

A.B. and B.B.

Albert Benjamin Simpson (A.B.) and the Crisis Experience of Sanctification
Criticized by Benjamin Breckenridge Warfield (B.B.)¹
A Representative² Response from Ernie Klassen^{3 4}

The Christian and Missionary Alliance believes in sanctification as both a crisis experience, as well as an ongoing progressive experience in the life of the believer. Our Alliance World Fellowship (AWF) statement of faith affirms

It is the will of God that each believer should be filled with the Holy Spirit and be sanctified wholly,^[22] being separated from sin and the world and fully dedicated to the will of God, thereby receiving power for holy living and effective service.^[23] This is both a crisis and a progressive experience wrought in the life of the believer subsequent to conversion.^[24] ^[22]1 Thessalonians 5:23, ^[23] Acts 1:8, ^[24] Romans 6:1–14 (Alliance Statement of Faith in the USA and AWF, Article 7).

A.B. Simpson believed, experienced and taught that the believer could and should be “wholly sanctified” as a definite post-conversion crisis experience, followed by a new progressive dynamic of growth in holiness and effectiveness in service. Some Alliance thinkers, leaders, pastors and members either have no awareness of or no longer believe, experience or teach these things. Why? Many reasons, but one is hidden doubt or even open misgivings about their truthfulness and biblical veracity. This is significant, with potential serious negative implications which I believe we see on our Alliance landscape both nationally and internationally.

Benjamin Breckenridge Warfield (BB) represents an entire school of thought of those who deny the existence of a crisis experience of sanctification subsequent to conversion. He contends that sanctification begins at regeneration and is terminated in the glorification of the believer. Any idea of a “second work of grace” in the form of a “crisis of sanctification”, especially when to be “wholly sanctified” (I Thess. 5:23, 24) implies any sort of “perfectionism”, is categorically denied. The purpose of this paper is to articulate clearly the criticisms BB Warfield (and his coterie) level against A.B.

¹ Warfield, B. B. *Perfectionism*. Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1967. (First published posthumously in 1931, so Simpson never read). Warfield’s dates are 1851 to 1921, dying two years after Simpson.

² I hope to faithfully reflect the thinking of A.B. Simpson and the early Alliance as I quote from their works in responding to the criticisms of BB Warfield.

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Simpson⁵. Among the many criticisms, I have identified and highlighted three⁶: (1) There is no definite or singular crisis experience of sanctification, (2) there is no second work of grace or “second conversion”, and (3) there is no definite experience of being “wholly sanctified” in this life that A.B. Simpson and his associates within the holiness movement affirm. I then proceed to articulate those arguments and reasons which defend the Alliance position that there is, indeed an experience of sanctification that is both “a crisis and a progressive experience wrought in the life of the believer subsequent to conversion” in this life.

CHAPTER ONE

01. No definitive crisis of sanctification in this life: Warfield is opposed to the concept of “crisis” in this life. He affirms: “Whether spiritual perfection may be attained before then [the resurrection at the second coming] he does not in this [I Thess. 5:23, 24] passage say”⁷. Warfield affirms “the gradual process of sanctification goes on in soul and body – until the crisis comes when the “Spiritus Creator” shall powerfully intervene with the final acts of renewal” (Warfield: 464). (For Warfield, crisis is glorification, not sanctification). Warfield not only questions, but negates the biblical basis for a crisis experience. In Warfield’s mind, entering in this life into a crisis of “entire sanctification” means some form of “sinless perfection⁸” which he finds intolerable. “The immediate attainment of sanctification and perfectionism are convertible terms” (Warfield: 266).

Warfield separates “crisis” from “process” and considers them mutually exclusive. Any crisis involving “entire sanctification” is, in the mind of Warfield, synonymous with perfectionism, and such a class of perfectionism that does not allow for a process of growth and further purification. Finally, Warfield affirms that the effort to emphasize sanctification as a definite crisis subsequent to regeneration “falls gravely short of the teaching of Scripture which connects sanctification with justification as its necessary issue and through it the necessary issue of the indivisible faith that lays hold of the indivisible salvation of the indivisible Christ.

⁵ Warfield, in his book “Perfectionism”, specifically names Simpson but tends to group all holiness “voices” into the same group, alluding to them as “perfectionists”, although he acknowledges varying degrees of “perfectionism” within the variant voices.

⁶ It will quickly become evident to the discerning reader that these three issues boil down to one, a kind of Trinitarian conglomeration: Can and should a believer seek to be wholly sanctified in this life in a singular event following conversion?

⁷ (Warfield: 463). [The method of referencing throughout this document gives the author and the page, for example: (Warfield: 463). If more than one book is authored by the same author, then the year of publication is given to identify which particular work is references, for example: (Simpson 1925: 11). All references to electronic sources provide the link.

