

---

# LECTURE LVI.

## SANCTIFICATION AND GOOD WORKS.

---

### SYLLABUS.

1. State the usages and meanings of original words rendered "sanctify," and the nature and extent of sanctification.

Shorter Cat., Qu. 35. Conf. of Faith, ch. 13, 16. Lexicons. Turretin, Loc. xvii, ch. 1. Hodge, Theol., pt. iii, ch. 18, § 1, 2, 3. Dick, Lect. 74.

2. How is sanctification distinguished from, and how related to justification and regeneration?

Turretin, Qu. 1, § 9 to end. Dick as above. Hill, bk. v, ch. 4, § 2. Knapp, § 116, 126. Ridgley, Qu. 78.

3. Who is the Agent, and what the means of sanctification?

Dick, Lect. 75. Ridgley, Qu. 75.

4. Is sanctification ever perfect in this life? Consider views of Pelagians, Socinians, Wesleyans and recent advocates of "Higher Life."

Turretin as above, Qu. 2. Hodge, Theol. as above, § 7, 8. Dick, Lect. 74. Hill, bk. v, ch. 4, § 3. Ridgley, Qu. 78. Watson's Theo. Inst., ch. 29.

**I**N discussing this subject, we turn again to Scripture to settle the meaning of the word. In the Old Testament we find

1. Sanctify. Def-  
inition of.

the word  $\text{שׁוֹדַף}$  used in the piel and hiphil, to express sanctification. In its lowest sense, it seems to mean simply separation to a particular purpose, and that purpose not sacred, as Jer. xxii : 7. More frequently it is used in the sense of consecrate, or dedicate as priests, utensils, the Sabbath day, where the idea is that of setting apart to a holy use. See Exod. xxviii : 41 ; xxix : 36 ; Deut. v : 12. But in its proper sense, it means to cleanse away ceremonial, and, especially, moral pollution. 2 Sam xi : 4 ; Num. xv : 40. Kindred to this is the sense where God is said to sanctify Himself, or to be sanctified by His people—i. e., declaratively. Ezek. xxxviii : 23.

In the Greek Scriptures  $\delta\gamma\alpha\delta\zeta\omega$  is used clearly in all the above senses, to separate, to consecrate, to purify morally, and to declare God's holiness.

Use of Word in New  
Testament.

There is a use of this verb, of which the clearest instances are seen in the Epistle to the Hebrews, especially ii : 11 ; x : 10, 14 ; xiii : 12, compared with i : 3. Dr. Sampson here renders the word popularly by "redeem." Sin carries two consequences—guilt and pollution—(nearly associated in the mind of a Hebrew). From the former, Christ's blood cleanses, from the latter, His Spirit. When Christ is said to "sanctify" us by His blood, His sacrifice, &c., it is the former element, cleansing away of guilt, which is intended prominently. This is evident from the fact that the verb is used by the Septuagint as the rendering for  $\text{קָדַשׁ}$ , which is strengthened by the fact that the kindred word  $\kappa\alpha\theta\alpha\rho\iota\zeta\omega$  is used for propitiation ; e. g., I Jno. i : 7. See Sampson on Hebrews, i : 3 ; and ii : 11.

Sanctification, in the gospel sense, means then, not only cleansing from guilt, though it presupposes this, nor only consecration, though it includes this, nor only reformation of morals and life,

Sanctification is of  
the Soul. Proofs.

though it produces this ; but, essentially, the moral purification of the soul. This is the great idea to which all the ceremonial sanctity of the typical dispensation pointed ; (see Ps. li : 6, 7 ; xxiv : 4, &c.,) and it is yet more emphatically and prominently expressed in the New Testament word  $\delta\gamma\alpha\delta\zeta\omega$ . In our discussions with Pelagians, we have already shown that their idea is erroneous, viz : that holiness can only be acted by man. We have proved that there must be a previous spring in the principles of the soul, and the dispositions which dictate volitions ; otherwise volitions formally right can have no true holiness. Outward reformation cannot, then, be sanctification ; because the former can only be the consequence thereof ; as is well stated in Turretin, and is clearly implied by Matt. xii : 33, 34, &c. This important practical truth may be farther supported by considering, (b) that holiness in man must be conceived as

