

# A Defense of Christian Perfection

by

Daniel Steele

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# A Defense of Christian Perfection

OR

A Criticism of Dr. James Mudge's  
"Growth in Holiness Toward Perfection"

BY

DANIEL STEELE, D.D.

AUTHOR OF "LOVE ENTHRONED;" "MILESTONE PAPERS;" "HALF HOURS  
WITH ST. PAUL;" COMMENTARIES ON LEVITICUS, NUMBERS, AND  
JOSHUA; "BINNEY'S THEOLOGICAL COMPEND IMPROVED;"  
AND "ANTINOMIANISM REVIVED; OR THE THEOLOGY  
OF THE SO-CALLED PLYMOUTH BRETHREN  
EXAMINED AND REFUTED"

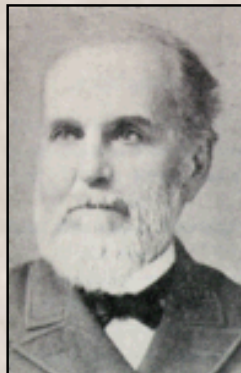
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**"A man that is not a thorough friend to Christian perfection will easily puzzle others, and thereby weaken, if not destroy, any select society."**  
-- John Wesley's last recorded utterance on Christian perfection, made in the year of his death, 1791.

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## PREFACE.

THE book entitled *Growth in Holiness Toward Perfection* was written by my friend and brother in the Christian ministry, James Mudge, D.D., for several years past the Secretary of the New England Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. He is held in the highest esteem as a very devout and earnest Methodist, in the strict sense, "one who observes method" in his Christian life and work. That he has written this book with the pure desire to elucidate and harmonize our doctrines with themselves, with reason, and with the Scriptures, no one is acquainted with him will deny. But many loyal Methodists are convinced that he is in great error, overturning our doctrinal foundations. When an eminent religious teacher, esteemed by all for the purity of his character, repudiates truths hitherto considered vital to the highest religious attainments, his very eminence in the public regard enables him to eclipse many more minds and obstruct their vision of the truth. It is for this reason that I have reluctantly taken up my pen to do the uncongenial work of criticism. There are excellences in this book. There are helpful suggestions about spiritual growth. The author's Christian experience is interesting. Testimony is always more convincing than theory, as persons are always more attractive than abstractions. It has been very wisely suggested that the author's experience should be read before his argument. It might soften a little the repugnance which arises in pious minds against the assailant of a cherished doctrine. It might possibly have saved one copy of this book from the flames. A very intelligent woman, educated as a Congregationalist, finding herself in a pulmonary decline, death in a few weeks in full view, supposing from the title of this book that it was a devotional, and not a polemical work, began reading it, thinking she would find nutriment to her soul seeking a full preparation for eternity. She desired no partial sanctification up to knowledge, but the assurance of perfect cleansing. Nothing short of this would satisfy her. She wanted such an experience as her Methodist husband professed and beautifully exemplified. She found the teachings of this book so disappointing and distasteful, so inadequate to her emergency, that she turned away from it utterly dissatisfied. Before her triumphant death she requested the burning of the book, lest it might be a stumbling block to her children. This was not an act of one known as a fanatic or an "empyrean professor of holiness," but of a well-balanced, cultivated lady, seeking the highest possibilities of grace for herself and for her family.

The chamber of death is not an infallible test of a religious book, but it is the best test on the earth in the case of a sincere inquirer after the highest possibilities of grace. The last letter to me from that soldier of the Union army who helped General Grant take Vicksburg, and who incited many churches to spiritual victories, Dr. S. A. Keen, that well-poised pastoral evangelist and pentecostal preacher, conveyed his expression of regret on account of the publication of this "misleading book." We have appealed to an English dictionary, because the book is written in the English language. Though it will be read chiefly by preachers, these address their people in English terms which have

an established meaning, which no one man can change. It becomes public speakers to use words with their fixed meanings. For the same reason we chose not a theological dictionary, where we might have found some sectarian meaning, but a popular, secular dictionary, acknowledged for three quarters of a century as superior to all others in its definitions. Though Noah Webster was educated under Calvinistic influences, it cannot be proved that that stern creed warped any of his definitions. His work is a perfect mirror of the" thought of the English-speaking world.

We have not attempted to reply to all the errors of our brother, but have called attention to those which seem to be fundamental.

The reference to the silence of our Articles of Religion, though made by our author in a very incidental manner, I have spoken of at some length, because many readers, especially among the laity, might infer that these Articles are the sole standard of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

By criticising the book, and not its author, we have endeavored to make our critique as void of personalities as possible by avoiding the author's name, and, so far as possible, we have refrained from the use of the *argumentum ad hominem*.

While earnestly contending for vital truth we have had in our heart love, and love only, toward the writer of the book under criticism, both while writing and publicly delivering portions of this defense of Christian perfection, and in listening to the author's public reply.

Hoping that this little volume will help to conserve a precious truth, I send it forth into the world.

D. S.

MILTON, MASS., March 12, 1896.





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I.

## The Title and the Contents.

THE title of the book under criticism is *Growth in Holiness Toward Perfection*. Mark, it is not *to*, but *toward*. Mark again, it is not "to Christian perfection," but toward absolute human perfection, or manhood perfection, when we shall be raised from the dead and be glorified, soul and body. There is no collusion between this and Wesleyanism. We, who believe in the resurrection of the body, expect and long for this absolute perfection.

The title is not Growth in Holiness unto Christian Perfection, the theory of gradualism advocated by some Methodists, with whom it is a theory only, and not an experience and testimony. The title does admit a lower perfection up to light, or a progressive series of sanctifications up to knowledge, never reaching in this life the extinction of so-called original sin or depravity. Here it antagonizes the Wesleyan doctrine, which is growth in holiness unto Christian perfection through entire sanctification attainable by faith. This antagonism appears throughout the book on nearly every page, leaving a very distinct negative impression on the reader's mind. Thus we, in behalf of Wesley, take issue with this book, the first sentence of which is a quotation from me seemingly indorsing it. I can but wish that the author had candidly quoted the next brief sentence of only nineteen words: "But respecting his heart he may say 'wholly sanctified' throughout the conscious and the unconscious realm of soul and spirit." This shows in what sense I teach sanctification up to knowledge. I very much regret that I have not the two qualifications which the author has publicly announced as necessary in the man who undertakes to criticise his book adversely. "He must be in the prime of life and well trained in the philosophy of the day, and fully abreast of current discussions."

A man at seventy-one is not considered by presiding elders and bishops in his prime, unless he is an episcopos. As for philosophy, I have endeavored to give earnest heed to Paul's inspired caveat, "Beware lest any man spoil your philosophy." This is the only mention of philosophy in the Bible.

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II.

## A Fundamental of Methodism.

I AM not a polemic. I naturally shrink from controversy. Unfavorable criticism is to me distasteful, doubly so when the object criticised is the production of a friend, a brother minister of the same Conference and colaborer in the same school of theology. But I have thought and taught that essential Christian truth lies nearer to the loyal heart than any human friendship. I cannot see fundamentals subverted without an unmistakable and emphatic public protest. What are fundamentals in Methodist doctrine? Those which relate to sin and salvation. I am an Arminian. James Arminius, whose tomb I visited in Bâsel, announced seven principles as basal in his theology. This is the seventh as arranged by Episcopus: "It is possible for a regenerate man to live without sin." Wesley expressly taught, in addition, that it is possible for the propensity to sin, called original sin, to be eradicated in this life. Is this a fundamental in Wesleyan theology? Passing by the accredited standard theologies of Watson, Pope, Raymond, and Miley, who give an affirmative answer, I cite the words of our own President Warren's *Introduction to Systematic Theology*:

Methodism in respect to its inmost spirit and essence is a viewing of Christianity from the standpoint of Christian perfection or perfect love, the formal principle of Wesley's theology.

Since the warm Irish heart ceased to beat that dwelt in the bosom of the scholarly President of Drew Theological Seminary, John McClintock, I have regarded it not only as a duty but a sacred privilege to voice the closing words of his centenary sermon in 1866 in New York city:

Knowing exactly what I say, and taking the full responsibility of it, I repeat, we are the only Church in history, from the apostles' time till now, that has put forth as its very elemental thought the great pervading idea of the whole Book of God from the beginning to the end -- the holiness of the human soul, heart, mind, and will. . . . It may be called fanaticism; but, dear friends, this is our mission. If we keep to that, the next century is ours; if we keep to that, the triumphs of the next century shall throw those of the past into the shade. . . . There is our mission; there is our glory; there is our power; and there shall be the ground of our triumph! God keep us true!

I could not have inquired of two more analytic and encyclopedic Methodist minds for "the inmost essence" and "elemental thought " which differences Methodism from all other creeds. You must discredit these men if you deny that Christian perfection in the present life is a fundamental of



Methodism. You may discredit me, but you will not, you dare not, discredit these honored names as "holiness cranks." The book which I review to-day openly antagonizes and repeatedly repudiates this fundamental and teaches that entire deliverance from depravity cannot be in this world nor in the next till the glorification of soul and body at the second advent.

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III.

## Definition Defined.

MILL in his logic says the most correct notion of a definition is "either the meaning it bears in common acceptance, or that which the writer, for the particular purposes of his discourse, intends to annex to it." If he invents new meanings of old words, he lifts his whole discourse into the clouds away from the *terra firma* of practical life. If his balloon is large enough to take his readers with him, and they are willing to take the risk of breaking their necks, he may carry them to his chosen landing place. But if they are not willing to empty words of their commonly accepted meaning, he has no right to complain if they quarrel with his conclusion. He has been the innovator on the established order of things. They have a right to insist, as I shall to-day insist, on the common acceptance of terms. For instance, if a writer empties "depravity" of its bad meaning, divesting it of all moral significance, and retains only bodily and mental weakness -- "a change in the relative order of strength" -- and then insists that "depravity" is incurable till the resurrection, he is giving a needless offense to Christian readers in asking them to accept his conclusion. He might say the weakness, or the change in the relative order of strength, will continue thus long, or the effects or scars of sin will continue, without any protest from the theologians. These remarks explain the just criticisms which this book has called forth, especially from elderly men. Good English is their inheritance, which they are determined to defend by resisting all individual and private definitions invented for a purpose revolutionary and subversive of our doctrinal foundations.

I have said that when a man invents his own definitions his whole discussion becomes aerial. Professor Austin Phelps declares that,

The controversial fever often burns out of a man's style a healthy taste. Witness President Edwards's definition of 'necessity.' The *Essay on the Will* brings on a pure invention in the meaning attached to that word. Edwards's idea of necessity, as he defines it, is not the English idea, is not the popular idea; it never was. It was not his own idea outside of the *Essay on the Will*. No man can preach it without lapsing into fatalism. In his sermons Edwards falls back, as other men of sense do, upon the popular idea. Even in the *Essay on the Will* in some sections, he forgets his definition, and speaks of 'necessity' and 'freedom' as the common sense of men understand them.

The most conclusive answer to the weak points in Edwards's essay is the strong point in his sermons.

The same writer also says of Dr. Thomas Brown's definition of "power" and "cause:"

The common mind has never for a day in any language sanctioned Dr. Brown's idea of the meaning of these words.

We confidently predict this will be true of all the newly-invented definitions in *Growth in Holiness*, especially of holiness, depravity, and cleansing.

In his preliminary chapter our new guide to perfection says of John Wesley and Matthew Simpson, in respect to their use of the terms holiness, sanctification, perfection, and perfect love: "Evidently to these men, and those for whom they speak, one word seems as good as another for all practical and theoretical purposes -- any attempt at nice discrimination or definition would be considered entirely out of place." Since much credit is claimed by our brother, the author, for accurate definitions, it may be well to inquire what is an exact definition. Webster has it in a nutshell -- "A description of a thing by its properties." "It is designed to settle a thing in its compass and extent." According to Webster, no essentially new definition is called for or is possible unless some new property has been discovered. Hence new definitions in the natural sciences are constantly needed as the human mind advances in its scrutiny of nature. In philosophy and theology, in which the greatest minds have delved for thousands of years, new discoveries are rare, and essentially new definitions are rare also. In fact, we sympathize with R. Watson, who says that "anything essentially new in Christian theology is essentially false." It follows that theological definitions essentially new are essentially erroneous.

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## IV.

### The Great Fallacy of the Book.

THE fallacy that underlies this entire book is the invention of new definitions to suit a predetermined conclusion. These definitions, of which the author specially boasts, thrust into English terms having other meanings, are really a source of deception to the reader, who very naturally, as he advances in the argument, forgets the novelty and retains the established definition. "The arbitrary selection of meanings for Bible words," says Joseph Agar Beet, "has been hitherto the disgrace of systematic theology. It is one chief cause of the present comparative neglect of this all-important study, by making it appear to be nothing else but a series of unproved assertions." This jugglery with words is permissible in a professed humorist -- in fact, "juggle" and "joke" are derived from the same Latin word -- but in a grave theological treatise it is reprehensible; and where there is an intention to mislead immortal souls -- which cannot be predicated of this author -- which are to be sanctified through the truth, it is in the highest degree reprehensible. It is a covert and adroit method of "handling the word of God deceitfully," though sometimes there is no such intention, as in the present case. We believe the author himself is deceived by his own definitions. We advise all readers to beware of the writer on moral and religious themes who takes leave of his dictionary and draws on his imagination for his definitions. You can easily prove that the moon is made of green cheese if you can smuggle milk and rennet enough into your astronomical definitions.

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V.

## Definition of Holiness.

LET us now read the author's definition of holiness, the fundamental term in this book:

Holiness is that condition of human nature wherein the love of God rules.

The novelty of this definition is interesting and attractive at first sight. But it will not bear close scrutiny. The following objections arise:

1. It is unnecessary to make new definitions, except in progressive sciences, where new discoveries are constantly made. The definition of atmospheric air made in 1894 must be revised in 1896, since the discovery of a new element in 1895. We must now correct our dictionaries by adding to its constituents, "argon." Although theology in its apprehension is progressive, our author has discovered no new element in holiness requiring a new definition.

2. It lacks the fundamental element of a definition, which Noah Webster says is "a description of a thing by its properties." Not a property of holiness is named, not even a negative property, to say nothing of its positive qualities. How different is this from Webster's meaning of this word as used by the reputable writers in the English language:

Holiness: The state or quality of being holy; perfect moral integrity or purity; freedom from sin ; sanctity; innocence. The adjective "holy," as applied to persons, is thus defined: Spiritually whole or sound: of unimpaired innocence and virtue: free from sinful affections: pure in heart; godly: pious: irreproachable; guiltless, acceptable to God.

3. This so-called definition is so vague and loose that it will describe a score of other abstract nouns denoting different states or qualities. Let us try it on some of them. HAPPINESS is that condition of human nature wherein the love of God rules. Will anybody deny this? Can there be genuine happiness where the love of God does not rule? The definition fits happiness just as well as it does holiness. SONSHIP is that condition of human nature in which the love of God rules. This is undeniable. ASSURANCE is that condition of human nature wherein the love of God rules. FEARLESSNESS is that condition of human nature wherein the love of God rules. The same definition would apply to harmony, gratitude, self-crucifixion, devotion, hope, grace, spirituality, knowledge of God, worship, or philanthropy, which is genuine only in hearts wherein the love of God rules. We might add to



these integrity, wisdom, in the scriptural sense, and the whole galaxy of graces called the fruit of the Spirit, centering in love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith (fidelity), meekness, and temperance, or self-control. Each of these would be defined just as accurately as our author has defined holiness, if we should use the same definition. Our brother's promise of " careful definitions " does not seem to be fulfilled.

4. There remains a still greater objection to this definition of holiness, that it cannot be predicated of God's attribute of holiness. For holiness in man must be the same as holiness in God, else there is no significance in the command of Peter to "obedient children" of God: "Become [aorist] ye yourselves also holy... for I am holy" (I Peter i, 14-16). We cannot take the position of Mansell, that the moral attributes of God may be wholly different from those of man. This is simply agnosticism. I am not prepared to worship a God of unknowable moral character. But the God to whom my soul bows in loyalty and love is he to whom Jesus prays, saying, "Holy Father," and who has revealed himself as "light in whom is no darkness at all." I understand that light is a metaphor for purity, and that darkness rhetorically stands for sin. The negative part of the proposition, the absence of sin, I can understand; but just how to formulate the positive side of holiness in God and in man, and how to state its full meaning, is exceedingly difficult. Dr. M. Raymond gives up the attempt to define holiness positively. Says Professor Beet: "For the more part, writers have contented themselves with assuming, without any proof or any reference to the great difficulty of the subject, a meaning for the word 'holy' when predicated of God, and then expounded their own arbitrary interpretation." Just so. This book is a conspicuous instance of this theological legerdemain. When I took up the book entitled *Growth in Holiness*, and read the preliminary chapter about the great strides of human progress since John Wesley wrote that " miscellaneous compend," the *Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, and noted the emphasis laid on "the utmost possible precision in the use of significant terms," and especially that "A positive presentation of the theme is much better than a negative one," I said to myself, perchance the Lord has at last raised up the man who will, by a clear and terse definition, turn the idea of holiness around so that all mankind can get a square look at the positive hemisphere of this heavenly orb. Great, indeed, was my disappointment when this progressive writer -- who convicts of error John Wesley, John Fletcher, John McCiintock, and all the other Johns, John of Patmos hardly excepted -- treats this vital theme as the Scotch preacher did when expounding his chapter: he came to a passage flatly contradicting the high Calvinism which he had just taught; he paused when he came to this Arminian verse and said, "My beloved brethren, we have now come to a text whose exegesis is very difficult; let us look it squarely in the face and pass on."