⁸ The concept of perfectionism is crucial in reflecting on this matter of “entire sanctification”. For Warfield, any allusion that the “holiness voices” gave to being “wholly sanctified” was tainted with perfectionism. He believed that the entire holiness movement, including A.B. Simpson, were guilty of Pelagian heresy and a serious lack of appreciation for our fallen and corrupt sinful nature. Any allusion to the “eradication” of the sinful nature, or claiming to be able to live with a sinless perfection, was illusory and heretical and wrong. This painting of the entire “holiness movement” with the same brush is unfair. Simpson distances himself from “perfectionism” and affirms with Paul “Not that I have already achieved this, or have already become perfect” (Phil. 3:12-15). Simpson denies sinless perfection, but affirms the perfection of Christ transforming our spiritual dynamic and enabling us to life in the Galatians 2:20 dynamic. See Appendix 2 for a graph that contrasts Wesley and Simpson in concepts of “crisis” and “perfection”.

From even it, however, Mr. Boardman's successors⁹ in the teaching of the Higher Christian Life have fallen away" (Warfield: 235). The crisis happens at conversion, and any attempt to relegate it to some future time "subsequent to conversion" compromises the critical nature of justification and conversion and regeneration.¹⁰

- a. It is important to define what I as the author of this article mean by "crisis". It is captured in the synonyms "defining moment", "turning point", "boundary marker", "threshold", "breaking point", a "distinct event" or "a moment of truth". It is definite, distinct from regeneration, often dramatic, sometimes traumatic. Often life and ministry transforming. (See Appendix #1 for further commentary on what crisis is and is not.)
- b. The origin of the concept of a second work of grace as a crisis of sanctification was developed by both Edwards (second conversion) and Wesley ("Christian perfection"). However, Wesley refers to Zinzendorf as the one who "discovered" the concept of a definite experience of a second work of grace (Ruth: 16).¹¹
- c. A.B. Simpson's experienced sanctification as a personal crisis after reading "Boardman" in his second pastorate, where he discovered that "He who had justified us was waiting to sanctify us, to enter into our spirit and substitute His strength, His holiness, His joy, His love, His faith, His power, for all our worthlessness, helplessness, and nothingness, and make it an actual and living fact"¹² [emphasis mine]. Simpson entered in, albeit imperfectly, and began to experience a new spiritual dynamic. Simpson uses the term "crisis"¹³ as well as a variety of other terms that are synonymous, in his mind, with crisis, such as "across the threshold of his spirit there passed a Being as real as the Christ who came to John on Patmos, and from that moment"¹⁴ [emphasis mine], "shock"¹⁵,

⁹ Boardman wrote a highly popular and influential book entitled "The Higher Christian Life" in 1858 (see bibliography). This book proved to be the gateway enabling Simpson to "enter in" to the Spirit-filled life, and its concepts profoundly affecting Simpson's understanding and subsequent writing regarding sanctification as both crisis and process. Undoubtedly Simpson is included in this reference to the "successors" of Boardman.

¹⁰ Many along very similar veins deny anything unique or distinct about a particular or definitive second work of sanctifying grace in the form of a crisis. People speak of "numerous crises" and belittle or minimize the idea that there is something unique or definitive about the first crisis. I believe that there is something unique and distinct about the first time a believer discovers the fullness of Christ. There will be "crises" in the life of a believer subsequent to the first crisis of sanctification, but now the Spirit-filled believer knows how to re-connect, and has dealt with the major issues of the self-life.

¹¹ See also Horton's article explaining the Pentecostal view on sanctification and attributing its origin to Zinzendorf (Dieter: 108).

¹² Simpson, A.B. "Personal Testimony", "The Alliance Weekly", 45 (Oct. 2, 1915): 11. <https://www.cmalliance.org/resources/archives/alifepdf/AW-1915-10-02.pdf#search=%22A%20personal%20testimony%22> [See also (Draper: 19) for secondary source]. (I prefer to give primary source references here, but am including secondary source since Draper's compendium is so useful and accessible to many).

¹³ Simpson, A.B. "Personal Testimony", "The Alliance Weekly", 45 (Oct. 2, 1915): 11.

¹⁴ Simpson, A.B. "Personal Testimony", "The Alliance Weekly", 45 (Oct. 2, 1915): 11.

¹⁵ Simpson, A.B. "Personal Testimony", "The Alliance Weekly", 45 (Oct. 2, 1915): 11.

“definite”¹⁶ and a sense of “annihilation”¹⁷. This marked a definite “milestone”, a “before and after”, a “gateway” experience in his life. He talks about “henceforth”¹⁸ and wrote about a “once” and a “now”¹⁹ demarcation in his spiritual pilgrimage.

