the finishing line which, in the end, makes all the training and hard work worthwhile. In the same way it is both right and inevitable that those who travel the road of holiness should look forward to the fulfilment of God's purposes in their lives

Our present experience holds a future promise

The holy life, as we have said in the previous chapter, is possible only because God has placed his own Spirit within every Christian. But the possession of the Spirit does more than merely provide us with the power for holy living here and now. It also holds a great promise for the future. In a majestic opening passage in his letter to the Ephesians, Paul writes of the dignity and destiny of God's children. Through Jesus Christ, he asserts, we share in the redemptive purpose of God; and in Christ we possess every spiritual blessing enabling us to live

for God' s glory. The passage reaches its climax with the claim that our present experience is but a fore- taste of something still greater:

In [Christ] . . . we. . . have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of his glory. In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, which is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory (Ephesians 1:11-14).

The two key words in these verses, for our present purposes, are 'sealed' and 'guarantee', both of which refer to the presence of the Spirit in the life of the believer. In the ancient world the seal denoted both ownership and authenticity. It also indicated the fact that a package or letter was intact, that it had not been opened or tampered with in any way. Paul is saying, metaphorically, that the Spirit marks out the Christian as belonging to God, enables him to live a truly Christian life, and keeps him securely 'in Christ' despite the temptations and trials which must be faced. And this present, rich experience of the Spirit's indwelling is the 'guarantee' of an inheritance yet to come. The word arrabon in the original Greek means rather more than our English word 'guarantee'. It refers to a down payment made by a purchaser as a pledge that, at the appropriate time, the rest of the money would be forthcoming. Our present experience of new life in the Spirit is a down payment on life in the presence of God.

Those early Christians lived in daily expectation of the coming of Christ; they were confident that the fulfilment of God' s purposes through his Son was not far off. Their conviction arose from the fact that, through the Spirit, Christ had already come to them, and that God' s purposes were being worked out in their lives. This sinful, fallen world, they were convinced, would one day be forced to recognise the truth which they already knew. The Day of the Lord

to which the prophets of old had looked in hope would be the Day of Jesus Christ. And on that day God would complete what he had so wonderfully begun in the lives of his people:

. . . I am sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:6).

The future promise encourages present exertion!

There were some amongst the early Christians who mistakenly imagined that their hope for the future gave them liberty to spend their time idly or to work out neat timetables of God's coming activity. The New Testament writers are not slow to disabuse them – and their modern counterparts! There is no shortage of blunt and explicit warnings on the danger and futility of pointless speculation on things which only God can know (eg Mark 13:32-37; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-8; 2 Thessalonians 3:1-13; 2 Peter 3: 1-10). Instead, the Christian hope must turn us back to this life with renewed efforts in holy living.

Sometimes the emphasis is on the fact that the Day of the Lord will be a day when all must stand before God's judgment. Those who have received his power for holiness will want to meet God as good stewards of his grace without shame or fear:

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of persons ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, . . . Therefore, beloved, . . . be zealous to be found by him without spot or blemish. . . (2 Peter 3:10-14).

On other occasions the emphasis is placed on God's culminating act of grace in our lives, completing for all eternity what has been begun on earth. Such a hope encourages us to exert ourselves

now. Our growth in holiness might seem painfully slow. But we continue to co-operate with the Spirit of God knowing that God himself will finally make us perfect in the likeness of his Son. There is no greater antidote to spiritual despair:

Beloved, we are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure (1 John 3:2, 3)

We, who are God's children now, who know something of his presence and power in our lives, who are on the road of holiness, are being increasingly transformed into the likeness of Christ. 'It does not yet appear what we shall be', but when we know his presence and power in perfect fulness, the likeness will be complete. The thrill at the end of the race is beyond our imaginings and defies our reason. We can do no more than echo the great prayer and affirmation of faith which conclude the first letter to the Thessalonians and which perfectly express the wonder of our calling:

May the God who gives us peace make you holy in every way and keep your whole being-spirit, soul, and body-free from every fault at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you will do it, because he is faithful (1 Thessalonians 5:23, 24, Good News Bible).

5

Running together!

Holiness: a new community

We live in the age of 'community running'. Every year thousands of amateur joggers enter the great marathon races, with no thoughts of winning or breaking any records, but just for the sheer joy of running in the company of fellow-devotees of the sport. Before we can complete our survey of the scriptural foundations of holiness it is essential that we set individual experience firmly in the context of community. For the Christian athlete, like his counterparts in the modern marathon, does not run alone. The experience of holiness is certainly personal; but, equally certainly, it is not individualistic.

The whole Church

We began our consideration of holiness by examining the characteristic New Testament word for the followers of Christ — 'saints'. It is significant that, although the word is found nearly 60 times, not one of the occurrences is in the singular. We never read of 'a saint', only of 'the saints'. A little reflection on the nature of the gospel will show why this is the case.

The central message of Christianity is that God has acted through his Son, Jesus, to bridge the gap between himself and mankind, alienated from him by their sin:

All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation;

that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18, 19).

But not only has God made us new creatures and reconciled us to himself. In so doing he has brought a new community into being, his Church. In this new fellowship all the old barriers are broken down, barriers of race, class and sex (Galatians 3:28). Before the coming of Christ only the Jews had been brought close to God because he had revealed himself to them and given them his law. But now, Jesus has died for all; and all who accept his offer of life stand in a new relationship with each other because of their equal status in the eyes of God:

For Christ himself has brought us peace by making Jews and Gentiles one people. With his own body he broke down the wall that separated them and kept them enemies. He abolished the Jewish Law with its commandments and rules, in order to create out of the two races one new people in union with himself, . . . in this way making peace. . . . So Christ came and preached the Good News of peace to all—to you Gentiles, who were far away from God, and to the Jews, who were near to him. It is through Christ that all of us, Jews and Gentiles, are able to come in the one Spirit into the presence of the Father. So then, you Gentiles are not foreigners or strangers any longer; you are now fellow-citizens with God's people and members of the family of God (Ephesians 2:14,15,17-19, Good News Bible).

The reconciling work of God must be reflected in a new community of reconciled people. That is why the New Testament condemns divisiveness and party spirit amongst Christians so strongly (eg 1 Corinthians 1:8-13; 3:1-4). And that is why the word 'fellowship' (Gk *koinonia*) is such a key word. It means literally 'partnership' or 'sharing in'. The fact that the Christian has fellowship with the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 13:14) must be demonstrated through his fellowship with other Christians in the Spirit (cf Acts 2:42; Philippians 1:5; 2 Corinthians

8:4). Such fellowship should be obvious in the unity, friendship and mutual concern of any group of Christians.

The man who says 'I don't need to attend church to be a Christian' is correct if he means simply that attending services won't in itself make him right with God. But he is quite wrong if he imagines that the Christian life can be lived in isolation. For it is only within the fellowship of the new community of men and women reconciled to God and to each other that the Holy Spirit distributes his gifts:

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit gives them. . . . The Spirit's presence is shown in some way in each person for the good of all. The Spirit gives one person a message full of wisdom, while to another person the same Spirit gives a message full of knowledge. One and the same Spirit gives faith to one person, while to another person he gives the power to heal. The Spirit gives one person the power to work miracles; to another, the gift of speaking God's message; and to yet another, the ability to tell the difference between gifts that come from the Spirit and those that do not. To one person he gives the ability to speak in strange tongues, and to another he gives the ability to explain what is said. But it is one and the same Spirit who does all this; as he wishes, he gives a different gift to each person (1 Corinthians 12:4, 7-11, Good News Bible).

There has been considerable controversy on the subject of 'spiritual gifts' in recent years. Much of this could have been avoided if careful attention had always been given to scriptural teaching. A lengthy consideration of the subject is outside of our present purposes, but the following points will help us keep a balanced view:

(a) There are several lists of spiritual gifts in the New Testament (Romans 12:4-8; Ephesians 4:1-16; 1 Peter 4:10). None of them coincides precisely with the others and clearly none is meant to be exhaustive. They are merely indications of some of

the ways in which the Spirit demonstrates God's power in his people.

(b) It is unwise to make a rigid distinction between 'natural' and 'spiritual' gifts. James tells us that, 'every good gift and every perfect present comes from heaven; it comes down from God, the Creator . . . (James 1:17, Good News Bible). The musician, poet, organiser, architect, young people's worker — to name but a few at random — whose God-given faculties (talents) are infused by the Holy Spirit for the extension of God's Kingdom is exercising a spiritual gift, though his particular ability is not to be found on any scriptural list.

(c) Gifts are given as the Spirit wishes. It is right to be open to God, willing to receive whatever he means us to have. But it is wrong to go overboard in pursuit of any particular gift. Some gifts, such as healing or speaking in tongues, may be more 'spectacular' than others, but the more 'ordinary' gifts, such as service, or teaching, or administration, are also very important. Paul's words to the Corinthians make it clear that no Christian possesses all the gifts and that no one gift should be seen as the essential proof of the Spirit's presence and power (1 Corinthians 12:27-30).

(d) It is unwise either to give a particular gift undue prominence or to forbid its use. In the 14th chapter of the first letter to the Corinthians, for example, with regard to the vexed subject of speaking in tongues, Paul shows that abuses must be countered, not by non-use, but by proper use based on sound spiritual principles.

(e) These spiritual principles are based on two overriding factors which must govern the use of all gifts. They must be used for the glory of God and for the spiritual benefit of others, and never for the display of personal power or self-glorification.

It is the last point which brings us back to our present study. For spiritual gifts and holiness are closely linked, not in the sense that possession of any particular gift is a guarantee of the holiness of the one who possesses it, but in the sense that all gifts are given for the purpose of building up all

believers in mutual holiness. The link is made explicit in some words addressed to the Ephesian Christians:

Each one of us has received a special gift. . . he appointed some to be apostles, others to be prophets, others to be evangelists, others to be pastors and teachers. He did this to prepare all God's people for the work of Christian service, in order to build up the body of Christ. And so we shall all come together to that oneness in our faith and in our knowledge of the Son of God; we shall become mature [Gk teleios] people, reaching to the very height of Christ's full stature (Ephesians 4:7, 11-13, Good News Bible).

In the Christian race we run together, each of us contributing to the other's holiness, each of us learning, drawing strength, and receiving encouragement from those around us. The preacher preaches, the pastor nurtures the flock, the evangelist announces the good news, the prophet declares the mind of God as understanding is given to him—and none exercises his gift for personal aggrandisement or even merely for the purpose of pursuing his own personal holiness. To use Paul's favourite picture, we are the 'body of Christ', and the health and holiness of each individual member is bound up with and dependent on the health and holiness of the entire body. We need each other for our mutual spiritual well-being, and we need each other because none of us is spiritually 'big' enough to demonstrate the greatness and majesty of Christ to a watching world by ourselves. Holiness is for the whole company of God's people, and only within the fellowship of that company can the individual reach to his full spiritual stature.

The whole creation

One more thing has yet to be said if we are to set the holiness of the individual Christian firmly in its scriptural context. Not only is holiness for the whole Church, but ultimately it is bound up with God's plan to transform the whole of his creation.

Here we come to a facet of God's redemptive plan which reaches beyond the limits of human understanding or imagining; we can only glimpse from a great distance the end God has in view. We do know, however, that the entire creation has been affected and infected by man's sin. Such is made clear in the story of the fall in Genesis chapter three. Sin brings alienation and enmity where God intends there should be unity and harmony and peace. But, just as God has begun a new life in us, the life of holiness, so he will one day give new life to his creation. That is the promise at the end of the passage from the second letter of Peter which we considered in the previous chapter. Peter writes of the Day of the Lord as a day of judgment; but beyond the judgment there is the promise of new life:

But we wait for what God has promised: new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness will be at home (2 Peter 3:13, Good News Bible).

In the coming of that new life, we have a part to play! It is rather like one of those war stories in which some ordinary person, of little importance in terms of military rank, is, none the less, so caught up in events that he has a vital part to play. He does not understand all that is being planned at High Command, but things have so fallen that everything depends on his participation. That is the implication of Paul's words in one of the most profound passages in the entire New Testament. We cannot fathom or imagine the glorious climax that God has in mind, but in some way our holiness is essential. We carry within us the vital message of holiness which holds the key to his ultimate victory over evil. What is happening in our lives through the Holy Spirit is but a hint of what God will one day achieve in transforming his entire creation. What is fallen and flawed will be raised to perfection:

In my reckoning, whatever we are called upon to suffer in this present time cannot compare with the

glory which is going to burst upon us. For the whole created universe eagerly and expectantly awaits the day when God will show the world who his sons are. For the whole created universe was involved in a process of meaningless frustration, not of its own choice, but by the decree of God who did so subject it. But the situation was never hopeless, because even the created universe itself will be liberated from its servitude to death's decay, and will come to enjoy the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that up to now the whole created universe groans in all its parts, like a woman in the birth-pangs.

. . . We too, even although we have received in the Spirit a foretaste of what the new life will be like, groan inwardly, as we wait longingly for God to complete his adoption of us, so that we will be emancipated from sin, both body and soul. It is for this hope that we have been saved (Romans 8:18-24, Barclay).

The whole truth

All that we have said in this and the preceding chapters serves as evidence that holiness, far from being a fringe doctrine for the spiritually inquisitive, or an optional extra for the spiritually elite, is central to God's plan for the life of every Christian. If our interpretation of New Testament teaching has been correct, then the basic elements of the doctrine can be summarised as follows:

- (a) Holiness is conferred upon the believer by God: to be 'in Christ' is to be, at least potentially, a holy person, a 'saint'.
- (b) Holiness must be claimed by the believer: there must be a decisive step of faith and commitment; what is spiritually true about every Christian must become actual in experience
- (c) Holiness must become the continuing exercise of a lifetime: the Christian must go on co-operating with the Holy Spirit, step by step and moment by moment, so that there is continuing spiritual renewal and growth.

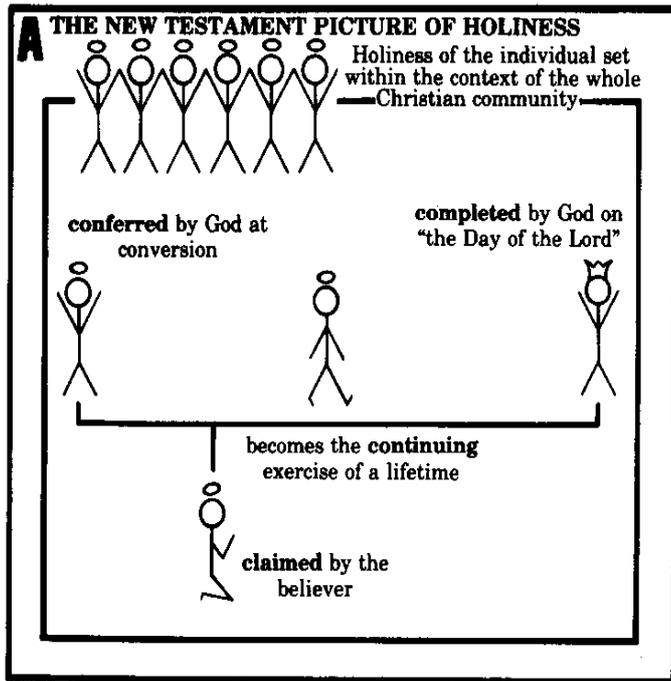
(d) Holiness will one day be completed in us:

we continue in holy life, confident in the promise that what God has begun will be completed.

(e) Holiness is enjoyed in the context of the new community of God's people:

God does not simply save individuals and make them holy. The holiness of the Christian is realised in the fellowship of the church and holds the promise of God's ultimate renewal of all creation.

Whilst we would not want to be guilty of reducing profound scriptural truth to a glib formula, it may well be helpful to visualise this in the form of the following diagram:



In the next section of this book we will try to discover how the Christian Church has viewed holiness throughout the centuries. It will become apparent that at different times different elements of the doctrine have been given greater or lesser

emphasis. It will also become clear that each new generation of Christians, while owing much to those who have gone before, must face the task of re-interpreting vital Christian truth for its own age.

PART TWO

Historical Development

There will be a highway there,
called 'The Road of Holiness
No sinner will ever travel that road,
no fools will mislead those who follow it,
No lions will be there,'
no fierce animals will pass that way.
Those whom the Lord has rescued
will travel home by that road.
(Isaiah 35:8,9, Good News Bible)

The first section of this book set out to demonstrate that the doctrine of holiness is central to the teaching of the New Testament. It is now our purpose to examine how the Church's understanding of this truth has developed throughout the centuries. In the same way that the analogy of a race helped us to hold together the various aspects of biblical truth in Part One, it will be helpful to think of what follows as a kind of map.

A map is useful to the traveller because it simplifies things; it reduces the truth to a picture that can be understood and followed. It cannot, of course, show every feature of the land, every little twist in the road. If it tried to do so it would become so detailed and unwieldy that its usefulness would be destroyed. The chapters which follow inevitably involve a similar degree of simplification. Space and time do not allow us to investigate every subtle nuance in men's understanding of holiness. Instead,

we look for some of the great landmarks of Christian thinking and use them to guide us in our quest. One book cannot attempt to say everything there is to say about holiness. We must be content to note those things which seem most important of all.

There is another parallel between our historical survey and a map which must be remembered. When I want to travel from Bristol to Edinburgh, I check the route on my map. But I have neither time nor need to check every road which turns off the one I must follow. In some ways that is a pity, because many of those side-roads lead to fascinating towns or picturesque countryside. If I took time to follow them all, however, I would never reach my destination. In the same way, the following chapters do not represent an attempt at an exhaustive statement of Christian truth. Inevitably issues will be raised in the mind of the inquiring reader which lie beyond the scope of our study. To follow them through must be the purpose of other journeys in which wiser men will serve as guides. All we can hope to do is to follow the great main road of holiness as it stretches throughout Christian history.

We will pass through unfamiliar terrain as we discover different aspects of the truth given emphasis by those whose church traditions are different from our own. But we will be in the company of many great and good Christian people and we will be content to 'travel home by that road'.

6

The disciplined life

Catholic spirituality

The Church in a pagan world

The Christian Church began life in an environment which was less than conducive to its teaching on the holy life. If the young Church was to survive and flourish there needed to be a clear difference between the life-style of its members and that of many of their pagan neighbours. The first letter to the Corinthians highlights the kind of background from which many of the converts came:

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor sexual perverts, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. . . (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

It was understandable, therefore, that the emphasis of the Early Church would fall, to a large extent, on the third strand of holiness teaching which we have identified in the New Testament-holiness defined as a continuing exercise, a disciplined way of life. High demands, in terms of moral conduct, were made on the first Christians; there was even considerable debate as to whether or not there could be any remission for sins committed after baptism. Regrettably, but perhaps inevitably given the circumstances, this concentration on one aspect of holiness led to an imbalance in the teaching of the

Church. R. Newton Flew has pointed out where the fault lay:

Christianity becomes a new law. . . . The righteousness which is of the law comes back as the goal of man's striving and with it comes a tendency to distinguish between degrees of good works. . . an excellent and worthy moralism is usurping the place of that splendid awareness of the perpetual activity of Christ which still makes the New Testament the most interesting and influential book in the world. (The Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology: ch 5, 'The Early Church').

The same truth is stated in another way by W. E. Sangster:

The . . . important fact which has significance for our study in this period 'after the Testaments' is the failure to keep the work and experience of the Holy Spirit central in Christian thought. (The Pure in Heart: ch 5, 'After the Testaments').

In its concentration upon the continuing, disciplined life through which holiness must be expressed, the Early Church neglected the complementary truths that holiness is given by God and claimed by the believer, that holiness, more than what we do, is what we are 'in Christ'. The continuing exercise of the holy life is possible only because the Spirit within has made us saints.

There were, of course, individuals and groups such as the Montanists in the latter half of the second century — who did emphasise the reality and presence of the Holy Spirit. Alas, all too often — as was the case with Montanism — their potential for good was spoiled by a tendency to spiritual pride and divisiveness. The Church as a whole was merely confirmed in its impression that too much emphasis on the inspiration of the Holy Spirit was unhealthy and led only to problems.

The influence of Greek philosophy

The Early Church set its course in the matter of its holiness teaching in reaction to the pagan practices all around; but it was also encouraged in the

direction it took by the influence of Greek culture. Three related types of philosophy made a great impact on Christianity.

Platonism

Although Plato, a pupil of the great Socrates, lived three centuries before Christ, his influence on Christian thinking was, none the less, considerable. Plato had taught that the material world which we experience through our senses is impermanent and changing. Through it, however, we become aware of the real world which is eternal and unchanging. The world we know is but a copy, a 'shadow' of that real world. Something of this way of viewing the world can be seen in the New Testament itself, in the letter to the Hebrews. The writer uses the concepts of Platonism to point to Christ as the perfect fulfilment of Jewish religion. Just as our physical universe is but a copy constructed after the pattern of the perfect, eternal world, so the Jewish High Priest making atonement on behalf of his people is but a shadow of Christ and his perfect atonement for all men on the cross (cf Hebrews 8: 5; 9:11).

Second century Christian writers, such as Clement of Alexandria and Origen, developed much of their theology along Platonic lines. The soul of man, they believed, belonging as it does to the eternal realm, is both immortal and pre-existent to the body in which it is now fettered. Therefore, the process of God's work in the life of a man is both lengthy and gradual. Sometimes they even speak of this slow progress continuing beyond the point of physical death.

Stoicism

Stoicism grew out of the same kind of thinking which gave rise to Platonism. It is the name given to a school of Greek philosophy founded by Zeno, again some three hundred years before Christ. The Stoics argued that, if this present world is merely passing, and if the soul of man belongs to the realm

of the eternal, then the only way to real life is the way of 'apathy' (Gk a = no; Pathe = emotion), the way of detachment from all created things. Stoicism, therefore, looked on the virtuous life as being a long process in becoming free from emotional attachment to, and natural desire for, the things of this world. Only in that way could the soul aspire to the realm of God who is utterly above all change, utterly detached from the created, material universe.