If the book under criticism had been built on established and universally received definitions, its conclusions would have been far different. This grand fallacy of purposely manufactured definitions vitiates the whole volume. It leads the unwary reader to new and surprising conclusions. So hidden is the error that, if possible, it would deceive the very elect. It is like taking the nine digits and giving each a new value, 1 meaning 9, and 9 meaning 1, and so on; then using them in their new values, and bringing out results which everybody must reject who does not accept the new valuation of the symbols, however exact the arithmetical process.

5. Our next difficulty in accepting this definition of holiness is that it contains an equivocal phrase, "the love of God," which may mean my love to God, or God's love to me. This equivocal phrase enables the writer to play fast and loose with his theme. He evidently starts off in his discussion with the first meaning in his mind, for he says, "They who love God will not knowingly or willfully violate



his law." But, as he advances, he announces "that there is but one kind of love with which a discussion like this concerns itself." We would naturally expect him to say that this is our love to God. But wishing to prove that all believers always have "the same pure and perfect love," he switches off to the second meaning, which he calls "the divine love," God's love to us; "God, as it were, taking a portion of himself and infusing it into our being." Just what this means is beyond my comprehension. I understand how the announcement that God loves me, in the phrase of Paul, "the shedding abroad the love of God -- the knowledge of his love -- in my heart by the Holy Ghost given unto me," awakens love in me responsive to God's great love to me; but how his love to me dwells and rules in me, instead of dwelling and ruling in God, who is the subject of it, is an enigma. The common sense view is that the love that dwells in a man and rules him is his own love. This love starts into being, and is the first pulsation of spiritual life when God assures me that he loves even me. This love to God may be very feeble by reason of strong evil propensities, or it may be very strong because it has conquered and expelled all proneness to sin. The Wesleyan doctrine of degrees in love, of a love existing in a heart aspiring after purity but not yet made pure, hence an imperfect or mixed love, also the doctrine of the possibility in this life of a pure or perfect love to God and men, are in accord with Scripture and reason. We now strike one of the cardinal errors of this book, that all love is perfect love, the error which requires an unreasonable exegesis of the First Epistle of John that, in the phrase perfect love, "perfect" means nothing, and which operates to deter every young convert, every stationary Christian or old babe in Christ, from pressing on unto perfection, and from seeking perfect love because they have it already, and have had from the first throb of the new life. Such persons naturally say, "Soul, take thine ease," don't be aspiring after perfect love, "Eat, drink," and enjoy the church entertainments; you have perfect love already, for a Methodist doctor of divinity tells you so. Yet this is the author who complains of the so-called "second blessing" theory because "it makes no suitable provision for perpetual advance, it offers no goal of attainment." This he said when he knew that it offers a constant incentive to apply more and more the implanted inward principle of holiness to the details of life and to the perfection of character; for the first words in his book is a quotation from *Milestone Papers*, which gives prominence to "a work which still remains to be done." I have intimated the difficulty in stating the positive quality in holiness. Some think that it is not a distinct quality, but the full-orbed and symmetrical manifestation of all the moral attributes of God and of those created in his image -- love, justice, wisdom, and truth. The derivation of "holy" from "whole," "wholly," seems to favor this theory, but I find nothing in the terms used in the original Scriptures to confirm this theory.

Another view is that it is that quality of love which prompts its righteous subject to a perfect devotement to its object, with pity where there cannot be righteous delight. Such is the kind of love which God has toward men. His self-devotement in the gift of his Son to the cross wrung the heart of the Father with infinite pain. We agree with Dr. Fairbairn, that the doctrine that the Father did not suffer in the atonement detracts from this central Christian truth, inasmuch as it affords no measure of his love, which is manifested only by self-sacrifice. Holiness in men is perfect self-devotement to God and to his Son, our adorable Saviour, and to our fellow-men. This theory, originated by another, seems to be philosophical and not unscriptural. It is the element of perfect self-sacrifice in our love and in God's love. But how can holiness, thus negatively and positively defined, be predicated of a babe in Christ just born of the Spirit? He is called holy because he has entered into that company to whom that word is technically applied because they are called to be holy, and he has the seed of holiness implanted in him. He has stepped across the line which separates the wicked from the righteous, and is facing the serene heights of perfect purity up to which he aspires to climb. He is not holy in the sense that he is not exhorted to pray that he may be sanctified wholly. He is an

infant in that company of believers who, like Milton's angels, sing,

In our proper motion we ascend  
Up to our native seat; descent and fall  
To us is adverse.

Yet we must remember that the word "saint" was a technical term denoting a member of the visible Church, and did not certainly designate a pure life. Says Professor Beet: "The priests were holy, whatever their conduct." He adds: "The word saint is a very appropriate designation of the followers of Christ; for it declares what God requires them to be."

One has humorously said that Paul called Christians saints on the same principle that some small and struggling American schools are called universities, because the founders had large hopes. As objects of hope they are universities, but not in reality. The term "holy" points to our privilege and obligation to live lives free from sin and wholly devoted to Christ, who died that we might not live unto self. In every pulpit and prayer meeting the fact should be constantly rung out that all who have taken upon themselves the name of Christ are called to be saints, holy ones.

In this view of the subject there is, after entire sanctification, a growth in the positive element of holiness. This is taught by Wesley in the continual increase of love in a pure heart, as the spiritual life day by day develops in its utmost fullness, enjoying that real freedom in which obedience to God is not hindered by any inward opposition. Hence we insist that the believer's complete development is realized only by a supreme act of self-crucifixion, followed by a life of total self-abnegation; in the words of Wesley, "naked, following a naked Christ," whose holiness as the "Son of man" was evinced in his coming into the world, "not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

This doctrine has always been disliked by self-centered men, whether nominal Christians or not, men filled with self-will, self-seeking, self-sufficiency, and self-righteousness. When the Church tones down or neglects to preach this essential and vital doctrine to please such men and gain their support, she betrays her Lord for money and commits suicide besides.



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## VI.

### Depravity Defined.

THE author of *Growth in Holiness* has great aversion to a phrase in the Articles of Religion of his own Church, "Original sin." Even contempt seems to mingle with his abhorrence. Hear him:

In the light of the truths now enunciated, it will, we trust, be fully seen how unphilosophical, inaccurate, and in every way objectionable is the antiquated phrase, 'Original sin.' It is quite time that this misbegotten and utterly misleading term, together with its partners, 'birth sin' and 'inbred sin,' was dismissed to the museum of theological curiosities, where alone at present it belongs.

Since "original sin" is not a biblical phrase, and since it always needs to be declared guiltless when used by Arminians and modern Calvinists, it would be both convenient and edifying to use another term. I would substitute "hereditary depravity." Many, in modern times, have substituted "depravity." We find no fault with the author under review for doing the same. But with what meaning does he use it? It might be asking too much to insist that it should mean all that original sin means *minus* voluntariness and guilt. This, then, would be the definition: "The corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and of his own nature inclined to evil, and that continually." We believe that this is not too dark a description of fallen human nature. But since it has an archaic sound, and its literary form may be modernized and improved, it would be natural for a writer whose only aim is the truth to turn to his dictionary and find a definition in which the reputable use of the whole English-speaking world is crystallized thus by Noah Webster:

DEPRAVITY: The state of being depraved or corrupted; a vitiated state of moral character general badness of character; wickedness of mind or heart; absence of religious feeling and principle.

This definition would compel an orthodox writer, who believes that death ends probation, to teach the total elimination of depravity before death, or, at least, at death, and not at the resurrection of the just. In other words, it would require belief in entire sanctification and the completion of Christian character this side of the grave. On this point both branches of orthodoxy agree, Calvinism and Arminianism.

Now, if a religious teacher should attempt to prove that depravity "cannot be absolutely removed in



this life," but must continue "till glorification," it is certain that he could not use Webster's definition, which the whole English-speaking world approves. He must invent one of a much milder type, a depravity which does not soil the white robe of St. John while, in the intermediate state, he walks arm in arm with Christ, and is called worthy, and which does not falsify the assertion of St. Paul, "To depart and to be with Christ is very far better." For our author astonishes us when he says: "We deny that the removal of all depravity in this life is one of the gifts of God to us;" "All depravity cannot be absolutely removed in this life."

This is his formal definition:

Depravity is that abnormal or disordered condition of human nature wherein we are no longer in harmony with God or with ourselves, as we were originally made, but have so strong a leaning toward self-indulgence that we are easily brought into disobedience to the divine commands.

There are several defects in this definition of a term substituted for original sin.

1. There is no hint of its Adamic origin. It could have been expressed in this one word, "hereditary." In justice to the author, it should be said that this idea is admitted in his discussion. Its absence from the formal definition gives it a Pelagian aspect.

2. Again, it will be noted that there is a studied avoidance of any term expressive of inherent taint requiring purging, such as is expressed in the standard definition quoted, in the terms "corrupted," "vitiating," and "badness." There is absent the idea that human nature is in ruins. This gives the definition the appearance of modern liberalism, which teaches that the evil in human nature is only skin deep, and is readily cured in the lavatory of Boston culture, as I have heard the poet Saxe sing

Who's born in Boston needs no second birth.

It is unjust to the public to void a term of its fundamental and essential meaning and then use it in its emasculated signification, although you give notice of the robbery you have committed. It is too much to ask the public to forget the established meaning accepted by the English-speaking races and to learn the novelty invented by a solitary individual.

The public will not accept any such innovation. If he should say that depravity, in his definition, is predicated of the body as well as the soul, we reply that if he will look in his dictionary again he will find that "depravity is a term that applies only to the mind and heart." Cicero insists that the same limitation pertains to *pravitas*, from which depravity is derived. It is a perversion of good English to speak of the depravity of a corpse. If, therefore, Christians have depravity till their bodies are raised and glorified, it must inhere in their disembodied spirits. The agency of the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier, it seems is insufficient to purify them in this life and in the life to come, between death and the sounding of "the trump of God." Where is the scriptural proof that the Holy Spirit will cleanse our spirits then? Where is the proof that the dead in Christ will need any such office of the Spirit? What are we to understand by "the spirits of just men made perfect?" The Greek assures us that the meaning is not that the spirits were perfected after departure from the body, but that we shall come to the spirits of perfected just men, perfected in this life. If it is said that Christ at his second

coming will eliminate the taint of depravity, we ask for the proof text which teaches that he will dishonor the Spirit to whom he has committed the sanctification of believers, by depriving him of this office and by himself becoming the sanctifier. I have yet to find the first Scripture proof of either the justification or the sanctification of a soul after the second advent of Christ. This is our standing challenge to premillenarians of every stripe.

3. This definition voids the term of all moral significance. Methodism teaches that no offspring of Adam is born in guilt because of the redemptive work of the second Adam, whose atonement unconditionally avails to cover all entailed evil. We teach that God, in the atonement, has begun to save the entire race, and that he will fail of his gracious purpose only where he is obstructed by human wills persistently rejecting his Son. We teach that infants are saved through the atonement purifying their natures. There is no hint in this definition of anything needing the cleansing efficacy of the atonement. The discussion limits it to actual sin. I infer from this book that half of the human race -- for half die before they are twelve months old -- will be saved on the ground of natural justice, wholly independent of the atonement, not needing the Sanctifier procured by the blood of Christ, and that they will not be found in the company of the bloodwashed, nor will their voices be heard in the new song in which this strain of praise to the Lamb is the loftiest: "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

The author says:

We inherit a germ of evil; our moral nature is wrong or wrung or twisted.

This is orthodox. But what power is there in the Gospel that will straighten out these moral kinks and destroy this germ of evil? There is no such power in this world, nor in the world to come, till the resurrection. The statement that the atonement covers only voluntary sin excludes dying infants from its benefits. For the continuance of depravity till the resurrection Drs. M. Raymond and D. D. Whedon are quoted. The former speaks only of the physical and intellectual effects of the fall, and not of proneness to sin; and probably the context would show that this is the meaning of the latter, and that both agree with R. Watson that

entire sanctification, or the perfected holiness of believers, is our complete deliverance from all spiritual pollution, all inward depravation of heart, deliverance from all inward and outward sin.

In Dr. Whedon's note on 2 Cor. vii, 1, he says:

We may note that a perfected holiness is here represented as a possible attainment; that it is the result of a properly directed activity; and that its attainment is not to be delayed until death, but is to be realized and possessed during the Christian's life.

This indorses John Wesley's doctrine, and manifestly contradicts the idea that depravity continues till the resurrection, an error which Dr. Whedon's name is brought forward to sustain. The necessary continuance of depravity till glorification is argued from the intimate connection of mind with matter. Bishop Brooks is quoted as saying:



Every man has in his bodily constitution the physical basis of the most subtle and transcendent parts of his profoundest life. There is a physical basis to his most spiritual life . . . . A man thinks well and loves well and prays well because of the red running in his blood.

Of course, others are prayerless, curse, and swear because the red in their blood is lacking. This is surrendering human freedom and moral accountability to the determinism of materialism, already exploded by Balfour and other recent writers. This is the acceptance of the waning fatalism of Herbert Spencer, Huxley, and Buckle; in order to prove the falsity of Wesleyan Christian perfection. It is more than orthodoxy can afford to yield. It betrays Christianity to what Carlyle calls "the dirt philosophy."

I am addressing a company who cherish the orthodox and very comforting belief that between death and the resurrection we shall be in conscious bliss in Paradise, the antechamber of the heaven of the glorified saints. According to the teaching of this book we must still have depravity inhering in our spirits or in our confined dust, or in both. If in our dust, will our spirits be perfectly void of depravity or will it still cling to them? This is a question in which I feel a personal interest, for I am expecting soon to travel out of the body and to be at home with the Lord. Several questions arise. Will my post-mortem depravity be fixed in amount, or will it be capable of increase? If so, I may be overcome by it, fall into sin, and in the resurrection arise not with the just but with the unjust.

On the other hand, if it is capable of decrease, what helps shall I have to hasten this minimizing process, and what promises can I plead? What motive will prompt and sustain my endeavor when I know that it is a task that will not be accomplished by all my efforts, it being set down in God's almanac as an event that will take place on the morning of the resurrection, and then only.

But if the author means that death is an effect of sin, and that we will not attain perfect manhood till soul and body are reunited in the glorified body, as we all believe and teach, why not say so in terms that everybody can understand? Why scare good people with this bugbear of depravity continuing till the resurrection? From the frequency with which the author reiterates this proposition of the continuance of depravity till the last gravestone of the righteous is overturned, we infer that it is with him a favorite and delightful topic of contemplation. But this is a natural sequence of his rose-colored view of depravity as

a derangement, that is all -- a change in the relative order of strength, a disturbance of the equilibrium, a different combination of the same things, no addition or subtraction being required for the restoration of the full image of God.

The consciousness of every believer sooner or later testifies to the felt need of both subtraction and addition. He feels that the old man inside, though bound by regeneration, is still capable of making much trouble, and there is a fear lest he may break his chains and grasp his scepter again. He feels that heaven and hell are having a Gettysburg battle within him and longs for auxiliary troops on the right side, and for the destruction of the evil forces.

In proof of the doctrine that there is always, after every sanctification, a residue of depravity left hidden away from consciousness to be purged out at some future time when discovered, so that



there is "less and less of self " but never complete extinction of the self-life, a familiar verse of Miss Havergal is quoted:

Perfect, yet it floweth  
Fuller every day;  
Perfect, yet it groweth  
Deeper all the way.

This beautifully illustrates the growth of the spiritual life after the destruction of proneness to sin and the crucifixion of self. The rest of the stanza implies:

Like a river glorious  
Is God's perfect peace,  
*Over all victorious*  
In its bright increase.

This hymn was written eleven months after her experience of the complete cleansing of her heart thus beautifully described:

'The blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanseth us from all sin.' I see it all and I have the blessing. It has lifted my whole life into the sunshine to which all my previous experiences were but as pale and passing April gleams compared with the fullness of the summer glory. It was on Advent Sunday, December 2, 1873, I first saw the blessedness of true consecration as a flash of electric light.

This was the golden milestone of her Christian life. Two months after this she wrote the consecration hymn,

Take my life, and let it be

She had already realized her aspiration --

None of self, but all of Thee,

If any reader wishes to see how wide of the mark the author of this book is in quoting this angelic poetess to disprove entire sanctification in this life, let him read the following stanza, written in 1877:

I know the crimson stain of sin,  
Defiling all without, within;  
But now rejoicingly I know  
That he has washed me white as snow,  
I praise Him for the cleansing tide,  
Because I know that Jesus died.