- d. Simpson believed that the real issue impeding the believer from enjoying the fullness of Christ and being “wholly sanctified” was the self-life, which requires a critical “death blow”, which involves a “crisis”. This theme so permeates his writings that footnotes seem redundant, but I will provide one compelling quote “as God shows you your old sinful self and every evil working of your own fallen nature, you are definitely to hand it over to Him, with the full consent of your will, that He shall separate it from you and deliver you wholly from its power”²⁰ [emphasis mine] ²¹. (Crisis implies a ‘critical’ moment when the “I” recognizes that it cannot live the Christian life. The sinful “I” often tries to obey the spiritual demands but in the flesh. In my teaching on the theme, I have made reference to the fact that, in English, the central letter of sin (S-I-N) and the central letter of pride (P-R-I-D-E) are the letter “I”, an orthographic coincidence which points to the central issue of why we sin. This definite act involves a crisis, as the self-life resists.)
- e. In the 1906 Conference for Prayer and Counsel, the Alliance sought to categorize and define their understanding of a second work of grace as “a. A definite second blessing, distinct in nature, though not necessarily far removed in time, from the experience of conversion; b. the baptism of the Holy Ghost as a distinct experience, not merely for power for service, but for personal holiness and victory over the world and sin; c. the indwelling Christ in the heart of the consecrated believer as a distinct experience; d. sanctification by faith as a distinct gift of God’s grace to every open and surrendered soul; and e. growth in grace and the deeper filling of the Holy Spirit as distinct from and the result of the definite experience of sanctification”²² [emphasis mine].
- f. It is evident that Simpson affirms the crisis experience in his teaching. Perhaps one of the clearest proofs is found in his sermon: Baptism of the Spirit, Crisis or Evolution?²³, wherein he argues strenuously and convincingly for a “crisis” experience.

¹⁶ <http://awf.world/consult/conference-for-prayer-and-counsel-1906/>

¹⁷ Simpson, A.B. “Personal Testimony”, “The Alliance Weekly”, 45 (Oct. 2, 1915): 11 [Also see (Draper: 18)].

¹⁸ Simpson, A.B. “Personal Testimony”, “The Alliance Weekly”, 45 (Oct. 2, 1915): 11.

¹⁹ This is especially evident in Simpson’s classic hymn “Himself”: “Once it was the blessing, now it is the Lord; Once it was the feeling, now it is His Word”. This repetition of “once” and “now” indicates a “before and after” and reflects his crisis experience of sanctification.

²⁰ (Simpson 1925: 17).

²¹ The cross deals not only with sins, but sin, and the central issue of the “I” which has been crucified with Christ (Romans 6:6) (Gal. 5:24). Crisis does not necessarily mean external circumstances (although God may use external critical circumstances to bring us to a point of spiritual internal crisis), but more importantly crisis has to do with the condition of the soul, and the awareness of our inadequacy and inability. We become “undone” (Isaiah 6:5) (KJV) or “ruined” (NIV).

²² <http://awf.world/consult/conference-for-prayer-and-counsel-1906/>

²³ A.B. Simpson: Living Truths 5 (Dec. 1905), pp. 705-715) (Draper 112).
<http://www.cmalliance.org/resources/archives/downloads/living-truths/living-truths-1905-12.pdf>

g. Biblical References to “crisis”.

- i. There are numerous analogies in the Old Testament to a crisis experience, such as the experience of the believers leaving Egypt, crossing the Red Sea and yet wandering before entering into the Promised Land in a critical fashion²⁴ and proceeded to exercise spiritual authority as they conquered the land, a picture of the Spirit-filled life, not of heavenly bliss but of warfare but characterized by victory.
- ii. When one links Exodus 29:37 (whatever touched the altar would become holy) with Romans 12:1 (present... living sacrifice, holy...) one gains a fuller appreciation of the connection between entire sanctification (I Thess. 5:23) and the “altar call” to consecrate one’s life fully to God.²⁵ The aorist²⁶ tense form, combined with the definitive nature of the action contemplated (present) suggest a definitive, critical, distinct act of consecration. The critical aspect of the presentation in verse 1 is followed by the progressive aspect of sanctification. This double dimension is reflected in Article 7, involving crisis and process.
- iii. Ephesians 3:14-18. The aorist forms that permeated this prayer (some eight times) accentuate the definitive critical nature of what Paul is contemplating. There is a definitive penetration of the inner man by Christ by His Spirit resulting in a fuller indwelling (κατοικῆσαι [katoikēsai](#)). Numerous scholars, like Moule²⁷ highlight that this indwelling is an intensification of the indwelling of Christ and is both critical and definitive in nature.
- iv. Through Paul’s writings I see this powerful connectedness between the provision of all the spiritual blessings in the heavenly place in Christ (Ephesians 1:3) and the illumination of our minds to understand and appreciate those blessings (Ephesians 1:15-21) and our appropriation of those blessings into our deeper spiritual life both at a critical moment in our lives as believers (Ephesians 3:14-21) (see comments about the “aorists” on previous point) and then continuing to appropriate on an ongoing or continuous process (Ephesians 5:18) [present continuous tense]. Simpson’s exposition of Ephesians is vintage Simpson in explaining this vital link and connectedness between justification and the crisis of sanctification.²⁸

²⁴ Alliance scholars like Pardington particularly enjoyed and employed this analogy (See “The Crisis of the Deeper Life”, page 144).

²⁵ I am indebted to Dieter, referring to Phoebe Palmer, (Dieter: 39) for making this connection. It has given me a new understanding of holiness preaching, the altar call, and the crisis of consecration.