the counterpart of sin. (The Pelagian admits this). But sin is both original and actual. Sin of heart is the fountain of the sin of life. Hence, it is fair to infer, as our Saviour does, in fact, in the places cited, that sanctification has its seat in the heart. (c) This appears also by the fact, which none will deny, that infants may be subjects of sanctification. They cannot act a sanctification. (d) Again, the synonymous phrases all speak of "a clean heart," of "circumcising the heart," &c. And last, the Scriptures are emphatic in their assertions. 1 Thess. v : 23 ; Eph. iv : 23, 24 ; Gal. v : 24 ; Titus iii : 5 ; Luke xvii : 21 ; Rom. xiv : 17.

When we inquire after the extent of sanctification, or the parts of the human person affected by it, the Catechism answers, that we are renewed "in the whole man." In 1 Thess. v : 23, the Apostle expresses the same idea of completeness, by employing the three comprehensive terms of the Platonic psychology current in his day, (not meaning to endorse that scheme). Now, when we analyse that element of human character and of human action, in which moral quality resides, we are compelled to say that, strictly speaking, it is only in the state and actings of man's active powers. If there is neither emotional activity nor choice involved in any human act, that act has no moral character. Hence, in strictness of speech, the true seat of sanctification is the will: the human soul in that class of its actings expressed in Scripture by the word heart. But the Apostle is writing popularly, and not scientifically. The emotional and voluntary capacity of the soul is not a different member, or department of it, from the intellectual. It is the one indivisible unit, acting in different modes.

It is the soul which is sanctified, and not a faculty thereof. True, that sanctification is only a moral change of the soul, in its essence ; but in its results, it modifies every acting of the soul, whether through intellect, appetite, or corporeal volition. Every one would consider that he was speaking with sufficient accuracy in using the words "a wicked thought." Now, in the same sense in which a thought can be wicked, in that sense the power of thinking can be sanctified. What is that sense? A thought is wicked, not because the faculty of thinking, or pure intellection, is the seat of moral quality, abstractly considered ; but because the soul that thinks, gives to that thought, by the concurrence of its active or emotional, or voluntary power, a complex character, in which complex there is a wrong moral element. To sanctify the intellect, then, is to sanctify the soul in such a way that in its complex acts, the moral element shall be right instead of wrong. So we speak, with entire propriety, of a "wicked blow." The bones, skin, and muscles, which corporeally inflicted it, are the unreasoning and passive imple-

Sanctification is of the Whole Person. In What Sense of Other Parts than the Heart?

The Soul has no Parts.

ment of the soul that emitted the volition to strike. But our members are sanctified, when the volitions which move them are holy; and when the impressions of sense and appetite, of which they are the inlets, become the occasions of no wrong feelings or volitions.

The sanctification of our bodies consists, therefore, not in the ascetic mortification of our nerves, muscles, glands, &c., but in the employment of the members as the implements of none but holy volitions, and in such management and regulations of the senses, that they shall be the inlets of no objective, or occasional causes of wrong feeling. This will imply, of course, strict temperance, continence, and avoidance of temptation to the sinful awakening of appetite, as well as the preservation of muscular vigour, and healthy activity, by self denial and bodily hardihood. See 1 Cor. ix : 27; 2 Pet. ii : 14; Jas. iii : 2. But the whole theory of asceticism is refuted by the simple fact, that the soul is the seat of holiness; and that the body is only indirectly holy or unholy, as it is the tool of the soul. The whole delusion, so far as it has sought a Scriptural support, rests on the mistake of the meaning of the word "flesh," "*caro*," "*σάρξ*," which the sacred writers use to mean depraved human nature; not the body. What those fleshly members are, which sanctification mortifies, may be seen in Col. iii : 5; Gal. v : 19-21.

Sanctification only matures what regeneration began.

2. Relation of Sanctification to New Birth and Justification. The latter sprouted the seed of grace, the former continues its growth, until there appears first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. The agent and influences are therefore the same.