# A Defense of Christian Perfection

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VII

## Native Depravity and Law.

THE opinions of Arminian theologians respecting the relation of native depravity to the law of God are in a state of solution. In what form they will crystallize does not yet appear. But it is enough for me to know that every child born into the world has two fathers: the first Adam, from whom he inherits a nature morally tainted and prone to sin; and the second Adam, from whom he has a heritage of grace sufficient to purify this taint. This grace comes from the atonement and is necessary, not for the justification of the infant -- for native depravity is without native demerit -- but for his purification. Properly speaking, law takes cognizance of actions and the resulting character, and not of the nature with which we were born. From the beginning of responsibility the atonement is needed for both justification and sanctification. This is true of all actual sinners. Their first pressing need is pardon through penitent faith; their second need is the entire purification which comes to the believer through faith in Christ. In the case of those who die in infancy before moral accountability, the heritage of grace is unconditionally applied to remove from their natures the evil unconditionally inherited -- "Washed in the blood of the Lamb." While we cannot accept the legal fiction of condemnation through the first Adam, and justification through the second, as true of the newborn babe, at one and the same time, we can accept the truth of a moral damage entailed by the first Adam provisionally repaired by the second Adam, the Lord from heaven.

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VIII.

## Definition of Sin.

OUR author endeavors to reform an acknowledged abuse in the use of the term "sin," which "nearly all writers use in a variety of senses." It is a pretty big job to bring about a reform in all writers in theology, many in ethics, and some, like Browning, in poetry and polite literature. In order to exterminate this acknowledged confusion we must rewrite most of the books in our libraries, and correct the loose habits of all present and future writers. In fact, we must correct our Bibles. Moses, in Leviticus iv and v, tells the Hebrews how to treat the "sins of ignorance;" and so careful a writer as Paul, with his diploma from the University of Tarsus in his trunk, falls into this inexact use of this important term, "sin:" "For he made him [Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin." Some men educated in high Calvinism have courage to insist that Christ, while hanging on the cross, was guilty of all the sins of the elect, making him "the greatest sinner in the universe;" but the rest of mankind interpret "sin" in the first clause to be sin offering. In the Hebrew language, with which Paul was familiar, the word *chatath*, "sin," has both meanings. This shows that the evil of a variety of meanings of "sin" has its roots in a distant antiquity. In this particular Paul is so reckless in his style of writing, that he declares unborn millions "sinners" and "made sinners by one man's disobedience." This apostle will be found quite obstructive of the proposed reform and of "dismissing original sin to the museum of theological curiosities."

His definition of sin strictly so-called as "deviation from duty; choosing our own will, instead of the divine will; disobeying that law which is binding upon us as a rule of present action," is not so concise, nor, it seems to me, so suitable to his purpose as Wesley's: "The willful violation of the known law of God." Wesley magnifies the voluntary element which is not expressed in the other definition. Our author, in defining sin, extendedly discusses the nature of the law whether fallen beings are obliged to keep perfectly the original and perfect moral law, or a lower law adapted to their diminished moral capacity. He gives a fair consensus of Methodist opinion on both sides of this interesting question. His own views do not contribute any additional material to this old controversy between the Antinomians and the Neonomians. He seems, however, to side quite strongly with those who contend against any letting down of the law. But the law under which we now are, he says, is "the law of faith as distinguished from the law of works." But this so-called law of Christ or law of love is different from the law given to angels, to Adam, and to other perfect beings. But, according to the author, it is about as impossible to keep this law as it would be to keep the law of paradisaical innocence. He says: "It is sin to live, even for a moment, below our privileges and the highest possibilities of grace in our particular case. It is a sin to have been, at any point, less useful than we might. It is a sin to have our tendencies toward sin at any point, or in any way, stronger than they

need to be." This implies that some proneness to sin needs to be! "It is a sin to lose any opportunity for doing a kindly act." Thus through several pages he shows that everything that is not on the highest possible key now, because of some momentary weakness in the past, is a sin. The moral of all this is the folly of the profession that anyone has lived any length of time without sinning. This would be true if each of these defects were the result of conscious volition. To this the reply is, that "what are called involuntary transgressions generally involve minute volitions escaping from us because of moral weakness." One begins to ask what Paul means when he says, "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound;" "we are more than conquerors," etc. The pages that we are criticising may have been written to exalt the way of holiness, but their natural effect will be to make it so steep as to discourage people from trying to walk therein. We are impressed with the idea that, while our author professedly describes the law of faith and love, he is really applying to moral cripples the law of Adamic innocence and angelic purity. There seems to be in it no sympathetic high priest who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. It looks like the hard law of works, in which grace has no place. It is possible for Christians to have as erroneous a concept of the law of love as they had in past generations of the God of love -- a Shylock enthroned in the sky demanding his pound of flesh according to the letter of the bond, and "hurling the thunderbolts of his wrath down upon the devoted head of his Son on the cross." This concept of God, the offspring of stern Calvinism, is disappearing under the ameliorating influence of Arminianism. So also may that concept of the law of Christ, which is so inflexible and absolute as to inspire his friends with terror and repel them from perfect obedience because of its rigor, no more torture of the souls of righteous people, as it seems to have haunted the author of this book, inspiring the portrayal of the appalling difficulties and mountain obstacles in the way of holy living in the dispensation of the Holy Comforter. From beginning to end of the argumentative part of this book we look in vain for words of good cheer to souls seeking complete victory in this life. This book minimizes grace. There is no magnificat in the volume, unless it is in the experience which he realized while believing the Wesleyan theory. The pæan of victory is deferred till the morning of the resurrection. It cannot be that our brother has often used and deeply pondered the ascription with which Paul finishes his prayer for the Ephesian Church: "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." This does not look like sanctification up to knowledge, but illimitably beyond. The Century Dictionary appends this note to its definition of sin:

The true definition of sin is a much contested question, theologians being broadly divided into two schools of thought; the one holding that all sin consists in voluntary and conscious acts of the individual ; the other that it also includes the moral character of the race. One holds that all moral responsibility is individual, the other that it is also of the race as a race. Original sin is the innate depravity and corruption of the nature common to all mankind. But whether this native depravity is properly called sin, or whether it is only a tendency, and becomes sin only when yielded to by a conscious and voluntary act of the individual, is a question upon which theologians differ.

It is therefore an assumption of authority in our author, or any other one man, to declare that the term "sin" in good English usage means only a willful act of wrongdoing. We have often wished that it had this meaning only. But the wish does not alter the fact.





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IX.

## Cleansing Means Empowering.

ANOTHER evil effect of letting the dust gather on his dictionary is found in his invention of an unheard-of definition of the word "cleansing." He says: "We would suggest that 'empowering' is a much better term to use, and one less liable to mislead." He says it translates into modern thought the Jewish meaning of cleansing. Let us read the new definition or translation in a few passages: "The blood of Jesus Christ *empowers us* from all sin;" "Let us *empower* ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit;" "*Empower* your hands, ye sinners;" "That he might sanctify and *empower* it [the Church] with the washing of water;" "*Empower* first that which is within the cup;" "Heal the sick, *empower* lepers;" "Immediately his leprosy was *empowered*." Having denied that there was "something brought into or added to man's nature at the fall of Adam which divine grace can instantaneously remove," and having said that depravity "is a disarrangement, that is all -- a change in the relative order of strength," he was forced to invent this absurd definition. But he should have gone on and read some new meaning into "destroy," that the body of sin might be destroyed; into "crucify," that the old man is crucified; into "mortify" or kill, when applied to uncleanness and covetousness ; and into "circumcise" in its spiritual meaning, in putting off (and laying aside) "the body of the flesh" by the circumcision of [procured by] Christ." You see that this opens a large field for a writer's powers of invention.

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X.

## **Christian Perfection not in the Articles of Religion.**

IN his chapter on perfection, after quoting several different meanings, mostly of ideal perfection and not of evangelical, he says: "The Articles of Religion say nothing about it, although it is declared on all sides to be the chief and most distinctive doctrine of Methodism." This argument from the silence of our Articles of Religion, incidentally made, is so transparently sophistical, that we are surprised that a man with so good a reputation for truth seeking, candor, and fairness in argument should have used it even by incidental mention. For he knows that our Articles of Religion include only a part of Methodist doctrine. They omit the inspiration of the Scriptures, the decalogue, the Lord's day, the immortality of the soul, and the eternal punishment of the wicked. These essentials of orthodoxy, together with eschatology, do not appearing our Articles of Religion; nor does that fundamental peculiarity of Methodism, first in its historical evolution, and, as I believe, first in importance to a vital spiritual experience, the direct witness of the Spirit to the adoption of the penitent believer. How much weight would the plea of the silence of our Articles of Religion on the doctrine of the destiny of the wicked have with an ecclesiastical jury trying a Methodist itinerant accused of heresy for publishing a book emphatically denying eternal punishment? This was one of the two counts on which Dr. Thomas was expelled. Our most vital doctrines are found in Wesley's Sermons, his Notes on the New Testament, and the Larger Minutes, and not alone in the twenty-four of the thirty-nine articles borrowed from the Anglican Church as an antique figurehead for the new ship -- American Methodism.

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XI.

## Christian Perfection not Ideal.

OUR author is not satisfied with that perfection which consists in "loving God with the whole heart and having every action spring from love, which appears to be the popular modern synonym for Christian perfection, or entire sanctification." He quotes Dr. Borden P. Bowne as sustaining his position: "The will to do right in no way implies the perfection of the moral life, but only its central element and its indispensable condition." Is our professor of philosophy discussing *Christian* perfection and entire sanctification, or the abstract "principles of ethics" when carried out till they reach absolute perfection? The rest of the quotation shows that he has not in mind evangelical perfection -which consists in supreme love to God, but an ideal perfection, not of the heart but of the outward life, resulting from the application of this love through a perfectly enlightened conscience: "The *will must be realized* in fitting forms and the entire life be made an expression of right reason before that which is perfect is come." Just so. Then ideal perfection will come forth in the beauty of faultlessness. But God condescends to call "its central element" -- supreme love -- that perfection which he requires and which he enables to emerge, when he has removed hereditary depravity and filled the soul with love: "The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart . . . to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart" (Deut. xxx, 6). On the selfsame day that Abraham was circumcised God said unto him: "I am the Almighty God, walk before me, and be thou perfect." Jesus Christ reiterates this command to all his followers: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." The context to which "therefore" relates proves that the command refers to the present time and that it is fulfilled by perfect love to-day, which in the future will be more and more "realized in fitting forms."

This confounding evangelical perfection with ideal perfection mars this book from the title to the finis. Of the title we have already spoken. The most eloquent pages are those in which the writer shows the impossibility of young people of seventeen, and ignorant and narrow-minded believers, becoming immediately perfect Christians. "A child cannot be a perfect Christian, in the higher sense of that term." Will that remark help him to become a perfect Christian in the lower sense? Will it encourage him to pray for

A heart in every thought renewed,  
And full of love divine?

He expatiates on "the length, breadth, depth, and height of God's mighty law" sufficient "for the study of saints and sages all their days" as a reason why our boys and girls from thirteen to seventeen



cannot exemplify the standard of New Testament perfection or entire sanctification. To such God's commandment is grievous and oppressive indeed. The Sermon on the Mount is impracticable to most of Christians till they know more!

The reader of this book will rise from its perusal with the impression that it aims to prove that absolute, ideal perfection is not possible in this present life. This was the impression made upon the mind of an honored bishop of the Church who listened to the author's reply to our criticism. These are his words when called on to speak to the Boston Preachers' Meeting after that reply: "I would say one thing with added emphasis -- ideal perfection is an impossible attainment in this life; and that I understand to be Dr. Mudge's contention." This is his contention throughout his book. He seems to imply that this is the significance of Wesley's Christian perfection. This is a great injustice to the honored name of our denominational founder, who always and everywhere disclaimed ideal perfection. He says:

Absolute or infallible perfection I never contended for. Sinless perfection I do not contend for, seeing it is not scriptural. A perfection, such as enables a person to fulfill the whole law, and so needs not the merits of Christ -- I acknowledge no such perfection; I do now, and always did, protest against it;....

The best of men still need Christ in his priestly office, to atone for their omissions, their shortcomings (as some not improperly speak), their mistakes in judgment and practice, and their defects of various kinds; ....

I believe there is no such perfection in this life as excludes therein voluntary transgressions which need an atonement.

Much of the argument in this book is directed against a man of straw.

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## XII.

### Sanctification up to Knowledge.

THIS the author regards as the immovable rock on which his book is built. The only condition on which we are saved is such a faith in Jesus Christ as works by love, overcomes the world, and purifies the heart. Knowledge is not a condition of salvation, except as a knowledge of Christ, the object of faith, is implied in saving faith. The great mercy of God is shown in the fact that he can save a soul that has very little knowledge, where there is an obedient attitude of the will. On this ground pious pagans, following the starlight of natural religion to the best of their abilities, while ignorant of the historic Christ, "are saved by Christ though they know him not," as Wesley taught. This doctrine is formulated by Dr. Whedon thus: "Pagans having the spirit of faith and the purpose of righteousness; are accepted of God." This means that they who are disposed to receive Christ, the object of faith, were he presented to them, and to walk by God's law were it revealed to them in his book, are saved -- as both Peter and Paul teach (Acts x, 34; Rom. ii, 13-15). Hence our theology needs no extension of probation after death to give the heathen and infants a knowledge of Christ.

God can also entirely sanctify a believing soul having very little knowledge. When he realizes that there is in him an antagonism to the new life, and that there is within the reach of his faith a power which can remove that antagonism at once, and totally, he has knowledge sufficient for his entire sanctification. The evil in man, though taking on many forms -- such as pride, malice, envy, etc. has one root, with various names -- "the old man," "the flesh," and "the sin which so easily besets," which Delitzsch calls "sin as inward inclination, an indwelling evil." It is the Wesleyan theory that these may all be destroyed at once in the removal of this indwelling evil without presenting each form of depravity separately to be burned up by the purifying Spirit.

It is the theory of this book that each of these must be revealed to the consciousness, and that a distinct "empowering" be imparted for its suppression. These successive empowerings are sanctifications up to knowledge; and as we increase in the knowledge of these inward evils, and never know whether they have all been revealed to the inner eye, we can never be sure that we are wholly sanctified. This theory is supposed to be confirmed by the fact that these evils are not removed at regeneration, because they are not then known. This is an assumption without proof. Paul said of his pre-Christian state, "I am carnal." Wicked men convicted by the Spirit know the evil of their natures as well as they know their past sins. They are not then delivered from their depravity, from any lack of knowledge, but from a lack of the requisite degree of faith. God in great mercy does not require a faith which grasps at once both pardon and purity. Faith for purity is a much higher attainment than faith for pardon, an effort requiring a taste of love divine and the



illumination of the Holy Spirit, revealing the greatness of his sanctifying grace. Then and then only will faith be able to grasp the prize. How much easier it is for one who already loves God and is acquainted with his "exceeding great and precious promises" to exercise strong faith in him, than it is for a sinner cowering beneath a sense of his wrath. Should justifying faith be represented by one, and that figure represent his whole ability, and sanctifying faith by nine, and should God require both at once, he would be requiring tenfold more than the penitent sinner can render. Let us thank God for the discovery made by two young men at Oxford that "men are justified before they are sanctified." They found no command to the wicked to be sanctified, but to repent, to believe, and be forgiven. They found no promise of sanctifying grace to the unregenerate, but the new birth by the Holy Spirit.

Again, when we turn to the Holy Scriptures, we nowhere find knowledge and sanctification associated together as antecedent and consequent. Paul says much about *epignosis* full and certain knowledge, as the result of purging the inner eye of film, and the sequence of the revealing power of the Spirit in the fullness of his indwelling. The natural order in the Scriptures is the same as that in mental philosophy -- faith is the pathway to knowledge. Faith in Christ precedes a knowledge of forgiveness. It is true also that we must know a man in order to put the highest confidence in him. But the order of spiritual progress emphasizes faith as the principal condition. "I know whom I have believed."

The logic of this work is this: God waits for believers to get knowledge, chiefly self-knowledge, before he sanctifies. But since men never get perfect knowledge, they are never in this life perfectly sanctified. Since they daily increase in knowledge, they daily need sanctification up to the last increment of knowledge. We infer from the Scriptures that God waits for a degree of faith which only one who loves God can exercise. This is the reason why justification and entire sanctification are not simultaneous.

After entire sanctification the normal order is a growth in knowledge and judgment, and a more and more perfect manifestation of the inner purity in the outer life; a progressive development in practical holiness, while the inner principle grows stronger and stronger.