²⁶ The aorist is a tense form that emphasizes a particular point in time, and carries with it the connotation of a decisive or definitive action. Contemporary scholarly debate questions how much weight should be placed on the nuances of the aorist tense form to convey a crisis, and the jury is still out, but historically many commentators (Alliance and non-Alliance) appealed to this argument to substantiate the grounds for a crisis (See, for an example of an Alliance scholar using “aorist” to establish “crisis”, Ramsey’s article: The Receiving of the Holy Spirit and the Baptism in the Holy Spirit – Identical or Different?) in The Alliance Weekly, Feb. 22, 1908). (Ramsey, A. J: 1908) <https://www.cmalliance.org/resources/archives/alifepdf/1908-02-22.pdf#search=%22Ramsey%22AW->

²⁷ (Moule: 97).

²⁸ (See, for example: Simpson 1993 V5: 428).

CONCLUSION: I believe the evidence for a crisis in the sanctification of the believer is compelling, and that Warfield's resistance to the term is unwarranted by the biblical, historical and theological arguments. This should become even clearer when I consider this crisis as part of a "second work of grace", to which I now turn.

CHAPTER TWO

02. Warfield warns against a "second work of grace" or a "second conversion" experience as undermining the integrity and sufficiency of justification. For example, he criticizes Boardman: "This separation of justification and sanctification as two distinct "experiences" resting on two distinct acts of faith is in point of fact Mr. Boardman's primary interest, and constitutes the foundation stone of his system. Grant him the reality of "the second conversion" by which we obtain sanctification, as distinct in principle from the first conversion by which we obtain justification, and he will not boggle over much else. Here lies the heart of his system of teaching and on the validation of this his whole effort is expended".²⁹ Warfield affirms: "We cannot divide Jesus and have Him as our righteousness while not at the same time having Him as our sanctification" (Warfield: 228). Again, referring to Wesley's thought as influencing all of the holiness movement, he proceeds to criticize the fundamental Wesleyan/holiness movement³⁰ premise that "In all of them alike justification and sanctification are divided from one another as two separate gifts of God" (Warfield: 351). "He who teaches that every Christian must experience through a second baptism with the Holy Spirit the eradication of his sinful nature and the attainment of sinlessness³¹, is an anti-Scriptural fanatic and errorist" [sic] (Warfield: 229, quoting Jellinghaus in footnote #39). "This crass separation of sanctification from justification, as if it was merely an additional gift of grace to be sought and attained for itself – instead of, as it is, an inseparable component part of the one salvation that belongs to all believers – lays the foundation, of course, for that circle of ideas which are summed up in the phrase "the Second Blessing". These are far from wholesome" (357, 358).

- a. I find it curious that Warfield, an avowed, convinced and committed Calvinist, should fail to trace this concept of a "second conversion" that Boardman employs, to its

²⁹ (Warfield: 229).

³⁰ It is extremely important to realize that A.B. Simpson distanced himself considerable from classic Wesleyan theology on the issue of "sinless perfection". I refer the reader to Appendix #2 for a comparative study in the contrasts between the two regarding the crisis of sanctification and their views on perfection. Unfortunately Warfield failed to make this distinction. In my considered opinion, many of Warfield's criticisms are justified when contemplating some versions of Wesley's "sinless perfectionism" or the Nazarene's "eradication" view of the crisis experience, but unjustified when contemplating Simpson's views of "wholly sanctified" which did not affirm "perfectionism" but affirmed with Paul "Not that I have already achieved this, or have already become perfect" (Phil. 3:12-15).

³¹ Please review footnote #8; Simpson distanced himself from those "holiness movement voices" that tended to affirm some form of sinless perfectionism. To be "wholly sanctified" is not "sinless perfectionism" in Simpson's mind, but it is in Warfield's mind.

primary source, Jonathan Edwards³², another avowed, convinced and committed Calvinist.^{33 34}

- b. My argument is that even from deeply within Warfield's own camp, one of his coterie, developed the idea of a "second conversion". Edwards saw no contradiction between the doctrine of justification and the need for a second conversion. There was no "undermining" of the Gospel in Edwards's fertile cerebrum by introducing this element, which clearly shows Edwards's belief in the need for a second work of grace, involving a deeper personal encounter with the Holy Spirit.³⁵ Boardman draws upon Edwards, and Simpson draws extensively upon Boardman (See footnote #35 for evidence to substantiate this affirmation).
- c. Simpson responds by affirming that indeed all of God's blessings come to us in Christ and through Christ, made real to us by the power of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps A. J. Gordon best responds to Warfield's argument, affirming that "we have maintained in the previous chapter that the baptism in the Holy Ghost was given once for all on the day of Pentecost, when the Paraclete came in person to make his abode in the church. It does not follow therefore that every believer has received this baptism. God's gift is one thing; our appropriation of that gift is quite another thing"³⁶.

³² Boardman acknowledges his indebtedness to Jonathan Edwards. First, Boardman makes numerous references to a "second conversion" (vii, 47, 53, 57, 66, 67, 71, 87, 113, 122, 128, 205), a term which Edwards was fond of. Boardman specifically refers to "President Edwards" (Boardman: ii, 39, 40). Simpson is indebted to Boardman. Why mention this here? Warfield's criticism is mollified by appreciating Simpson's indebtedness to Boardman and Edwards, in the light of Warfield's association with Edwardsean theology.