Gnosticism

Genuine 20th century scientific thinking has a popular counterpart made up of half-truths and bearing little relationship to the real thing. (How often does the 'barrack-room scientist' announce to all who will listen that 'since science says we've all come from apes the Bible can't possibly be true'?) In the same way the 'respectable' Greek philosophies had their counterpart in the popular pseudo-religions of the day. These sects, though they differed from each other in the details of their beliefs and rituals, had a common basis of Gnostic thought. (The word is derived from the Greek word gnosis meaning 'knowledge'.)

According to the adherents of such groups, everything in the created, material world was not only passing but also inherently evil; consequently, the physical realm could not be the creation of a good God. They taught, instead, that the universe is the work of powers who are both inferior to the true God and hostile to his nature. Mankind, as part of this dark and evil world, is doomed and beyond redemption.

However, there remains in an elect few a divine spark, a memory of the soul's true, heavenly home. The way to salvation, as taught by the Gnostics, lies in being rescued from all that is physical; and that way is open only to those who are able to receive that special 'knowledge' which Gnosticism claimed to impart to its initiates. Such knowledge

concentrated largely on the names of the evil powers who rule the world and whose home was believed to be in the seven planets. The possession of these names, in addition to the knowledge of the necessary secret passwords, would enable the elect soul to pass through the planetary spheres on his way back to God after death. Their utterance would force the evil powers who barred the way to give the soul free access on his journey to the realm of light.

Since the ancient world regarded it as normal for the various religions of the day to borrow from each other, why should anyone be dogmatic and exclusive when with a little judicious juggling and borrowing he could enjoy the extra insurance and security of more than one religion?

In such a climate of opinion, it is not surprising that Gnosticism began to penetrate into the Christian Church with serious consequences for belief and behaviour. Some Gnostic groups within the Church, regarding the body as unalterably evil, took the way of licence, arguing that, if the physical part of man is beyond redemption, what we do with our bodies is of no consequence. Others reacted by following a path of rigorous denial of all human appetites. The grosser aspects of Gnosticism were resisted by wise Christians. But the idea that the body is evil — which is quite different from the Bible's insistence that the physical realm is the creation of a good God and that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit-left its mark on Christian thought.

A moment's reflection will make it clear that influences such as those we have just examined had a considerable bearing on the Church's teaching in regard to holiness. Indeed, they served to reinforce the emphasis we noted at the beginning of this chapter on holiness as an ongoing, disciplined process. And they did so in two particular ways. In the first instance the tendency of all Greek thought to separate man's spiritual nature from his physical body, to see the soul as belonging to the

eternal realm, meant that holiness was viewed as a gradual refinement of the soul, a process which continues even after death. The enjoyment of holiness is something which lies in the future. The present life is simply a part of the long preparation.

In addition, the idea that the body is the material 'prison' of man's soul led to the conviction that the only way to holiness is to be released from the body. This gave rise either to asceticism — the rigid and excessive control of all normal physical appetites, going far beyond a proper self-control— or to mysticism — the search for a direct communion of the soul with God involving the kind of ecstatic states in which physical awareness is left behind.

Catholic spirituality developed from such beginnings. The main features of that spirituality have great significance for the history of the Church and are of great importance to the student of holiness.

Monasticism

By the late third and early fourth centuries the great persecutions of the Church were at an end; and when Constantine, the Roman emperor, was converted to the faith in AD 312 the transformation from persecuted minority to semi-official state religion was complete. But this apparently favourable turn of events proved to be a mixed blessing; for, as the numbers entering the Church increased, so the standards of conduct began to drop. According to the New Testament, the setting for the holy life is to be the total fellowship of believers, the Body of Christ in which individual members contribute to each other's holiness. But what does the sincere seeker after holiness do when his fellow Christians are such in name only? Some felt that there was only one answer: if the Church was not serious about holiness then they would turn from popular religion in pursuit of their quest. It was this conclusion, born of the desire for genuine

Christian living, which gave rise to the remarkable phenomenon of monasticism.

The forerunners of the monastic movement were individuals who retreated to the desert areas of Egypt and Syria in the late third and early fourth centuries. The most famous of these hermits was Antony, a Coptic peasant from Egypt. While making his way to worship one day, Antony was deeply challenged by the thought of his own unworthiness compared with the apostles who had left everything to follow Jesus. When he heard the reading for the day — Jesus' words to the rich young ruler: 'If you would be perfect, go and sell all you have. . . and come and follow me' — Antony knew what God wanted of him. He sold everything and began to live as a hermit.

The discipline of the hermit's life was demanding. By its very nature it involved celibacy and the rejection of all family ties. Instead, the hermit embraced a rigorous routine of prayer, meditation, fasting, Scripture reading and, in many cases, extreme feats of asceticism such as going without sleep or remaining standing for hours at a time. The loneliness and hunger often led to hallucinatory experiences in which the hermit would be aware of the temptations of the devil or the presence of God in particularly vivid ways. Such encounters added to that strain of mysticism which we have already noted.

Many of these ascetics were highly respected and were often sought out for their wisdom. "Speak to me a word, father, that I may live," became a standard form of address to the desert fathers in Egypt. But there were dangers which quickly became apparent. And these arose from the fact that, whereas the New Testament regards divisiveness in the Church as something to be avoided at all costs, the hermits looked on separation from all men, including other Christians, as an essential ingredient of the holy life. Some abandoned all attendance at church and participation in worship.

Others developed strange beliefs and stranger practices. The Messalians of Mesopotamia, for example, were convinced that every man is possessed by a demon who can only be driven out by intense prayer; to this end they kept up a non-stop wailing as they wandered from place to place.

Monasticism proper came to birth when groups of ascetics joined together under a common rule in order that such excesses might be controlled and such spiritual energy might be carefully directed. One of the first of these communities was that formed by Pachomius at Tebennisi by the River Nile around AD 320. His was one of earliest monastic 'Rules'. Members, who were admitted to the order only after a period of probation, had to hand over all personal wealth to a common fund. The community aimed to be self-supporting through the work of its members and prominence was given to worship and study of the Scriptures. This general pattern of life became the framework for all later monastic communities.

To list the names of those who were most influential in the development of monasticism is to record some of the greatest figures in Christian history: Basil the Great, a bishop as well as an ascetic, sought to draw the monastic community closer to the visible Church under the authority of the bishop; Martin of Tours set up a monastery at Marmoutier and did much to stimulate monasticism in the West; Augustine of Hippo encouraged the concept of a group of celibate clergy linked in service to the local church; John Cassian founded the community at Marseilles and has left extensive writings on the monastic ideal; Cassiodorus established the monastery at Vivarium and gave great emphasis to study, and the copying of ancient manuscripts.

Arguably the most influential figure of all was Benedict of Nursia who drew up his 'Rule' in the sixth century, built around the complementary activities of work and prayer. Although it has been

amended and expanded by later writers it still owes much to its original author and it still gives a clear insight into the monastic life:

In every aspect all shall follow the Rule as their guide. . . . Let no one in the monastery follow his own inclinations, or brazenly argue with his abbot. . . .

The abbot, for his part, should do everything in the fear of the Lord and in obedience to the Rule. . . .

The brothers shall take turns to wait on each other so that no one is excused from kitchen work. . . .

At the brothers' meal times there shall always be a reading. . . no whispering or any voice except the reader's should be heard. . . .

They must get up at the eighth hour of the night, so that they rest for little over half the night. . . . But the time that remains after 'vigils' shall be spent in study. . . .

As the prophet says, 'Seven times in the day do I praise thee.' We will complete this sacred number seven if, at lauds, at the first, third, sixth, ninth hours, at vesper time and at compline we carry out the duties of our service.

Idleness is the enemy of the soul. Therefore, at fixed times, the brothers should be busy with manual work; and at other times in holy reading. . . .

A mattress, woollen blanket, woollen under-blanket and a pillow shall be enough bedding. Beds are to be searched frequently by the abbot for private belongings. And if anyone is found to possess anything he did not receive from the abbot, he shall be very severely disciplined. To abolish private property everything necessary shall be given by the abbot.

A monastery should, if possible, be built so that everything needed. . . is available, so that the monks do not need to wander about outside. For this is not at all good for their souls. . . .

We intend to found a school to train men in the service of the Lord. . . .

The entrance to the path of salvation must be narrow, but as you progress along the life of the Faith, the heart expands and speeds with love's sweetness along the pathway of God's commandments.

It is all too easy for those who have lived within the tradition of the Reformed Church to dismiss monasticism as a 'flight from the world'. But a great spiritual movement, such as monasticism, when seen at its best, cannot be dismissed so easily. It must be borne in mind, too, that there are still many men and women who find that the answer to God's call for them means monastic vows, and the present writer will not be alone in testifying that his own life has been enriched by such sincere Christian people. Our concern, however, is primarily with monasticism in the history of the development of the doctrine of holiness, and we will make a realistic assessment of its strengths and weaknesses by looking at three aspects of the Christian life to which it gave prominence.

The quest for communion with God

The monastic communities were made up of those who sought a deep communion with God. Such a desire is deep in the hearts of all who seek to live the holy life. However, two features of this quest need to be noted.

Firstly, such communion is usually understood to come at the end of a long spiritual journey. It comes only as a result of the discipline and struggle. There is little realisation of the New Testament truth that acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour brings the Christian into immediate fellowship with God through the Holy Spirit.

It is also seen to depend on mystical experiences. John Cassian speaks of that state in which the soul 'no longer feels that it is imprisoned in this fragile flesh and bodily form, but is caught up into such an ecstasy as not only to hear no words. . . but not even to see things close at hand or large objects before the very eyes'.

Again the criticism can be made that such an understanding of communion with God can lose sight of the fact that this physical world is God's creation, that the Son of God became a man of flesh

and blood, and that he is present with us in the ordinary moments of everyday life.

The way of the cross

The Stoic insistence on detachment from all created things obviously strikes a chord with Christ's call for his disciples to give up all, to take up the cross and follow. For St Basil this was the key to the holy life. 'Greatest of all, renunciation is the beginning of our being made like unto Christ. . . perfect renunciation consists in a man's attaining complete impassivity as regards actual living . . . so he who is seized by the vehement desire of following Christ can no longer care for anything to do with this world.'

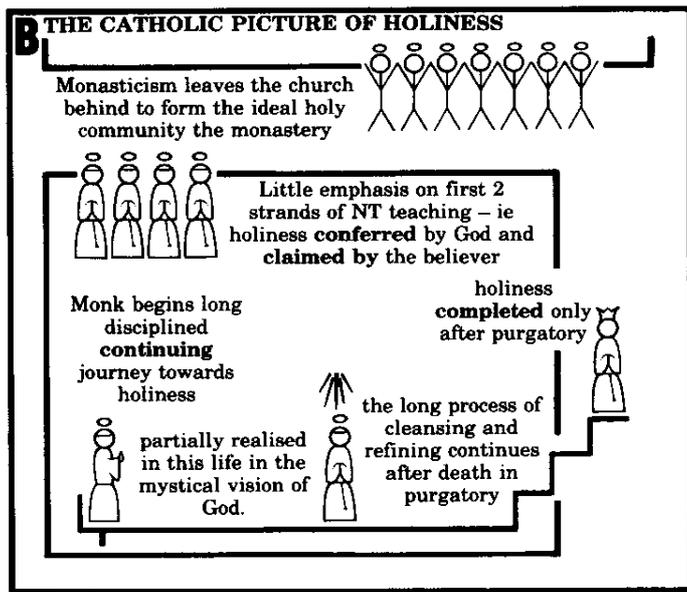
No one could ever accuse the founders of monasticism of underplaying the cost of discipleship. Herein lay the greatest strength of the movement. The holy life is the way of the cross and in a world of selfishness and half-truths the monastery stood for that fact. It must be objected, however, that it did not always see that there was a difference between the call of Christ and the teaching of Greek philosophy. The latter denigrated the created world and saw it as evil. Jesus, however, taught that this is God's world created for our pleasure. What he demanded was not so much a denial of 'things' as a denial of 'self' his call was a call to put him first in everything; it involved a detachment from 'things' only insofar as they come between us and him. In short, although in many ways monasticism was true to the spirit of Christ, it failed to distinguish between self-denial and rigid asceticism.

Life in community

In its rejection of the individualism of the hermits and its assertion that the holy life involves community monasticism is in line with the New Testament. However, it has substituted the community of the monastery for that of the total Body of Christ. The great thinkers of the movement

would insist, of course, that the monk exists to serve the Church, that by his disciplined life and prayer he adds to the holiness of all believers. None the less, the inescapable implication of monasticism is that the holy life in its fulness is possible only by withdrawal from the world and the Church into the ideal community. The serious consequence of such a step is that it creates a two-tiered Christianity in which the ordinary believer has to be content to live at a lower level than the devoted follower of Christ.

We can conclude our brief look at monasticism by showing in diagram form what has happened to the concept of holiness, set firmly within the Body of Christ, as presented in the New Testament.



The veneration of the saints

If it is true to say that the monastic movement tended to take the life of holiness out of the range of the ordinary Christian, then it is equally true to say

that the ordinary Christian still enjoyed the holy life, albeit 'by proxy' through the veneration of the saints. Although the procedure of 'canonisation' is now lengthy and complex, there is no doubt that it arose as a spontaneous recognition by ordinary believers of those who had demonstrated their holiness in extraordinary ways.

It is probable that the practice of venerating (or honouring) the saints grew out of the period of persecution when, for obvious reasons, those who were martyred for the faith were accorded special respect. Originally, no doubt, many of these were remembered only by their own local congregation with particular celebrations on the anniversary of their death. As martyrdom began to fade into history, other notable characters, such as the hermits and ascetics, became the object of popular veneration. The natural tendency for hero worship would also have been encouraged by the fact that many of the converts to Christianity brought with them ideas from paganism. The saints began to take on the role that the gods had played in pre-Christian days; their sanctity while alive encouraged the belief in popular religion that after death they possessed great power.

Chapels and churches were built around the tombs of saints and martyrs. It was a simple step from that kind of honour to the belief that the honoured one was in a position to obtain blessings from God. It is unlikely that the Church ever sanctioned the worship of the saints; but it did teach that prayers could be made to the saint who would convey them to God. By the Middle Ages the veneration of the saints had become one of the most important features of popular religion: relics, such as pieces of the saints' bones, were greatly valued; their tombs became a focal point for pilgrimages; it was commonly believed that such places were the setting for miracles worked by the saint.

The procedure of canonisation was simply the 'official' upshot of all this popular veneration. (The

word 'canonisation' originally meant to place the saint's name in the Canon of the Mass as a sign of recognition.) As time passed the approval of the bishop of the diocese was required as a way of making sure that the object of such honour was indeed worthy. Later the authority passed directly to the Pope and by the beginning of the 13th century two essential conditions were laid down before canonisation could take place: there had to be proof of a saintly life, and there had to be proof of miracles after death. (The latter was believed to indicate that the saint now enjoyed the 'beatific vision', that he had entered into the fulness of God's presence and power.)

It is true, of course, that all too often such practices degenerated into superstition and worship of the creature rather than the Creator. But it is also true that many of the saints were just that — devout and holy men and women who became an inspiration to generations of Christian people. In the end, the veneration of the saints serves as a reminder of men's desire for holiness and their need to see it lived out in the world. A recent important Roman Catholic document sums up all that is best in the place given in that tradition to 'the saints':

When we fix our gaze on the life of those who have followed Christ faithfully, we have an extraordinary motive that impels us to seek the city which is to come. At the same time we receive instruction in the safest route whereby we may arrive at perfect union with Christ, which is perfect godliness, a route which suits each person in their own condition and their own circumstance. In the life of those who share our human nature yet become more completely changed into the likeness of Christ, God makes his presence, his countenance, vividly manifest to men. In their person he addresses us, he offers us the standard of his kingdom, and we who are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, such a proof of the gospel's truth, are powerfully attracted to it.

(Vatican II Dogmatic Constitution on the Church VII 50.)

The way of the saints

The two elements of catholic spirituality which have been already noted—the emphasis on the spiritual life as a continuing exercise in disciplined pursuit of holiness, and the place of honour given to the saints—have together led to what many would consider to be its greatest treasure, the vast library of instruction in the holy life.

It would take far more space than is available to us to do justice to such a wealth of teaching. But we can briefly follow the analysis of John A. Hardon (SJ) in *The Catholic Catechism*. Hardon identifies four elements which ‘stand out prominently and may be taken as pivotal in the Catholic understanding of how the faithful who are willing may grow in perfection and, with God’s help, rise even to the heights of sanctity’ Those four elements are listed below, each with one example of the writings Hardon uses as illustration.

Firstly, the plan of God for mankind in general and ‘for me’ in particular must become deeply impressed on the consciousness of the believer.

Man is created to praise, reverence and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul. The other things on the face of this earth are created for man to help him in attaining the end for which he was created. Hence man is to make use of them in as far as they help him in the attainment of his end, and he must rid himself of them in as far as they prove a hindrance to him. . . . (St Ignatius of Loyola: *Spiritual Exercises*; First Principle and Foundation).

In the second place, self-knowledge of one’s sinfulness and weakness, as well as of virtue and strength, must be acquired at no matter what cost to pride and complacency, or to sloth and natural timidity.

No matter how attractive the prospect may be, I will not seriously undertake the road to sanctity until I have come to grips with myself on the two profoundest levels of my being; knowledge of where I presently stand with respect to creatures that stand

between me and my God, and knowledge of how far I am willing to go in giving myself to God (Hardon).

Then, thirdly, practical decisions must be made that affect one's personal and social behaviour, and future commitment in the following of Christ.

God's inscrutable providence has decreed that these abundant graces should not be granted to us all at once; and the amount of grace to be given depends in no small part also on our good deeds . . . (Pius XII Encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi* III).

Finally, a programme of life must be adopted that will differ according to circumstances of person, time and opportunity; but it should have about it a definite form and content, and a certain pattern of consistency.

Admire his beauty, invoke his aid, cast yourself in spirit at the foot of his cross, adore his goodness . . . offer your soul to him, fix your inward eyes on his kindness, hold out your hand to him as a child to its father Such prayers may be interwoven with all our business and occupations (St François de Sales on the need for regular prayer in *Introduction to a Devout Life*).

Even such a fleeting survey as this makes it clear that here as elsewhere in Catholic spirituality the emphasis is on the continuing, disciplined life. The stress is placed on man's efforts. Whilst it is unfair to suggest, as some Protestant commentators have done, that the primary fact that all is of God's grace is forgotten by catholicism, it is fair to say that it has placed far greater weight on what man must do.

Purgatory

It is in the light of this persistent stress on human effort in the life of holiness that the doctrine of purgatory can best be understood. If, even for those who had left the world for the monastery, the vision of God came only after a long spiritual journey, what hope was there for the ordinary Christian? And if the veneration of the saints kept

the ideal of sanctity within his gaze, it also served to show how far it lay beyond his reach. The clear teaching of Scripture, however, is that 'without holiness no one shall see the Lord'. The doctrine of purgatory, therefore, became a logical necessity, given the fact that holiness was seen to be beyond the reach of the majority in this life. There needed to be a further time of perfecting and purging after death before the soul could be admitted to the presence of God. The formulation of the Second Council of Lyons in 1274 merely gave official expression to what the Church had long taught:

If those who are truly repentant die in charity before they have done sufficient penance for their sins of omission and commission, their souls are cleansed after death in purgatorial or cleansing punishments.

Twentieth century exponents of the doctrine of purgatory, such as John A. Hardon, implicitly admit that it comes from the tradition of the Roman Catholic Church rather than from the Scriptures themselves:

God created man that man might possess his Creator in the beatific vision. Those who die in a state of enmity toward God are deprived of this happiness. Between these extremes are people who are neither estranged from God nor wholly dedicated to him when they die Nothing defiled can ever enter heaven, and therefore anyone less than perfect must first be purified before he can be admitted to the vision of God. In more concrete terms, which have been carved out of centuries of the Church's reflections on revelation, there exists purgatory, in which the souls of the just who die with the stains of sin are cleansed by expiation before they are admitted to heaven (The Catholic Catechism).

Conclusion

Our brief survey of catholic spirituality has shown us a way of life designed specifically for those who seek after holiness, a great company of godly men and women whose genuine saintliness is recognised by all Christians, and a treasury of

devotional writings which still have much to say to us today. But it has also shown us the holy life as a long struggle with little hope of fulfilment in this life. The despair of one monk with that seemingly hopeless struggle brings us to another page in our historical map.

7

Sanctified sinners

Reformation theology

Martin Luther: justification by faith

That monk to whom we referred at the end of the last chapter was, of course, Martin Luther, one of the most influential figures in the history of the Christian Church. After studying law at the University of Leipzig, Luther joined the Augustinian order at the age of 22 in 1505. He was a serious and devout young man, keeping the monastic rule with meticulous care and following the disciplined road to holiness set before him. But all of this brought him neither success nor satisfaction. The religious life was, for Luther, an interminable process of setbacks and defeats. His own words testify to his frustration and despair:

I tried as hard as I could to keep the rules. I used to be contrite and make a list of my sins. I confessed them again and again. I scrupulously carried out the penances which were allotted to me. And yet my conscience kept nagging. It kept telling me, 'You fell short there,' 'You were not sorry enough,' 'You left that sin off your list.' I was trying to cure the doubts and scruples of the conscience with human remedies, the tradition of men. The more I tried these remedies, the more troubled and uneasy my conscience grew.

To such a sensitive conscience the whole idea of divine justice became intolerable. If God was righteous, there could be no hope for Luther. The monastic life, far from taking him along the road to

holiness, had merely served to show him that the journey was impossible for a sinful man. But help was at hand. In 1512 Luther had become Professor of Holy Scripture at the University of Wittenberg. Guided by the vicar-general of his order and in preparation for his lectures to his students, he was particularly drawn to the writings of Paul. The truth about the righteousness of God, a truth which was to change not only his own life but that of millions of Christians, began to dawn on his soul:

I greatly longed to understand Paul's Epistle to the Romans, and nothing stood in my way but that one expression, 'the righteousness of God', because I took it to mean that righteousness whereby God is righteous and deals righteously in punishing the unrighteous . . . Night and day I pondered until . . . I grasped the truth that the righteousness of God is that righteousness whereby through grace and sheer mercy, he justifies us by faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas before 'the righteousness of God' had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gateway to heaven.