Moreover, we do not find in the Bible any such limitation of the work of the sanctifying Spirit to the narrow range of human knowledge. We read that it is possible for the believer "to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge" (Eph. iii, 19), surpassing not only our ability to comprehend, but also overleaping the boundaries of self-knowledge, and going down into the unexplored depths of our nature with its cleansing power. For love is the element in which holiness dwells. Love is the kingly noun in the universe, and holiness is the peerless adjective which describes it. Paul adds to his prayer this ascription: "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us;" literally, "able to do superabundantly above the greatest abundance." Well does Adam Clarke ask: "Of what consequence would it be to tell the Church of God that he had *power to do* so and so if there were not implied an assurance that he *will* do what his power *can*, and what the soul of man needs to have done?" The most pressing need of the regenerated soul is perfect deliverance from the evil in his nature. Paul says that God is able to do above all our thinking, and not merely up to our knowledge. The same large view of the possibilities of grace is seen in these words: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit," in the glories of a present experience, as a foretaste of the



glories of heaven to which some people erroneously limit this entire text, putting it out of harmony with the context. This text shows that God's grace is not limited by the believer's knowledge.

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## XIII.

### Evidence of Entire Sanctification.

#### 1. NOT CONSCIOUS OF QUIESCENT STATES.

ONE of the cardinal truths of Methodism is the absolute freedom of man in all his moral acts. This word "absolute" is used to cut off all causation anterior to volition, which would make it an effect and not a cause. We teach that man is the sole and original cause of his moral actions; that he is a cause uncaused and a creator of his own moral character and destiny. All other theories either make God the author of sin or they land us in fatalism. Calvinism without its modern alleviations insists that God foreordained whatsoever comes to pass. Sin comes to pass, therefore it is decreed by God. What is the Arminian answer? Consciousness. I am conscious when I tell the truth that I might have told a lie, to which I was tempted, but I resisted the temptation and uttered the truth. Says sturdy Dr. Samuel Johnson "I know I am free, and that is the end of it." There is no argument against human consciousness. Consciousness killed Calvinism. But the denial of freedom and responsibility is not dead, but is alive and active for evil under other forms. One of these is materialism, which makes everything physical, even thought, feeling, and volition. These are the results of changes in matter governed by the invariable laws of mechanical necessity. This system -- sometimes called positivism, which reduces all there is of a man to gas -- excludes ethics. There can be no distinction of right and wrong where there is no freedom. What answer has Methodism to materialism? She goes down into the soul and listens to the voice of truth within. That voice cries out : "I am not a part of the material universe, for I am free to obey or disobey the dictates of conscience," which is not an attribute of matter, but of mind. Consciousness is a veracious and stubborn witness against all the fallacies of materialists and positivism, the supreme delusion of the nineteenth century, professing to weigh and measure everything, while entirely omitting the phenomena of revelation and man's moral and religious nature.

There is still another error widely prevalent arising from the attempt to reduce all things and all beings to one substance. If this is matter we have materialistic pantheism, which we have just described. If the sum total of being is spirit, we have blind, nondescript force, impersonal and unethical, a fragment of which is man, who is incapable of morality, because destitute of freedom. Some minds are fascinated with pantheism, because it relieves the difficulty of the distinct coexistence of the finite and the infinite. When Spinoza says that it is "mathematically demonstrated," what answer have we but the primary intuitions of consciousness, personality, freedom, and moral sense? Thus is dispelled what has been styled "the grandest delusion of the human mind." All these forms of error are confuted by an appeal to consciousness cognizing a mental



state. I know that I am a free and responsible personality. This is the Gibraltar of true Christian philosophy, especially of Methodism in upholding the standard of truth lifted up by James Arminius. We are called upon by a few Methodist writers to abandon our Gibraltar and surrender to all these enemies of the Gospel. This was the attitude of a strong Methodist thinker -- with Calvinistic leanings -- of a past generation when magnifying the difficulties of the Wesleyan doctrine of entire sanctification. He alleged that this radical purification could not be known, because, first, it is not the scriptural office of the Holy Spirit to witness to it; and secondly, consciousness cognizes only acts, and not quiescent states. This second proposition Methodism must resist with all her might or surrender to every form of theological and philosophical necessitarianism. There is no alternative. This is so obvious that I was surprised to see the second proposition assumed as an undisputed axiom of philosophy by Dr. James Mudge in his book on *Progress in Holiness*, that "consciousness is a valid witness only to the active operations of the mind, not to its quiescent states."

In view of the deadly errors against which this very form of consciousness is our only safeguard, our very sheet anchor, this declaration by an evangelical writer must be regarded as a stupendous blunder. For freedom is a "quiescent state," as is also the imperative of moral obligation. The two states are binary stars in the firmament of every responsible human soul. Every soul has an eye with which to see these internal luminaries. Sir W. Hamilton, in his *Notes on Reid*, affirms that we are directly conscious of both free will and of obligation to do right. He admits that a free act is incomprehensible by us because it is a first cause, yet it is attested solely by consciousness, a witness which cannot be impeached. But in his *Lectures on Metaphysics* he had limited consciousness to mental acts only. John Stuart Mill eagerly pounces on this unfortunate limitation and turns it against Hamilton's only proof of freedom. He says: "What I am able to do is not a subject of consciousness. We never know that we are able to do a thing except from having done it;" that is, we are never conscious of what we can do, which is only "a quiescent state," a potency, and not an act. Thus the fatalist Mill adroitly turns the admission of Hamilton, that we are not conscious of "quiescent states," against his only proof of freedom. His only possible answer to Mill is to recall his blunder in excluding states from the objects of consciousness. Dr. Mudge and every other Methodist will find themselves in the same trap in which Mill caught Hamilton if, in arguing with a fatalist, they start with the admission that "consciousness is a valid witness only to the active operations of the mind, not to its quiescent states." Let me illustrate. Booth murdered President Lincoln. He was conscious only of the act, not of ability to refrain from the act. No man on earth can prove that he had such ability, if the assassin himself was not conscious of it. We must all become fatalists, or the highest style of Calvinian necessitarians, if we cannot say with Mansel, "I am fully conscious that I can at this moment act in either of two ways." If a man may be conscious of a state of "alternativity" (Whedon), he maybe conscious of a state of carnality, as was Paul before his conversion -- "I am carnal," and of inward and outward holiness, as was Paul, the apostle, when he testified: "Alive no longer am I, but alive indeed is Christ in me." Here is a consciousness of a blissful quiescent state, which we may all enter into through the same strait gate, crucifixion with Christ.

St. Paul calls God and men to witness "how holily and justly and unblamably he had behaved among them that believe." His appeal to the Omniscient must have proceeded from a consciousness of perfect purity of heart. This gracious state is possible to everyone who will claim his full heritage in Christ, and a knowledge of it is possible also, for the Spirit shines on his own work, revealing it to our quickened spiritual perception.

Since writing the above I have read with great pleasure Dr. Miley's utterances on assurance, found in



his great work on systematic theology, sent forth to the world after he was eighty years of age, and adopted by our bishops as the most suitable statement of Methodist doctrine. On the knowledge of perfected holiness his trumpet gives no uncertain sound:

We do not question the fact of an assurance of entire sanctification. There may be a direct witness of the Holy Spirit to such a gracious attainment; but without such a witness the assurance is still possible. The inner work of salvation is such that it clearly reveals itself in the consciousness of its subjects. Regeneration so reveals itself. The full salvation may reveal its fullness in the consciousness of the happy recipient.

Here is a man. although a score of years past his prime, so "fully abreast of current discussions" in philosophy as to escape an error into which some younger men have inadvertently fallen.

Theories in accordance with reason are valuable, but when in addition they are sustained by facts we are compelled to admit their truth. Various interior experiences are facts, the testimony to which is to be received according to the laws of evidence. Many thousands have testified to the consciousness of heart purity following a sense of moral defilement and of faith in Christ for complete cleansing. If it is objected that many of these are incapable of expressing their mental states in exact philosophical language, we will rule all these out and retain only the few who are experts in the analysis of mental phenomena and well skilled in the correct use of psychological terms. Such a man all who are acquainted with him or with his books will admit Bishop Randolph S. Foster to be. In detailing his deeply interesting advanced Christian experience, he says:

Here again the Spirit seemed to lead me into the inmost sanctuary of my soul -- into those chambers where I had before discovered such defilement, and showed me that all was cleansed, that the corruptions which had given me such distress were dead -- taken away -- that not one of them remained. I felt the truth of the witness; it was so; I was conscious of it, as conscious as I had ever been of my conversion. A change had been wrought in my heart -- a radical, conscious change. I was not only peculiarly exercised, but I was changed. I was a new creature; my heart had entered into new and higher existence. This was as evident as transition from darkness to light.

This testimony confirms Wesley's statement, "The Spirit shines on his own work;" and in his light, as intense and penetrating into spirit as the marvelous X rays are into matter, no trace of impurity is seen.

## 2. THE SPIRIT GIVES NO TESTIMONY TO PERFECTED HOLINESS.

The objection is made to the Wesleyan doctrine of the witness of the Holy Spirit to the fact of entire sanctification, that there is no Scripture which specifically mentions such a witness. To this we reply that this proves too much. There is in the Bible no specific witness of the Spirit to justification by faith or the pardon of sins. We are surprised at this, because pardon is an act taking place in the mind of God. It can be known only by the direct testimony of the Spirit, who searches the deep things of God. Myriads have received this testimony direct from the throne of God by the voice of the Spirit. I have yet to hear the first Methodist discredit it, because he could quote no text of Scripture expressly certifying that this is an office of the Spirit. But it may be said that the witness of the Spirit to adoption into the family of God so strongly implies pardon that we are justified in

asserting that it includes pardon. May we not also, with equally good reason, insist that the permanent, conscious incoming of the Spirit implies a conscious, thorough house cleaning? Jesus said of the promised Paraclete: "Ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." Shall we not know his works also? Again, we have never seen a valid objection to Wesley's use of I Cor. ii, 12, as including the witness to heart purity wrought by the Spirit: "Now we have received . . . the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." This use of the plural "things" implies that the Spirit attests facts other than adoption.

It is asserted in this book that the extension of the revealing power of the Holy Spirit or his testimony beyond the one fact of adoption opens the door to all kinds of fanaticism. But the universal Church -- papal, Greek, and Protestant, at least all which ordain their ministry by bishops -- asks this question: "Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon you the office of the ministry in the Church of Christ?" What is this but the Spirit's witness to a fact, the fact of a call? Does this promote fanaticism? If so, the Church from the apostolic age has been breeding fanatics. The celebrated English preacher, R. L. Horton, in his Yale lectures, tells the theological students in true Quaker style that, unless they by the Holy Spirit get their message from the mouth of God every time they preach, they have no business in the pulpit. Does that promote fanaticism? This advice, if followed, would make mighty men in the pulpit. If our Church could get that kind of preaching she could afford to risk an occasional fanatic.

My conclusion is that all *truth* necessary to salvation is found in the Bible, but that all *facts* a personal nature, such as conviction of sin, pardon, entire sanctification, call to the ministry, and the message demanded by the occasion and the duty of the hour, where duties apparently conflict, facts which could not have been revealed in the Bible, are revealed by the Holy Spirit in answer to the prayer of faith. If in saying this I am called a fanatic I accept the epithet, thankful that I am counted worthy to suffer this reproach.

The Church owes much to men who while living bore that name. There is a call for more of the same sort. Paul asserts that "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." It is alleged that our doctrine, that facts necessary to our own highest spiritual development and usefulness may be indicated to us by the guiding Spirit, opens a wide door for fanaticism. It would were there no safeguards, such as a diligent study of the Bible, and a conformity of our conduct to its principles, a use of our God-given reason, a regard for providential indications, and believing prayer. He who thus does and then trusts God for the guidance of his Spirit has no other way to evince that he is a son of God. If it is said that we may mistake something else for the impression of the Spirit we reply, so may the seeker of salvation mistake some movement of his own feelings for the Spirit of adoption. It would be very foolish for us to refrain from preaching that doctrine which lies at the very foundation of the spirituality of Methodism, lest we give occasion for some mistaken confession of saving faith in Christ.

The longer, I live the more am I convinced that the children of God should seek this guidance more than they do in the perplexities of life. It is quite another thing to make positive assertion that any particular act is infallibly prompted by the Holy Spirit. Here is where fanaticism crops out. Yet it is the privilege of every Christian to commit his ways to the Lord and enjoy the comforting belief that God is leading him by the hand.

However, there is another sufficient witness to Christian purity, the testimony of consciousness.



Is there any advantage in knowing that depravity, the work of the devil in us, is destroyed? Would it not afford a strong safeguard against future defilement in the moment of temptation? We aver that a consciousness of inward purity is strongly protective of purity. Let me give a few homely illustrations. During the administration of Andrew Johnson, whose reconstruction policy was to withhold the ballot from the millions of freedmen, I heard Frederick Douglass, arguing that the elective franchise would elevate the black man, say: "If you wish to keep a man out of the mud, black his boots." If a mother wishes a daughter not to play hide-and-seek among coal carts and tar buckets, she dresses her in garments as white as snow. If the housewife wishes to keep her maid from using a certain china vessel from being used as a slop bowl, she calls her attention to its beauty, costliness, and cleanliness. It is certain that God, the blood of whose Son has made us pure, will apply every motive to keep us pure. The knowledge of inner whiteness is such a motive. Strong indeed is the presumption that this safeguard will not be withheld. It is not -- my soul attests. Glory to the ever blessed Spirit! On the other hand, our missionaries in the slums testify that the strongest grip of the devil against which they are striving in rescue work is the sense of inner vileness in the wretched victims of vice.

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# A Defense of Christian Perfection

by

Daniel Steele

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## XIV.

### Experience Colored and Shaped by Theory.

IN his difficult work of invalidating testimony to instantaneous and entire inward purification our author says: "It is the simple truth that every man's experience, and hence his testimony, is colored and shaped by his theory. He puts his profession in the particular form that his special doctrine tells him it ought to be put in." If this is "the simple truth," then it must follow that no man with a Calvinistic theory will ever testify to a Wesleyan experience. This is contrary to the facts in numerous instances, such as Drs. Finney and Mahan and the host of Oberlin witnesses in a past generation. In thousands of devout Presbyterian homes you will find a devotional library of uniformly bound volumes, among which is the *Life of James Brainerd Taylor*, who while a student in the Princeton School of Theology had an experience of entire sanctification so confirmatory of the Wesleyan theory that his biographers expurgated his written testimony so as to eliminate the most striking Methodist features. There have been many such instances in the past, and there are now in Calvinistic churches, Dutch Reformed, Presbyterian, Baptist, and Congregationalist, ministers, deacons, ruling elders, and a host of members who, in the face of more or less opposition, persist in a Wesleyan testimony. There are also in Arminian churches many so-called gradualists who, contrary to their piecemeal theory of entire purification, have experienced in their great spiritual hunger a sudden and glorious deliverance from the evil still remaining in them.

These experiences, contrary to theory, abound in Methodism. and in the Church of England, in which were Miss Havergal and Admiral Fishbourne, besides many others. In addition to these are the testimonies of some who held the so-called Zinzendorf theory of entire sanctification in the new birth. A notable instance is that of Dr. Francis Hodgson, who was tried about sixty years ago by his Conference for this heresy, and was permitted to continue to preach only after he had promised to abstain from disseminating this error. Later in life, at a national camp meeting, he publicly came forward as a seeker, and found the blessed experience of full salvation, contrary to his life-long theory. The New York Conference, which tried him, at the same session requested Dr. George Peck to write a refutation of this error. Thus originated Peck's *Christian Perfection*, which was for a long time in the course of Conference studies. These instances of Methodists entirely sanctified contrary to their theories not only prove the author's statement untrue, that experience in every case is shaped by theory, but they afford encouragement to other Methodist preachers who have gone astray in their speculations to ask for complete deliverance from the plague of their own hearts. You know, my brethren, that we have a "high priest taken from among men . . . who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way."

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# A Defense of Christian Perfection

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XV.

## Discrediting the Witnesses.

THE author thus kindly apologizes for Wesley's great doctrinal error of Christian perfection in this life as consciously received. He says: "They," that is, Wesley and his colaborers, "were surrounded by a mass of very ignorant followers, whose crude, unreliable, indiscriminating testimonies on the subject they felt bound to accept in lieu of anything better, and to whose rudimentary comprehension they felt bound to adapt their teaching." This is very charitable indeed. But let us name the authors of some of these "indiscriminating testimonies:" William Bramwell, Joseph Benson, Francis Asbury, Hester Ann Rogers, John Fletcher, Mary Fletcher, Thomas Walsh, "whose portrait," says Abel Stevens, "was a facsimile of Jonathan Edwards, whom he much resembled in other respects." There were also associated with Wesley after he fell into the great doctrinal error such men as Thomas Coke and Adam Clarke, who were ensnared by the same delusion and promoted it by their preaching. Charles Wesley, though differing from his brother in some minor particulars, helped this doctrine greatly by his glorious hymns, such as:

Breathe, O breathe thy loving Spirit  
Into every troubled breast!  
Let us all in thee inherit,  
Let us find that second rest.

'Tis done! Thou dost this moment save,  
With full salvation bless;  
Redemption through thy blood I have,  
And spotless love and peace.