³³ The origin of the term "second work" seems to be associated with both John Wesley (A Plain Account of Christian Perfection) (see Bibliography) and Jonathan Edwards (sermon on the need for a second conversion in which he refers to a second work of grace. The sermon is entitled: "The subjects of a First Work of Grace may need a New Conversion") (Stout: et. al.: Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume #22: 181-202). Both an Arminian and a Calvinist referred to a second work of grace, a kind of "second conversion".

³⁴ Was Warfield unwilling or "embarrassed" to associate one of his heroes and a leading American voice of Calvinism with the origins of the holiness movement and its emphasis on a second work, involving the fullness of the Spirit?

³⁵ Edwards (between the ages of 19 and 21) composed 70 resolutions as part of his pursuit of holiness. However, later in his life he confessed to too much youthful hubris and self-reliance in the pursuit of holiness, and confessed that he had not yet grasped the depths of his sinful humanity, and that only through a "second conversion" of discovering the power of the Spirit was he able to overcome his sinful tendencies. It is significant that there is absolutely no reference to the Holy Spirit either directly or indirectly in the 70 resolutions, but there is a lot on emphasis on his own forces, resolve, and human ability (See Resolutions #22, 56 and 64). Here is a paraphrase of Resolution #22: Resolved, to endeavor to obtain for myself as much happiness, in the other world, as I possibly can, with all the power; might, vigor, and vehemence, yea violence, I am capable of, or can bring myself to exert, in any way that can be thought of." (<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-resolutions-of-jonathan-edwards>). Hubris of the youth? I think so; so did Edwards. He admits to it in his "Faithful Narrative" (Claghorn WJE 16: 796). It is this "second conversion" terminology that Boardman, and later Simpson (through Boardman) borrow to develop their understanding of a second work of grace.

³⁶ (Gordon: 67).

- d. One of the basic arguments in favor of a “second work of grace” is the appeal of Paul to present our bodies as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1, 2) and to go through the metamorphosis of progressive sanctification subsequent to this critical “presentation”.
- i. Romans 6:19 and Romans 12:1 Paul’s argument is sequential, then consequential. He builds his case for a definitive presentation of all the parts of the body (Rom. 6:19). In Romans 12 he urges (it is an urgent matter) the believer to present (in a definitive act of consecration) the body and all individual members of that body to God and His service. The phrase “accepted unto God” means that we can and must believe that once the transaction has been realized, God accepts the transaction. The witness of the Spirit will confirm it, but our role is to believe. “We must believe that He receives the consecration we make”³⁷
- e. Simpson’s own experience: In a sermon, Simpson testified: “The writer will be pardoned for recalling a moment in his own experience which tells the whole story, at least of his Christian life. It was the moment after he had yielded himself to Christ and received Him as the all-sufficient of his future life, handing over in one supreme transaction all his sin, self/life, strength, and weakness, all his conflicts, cares temptations, needs to the keeping of the indwelling Christ who henceforth became the Sponsor for all his future. He rose from that prayer with a quiet sense of rest.”³⁸ Simpson’s most recent biographer³⁹ carefully shows this crisis experience was a second work of sanctifying grace in his life.
- f. Another compelling argument in favor of a second work of grace is “corroborating testimonial evidence”, both within Scriptures and down through church history. Although personal subjective testimony does not have the same weight as biblical revelation, it stands to reason that if our understanding of Scripture is solid, it will be verified and corroborated by personal testimony. A Scriptural principle (II Cor. 13:1) suggests that corroborating witnesses go a long way in removing doubt and establishing the credibility and certainty of a truth claim. Several scholars⁴⁰ have investigated the deeper life experiences of several men and women of God and have found compelling corroborating testimony. After an extensive investigation, Edman, in his compelling book “They Found the Secret” (See fn. #40) concludes: “From a multitude of witnesses throughout the centuries I have chosen just a few by way of illustration. The pattern of their experiences is much the same. They had believed on the Savior, yet they were

³⁷ (See also Simpson 1993 V4: 42). As I mentioned on page five, point (g) (ii), “The aorist tense form, combined with the definitive nature of the action contemplated (present) suggest a definitive, critical, distinct act of consecration, a second work of grace. The critical aspect of the presentation in verse 1 is followed by the progressive aspect of sanctification. This double dimension is reflected in Article 7, involving crisis and process.”

³⁸ (A. B. Simpson 1901: 186) (Christian and Missionary Alliance, V. XXVI, #14, April 6, 1901 “Free Grace in Our Sanctification”, p. 186). <https://www.cmalliance.org/resources/archives/alifepdf/AW-1901-04-06.pdf#search=%22Free%20Grace%22>

³⁹ (Jones: 59, 60).

⁴⁰ Three of the best sources dealing specifically with testimonies on the crisis of sanctification include Edman’s They Found the Secret, Gilchrist’s Deeper Experience of Famous Christians, and Choy’s Powerlines. See bibliography for further information. Of course, more information can be found in individual biographies of these and other men and women who walked in holiness and served effectively.

burdened and *bewildered*, *unfaithful* and *unfruitful*, always *yearning* for a better way and *never achieving* by their efforts a better life. Then they came to a *crisis*⁴¹ of utter heart *surrender* to the Savior, a meeting with Him in the innermost depths of their spirit; and they found the Holy Spirit to be an unfailing *fountain of life and refreshment*. Thereafter life was never the same, because in one way or another that had learned what the apostle Paul had testified: “I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and have himself for me”. “*New life had been exchanged for old*”⁴² (Emphasis mine). Space is limited, but by way of illustration I select a biblical (Peter), an extra-biblical Alliance example (Tozer) and finally a non-Alliance (Taylor) example.

