

BIBLICAL PERFECTION

By

PETER WISEMAN

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*The Theology of Perfection as Revealed in the
Word of God, Especially in the New Testament
Scriptures*

by

PETER WISEMAN

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Dr. Wiseman is now in full-time evangelism.

To

MAY CATHERINE JOHNSTON

my godly wife
whose life is an outstanding
illustration of perfect love
and
to my children
and
to all lovers of this
glorious truth
is this little volume
affectionately dedicated

THE HOLY SCRIPTURE SAYS:

“The Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou *perfect*” (Gen. 17: 1). “Thou shalt be *perfect* with the Lord thy God” (Deut. 18: 13). “Let your heart therefore be *perfect* with the Lord our God, to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandments, as at this day” (I Kings 8: 61). “And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a *perfect heart* and with a willing mind: for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever” (I Chron. 28: 9). “Mark the *perfect man* and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace” (Psa. 37: 37). “Be ye therefore *perfect*, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matt. 5: 48). “Be *perfect*” (II Cor. 13: 11). “Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man *perfect* in Christ Jesus” (Col. 1: 28). “The law made nothing perfect but the bringing in of a better hope did” (Heb. 7: 19).

* * * * *

THE TWO APPEALS TO PERFECTION

SATAN: “Ye shall be as God knowing . . .”

SAVIOUR: “Ye therefore shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

The first: An appeal to be like God in knowledge, an evil intent, to deceive, to obtain knowledge in a wrong way. . . .

The second: An appeal, a promise, of perfection as God is, a promise of God-likeness in character, a Divine intent for our good and His glory. . . .

PREFACE

IN the realm of the application of redemption the word *perfection* has been misunderstood perhaps more than any other word, unless it would be the word holiness. With some people, one who believes in perfection is a perfectionist, and thereby on his way to a mental institution: a little off!

After all it is not a matter whether there is perfection. There is. The Bible says so. It is rather a matter as to what kind of perfection is meant. What is that perfection which is obtainable in this life? And what is it not?

In the following pages we have commenced with a discussion or definition of terms commonly used in Christian doctrine or theology. Then we have presented a discussion of perfection, seeking to discover the Bible standard of perfection. As to whether we have succeeded, the reader will judge.

If the reader receives the spiritual blessing while reading these pages that the writer did while writing, he will feel that out of his enrichment he has made a good investment. "This also we wish, even your perfection" (II Cor. 13: 9).

PETER WISEMAN

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. . . *God . . . Make You Perfect . . .*

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

“*Make you perfect* in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen.” (Heb. 13: 20, 21.)

I. PERFECTION AMONG BIBLICAL EXPRESSIONS

THE word *Perfection* is frequently used in the Bible concerning man and his character; it is used as not only necessary and essential in order for future blessedness but necessary and essential in order for heart satisfaction, for the highest Christian ethical living, and for the carrying out of the great commission. "A vast evangelistic advance," says Dr. R. Newton Flew, in discussing *Perfection*, "can only be sustained if Christian ideal for this life is steadily set forth in all its beauty and its fulness as being by the grace of God something not impossible of attainment. If this principle be valid, it is likely that the ignoring of it will bring impoverishment and arrest."¹

"Perfection," says S. T. Coleridge, "is one of those terms which, however they may have been perverted to the purpose of fanaticism, are not only Scriptural, but of too frequent occurrence in Scripture to be overlooked by silence."²

"A relative perfection is possible to mortals in this life. We are living below the level the New Testament teaches as normal. Saints could be as common as now they are rare."³

"No word has been the occasion of so much stumbling and controversy among Christians," says Dr.

¹ *The Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology*, by R. Newton Flew, M.A., D.D.(Oxon), Oxford Press.

² *Aids to Reflection*, XII,c.

³ Dr. W. E. Sanster, in a Review of the *More Excellent Way*, by Prof. Turner, *Free Methodist*, June 16, 1953.

Thomas Cook, "as this word 'perfect.' But the term is a spiritual one and is used more frequently in the Bible than any other single term to set forth Christian experience. It occurs one hundred and thirty-eight times in the Scriptures, and in more than fifty of these instances it refers to human character under the operation of grace. . . . Forty-five times the Israelites are commanded to bring sacrifices without blemish, and every time the word should have been translated perfect. By such impressive symbols God would teach that the heart of the offerer must be perfect before Him.