The testimony to the witness of the Spirit to entire sanctification is regarded by our author as "of very little value indeed," because "they never define the terms they use in such a way that we can be sure we know precisely what they are talking about. They use the language of the class meeting and the pulpit." Then follows a description of this language not very complimentary to the pulpit, as "exceedingly ambiguous, being wholly of the indefinite, popular sort." The amount of this objection is that the testimony of Christian people is to be rejected because they do not bring their dictionaries to the love feast and class meeting, and speak in the philosophic style of a lecturer on psychology! A third rate lawyer, by cross questioning, can manage to get an intelligible testimony from a witness in the court of a justice of the peace where five dollars is the value in dispute, while a Methodist doctor of divinity, with the opportunity to cross question by the hour in private, is



powerless in his effort to arrive at a spiritual fact of blessed significance.

Those who reject our doctrine of the Spirit's witness to adoption could make exactly the same objection. How would our author meet it? These are the names of some of these discredited witnesses -- John Fletcher, Stephen Olin, Wilbur Fisk, and Frances E. Willard.

Here it is wise to raise the question whether there are not facts on which illiterate people are just as competent to testify as the most learned, such as facts apprehended by the five senses. Any jury would receive the statement of what a man saw, heard, handled, tasted, smelt, although he could neither read nor write. It is just so in respect to intuitive knowledge, what a man is conscious of within his own mind. He hears the Gospel and says that he has a sense of guilt; he believes on Christ and testifies to a sense of forgiveness. Is he not just as competent to testify to these conscious experiences as any professor of psychology in any university? But suppose that our converted illiterate after a time testifies to a sense of inward impurity which gives her distress, and after hearing that there is deliverance from this, as there was from her guilt, she by faith claims inward cleansing, is not Amanda Smith at her washtub just as competent to attest this sense of inward whiteness, whiter than snow, as she was to testify to the pardon of sin? If she persists in this testimony thirty or forty years, and her outer life is as white as she says her heart is, she is by no means to be ruled out of court because she has not a university diploma in her trunk.

What we have felt and seen  
With confidence we tell,  
And publish to the sons of men  
The signs infallible.

One of the marks of greatness in John Wesley, M. A., fellow of Lincoln College and lecturer in Oxford University, was that he was willing to sit at the feet of unlearned and obscure men who had been taught of God the deep things of Christian experience, that he was willing to journey, part of the way on foot, to Herrnhuth, and, listen to four sermons of Christian David, a carpenter, who was twenty years old before he had even seen a Bible, being a zealous papist who, before his conversion, had crawled on his knees before images, performed penances, and invoked departed saints. Why did the Oxford graduate seek the instruction of the unlettered *Bush Preacher*, as persecuting priests and Jesuits sneeringly called him? Because Wesley believed that there are things of the greatest value "hidden from the wise and prudent, but revealed unto babes." He was willing to become a babe that he might get this revelation. Lord Bacon opened the gate to the procession of all the modern sciences when he taught, men to throw to the winds their proud Grecian theories about Nature, and to humble themselves as little children and ask the simplest questions of Nature, and thus get at a series of facts leading up to great principles by induction.

Wesley was a spiritual Bacon, asking questions of spiritual men and women, however humble, in order that he might find the gate of a spiritual religion and lead millions in all lands, and in all future generations, through it with joyful praises and glad hallelujahs. He found it -- praise the Lord! Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth before it utters one word depreciatory of this great spiritual instaurator, because, passing by the wise men after the flesh, the mighty, and the noble, who could not help him in his search after spiritual truth, he descended to men of low estate, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom. Here he found hosts of witnesses of the experience of God's uttermost salvation. I honor him for his Baconian method of research, questioning and cross-

questioning and spending much time in examining witnesses one by one, then deliberately summing up the results thus: "The testimony of some I could not receive; but concerning the far greater part it is plain (unless they could be supposed to tell willful and deliberate lies), 1. That they feel no inward sin, and, to the best of their knowledge, commit no outward sin ; 2. That they see and love God every moment, and pray, rejoice, give thanks, evermore; 3. That they have constantly as clear a witness from God of sanctification as they have of justification."

The same characteristic distinguished Dr. Channing. He was deeply interested in the study of spiritual phenomena in the experiences of uneducated men and women remote from the influence of Christian culture and sectarian theories of salvation. He often attended the Sunday night social meeting in the Bethel of Father E. T. Taylor in Boston. He was eager to hear the personal religious experience of illiterate men, sailors of all nationalities, longshoremen, coal heavers, and wharf men and their wives, who had been converted in the Mariners' Bethel. He said he cared not to hear the echoes, those who repeated hackneyed phrases, but he was desirous of hearing the voices of original testimony, "everyone in his own tongue speaking forth the wonderful works of God." He inquired their names, sought an introduction to them, invited them to his study, and sometimes sent his carriage for them. He was in the habit of questioning them closely by the hour respecting their previous religious knowledge, creed, and theory; to find out how much of their experience could be ascribed to human influences, and how much must be regarded as the work of the Holy Spirit. This was done not in the spirit of skepticism, but of earnest desire to arrive at the truth. Both Wesley and Channing were wise in their selection of the best field for their investigation. They both showed true greatness in their high appreciation of humanity in its low estate, without the glitter of wealth and culture.

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# A Defense of Christian Perfection

by

Daniel Steele

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XVI.

All the Saved are Sanctified.

"THAT all the saved are sanctified and that there are no unholy children of God ought to be rung out constantly from the pulpit and prayer meeting." The writer of these words was not oblivious of Paul's words to the "brethren," "babes in Christ," in Corinth, whom he was sorely puzzled to classify in either of the two characters that he had just described, the natural man and the spiritual man. He cannot call them natural, because they have life as babes in Christ; and he cannot call them spiritual, because they are so largely carnal. "But," says Dr. Mudge, "they are for all that, in the main, spiritual and saintly and sanctified; that is, set apart for the service of God." What a pity that Paul did not have the wisdom to say these complimentary words to his converts, "in the main spiritual." It would have relieved our good brother from the necessity of flatly contradicting the great apostle who cannot call them spiritual, and who strongly intimates that his Galatian converts also have in them "the flesh lusting against the Spirit," whom he exhorts to go forward to the point where the flesh is crucified with the passions and lusts (Gal. v, 17, 24). Says Dr. Whedon:

The class so severely reprehended and even menaced by Paul in the First Epistle to the Corinthians are held by him Christians, but faulty Christians, who needed to ascend into a higher level of holiness. From this it follows that there may be 'sin in believers.' Not every sin forfeits regeneration, but it dwarfs the spiritual stature and lessens the glorious reward.

The advice, "To ring out from the pulpit and prayer meeting that all the saved are sanctified and that there are no unholy children of God" is rather difficult advice to follow, because we do not know who are saved and who are holy children of God among those who have been baptized at our altars and members of the Church, all of whom imagine that they are saved. I should prefer to sort out those whom I am to pronounce sanctified, fearing lest if I should tell this to all Church members I should get such a reply from some of them as a zealous Plymouth Brother received when he asked a rough-and-ready sinner, "Do you believe the Bible? Yes." "Do you believe that Jesus died for you? Yes." "Then you are saved." The wicked fellow had the good sense to reply, "Don't tell it around here, for the folks will think you are lying." I think we should constantly remind our members that they are by profession following the holy Christ, have received holy baptism, and if truly born of the Holy Spirit they have begun a holy life, and that they should, by a constant use of all the means of grace, be pressing on unto perfection, and that it is their glorious privilege, just as much as that of all itinerant Methodist preachers, "to be made perfect in love in this life." Our author's purpose of promoting holiness would have an excellent safeguard if he would accept the distinction hinted by



Miley, and Elaborated by Professor Beet, that the holiness to which the justified are called is objective, and that which they have realized is subjective. Hence the need of urging Christians to that real, inherent, and personal holiness to which the word "saint" points.

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# A Defense of Christian Perfection

by

Daniel Steele

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XVII.

## Sanctified Parents of Depraved Children.

OUR author is not satisfied with Wesley's declaration, "Sin is entailed upon me, not by immediate generation, but by my first parent;" and he controverts Dr. Miley's statement, that "a gracious state, achieved through the supernatural generation of the Holy Spirit, is not transmissible through natural generation." He insists that "whatever nature or state we have, however it originated or was superinduced, whether by the good Spirit or the evil spirit, can be and must be transmitted." He adds: "The only sufficient and satisfactory reason that we have been able to find, why no child is begotten or born without some degree of depravity, is that there are no parents wholly free from it." Will not perfectly sanctified parents have perfectly holy children? This was a conundrum proposed to Wesley by an opponent of Christian perfection, and quite imperfectly answered by him. The doctrine of Wesley may nevertheless be true, although an objection to it has not been answered satisfactorily. There is no doctrine of orthodoxy against which some objection has not been made. Dr. Samuel Johnson says, that "infinite space is either a plenum (full of matter) or a vacuum; there are objections against both theories, yet one of them must be true." Heredity involves mysteries such as this: Parents, with dark complexion, jet black hair and eyes, have a child of light complexion, red hair, and blue eyes. The parents have transmitted qualities they did not possess, but which on research are found to have belonged to some remote ancestor. Thus racial depravity, may have been transmitted by parents in whom it was not then existent. How? This is a Mystery.

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# A Defense of Christian Perfection

by

Daniel Steele

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XVIII.

Exegesis.

To sustain his theory of successive acts of sanctification "up to light," our brother quotes 1 John 1, 7: "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." This is his exegesis: "It is not something finished in the past and left behind; but a perpetual present, 'cleanseth,' empowereth now." This distinction between a continual and a momentary and finished cleansing is doubtless founded on the Greek tenses. Though this fact is not expressed by the author it is by many others. It is supposed that John used the present tense to denote repeated cleansings or "empowerings" of the same believer. But it is more reasonable to suppose that the successive cleansings relate to successive persons all along down the ages, as each believer apprehends by faith his full heritage in Christ. There is abundant confirmation of this position in New Testament Greek. In Matt. x, 8, "Cleanse the lepers," the present tense cannot mean a series of purifications of the same leper, but the instantaneous cleansing of each successive leper met by the twelve apostles. In Matt. viii, 2, 3, the aorist tense is used: "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus ... touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed." This use of the present to denote a momentary act on a series of persons is seen in Rom. iii, 24: "Being justified [present tense] freely by his grace." Here continuousness of the decisive act of pardon of one is not implied, but the forgiveness of many in succession. In Westcott and Hort's text, Matt. xxviii, 19, the present tense of "baptizing" is used to denote successive individuals. In Rev. xiv, 13: "Blessed are the dead who die [present] in the Lord." This cannot signify continuous dying, but a succession of dying saints. Says Professor Joseph Agar Beet: "A gradual process is not necessarily implied in the present participles of Heb. ii, ii, 'For both he sanctifying and they being sanctified are all of one,' nor in x, 14, 'By one offering he hath perfected forever [provisionally] them that are being sanctified.'" Says the same erudite scholar, now at the head of a Wesleyan School of Theology: "It is worthy of notice that in the New Testament we never read expressly and unmistakably of sanctification as a gradual process, or, except, perhaps, Rev. xxii, 11, of degrees and growth in holiness." The exception reads thus in the Revised Version: "He that is holy, let him be made holy still." Says Alford: "The saying has solemn irony in it; the time is so short that there is hardly room for change; the lesson conveyed in its depth is, 'Change while there is time.'"

The reader will note that Professor Beet leaves no basis in the New Testament for the successive sanctifications of the same person in this life to stand upon. What does he say about sanctification after death? He says that while "salvation is expressly said in Rom. v, 9, 10, to await completion in the future even for the justified, this is never said of sanctification." This is not the declaration of an intense and bigoted partisan "clinging to the skirts of Wesley," but of a liberal and independent annotator who widely differs from Wesley's teachings respecting the nature of holiness, and takes an



agnostic position respecting the time of the entire annihilation of "the inward forces of evil," whether at death or after death. Our author has found out that this will be when the saints are raised and glorified. But he gives us no proof texts. He asks: "What is the truth, what the error, concerning the second blessing theory of entire sanctification as commonly taught?" This is his answer: "We are not of those who deem it altogether erroneous or altogether correct." After exhibiting himself as thus standing on the fence he jumps off on the negative side and fights the affirmative tooth and nail, declaring that "the whole second blessing experience, as commonly taught," that is, as removing depravity, "had no place or trace in the Bible." He then quotes several commonly cited proof texts and declares that there is it not the slightest suggestion in them of the peculiar doctrine to maintain which they have been so strenuously laid hold of." To this we reply that they all imply, first, that the persons addressed as saints, brethren, and believers have not attained perfect holiness, and, secondly, by the use of the aorist tense, this perfected holiness may be obtained by a definite and decisive act." As He which called you is holy, become [γενήθητε, aorist imperative, setting forth the completeness with which this holiness is to be put on -- *Alford*] ye yourselves [not by imputation, in a proxy] also holy in all manner of living " (1 Peter i, 15). Thus persons who are addressed as the elect and begotten again and in sanctification of the Spirit are exhorted to become holy by a decisive act, not by an indefinite series of acts.

"The God of peace himself sanctify [aorist] you wholly " (1 Thess. v, 23). The brethren to whom the Gospel came "in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance" are presented in prayer as subjects for a decisive and instantaneous entire sanctification. He employs a once-used Greek word for "wholly," found nowhere else in the Greek Bible, to express his conception of the thoroughness of this cleansing. He then specifies the three components, spirit, soul, and body, as being preserved "entire" (a twice-used word in the Greek New Testament). In what part depravity could be lurking after this prayer should be answered and the purifying fire had descended is beyond my comprehension. The prayer grasps a decisive and instantaneous purgation. The same remarks apply to 2 Cor. vii, 1. Being already sons and daughters unto God, they are now commanded to cleanse themselves of all filthiness which finds expression through the body, and of all that inheres in the spirit even when disembodied, pride, unbelief, envy, etc. This cleansing is once for all, since the aorist is used. Moreover, a period of preservation afterward strongly implies that it is now in this life and not at death or the resurrection.

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XIX.

Love and Perfect Love the Same.

THE author labors very hard to prove that love and perfect love in John's first epistle are exactly the same. He says : "Every child of God, in having God's love, has perfect love." He assumes that "perfect love" is always divine love; that is, God's love to us. "God, as it were, takes a portion of himself and infuses into our being, thereby making us 'partakers of the divine nature.' And this nature is always the same, pure and perfect." The phrase, "as it were," saves the author from the pantheistic assertion that we are scraps of God. Whedon and Alford explain "partakers of the divine nature" as becoming "like God in holiness and all his moral nature." Alford's note on 1 John ii, 5, is: "It is manifest that 'the love of God ' must be our love toward God, not his love toward us;" and our author's exegesis "is manifestly alien from the context," the sum of which is that "the perfect observation of his commandments is the perfection of love to him." Everyone who continuously keeps [present tense] God's commands is perfected in love. This is rarely, if ever, true of babes in Christ. This, then, is not "precisely the same as to say that every child of God, in having God's love, has perfect love." The idea that the adjective "perfect," the biggest in the New Testament, is a meaningless expletive, in the First Epistle of John, is a novelty in exegetics which the theory of our author has driven him to invent. Let us apply it to other texts: iv, 7: "Everyone that loveth perfectly is born of God." This rendering would be a very wet and cold blanket for a newborn babe whose love is feeble and fitful. Another blanket still more frosty is iv, 18 : "He that feareth has no love," and hence is no Christian at all. Again, iv, 8: "He who does not [perfectly] love does not know God, for God is [perfect] love." In iv, 17, the rendering of perfect love as "God's love to us" is " forbidden by the whole context." *Alford*. Moreover God's love cannot become perfected, for it is always perfect. Our friend's exposition of 1 John is a conspicuous failure, so far as he attempts to prove that there is no difference between love and perfect love. His declaration that perfect love is God's love to us was very early made by Beza to rob the Roman Catholics of a proof text for their doctrine of perfection by keeping the three counsels of perfection -- chastity, in the sense of celibacy, poverty, the gift of all possessions to the monastery or nunnery, and obedience to the ecclesiastical autocrats placed over them. We are inclined to think that some modern expositors are swayed from the correct exegesis by a desire to wrest this text from the advocates of Christian perfection found among the Protestants.

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XX.

## No Distinct Classes in the New Testament.

WE are told in this book that "the New Testament churches are nowhere separated into the two distinct classes . . . known as 'the merely justified' and the 'sanctified.'" In his Epistle to the Corinthians Paul, after describing the natural man and the spiritual man, attempts to classify his church members in Corinth as all of them spiritual. But his good judgment and conscience would not allow it. If that phrase, "merely justified," had been in vogue, I think he would gladly have used it of a class who were having a disgraceful church quarrel over the selection of their next preacher. In the absence of that designation the apostle had to invent another not quite so complimentary -- "babes in Christ" and "carnal." We charitably believe that there were at least a few adults in Christian character whom he could call "spiritual." In that case, there were two quite distinct classes. When Paul writes to the Philippians that he would station a preacher there, if in the absence of Timothy he had a man likeminded with himself, who would take genuine care of them, he makes the sorrowful statement that all the Christian ministers with him "were seeking their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." It seems that Paul made this odious distinction, a few in whom self was crucified, and others whom he calls brethren -- "the brethren which are with me salute you" -- who are pilloried in his immortal epistle as self-seekers. I should prefer to be called "merely justified." But two distinct classes exist. Wesley never made a distinction so offensive to the less spiritual class.