- i. **Biblical Example: Peter, the Apostle:** The classic case is Peter, so brazen and self-confident. I see Peter’s “proactive” brazenness in several instances, like taking the initiative to walk on water, or speak boldly that Jesus is indeed the Messiah, and yet at the same time show such unreliability, as when he got his eyes off the Master and onto the wind and waves, and started to sink, [moments after such positive spirituality] (Matthew 14:28-30) or when he tried to dissuade Jesus from going to the cross, and was sternly rebuked [“get behind me Satan”] as reflecting the values and strategies of the world [again, moments after such a positive confession of faith] (Matthew 16:22-23). Although all of the other disciples might deny Christ, he certainly would not (Mat. 26:31-35). And yet, that very same day in the evening Peter denied his Lord three times (Matthew 26:69ff). Peter was radically and powerfully restored through a look (Luke 22:61), prepared through the upper room discourse (John 15 and 16), followed by a very intimate and profoundly personal conversation (John 21:15-19), resulting in Pentecost and the outpouring of the Spirit. What a change! Talk about a crisis experience! Not perfection, (Gal. 2:11) but radical transformation (Peter as protagonist in Acts, and then “strengthening his brethren” through two powerful and profound epistles). Simpson loved to illustrate the crisis of sanctification using the transformed disciples, especially Peter, as illustrations.⁴³
- ii. **Extra-Biblical Alliance Example: A.W. Tozer (recognized prophetic voice within and outside of the Alliance:** “At 17, I met God. A year and a half later, I met Him in a mighty baptism of the Holy Spirit and the fullness of the Spirit and then I began my education”.⁴⁴ Tozer’s life and teaching on the crisis experience is crystal clear. “We receive Him by faith as we receive the Lord in salvation by

⁴¹ The references to the concept of “crisis” and a “second work of grace” by many authors, whether that be in giving testimony to the experience of a deeper work of God, or in teaching and clarifying concepts, is extremely significant. For verification, consider Gordon (Choy: 89), Paxon (Choy: 185) and McQuilkin (Dieter: 171) in how they conceptualize the “second work of grace”. In terms of how men and women give testimony to a second work of grace, consider Taylor (Edman: 23), Brengle (Edman: 29), Carmichael: (Edman: 44, 45), Chambers (Edman: 55) and Halverson (Edman: 80, 81). Corroborating testimony is a powerful evidentiary argument in our judicial system, and begs careful consideration or re-consideration as I weigh the evidence in favor of a second work of grace in a crisis of sanctification.

⁴² (Edman: 14).

⁴³ (Simpson 1890: 39).

⁴⁴ Tozer, A.W. http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?topic_id=56039&forum=35

faith. He comes as a gift of God to us in power. First, He comes in some degree and measure when we are converted, otherwise we couldn't be converted. Without Him we couldn't be born again, because we are born of the Spirit. But I am talking about something different now, an advance over that. I am talking about His coming and possessing the full"⁴⁵.

- iii. **Extra-Biblical Non-Alliance Example⁴⁶: J. Hudson Taylor (founder of China Inland Mission):** Taylor relates how the reality of an "exchanged life" radically transformed his life and ministry. He was sparked to seek this dynamic through the testimony of a colleague (McCarthy)⁴⁷. There preceded a keen sense of sinfulness: "I cannot tell you how I am buffeted sometimes by temptation. I never knew how bad a heart I had"⁴⁸. "When my agony of soul was at its height, a sentence in a letter from dear McCarthy was used to remove the scales... I looked to Jesus and saw... I saw not only that Jesus would never leave me, but that I was a member of His body, of His flesh and of His bones... I was altogether different"⁴⁹. "How, then, shall a Christ bear fruit? By efforts and struggles to obtain that which is freely given; by meditations on watchfulness, on prayer, on action, on temptation, and on dangers? No: there must be a full concentration of the thoughts and affections on Christ; a complete surrender of the whole being to Him; a constant looking to Him for grace"⁵⁰

CONCLUSION: I believe that there is no validity to the argument that Simpson divorces what God has joined together, justification and sanctification, be appealing to a "second work of grace". All that we receive from God comes to us on the grounds of Christ's death and resurrection, and when we are justified and regenerated by pure grace, we are sanctified. But the working out of that reality in the warp and woof of life involves a definitive experience of appropriation followed by an ongoing maturation.

CHAPTER THREE

03. *Entire sanctification is future, not present:* Warfield takes 1 Thess. 5:23, 24⁵¹ and the reference to "entire sanctification" as purely eschatological, and not something that is to be arrived at

⁴⁵ Tozer, A.W. <https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/320983-how-to-be-filled-with-the-holy-spirit> (How to Be Filled with the Holy Spirit).