"Opening the New Testament we find the word 'perfect' dropping from the lips of Christ, and from the pen of Paul, seventeen times as descriptive of fitness for the kingdom of God; while the cognate noun 'perfect' is twice used, and the verb 'to perfect' fourteen times. Instead of finding fault with a word which the Spirit of inspiration sees fit to use with such persistency from Genesis to the Epistle of John, should we not rather endeavor to arrive at its true Scriptural meaning."¹

¹ *New Testament Holiness*, by Thomas Cook, pp. 57, 58.

II. PERFECTION AND IMPERFECTIONS

THE PERFECTION OF GOD

“THE holiness of God,” says one, “is not a particular but a universal perfection.” “It is,” says Alfred Cookman, “*the beauty of perfection*. Take it away and you bring a universal stain and blemish upon the Divine perfection. For illustration: without holiness God’s power would be an unholy power, and that would be oppression. Without it, His wisdom would be subtle and cunning, His sovereignty would be tyranny, His justice would be cruelty, His mercy would be foolish pity, His truth would be falsehood.”

If the perfection of which we speak, Biblical perfection, is ours, then our power, if we are masters, will be free from oppression; our wisdom will be free from cunning and duplicity; our authority as parents will be free from tyranny, though firm; our justice will always be tempered with mercy, without compromising the principle of justice; our desires will be pure, desiring nothing apart from God’s plan or will; our affections will be right, being purified; our tempers will be free from any destructive and uncontrollable elements; our words will be becoming a holy person, the oracles of God, gentle, charitable and profitable; our motive will be right, honest motive, though our method may not be so good; our actions will be in harmony with God’s standard as revealed in the Word of God; our lives will be patterned after the wonderful life of the Master, as far as possible as limited creatures. Such a standard of Biblical perfection is possible and should be our standard!

The perfection required of man, then, is not absolute perfection, for that belongs to God. He alone is perfect in this respect. "There is none good but one, that is God." "Created beings and things can be perfect only in a relative sense; that is, according to their nature and after their kind. Men and angels may be approximating toward the perfections of God for all eternity, without the possibility of ever attaining unto them. God, in all his perfections, will still be infinitely beyond their reach."¹

PERFECTION OF ANGELS

The perfection required of man is not angelic perfection, for angels comprise an order of their own. They "excel in strength," those who "kept their first estate" are called "holy." They are distinct from the race of man. They do God's pleasure. "All their native faculties," says Rev. J. Wesley, "are unimpaired; their understanding in particular, is still a lamp always true; hence though their knowledge is limited (for they are creatures), though they are ignorant of innumerable things, yet they are not liable to mistake; their knowledge is perfect in its kind. And as their affections are all constantly guided by their unerring understanding so that all their actions are suitable thereto, so they do every moment, not their own will, but the good and acceptable will of God." With regard to the will of God, however, we pray, "They will be done as in heaven, so on earth."

PERFECTION OF OUR FIRST PARENTS

The perfection required since the fall of man is not Adamic perfection, for that perfection extended to the

¹ Ralston's *Elements of Divinity*, Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, New York, Nashville.

whole man, perfect in every respect . . . mentally, spiritually, and physically. He, doubtless, enjoyed before the fall a perfect body. Psychology usually discusses man in a threefold way—the intellectual, the emotional, and the volitional. When we consider the relation of one to another, and the relation of all to the frail body, the earthly home of the man, it would be folly to claim perfection for either. The physical body is weak and fleshly; appetites and desires must be kept under.

PERFECTION OF CONDUCT

The perfection required of man is not perfection of conduct, for one's conduct may be the outcome of errors in judgment, of ignorance of the right or of even the truth. One's intentions will no doubt be right but his conduct perhaps not so good.

“What is the judgment of all our brethren? Every one may make mistakes as long as he lives. A mistake in opinion may occasion a mistake in practice. Every such mistake is a transgression of the perfect law. Therefore every such mistake, were it not for the blood of atonement, would expose to eternal damnation. It follows that the most perfect have continual need of the merits of Christ, even for their brethren. ‘Forgive us our trespasses.’ ”¹

Paul gloried in his infirmities. He surely did not glory in sin (II Cor. 12: 9). There is a difference. It is strange, though nevertheless true, that there is constant need of a clear distinction between the experience of Christian perfection and a hundred and one things which are often incidental with it. God does not through the provision of redemption remove from man that which He gave him in creation. Furthermore, because

¹ *Minutes of Early Methodist Conferences.*

of the effects of the fall upon man, there are many infirmities we shall have to bear till we receive a new body in the resurrection of the just.