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XXI.

## A Kind of Second Blessing Needed by the Church.

THE author who speaks disparagingly of the "so-called second blessing" makes the following candid admission:

We wholly agree with the good brethren who are leading in this movement, that the great mass of the members of our churches are in a very unsatisfactory condition and need a further work of purification wrought upon their hearts; that it is their privilege and duty to be living, day by day, a life without condemnation and with the fullness of love governing all their words and actions. We further agree that, in order for them to reach this most desirable state, a crisis must, in most cases, be brought on very similar to what they went through at conversion.

In promoting this crisis we are curious to know just what would be the target at which believers are to be directed to aim; for appropriating faith always grasps something definite. Shall we invite them to come forward to pray to God "to sanctify them wholly," after the style of Paul, or to seek a "further work of purification," after the fashion of J. S. Inskip, who used to invite those who believed in gradual sanctification to "come and get forward a good bit today?" Which aim is best adapted to call forth the strongest faith -- definite heart purity in its completeness, or an indefinite further work of purification? The advice to those who seek "a further work of purification wrought in their hearts" is found on page 166: "They must repent of their sins" -- good advice to the unregenerate and to backsliders. For "whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin." Then there must be consecration "a great deal more detailed and complete than when their sins were first pardoned." "It only remains to believe that God accepts that which is given." On what ground this faith rests is not stated, probably on the supposed perfectness of the consecration, which may be a great mistake. All is human thus far, for the work and testimony of the Holy Spirit are not mentioned as the basis of this faith of assurance. But does the seeker of "a further work of purification" receive this desired blessing? This is not asserted by this spiritual instructor, who says that "God receives the penitent offerer into a new and tenderer relation, and fully empowers him for all the service to which he will be called," not fully nor partially purifies. He leads the seeker of purity to empowerment and there leaves him. It would be profitable to know what this new relation to God is. It certainly is not sonship, for they were children of God when they began "a further purification." It cannot be holiness, for how could he know that he is perfectly holy up to knowledge, if neither the Holy Spirit nor consciousness is competent to testify to entire sanctification? Is it easier for either of them to testify to a partial work than it is to a complete work ?



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XXII.

## Retrocession a Prerequisite of Sanctification.

THE theory of successive partial sanctifications it up to light," but never reaching the extinction of depravity, seems to imply successive backslidings after every cleansing:

When justified, every person is, in the relative or comparative sense, entirely justified. And whenever, at any subsequent point, after a season of retrocession, he comes fully up to his light and once more walks in unclouded communion he becomes again entirely sanctified, in this lower sense.

Thus our author confounds entire sanctification with what has been called being reclaimed from spiritual decline. Any acquaintance with the law of spiritual progress shows that only live, growing, and intensely earnest Christians grasp the prize of inward purity. In fact, Wesley discourages preaching Christian perfection to those who have retrograded and are indifferent to spiritual advancement. This is his answer to the question, "In what manner should we preach sanctification?" "Scarce at all to those who are not pressing forward," or "to those who are always drawing rather than driving." The good sense of Wesley in this matter is in striking contrast with the crudity of our author, who would make "a season of retrocession" a preparation for entire sanctification "in the relative sense."

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XXIII.

## Entire Sanctification a Limit to Growth.

THE conception of entire sanctification as a boundary line beyond which growth in holiness is impossible has been very widely spread, especially in Calvinistic circles. We are sorry that our author, whose education was under Arminianism of the best type, should indorse this view in these words : "Where one is entirely freed from depravity or sinfulness or evil there can be no more growth in holiness or goodness." This would be true were holiness a mere negation of sin, but it is more than this, infinitely more. In its positive quality it is self-devotement, an inexhaustible spring of thought, energy, and progress. It is true that Wesley locates Christian perfection at the point of time when proneness to sin is eradicated. It is also true that his assertion that growth in holiness is more rapid after that point is not contradictory, but eminently philosophical when we consider the positive side of this blessed experience. This growth in self-devotement is also attended by a decrease, not of depravity, but of susceptibility to sin in the form of temptation; for as long as we are in probation we are all within gunshot of the devil. But to a soul rapidly moving Godward it is more and more "a spent ball -- no harm is done," as Washington at Yorktown said to General Knox when he grasped his arm to draw him out of the range of a musket ball which rolled to his feet.

There is implied throughout this book the erroneous idea that the Wesleyan doctrine is not promotive of growth in holiness after entire sanctification instantaneously wrought by the Holy Spirit. The author says that many have been impressed with "this weakness of the second blessing theory;" that it "seems to promote the feeling that about everything of consequence has been obtained, and that self-gratulation is the main thing in order for the rest of one's days." Some of our Episcopal friends allege the same objection against an instantaneous new birth -- that it is rested in to the detriment of future growth, and that growth into regeneration is more favorable to growth afterward. We Methodists admit that there may be exceptional instances of resting idly for "forty years" in a sudden translation out of darkness into God's marvelous light, as there are blossoms suddenly bursting into beauty and fragrance which never yield any fruit. But true followers of Wesley urge men to immediate repentance, and assure the penitent believer that he may here and now, while at the altar, consciously pass from death into life and receive the Spirit of adoption, crying, "Abba, Father." They do not believe that in so doing they are laying the foundation of an unprogressive Christian life, but rather that a clear conversion, with a date to it, is the birthday of an active, testifying, growing Christian. The same is true of the instantaneous completion of the spiritual life by the extinction of the hereditary propensity to sin. It is the inspiration of a robust and ever-expanding life, because the source of feebleness and decay has been removed. This is sound philosophy. Perfect love to God is perfect love to men, awakening ceaseless activity for their

salvation. Healthful activity promotes growth in strength.

This book says that there is "a weakness in the second blessing theory" because "it makes no suitable provision for perpetual advance and offers no goal of attainment." Let us see whether the same objection does not lie against the theory of a definite and "full empowerment for service." It is thus portrayed:

Thus resting in this comfortable assurance, all his anxieties, which were inseparable from a partial consecration and an imperfect faith, being at an end, he has perfect peace, abiding joy, and meetness for the Master's use. This will be a momentous era in his life, an epoch from which he will very naturally date as being almost a fresh conversion.

But will not this "fresh conversion" also promote "the feeling" ascribed to the second blessing, "that about everything of consequence has been obtained, and that self-gratulation is the main thing in order for the rest of one's days?" We fail to see the superiority of this theory, in affording motives to growth, to the Wesleyan doctrine which, after entire sanctification, urges to "perfecting holiness" objectively, while the new theory urges to a progressive subjective sanctification without the prospect of ever reaching it in its entirety till the trumpet of the resurrection sounds.

Again, it is said that "there is not a particle of proof, either in Scripture or reason, that the second blessing is a finality entirely removing all depravity left after regeneration." Depravity is not a scriptural term, but there are terms which must include what it signifies in its accepted meaning. One of these is "the old man," which "the saints and the faithful in Christ Jesus," that is, the regenerated, are supposed to have "put off" (aorist) once for all, and yet they are afterward commanded "to put away lying" and stealing and impure speaking, and all bitterness and malice. The fountain from which these bad things flow must be a kind of "depravity" of which they were to be divested here in this life in order that they may be "kind to one another, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. iv, 22-32). The new birth had bound "the old man" and sentenced him to death by crucifixion (Rom. vi, 6) and possibly had nailed him to the cross, but had not yet thrust a spear into his heart. The same doctrine is taught in Col. iii, where the persons addressed are assumed to "be risen with Christ" and to be regenerate, and yet various propensities to sin linger in them which they were to "mortify" (aorist), to kill, not to be perpetually choking down and repressing. This looks very much like a second experience more effectual than the first. A study of the Greek tenses in this chapter is a confirmation of the doctrine of a final crisis of purification after entering into newness of life, especially verses 5, 8, and 12.

If there is in Paul's epistles any synonym for depravity it is "the flesh," when used in a bad sense. That this exists in the regenerate, and is to be put entirely away in the present life by an instantaneous and entire purification, is taught in 2 Cor. vii, 1, taken with the preceding verse. "Having therefore these promises," or things promised, having become "sons and daughters," "let us cleanse [aorist] ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit." This is a thorough purgation of the whole nature, removing the seed of sin which finds expression in sensual forms, and which may exist independent of the body in the spirit only, as pride, malice, and unbelief. The adhortative form, "let us cleanse," does not imply the impurity of the writer, but a rhetorical softening of the command.



Just what depravity there would be left to be put away at the glorification of soul and body united, after "all filthiness of the flesh and spirit" is cleansed, it is difficult for me to see.

In Gal. v, 17, we have a struggle going on in the regenerate before one of the contestants is slain, "the flesh lusting against the Spirit." In verse 24 the crucifixion of the flesh is the end of this intestine war. It is evident that Paul here presents the ideal of a true Christian in the present world after he has through faith in Christ entirely crucified the flesh. Many exegetes, doubtless influenced by the general prevalence of an imperfect type of Christianity, are inclined to say that Paul describes a character never completely realized in this life, when he writes, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the passions and lusts." Rather, the apostle portrays all Christians on earth at their climax, being viewed in their concrete actuality, having appropriated their full heritage in Jesus Christ.

In Heb. xii, i, this exhortation is given to believers : "Let us lay aside ... the sin which doth so easily beset us." Delitzsch calls this "an inward inclination. Our first duty is to cast off sin as an indwelling evil, a weight, a burden, a cumbersome garment or tormenting chain." He is not speaking of a guilty past which has been forgiven, but an "evil inclination" existing after the new birth which we are to "lay aside" (aorist) by a definite and decisive act once for all. This looks very much like "a finality entirely removing all depravity after regeneration."

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XXIV.

## Irrelevant Proof Texts.

COMPLAINT is made of "unwarrantable perversions of Scripture to which the special advocates of this theory (the Wesleyan) find themselves driven. The utmost violence is continually done both to the text and the context." This is a sweeping accusation brought against a whole class of writers, not against some more zealous than wise in the promotion of this doctrine and experience. The author well knows that some of the strongest men in Methodism have specially advocated this doctrine, beginning with its founder, the scholarly Oxonian, and that they used strong and pertinent proof texts, some of which he quotes on page 171 in a lump, and then makes this brief comment on them in the gross that they contain "no note of time whatever, and not the slightest suggestion of the peculiar doctrine to maintain which they have been so strenuously laid hold of." Any jury of twelve laymen with a common school education would decide that these texts all relate to the present life and not to the resurrection; and any jury of candid Greek scholars, noting the aorist tenses, would give a unanimous verdict that the sanctification was not a continuous series of acts, but a decisive work, done once for all. While slurring over these great texts, he finds room to amplify on irrelevant texts to the extent of several pages.

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XXV.

## No Sins of Ignorance.

OUR author says, "Unavoidable infirmities and ignorances need no expiation." He could not have read Heb. ix, 7, in his Greek Testament, nor in the Revision, just before writing that sentence: "Not without blood which he offers for the ignorances of the people," or " errors," as in the Authorized Version. Nor could he have read Heb. v, 2, nor Lev. iv, 13: "If the whole congregation of Israel sin through ignorance, and the thing be hid from the eyes of the assembly, and they have done somewhat against any of the commandments of Jehovah . . . When the sin, which they have sinned, is known, . . . then they shall offer a young bullock for the sin." In this chapter there are precepts respecting the sin of ignorance of "a soul " and of the anointed high priest, who must first offer sacrifice for his own ignorances. The great day of atonement assumes that he and "his household" and "all the congregation of Israel" have need of expiation (Lev. xvi, 17), not because they are all conscious of willful sin, but their involuntary "errors " in the presence of the holy God need the screen of the atonement. All sins not committed "with a high hand," in open defiance of the known law of God, "but through human infirmity, or with a half-consciousness only of their moral turpitude, and such as when recognized as sins, are truly repented of" (Delitzsch), were atoned for by the blood of sprinkling. What CREMER calls "unconscious sin, as well as sin wherein consciousness is passive," is included in "sins of ignorance." Saul of Tarsus found forgiveness because his sins were committed in ignorance, not with a high hand. He did not know that Jesus is the true Messiah.

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XXVI.

## The Absolute Right Unknown by the Masses.

THE constantly recurring assertion that perfection in love, loyalty, and heart purity cannot exist in this life, and that we must be marred by depravity till we are glorified will please every agnostic, every skeptic, and every enemy of Christ. They will all take off their hats and do obeisance to the Christian minister who boldly proclaims that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a splendid ideal, which cannot be realized in the perfect deliverance of believers from all depravity in this wicked world, where it is most needed. Its effect on souls hungering for purity of heart must be discouraging, and, I fear, disastrous. Many will be bewildered, many misled, and not a few disheartened to the extent of abandoning the attempt to secure the prize of a heart

Perfect and right and pure and good,  
A copy, Lord, of thine.

Again, there is a perpetual confounding of "the absolute and abstract right" with the practical and concrete right. While showing that Christians cannot be perfect till they have a very large intellectual development, he asks this question:

Will anybody claim, either for himself or another, that he can in this world always know precisely what the absolute and abstract right is -- that right which lies calmly behind all the blunders and partial knowledges of the creature, as the infinite blue lies back of the floating clouds and the changing planets?

I answer for myself and all the children passing my window on the way to school, "Yes, we all know." For these changeless principles, called by Whewell "immutable morality," are few indeed. They are the axioms of pure ethics, as follows: Is it right to intend to injure anybody? Is it right to hate a benefactor? Is it right to punish innocence? We all answer, "No! No!" We and all the human family say, "No!" Such questions as these do not stand in the way of Christian perfection even in the kindergarten. Is it right for me to shoot my neighbor's dog?" "Yes" and "No" the children say. "Yes, if the dog is mad," and "No, if you are mad." We have now struck the questions of practical life called by Whewell "mutable morality;" the answer must depend on circumstances to be considered by our differing judgments. Two men loving God with all their hearts, using all the light available, may cast different ballots into the ballot box or in the jury room. The only question is, "Have I done my best in the fear of God and with an eye to his glory?"





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XXVII.

## Subjective Purification.

THE sum and substance of this book is well expressed on page 158:

We are not yet any of us fully saved, and in the largest meaning of the term not yet completely redeemed, not yet made perfectly whole; not yet in the complete or absolute sense entirely sanctified.

If he means by this that the complete inner cleansing finds through all the subsequent earthly life a progressive realization in the conduct and character, he says what all Wesleyans admit. Dr. John Miley, the latest Methodist authority in theology, says: "It is the *definite* work of entire sanctification to complete the *subjective* purification." Not all my readers may know Webster's definition of "subjective" -- "Pertaining to or derived from one's own consciousness." Our latest standard theology teaches the definite work of entire sanctification wrought in the consciousness of the believer who appropriates his full heritage in Christ. Then he adds what Wesley always insists upon: "But the perfection or maturity of the Christian graces is not an *immediate* product of the subjective purification." In other words, the objective or outward perfection depending on intellectual growth is not immediately manifest, but is a progressive work which will continue so long as the moral judgment is capable of improvement. The involuntary mistakes and defects which appear in the meantime, this book alleges, are proofs of remaining depravity. This we stoutly deny, since that term in its established use, as we have seen, denotes "perverseness," "corruptness," "general badness," and "absence of religious feeling and principle."

In attempting to prove "that all who are justified are also sanctified, or made holy, clean, and pure," the author admits that "inferior elements may still have some footing in the soul, so that the total outcome may be more or less marred ; but the divine love, which is the leading, controlling element, is not in itself subject to deterioration or adulteration." This has a Calvinistic aspect, and teaches the final perseverance of the saints. What the author calls divine love is not our love to God, as Alford insists, but his love to us, "a portion of himself infused into our being." In this way, since God's love is always perfect, every newborn babe in Christ has perfect love. But how the author adjusts this doctrine to the contradictory universal consciousness of Christians before they are sanctified wholly does not appear. The testimony to love, weak, imperfect, and vacillating, is constant and painful. Again, we must bear in mind "that the writers of the New Testament call believers 'saints,' without thought of the degree of their Christian life or the worthiness of their conduct. In the Old Testament the priests were holy, whatever might be their conduct." -- *Beet*. Hence the same persons

may be nominally "sanctified in Christ," and really "carnal." Their objective or titular holiness should become subjective, real, personal, and perfect.

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XXVIII.