In the order of production, justification precedes sanctification; for one of the benefits received by the justified believer, in virtue of his acceptance, is sanctifying grace. While the two graces are practically inseparable, still their discrimination is of the highest importance; for it is by confounding the two that Rome has re-introduced her theory of justification, by self-righteousness. Hence, let the student remember, that the results of the two graces are different. Justification removes the guilt of sin, sanctification its pollution. Justification changes only our legal relations, sanctification our actual moral condition. Justification is an act, sanctification is a process; the one is instantaneous and complete in all, the other is imperfect in its degree in all, unequal in different Christians, and is increased throughout life. Justification takes place in God's court, sanctification in the sinner's own breast.

The necessary and uniform connection between the two has been argued substantially in the last lecture on Justification, and to that the student

Sanctification Essential to Salvation.

is referred. But the proposition is of such prime importance, that it will not be amiss, in closing this head, to state the points of our argument in somewhat different order.

(a.) The Covenant of Grace embraces both. Jer. xxxi : 33 ; Rom. viii : 30.

(b.) The sanctity of the divine nature requires it. 1 Pet. i : 15, 16.

(c.) The connection appears inevitable from the offices of Christ ; for He is King, as well as Priest, to all His people. Rom. viii : 29 ; vi : 11 ; Titus ii : 14 ; Rom. viii : 1, 2.

(d.) The office of the Holy Ghost shows this connection ; for His influences are a part of Christ's purchase. But He is the Spirit of Holiness. Rom. viii : 9.

(e.) The sacraments symbolize cleansing from pollution as well as from guilt. Col. ii : 11, 12 ; Titus iii : 5.

(f.) Redemption would be a mockery without sanctification ; for sin itself, and not the external wrath of God, is the cause of misery here, and eternal death hereafter. Hence, to deliver the fallen son of Adam from his guilt, and leave him under the power of corruption, would be no salvation.

Last: The chief ultimate end of redemption, which is God's glory (Rom. xi : 36 ; Is. lxi : 3 ; Eph. i : 6), would be utterly disappointed, were believers not required to depart from all sin. For God's holiness, His consummate attribute, would be tarnished by taking to His favour polluted creatures. This point suggests, also, the second, where God points to His own perfect holiness as the reason for the purification of His people. No argument could be plainer. An unholly creature has no place in the favour and bosom of a holy God. As I have argued in another place, God's holy law is as immutable as His nature ; and no change of relation whatever, can abrogate it as a rule of right action.

To return a moment to the third point, I would add on it a remark which I omitted, in order to avoid interrupting the outline. The selfishness and guilty conscience of man prompt him powerfully to look to the Saviour exclusively as a remedy for guilt, even when awakened by the Spirit. The first and most urgent want of the soul, convicted of its guilt and danger, is impunity. Hence, the undue prevalence, even in preaching, of that view of Christ which holds Him up as expiation only. We have seen that even an Owen could be guilty of what I regard as the dangerous statement, that the true believer, in embracing Christ, first receives Him only in His priestly office ! The faith which does no more than this, is but partial, and can bear but spurious fruits. Is not this the explanation of much of that defective and spurious religion with which the Church is cursed ? The man who is savingly wrought upon by the Holy Ghost, is made to feel that his bondage under corruption is an evil as inexora-

ble and dreadful as the penal curse of the law. He needs and desires Christ in His prophetic and kingly offices, as much as in His priestly. His faith "receives Him as He is offered to us in the gospel;" that is, as a "Saviour of His people from their sins."

The Scriptures attribute sanctification so often to God, as in 1 Thess. v : 23, that it is hardly necessary to set about collecting proofs. The sense in which He is the Author of the grace has been indicated, when we said that sanctification is but the continuance of the process of which regeneration is the initiation. If regeneration is supernatural, and by a mysterious, but real and almighty operation, more than the moral suasion of the truth, then sanctification is the result of the same kind of agency. The proper and immediate Agent is the Holy Ghost, as appears from Ps. li : 11 ; Jno. xvi : 8, 9 ; 2 Thess. ii : 13, &c., &c. This work is also attributed to the Son, in 1 Cor. i : 30, &c.; and this not merely in the sense of the Epistle to the Hebrews, because His righteousness is there mentioned distinctly. Now, Christ is our Sanctifier, because He procures the benefit for us by His justifying righteousness; because He is now the God of Providence, and Dispenser of means to His people; and because, by His perpetual intercession, He procures and dispenses the influences of the Holy Ghost to us, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son. The Father is also spoken of as our Sanctifier ; e. g., Jno xvii : 17, because He stands in the Covenant of Grace as the Representative of the whole Trinity, and is the Deviser of the whole gracious means, and the Sender of the Son and Holy Ghost.