Martin Luther had rediscovered a vital but neglected truth: all men are sinners and cannot, by any efforts of their own, become holy; the new life is possible only because God in his infinite love and mercy 'justifies' them — forgives their sin, acquits them of the sentence of death which they rightly deserve, and accepts them, though they are guilty sinners, as being righteous. He does this by 'imputing' to them the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, by attributing to sinners the holiness of his Son; the only thing for men to do is to accept this by faith, by an absolute trust in God's 'righteousness'.

A moment's reflection will make it clear that this rediscovery changed the way in which Luther and his fellow reformers viewed the life of holiness. It means that the stress now falls on the first strand of New

Testament teaching — holiness is conferred on us by God; it is primarily what we are ‘in Christ’, rather than what we do. God accepts sinners only because, by faith, they are ‘covered’ with the holiness of Jesus Christ. Justification and sanctification are two sides of the same coin. When viewed in this way, holiness becomes something ‘external’: a man remains in a real sense a sinner, but God looks at his life through the life of his Son. Indeed, one of the ways in which Luther described holiness was by referring to Christ as our ‘alien righteousness’.

Luther’s words must be understood in the light of his sense of release when he realised that his standing before God depended not on his own efforts. His reaction to the futile struggle of his life as a monk and his awareness of his own deep sinfulness led him to make the occasional extravagant statement, such as his remark in a letter to his friend Melanchthon:

Be a sinner and strong in your sins, but be stronger in your faith and rejoice in Christ.

Words like that can easily lead men into ‘antinomianism’ — the idea that since God forgives sinners by his grace, Christians can live as they please with no regard to the moral law. It is a problem which all who stress ‘justification by faith’ have to face and one which we will examine a little more closely in the next chapter.

However, the theology of the Reformation did give place to the third strand of New Testament teaching — holiness as a continuing process. But for that we must turn to another of the great figures of Christian history.

John Calvin: sanctification for sinners

John Calvin, a Frenchman, came into contact with the writings of Luther around the year 1530 while studying in Paris. A few years later, following a conversion experience, he broke with Roman Catholicism and embraced the cause of the

Reformation. Calvin was a careful and systematic thinker and his most famous work, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, is a painstaking declaration and defence of Reformed doctrine. It is here we find his teaching on sanctification.

Like Luther, Calvin links sanctification with justification:

When it is said [1 Corinthians 1:30] that Christ is made unto us redemption, wisdom and righteousness, it is also added that he is made our sanctification. From this it follows that Christ justifies no one whom he does not sanctify at the same time. For his benefits are joined together as by a perpetual bond so that when he enlightens us with his wisdom he redeems us; when he redeems us he justifies us; when he justifies us he sanctifies us . . . Since thus it is that the Lord Jesus never gives anyone the enjoyments of his benefits save in giving himself, he bestows both together and never the one without the other (*Institutes III, 16, 1*).

That is a perfect expression of the truth that the Christian, in being indwelt by Christ, has received all God's blessings. He is therefore, by definition, a saint, a sanctified man. However, Calvin also speaks of the continuing process of sanctification:

God commences so to reform his elect in this present life, that he proceeds with this work little by little and does not fully achieve this until death, so that they are still guilty before his judgment. But he does not justify in part, but so that the faithful, being clothed in the purity of Christ may dare frankly to appear before heaven (*Institutes III, 11, 11*).

There are two implications in Calvin's statement which need to be noted.

In the first instance, the continuing process of sanctification is a gradual work, proceeding 'little by little', and without fulfilment in this present life. In this it is similar to catholic teaching.

However, the emphasis is on what God continues to do within us rather than on our continuing efforts. In this it differs from catholic teaching.

It would be wrong to suggest that Calvin had

nothing to say about man's part; there is a place for 'good works', but even the best things we do are contaminated by our deep-rooted sinfulness. Our deeds are never totally worthy, our motives are never completely pure. Even our goodness is acceptable to God only because it is covered by the perfect goodness of Christ:

Just as we appear righteous before God after we have been made members of Christ, inasmuch as our faults are hidden under his innocence, so are our works held to be righteous, inasmuch as the evil they contain being covered by the purity of Christ, it is not imputed to us. Wherefore, we have a good right to say that not only the man is justified, but also his works (Institutes III, 11, 6).

In Calvin's description of the holy life there is still a need for renouncing self and taking up the cross. But whereas, in catholic spirituality, this was the way to reach God — the precondition of holiness, now it is the proof that we belong to God — the sure evidence that we are already justified and sanctified:

All those whom the Lord has adopted and received into the company of his children must prepare themselves for a life that is hard, laborious, full of work and of endless kinds of evils. It is the good pleasure of the heavenly Father thus to exercise his servants in order to prove them. He began that order with Christ, his first-born Son, and continues it with all others . . . The more we are afflicted and endure miseries, so much the more certainly is our association with Christ confirmed (Institutes III, 8, 1).

'Sola scriptura': a new authority

Luther and Calvin have shown us the main emphases of Protestant theology in regard to holiness: God confers holiness on sinful men when he justifies them through their faith in Christ, and attributes to them the righteousness of his Son; he then begins the gradual work of making them holy in conduct and experience, a process which is never completed this side of eternity.

The picture is not yet complete, however. We must remember that the Reformers asserted that for all matters of faith and practice, the Bible is the sole authority. 'Sola scriptura' — 'scripture alone', was their great battle cry. Those things which they believed to derive only from the tradition of the Church were rejected: papal authority, the merit of good works, the mediation of the saints, the idea of the mass as a sacrifice, the doctrine of transubstantiation, the celibacy of the clergy, monasticism, those 'sacraments' which had not been commanded by Jesus — all these were rejected. And this new insistence on scriptural authority had two particular consequences for their understanding of the holy life.

1 The priesthood of all believers: the context of the holy life

On the basis of such Scripture passages as 1 Timothy 2:5,6 and 1 Peter 2:9,10, the Reformers rejected the concept of the priest as a mediator between God and man and re-asserted the priesthood of all believers. It was their conviction that God called all his people to serve him in their different occupations; there was to be no division of people into religious and secular, spiritual and lay. Luther repudiated the sacrament of ordination, insisting that the difference between clergy and laity was merely one of function within the Church, and not of status before God:

All of us are baptised as priests without distinction, but those whom we call priests are ministers, chosen from among us that they should do all things in our name and their priesthood is nothing but a ministry. The sacrament of ordination, therefore, can be nothing other than a certain rite of choosing a preacher in the church. *The Babylonian Captivity*, (1520) quoted by Roland H. Bainton.

This has enormous importance for the life of holiness. It takes it out of the cloister and monastery

and places it firmly back in the everyday life of the church in the world. Luther drew out the implications in one of his most eloquent statements:

The [monk's] cassock is non-essential, only incidental to piety We need no cowl and cord. We have plenty of cowls and orders right here in our estates and callings: the preacher in his teachings, the magistrate in his administration, the school-master in his learning, the student in his studies, the head of the household in his affairs, the manservants and maidservants in their chores. The Lord has filled the whole world with this kind of cowl and orders, if we will but don them.

(Translated by H. G. Haile in Luther)

2 The rejection of purgatory: the completion of the holy life

The doctrine of purgatory had no genuine foundation in Scripture. The abuses which had grown up around the doctrine, such as the sale of 'Indulgences' through which the purchaser was promised a lessening in the sufferings of a loved one in the purging fires, served only to harden the resolve of the reformers that it had to go. The Westminster Confession, the doctrinal standard of English-speaking Presbyterians, makes clear both the rejection of purgatory and the consequences for the teaching of holiness:

The bodies of men after death, return to dust and see corruption: but their souls immediately return to God who gave them; the souls of the righteous being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory..., and the souls of the wicked are cast into hell where they remain in torments and utter darkness, reserved for the judgement of the great day. Besides these two places, for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledgeth none. (Article XXXII i. 1669 edition.)

There is no period of further refinement after death; the souls of the righteous are made perfect in holi-

ness at the point of death. The holy life is complete, not after purgatory, but at death itself. God, who is doing a gradual work in the life of the believer on earth, will, by a stroke of omnipotence, bring that work to completion the moment this life is over.

The new picture

The rediscoveries and new emphases made by the reformers have changed the picture of the life of holiness. We can sum up the new picture in the following five ways.

The first strand of New Testament teaching is brought back into prominence: holiness is not primarily something to be attained by effort; it is conferred by God, a vital blessing of salvation.

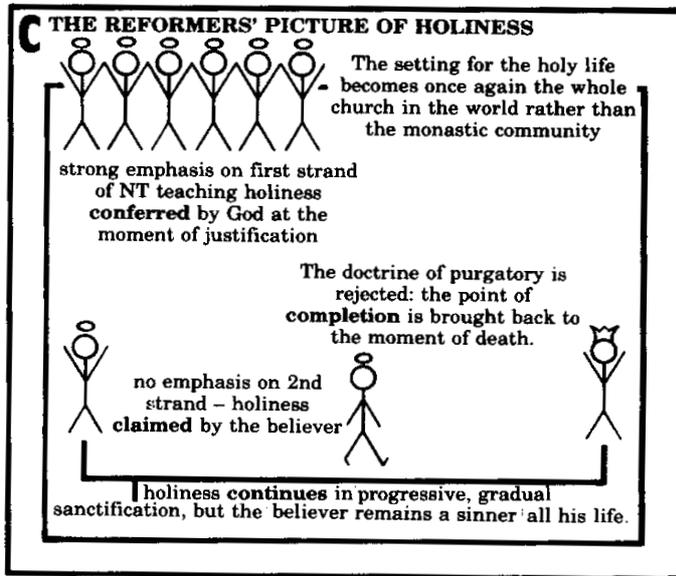
The second strand of New Testament teaching which presents holiness as a blessing to be claimed — a step of faith by which what is spiritually true of the believer becomes actual in experience — is given little or no place in Reformation theology. It is virtually eliminated from the picture.

The third strand of New Testament teaching — holiness as a continuing experience — still has a place, but it differs from catholic spirituality in that the stress is placed on God's continuing work in the believer as evidence of his justification, rather than on the Christian's disciplined efforts to become holy. The work is gradual and the best of men will remain sinners all through this life.

The fourth strand of New Testament teaching relating to the completion of the work of holiness is taken from purgatory to the point of death itself.

The fifth strand of New Testament teaching, the insistence that the holy life must be lived by all Christians within the setting of the whole Church, is re-affirmed with the rejection of monasticism and the renewed emphasis on the priesthood of all believers.

Presented in diagram form, the picture now looks like this:



Pietism: reforming the Reformation

The Reformation began, as we have seen, not with the cold logic of academic debate but with the spiritual release of a man trapped in a seemingly hopeless quest for holiness. Such was the reality of that release that Luther felt himself to have been 'reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise'. From that moment on he sought to communicate his experience to others through the exercise of his towering intellect. His head was at the service of his heart.

In the century that followed Luther's experience, however, there was a tendency for his discoveries to become the dogmas of his spiritual descendants. As one writer has expressed it, 'This was an age of protestant scholasticism. The vital insights of the Reformers had hardened into rigid formulas' (A. Skevington Wood). The emphasis was on correct doctrine rather than devotion to Christ. It was in reaction to this prevailing climate that Pietism

grew out of the Lutheran and Reformed Churches in the 17th and 18th centuries.

One of the pioneers and most influential figures in Pietism was Philip Jacob Spener (1635-1705). Spener, a Lutheran minister in Frankfurt, began to hold devotional gatherings which were known as 'Collegia Pietatis' and from which the movement derived its name. These meetings spread rapidly and, along with Spener's book, *Pia Desideria* (Holy Desires) they served to bring a revitalisation to a church which lacked life and warmth.

Pietism placed strong emphasis on heart religion. Whereas Luther had stressed justification, the Pietists sought to give prominence to the need for a new birth and for sanctification which would give a man power in the Christian life. Sound doctrine was all very well, but it must be accompanied by a changed life. Spener himself expressed the discontent they felt at the notion that a Christian remains a sinner all his days:

Even if we shall never in this life achieve such a degree of perfection that nothing should be added, we are, nevertheless, under obligation to achieve some degree of perfection.

Without in any way minimising Luther's teaching that salvation is a gift from God to be received by faith, they once again began to find a place for the spiritual disciplines which had featured so prominently in catholic spirituality — meditation, prayer, fasting, silence and solitude. It was not, they felt, that these practices gained a man merit before God, but rather that they enabled him to be better equipped to serve God.

This renewed emphasis on the disciplined, holy life encouraged an appreciation of two other features of catholic spirituality among the Pietists. Firstly, they valued the example of the great Roman Catholic saints and mystics such as Augustine, Bernard of Clairvaux and Thomas a Kempis. And secondly, they saw value in the setting up of religious communities in which those

with a sincere concern for heart religion could seek together for a closer communion with God.

The Moravians

One such community was the Moravian colony at 'Herrnhut'. The Moravians, who traced their spiritual beginnings to Jan Hus, a Czech forerunner of the Reformation, had been driven from their homeland during the Thirty Years' War in Europe, and scattered throughout the Continent. A tiny remnant was left, but they met secretly and prayed for the future renewal of their church. In 1727 a small group of Moravians who had settled on the estate of Nikolaus Ludwig Count von Zinzendorf, a godson of Spener, experienced a powerful visitation of the Holy Spirit which brought them into a new and vital fellowship with each other and with God. The name 'Herrnhut', meaning 'The Lord's Watch' — which had been given some years earlier, since the plot of land they had been allocated was situated on the 'Hutberg' (Watch Hill) — proved to be prophetic. For the influence of the Moravians, under the leadership of Zinzendorf, was to spread throughout Europe and beyond like the light from a hill-top beacon. Their passionate, personal devotion to Christ and their burning missionary zeal endowed them with a power which was quite out of proportion to their numerical strength.

For the purpose of our present study, the Moravians form a vital link-route on the map of holiness. For, had not John Wesley met the Moravian missionary, Peter Böhler, it is doubtful whether the next page in the historical map of holiness would ever have been written.

8

Holiness now!

John Wesley and sanctification by faith

John Wesley is such a key figure in the story of the development of the doctrine of holiness that we must give him a major place in our study. Not only was he the founder of methodism in the 18th century, but his interpretation of the doctrine gave rise to the Holiness Movement of the 19th century and the Pentecostal Revival of the 20th.

Wesley's experience: from failure to faith

The distinctive emphasis that Wesley brought to the teaching of holiness was not the result of cold academic study in some cloistered seminary. Rather it grew out of his own experience of struggle to live a truly Christian life. We will understand his teaching much more easily if we know something of that experience.

Discipline

John Wesley began his life in Epworth, Lincolnshire, on 17 June 1703. He was the 15th of 19 children born to the Reverend Samuel Wesley and his wife Susannah. From his earliest years he knew the meaning of discipline. His mother's own words indicate the tenor of life in the Wesley household:

In order to form the minds of children, the first thing to be done is to conquer their will, and bring them to an obedient temper I insist upon conquering the will of children betimes, because this is the only

strong and rational foundation of religious education.

As soon as her children could speak they were taught to recite the Lord's Prayer, morning and evening; they were systematically instructed in the moral and religious life from a manual prepared by their mother; time was set aside for private prayer and for conversation on spiritual matters between Susannah and each of her children. With such a background, it is not surprising that, from childhood, John Wesley demonstrated an unusual degree of serious thought and devout conduct. In fact, Mrs Wesley's general philosophy on the raising of children was reinforced in regard to John because of his apparently providential escape from a fire at the Epworth parsonage when he was only six years old. From that moment she looked on him as being a 'chosen vessel' of God, and she determined not to fail in preparing him for whatever vocation God had in store. She wrote in her book of private meditations:

I do intend to be more particularly careful of the soul of this child that thou hast so mercifully provided for than ever I have been, that I may do my endeavour to instil into his mind the principles of true religion and virtue.

John Wesley himself felt that his leaving home for Charterhouse School marked a deterioration in his spiritual life; none the less, he still observed a greater measure of discipline in religious matters than might be expected from the average schoolboy!

I still read the Scriptures, and said my prayers morning and evening. And what I now hoped to be saved by was —1) Not being so bad as other people;2) Having still a kindness for religion; and 3) reading the Bible, going to church, and saying my prayers.

It was, however, during his time at Oxford University that Wesley's search for holiness began in earnest. His quest was stimulated by reading three of the great classics of devotional literature:

In the year 1725, being in the twenty-third year of my age, I met Bishop Taylor's Rules and Exercises of Holy Living and Dying. In reading several parts of this book I was exceedingly affected; that part in particular which relates to purity of intention. Instantly I resolved to dedicate all my life to God; all my thoughts and words and actions; being thoroughly convinced there was no medium, but that every part of my life (not some only) must either be a sacrifice to God, or myself; that is, in effect to the devil . . . In the year 1726 I met with Kempis's Christian Pattern. The nature and extent of inward religion, the religion of the heart, now appeared to me in a stronger light than it had ever done before. I saw, that giving even all my life to God (supposing it were possible to do this and go no farther) would profit me nothing, unless I gave my heart, yea all my heart, to Him . . . A year or two after, Mr Law's Christian Perfection and Serious Call were put into my hands. These convinced me more than ever of the absolute impossibility of being half a Christian. And I determined through His grace (the absolute necessity of which I was deeply sensible of), to be all devoted to God — to give Him all my soul, my body, and my substance..

(A Plain Account of Christian Perfection.)

The three writers to whom Wesley refers (one medieval monk and two anglicans) stand in that great tradition of catholic spirituality which we examined in chapter six. Bishop Taylor's Rules and Exercises for Holy Living and Dying is just that — a collection of rules and exercises for those who would live the devout life. There are rules for chastity, modesty, contentedness, obedience, business transactions, fasting, keeping the Lord's Day, prayer and the giving of alms. Even Bishop Taylor's thinking on purity of intention, which made such an impression on Wesley, is reduced to a rule:

That we should intend and design God's glory in every action we do . . . is expressed by St Paul, 'Whether ye eat or drink, do all to the glory of God. Which rule when we observe, every action of nature becomes religious, and every meal is an act of

worship . . . that all our lifetime we may do him service In every action reflect upon the end begin every action in that name of the Father, the Son and of the Holy Ghost Let every action be begun with prayer... let not that which began well and was intended for God's glory, decline or end in thy own praise.

The Christian Pattern to which Wesley refers is known to us today as *The Imitation of Christ*. It is the work of a monk and breathes the spirit of renunciation, of determination to follow Christ at all costs. It remains one of the most influential books ever written on the holy life. A few sentences will indicate why it made such an impression on a young man whose feet were already set on the path of discipline:

Anyone who wishes to understand and to savour the words of Christ to the full must try to make his whole life conform to the pattern of Christ's life. Every day we should make a fresh resolve and stir ourselves up to ardour . . . Our progress depends upon our resolution, and a man who wishes to make good progress needs perseverance . . .

Turn to the Lord with all your heart and give up this worthless world; then your soul will find rest. Learn indifference to all that lies outside you and devote yourself to the life within, and you will see the kingdom of God coming within you . . . Jesus has in these days many people who love his heavenly kingdom, but few who bear his cross. He has many who desire comfort, but few who are ready for trials.

William Law defines holiness, or Christian perfection, as 'the right performance of our necessary duties'. Such a practical expression of holiness arises out of 'the right habit of mind', and that 'habit of mind' is developed through disciplined living. Again, a few sentences chosen almost at random show why Law's writings made such an impact on John Wesley:

It does not follow that any people will be saved who did not strive after . . . perfection. . . Christianity is,

therefore, a course of holy discipline solely fitted to the cure and recovery of fallen spirits and intends such a change in our nature as may raise us to a nearer union with God and qualify us for such higher degrees of happiness. . . . No one can have any assurance that he pleases God or puts himself within the terms of Christian salvation but he who serves God with his whole heart and with the utmost of his strength . . . We shall surely rise to different degrees of glory, of joy and happiness in God according to our different advancements in purity, holiness and good works . . . (A Plain Account of Christian Perfection).

Even this most cursory glance at the three writers who inspired the desire for holiness in Wesley enables us to see that he was in the direct line of catholic spirituality with its emphasis on the continuing disciplined life as the only road to holiness. The effect on his own life was total and immediate:

I began to alter the whole form of my conversation, and to set in earnest upon a new life. I set apart an hour or two a day for religious retirement; I communicated every week. I watched against all sin, whether in word or deed. I began to aim at, and to pray for, inward holiness. So that now, doing so much, and living so good a life, I doubted not that I was a good Christian.

This determination to live the disciplined, holy life was shared by his brother Charles. During John's absence from Oxford when he worked for two years as his father's curate, Charles gathered round him a group of like minded companions who shared the brothers' concern for genuine religion. This little company became well known throughout the university and was given a number of more or less derogatory nick-names — 'The Holy Club', 'Bible Moths' and 'Methodists' among others. On his return John became fully involved in their activities and eventually became the recognised leader of the group. 'The Holy Club practised together the same kind of strict discipline that

the members observed individually; they met several evenings a week to study New Testament Greek; on Sunday evenings they studied divinity; twice a week they fasted and undertook a rigid system of self examination; later they began to visit systematically the prisoners in Oxford gaol. In its own way, the group was a reflection of the catholic pursuit of holiness through the monastic life. Together they took a similar route as the monks before them had taken — the way of asceticism, the long search for communion with God. It was a way that Wesley perfectly described in his famous sermon preached at the university on 1 January 1733:

Vain hope! that a child of Adam ... should once entertain a thought of being 'purified as his Lord is pure' unless he tread in his steps and 'take up his cross daily'. . . that he should ever dream of shaking off his old opinions, passions, tempers, of being 'sanctified throughout in spirit, soul and body' without a constant and continued course in general self-denial.