## The Author's Experience.

WE are pleased with the frankness of the personal testimony of the author respecting advanced Christian experience. This is commendable. Many have no marked transition in their experience after justification; others, if they have it, are not free to declare this wonderful work of God. Not so with our author. His experience of sanctifying grace, quite fully narrated, does not confirm the Wesleyan theory of Christian perfection. This negative testimony would have more weight were we assured that the conditions of that theory had been perfectly fulfilled. There are experiences of regenerating grace which do not accord with the doctrine of instantaneous justification attended by the witness of the Spirit. We ascribe this to some failure to meet the conditions. Our brother's experience was largely, if not wholly, under the influence and impelling power of the doctrine which he now rejects. Whether the new doctrine of his book would have motive power sufficient to induce believers to seek definitely for a partial sanctification remains to be seen. By this we mean that the Christian public have not seen this fact, although the author may have seen it in the churches which he serves. If the book contains any testimony on this point it has escaped our notice.

There are normal experiences of Justification, and there are abnormal ones also, which are demonstrated to be genuine by a godly life. The same is true of entire sanctification. The experience of the author of this book, which is abnormal to the Wesleyan pattern, should be universally received as illustrating the wonderful variety in the operations of the Holy Spirit. But when an abnormal experience is generalized, and made into a doctrinal theory antagonizing that under which the normal experiences occur, it is natural and reasonable that there should be opposition to such an attempt. This accounts for the many criticisms of the book entitled *Growth in Holiness*, while there were no criticisms of the author's experience when it was previously published and widely read, and "many glorified God" in him. Experiences are God's work and are always orthodox; theories are of man's devising and are sometimes erroneous. The doctrine of Christian perfection in this life, "the formal principle of Wesley's theology and the inmost spirit and essence of Methodism" (Dr. Warren), may be erroneous, and the doctrine of successive partial sanctifications never extinguishing depravity may be true. By their fruits let them be judged. Let the latter theory be substituted for the former when it has raised up more saintly men and women, and has communicated a mightier upward impulse to our common Christianity throughout the whole world.

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XXIX.

## Baptism With the Holy Ghost.

THE chapter with this caption may have relevancy to some modern advocates of Christian Perfection, but is not relevant to the doctrine as taught by Wesley and Wesleyan standard theologians. For rhetorical reasons, Wesley used at least twenty-five phrases to indicate this state of grace. But among these, "the baptism of the Spirit," "the fullness of the Spirit," "the coming of the Comforter," are not found. In speaking of "a second change," of being "saved from all sin and perfected in love," he says: "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.'" It seems that Charles Wesley was not so careful in this particular, since John quotes him as saying to him: "Your day of Pentecost is not fully come; but I doubt not it will; and you will then hear of persons sanctified as frequently as you do now of persons justified." Fletcher does not positively affirm the entire sanctification of "the multitude of them that believed" in the happy "days of Pentecost." He says:

While many of them are perfect in love, many might have the imperfection of their love only covered over by a land flood (which Americans call a freshet) of peace and joy in believing.

Hence we conclude that the phrase, baptism or fullness of the Spirit," may mean something less than entire sanctification.

Such baptism may be what we may call ecstatic fullness of the Spirit, the freshet just mentioned, which temporarily conceals but does not remove the evils of the heart. Sometimes this flood of divine power may prostrate the body without cleansing the soul. I once saw in a prayer meeting in my father's ample kitchen a young woman lying prostrate and motionless till midnight, under what the Methodists of that time called "the slaying power," whom, within less than six months, I saw on her way to a ball where she danced all night. It was a temporary emotional fullness of the Spirit, leaving no permanent moral effect. Again, there may be what we may call a charismatic fullness of the Spirit. The person, whether a real Christian or not, may be filled with some extraordinary gift or charism of the Spirit. In his Sermon on the Mount our Lord Jesus teaches that such a gift may exist where there is no grace, and never was: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out demons? and in thy name wrought miracles? Then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Wesley's



note is, especially to preachers of the Gospel, both searching and admonitory. They may "write books, and preach excellent sermons; " " even the working of miracles is no proof that a man has saving faith." In his note on faith to remove mountains he says: "But it is certain the faith which is here spoken of does not always imply saving faith. Many have had it who thereby *cast out devils*, and yet will at last have their portion with them." In 1 Cor. xiii, 1-3, Paul implies that a high degree of miracle-working faith may exist without love. This faith is named as one of the nine charisms or extraordinary gifts of the Spirit mentioned in 1 Cor. xii, 8-11. Says Dr. John Robson, in his recent lucid book, *The Holy Spirit, the Paraclete*:

It is a very solemn and awful fact that there may be enduement of the Spirit without life in the Spirit, service in the kingdom without being born into the kingdom. Hence, we have such a character as Balaam endued with the highest prophetic gifts of the Spirit, and yet living a life of enmity with God and his people. Hence, we have to the present day occasional instances of men of high evangelistic power, a means of blessing to others, and yet living in sin. Our Lord tells us that there will be many such.

But there is another kind of fullness of the Spirit which must imply entire sanctification -- the permanent gracious presence in the soul of the Holy Spirit, in his fullness, not as an extraordinary gift, but as a person having the right of way through soul and body, having the keys to even the inmost rooms, illuminating every closet and pervading every crevice of the nature, filling the entire being with holy love. This we may call the ethical fullness, or fullness of righteousness, to distinguish it from the ecstatic and the charismatic fullness. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." But as these adjectives are not used in the Scriptures, the phrase "fullness of the Spirit" is not a certain proof text of entire sanctification. Yet it is quite certain that the baptism or fullness of the Spirit -- as a grace, not as a gift -- never occurs till after the new birth by the Spirit. It is certain that it indicates a marked transition of uplift in the spiritual life, which some call endowment for service, and others entire sanctification. I have said that Wesleyan theologians do not ground the doctrine of Christian perfection, as initiated by entire sanctification, on this class of proof texts. Yet, in popular phrase, for the sake of variety in testimony, these texts are largely used. Whether we read Acts xix, 2: "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" as Bengel, Meyer, and others do, or "when ye believed," as the Revised Version does, is immaterial. It is evident that the persons addressed as disciples and believers were lacking some great spiritual blessing necessary to the perfection of their Christian character and to their highest efficiency. What a blessing to universal Methodism if this question should be earnestly pressed home upon all our Church members, without waiting to determine to a hair's breadth just exactly how much it means.

Our author's chapter on the baptism of the Spirit might have been included in his discussion of irrelevant texts, on none of which do our standard theologians ground the doctrine of Christian perfection. It is to be regretted that he did not take more space for his explanation of the texts considered as relevant.



# A Defense of Christian Perfection

by

Daniel Steele

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XXX.

## Sanctification Instantaneous and Entire.

THE Wesleyan doctrine of evangelical perfection is assailed at three special points -- its entireness, its instantaneousness, and its certification. These are so related that they stand or fall together. The proof of any one of these points strongly supports the other two. The demonstration of two makes the third a necessary inference. While our theologians differ on minor points, there is a complete unanimity as to the possibility of instant and entire purification in this life, in answer to a faith fully developed and adequate. We present the following conspectus and consensus of all our standard theologians on two of these points

Mr. Watson says: "The general promise that we shall receive 'all things whatsoever we ask in prayer believing,' comprehends, of course, 'all things' suited to our case which God has engaged to bestow, and, if the entire renewal of our nature be included in this number, without limitation of time except that in which we ask it, in faith, then to this faith shall the promises of entire sanctification be given, which, in the nature of the case, supposes an instantaneous work immediately following upon our entire and unwavering faith."

Dr. Raymond: "It is obvious that the work of complete sanctification is both progressive and instantaneous. The Spirit may take time in preparing a holy temple for a habitation of God, but he enters and takes full possession -- fills the temple with his presence in a single instant of time. The work may be long in the doing, but there is an instant when it is done, completed, finished."

Dr. Summers, in his special treatise -on *Holiness*, says that indwelling sin, "when it exists in the heart of the regenerate, is a hated and subdued principle which, by gradual mortification or by an instant and powerful exercise of faith, is entirely destroyed."

Dr. Pope: "There is no restraint of time with the Holy Ghost. The preparations for an entire consecration to God may be long continued or they may be hastened. Whenever the seal of perfection is set on the work, whether in death or in life, it must be a critical and instantaneous act."

Dr. Ralston: "Whenever we comply with the conditions prescribed in the Gospel -- that is, whenever we exercise the requisite degree of faith, be it one day or ten years after our conversion -- *that moment God will 'cleanse us from all unrighteousnes.'*"

Dr. Miley: "Through the divine agency the soul may be as quickly cleansed as the leper, as quickly

purified in whole as in part. We admit an instant partial sanctification in regeneration, and therefore may admit the possibility of an instant entire sanctification. Such a view of sanctification does not mean that there need be no preparation for its attainment. The necessity of such a preparation is uniformly held, even by such as hold strongly the second blessing view. . . . Let it be recalled that the question here is not the maturity of the Christian life, but the purification of the nature. For the attainment of the former there must be growth, and growth requires time. But while the subjective purification may be progressively wrought, *it is not subject to the law of growth*; it is so thoroughly and solely the work of God that it may be quickly wrought."

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# A Defense of Christian Perfection

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Daniel Steele

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XXXI.

## Genesis of the Doctrine of Entire Sanctification.

IN the order of time this doctrine was formulated in the history of Methodism after the direct witness of the Spirit to adoption had been experienced by the Wesleys and made prominent in their preaching. This is the natural order. Believers are born of the Spirit before they are wholly sanctified by the Spirit. "In 1729 two Young Men in England, reading the Bible, saw they could not be saved without holiness, followed after it, and incited others so to do." Their way was dark. They evidently believed that holiness attained by good works was the path to justification. In 1737 they saw, likewise, that men are justified before they are sanctified; but still holiness was their object. In 1738 Charles Wesley was made a partaker of salvation from guilt through faith only. Three days afterward John Wesley "felt his heart strangely warmed and that Christ alone had taken away his sins." In 1739 he tentatively propounds the possibility of "entire freedom from sin." In 1744 some began to profess Christian perfection, "but Wesley was extremely cautious in receiving their testimony." -- *Tyerman*. "It appeared exceedingly strange, being different from any that I had heard before." -- *Wesley*. In 1745 this doctrine was clearly defined.

Up to 1761 Wesley preached it most explicitly and strongly; and in 1762 "the remarkable work of sanctification was rapidly spreading throughout the whole of the United Kingdom," and Wesley, in true Baconian style, was questioning hundreds of professors, one by one, and carefully recording the answers. This was the genesis of this doctrine: first, the theory was educed from a long and careful study of the Scriptures ; and, secondly, it was confirmed by a critical examination of many witnesses, some of whose testimonies, not being sustained by holy lives, were rejected. In 1763 fanatics arise "by the device of Satan to cast a blemish upon a real work of God," and Wesley's friends desert him, yet he persists in preaching and publishing books on this doctrine. In 1765 was published *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*. In 1768, standing almost alone in defense of this truth, he writes to his brother: "I am at my wit's end with regard to two things -- the Church and Christian perfection. Unless you and I stand in the gap in good earnest, the Methodists will drop them both." We have long admired the heroism of "*Athanasius contra mundum*."

In the establishment of this vital doctrine there is ground for an equal admiration of "Wesley against the world." Says he: "Blessed be God, though we set a hundred enthusiasts (fanatics) aside, we are still encompassed with a cloud of witnesses who testify in life and in death that perfection which I have taught these forty years! This cannot be a delusion, unless the Bible be a delusion, too; I mean, loving God with all our hearts, and our neighbors as ourselves." In 1785 he says: "As soon as any find peace with God, exhort them to go on to perfection. The more explicitly and strongly you press



believers to aspire after full sanctification, as attainable now by simple faith, the more the whole work of God will prosper." The reader will note that this was written a year after Wesley selected our Articles of Religion from the Thirty-nine of the Church of England, in the manner of doing which some attempt to find proof that he had abandoned the doctrine that a residue of depravity remains after regeneration.

In 1790, a year before his death, he styles "this doctrine 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." His last recorded utterance on this subject was about three months before his triumphant death, in a letter to Dr. Adam Clarke: "To retain the grace of God is much more than to gain it; hardly one in three does this. And this should be strongly and explicitly urged on all who have tasted of perfect love. If any can prove that any of our local preachers or leaders, either directly or indirectly, speak against it, let him be a local preacher or leader no longer. I doubt whether he should continue in the Society." The following observations we record:

1. It is evident from these facts that the doctrine of entire sanctification in this life as a work of the Holy Spirit, consciously inwrought by faith, was providentially evolved out of the Holy Scriptures and the testimony of many trustworthy witnesses.
2. That there was in the mind of Wesley a steady but cautious advance till this doctrine was fully stated.
3. That there was not the least wavering in his adherence to it till the day of his death, although his mind was constantly open to any new light which might convict him of error. It was in reference to this doctrine that he frankly said to a very able opponent: "I seek two things in this world -- truth and love ; whoever assists me in this search is a friend indeed."
4. That in the estimation of the founder of Methodism the doctrine of Christian perfection earnestly and clearly preached to believers was the vital center of this spiritual movement, the unconquerable energy which surmounted all obstacles and vanquished all its opposers. The self-sacrifice of his preachers, enduring poverty, facing persecution, and cheerfully enduring incessant and unrequited toil, could be generated and sustained by nothing less than a perfected holiness totally extinguishing selfishness, and fully endowing and equipping for the most effective service.
5. That this experience is the confessed basis and cause of the lofty altitudes in holiness attained by those eminently spiritual men and women whose biographies adorn Methodism.
6. Lastly, if this doctrine, which has wrought out such blessed results, is false, it follows that it is no longer true that an evil tree cannot produce good fruit, and that we must now teach that believers are sanctified, not by the truth, but by falsehood. For the theories devised to eliminate the alleged errors of the Wesleyan doctrine are confessedly barren trees, such as holiness by imputation, Christ's holiness being a substitute for ours; the identity of the new birth and perfected holiness; gradualism, or the insensible approach to entire sanctification, never consciously grasped; and, lastly, entire sanctification up to light to be repeated over and over with the increase of knowledge, but washing away depravity only when soul and body are glorified. Men gather no grapes from these thistles.



# A Defense of Christian Perfection

by

Daniel Steele

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XXXII.

## A Cloudy Outlook.

I AM not a pessimist nor a friend of pessimism; I am not a prophet nor the son of a prophet; yet something like the burden of a prophet is laid upon me, constraining me to cry aloud to the Church of my father and mother -- the Church in which I had my first and my second birth -- the Church which nurtured me in her schools, and commissioned me to preach in her pulpits and to teach in her universities -- a Church to which I owe a debt too large for me to pay. It is exceedingly painful to note in this Church the first and the second indication of spiritual decay. The first has long grieved me; it is the neglect of those vital truths which nourish a stalwart spiritual life. The silence of the pulpit these many years respecting the full heritage of the believer, which is nothing less than is expressed in the words of Dr. McClintock, "The holiness of the human soul, heart, mind, and will," has been broken at last by the voice of a son of the Church in the open and loud repudiation of that doctrine which is "the inmost essence" and "elemental thought" of Methodism. This is the second token of spiritual decay, the second milestone on the downward road to spiritual death. The fact that this voice sounds out through the very trumpet which was made for the heralding of the glorious evangel of Christian perfection greatly aggravates my sorrow. Yet I am not surprised. The Church that incorporates in itself so large a segment of worldliness will sooner or later reject every doctrine hostile to a love of the world. "Whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." Says Professor Herron:

Except by its manifest subserviency to wealth, nothing more clearly indicates the immoral influence of religion than the contemptuous meaning which has come to be attached to the word holiness. By the holy man is meant, in popular thought, simply no man at all; while the word primitively meant a whole human man, normally fulfilling all the natural functions of his life in their wholeness.

Socrates, in his defense before his judges, says that men just about to die are sometimes inspired to prophesy. I am rather inspired with a foreboding of future ill to the Church of my choice. I see a century hence a Church of twenty millions of united Methodists in America. It is strong to resist "Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion," but it is weak in converting power and few seek entire sanctification at her altars. The alarming truth of eternal punishment for the finally impenitent has long been practically discarded as unworthy a God of goodness. The doctrine of immediate and entire sanctification in this life was first unfashionable, then the wise men of the Church found it to be unphilosophical, and a patient study of the Bible found it to be unscriptural, having not a single text to rest upon. How opportune this discovery! It came conveniently at the moment when the



progressives in the Church wished to rid themselves of a doctrine displeasing to worldliness, and which barricades the way to the theater, the card table, and the ball room. The Discipline long since expunged the crude and impertinent rule against these harmless recreations. Methodist orthodoxy has now for many years been measured by the Articles of Religion, alone under which Universalism can be preached and Christian perfection be scouted, with no ecclesiastical courts to molest. Methodist unity of doctrine is gone. Instead, there is a high Church magnifying the Ritual, a broad Church magnifying Reason and prating of progress in liberal thought, and a low Church with whom the converting and sanctifying power still abides.