While the agency in sanctification is supernatural, and the inscrutable indwelling and operation of the Holy Ghost are required, not only to initiate, but to continue growth in grace, yet He operates through means usually. And these means may be said comprehensively to be God's truth, His ordinances, and His providence. Such passages as Ps. xix : 1-17, plainly show that not only God's revealed word, but His truth seen through the works of nature, may sanctify the believer. But there is no reason to suppose that these truths of Natural Theology have any sanctifying agency, where they are not confirmed and enlarged by revelation. While truth has no adequate efficiency to sanctify by itself; yet it has a natural adaptation to be the means of sanctification in the hand of the Holy Ghost. For it is religious truth which presents all the objective conditions of holy exercises and acts. That man's active powers may be holily exercised, an object of acting is needed, as well as a power of acting. Thus in natural vision. Now, religious truth presents that whole body of theological facts, of examples, of inducements, of external motives, by which the soul is incited to act. By the ordinances, we mean

3. Agent of Sanctification in one Sense the Father, and the Son, but specially the Spirit.

The Means Three.

God's worship and sacraments ; for the preaching of the word comes more properly under the former head. Worship is a sanctifying means, because the petitions there offered are the appointed medium for receiving grace ; and because all the parts of worship give expression and exercise, and thus growth, to holy principles. The sacraments are means whereby God symbolizes and seals to us the same truths expressed verbally in Revelation. They are, therefore, a kind of acted instead of spoken word, bringing to the soul, in a still more lively manner, those views of truth, which the Holy Ghost makes the occasion, or objective of holy exercises.

Last, God's providences, both prosperous and adverse, are powerful means of sanctification, because they impress religious truth, and force it home, by operating with the word and Holy Ghost, on our natural emotions. See Ps. cxix : 71 ; Heb. xii : 10 ; Rom. ii : 4. But it should be remarked, that two things must concur for the sanctifying effect of Providences—the light of the word on the Providences to interpret them and give them their meaning, and the agency of the Holy Ghost inclining the heart to embrace the truths they serve to impress. Mere suffering has no holiness in it.

Looking back, we now see that there is a sense in which the Revealed Word is the uniform means of sanctification. It gives fulness and authority to Natural Theology. It guides, authorizes, and instructs our worship. It is symbolized in the sacraments. And it shines through the Providences, which do but illustrate it. So that the Word is the means, after all, in all other means, Jno. xvii : 17. Where the Word is not, there is no holiness.

Now, there are two graces, by whose intervention the efficacy of all these means of sanctification is always mediated to the soul. In other words, these two graces are the *media* through which all other means come in efficacious contact with the soul. They may, therefore, be called the mother graces of all the others. They are Repentance and Faith. It is only when an object is apprehended by a full and active belief, that it becomes the occasion of any act of the soul. A hundred illustrations are at hand, which show that this is universally true, and as true in man's carnal, as in his spiritual life. Belief is the instigator of action. But in order that belief may instigate action, the object believed must be so related to the affections of the mind, that there shall be appetency and repulsion. In the case of saving faith, that relation is repentance—i. e., the active affections of the regenerate soul as to holiness and sin, and the means for attaining the one and shunning the other. The student may now understand why God gives these graces such prominence in practical religion. They are the *media* for the exercise of all others. It follows, obviously, that repentance

But the Word is the Means in the other Instruments.

Repentance and Faith Mother-Graces.

and faith must be in perpetual exercise during the whole progress of sanctification.