Despair

Wesley's own later reflection on his early search for holiness was expressed in the words, 'I was a Papist and knew it not.' There can be no doubting his sincerity, but, by his own confession, this concentration on winning holiness by good works led him into despair:

In this refined way of trusting to my own works and my own righteousness, I dragged on heavily, finding no comfort or help therein till the time of my leaving England.

The reference to 'leaving England' brings us to the next episode in Wesley's search for holiness — his missionary endeavours in Georgia. When John and Charles Wesley set sail for America with two friends in 1735, it was not a case of giving up the pursuit of personal holiness for the more practical task of preaching to the heathen. Their motive in going to the Indians of Georgia was to seek an

avenue of service which would provide further opportunity for living the life of self-denial through which holiness might be attained:

Our end in leaving our native country was not to avoid want . . . nor to gain the dung or dross of riches or honour; but simply this — to save our souls; to live wholly to the glory of God.

Even on board ship en route to the New World, Wesley began a yet more rigorous regime of self-denial:

Believing that denying ourselves . . . might, by the blessing of God, be helpful to us, we wholly left off the use of flesh and wine, and confined ourselves to vegetable food . . . from four in the morning till five each of us used private prayer. From five till seven we read the Bible together . . . at eight were public prayers. From nine till twelve I usually learned German . . . At twelve we met to give an account to one another what we had done since our last meeting . . .

And that was just the morning! Afternoons and evenings were similarly mapped out so that not a moment would be wasted in frivolous levity.

Alas, sincere and devout though Wesley was, the mission in Georgia was a failure. On 1 February 1738, Wesley landed again in England. His judgment on himself and his ministry was scathing:

It is now two years and almost four months since I left my native country, and in order to teach the Georgian Indians the nature of Christianity; but what have I learned of myself in the meantime? Why (what I the least of all suspected), that I who went to America to convert others, was never myself converted to God.

Discovery

But Wesley's time in Georgia had not been wasted. For it brought him into contact with the Moravians with their emphasis on the need for a personal faith in Christ, and there is no doubt that this marked the beginning of a discovery that was to bring a new dimension to his understanding of

holiness. Even before he reached the shores of America he had been deeply impressed with the humility and courage of the party of Moravians on board ship. Clearly these people enjoyed a relationship with God which Wesley, for all his devotion and self-denial, did not possess.

Shortly after landing in America Wesley had encountered August Gottlieb Spangenberg, a prominent Moravian minister, whom he had consulted about his future work and conduct. Their conversation haunted him so much that he recorded it in his journal:

He said, 'My brother, I must first ask you one or two questions. Have you the witness within yourself? Does the Spirit of God bear witness with your spirit, that you are a child of God?'

I was surprised, and knew not what to answer. He observed it and asked, 'Do you know Jesus Christ?'

I paused and said, 'I know he is the Saviour of the world.'

'True,' he replied; 'but do you know he has saved you?'

I answered, 'I hope he has died to save me.'

He only added, 'Do you know yourself?'

I said, 'I do.' But I fear they were vain words.

Spangenberg's question probed right to the heart of John Wesley's problem. Herein lay his lack of peace, and the reason for his failure in Georgia. For all his sincerity, for all his discipline and self-denial, his life was one of seeking. He was reaching out to a holiness and a communion with God which had no present fulfilment in his life. He lacked the vital ingredient of faith which transforms religious duty into a living relationship with God.

On his return to England, wearied with hard work and burdened by a sense of total failure, Wesley made contact with another Moravian minister, Peter Böhler. Like Spangenberg, Böhler spoke to Wesley of the supremacy of faith in the Christian life:

I met Peter Böhler again, who now amazed me more and more, by the account he gave of the fruits of liv-

ing faith—the holiness and happiness which he affirmed to attend it. The next morning I began the Greek Testament again, resolving to abide by 'the law and the testimony'; and being confident that God would hereby show me whether this doctrine was of God. (*Italics mine.*)

Wesley became so convicted of his lack of faith that he seriously considered whether he should give up preaching until the matter was resolved. 'How can you preach to others,' he asked, 'who have not faith yourself?' But Böhler's advice was to do quite the contrary: 'Preach faith till you have it; and then, because you have it, you will preach faith.'

It was on 24 May 1738 that things came to a head. Wesley underwent an experience which was so crucial for his understanding of the Christian life that we must allow him to relate it in his own words:

I think it was about five this morning that I opened my Testament on those words, 'There are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, even that we should be partakers of the divine nature' (2 Peter 1:4). Just as I went out, I opened it again on those words, 'Thou art not far from the kingdom of God'.

In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. At about a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.

I began to pray with all my might for those who had in a more especial manner despitefully used me and persecuted me. I then testified openly to all there what I now first felt in my heart.

That moment in Aldersgate Street, London, was the turning point in Wesley's life. Before that he had interpreted Christianity in the light of catholic spirituality; his emphasis had been on man's own efforts as the way to ultimate communion with God.

Now he had discovered for himself the central tenet of the Reformation — salvation is a gift of God to be received by faith alone. His spiritual genius, and his supreme importance for our study of the historical development of the doctrine of holiness, lie in the fact that he brought those two viewpoints together to produce an exposition of holiness which included a vital element of New Testament teaching which had been virtually ignored by both catholic and protestant theology. It is to that exposition of the doctrine of holiness we must now turn.

Wesley's doctrine: holiness claimed

Before we can say what Wesley taught, however, we must allow him to say what he did not teach; unless we appreciate Wesley's definition of two important words we will totally misunderstand everything else in his exposition of holiness.

The meaning of perfection

Wesley followed William Law in describing holiness as 'Christian perfection'. The word 'perfection', however, is fraught with difficulties. In its general English usage it describes something which is so good that it cannot be made any better. Clearly, no honest Christian can consider himself to be in such a state. When it was put to Wesley that it might be wiser to speak of holiness as 'a high state of grace' rather than perfection, he defended his terminology on the grounds that it was biblical:

As to the word, it is scriptural; therefore, neither you nor I can in conscience object against it, unless we would send the Holy Ghost to school and teach him to speak who made the tongue.

Wesley's reply, although cleverly worded, failed to give due weight to the difference in meaning between the biblical term (ie perfection = maturity, properly fulfilling the task for which we were created) and the normal English usage of the word. He stuck with his terminology which meant that he had frequently to remind people that he didn't mean what they thought he meant!

Perhaps the general prejudice against Christian perfection may chiefly arise from a misapprehension of the nature of it. We willingly allow, and continually declare, there is no such perfection in this life as implies either a dispensation from doing good and attending all the ordinances of God; or a freedom from ignorance, mistake, temptation, and a thousand other infirmities necessarily connected with flesh and blood

. . . neither . . . is there any absolute perfection on earth. There is no perfection of degrees; none which does not admit of a continual increase.

(A Plain Account of Christian Perfection.)

These three qualifications must always be borne in mind if we are to understand Wesley's use of 'perfection': 1) a man must still be obedient to the laws of God; 2) he will never be free in this life from normal human limitations such as ignorance and mistakes; 3) there will always be room for improvement in this life.

The problem remains, however, that perfection is a dangerous word. If Wesley himself was wise enough to hedge it round with careful limitations, his spiritual heirs did not always share his wisdom. 'Perfectionism' was a rock on which the later Holiness Movement was almost wrecked at times by those who, believing themselves to be beyond temptation, fell into serious doctrinal error and blatantly unethical conduct. Wesley, for all his greatness, must bear censure for perpetuating terminology which can lead men far from biblical truth and biblical standards.

The meaning of sin

And still the problem with words is not over! For Wesley taught that Christian perfection meant that a man could be free from sin. That, too, was a source of contention. The Westminster Confession, standing firmly in the tradition of the Reformers, had insisted that such a thing was impossible:

No man is able, either of himself, or by any grace received in this life, perfectly to keep the command-

ments of God; but doth daily break them in thought, word and deed.

Wesley's point of view was altogether different:

In conformity . . . to . . . the whole tenor of the New Testament, we fix this conclusion: a Christian is so far perfect as not to sin.

The difference is not so irreconcilable as it at first appears, for these two statements arise out of two different definitions of sin. The Reformers, with their deep consciousness of man's total unworthiness and utter dependence on the grace of God, defined sin as any transgression, voluntary or involuntary, of any of God's laws, known or unknown. Finite man inevitably fails to conform to the perfect will of God and remains a sinner all his life. Wesley, however, who was so deeply impressed by Bishop Taylor's insistence on 'purity of intention', saw sin as a matter of the will. He carefully outlines his thinking on the matter:

To explain myself a little farther on this head-

1 Not only sin properly so called (that is, a voluntary transgression of a known law), but sin, improperly so called (that is, an involuntary transgression of a divine law, known or unknown), needs the atoning blood.

2 I believe there is no such perfection in this life as excludes these involuntary transgressions, which I apprehend to be naturally consequent on the ignorance and mistakes inseparable from mortality.

3 Therefore, sinless perfection is a phrase I never use, lest I should seem to contradict myself.

4 I believe a person filled with the love of God is still liable to these involuntary transgressions.

5 Such transgressions you may call sins, if you please: I do not, for the reasons above mentioned.

(A Plain Account of Christian Perfection.)

A man's actions may on occasions be wrong but, if his intentions are pure, Wesley insists, they would not be sinful actions in any real sense, merely the evidence of human limitations. The actions of a child provide a suitable analogy for the point

Wesley is making. There is a world of difference between a child who spills the orange juice deliberately in a fit of temper and a child who spills the orange juice while trying to be helpful and serve others. In both cases the end result is the same! But a good parent knows that one is an example of 'sinfulness' and the other due to the inevitable limitations in the child's understanding and undeveloped co-ordination. In both cases the child did something 'wrong'. But only one involves a moral wrong. -

Holiness is love

We are now in a position to understand Wesley's definition of what holiness is:

Christian perfection is that love of God and our neighbour which implies deliverance from all sin.

(A Plain Account of Christian Perfection.)

Having considered his view of sin, it is not difficult to see why 'love of God and our neighbour .implies deliverance from all sin'. If I love someone I may through ignorance or some personal frailty cause them hurt, but I will never deliberately do them any harm. Love and wilful hurt are mutually exclusive. So, given Wesley's definition of sin, love and sin cannot exist together.

From the time Wesley met with Bishop Taylor's writings and realised the importance of 'purity of intention' his definition of holiness did not change. What mattered above all was acting out of love to God. His sermon of 1 January 1733, from which we quoted earlier, shows that he grasped this truth early in his search:

Here is the sum of the perfect law Let your soul be filled with so entire a love to him, that you may love nothing but for his sake. Have a pure intention of heart, a steadfast regard to his glory in all your actions. For then and not till then, is that mind in us which was also in Christ Jesus, when in every motion of our heart, in every word of our tongue, in every work of our hands, we pursue nothing but in relation to him, and in subordination to his pleasure;

when we, too, neither think, nor speak, nor act, to fulfil our own will, but the will of him that sent us.

(A Plain Account of Christian Perfection.)

Holiness is love claimed by faith

What did change for Wesley after his Aldersgate Street experience was not his definition of holiness as a state of love to God and man, but his understanding of how this state in all its fulness could be realised in experience. Prior to that he had believed that it came as the result of disciplined living. Now, having grasped the truth that salvation is a gift of God to be received by faith, he came to the understanding that holiness, too, as part of that salvation was also to be received by faith: he maintains that:

1 Christian perfection is that love of God and our neighbour which implies deliverance from all sin;

2 that this is received merely by faith,

3 that it is given instantaneously, in one moment;

4 that we are to expect it, not at death, but every moment; that now is the accepted time, now is the day of this salvation. (Wesley's italics.)

(A Plain Account of Christian Perfection.)

Wesley's discovery of the centrality of faith has led him to a renewed emphasis of the second strand of New Testament teaching on sanctification—that holiness can be — must be — claimed by the believer here and now. He is in agreement with the Reformers that faith is the key to the Christian life; he is in agreement with the Reformers that God confers sanctification when he justifies us; where he differs is in his assertion that holiness can be a reality in the believer's present experience. Just as the Reformers 'pulled back' the realisation of holiness from purgatory to the point of death, so Wesley draws it back into life itself. He makes it clear in a series of questions and answers just what he is asserting:

Q What, then, is the point where we divide?

A It is this: Should we expect to be saved from all sin before the article of death?

Q Is there any clear Scripture promise of this...?

A There is: 'He shall redeem Israel from all his sins'.

Q Does the New Testament afford any further ground for expecting to be saved from all sin?

A Undoubtedly it does, both in those prayers and commands, which are equivalent to the strongest assertions.

Q What command is there?

A 'Be ye perfect as your Father who is in heaven is perfect' (Matt. 5:48). 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind' (Matt. 22:37). But if the love of God fill all the heart, there can be no sin therein.

Q But how does it appear that this is to be done before the article of death?

A From the very nature of a command, which is not given to the dead, but to the living. Therefore, 'Thou shalt love God with all thy heart' cannot mean, 'Thou shalt do this when thou diest, but, while thou livest.'

(A Plain Account of Christian Perfection.)

Holiness — 'entire sanctification' — is a 'second blessing'

This experience of holiness, the love of God received by faith, is sometimes referred to by Wesley as 'entire sanctification' in order to distinguish it from the initial sanctification which is conferred on the believer when he is justified. He argues, not from Scripture, but from experience and observation, that it is inevitably separated in time from justification:

Neither dare we affirm, as some have done, that all this salvation is given at once . . . we do not know of a single instance, in any place, of a person's receiving, in one and the same moment, remission of sins, the abiding witness of the Spirit, and a new, clean heart ['a clean heart' is for Wesley another term for 'entire sanctification'].

He then goes on to outline 'the general manner' in which God usually works: a person is convicted of sin by the Holy Spirit; he 'cries unto the Lord' who

shows that he has taken away his sins and justified him; all is well for a time but, sooner or later, the believer is attacked by temptation and doubt so that he begins to fear for his salvation; then, in a particular way, God sends the Holy Spirit to 'bear witness continually with their spirits that they are the children of God'; it is only at this point, when he is sure of his acceptance by God, that the Christian can face the truth of the depth of sin within his heart:

And now first do they see the ground of their heart, which God before would not disclose unto them, lest the soul should fail before him . . . Now they see all the hidden abominations there, the depths of pride, self-will and Hell.

This is the point at which 'entire sanctification' can take place:

. . . this fiery trial ... heightens both the strong sense they then have of their inability to help themselves, and the inexpressible hunger they feel after a full renewal in his image, in 'righteousness and true holiness'. Then God is mindful of the desire of them that fear him He createth them anew in Christ Jesus; he cometh unto them with his Son and blessed Spirit; and, fixing his abode in their souls, bringeth them into the 'rest which remaineth for the people of God'.

As a sensitive study in the psychology of Christian experience, Wesley's analysis outlined above is penetrating and accurate. This is, indeed, the 'general manner' in which God works. Only the soul which knows something of his love can begin to see clearly the deep selfishness of the human will; and that soul, crying out to God for a deep infilling of his love will not be disappointed. But there are dangers in such an analysis. Two in particular need to be noted and guarded against.

Firstly, Wesley is careful to say that this is the 'general manner wherein God does work'. He is equally careful to add, 'how God may work, we cannot tell'. His conclusion that holiness is a 'second blessing' is not a rigid article of doctrine,

but a helpful guide for earnest seekers. Wesley does not produce scriptural authority which would cause us to say, 'this is how it must be'. Sadly, not all his spiritual heirs have remembered this fact.

Secondly, whenever we speak of God's work in the human heart, we inevitably speak in pictures. That is the only way in which we can describe truths which go too deep for words. The danger is that the picture can become more important than the experience it seeks to describe. Sometimes in his desire to describe the deep work of the Holy Spirit in a man's heart, Wesley spoke of sin being 'separated from the soul' or of the believer being 'emptied of sin' or some similar expression. When such 'picture-language' is interpreted too literally it can give rise either to terrible pride in the man who thinks it is now impossible for him to sin, or equally terrible despair in the man who discovers that old, sinful desires can be very powerfully present in moments when he is most vulnerable. It is well always to bear in mind the central tenet of Wesley's teaching, that by faith the believer can claim the reality of the love of God in his life, that it is impossible to love God and man and wilfully sin against either, and that love is a matter of the will seeking to live to God's glory, rather than a mere passing emotion.

Holiness is still the work of a lifetime

The new emphasis which Wesley placed on holiness as a gift from God to be claimed by faith did not cause him to neglect his catholic inheritance. He still gave place to that third strand of holiness teaching in the New Testament — holiness as a continuing disciplined exercise — which features so largely in catholic spirituality:

I believe this perfection is always wrought in the soul by a simple act of faith; consequently in an instant. But I believe in a gradual work both preceding and following that instant.

(A Plain Account of Christian Perfection.)

The difference now was that he saw the disciplined life, not as the route to holiness, but as the preparation for God's instantaneous work and as its subsequent expression in holy living; in answer to the question, 'How are we to wait for this change?' he says this:

Not in careless indifference, or indolent inactivity; but in vigorous, universal obedience, in a zealous keeping of all the commandments, in watchfulness and painfulness, in denying ourselves, and taking up the cross daily; as well as in earnest prayer and fasting, and a close attendance on all the ordinances of God. And if any man dream of attaining it any other way (yea, or of keeping it when it is attained, when he has received it even in the largest measure), he deceives his own soul. It is true we receive it by simple faith; but God does not, will not, give that faith unless we seek it with all diligence in the way which he hath ordained.

(A Plain Account of Christian Perfection.)

This insistence of Wesley's on the disciplined life brought back to the forefront a concern which the Reformers had tended to push into the background in their anxiety to be rid of 'justification by works'. But without it, Protestantism had tended to produce fringe groups who were guilty of 'anti-nomianism'. Even such an outstanding figure as Count von Zinzendorf, the leader of the Moravians whom Wesley so much admired and to whom he owed so much, could see little relationship between holiness and discipline. His conversation with Wesley at Gray's Inn Gardens is worth recording since it sums up perfectly Wesley's dual emphasis on holiness as an experience to be claimed by faith and an exercise to be expressed in disciplined living:

Z I acknowledge no inherent perfection in this life. This is the error of errors . . . Christ is our sole perfection. Whoever follows inherent perfection, denies Christ.

W But I believe that the Spirit of Christ works this perfection in true Christians.

Z By no means. All our perfection is in Christ. All Christian perfection is faith in the blood of Christ. Our whole Christian perfection is imputed, not inherent. We are perfect in Christ, in ourselves we are never perfect.

W I think we strive about words I mean nothing else by perfection than [loving God with all his heart].

Z But this is not his holiness. He is not more holy if he loves more, or less holy if he loves less.

W What! Does not every believer while he increases in love, increase equally in holiness?

Z Not at all. In the moment he is justified, he is wholly sanctified From that time he is neither more nor less holy, even unto death

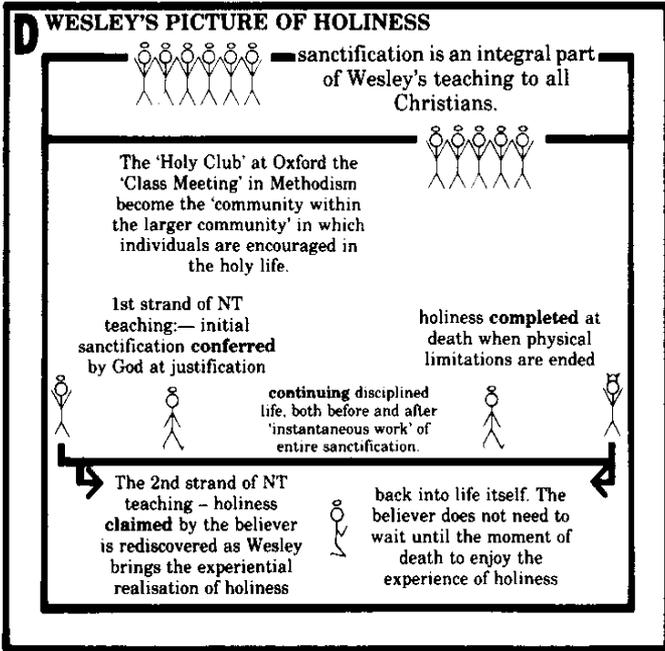
W Do we not, while we deny ourselves, die more and more to the world and live to God?

Z We spit out all self-denial; we tread it underfoot. As believers, we do everything we wish and nothing beyond. We laugh at all mortification. No purification precedes perfect love.

When such an otherwise sane and good man as Zinzendorf could make such statements, it cannot be doubted that Wesley's emphasis on inward holiness expressed and nurtured by self-denial and obedience to the revealed will of God was an enormous contribution to the Church's understanding of sanctification.

A unique synthesis

Wesley's debt to catholic spirituality with its stress on the disciplined life, and to Reformation theology with its rediscovery of the centrality of faith in God's grace, led one scholar, G. C. Cell, to describe his doctrine as 'a unique synthesis of the protestant ethic of grace with the catholic ethic of holiness'. That statement, made over 50 years ago, still seems to be an accurate summary of Wesley's outstanding achievement. It is a synthesis that can be seen clearly when we present his teaching in diagram form.



9

Holiness for All!

The Holiness Movement of the nineteenth century

There can be no doubt that John Wesley believed his teaching on entire sanctification to be the central truth of methodism. Indeed, he saw it as the main reason for the existence of that branch of the Church which, under God, he founded:

This doctrine is the grand depositum which God has lodged with the people called Methodists, and for the sake of propagating this chiefly he appears to have raised us up.

He was, moreover, convinced that the spiritual health of his people was linked to the proclamation of holiness; of one Methodist Society which seemed to be in numerical and spiritual decline he wrote:

I was surprised to find fifty members fewer than I left in it last October. One reason is, Christian perfection has been little insisted on; and wherever this is not done, be the preachers ever so eloquent, there is little increase either in the number or grace of the hearers.

Wesley's reticence

None the less, there remained a certain reticence in Wesley's proclamation of entire sanctification. It was not that he doubted God's ability or willingness to make men holy, but rather that he exercised and advised caution with regard to the way in which any individual should testify to the experience. There were a number of reasons for this reticence.