Wesley is now a name to glory in, not an authority in doctrine, not an example to be followed in holy living and self-sacrificing evangelism. Self-styled progressives in the Methodist ministry are warning their conservative brethren against the baneful influence of his name in retarding free thought. A few days ago, at a farewell supper to a baptized and ordained infidel this archheretic warned his clerical brethren not to let the name of Channing obstruct the progress of liberal thought. No man can read the preliminary chapter of this book as carefully as I have read it, again and again, without the feeling that if it attains a general circulation its publication will mark the epoch of doctrinal disintegration and accelerated spiritual decay. The spirit of this book from beginning to end may be expressed in the warning to the Unitarians, by substituting the name of Wesley for Channing -- beware lest the name of Wesley obstruct the advance of liberal thought.

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# A Defense of Christian Perfection

by

Daniel Steele

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XXXIII.

## A Sunny Outlook.

THERE is an alternative outlook before American Methodism. The prayer of Dr. McClintock for the continuance of our spiritual triumph another century, through our faithfulness to the "very elemental thought" of Methodism, may be answered. The Head of the Church militant has a great work for Methodism in the generations to come in his conquest of the world. The extent of this work will be measured not alone by our millions of members, their social standing, wealth, and intellectual culture, but by their loyalty to Christ awakening and increasing a spiritual life strong enough to withstand the rising tides of worldliness threatening to submerge the Church.

Since everything depends on the vigor of the spiritual life, how may this be promoted? We answer:

### 1. FAITHFUL PREACHING.

By the use of the same weapon by which our first conquests were made, by the earnest preaching of truths which awaken spiritual life in dead souls. There must be a proclamation of the alarming truths of the Gospel, the nature and punishment of sin. Retribution must be preached as Christ the model preacher proclaimed it. We cannot err if we employ, in a tender and sympathetic spirit, the same emblems without exaggeration that he employed. He knows what mighty motives men in all ages need to induce them to repent and believe on him. The human race will never outgrow the necessity of using the Gospel imagery of retribution.

The most intellectual generations of men will need the same truths presented in the same figurative language as was preached by Jesus Christ to a less enlightened age. There is nothing temporary in the Gospel to be laid aside when men have attained a higher degree of enlightenment. The heavenly maiden, Truth, will neither be outgrown, nor will the metaphors and the parables, the robes in which she is arrayed, ever be out of fashion. In these days when we have voluminous and almost encyclopedic treatises on Homiletics, our younger preachers may overlook the brief disciplinary statement of the best method of preaching: "1. To convince; 2. To offer to Christ; 3. To invite; 4. To build up. And to do this in some measure in every sermon." Those who keep these rules in mind will find them helpful in resisting the temptation to subordinate the pulpit to such selfish ends as the display of literary culture, classical erudition, or oratorical abilities. In the last analysis self and Christ are the only themes of preaching. Self is so subtle that it may unconsciously become the real, while Christ is the ostensible theme. Worldly men dislike the alarming truths of the Gospel. Preachers who court the favor of such hearers are tempted to smooth the tongue, and to preach a



soft and easy way of salvation. It requires Pauline courage to declare the whole counsel of God, keeping back nothing that is profitable, however unpalatable to lovers of worldly pleasure and enemies to God.

Under such preaching sinners will be awakened, and will ask the all-important question, "What must I do to be saved?" The answer is as important as the question, for destiny hinges on receiving a right or wrong answer and acting in accordance with it. Before directing him to believe on Christ as both Saviour and Lord be quite sure that he is truly penitent and is disposed to take sides with God against his sins, from which he must now turn away forever. Genuine faith is possible only where sincere repentance exists. But real repentance is a cup so bitter that many partially awakened sinners are strongly inclined to find some substitute. Just at this critical point there is a danger which Wesley and the first generation of Methodist preachers avoided -- the danger, in revivals of religion, of exalting unduly acts of the awakened which fall short of the scriptural conditions of salvation. They had no altar service, nor anxious seat, nor card-signing. It is customary now in many cases to place slight emphasis on repentance, and restitution where it is possible, and to urge to acts which may be easily done, without repenting of sins as dear as the right hand or the right eye. It is easier to go forward to an altar as a seeker than to cut off that right hand sin. Says Professor Austin Phelps: "The fact is a very significant one that impenitent men are never exhorted in the Scriptures to anything preliminary to repentance. But one thing is the center of all biblical appeal to the ungodly -- that is, repentance and faith, a complex yet a single act."

What, therefore, is it advisable to do? Shall we abandon the modern practice of applying to congregations the customary tests of a desire to begin a Christian life? By no means. But they should be kept in the background as secondary, and not be thrust into prominence, tempting the half-awakened impenitent to substitute for the abandonment of his sins some act not essential to salvation. Let the alarming, searching, convicting truths of the Gospel be copiously poured out, day after day, before any such test is applied.

Let this matter be handled cautiously, so as to guard men as much as possible against deceptive substitutions followed by spurious professions of faith in Christ. Coming to an altar or "anxious seat" should be permitted to the truly penitent as a privilege, a mode of confessing repentance toward God, rather than held up to the impenitent as the chief duty to be done. Canvassing the assembly by persons exhorting individuals to immediate submission to God's command to repent, if done in a prayerful, tender, and gentle spirit, can never result in any harm. This is far different from urging unwilling and impenitent men to a step in no way decisive of salvation, and succeeding by dint of importunity at the button-hole, if not at the coat collar. The earlier Methodist style of preaching was to storm the castle of impenitence till the inmates of their own accord ran up the white flag of unconditional surrender. I should like to see a return to this style of spiritual warfare all through our churches and religious encampments, and to note the results.

## 2. SAVING FAITH.

Let there be a universal return to the Wesleyan definition of saving faith on the part of a soul truly penitent and submissive to God. It is the laying hold of his Son as able and willing to save now without the seeker's doing or suffering anything more. The Holy Scriptures are the ground of this faith, the Old Testament being the prophetic record and the New Testament the historic record of this wonderful Saviour. In this attitude of assent to Christian truth and consent to Christ's



enthronement over the heart, and of reliance on him alone to save, let the penitent seeker continue to seek till he has notification direct from God of his adoption into his family. Let this be the advice given at all our altars: Through faith in our Lord Jesus seek to be saved till you know that you are saved.

Largely through the influence of a school of evangelists whose theology is Calvinistic, whose view of the atonement is that it is an unconditional substitute *in* punishment for the sins of the elect, instead of a conditional substitute *for* the punishment of the sins of all mankind, misleading and pernicious advice is given at some of our altars. I do not know by what better name to call it than the syllogistic inference, thus: "The Bible says that he who believes on Christ is saved. Do you thus believe? If you do, you are saved on the testimony of the word. No other testimony is required." The great errors involved in this are: (1) That the seeker, and not God, is the sole judge of the saving efficacy of his faith; (2) that faith is its own evidence; and (3) not the results of faith, assurance of forgiveness by the Holy Spirit and consciousness of the new birth.

Now it may be that saving faith is exercised while going through this syllogism. But the outcome will probably be a state of great doubt and perplexity, a hope without experience, its proper basis, and a profession of salvation without its possession. This style of reasoning will do for that Calvinist who imagines that he by some means has gotten a glimpse of "the secret register of the elect, hidden in the bosom of God," and has seen his name written therein. But for the rest of mankind there is no repose of soul, no present comfort, no hope for the future in this groundless inference. It is groundless, because the word, written many centuries ago, cannot contain the assurance of my personal pardon, nor can it be inferred from the fact of the atonement, which is only the provision for my conditional pardon. The two theories may be thus illustrated: 1. A prisoner in his cell desiring pardon is given a copy of the Revised Statutes, which describes how pardon may be obtained. After months of wearisome research he finds not his personal pardon, and is in deep despair. 2. By the other system, he petitions the governor till there comes from the executive chamber a special messenger bearing his personal pardon, signed and sealed. Now he mounts up to the highest joy.

This brings us to our next doctrinal peculiarity, and the secret of our evangelistic power:

### 3. DIRECT WITNESS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Dr. Abel Stevens deems this to be the distinctive doctrine of Methodism, the immediate contact of the human spirit with the Holy Spirit, by the touch of faith, awakening to spiritual life, giving assurance of pardon, and impressing a sense of the reality of God and of spiritual things. By the Spirit it pleased God to reveal his Son in Saul of Tarsus to qualify him to preach the faith he once destroyed. By the Spirit dwelling in the consciousness of Peter he was made bold to charge upon the Jewish officials the murder of their Messiah King. On the day of Pentecost there came a Person capable of entering into the inner sanctuary of every believing soul and pouring out the unspeakable riches of his grace, making them all kings and priests: kings because they may henceforth supremely rule self, the most difficult kingdom; and priests, because they now have direct and continual access unto God, the prerogative of the high priest only on only one day of the year. The dispensation of the Spirit transcends in glory all preceding eras, not excepting that of the incarnation of the Son of God. Jesus implies this when he asserts that it is expedient for him to go away in order that the Paraclete may come. He has come to stay till the end of the world. One of his chief offices is to cry in every believer's heart, "Abba, Father." This was the characteristic of conversions in the day of

primitive Christianity and in the day of primitive Wesleyanism. It is the characteristic of modern Methodism wherever the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit is clearly preached and generally believed. Conversions take their type from the faith of the people, and this in turn takes its stamp from the utterances of the pulpit. The instrument used by the Spirit is the truth relating to Jesus Christ as the atoning Saviour. Where this is lacking the Spirit cannot impart life to dead souls. Where the truth is diluted with human philosophy weaklings may be born into the kingdom. Uncertainty in the pulpit will produce hazy conversions, if it produce any at all. Positive, clear, constant, and sharply defined presentations of revealed truth by a man in deep sympathy with him who is the impersonation of truth, will, by an invariable spiritual law, be followed by clear-cut conversions, because the Spirit now has the use of a perfect instrument. "The sword of the Spirit is the word of God:"

Wesley testifies that ninety-nine out of every hundred converted under his preaching and that of his "assistants" could tell the time and place of their entrance upon the new life. The prominence given to the person and offices of the Spirit, especially his testimony to adoption, had laid down in the hearts of Wesley's hearers a basis of faith in God for an instantaneous and assured translation out of darkness into light of every penitent believer in Jesus Christ. The decline of this doctrine is invariably attended by dubious conversions and spiritual weakness and waning joy. Let the theme of the Holy Spirit be fully restored to all our pulpits, and let him be enthroned in all our churches, and cry in all our hearts, "Abba Father," and the complaint of spiritual poverty, "O my leanness, my leanness!" will be no longer heard. The doctrine of the direct witness of the Spirit to adoption, indisputably scriptural, was revived by Wesley and made fundamental to the spiritual life in his preaching. So far as our observation extends the advocacy and dissemination of this doctrine is still the mission of Methodism. It is rarely heard in other pulpits. In non-Methodist writers of books on the Holy Spirit it is not advocated as the privilege of all believers. This assertion is verified by an examination of all the literature of this theme written during the last hundred years. Hence our belief that Methodism has been set for the defense of this vital doctrine. The spirituality of the whole of Protestant Christianity depends on our faithfulness to our trust. A revival of this doctrine in all our pulpits would awaken no doctrinal controversy, for universal Methodism has never had any theoretical differences in respect to this subject. It would tend to tone up the spiritual members, to reclaim the backslidden, and to awaken the nominal, who never were regenerated. It would be the best possible preparation for the restoration of another vital doctrine which can be successfully preached only to the truly spiritual members who are aspiring to the higher altitudes of Christian experience.

Vital to the future success of Methodism is the answer to the question: What shall be the qualification for membership in our Church? Will it be safe to receive those who have sustained a good moral character during the term of probation, but have no testimony to Christ's saving power, and no evidence of a change of heart? Will it not crowd the Church with baptized lovers of worldly pleasure rather than lovers of God? Will not they be brought into an unfortunate relation to saving truth when they have Church membership as a shield against appeals to repent and be converted?

These are very serious questions. I would not make a cast-iron rule which would exclude all who cannot testify to the witness of the Spirit. But this should be the aim of the pastor, to bring all up to this point, a knowledge of sins forgiven by direct or inferential evidence. Let the instruction of probationers emphasize this doctrine of the direct and the indirect witness of the Spirit. In cases of doubt let the term of probation be extended till there is good evidence of the new birth.



#### 4. THE REINSTATEMENT OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION IN THE PULPIT.

This implies that this theme of discourse has become nearly obsolete. For this there are several causes. Some preachers think they are not called to preach beyond their own experience. Many of the laity think it an impeachment of their present spiritual attainments to be urged to ascend to loftier heights. Some have fallen into self-indulgences which heart purity would require them to put away. Others who are at ease in Zion dislike to be aroused to activity. Some are swayed by prejudice; for we live in an age in which "holiness" is a term of reproach because of an occasional faulty professor, and for other reasons, especially a repugnance to its requirements. In addition to this is the necessity of addressing an unsorted assembly in such a manner as to edify as many as possible, young and old, saint and sinner. This seems to require the omission of a theme interesting to only a very few Christians who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and the presentation very often of evidential, elemental, and ethical truths, milk instead of strong meat. Says Joseph Parker: "Perhaps there is some excuse for the preacher, seeing that he is conventionally compelled to address all classes in a common speech, instead of being permitted to address each class in its own language, and according to its own degree of spiritual enlightenment." This difficulty may be obviated by occasional addresses on advanced spiritual themes; by a few words of this kind in many sermons; also by introducing this subject in the social meetings and pastoral visitations in the homes of the members. Thus the way may be opened for proclaiming "the whole counsel of God."

This suggests that every church should be like a university, with instruction suited to every grade of believers. Where the pastor cannot instruct all these classes, he can provide competent instruction for the highest grade. A group of churches in a city could easily maintain a believers' meeting led by some pastor or person appointed by the pastors concerned, and meeting in one of the churches. Thus hungry souls would be fed within the fold without being compelled to incipient schism by hiring a hall in which to learn the highest possibilities of grace, while all the churches near by are unused. There is neither good sense nor good statesmanship in a management which thrusts from beneath the watchcare of the pastor souls earnestly inquiring for their full heritage in Christ.

If our young converts, the fruit of our revivals, were by proper instruction, oral and by tracts and books, urged to seek a still greater experience, even that perfect love which casteth out all fear, a much larger part of them would be saved to the Church, and be developed into efficient workers and strong burden bearers. There is just as much propriety in arranging for the instruction of advanced believers as there is in providing competent professors for senior classes in college. Away, then, with the unreasonable prejudice against the Pentecostal assembly, or the meeting for Christian Perfection.

The pastor who withholds sympathy from the little company who seek the full heritage in Christ is as unwise as a general at the front who looks with distrust upon a certain loyal regiment and withdraws from it his guidance because the soldiers speak a slightly different language from the rest of the army.

Again, pastors should either feed all their flock or should appoint those who will give them wholesome supplies of food. Sheep left to browse about the highways may eat poison and die. Sheep of the fold of Christ should not be left to care for themselves, to be led astray by ignorant or designing guides. If a preacher is experimentally incompetent to preach truths relating to advanced



Christian experience, he can secure some one in whom he has confidence to supply his lack of service, and not by his neglect tempt the hungry souls to listen to instructors of doubtful competency, who may lead them far astray from Christ and his Church.

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# A Defense of Christian Perfection

by

Daniel Steele

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XXXIV.

## A Hopeful Sign.

AN exceedingly hopeful sign of the times is the great spiritual hunger of the Church recently manifested under the labors of Dr. S. A. Keen, recently called to his reward. After a career of marked success in what he felicitously styled "pastoral evangelism," greatly strengthening the churches blessed with his pastoral services, he felt that he was called of God to a mission to world-wide Methodism. In this mission, largely to the preachers, he held a series of "Pentecostal Meetings" in about seventy Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, including the General Conference of 1892. The cordial reception everywhere given him, and the interest evinced in his services by the preachers and the laity, revealed an earnest desire to realize in their experience the full heritage of the believer in the gift of the divine Comforter. The distinctive Wesleyan doctrine of entire sanctification was not made conspicuous, but was merged in the broad doctrine of the fullness of the Holy Spirit as the supply of the believers' utmost needs. This presentation of the theme was cordially welcomed by many who had been perplexed by the discussions which have distracted the Church relative to Christian perfection. Great numbers thronged the altar in response to his invitation to plant their feet on the uplands of an advanced spiritual experience, by receiving the personal Paraclete to dwell within them, endowing and equipping them for the most effective service.

It was the theory of Dr. Keen that the fullness of the Spirit would, in a great measure, clear away the difficulties that exist in some minds respecting Christian perfection as taught in our standards. In this we think he was right. It would certainly remove all the moral difficulties in the form of prejudice, and a shrinking from entire consecration, while it would so illumine the mind as greatly to dispel the intellectual objections. We are, therefore, justified in drawing this inference from the evangelistic labors of our lamented brother: that the best way to reinstate this fundamental Methodist doctrine in many of our pulpits is to begin with preaching the divinity and personality of the Holy Spirit, and his various offices, emphasizing, especially at first, the witness to adoption which very many of our members have not received. Let this be followed by testimonies from those who know by joyful experience of the direct witness of the Spirit. Thus inquiry into this subject will be awakened, and many will find out what is lacking in themselves, and will be incited to seek the proffered supply. Then may they who have hitherto been fed with milk become able to appropriate the solid food of perfect love.

THE END.

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