It has been a question long mooted between Evangelical Christians, and Pelagians, Socinians, Jesuits, and Wesleyans, whether sanctification is ever perfect in this life. The Pelagians and Socinians had an interest to assert that it may be; because such an opinion is necessary to establish their doctrine of justification by works; the Jesuits in order to uphold the possibility of "merits of supererogation;" and the Wesleyans, to sustain their theory of free-will and the type of religion which they foster. As we have, practically, most to do with Wesleyans, on this point, and they reproduce the arguments of the others, let us address ourselves to their views. They assert that it is scriptural to expect some cases of perfect sanctification in this life; because, 1. The means provided by God are confessedly adequate to this complete result, should He please to bless them; and that it seems derogatory to His holy character when He assures us that "this is the will of God, even our sanctification," to suppose He will not hear and answer prayers for a blessing on those means, to any extent to which the faith of His children may urge those prayers. And 2. He has actually commanded us to pray for entire sanctification. Ps. cxix : 5, 6. Surely, He does not cause the seed of Jacob to seek Him in vain? 3. Not only has He thus encouraged, but commanded us to seek perfection. See Matt. v : 48. Unless obedience were possible, the command would be unjust. And 4. Perfect sanctification is nowhere connected with the death of the body by explicit texts. Indeed, the opinion that it must be, savours of Gnosticism, by representing that the seat of ungodliness is in the corporeal part, whereas, we know that the body is but the passive tool of the responsible spirit. As to the involuntary imperfections which every man, not insensibly vain, must acknowledge, they are not properly sin; for God does not hold man guilty for those infirmities which are the inevitable results of his feeble and limited nature. Here, the Wesleyan very manifestly implies a resort to the two Pelagian principles; that man is not responsible for his volitions unless they are free not only from co-action, but from certainty; and that moral quality resides only in acts of choice; so that a volition which is prevalently good is wholly good. Hence, those imperfections in saints, into which they fall through mere inattention, or sudden gust of temptation, contrary to their sincere bent and preference, incur no guilt whatever. Last: They claim actual cases in Scripture, as of Noah, Gen. vi : 9; Ps. cxix : 1; Job i : 1 and 8; David, Ps. xxxvii : 37; Zechariah; Luke i : 6; 1 Jno. iii : 9.

We reply : Perfection is only predicated of these saints, to

No Bible Saint Perfect. show that they had Christian sincerity ; that they had all the graces essential to the Christian character in actual exercise. As if to refute the idea of their sinless perfection, Scripture in every case records of them some fault, drunkenness of Noah, lying of Abraham, adultery and murder of David, unbelief of Zechariah, Luke i : 20, while Job concludes by saying, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

The most objectionable trait about this theory of perfect sanctification, is its affinities to Jesuitism and Pelagian Features. Pelagianism. These are several ways manifest. We saw that the old Pelagians, admitting that a complete obedience is requisite for a justification by works, claimed that the obedience which is formally in strict accordance with the statute, and prevalently right in purpose, is perfectly right. We saw, also, how they defended this view in consistency with their false ethicks. For they place the moral quality of acts in the volition, denying any certain efficiency to subjective (as to objective) motive. Now, volition is, of course, an entire and single act. The motives of a single volition may be complex ; but the volition has a perfect unicity. Hence, if the morality of the act is wholly in the volition, and not in those complex motives, if the purpose is right, it is wholly right. But say, with us, that the volition derives its moral quality from the subjective motives, (which is the doctrine of common sense and the Bible,) and it follows that a volition may have a complex moral character ; it may be prevalently right, and yet not perfectly right. Now, while volition is single, motive is complex. I showed you, that the least complex motive must involve a judgment and an appetency, and that no objective theory is ever inducement to volition, until it stands, in the soul's view, in the category of the true and the good, (the natural good, at least). In the sense of this discussion, we should include in the "subjective motive" of a given volition, all the precedaneous states of judgment and appetency in the soul, which have causative influence in the rise of that volition. Then, many elements may enter into the subjective motive of a single volition ; elements intellective, and elements conative. Every one of these elements which has a moral quality, i. e. which arises under the regulative power of subjective, moral disposition, may contribute of its moral character to the resultant volition. Now, then, it is the plainest thing in the world, that these elements may be, some unholy, and some holy. Hence, the volition, while possessed of an absolute singleness as a psychological function, may have mixed moral character,—because, simply, it has morally mixed subjective springs in the agent's soul. This solution is simple ; and in several problems it is vital. Let it explain itself in an instance. A good Christian man is met in public by a destitute person, who asks alms. With deliberate