For one thing, although Wesley pulled back into life the moment at which the believer could be made holy, he still looked on that moment as being far along the Christian pathway. According to Wesley's thinking, not even the greatest figure in the New Testament (apart from Jesus himself) possessed this blessing until the latter part of his life:

Q Is this [sanctification] ordinarily given till a little before death?

A It is not, to those who expect it no sooner.

Q But may we expect it sooner?

A Why not? For although we grant—(1) That the generality of believers whom we have hitherto known, were not so sanctified till near death; (2) that few of those to whom St Paul wrote his Epistles were so at that time; nor (3) he himself at the time of writing his former Epistles; yet all this does not prove that we may not be so today.

(A Plain Account of Christian Perfection.)

Consequently, there is no suggestion that those who do not yet believe themselves to have attained to this exalted state should be regarded as 'second class' members of the Christian Church. That would only lead to the kind of divisiveness which Wesley feared like the plague:

Q But may we not continue in peace and joy till we are perfected in love?

A Certainly we may; for the kingdom of God is not divided against itself; therefore, let not believers be discouraged from 'rejoicing in the Lord always'. And yet we may be sensibly pained at the sinful nature that still remains in us. It is good for us to have a lively sense of this, and a vehement desire to be delivered from it. But this should only incite us the more zealously to fly every moment to our strong Helper; the more earnestly 'to press forward to the mark, the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus'. And when the sense of our sin abounds, the sense of his love should the more abound.

(A Plain Account of Christian Perfection.)

Again, within the whole Christian community all should be encouraged to press on towards the fulness of the holy life. The accent must be on what God has promised to do in us, rather than what we have failed to achieve:

Q In what manner should we preach sanctification?

A Scarce at all to those who are not pressing forward: to those who are, always by way of promise; always drawing rather than driving.

(A Plain Account of Christian Perfection.)

Lastly, although towards the end of his life Wesley was willing to speak of '625 examples in our Society in London', he was previously unwilling to be over-specific in citing individuals:

There are many reasons why there should be few, if any, indisputable examples. What inconveniences would this bring on the person himself—set as a mark for all to shoot at!

(A Plain Account of Christian Perfection.)

Significantly, in all his many writings, he never once explicitly claims that he himself is 'entirely sanctified', and to those who believe that they have attained to this high plane he advises caution and humility:

. . . it would be advisable not to speak of it to them that know not God (it is most likely that it would only provoke them to contradict and blaspheme); nor to others without some particular reason, without some good in view. And then he should have especial care to avoid all appearance of boasting; to speak with the deepest humility and reverence, giving all the glory to God.

(A Plain Account of Christian Perfection.)

In short, Christian perfection, entire sanctification in this life, received by faith and granted by God in a moment, was, for John Wesley, a glorious possibility to which every Christian should look and for which every Christian should prepare by disciplined holy living.

The Holiness Movement—reticence overcome

If we liken John Wesley to an explorer, tentatively finding his way through previously undiscovered country, then we can justifiably describe his spiritual heirs in the Holiness Movement as settlers, following in his footsteps and boldly claiming the new-found territory as their own. The Holiness Movement is the name given to the wave of religious revival which swept through Britain and the United States of America in the middle of the 19th century, carrying Wesleyan teaching into many other denominations. (The Salvation Army, whose Founder, of course, came from methodism, was very much a part of the Holiness Movement, and we will consider the teaching of the early salvationists, not in isolation, but within the context of the movement as a whole.) The term 'Holiness Movement' is a very wide one and within its scope there were many subtle variations of emphasis and expression. It is impossible for us to follow every by-road. Rather, we will attempt to follow the main route, noting the dominant features of the landscape as we proceed. We can best do that by concentrating firstly on the nature of sanctification in general, as it was understood in the Holiness Movement; then we will turn to look more closely at the 'crisis experience' itself, the moment in which entire sanctification is received by faith.

The nature of sanctification

1 Entire sanctification is indispensable: Wesley's successors inherited his emphasis on entire sanctification as a second work of grace. But, whereas he had proclaimed this as a possibility for all, they taught it as being absolutely essential to Christian living. Where Wesley had been content to 'draw', they saw the need to 'drive' men on. Consider the words of William Booth to the 1877 Conference of The Christian Mission:

Some of you are old and grey-headed, and you have been hearing, and reading, about this blessing a long,

long time, but you are little or no forwarder, and, my brethren, you won't be until you trust the living God, and then it will be done at once To you, my brethren, as leaders of the armies of the God of Israel, I need not say how all-important is the realisation and enjoyment of holiness.

(a) It is a condition of happiness Oh, my brethren, none but holy men and women have reached this state, to be saved from fear and anxiety about past, present, and future... deep and lasting happiness is impossible without this.

(b) Holiness is indispensable to your completest usefulness You know the way of life and the blessedness of religion. You can tell something of the love of God and the joys of the redeemed. You can pray and sing and lead out to battle the armies of the King. What else is wanting to complete your qualifications for doing the greatest possible amount of good but that you shall be able to say to your people, "That which I publish as attainable of personal peace and joy and communion with God—I enjoy myself?"... A sanctified life means a gentle, tender spirit; it means the accompanying manifestation of the Holy Ghost. It is the prelude and condition and assurance of the endowment of power; and, my brethren, the realisation of the blessing is —

(c) The condition of the perpetual indwelling of God. . . . with him you have all things and abound, all things for present, and future, for yourselves and your families and your people; the full equipment and qualification and guarantee of success in the great work of pulling down the kingdom of Satan and establishing the kingdom of God.

Brethren, be ye holy, but be holy now!

2 Entire sanctification must be immediate: In the light of such insistence that the blessing of holiness is indispensable, it naturally follows that there is no time to be wasted. For Wesley, who had 'pulled back' the point at which holiness is realised in a man's life from the moment of death, it is still the case that the moment of the blessing lies far along the Christian pathway. It is a place to which a man might well come, indeed to which he ought to come,

on the road of holiness. For the Holiness Movement, however, it is the place at which holiness truly begins. And the time is now. To wait amounts to a denial of God's promises. Catherine Booth left her hearers in the Exeter Hall in 1881 in no doubt as to the urgency of the matter:

If you want this blessing, put down your quibbles, put your feet on your arguments, march up to the throne and ask for it, and kill, and crucify, and cast from you, the accursed thing-which hinders it, and then you shall have it, and the Lord will fill you this morning with his power and glory, and something will happen, and this Exeter Hall will be consecrated to soul-saving and soul-sanctifying power today.

3 The process which follows is God's work: From what has just been said it can be seen that the teachers of the Holiness Movement laid even more stress on the second strand of New Testament teaching on holiness — that it must be claimed and made actual in the life of the believer — than Wesley himself. However, they also gave place to the third strand of New Testament teaching — holiness as a continuing way of life. But, yet again, their emphasis was somewhat different from Wesley's. He, it will be remembered, had come to his realisation that holiness could be claimed by faith, from the catholic tradition of holiness as a disciplined way of life. His new discovery did not lead him to jettison his belief in the necessity for disciplined effort. It was necessary, firstly, as a sign of earnest seeking, as a precondition of the faith which God would grant; and it was necessary, secondly, following the granting of the blessing as the proper expression of the new life.

The holiness teachers of the 19th century, however, came mainly from a protestant background. Just as a man can never be justified by effort, they reasoned, neither can he be sanctified by such effort. Indeed, such effort was doomed because of man's sinfulness and inherent lack of spiritual power. The process of holiness, subsequent

to the reception of the blessing by faith, was, therefore, not one of disciplined effort but one of continual reliance on God. In 1888, Mrs Hannah Pearsall Smith, who with her husband greatly influenced the early Keswick Convention movement, published her very popular book, *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*. Her emphasis on reliance on God rather than human effort amounts almost to total passivity:

To state it in brief, I would say that man's part is to trust, and God's part is to work. . . the believer can do nothing but trust; while the Lord in whom he trusts actually does the work in him The preacher who is speaking on man's part in the matter, cannot speak of anything except surrender and trust, because this is positively all that man can do We do not do anything but he does it, and it is all the more effectually done because of this Now sanctification is both a step of faith and a process of works. It is a step of surrender and trust on our part, and it is a process of development on God's part. By a step of faith we get into Christ; by a process we are made to 'grow up into him in all things'. By a step of faith we put ourselves into the hands of the Divine Potter; by a gradual process he makes us into a vessel unto his own honour, meet for his use and prepared for every good work.

The strength of such teaching lay in the fact that it emphasised that the holy life is possible only through the power of God, that holiness is far more than human respectability and morality perfected to the ultimate degree. Its weakness was that it tended to give the impression that a man should 'leave it all to God'. Bishop Handley Moule, a noted Keswick speaker and one of the best theologians of the Holiness Movement, expressed the matter in a way that was much closer to the New Testament emphasis of such passages as Philippians 2:12, 13: we must work, in the power of God, who works through us:

We aim at nothing less than to walk with God all day long, to abide every hour in Christ and he and his

words in us, to love God with all thy heart and our neighbour as ourselves... it is possible to cast every care on him daily, and to be at peace amidst pressure, to see the will of God in everything, to put away all bitterness and clamour and evil speaking, daily and hourly. It is possible by unreserved resort to divine power under divine conditions to become strongest through and through at our weakest point.

(Thoughts on Christian Sanctity.)

The further advantage of seeing holiness as continual reliance on the power of the indwelling Christ is that it frees us from the dangerous idea that sin can be taken out of a man. Although the early salvationists, in their enthusiasm and out of their devotion to the teaching of Wesley, continued to speak and think of holiness in terms of 'a clean heart' or 'being without sin', it must be admitted that this left their statements open to much misunderstanding and misinterpretation. There is no doubt that the careful statements of men such as Moule were doctrinally more accurate and psychologically more healthy. John C. Pollock, in his authorised history of the Keswick Convention, quotes from Alexander Smellie and Bishop Moule in clarification of this point:

Keswick has rejected the doctrine of eradication, as though the soul ... were secure now from contamination and incapable of defilement; and has insisted on the wiser doctrine of counter-action in which the soul is delivered, and kept, and led from strength to strength only through the grace and mightiness of One who dwells within it, a sin-restraining and sin-conquering Saviour. Conversely it is still possible to lapse: 'We know ourselves,' wrote Moule, 'to be always and everywhere poor sinners, carrying the "carnal mind" very really in our constitution, ready to assert all its tyranny when a man neglects to use the glorious promise and presence of the Holy Ghost.'

(The Keswick Story.)

Before we move on to examine the 'crisis experience' itself, it is probably wise to add that the criticisms made above of the way in which the early-

day salvationists sometimes expressed the doctrine of holiness do not imply any denial that they knew the reality behind their sometimes faulty exposition. The holy life in practice is more important than a flawless statement of doctrine. Beyond any doubt, thousands of people, outside as well as inside the ranks of the Army, were brought to an experience of sanctification through the witness of theologically untutored soldiers and officers. Often that simple witness was more effective than the most eloquent and systematic sermons. To quote John C. Pollock again:

The deeper definition of the doctrines of sanctification and the Holy Spirit which followed the accession of Moule did not, as yet, lead to over-systematising. Sometimes speakers went a little too deep. 'I do hope,' murmured Robert Wilson, looking at Hopkins and Moule keyed up to address the Tent, 'these two dear brethren will feed the lambs tonight.' Old Haslam, after the Convention of 1889, overheard the remark: 'People get teaching at the Tent but their blessing at The Salvation Army.'

(The Keswick Story.)

The nature of the 'crisis experience'

The holiness teachers of the 19th century were unanimous in their insistence that there must be a crisis point, that sanctification must be claimed by faith before it could be expressed in the ongoing life of holiness. However, there were two main interpretations of what actually happened in that moment. They were not mutually exclusive and the distinction was not always fully appreciated by those who expounded them; but they do represent two quite different theologies of the crisis moment and, with the passing of the years, they were to lead in quite different directions. Both of these interpretations can be found in The Salvation Army.

The crisis moment: receiving Christ in all his fulness

One line of teaching pointed to the fact that to

claim holiness was simply to claim Christ in all his fulness. Not only does he forgive our sins by his death on the cross, but he gives us power over sin by his life within us. The crisis moment is a moment of 'realisation' in that double sense to which we referred in chapter two: we 'realise'—understand—what is ours in Christ, and we 'realise'—allow him to make real and actual—his power within us. Such was the testimony of Catherine Booth. Her analysis of the moment of spiritual breakthrough is so penetrating as to demand a fairly lengthy quotation:

. . . my mind has been absorbed in the pursuit of holiness ... a week ago last Friday when I made the surrender referred to in my last [letter], I saw that . . . I must have a whole Christ, a perfect Saviour. I therefore resolved to seek till I found that 'pearl of great price' I perceived that I had been in some degree of error with reference to the nature, or rather the attainment, of sanctification, regarding it rather as a great and mighty work to be wrought in me through Christ, than the simple reception of Christ as an all-sufficient Saviour, dwelling in my heart, and thus cleansing it every moment from all sin. I had been earnestly seeking all the week to apprehend him as my Saviour in this sense, but on Thursday and Friday I was totally absorbed in the subject. I laid aside almost everything else, and spent the chief part of the day in reading and prayer, and trying to believe for it On Friday morning God gave me two precious passages. First, 'Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.' Oh how sweet it sounded to my poor, weary, sin-stricken soul. I almost dared to believe that he did give me rest from inbred sin, the rest of perfect holiness. But I staggered at the promise through unbelief, and therefore failed to enter in. The second passage consisted of those thrice-blessed words, 'Of him are ye in Christ Jesus who is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.' But again unbelief hindered me, although I felt as if I was getting gradually nearer. I struggled through the day until a little after six in the evening, when William joined me in prayer. We

had a blessed season. While he was saying, 'Lord, we open our hearts to receive thee,' that word was spoken to my soul, 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock' I felt sure he had long been knocking, and oh, how I yearned to receive him as a perfect Saviour! But oh, the inveterate habit of unbelief! How wonderful that God should have borne so long with me! When we got up from our knees I lay on the sofa exhausted with the excitement and effort of the day. William said, 'Don't you lay all on the altar?' I replied, 'I am sure I do!' Then he said, 'And isn't the altar holy?' I replied in the language of the Holy Ghost, 'The altar is most holy, and whatsoever toucheth it is holy.' Then he said, 'Are you not holy?' I replied with my heart full of emotion and with some faith, 'Oh, I think I am!' Immediately the word was given to me to confirm my faith, 'Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.' And I took hold, true with a trembling hand, and not unmolested by the tempter, but I held fast the beginning of my confidence, and it grew stronger, and from that moment I have dared to reckon myself dead unto sin, and alive unto God through Christ Jesus my Lord.

(Catherine Booth in a letter to her parents,
11February 1861.)

The struggle which Catherine underwent was not a struggle to find something which was not yet hers. It was, rather, a struggle to claim by faith the fulness of that which she already possessed—the indwelling Christ.

In the end, this interpretation of the moment of crisis—the realisation of God's will and work which, at least to some extent, is potentially true for every believer from the time of conversion—leads to a lessening of its importance in emotional and psychological as well as doctrinal terms. It becomes a 'crisis' (in small letters), nothing more than the beginning of the PROCESS of growth in holiness. It is not an exalted state far along the Christian life. It is the point of time at which the believer begins to take seriously his dependence on God and the resources available to him in Christ. Any emotional content is peripheral to the simple act of claiming

what God wills to give. And this is the direction in which the 'Holiness Churches' in general, and certainly The Salvation Army in particular, have moved. The quiet, restrained language of General Frederick Couetts expresses perfectly this line of thinking:

There can be no experience without a beginning . . . There arises an awareness of personal need which draws a man on to an act of full surrender. The forgiven soul awakes to the truth that forgiveness is not enough. Blessed is the man whose iniquity is forgiven but that act of divine grace arouses in him a longing to be like the One to whom he owes his forgiveness In penitent obedience I yield up a forgiven life. In faith believing I receive of his Spirit. That is the beginning. The beginning but not the end. This is the commencement of the life of holiness, not its crown. This is the start, a good and necessary start, but only the start The crisis must be followed by a process.

(The Call to Holiness.)

The crisis moment: baptism in the Spirit

The second line of interpretation concerning the 'crisis moment' took a quite different view. According to this way of thinking, something radically new took place in a man's life; there was, in truth, 'a great and mighty work to be wrought in (the believer) through Christ'.

Without a doubt such an interpretation derives from the nature of the experience undergone by many individuals. They could not describe what had happened to them as 'only the start' of a process. Their prayer, faith and struggles had brought them to a moment of spiritual breakthrough, a moment of overwhelming awareness of the power of God, a moment when life was lifted to an altogether higher level. Not surprisingly, they looked for some biblical parallel to their experience and it seemed to be staring them in the face in the second chapter of Acts: just like the believers of old, they too were being 'baptised in the Holy Spirit'.

The testimonies of early methodists indicate that they often saw entire sanctification in this way:

I was convinced more deeply than ever of inbred sin, and of the promise of God to save me from it. And never did man at a bar plead harder for life than I pleaded with God for this salvation The Lord was conquered by our instant prayer, and we had the petition we asked of him. I was baptised with the Holy Ghost and with fire, and felt that perfect love casteth out fear. Great was our fellowship with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit Our Lord was inexpressibly near From this time I went forth in the power and spirit of love.

(John Oliver in the Arminian Magazine 1779, quoted by W. E. Sangster in *The Path to Perfection*.)

It would seem that Wesley himself had some fears regarding the doctrinal accuracy of this parallel, for he wrote to one Joseph Benson:

If they like to call this 'receiving the Holy Ghost', they may: only the phrase in that sense is not scriptural and not quite proper; for they all 'received the Holy Ghost' when they were justified. God then 'sent forth the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, crying, Abba, Father'.

(Quoted by W. E. Sangster in *The Path to Perfection*.)

It would have been well had succeeding generations heeded Wesley's wise warning. There can be little objection to the phrase 'baptism in the Spirit' used as a figure of speech to describe the experience which, undoubtedly, has come to many, of being totally 'drenched and cleansed' by the love of God. But there are grave dangers when it is used as the foundation for a rigid doctrinal framework. But this is precisely what happened in the Holiness Movement. Commissioner Samuel Logan Brengle was expressing what many believed when he repeatedly asked his readers, 'Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?' For Brengle the blessing of holiness and the baptism in the Holy Spirit were interchangeable terms; he leaves his

readers in no doubt as to his convictions on this matter:

... every child of God, every truly converted person, has the Holy Spirit in some gracious manner and measure, else he would not be a child of God It is the Holy Spirit who convicts us of sin It is the Holy Spirit who leads us to true repentance and confession It is he who assures us of the Father's favour It is he who strengthens the new convert.

Blessed be God for this work of the Holy Spirit within the heart of every true child of his! But, great and gracious as is this work, it is not the fiery pentecostal baptism with the Holy Spirit which is promised; it is not the fulness of the Holy Ghost to which we are exhorted. It is only the clear dawn of the day, and not the rising of the day star. This is only the initial work of the Spirit. It is perfect of its kind, but it is preparatory to another and fuller work.

(When the Holy Ghost is Come.)

Anyone who has looked seriously at the prominent teachers of the Holiness Movement knows what a saintly man Brengle was and how balanced and sane was his understanding of the doctrine he preached. His influence is still felt today through many parts of the world. But such has become the importance of 'baptism in the Spirit' theology that it is necessary to take Brengle, as the representative of this teaching, to task by a careful examination of relevant New Testament passages. When that is done a number of things emerge which stand as evidence against the doctrine that the baptism in the Spirit is an experience subsequent to conversion.

It is often argued that, since the baptism in the Spirit, as recorded in the second chapter of Acts, happened to the disciples as a distinct experience, it must be the same for us. This reasoning, however, ignores the simple fact that the original disciples were living in the days when God's plan of salvation was still being worked out historically. Inevitably they first of all experienced Jesus' life and teaching;

then they came to know his death and resurrection; then followed his ascension and the promised outpouring of his Spirit at Pentecost. When people become Christians today, however, they do not receive things in that order. The example of Jesus' life and teaching, the saving results of his death for our sins, his risen presence, and the indwelling of his Spirit all come to us as part of a 'complete package', to be accepted by faith. That, indeed, is how Peter presents the gospel to the listening crowd on the day of Pentecost. What has happened to the disciples is proof of God's completion of salvation through his Son Jesus. And the 'complete package' is offered to all who will respond:

Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).

Throughout the four gospels baptism in the Spirit is viewed not as an 'extra' to normal Christian living, but as the distinctive element of the ministry of Jesus. The baptism in water, performed by John as a token of repentance, is merely preparatory to the mighty drenching and cleansing which Jesus will bring:

After me comes he who is mightier than I I have baptised you with water; but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:7, 8).

In the fourth gospel it is John the Baptist who points out the double ministry of Jesus to die a sacrificial death for the forgiveness of sins and to grant men the empowering of the Holy Spirit:

Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world ... this is he who baptises with the Holy Spirit (John 1:29, 33).

Clearly, the gospel writers believed the baptism in the Holy Spirit to be the distinctive mark of Christian life and experience.

This is borne out by Paul. Despite what Brengle says in the passage we quoted, Paul never exhorts his readers to be baptised in the Holy Spirit. That

would amount to telling them to become Christians all over again! For it is the baptism in the Spirit which has made them part of the Body of Christ:

For Christ is like a single body with its many limbs and organs, which, many as they are, together make up one body. For indeed we were all brought into one body by baptism, in the one Spirit, whether we are Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free men, and that one Holy Spirit was poured out for all of us to drink (1 Corinthians 12:12, 13, NEB).

It is difficult to escape the conviction that, for the New Testament writers, the phrase 'baptism in the Spirit', far from describing a second, optional blessing, is a figure of speech for the essential, universal Christian experience of being reborn, strengthened, and brought into union with Jesus Christ, all through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

The only scriptural passages which give any credence to the concept of 'baptism in the Spirit' as an experience subsequent to conversion are those in Acts which are so often used in support of this position. But even these are not nearly so simple as they would at first appear.

