

WESLEYAN HOLINESS STUDY PROJECT HOLINESS AS PRACTICE

by

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The Church is living in the midst of an age in which holiness is spoken of in a negative sense inasmuch as it encroaches on the rights of individuals. The Church is subtly drawn into an individualistic morality that mirrors the world system substituting true holiness for relative morality causing a cheapening of God's grace. Hence this paper calls for holiness as praxis, which assumes an origin apart from the world system, a nature distinct from the cultures of the world, and a character that is pervasive with the power to draw nations unto the Lord. The Word becomes manifest in the character of the believer and it is this living Word in the believer that is read by men and women drawing them to faith in God. This theme is an essential message throughout the Old and New Testament. In articulating a definition of holiness it is essential to dialogue about the biblical, theological, and historical constructs of holiness. This includes the origin, nature, and character of holiness progressing to the work of Christ on the cross, the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church, along with its missiological imperatives of holiness, and leading to the eschatological hope of the consummation of all things. Historical and theological constructs must be articulated in light of their ultimate purpose in the life of the believer, in the Church as a whole. In examining the origin, nature, and character of holiness it is essential to commence with the *imago dei*. I posit that there are two natures of holiness, divine and human, and both are essential to the holiness journey. This duality is demonstrated throughout Scripture and is the basis for the tensions that existed in the early Church as articulated in Pauline theology. The terminology holiness journey is preferred to articulate the progressive nature of holiness which becomes perfected at Christ's appearance. God's people are to reflect a lifestyle that is distinctively different than that of the world. Although perfection, in the sense of God's perfection, is not obtained until Christ's return there is a level of perfection that is obtainable to those who have been sanctified by the work of Christ on the cross and who are receiving the fullness of God's Spirit for this Church era. The process of this continuing perfection is ignited by one's love for Christ and desire of someday seeing Him face to face. The work of Christ on the cross is critical because God's holiness is revealed and made available to the believer. It is the internal work of Christ in the believer that allows them to become holy. One is able to discern the outward demonstration of this holiness (the outward manifestation of an inward work) through one's lifestyle, demeanor, and character (the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer manifested outwardly as the fruit of the Spirit), which can only be obtained through a true relationship with God. It is a way of life (in a most ontological sense) that the Church has been called to live to bring others into the Light. The Church is called to be the light and salt of the world. There is to be a distinct difference between the two (the Church and the world) which entails the submitting of individual will and rights to the will and work of God. As the Church perfects holiness and comes into the fullness of Christ, the Kingdom of God is advanced. To further explicate this viewpoint it is necessary to revisit key biblical and theological themes surrounding the terms holiness, sanctification, regeneration, perfection, ethical faith, and God's love. Based on a synthesis of the above constructs the definition of holiness must be ontological in nature and practical in application emulating the work of Christ in the believer for the purpose of expanding the Kingdom of God. Hence, holiness is an outward manifestation of the inward work of Christ in the believer for His sovereign purposes.