consideration the relief is bestowed. The things which were present in the Christian's consciousness were these: The rush of instinctive or animal sympathy (morally negative while merely animal): A rational movement of ἀγάπη, or love (morally good): Recollection of, and desire for Christ's glory as displayed in the succour of His creature, (morally good): The thought of, and pleasure in, his own applause as a philanthropist (morally negative at least, and if inordinate, criminal): Selfish appetency to retain the money needed by the destitute person, for his own gratification, (morally evil). And last, a judgment of conscience. Now, the nature of that Christian's process of soul, during the instant he stood deliberating, was an adjusting of these concurring and competing elements of motive. The result was, that the better ones preponderated over the selfish reluctance, and the alms were given voluntarily and deliberately. Let us credit the Christian with giving the preponderant weight to Christian love, zeal for Christ's honour, and the conscientious judgment of obligation. Then these elements of motive have constituted the concrete act a prevalently godly one. But there ought to have been no selfish reluctance! Then the very fact, that this evil element was there and was felt, and even needed suppressing, was an element of moral defect. There again, was the personal craving for applause, which was enough felt, to cause at least a partial disregard of our Saviour's rule, Matt. vi : 3, at the time of giving the alms, or afterward. Then, this also detracts from the perfectness of the action. Yet it was a prevalently godly action. So, an act may be socially virtuous, while prevalently ungodly; or an act may be wholly godless and vicious. Only those, in whom concupiscence has been finally extinguished, perform perfectly godly acts. Such, we repeat, is the analysis of common-sense, and of the Bible. But the Wesleyan, acknowledging remainders of concupiscence in his "complete" saint, and yet asserting that his prevalently godly acts are perfect acts, has unconsciously adopted the false Pelagian philosophy, in two points: that "concupiscence is not itself sinful;" and that the "moral quality resides exclusively in the act of soul." Again: when the Wesleyan says that an act, to which the good man is hurried by a gust of temptation so sudden and violent as to prevent deliberation; an act which is against his prevalent bent and purpose, and which is at once deplored, is an infirmity, but not a sin; he is pelagianizing. He has virtually made the distinction between mortal and venial sins, which Rome borrows from Pelagius, and he is founding on that heretic's false dogmas, that responsibility ends when the will is no longer in *equilibrio*. (In this case it is the sudden gust of temptation which suspends the equilibrium).

There is also a dangerous affinity between these principles, and those horrible deductions from Pelagianism, made by the Jesuits, under the name of the art of "directing the attention,"

and venial sins. The origin is in the same speculations of those early heretics. The student may see an account and refutation in the unrivalled "Provincial Letters" of Blaise Pascal. The general doctrine is: that if, in perpetrating a crime, the direction of the intention is to a right end, this makes the act right, because the act which is prevalently right is wholly right. The abominations to which this Pelagian dogma led, in Jesuits' hands, were such, that they contributed to their suppression. It is not charged that Wesleyans countenance any of these immoral and loathsome conclusions: but their premises are dangerous, as appears from these results.

To proceed: it is true that the Bible does not say, in so many words, that the soul's connection with the present body is what makes sanctification necessarily incomplete. But it asserts the equivalent truth; as when it teaches us, that at death the saints are made perfect in holiness. It is no Gnosticism, but Scripture and common sense, to attribute some obstacles to entire sanctification to the continuance of the animal appetites in man. While God's omnipotence could overcome those obstacles, yet it is according to His manner of working, that He has seen fit to connect the final completeness of His work of grace in the soul, with this last change. Hence, when the Scriptures show that this is His plan, we are prepared to believe it so.

God commands us, says the Wesleyan, to "be perfect, even as our Father in heaven is perfect," whence its possibility must follow. I reply. True; God cannot require of us a physical impossibility. But our inability to keep God's whole law perfectly is not physical. It began in man's sin. By that sin we lost none of those faculties which, when Adam's will was right, enabled him to keep God's command without sin. Our impotency is an "inability of will." Hence, it ought not to alter the demands of God's justice on His creatures. It is right in God to require perfection of us, and instruct us to seek it, because His own perfect nature can accept no less. Did God allow an inability of will to reduce His just claims on the creature, then the more sinful he became, the less guilt would attach to his shortcomings. A creature need only render himself utterly depraved to become completely irresponsible!