Acts 2 relates the coming of the Spirit upon the first disciples at Pentecost. But by its very inaugural nature, ushering in the new age of the Spirit, this incident is exceptional. As we have already discussed, Peter's sermon makes it clear that in the normal course of events the Spirit is bestowed at conversion.

Similarly the eighth chapter of Acts describes the coming of the Spirit on the Samaritan believers (the 'Samaritan Pentecost'). Most commentators are of the opinion that this is recorded precisely because it, too, is a special case rather than the 'norm'. The Jews, it will be remembered from the gospels, had no dealings with the Samaritans, regarding them as their racial and religious inferiors. The most likely explanation for the delay between water baptism and the gift of the Spirit through the laying on of hands by Peter and John lies in the need to avoid

schism in the Early Church. The Spirit was granted through the ministry of the apostles in order to demonstrate to the wary Samaritans and the conservative Jews that Christianity was not the exclusive possession of orthodox Judaism. Certainly, it should not be inferred from this passage that the Spirit is only received through the laying on of hands. Other passages make it quite clear that such an act was by no means essential (2:38, 39; 10:44).

The descent of the Spirit on Cornelius and his friends (the 'Gentile Pentecost') is, likewise, a special case. It was traumatic enough for Peter to discover that the Samaritans were included in God's salvation. That it should reach to Gentiles was unthinkable! It had taken a vision (Acts 10:9-16) to convince Peter that he should even visit Cornelius in his home. But before Peter had reached the end of his sermon the impossible happened 'the gift of the Holy Spirit' was 'poured out even on the Gentiles' (Acts 10:45). It can hardly be argued from this passage, in which the Spirit comes even before water baptism, that baptism in the Spirit is necessarily a subsequent blessing!

Acts 19 tells the story of Paul's discovery of a group of 'disciples' at Ephesus who responded negatively to his question 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' The ensuing verses, however, make clear the fact that these 'disciples' were, in fact, followers of John the Baptist's teaching. They were God-fearing men who had responded to the call for repentance, but who knew little, if anything, of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. There is no real sense in which they can be described as 'Christians'. Therefore, Paul baptised them 'in the name of Jesus', laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. This passage, in reality, gives no support to the idea of baptism in the Spirit as a second Christian experience.

From all of this it will be obvious how unwise it is to erect a 'second blessing' theology from difficult

passages which invite a quite different interpretation on careful reading.

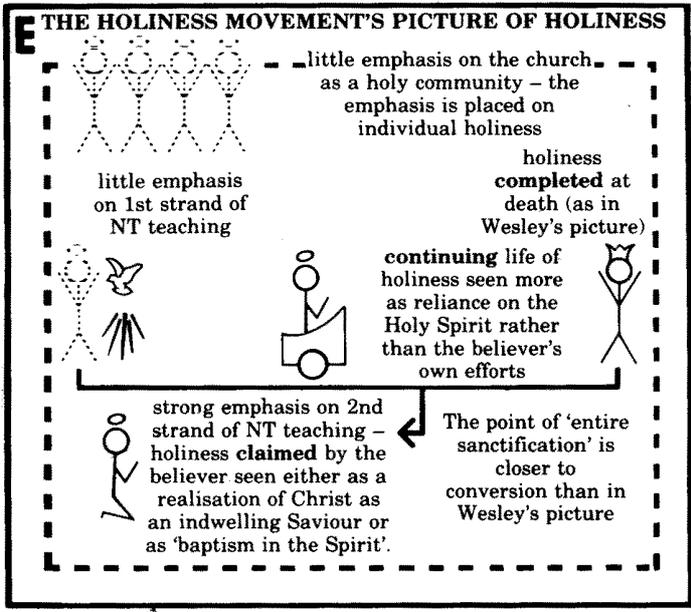
Lest it appear that this diversion from the study of the Holiness Movement to the discussion of a number of New Testament passages has been unduly pedantic, it ought to be pointed out that the tendency to equate holiness with the New Testament narratives of the baptism in the Spirit had three important consequences.

Firstly, it led to a tendency to minimise the importance of conversion and the first strand of New Testament teaching on holiness as a new status conferred on the believer in Christ. In the minds of some, conversion came to be little more than forgiveness of sins, a preparatory experience for the more important second blessing of baptism in the Spirit.

Secondly, and as a consequence, holiness was — and still is today — all too often seen as something extra, something which is outside the grasp and experience of ordinary Christians. As a result Christians either give up their concern for holy living or are led into a feverish pursuit of a new experience. Both of these alternatives are a long way from the New Testament insistence that holiness is ours in Christ, that it has to be claimed and expressed in daily living.

Thirdly, the concentration on the passages in Acts as a foundation for a theology of baptism in the Spirit as a subsequent experience to conversion took many along a new road. For good or ill, that new direction has had a profound and lasting impression on 20th century Christianity. The phenomenon of pentecostalism and the Charismatic Movement must now occupy our attention.

We complete our survey of 19th century holiness teaching by presenting our assessment diagrammatically:



10

Alive in the Spirit!

The pentecostal revival of the twentieth century

Those teachers of the Holiness movement who equated sanctification with the 'baptism in (or 'with' or 'of') the Spirit' raised, albeit unwittingly, a question which their successors set themselves to answer: 'What is the proof of the baptism in the Spirit? How can we be sure that we are sharing the same experience as that which came to the first disciples on the day of Pentecost?' It was the search for answers which launched the Pentecostal Revival of the 20th century.

Some historical landmarks

Bethel Bible College: The birth of modern pentecostalism is briefly but graphically described by Michael Harper in his very readable history and appraisal of the Pentecostal Movement.

In the autumn of 1900 the Bethel Bible College was opened in Topeka, Kansas. The founder and first principal was a Methodist evangelist called Charles Parham . . . As soon as the students assembled they were given the task of discovering what was the biblical evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Charles Parham had to leave for three days to speak at meetings in Kansas City, and when he returned he found the atmosphere in the college electric with excitement. They had all, on examining the New Testament, come to the conclusion that the answer

to the question was 'speaking in tongues as the Spirit gives utterance'.

This was on the morning of the watchnight service, and the same evening the students, together with people from outside, met for this service. In Charles Parham's own words, 'a mighty spiritual power filled the entire school'.

They began to pray that they might be baptised in the Spirit as on the day of Pentecost. As they were praying one of the students Agnes Ozman remembered that on three occasions in the New Testament hands had been laid on those desiring this blessing. So she asked Charles Parham if he would lay hands on her. At first he refused, but then he agreed to do so. As he laid hands upon her head 'a glory fell upon her, a halo seemed to surround her head and face' and she began to speak in tongues. It was 7 pm on December 3 1st, 1900.

(As at the Beginning.)

The Azusa Street Revival: The fire which was kindled at Bethel Bible College was to burst into full flame some years later in an unlikely setting, and that flame was to be fanned by an equally improbable human leader. One of Charles Parham's pupils at another of his colleges in Houston, Texas, was a black preacher named William J. Seymour. One contemporary observer described him as 'dirty and collarless'! Be that as it may, many would consider Seymour to be the founder of pentecostalism.

In 1906 Seymour was invited to Los Angeles to preach in a Negro Holiness Church. The members, however, soon rejected both the visitor and his message. How dare he tell them that they were not truly baptised in the Spirit since they had not received the gift of tongues! The visitor was undeterred and went on holding meetings in the homes of sympathetic seekers. Before long he hired an old Methodist church and disused livery stable at 312 Azusa Street. The Azusa Street Revival lasted for some three years and people came from many parts of the world to receive the baptism in

the Spirit with the accompanying evidence of tongues.

The ripples of what was happening at Azusa Street spread outwards in ever increasing circles. They touched the life of Thomas Ball Barratt who was instrumental in bringing the Pentecostal Revival to Europe. Through the ministry of Barratt they reached the Reverend Alexander Boddy, an Anglican vicar in the north of England. Pentecostalism had gained a foothold on both sides of the Atlantic. In succeeding years it was to become firmly established in every part of the Christian world.

There was, of course, opposition from Christians who had doubts about what was happening. Sometimes these doubts resulted from honest disagreement with some aspects of Pentecostal teaching; sometimes they arose from the sheer prejudice and jealousy which always confronts any new movement of the Holy Spirit; sometimes they were caused by the unwise and immature behaviour of some Pentecostals who 'went over-board' on the more spectacular elements of their experience. The result was that, by and large, those who had received the 'baptism in the Spirit' withdrew from the mainline churches and formed their own congregations. Denominations such as the Assemblies of God and the Elim Churches are the result of the first wave of the 20th century Pentecostal Revival. Consequently, until the end of the 1950s most Christians were able to regard the Pentecostal experience as the somewhat eccentric possession of a relatively small group of churches. Around 1960, however, events began to occur which demanded a total reassessment.

The Charismatic Movement

One of the most significant developments for Christianity during the last three decades has been the spread of the Pentecostal experience and the 'baptism in the Spirit' outside the Pentecostal

denominations into the historic churches. Father Dennis Bennet of the Episcopalian Church in America, Rev Michael Harper of the Anglican Church in England, and Cardinal Suenens of the Roman Catholic Church in Belgium are just a few of the respected churchmen who have become known as champions of this new wave of Pentecostal Revival. This remarkable breakthrough has been variously known as 'The Renewal Movement'—emphasising the fact that it represents a renewal through the power of the Holy Spirit for all Christians, or, more commonly, 'The Charismatic Movement' indicating the place that pentecostalism gives to supernatural spiritual gifts as listed in such scriptural passages as Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, and Ephesians 4:11 -13. (The word 'charismatic' is derived from the Greek *charismata* meaning 'gifts of grace'.) No longer can pentecostalism be ignored as an eccentricity of a few; it represents a powerful and — at its best — enormously beneficial force within the Christian Church as a whole. It is important to understand just how it differs from the Holiness Movement which cradled it in order to appreciate its place in the historical map we are trying to follow.

An assessment

A changed definition. The most obvious difference between pentecostalism and the Holiness Movement is that the definition of the 'baptism in the Spirit' is significantly changed. For holiness teachers such as Samuel Logan Brengle it is an infilling of the love of God which totally redirects a man's thinking and conduct; baptism in the Spirit means purity:

Do you want to know what holiness is? It is pure love. (Brengle's italics.) Do you want to know what the baptism of the Holy Ghost is? It is not a mere sentiment. It is not a happy sensation that passes away in a night. It is a baptism of love that brings every thought into captivity to the Lord Jesus (2

Corinthians 10:5); that casts out all fear (1 John 4:18); that burns up doubt and unbelief as fire burns tow; that makes one 'meek and lowly in heart' (Matthew 11:29); that makes one hate uncleanness, lying and deceit, a flattering tongue and every evil way with a perfect hatred; that makes heaven and hell eternal realities; that makes one patient and gentle with the froward and sinful; that makes one 'pure . . . peaceable.... easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy' (James 3:17); that brings one into perfect and unbroken sympathy with the Lord Jesus Christ in his toil and travail to bring a lost and rebel world back to God.

God did all that for me, bless his holy name!
Oh, how I had longed to be pure! Oh, how I had hungered and thirsted for God the living God! And he gave me the desire of my heart.

(Helps to Holiness.)

Contrast this with the definition given by Harold Horton. If the baptism in the Spirit means purity for Brengle, for Horton it means power:

The evidence of water baptism at Jerusalem, Caesarea, Ephesus, was not faith nor love, but wetness! It is the same today. The evidence of baptism in the Spirit at Jerusalem, Caesarea, Ephesus, was not faith nor love, but tongues! So it is today . . . I want to know what degree of love will warrant a poor sinner saved by grace the claim, that he has received the baptism? What degree of flowing, we might as reasonably ask, would be sufficient indication that water is boiling. Flowing is certainly a proof that water is not stagnant, but only steam is evidence of its boiling. Flowing is a characteristic natural to river water. Steam is not. It is the result of a further and non-natural process. However strongly a river flows, it never boils that way. It might froth with flowing. That looks a bit like boiling, but it is not. Love may look like the baptism, for both those who are baptised and those who are not have love. But love is not the baptism . . . Love is a fruit of the new life we have in Jesus. It is natural to that life. It is an expected result of the life in the tree. If the tree bore diamonds and pearls instead of fruit, that would be the result of some supernatural

endowment that the tree had enjoyed. That is exactly the comparison between love and tongues. Love is a fruit of the Spirit But speaking in tongues is not a natural exercise, but a supernatural exercise. Some mighty supernatural endowment is necessary to cause a natural man to speak perfectly a language he has never learned. That language is the evidence of the baptism.

(Quoted by Walter J. Hollenweger in
The Pentecostals, SCM.)

That one small step taken by pentecostalism seeking indisputable evidence of the baptism in the Spirit, and identifying that evidence as speaking in tongues means a giant leap away from the Holiness Movement. What was previously understood as an infilling of love has become an endowment of power. That changed definition has important consequences and leads to an entirely changed emphasis.

A changed emphasis: In concentrating on the crisis moment, understood as the baptism in the Spirit evidenced by the gift of tongues, the Pentecostal Movement changes the emphasis from ethics to experience. To put it another way, whereas the main thrust of Wesley's teaching and that of the Holiness Movement had been related to divine love overpowering man's sinful nature with a resulting change in conduct, the main thrust of pentecostal teaching centres upon divine power enabling a man to exercise supernatural abilities. The Holiness Movement itself had already gone some way along that road. The young Salvation Army, in particular, exhibited a definite tendency towards pentecostalism. Bramwell Booth made the following entry in his journal dated 16 January 1878 when describing the meeting following the 'half yearly Council of War':

At night Corbridge led a Hallelujah Meeting till 10 o'clock. Then we commenced an All-Night of Prayer. Two hundred and fifty people were present till 1 am; two hundred or so after. A tremendous time. From the very first Jehovah was passing by, searching,

softening, and subduing every heart. The power of the Holy Ghost fell on Robinson and prostrated him. He nearly fainted twice. The brother of Blandys entered into full liberty, and then he shouted, wept, clapped his hands, danced, amid a scene of the most glorious and heavenly enthusiasm. Others meanwhile were lying prostrate on the floor, some of them groaning aloud for perfect deliverance It was a blessed night.

(Quoted by Bramwell Booth himself in *Echoes and Memories*, chapter 7, 'Signs and Wonders'.)

Humphrey Wallis, the biographer of the irrepressible Elijah Cadman, gives a similar picture of the early Salvation Army:

The course of the regular meetings began to be interrupted by Salvationists falling into 'glory fits'. In one of Elijah's meetings at Bradford 'about one hundred people were in "glory fits". Soldiers came up to officers to say, "I don't believe in this" and, while speaking, fell under the strange manifestation of the Divine Presence.' The glory fits were ecstasies during which individuals affected were insensible, usually silent, and remained thus for one or many hours On returning to consciousness no coherent account was given of what had taken place. A few described their withdrawal from material sense as 'bliss', 'great happiness', 'like Paradise', 'walking into Heaven in a rainbow', 'joy the body was unable to bear', and a 'sense of the love and glory of Christ'.

Not only were there prostrations, but numerous cases of physical healing . . . Elijah never laid hands on the sick, though the saintly officer, Colonel Pearson did so. Cures often took place when the meetings were in progress, were often unexpected by the afflicted, and unknown at the time to the Salvationists on the platform and in the congregation.

(The Happy Warrior.)

For the early salvationists, these manifestations were peripheral to their main work of saving sinners and transforming them into saints. As Elijah Cadman himself explained:

These [glory] fits and bodily cures were nothing to do

with any of us. They were manifestations of the power of God. We could not say when, where, or how they would occur, and we certainly did not know how God worked we only saw them as signs of his presence. People were more curious and bothered about them, of course. That's the way of the human mind. But conversion is much more of a miracle.

(The Happy Warrior.)

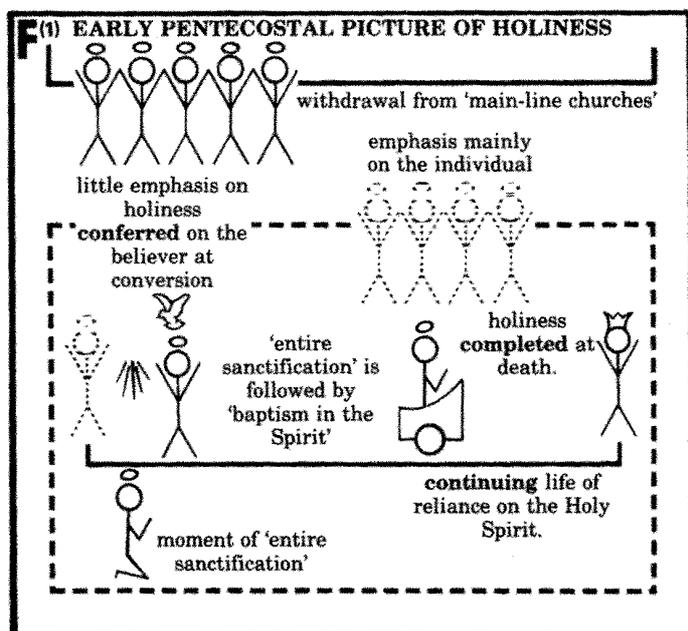
For the Pentecostal Movement, however, such signs and wonders were much more central to their view of the Spirit as the giver of power. It is a simple fact of history that a considerable number of the early pentecostals among them the improbably named Smith Wigglesworth, later to become a world respected figure in the movement were former salvationists who felt that The Salvation Army was wrong to stop short of a full pentecostal expression. Undoubtedly it was the innate pragmatism of William and Bramwell Booth which kept them from such a course. Bramwell summed up their attitude in *Echoes and Memories*:

. . . in some of the Scandinavian countries . . . we have had trouble owing to manifestations called the 'gift of tongues'. We have to be suspicious of any voices or gifts which make men indisposed to bear the cross or to seek the salvation of others; and although some of our own people have received what is spoken of as a gift of tongues, we have always invariably found that one of the consequences has been a disposition to withdraw from hard work for the blessing of others and from fearless testimony to the Saviour.

(Whilst we recognise that Bramwell Booth was expressing a legitimate reaction to some of the excesses of immature Christians who pursue the gift of tongues and other 'spectacular' gifts to the detriment of work and witness, the outstanding missionary endeavours and phenomenal growth of pentecostalism will not allow us to label the entire movement as inward looking or spiritually idle. Honesty compels us to recognise that the inability of the holiness churches to come to terms either

with the original wave of Pentecostal Revival or with the more recent Charismatic Movement is partly due to an understandable but regrettable resentment towards this 'upstart younger brother' daring to tell his elders and betters that there is something lacking in their experience.)

A changed picture: The altered definition of the baptism in the Spirit, with its resulting change of emphasis, meant that the pentecostalists also had a new picture of holiness. Since most of the early adherents of the movement came from the holiness churches they took with them their concept of conversion followed by sanctification to which they added their new experience of the baptism in the Spirit with its accompanying manifestation of tongues. We can see this presented visually in the following diagram.



This was the picture of salvation held by the entire Pentecostal Movement until about 1908. Then an evangelist named W. H. Durham, under the

influence of the Baptists who stood in the Reformation tradition of Calvin and saw sanctification not as a subsequent experience but as a gift conferred by God at conversion, rejected the three-stage plan of salvation:

I began to write against the doctrine that it takes two works of grace to save and cleanse a man. I denied and still deny that God does not deal with the nature of sin at conversion. I deny that a man who is converted or born again is outwardly washed and cleansed but that his heart is left unclean with enmity towards God in it This would not be salvation. Salvation is an inward work. It means a change of heart. It means a change of nature. It means that old things pass away and all things become new.

(Quoted by Walter J. Hollenweger in
The Pentecostals.)

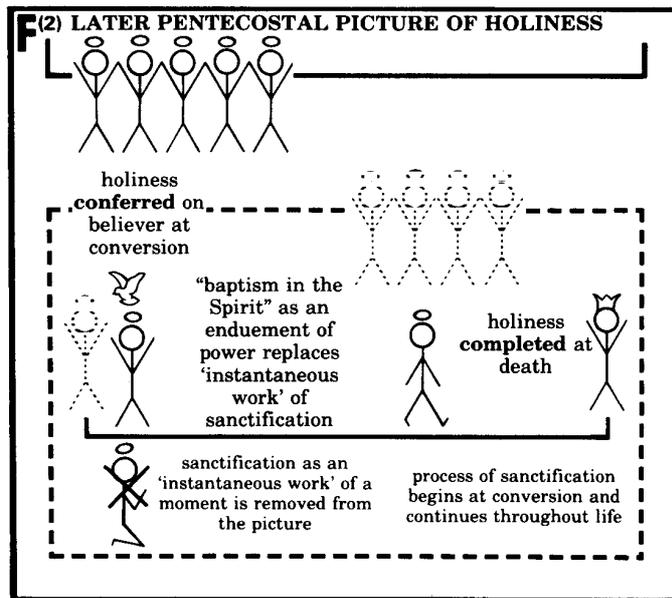
This meant that the picture changed again. Instead of 'conversion, followed by sanctification, followed by the baptism in the Spirit', sanctification as a distinct and separate experience was dropped. Diagram F2 shows the new picture. Not everyone's judgment was carried, however. Thomas Ball Barratt, Norwegian pentecostal pioneer and former methodist minister, spoke for many who wanted to retain the three-stage pattern:

We do not accept the opinion of Durham, that all, in the moment in which they are born again are wholly sanctified... the word of God and experience show us that most people do not find this higher life in regeneration. They must, therefore, undergo an act of purification through which this happens. Many have this before the baptism of the Spirit, others after. But it must come after the baptism of the Spirit, if a person has not received it before, for otherwise he lapses into pride, party spirit, worldliness and sensuality, so that the power of the Spirit, which he has received, is not vindicated in him

(Quoted by Walter J. Hollenweger in
The Pentecostals.)

The majority of pentecostals today follow the

pattern of Durham, although there is still a sizeable minority within the movement who hold to the original three-stage picture for which Barratt pleads.