⁴⁶ I have quoted at length from Alliance sources; here I illustrate from outside the Alliance to show this emphasis was much broader than just the Alliance.

⁴⁷ (Edman: 18).

⁴⁸ (Edman: 18).

⁴⁹ (Edman: 19-21).

⁵⁰ (Edman: 23).

⁵¹ The text reads "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass" (I Thess. 5:23-24) (NASB).

here in this life. Referencing this passage, Warfield distances himself from contemporary theories of “entire sanctification” which suggest a sinless perfectionism: “There is certainly no doctrine of “entire sanctification” that has been invented in these later days [a reference to the ‘holiness movement’] which can compare with Paul’s doctrine in height or length or breadth. His ‘perfectionism’ is assuredly the very apotheosis of perfectionism... [as understood by the ‘holiness movement’]...”⁵². Warfield proceeds to explain that a believer “...certainly and unfailingly shall be perfect” (Warfield: 461). [Emphasis on the future shall is mine]. He casts “entire sanctification” in the future, as part of the glorification of the believer, instead of considering it a present possibility, as A.B. Simpson does. Expounding on I Thess. 5 and the concept of “entire sanctification”, Warfield “presents it as a matter of hope, not yet seen; not as a matter of experience, already enjoyed” (Warfield: 462) [Emphasis mine]. Warfield affirms that Paul considers this entire sanctification to happen “at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” not before (Warfield: 463).

- a. Simpson would respond that to be “entirely sanctified” is possible in this life. Simpson affirms that entire sanctification is “the prepared inheritance of all who will enter in, the great obtainment of faith, not the attainment of works” (Simpson 1925: 11).
- b. “Sanctification is not the work of death” (Simpson 1890: 13). Simpson affirms that entire sanctification “should be entered into intelligently when the mind is clear” (Simpson 1890: 13) meaning in this life, not in death.
- c. Sanctification, entire sanctification, is the separation now from sin and the world, dedication now to God and His purposes, and then now, in this life, entering into the fullness of the life of Christ, so that our entire being (spirit, soul and body) are now His.⁵³
- d. Furthermore, our text speaks of being “preserved blameless” (I Thess. 5:24). Warfield’s eschatological interpretation doesn’t stand up to scrutiny. Subsequent to the crisis of being “entirely sanctified” is the process of being “preserved blameless” unto the coming of the day of Christ. The preservation in that holiness happens in this life until, or up to the coming of Christ, and not, as Warfield contends, at the coming of Christ.⁵⁴ (God preserves us blameless in this life through many vicissitudes) (cf. Jude 24). Simpson affirms that the same God who sanctifies us “wholly” is He who preserves us and protects us from falling⁵⁵. God’s promise and faithfulness is applied to both the promise of entire instantaneous sanctification and progressive preservation in blamelessness.⁵⁶

⁵² (Warfield: 459, 460).

⁵³ (Simpson 1925: 13-23).

⁵⁴ The Alliance affirms that in glorification, the process of sanctification will be culminated. But the emphasis on the text is preserving blameless in this life the “entire sanctification” of the believer initiated with a crisis in this life, resulting in a sanctified person completely or entirely sanctified that God promises to “preserve blameless” up to the second coming. The one who calls us to live a holy life in this life is faithful to effect this sanctification as both a crisis and a process, maintaining a life or holiness or “preserved blameless” up to the coming of Christ, at which time the glorification occurs and sanctification is culminated.

⁵⁵ (Simpson 1925: 96, 97).

⁵⁶ (Simpson 1925: 96, 97).

CONCLUSION: “Entire sanctification” can and should be experienced in this life, followed by an ongoing process of maturation. This is not sinless perfection, but it is a beautiful new dynamic for holy living and effective service. God has called us to enter into this dynamic, and once entered, He called us to persevere in blamelessness. He not only calls us to this dynamic, but promised to make it a reality in our lives, and then empowering us to keep us from falling (Jude 24) until the day of the Lord.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Warfield is opposed to “Perfectionism” and a “Second Work” of Grace involving a Crisis of Sanctification, leading to being “wholly sanctified”. Although there are numerous criticisms against A.B. and his coterie which he enumerates,⁵⁷ I have chosen to focus in on these three, and I trust the reader is convinced that Warfield’s arguments are unwarranted. I believe we in the Alliance⁵⁸ are on solid ground, biblically, theologically, historically, biographically and pastorally as we affirm:

It is the will of God that each believer should be filled with the Holy Spirit and be sanctified wholly,[\(22\)](#) being separated from sin and the world and fully dedicated to the will of God, thereby receiving power for holy living and effective service.[\(23\)](#) This is both a crisis and a progressive experience wrought in the life of the believer subsequent to conversion.[\(24\)](#) [\[22\]](#) *1 Thessalonians 5:23*, [\[23\]](#) *Acts 1:8*, [\[24\]](#) *Romans 6:1–14* (Alliance Statement of Faith in the USA and AWF, Article 7).