But we argue, affirmatively, that sanctification is never complete in this life. (a.) Because the Scripture says expressly that remains of sin exist in all living men. See, for instance, I Jno. i: 8; Jas. iii: 2; I Kings viii: 46; Prov. xx: 9. How can such assertions be evaded?

(b.) I argue it, also, from the perpetual warfare which the Scriptures say is going on between the flesh and the Spirit. See Rom. vii: 10, to end; Gal. v: 17, etc. This warfare, says

Refutation.

Command Not the Measure of Ability.

None Sinless. Proofs.

the Bible, constitutes the Christian life. And it is of no avail for the Wesleyan to attempt evading this picture of Rom. vii: as the language of Paul convicted but not yet converted; for other similar passages remain, as Rom. viii: 7; Gal. v: 17; Phil. iii: 13: 1 Tim. vi: 12, etc., etc. Now, as long as the contest lasts, there must be an enemy. (c). The impossibility of a perfect obedience by ransomed men is clearly asserted in Scripture. Ps. cxix: 96; Acts xv: 10. It is true, that in the latter place the ceremonial law is more immediately in Peter's view; but the whole law is included, as is obvious from his scope; and if either could be perfectly kept, surely the ceremonial would be the easier. Last: The Lord's Prayer teaches all Christians to pray for the pardon of sin; a command which would not be universally appropriate if this doctrine were true. And if human experience can settle such a point, it is wholly on our side; for those who are obviously most advanced in sanctification, both among inspired and uninspired saints, are most emphatic in their confessions of shortcoming; while those who arrogantly claim perfect sanctification, usually discredit their pretensions sooner or later, by shameful falls. It is well that the Arminians have coupled the doctrine of falling from grace with this. Otherwise their own professors of complete sanctification would have refuted it with a regularity that would have been almost a fatality.

Now, the Almighty Spirit could subdue all sin, in a living saint, if He chose. Bible truths certainly present sufficient inducements to act as the angels, were our wills completely rectified. Why God does not choose, in any case, to work this complete result in this life, we cannot tell. "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight."

The Wesleyans are accustomed to claim a more stimulating influence toward the pursuit of holiness, for their doctrine, and to reproach ours with paralyzing results. They say, that with a rational agent, hope is a necessary element in the incentives to exertion; and that it is unnatural and impossible a man should attempt, in good earnest, what he thinks impossible to be achieved. But tell him that success, though arduous, is possible, and he will strain every nerve, and at least make great progress. They say that Calvinists practically teach their converts not to aim high, and to make up their minds to low attainments in holiness. And hence the feeble and crippled character of the most of the religion exhibited in their churches. We reply, that this calculation misrepresents the facts, and leaves out one of the most important of them. We do not forbid hope. We teach our people to hope for constant advances in holiness, by which they approach perfection continually, without actually reaching it in this life. The essential fact left out of the estimate is the invincible opposition of the new nature to all sin. The man

Tendencies of Two  
Theories Compared.

renewed by God is incapable of contenting himself with any degree of sin. Here is the safeguard against the cessation of the struggle under the discouraging belief that victory is only after death. If the indwelling enemy is thus as long-lived as the body, and immortal as long as the body lives, yet truce is impossible because the hostility of the new-born soul to it is unquenchable. Does it follow from this view, that the life must be a life-long battle? I reply, even so; this is just what the Bible represents it to be.

We can retort on the Wesleyan, a juster objection to the working of his theory. By giving a false definition of what perfection is, it incurs a much greater risk of inciting false pride, and dragging the conscience into a tolerance of what it calls guiltless, or venial infirmities. The Bible-Christian, the more he is conformed to God, advances just so much the more in tenderness and perspicacity of conscience. Sin grows more odious, just as holiness grows more attractive. Thus, when there is, in God's view, less indwelling sin to extirpate in the heart, it is nerved by its contrition to a more determined war against what remains. Thus an ever progressive sanctification is provided for, conformably to the rational and free nature of man. But our question is: If the Christian be taught that what remains of indwelling sin, after a distinctive and decisive reign of grace begins in the soul, "is infirmity but not sin," do we not run a terrible risque of encouraging him to rest on the laurels of past attainments; do we not drug his conscience, and do we not thus prepare the way for just those backslidings, by which these high pretenders have so frequently signalized their scheme? Wesleyans sometimes say, that their doctrine of perfect sanctification, as defined by them, amounts to precisely the same with our statement concerning those better Christians, who, with Caleb and Joshua, (Numb. xiv: 24), "followed the Lord fully," and who enjoy an assurance of their own grace and salvation. Our objection is, that a dangerous and deluding statement is thus made of a scriptural truth. All Christians should be urged to these higher spiritual attainments; but they should not be taught to call that "perfection," which is not really perfect, nor to depreciate their remaining sins into mere "infirmities."