A balanced view

Having looked, albeit briefly, at the history of pentecostalism, and attempted to assess where it diverges from the Holiness Movement out of which it grew, we must now seek a balanced view of its contribution to our understanding of holiness. Without doubt, there are difficulties which need to be recognised.

The most serious charge which pentecostalism must face is that its entire doctrine in relation to the baptism in the Spirit is built on questionable scriptural foundations. We have already argued in the last chapter that it is unwise to equate a crisis experience following conversion with the accounts of the baptism of the Spirit in Acts. The criticisms

made of the Holiness Movement in this matter apply equally to pentecostalism.

In addition, however, pentecostals have added the teaching that the baptism in the Spirit must always be accompanied by the gift of tongues. Many Christians consider this to be a serious error. Undoubtedly, some passages in Acts do link speaking in tongues with the baptism in the Spirit (eg 2:4; 10:44-48; 19:17). But equally certainly there are other places where there is no mention of tongues in connection with the coming of the Spirit (eg 2:38-41; 8:14-17; 9:17-19). Even on the evidence of Acts itself, therefore, the rigid link between the baptism in the Spirit and speaking in tongues seems unjustified.

The strongest argument against the pentecostal teaching is, however, found in the teaching parts of the New Testament — the letters of Paul, in particular. Paul gives three lists of 'spiritual gifts': Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:8-11; and Ephesians 4:11, 12. Only in the Corinthian list does Paul mention tongues. If this were the one essential gift, surely he would have been at pains to include it on each occasion.

In his words to the Corinthians, Paul is careful to put the gift of tongues in its proper place: 'tongues' (and the accompanying gift of interpretation) come at the end of the list (1 Corinthians 12:10); he asks the rhetorical question, 'Do all speak in tongues?' (1 Corinthians 12:30), and clearly, in the context of his remarks that the Spirit apportions gifts as he sees best for the benefit of the whole Church, he expects the answer to be 'No'; he insists that 'tongues' does have a place in public worship, but goes on to say that it is not so important as prophecy telling forth the word of God in plain language. Clearly Paul does not see this as the gift to be desired above all others! (The distinction made in some pentecostal circles, asserting that there are two distinct gifts of tongues — that given to all when they are baptised in the Spirit and that given to some for

praise and worship primarily, but also for the purpose of sharing a word from God with the Church — would surely be made here by Paul if it had any scriptural basis.)

The verdict that it was unwise to lay down tongues as the essential initial evidence of baptism in the Spirit is overwhelming and is increasingly recognised by pentecostals themselves. Whilst it is true to say that many people have found emotional and spiritual release in the use of tongues, it is also true that, in giving it too great an importance, some have succumbed to pride in their possession of a gift which they have wrongly seen as the barometer of spirituality. Others have fallen into near despair at their failure to exercise the gift which they have been taught is the infallible proof of the baptism in the Spirit.

Secondly, the preoccupation with spiritual gifts such as tongues, healing, the working of miracles, and the manifestation of supernatural knowledge, has led in some areas of the Pentecostal Movement to a neglect of discipline and study. In fairness, it must be added that wise leaders have been aware of this and have warned against it. Donald Gee, for example, an outstanding figure in the Assemblies of God in Great Britain until his death in 1966, counselled those who had been influenced by the Charismatic Movement to avoid the errors of an earlier generation:

Many of you are trained theologians with a good academic background. Do not, now you have tasted spiritual gifts, become fanatical in your repudiation of consecrated scholarship. Let the Spirit of truth set it all on fire and use it for the glory of God. Some of us in our early folly set a premium upon ignorance.

Further, the tendency to exalt the individual's experience of the Holy Spirit and to undervalue the more prosaic, but altogether necessary, 'mechanics' of life in any Christian community has resulted in numerous splits and subdivisions within pente-

costalism. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that the Pentecostal Movement continually struggles to avoid two opposite dangers. Either it suffers recurring fragmentation as individuals or groups separate themselves from the larger group because they believe that it is failing to respond to what they believe the Spirit to be saying to them; or else, in order to counteract this tendency, excessively authoritarian forms of leadership will often occur. The tendency towards 'shepherding' in recent years has caused David Watson, one of the wisest and sanest voices in the Renewal Movement until his untimely death, to sound the alarm bells:

First, serious discipling has all too often become legalistic and authoritarian. Rules and regulations covering a wide range of expected behaviour (not all spelt out in the Bible) have become the norm, often marked by a narrow pietism, an unhealthy separation from the world Second, strong shepherding can develop into a new priesthood. In some cases, every disciple submits virtually every area of his or her life to a shepherd, and every shepherd (with not more than twelve disciples under him) submits his life to another shepherd all in a pyramid structure The new priesthood of such a system is now clear. How can I hear the voice of God? I must listen to my shepherd. How can I know the will of God for my life? I must ask my shepherd. What is the right interpretation of this passage of Scripture? My shepherd will teach me When shepherding assumes detailed control over the lives of others, there will be a serious loss in personal responsibility, maturity, and even significance.

(Discipleship.)

The paradox is that some parts of the House Church Movement, whilst seeking to rid themselves of what they believe to be the Spirit-denying restraints of the traditional churches, have substituted a system of control which is far more rigid than that which they have tried to leave behind. Apart from the fact that too much control lies in the hands of one individual, there is the

regrettable result that genuine personal holiness, arising out of life in Christ, is replaced by submission to human leadership and adherence to a prescribed pattern of behaviour.

However, the observations just made should not blind us to the positive contribution of the Pentecostal Movement. Two points need to be made in relation to our study of Christian holiness.

The first is that pentecostalism, above everything else, reminds us that the Christian life is the result of a supernatural work of the Spirit of God, that holiness is the life of God in the believer rather than human attempts to reach a high standard of ethical conduct. It insists that the Christian Church is not simply a human institution of religiously minded people, but, rather, a new society possessing a different kind of life from any other club or organisation — the Body of Christ on earth whose members manifest God's gifts of grace for the sake of the upbuilding of the Body as a whole.

And then, secondly, the fact that we cannot accept the traditional pentecostal interpretation of the baptism in the Spirit does not necessarily imply a denial of the validity of the moment of spiritual breakthrough which many have experienced. Jesus taught that those who hungered and thirsted after righteousness would be filled. He did not suggest that this was conditional on their theology being correct in every particular! Like the Holiness Movement, pentecostalism has acknowledged the fact that many Christians do not appear to be enjoying all that God has promised; and like the Holiness Movement it has given the opportunity to break through to God's fulness in a moment of crisis. No honest observer could deny that the lives of countless Christians have been immeasurably enriched by such a moment. The danger arises only when the experience of many is hardened into a dogma to be accepted by all. When that happens we have gone further than the New Testament allows.

If John Wesley is correct in his conviction that

love is the heart of holiness, then Michael Harper's verdict on pentecostalism points to the truth that pentecostalism — like every genuine movement of the Holy Spirit — is, at its best, another 'holiness movement':

Perhaps it is true to say that love is one of the main marks of this movement — rather than 'speaking in tongues' which captures most of the publicity. Christians are receiving a deeper love for God and his Son — a richer love for other Christians which is bringing together men and women of very different traditions — and a broader love for all men and desire for their good. If this is so, then it deserves both success and sympathetic interest.

(As at the Beginning.)

PART THREE

Historical Development

Our doctrine, it seems to me, needs to be made alive again in the consciousness and witness of our people. We should make every endeavour to teach the doctrine, to select and train teachers of it, and by every other means to make real and vital to this generation the beliefs so fervently held and taught by our great Founders.

I do not look upon this 'faith once delivered unto the saints' as an interesting collection of truths which we must protect and defend. I think of our faith as knowledge, conviction, challenge, a moral and spiritual dynamic. . . . When an army settles down to an acceptance of a code and is content to stitch its trophies on its banners and to admire its own history, that army is lost.

We who are trustees of a great deposit of victorious faith can keep it alive only by using it. We cannot live upon our history. We must surely reinvest our successes in new sacrifices and fresh battles, flinging ourselves into enterprises of toil and devotion. We shall never match our great captains, but, praise God! we can share their spirit.

(Albert Orsborn)

Our examination of New Testament teaching on holiness, and our review of the Church's understanding of that teaching throughout the centuries, have not been ends in themselves. What we have learned will have worth only insofar as it enables us to experience and communicate the holy life in our

generation. For that reason the final chapter of this book is an attempt to restate the doctrine of holiness. If that restatement — tentative and inadequate though it may be — helps to stimulate the preaching and living of holiness, our purpose will have been realised.

11

Tell it like it is!

A restatement of the doctrine of Christian holiness

Don't be trapped!

It is probably true to say that The Salvation Army has tried as hard as any part of the Christian Church to keep the teaching and experience of holiness to the forefront of its proclamation of the gospel. Our brief statement of faith contains only 11 articles of doctrine, one of which is devoted to sanctification:

We believe that it is the privilege of all believers to be wholly sanctified, and that their whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(Doctrine 10.)

Every Salvation Army officer, on the occasion of his or her commissioning, promises 'faithfully to maintain and proclaim these truths'; every Salvation Army soldier states, in the signing of his or her articles of war, that 'I am thoroughly convinced of the truth of the Army's teaching.'

Every Sunday one meeting is designated a 'holiness' meeting and is given over to the exposition of some aspect of the holy life.

Despite all this, one senses a growing concern that we do not understand or experience the sanctification which our forefathers were so anxious to proclaim to their generation and preserve for their children. One answer to this anxiety—and it is an

important and relevant one is that God gives his righteousness to those who hunger and thirst after it; we need to search our hearts, individually and as a movement, and ask ourselves just how serious we are in our search for spiritual reality. That answer can come only through prayer and openness to the Holy Spirit. It is beyond the scope of this or any other book.

But there is another answer to our dilemma, an answer with which this book may give some assistance: we need to return to those New Testament truths which we tried to set forth in the first section of this book, and we need to restate them and reapply them to our own age. Holiness must be 'made alive again in the consciousness and witness' of all of us. We cannot rely on time honoured formulas, however helpful they might have been to earlier generations. For example, for many years now we have been talking of holiness as 'both a crisis and a process'. Undoubtedly, that succinct statement of truth has been useful in reminding us that we must claim the life God gives us and then allow it to be worked out in ever-increasing spiritual growth. But, could it be that the catchphrase has become a trap, preventing us from thinking through and realising for ourselves the fulness of the teaching and experience of holiness as set out in the New Testament? A careful, considered second look at those aspects of scriptural holiness previously outlined, and an appreciation of their implications for our preaching and living, will bring us face to face with a glorious reality which is too great to be encapsulated in a neat, two-word formula.

Don't fret!

All too often our holiness teaching starts from the wrong place. Let us be clear that holiness does not *begin* at the point of surrender and crisis in the life of the believer. If we begin there, then several dangers will result. Firstly, to begin by calling people to surrender can easily result in an

unbalanced and unhealthy spirituality. Holiness is seen to depend on the seeker's discovery of some unconfessed sin or some unyielded area of life. The result can be a negative, life-destroying guilt complex rather than the positive, liberating power of holiness. Earnest seekers undergo agonies of introspection, digging into their hearts and minds to find the reason for their lack of holiness. The outcome is often despair rather than deliverance.

Secondly, if we are not careful, we can all too quickly be back on the treadmill of justification by works. Surrender is thought to be demonstrated by ever-increasing efforts to 'do more for God', and soon exhaustion and disillusionment take over. The terrible uncertainty of 'Have I done enough or not?' becomes a factor, and joy and spontaneity are lost.

Thirdly, when holiness teaching starts in the wrong place, men and women are set on the quest for some experience which will supply what is missing. Frequently they fall into the trap of envying some other Christian whose life seems much fuller than their own. 'What has happened to them must be right for me,' they reason, forgetting that God deals differently with different personalities. And frequently they are frustrated as they fail to find the 'experience' which will introduce them to the holy life.

All this is not to deny that there is a place for surrender. If I am deliberately disobedient to God, if there are areas of my life over which I selfishly keep a stubborn hold, then, of course, these will bar my entry into the fulness of holiness. But this is not the place to begin. It is too man centred, too self-oriented, too sin-concerned. The place to begin is with Jesus Christ and his perfect adequacy. We need to remind ourselves that holiness is conferred by God through the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ.

In his book *The Transforming Friendship* Leslie Weatherhead relates that he once asked a number of clergymen 'where they would begin with a man

... who really wanted to find the new life about which the New Testament writers knew so much and we so little'. They gave him various answers, none of which seemed to be quite the right starting point. Then he asked a layman:

I can hear his quiet voice now . . . How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.' He said that the new life was a gift from God. You simply had to kneel down and ask for it, and then get up and believe that you had received it, to go out and live it as if you had received it, only to find that it was yours indeed.

(The Transforming Friendship.)

'So,' concludes Weatherhead, 'God gives us a gift for which we need not strive, and about which primarily we need not argue. After all, our attitude to a gift is acceptance.' Holiness begins with the realisation that God has implanted the Spirit of his Son in every Christian. We must look, not to ourselves and our inadequacies, but to him who died to forgive our sins and who lives within us to give us the new life which is holiness. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus Christ who is perfectly holy, dwells in every Christian (Romans 8:9). That means that every Christian has within him the potential for holy living. And that is the place at which the teaching and experience of holiness must begin. Holiness is the freedom to be what, in Christ, we are; not a fretting for something which lies beyond our present reach.

Don't be afraid of the crisis!

Once that has been appreciated, the nature of the crisis can be better understood. The Christian does not need to find something extra; nor does he require another experience or a second instalment of God's power. What he does need to do is to ensure that the power of the Spirit is released in his life. It is probably true to say that, because of an understandable fear of excesses in some areas of the Charismatic Movement, holiness teaching has

tended to become afraid of too great an emphasis on the crisis point in the life of a believer when the Spirit is released. Such a fear is regrettable, for it may cause us to neglect an important element in Christian experience. Many outstanding Christians—Samuel Logan Brengle, Charles Finney, John Wesley, Stanley Jones, Samuel Chadwick, Catherine Booth, to name but a few—as well as countless lesser known individuals, have testified to a crisis moment at which their Christian life was brought on to a new level of power and purpose.

John Larsson has covered this area in his excellent book *Spiritual Breakthrough* and lengthy further coverage here would be superfluous. It will be sufficient for our purposes to record two very different testimonies as illustration of the truth that the nature of the experience will vary from individual to individual. What matters is not the accompanying phenomena of tears, or tongues, or mystic vision, or the complete absence of such things. What matters is that spiritual breakthrough has taken place. Take the experience of D. L. Moody, the great evangelist:

An intense hunger and thirst for spiritual power were aroused in him by two women who used to attend the meetings and sit on the front seat. He could see by the expression on their faces that they were praying. At the close of the services they would say to him:

‘We have been praying for you.’

‘Why don’t you pray for the people?’ Moody would ask.

‘Because you need the power of the Spirit,’ they would say.

I asked them to come and talk with me, and they poured out their hearts in prayer that I might receive the filling of the Holy Spirit. There came a great hunger into my soul . . . Well, one day, in the city of New York — oh what a day! — I cannot describe it, I seldom refer to it; it is almost too sacred an experience to name . . . I can only say that God revealed himself to me and I had such an experience of his love that I had to ask

him to stay his hand. I went to preaching again. The sermons were not different; I did not present any new truths; and yet hundreds were converted. I would not be placed back where I was before that blessed experience if you should give me all the world it would be as the small dust of the balance.

(The Life of Dwight L. Moody, W. R. Moody.)

Contrast this with the moment of breakthrough for Bramwell Booth, second General of The Salvation Army:

Bramwell is seeking for himself. His entrance by faith into the peace of that experience came almost abruptly. One Sunday morning when he was on tour visiting Mission stations, after leading the morning meeting in one town he was walking to another. His thoughts were dwelling on the question of a holy life and his own lack of faith, when he suddenly apprehended with great clarity that this was a matter of the will. He stopped, turned aside to a gate in the lane, and immediately challenged his own heart's will to believe. Vaulting into the field he then prayed, submitting himself wholly to Christ. 'What God requires is not merely the doing of righteousness but the love and choice of it,' he wrote in after years. In that garb the experience of holiness had been presented to his heart and by faith it became his own.

(Bramwell Booth, Catherine Bramwell-Booth.)

For the fiery D. L. Moody, the release of the Spirit was a mighty moment of high mysticism in the middle of busy New York; for Bramwell Booth, shy in temperament and orderly in mind, the moment of breakthrough came in a matter of fact moment in a quiet country field. But each moment is as valid as the other. The first account has CRISIS written over it in large letters, the second is so simple as almost to need a different word. No matter; for Moody and Booth the Spirit had been released. No Christian should seek to emulate the experience of another. But every Christian should so place himself in the will of God, every Christian

should so desire the fulness of the Spirit in his life, every Christian should so claim all that is his 'in Christ', that God the Holy Spirit is allowed to be a living reality in his life. The need to claim all that God has for us is our part; the nature of the crisis can safely be left to him. Every teacher of holiness must provide opportunity for men and women to take that step of faith; every Christian must be sure that the step has been taken.

Don't stop at the crisis!

Sadly, there is a kind of holiness teaching which never gets past the crisis point. There are some who would call on Christians to be continually surrendering, to be moving from one crisis decision to another. Such a concept of the holy life is spiritually and emotionally unhealthy; for holiness is the expression of an intimate relationship with God, and any relationship which lurches from one crisis to another cannot last. Human beings were never designed to live in a continual state of crisis and high drama! If Moody was certain that he would not go back to the days prior to his experience in New York, then equally certainly he could not continually relive the moment itself. Those who have met God on the mountain are always sent back to the valley to get on with the hard work of living out the vision of the divine which is theirs. The crisis, whatever form it takes, must be followed by the continuing life of holiness. Every Salvation Army officer must ask himself if his holiness meetings contain ongoing, practical instruction on holy living. If he never gets any further than inviting people to 'claim the blessing', he must not be surprised if they become crisis oriented and show little sign of progress towards spiritual maturity. Holiness meetings need to be instruction times in true discipleship. David Watson has pointed to the failure of the Church at large to produce disciples:

Christians in the West have largely neglected what it

means to be a disciple of Christ. The vast majority of Western Christians are church members, pew-fillers, hymn singers, sermon-tasters, Bible-readers, even born-again believers or Spirit-filled charismatics, but not true disciples of Jesus. If we were willing to learn the meaning of true discipleship and actually to become disciples, the church in the West would be transformed, and the resultant impact on society would be staggering. This is no idle claim. It happened in the first century.

(Discipleship.)

Such discipleship is nothing other than the holy life in action. What are the distinguishing characteristics of true discipleship?

Death and life

When Jesus made his call to discipleship, he couched it in terms which left his original hearers in no doubt as to the cost:

If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it (Mark 8:34, 35).

The cross may have become a moving, even sentimental image for us. For those first Christians it had a very different emotional impact. When they saw a man carrying his cross they knew it meant only one thing he was under sentence of death, on his way to his own funeral! And Jesus is saying that his disciples must shoulder the cross! He was not suggesting that our personalities must be extinguished; rather he is insisting that the principle of self-centredness must be replaced by Christ-centredness. The big 'I' at the centre of our lives must die. The point of reference for every action must no longer be 'me and my ambition' but 'Jesus Christ and his love'.

Far from resulting in the destruction of human personality, this is the only way in which it can flourish. As Jesus promised, those who 'lose' their lives for his sake will, in fact, 'find' themselves. This

apparent contradiction is made clearer through the insights of the psychologist. In psychological terminology the total personality of an individual, with all its disparate instincts and drives, must be integrated around an 'organised self', a conscious centre with a 'unifying principle', which handles and controls the impulses and desires and directs them towards healthy and constructive ends. It is this 'organised self' which exercises the will and is, therefore, responsible for moral decisions. The truth of the human condition, however, is that man lacks a 'unifying principle', a sense of purpose and strength to integrate and direct the personality. The human experience, all too often, is inner war rather than peace. Paul's writings demonstrate that he knew this truth as well as any modern psychologist:

I do not understand what I do; for I don't do what I would like to do, but instead I do what I hate. Since what I do is what I don't want to do, this shows that I agree that the Law is right. So I am not really the one who does this thing; rather it is the sin that lives in me. I know that good does not live in me that is, in my human nature. For even though the desire to do good is in me, I am not able to do it. I don't do the good I want to do; instead, I do the evil that I do not want to do. If I do what I don't want to do, this means that I am no longer the one who does it; instead, it is the sin that lives in me (Romans 7:15-20, Good News Bible).

The apostle has outlined the profound psychological and spiritual truth that human personality, unaided, is heading for disintegration and destruction rather than integration and wholeness. That is why he reaches the conclusion:

To be controlled by human nature results in death (Romans 8:6, Good News Bible).

As a Christian, however, Paul discovered a new reality, a new 'unifying principle' at the centre of his personality. When he tells the Galatians,

It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me (Galatians 2:20, Good News Bible)

he is testifying, not to the extinction of his personality, but to a personality remade, integrated, empowered by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. His old ambitions, aims, values his former 'organised self' which had been centred around the 'unifying principle' of obedience to an external law had been replaced by the motivating power of the living, loving Spirit of Christ.

That essential change which took place in the life of Paul, and must take place in the life of every Christian, began with a taking up of the cross—a death to the old 'self', the old 'I'. The life of discipleship which ensues also centres around the cross; self is crucified daily as the Christian says 'Yes' to Christ and 'No' to his merely human nature. To resort to the biblical terminology we examined in chapter three, we must 'walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit'.

Discipline and liberty

The new 'unifying principle' of life in the Spirit which is the motivating power of discipleship must be allowed to reach ever deeper into our conscious and unconscious personalities, directing every aspect of our beings to loving service for God and man, freeing us from stifling selfishness. Just as we have grasped the paradox that life comes through death, so we must come to terms with the truth that liberty in the Spirit comes through discipline. John Wesley was ever concerned to remind his people that there are no short cuts in discipleship. He warned them to beware of

expecting the end without the means; the expecting knowledge, for instance, without searching the Scriptures, and consulting the children of God; the expecting spiritual strength, without constant prayer and steady watchfulness; the expecting any blessing without hearing the word of God at every opportunity.