⁵⁷ I have selected the three most significant points of criticism that Warfield levels against A. B. Simpson. Seven other significant points of controversy that Warfield levels against Simpson in particular or the holiness movement in general, include: (1) “entire sanctification” involves some degree of “sinless perfectionism” (Warfield: 266); (2) contaminated with Pelagianism (Warfield: 246); (3) reflects quietism and passivity promoting spiritual lethargy (Warfield: 250); (4) crisis and process are mutually exclusive (266); (5) A.B. is illogical and irrational and contradictory (Warfield: 381); (6) not serious enough about the sinfulness of fallen human nature of the believer (Warfield: 396), and finally (7) guilty of spiritual pride and elitism (Warfield: 358). Neither time nor space allow us to respond point by point to each of these charges, but most of these allegations are grounded on a misunderstanding of Simpson’s convictions and a tendency to “paint all holiness voices” with the same brush.

⁵⁸ See Appendix #3 for a brief reflection on why many in the Alliance no longer affirm a “second work of grace” and a crisis involving “entire sanctification”.

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Appendix #1 - The Meaning of "Crisis"

CONCEPT OF CRISIS (DISTINCT EVENT)	
(10 Traits or Characteristics)	
WHAT ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION AS CRISIS IS	WHAT ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION AS CRISIS IS NOT
1. It is captured in the synonyms defining moment, turning point, boundary marker, threshold, breaking point, moment of truth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not eradication, or suppression or annihilation.
2. It is critical in the sense of definite.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Definite and distinct does not mean distant.
3. It is often described as dramatic, but this should not be understood as traumatic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not <i>necessarily</i> associated with a traumatic experience, although often is.
4. Wholly sanctified means that every part of our being is affected, and separated from, dedicated to and filled with.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comprehensive should not be misconstrued to imply sin-less-ness.
5. Crisis and process are meant to complement. Since the crisis is NOT seen as a UTOPIA or ABSOLUTE PERFECTION experience, the progressive element is necessary.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The crisis or distinct nature is not divorced from the progressive, not should terms be utilized which suggest an absolute sinless perfection.
6. It affects both life and service, in that order. Fruitful effective service flows out of a life touched by God.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sometimes the emphasis on the one (life or service) eclipses the other.
7. Like a river glorious is God's perfect peace, Over all victorious, in its bright increase; Perfect, yet it floweth fuller every day, Perfect, yet it groweth deeper all the way (Frances Havergal)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perfect, but not perfectionistic.
8. A new dynamic and connectedness to Jesus in His fullness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The tendency is to focus on externals, or legalities, or experiences, or terminologies.
9. Names and terms vary and tend to focus in on various angles of the diamond.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not necessarily linked with certain phenomenology (i.e., tongues, swooning, etc.)
10. Unique in character from justification, although not necessarily far removed chronologically.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not synonymous with conversion.

Appendix #2

Contrasting Wesley and Simpson

The following comparison contrasts the differences between Wesley and Simpson regarding the crisis experience of sanctification. The source is my paper found in the bibliography.

WESLEY	SIMPSON
Renewal of the image of God	The perfect Christ
Very little "death" language	Emphasis on death to self
Sanctification means liberation from the being of sin	Glorification means liberation from the being of sin
Regeneration means liberation from the power of sin	Sanctification means liberation from the power of sin
Emphasis on self-denial	Emphasis on self-crucifixion
Baptism of Spirit = regeneration	Baptism of Spirit = sanctification
Arminian tendency	Calvinistic tendency
We should pursue perfection	We should pursue Christ
Works prior to entire sanctification	Grace emphasis
Crucifixion of self not emphasized	Crucifixion of self is emphasized
Power for living	Power for living and service
Little emphasis on missions	Dynamic link between sanctification and missionary service
Ambiguity on Wesley's profession	Clarity on Simpson's profession

Appendix #3

Why is a “crisis experience” in crisis in our Alliance Churches?

Why is the doctrine of sanctification as “crisis” not preached or taught with conviction and emphasis in some⁵⁹ Alliance circles today? I have explored websites of Alliance churches that reflect a concept of sanctification that is more “Warfieldian” than Alliance, in that sanctification is only understood as progressive, with no critical element. Tozer once said that it’s not what we believe that counts and makes a difference, but rather what we believe with conviction. There appears to be a waning conviction among Alliance leaders regarding the crisis of grace. Why?

1. Some have not been taught with clarity and conviction in some of our centers of theological formation regarding these things. Some have been brought into the Alliance from outside of the Alliance, and sometimes “fast-tracked” in such a way that our Alliance distinctives are either over-looked or are given “mental assent” to without really “acquiring a solid conviction”.
2. Some haven’t really processed their doubts and questions and misgivings about the “crisis” of sanctification. There are many objections to the doctrine of a second work of grace and a crisis experience. Hopefully this paper’s review of some of Warfield’s criticisms, and our response “representing Simpson et. al.” will dispel some of those misgivings.
3. Some simply have never entered into the crisis experience of the deeper life. It is difficult to pass on with conviction what one has never personally experienced.
4. Some have simply not come to a conviction through personal study on the matter, leading to a deep and renewed experience of the fullness of the life of Jesus in life and ministry.

⁵⁹ Whether the correct word is “some” or “many” is debatable. I chose to err on the conservative side but wonder if the numbers are greater than even many leaders would recognize.