A form of virtual perfectionism has become current recently, among Christians whose antecedents were not Arminian, but Reformed. They call themselves advocates of the "Higher Christian Life." This stage, they say, is reached by those who were before Christians, by a species of second conversion. The person gains his own full consent to undertake, in reliance on Christ, a life entirely above sin; a life which shall tolerate no form or grade of shortcoming. As soon as this full resolve is entertained, and is pleaded before God with an entire faith, the believer receives the corresponding grace and strength,

in accordance with the promise; "Ask and ye shall receive." This attainment is often accompanied with a new "baptism of the Spirit," bestowing this full victory over sin, with a perfect assurance of acceptance; which baptism is immediately and infallibly recognized by the recipient, and in some cases, is even perceptible to bystanders, by infallible signs. Thenceforward, the recipient "walks in the light," enjoys perfect peace, and lives above all sin. It is pleaded by the advocates of this claim; that there is no limit to the gospel promises, nor to the merits of Christ, nor to the paternal grace of God; that the only reason we do not get fuller grace is, that we do not believingly ask it: and that no scriptural limit may be put upon this last proposition, this side of a perfect victory over sin. If, say they, men had a perfect faith to ask, they would receive of Christ's fulness a perfect answer. They quote such promises as these; "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it," Ps. lxxxix: 10. "Ask and ye shall receive," Matt. vii: 8. "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." 1 Thess. iv: 3.

That the promises of God in Christ hold out indefinite encouragement to believers, is a precious truth. That it is the duty of all to press forward to the mark, is indisputable. But when men say, that a perfect faith would receive a perfect answer, they are but uttering a valueless truism. The man who had a perfect faith would be a perfect man. He would need no more sanctification. Unfortunately for this theory, the indwelling sin which creates the need for farther sanctification, inevitably involves some imperfection and weakness of the faith. We shall always have to raise the disciples' cry; "Lord increase our faith," as long as we cry for increase of grace. So, if a believer's heart were finally, immutably, and perfectly united, through every moment, in the resolve to live, by Christ's strength, absolutely above sin, he would doubtless meet with no rebuff in any petition for strength, at Christ's throne of grace. But in order to have such a state of purpose, there must be no indwelling sin in that heart. This scheme, stripped of its robes, comes therefore to this truism: "Were a man absolutely perfect, he would be absolutely perfect?" The picture of the Christian's militant life, which we ever see portrayed in Scripture, is that of an imperfect, but progressive, faith uniting him to his Saviour, always finding Him faithful to His promises, and always deriving from Him measures of grace corresponding to the vigour of its exercise, yet always leaving room for farther advances. There is an exceedingly broad and conclusive argument against all forms of perfectionism in this fact: That the provisions of grace described in the Bible are all provisions for imperfect and sinning men. The gospel is a religion for sinners, not for glorified saints. This is the only conception of it which appears in any part of scripture.

Only a little experience and scriptural knowledge are nec-

essary, to make us view the claims of the spiritual baptism advanced above, with suspicion. The immediate visitation of the Holy Ghost should attest itself by miraculous "signs," by "tongues," or "gifts of healings;" as it did in apostolic days. If these be lacking, we have no other test of its presence, than the fruits of holy living; and for these we should wait. The Christian who, instead of waiting for this attestation, presumes on an intuitive and infallible consciousness of the endowment, can never scripturally know but that the impulse he mistakes for the Spirit's baptism is natural fanaticism, or the temptation of him, who is able to transform himself into an angel of light.

---