(A Plain Account of Christian Perfection.)

In a recent and timely book, Richard Foster, an

American Quaker, has called on Christians to rediscover the great 'classical Disciplines':

We must not believe that the Disciplines are for spiritual giants and hence beyond our reach, or for contemplatives who devote all their time to prayer and meditation. Far from it. God intends the Disciplines of the spiritual life to be for ordinary human beings The purpose of the Disciplines is liberation from the stifling slavery to self-interest and fear The apostle Paul said, 'he who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption; but he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life' (Galatians 6:8). A farmer is helpless to grow grain; all he can do is to provide the right conditions for the growing of grain. He puts the seed in the ground where the natural forces take over and up comes the grain. That is the way with the Spiritual Discipline they are a way of sowing to the Spirit. The Disciplines are God's way of getting us into the ground; they put us where he can work within us and transform us. By themselves the Spiritual Disciplines can do nothing; they can only get us to the place where something can be done. They are God's means of grace. The inner righteousness that we seek is not something that is poured on our heads. God has ordained the Disciplines of the spiritual life as the means by which we are placed where he can bless us.

(Celebration of Discipline.)

Richard Foster then goes on to commend the various disciplines and to give guidance on how they might be practised. There are what he calls the 'inward disciplines' of meditation, prayer, fasting and study; then follow the 'outward disciplines' which he lists as simplicity of lifestyle, solitude, submission, and service; and finally he deals with the 'corporate disciplines' of confession, worship, guidance, and celebration. Probably many of us find that list of disciplines a strange one apart from prayer and study; but that in itself is an indication of how much we have come to neglect the great disciplines of the Christian life. Richard Foster's

book is worthy of careful study by everyone who is serious about the ongoing holy life. One of the weaknesses of the Holiness Movement and the denominations which have grown from it has been a neglect of the emphasis which Wesley gave to disciplined living. We must not, of course, return to a system of 'justification by works', but we do need to remember that it is wrong to 'expect the end without the means'.

We have space only to point to the need for Christian discipline and pass on. Two observations might be made, however, before we leave the subject.

Firstly, evangelical Christians are often heard to say that it is not enough to recognise Jesus as a great teacher; he is, above all, Saviour and Lord. That is true; but it does not mean that we can neglect his teaching. His contemporaries, even his opponents, all recognised him as an outstanding Rabbi. We need to return to his teaching and consider its implications for our day. Reread every day for a month the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chapters 5, 6 and 7) and try to put into practice its principles. The increase in authentic Christian discipline might well be startling!

Secondly, in recent years many of the great classics of spirituality have been reprinted. They have much to teach us about Christian disciplines. Begin with *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis. Try *The Practice of the Presence of God* by Brother Lawrence. Get hold of William Law's *Christian Perfection* or *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*. Examine the strenuous holy life of Wesley in his *Journal*. Don't forget Samuel Logan Brengle's *Helps to Holiness* The list could go on. It is enough to say that, as members of a shallow-minded generation which demands instant satisfaction in matters spiritual as well as material, we will find our minds and spirits enriched by contact with those who devoted a lifetime to the study and practice of discipleship.

Discovery and love

There is one further aspect of discipleship we must consider if we are to understand the nature of the continuing life of holiness, and it is this: death to self and the discipline of the holy life will lead to a continuing process of discovery in the light of Christ's presence and love. That discovery will sometimes be painful as we realise how far short we are of his perfect holiness. There will be moments when, like Peter, we will cry out, 'Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man.' The miracle is that he never will! Instead, if we are open to his searching and obedient to his revelation of truth at every moment, he will go on transforming our personalities until they perfectly reflect his indwelling presence and love. Mark, in his account of the call of the first apostles, tells us that '. . . he appointed twelve, to be with him. . .' (Mark 3:14). That is still his primary intent in calling us to discipleship. As Leslie Weatherhead so aptly expressed it, the intimacy of disciple and Master is the supreme example of 'transforming friendship':

What we call quiet examination in the presence of Christ — the attempt to see ourselves as he sees us — ends in his showing us ourselves as we really are. He is not so poor a friend that he blazons our failings in letters of fire on the wall when we ask our friends to supper, but if we will go into some place of sanctuary and sit down quietly for a little while with the outer door upon the latch, he will come right through, and undo the inner one for himself and us, and in the intimacy of friendship, in the kindly, inexorable ways of perfect love, he will reveal to us something of our poverty, unworthiness, and shame. But he will do more than this. Our secret citadel is his holy place, and he had always a passion to cleanse his own temple. All evil intentions and thoughts and desires fly from his searching glance as bats fly from a dungeon when it is opened to the blaze of day. And instead of them there shall dwell the sunshine of his

glory, the radiance of his abiding presence, and the strength of his ineffable peace.

(The Transforming Friendship.)

Don't forget the destination!

The story is told—possibly apocryphal! of a certain high-ranking ecclesiastic who lost his ticket while travelling by train. When the ticket-collector arrived in his compartment, he was so embarrassed and troubled that he burst into tears. The sympathetic railway employee immediately sought to reassure him. 'Don't worry sir,' he said. 'I know you're a man of the cloth. I won't put you off.' 'That's not what's worrying me,' replied the distraught clergyman. 'The trouble is that I can't remember for the life of me where I was supposed to be going!'

The 'crisis-process' formula not only encourages us to start in the wrong place; it can also cause us to forget where we are supposed to be going. As we saw in chapter four, the early Christians lived in constant readiness for the coming of Christ. Their present experience of his Spirit indwelling their lives aroused in them a profound hope that the reality of the reign of God which they enjoyed would be recognised by the entire created universe: Christ who had come to them would one day appear in all his glory. That expectation, derived from present experience, became, in turn, the spur to renewed efforts to live out the holy life in the power of the Spirit. For Christ's coming and ultimate victory over evil would bring about the completion of the process of spiritual renewal.

Alas, all too often, confusion has surrounded this area of Christian truth. On the one hand, there have been those who have forgotten the teaching of Jesus that the timing of his coming is known only to the Father; such books as Daniel and Revelation have become a happy hunting-ground for men more concerned to lay down a timetable than to live the holy life. On the other hand, many Christians

have ignored this element of New Testament truth; it seems to them to be a rather embarrassing appendage to the gospel about which the less said the better.

We need to return to New Testament truth. Those who have trusted that Christ, by his death on the cross, has brought forgiveness of sins, and who have experienced that Christ, by his life in theirs, has made holiness a reality, know beyond doubt that Christ, by his coming again, will bring to perfect completion all the purposes of God. If that is not true, then our faith and our holiness are delusions. The details of how and when are beyond our imaginings and can safely be left to the Father. Our part is simply to live with the sense of dignity, destiny and holy daring which arises from such a conviction. Nothing can ever separate the sons and daughters of God from the eternal Love which we enjoy now and before which every knee will ultimately bow. The poetry of William Young Fullerton is better able to express this deepest of all truth than is the logical language of prose:

I cannot tell how silently he suffered,
As with his peace he graced this place of tears,
Or how his heart upon the cross was broken,
The crown of pain to three and thirty years.
But this I know, he heals the brokenhearted
And stays our sin and calms our lurking fear,
And lifts the burden from the heavy laden,
For yet the Saviour of the world is here.

I cannot tell how he will win the nations
How he will claim his earthly heritage,
How satisfy the needs and aspirations
Of East and West, of sinner and of sage.
But this I know, all flesh shall see his glory,
And he shall reap the harvest he has sown
And some glad day his sun shall shine in splendour
When he the Saviour of the world is known.

I cannot tell how all the lands shall worship,
When at his bidding every storm is stilled,

Or who can say how great the jubilation

When all the hearts of men with love are filled.

But this I know, the skies will thrill with rapture,

And myriad, myriad human voices sing,

And earth to Heaven, and Heaven to earth, will
answer:

At last the Saviour of the world is King!

(William Young Fullerton, The Psalms and Hymns
Trust.)

Don't go it alone!

Dr James I. Packer has pointed out that the presence of the desire for holiness in the heart of the individual Christian is an indication of his spiritual health:

God has implanted a passion for holiness deep in every born-again heart. Holiness, which means being near God, like God, given to God, and pleasing God, is something believers want more than anything else in this world It is natural and normal for Christians to want to understand and prove the Spirit's sanctifying power; any believer who was apathetic about seeking sanctity would be very much out of sorts.

(Keep in Step with the Spirit.)

The tragic irony is that sometimes the strength of this desire for holiness in sincere Christians has caused them to deny a fundamental aspect of the holiness they seek; in the quest for sanctity they have withdrawn from their fellow-Christians, failing to appreciate that it is only within the fellowship of other believers that sanctity can be fully realised. Holiness must never become individualistic. For, as the fifth strand of New Testament teaching we identified made clear, it is the holiness of the Christian community which holds out the promise of renewal for the entire creation; and a proper understanding of the nature of sanctification will mean that the individual Christian is committed both to the Church and the world.

Committed to God's people

Revival and renewal always deepen the desire for close communion with God. Those who experience the Spirit's work can easily become impatient with those who seem to be resisting the new work of grace. John Wesley warned the early methodists of the need for tolerance and the dangers of separation:

Beware of schism, of making a rent in the Church of Christ . . . Suffer not one thought of separating from your brethren, whether their opinions disagree with yours or not. Do not dream that any man sins in not believing you, in not taking your word . . . Do not condemn or think hardly of those who cannot see just as you see, or who judge it their duty to contradict you, whether in a great thing or a small . . . Beware of tempting others to separate from you. Give no offence which can possibly be avoided; see that your practice be in all things suitable to your profession, adorning the doctrine of God your Saviour. Be particularly careful in speaking of yourself: you may not, indeed, deny the work of God; but speak of it when you are called thereto, in the most inoffensive manner possible. Avoid all magnificent, pompous words: indeed, you need give it no general name; neither perfection, sanctification, the second blessing . . . Rather speak of the particulars which God has wrought for you.

(A Plain Account of Christian Perfection.)

David Watson has expressed similar sentiments two centuries later in words that are equally forceful:

The only divisions that are in any way justified are when Christians are literally driven out of their churches through active persecution . . . or when the institutional church has apostasised by denying the most fundamental tenets of the Christian faith. All other divisions are wrong and sinful, and they grieve the Holy Spirit of God. We need only to see the urgent apostolic appeals for unity within the New Testament epistles to understand how important this is.

If we really followed the Spirit we would be willing

to go through suffering and crucifixion if need be—no doubt at the hands of religious people—in order to bring life to others. To form another church of like-minded people, thereby impoverishing the lives of our brothers and sisters who are working hard for renewal within their own churches (however slowly and imperfectly), is an easy option and not the way of Christ. Indeed, it is a sad twist that those who genuinely want to 'obey the Spirit' can so easily 'grieve the Spirit' by their actions which are contrary to the word of God.

(You are my God.)

Holiness is an intimate relationship with God the Father; but it is also an intimate relationship with his children. Just as Christ himself 'loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her' (Ephesians 5:25), so must individual Christians give themselves in costly love for the sanctification of their brothers and sisters. In that costly self-giving they will find that their own growth in holiness is strengthened and advanced.

The Church has always realised the power of the individual saintly life to confront the watching world with the love and power of God. But the Church has not always taught so clearly the power of the renewed community of faith. Richard Foster was right to include guidance and confession in his list of corporate disciplines, as well as worship and celebration. For it is only within the fellowship of God's people that the individual Christian can truly and fully experience God's direction and forgiveness; it is only within the fellowship of God's people that he can contribute to the discovery of these in others.

Committed to God's world

The communion of the individual with God, and the corporate life of the people of God, will contrast sharply with the shallow selfishness of the surrounding world. Holiness inevitably carries different standards and values. The 'difference', the 'separation' of the saints, however, does not equal

withdrawal. We are 'set apart' in order to be light and salt to a dark and decaying world. The holiness of the Church must be the present manifestation of God's ultimate purpose to redeem his entire creation. God, the giver of holiness, loved the world so much that he gave his Son to die for the world, and his people must be similarly involved and concerned. Two things must characterise our attitude to the world.

The Church must serve the world

The most obvious and easily understood manifestation of the holy life is humble service. Jesus fed the hungry, healed the sick, befriended sinners, washed men's feet; and he left his disciples in no doubt that their lives should be modelled on his:

whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:43, 45).

True holiness is far more concerned about service than religious ritual and observance. In August 1984 Dr Anthony Campolo spoke to his fellow American Christians with a fiery, prophetic voice. He took them to task over their apparent lack of concern about the famine in Africa:

The response from the church has been non-existent. This is not a hot issue for Christians When you consider that the evangelical community is more concerned about school prayer, you begin to see how confused our values have become. I believe that only when the church of Jesus Christ begins to be concerned about feeding the hungry will God answer our prayers, in school or out.

(Quoted in the April '85 edition of Buzz magazine.)

Strong words! But they demonstrate the same kind of impatience which Jesus felt towards those whose critical comments indicated that they cared more about Sabbath observance than about healing

the sick and lame (Mark 3:1-6). Holiness is the character of God in the life of his people; the supreme attribute of that character is love; and love is always expressed most clearly in humble service. The world will believe in holiness only insofar as it witnesses our loving, practical service in every area of human need.

The Church must speak to the world

The second characteristic of the Church's attitude to the world around is its prophetic role. The Church must speak to the world, bringing God's word to the age in which we live. God's plan of salvation does not merely involve rescuing individuals out of a corrupt world; it also involves the redemption of creation. Christians can neither allow their values to be dictated by a fallen world, nor can they opt out of it. Instead, it is our vocation to confront the world with a vision of a new order of humanity. We must address our age through a radical, alternative life-style and by a clear pronouncement of the Christian position with regard to the great ethical issues of the day.

Much has been written in recent years on various aspects of an authentic Christian life-style. But no one has written more accurately or eloquently on the principles which govern that life-style than the late Bishop John A. T. Robinson. As long ago as October 1959 he delivered a lecture in St Paul's Cathedral, London, which deserves the consideration of every Christian who seriously seeks to understand the relationship between holiness and social concern. A rather lengthy quotation will not be out of place:

There are many other religions which say, 'Do not love the world': there is no other which says at the same time, 'God so loved the world that he gave', and whose central affirmation is of the Word made flesh. And it is this paradox which governs the distinctive style of life of the Christian society in this world,

which we must now go on to try and define

The phrase which perhaps describes it better than any other is one coined by Dr Alec Vidler. He has defined the characteristically Christian way of life as 'holy worldliness'. Let me try to draw out what I take that to mean.

First, the Christian style of life is marked by an extraordinary combination of detachment and concern. The Christian will care less for the world and at the same time care more for it than the man who is not a Christian. He will not lose his heart to it, but he may well lose his life for it. This, paradoxical as it sounds, is not, I believe, difficult to recognise for the authentic Christian attitude when we see it. The trouble is that we so seldom do see it. The Christian community is neither sufficiently detached nor sufficiently concerned. The Church's perennial failing is to be so identified with the world that it cannot speak to it and to be so remote from it that, again, it cannot speak to it. These would appear to be opposite and mercifully incompatible sins; but it is remarkable how easy it is for the Christian society and the Christian individual to commit both of them at once.

Holy worldliness involves constantly walking on a knife-edge: it is only too simple to slide off into becoming too worldly or too other-worldly-and neither is holy, though the latter has often been hailed as sanctity.

(On Being the Church in the World.)

The practical implications of these profound principles are not difficult to see. The Christian will be active in society to bring about a better standard of living for all; but his own life-style will be such that others will realise that he is not motivated by the desire for a bigger car, a better house and all the latest consumer-durables. The Christian will— where he lives in a society with such freedoms — exercise his democratic rights and duties; but he will recognise the truth in the saying that he is 'turning out one lot of sinners, and putting another lot of sinners in' — he will be wise enough not to

equate Christian principles too closely with the policies of any one political group. The Christian will work for justice, the alleviation of human suffering, the elimination of prejudice — be it racial, sexual, religious, or class-based; but he will know that evil arises from the heart of man, and he will seek to change men as well as society. The Christian will work for the Kingdom of God on earth; but he will ever look towards and point others to, 'the city which is to come'. In short, the Christian will be committed to the real world of ordinary people with ordinary problems and needs; but that commitment will be directed towards introducing those ordinary people to an extraordinary reality which begins here and now for the Christian and will be fully consummated only when time is swallowed up in eternity.

When we have resolved the matter of Christian life-style, then we are in a position to understand and exercise our prophetic role in the world. We can recognise the question 'Should the Church be involved in politics?' as a misleading inquiry; we ask instead, 'Should politicians be allowed to make crucial, moral decisions without continual, constructive criticism from concerned, informed Christians?' and we know immediately that the answer must be 'No'. There can be no doubt that matters such as nuclear arms, race relations, genetic engineering, Third World aid, health care, and housing-to mention but a few-are, at root, moral matters. Far from raising merely pragmatic questions about the most efficient way in which to organise society, they are concerned with man's relationships with his fellows and with the world in which God has placed him. That being the case, it is not simply permissible for Christians to speak out. It is their God-appointed duty.

Too often we have tended to do the relatively easy thing and speak out only on matters of sexual morality to the neglect of other important areas. It is right, of course, that we protest against the porn-

merchant who would cheapen human dignity for personal gain. It is right that we resist the attempts of evil men to lower the age of consent or, worse still, to legalise sexual relationships between adults and children. But the gospel calls us to resist evil in all its forms. Men and women are also degraded when governments direct massive sums of money to the arms race at the cost of vital, social programmes, or when political systems decree that society is divided on the grounds of race, or when economic structures enable some to eat well while others starve. It is wrong for individual Christians, or the Church as a whole, to keep quiet on such matters on the basis that they are 'political'. If we are serious in our assertion that Jesus Christ is Lord, then we must proclaim that Lordship in every area of life. Whatever does not accord with his life and teaching, whatever does not accord with his Holy Spirit, must fall under his judgment.

There are undeniable difficulties in exercising a prophetic ministry; it must be admitted that these matters are complex and Christians do not always share a common point of view. To take one obvious example: all Christians agree that nuclear weapons are undesirable-but some would say that in a fallen world we need to live with 'the bomb', that only a balance of terror can ensure that it is never used; others would say that, through painstaking negotiation, we must work for a planned reduction; others still would insist that the very manufacture and possession of these weapons is such an evil that Christians should call for immediate and, if necessary, unilateral disarmament. Honest disagreement does make it difficult for Christians to speak out clearly with one voice. But that is not the whole truth. It is not simply the complexity of the issues that causes us difficulty, but also our neglect of the study of Christian ethics. We have neglected it both as a personal discipline and as matter for preaching.

Perhaps our narrow view of holiness as an initial

crisis and subsequent process in the life of the individual believer has caused us to see sanctification as no more than a call to individuals to be more fully committed to Christ. To read the eighth chapter of Romans, however, is to be confronted with the truth that the perfecting of the sons of God is inextricably bound up with God's ultimate plan of redemption for his total creation. The gospel must be applied not just to sinful individuals, but to a sinful world. We need to know the New Testament better-not, of course, that we will find ready-made answers to complex problems undreamed of by those who wrote the words of Scripture. But we will discover principles and insights which, when we have done the hard work of thinking through their implications, can and must be applied to our world today.

Every Salvation Army officer-everyone with responsibility for preaching the gospel-has a duty to educate those for whom he is responsible in such matters. Whilst, of course, he must never tell them how to exercise their democratic right, he ought to help them to bring all political programmes and all the great issues of the day under the scrutiny of gospel truth. John Stott in his book *I Believe in Preaching* has laid down guidelines for ethical preaching which every teacher of holiness would do well to ponder:

- a It must expound the biblical principles involved.
- b It should summarise the alternative applications which faithful Christians make.
- c It should indicate which position the preacher holds.
- d It should leave the congregation free to make up their own minds.

Such preaching is far from easy. Without it we may still save souls; but we will fail to bring men and women to maturity or to send them out as salt and light to a corrupt and dark world.

And finally...

With regard to this book, our study of holiness is almost at an end. With regard to our lives, we are only at the beginning. If the part of the journey we have shared has helped to clarify your thinking and stimulate your longing for holiness, then the author's intentions have been fully realised. Having examined the scriptural foundations of this doctrine, having traced its historical unfolding in succeeding Christian centuries, having attempted to restate it for ourselves, we are bound to add the comment that, in the end, the matter is simplicity itself. As Samuel Logan Brengle said, "There is no such thing as holiness, apart from "Christ in you".' As C. S. Lewis explained, only in that experience can we realise our true personalities and the purpose of our existence:

To become new men means losing what we now call 'ourselves'. Out of ourselves, into Christ, we must go. His will is to become ours and we are to think his thoughts, to 'have the mind of Christ' as the Bible says. And if Christ is one, and if he is thus to be 'in' us all, shall we not be exactly the same? It certainly sounds like it; but in fact it is not so . . . It is when I turn to Christ, when I give myself up to his Personality, that I first begin to have a real personality of my own . . . There are no real personalities anywhere else. Until you have given yourself up to him you will not have a real self. Sameness is to be found most among the most 'natural' men, not among those who surrender to Christ. How monotonously alike all the great tyrants and dictators have been: how gloriously different are the saints Give up yourself, and you will find your real self. Lose your life and you will save it. Submit to death, death of your ambitions and favourite wishes every day and death of your whole body in the end: submit with every fibre of your being, and you will find eternal life. Keep back nothing. Nothing that you have not given away will ever be really yours. Nothing in you that has not died will ever be raised from the dead. Look for yourself, and you will find in the long run only hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin, and decay. But look for Christ

and you will find him, and with him everything else thrown in.

(Mere Christianity.)

That miracle of the new life — the holy life — has begun in the heart of every Christian; the more fully we understand our destiny and the more eagerly we claim the resources of God's grace, the more it grows towards maturity; and, on that Day when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God, it will reach its perfect expression:

We know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he really is (1 John 3:2, Good News Bible).

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