Our limitations as human beings will be our portion through life. "We are not perfect in knowledge. We are not free from ignorance; no, nor from mistake. We are no more to expect any living man to be infallible than to be omniscient. We are not free from infirmities, such as weakness or slowness of understanding, irregular quickness or heaviness of imagination. Such in another kind, are impropriety of language, ungracefulness of pronunciation; to which one might add a thousand nameless defects, either in conversation or behaviour. From such infirmities as these none are perfectly freed till their spirits return to God."¹ Paul in his letter to the Corinthians said, "I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling" (I Cor. 2: 3). Again, he said, "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?" (II Cor. 11: 29). "In due season ye shall reap if ye faint not?" Yes, we ever need to say, "I had fainted unless I had *believed to see* the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living" (Psa. 27: 13). One may be "cast down but not destroyed." For various causes there may be *depression*, mental and spiritual; *discouragement*, though never from God; righteous anger (Eph. 4: 26); hate in a good way (Rev. 2: 6); thoughts of evil yet not evil thoughts; deep feelings because of a wrong, but deeper still the love of God toward the offender; often thoughts that must be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ (II. Cor. 10: 5). If Christ learned obedience by the things which He suffered, we surely have need of lessons. There will be *self* but sanctified; *fear* and *passion* but legitimate. Nor does perfection give us a

¹ *Christian Perfection*, by John Wesley.

new body. It will give us a new victory to be sure. But we will still have the same nerves, and they may be badly strained even to the point of being diseased. There will be mental and spiritual limitations as well as physical. There will be *concerns* over situations and circumstances but not to the extent of worry.

It is well to remember that perfection does not save us from the capacity for sin nor from the ability to sin, but it does save us from sin within human personality and enables us to live under the cleansing efficacy of the blood of Christ. It does something to our capacity in view of the Divine indwelling, also something for our ability in the sense of enablement to not do what we should not do and to do what we should do.¹

PERFECTION NOT SINLESS

The perfection required of man is not sinless. The Rev. John Wesley, who is perhaps the best human authority on this line, said, "I believe there is no such perfection in this life as excluded these involuntary transgressions (mistakes, errors, infirmities, etc.); from which I apprehend to be naturally consequent on the ignorance and mistakes inseparable from morality, therefore sinless perfection is a phase I never use lest I should seem to contradict myself."

Dr. Daniel Steele is perhaps the greatest modern authority on this subject. "Infirmities," says Dr. Steele, "are failures to keep the law of perfect obedience given to Adam in Eden. This law no man on earth can keep, since sin has impaired the powers of universal humanity. Sins are offences against the law of Christ, which is epitomized by John, 'And this is His commandment, that we should love one another' (I John 3: 23).

¹ *Scriptural Sanctification*, by the author, p. 35.

“Infirmities are involuntary . . . Sin is always voluntary . . .

“Infirmities have their ground in our physical nature, and they are aggravated by intellectual deficiencies. But sin roots itself in our moral nature, springing either from the habitual corruption of our hearts or from the unresisting perversion of our tempers.

“Infirmities entail regret and humiliation. Sin always produces guilt.

“Infirmities in well-instructed souls do not interrupt communion with God. Sin cuts the telegraphic communication with heaven. . . .

“Infirmities, hidden from ourselves, are covered by the blood of Christ without a definite act of faith, in the case of the soul vitally united with Him. On the great Day of Atonement the errors of the individual Hebrew were put away through the blood of sprinkling, without offering a special victim for himself. ‘But unto the second (tabernacle) went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people’ (Heb. 9: 7). Sins demand a special personal resort to the blood of sprinkling and an act of reliance on Christ.

“Infirmities are without remedy so long as we are in this body. Sins, by the keeping power of Christ, are avoidable through every hour of our regenerate life. Both of these truths are in Jude’s ascription, ‘Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling (into sin, or as the Vulgate reads, sine peccato, without sin), and present you faultless (without infirmity, not here, but) in the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.’ Jude understood the distinction between faults, or infirmities, and sins. In this scheme of Christian perfection, faults are to disappear in the life to come, but we are to be saved from sins now. A thousand infirmities are con-

sistent with perfect love but not one sin. Thus we see on undisputed authority we may be conscious of human weakness yet well pleasing to God."¹

For one to be tempted does not prove that he has sinned or has sin. The wonderful Christ, the sinless One, was tempted. "A man is tempted," says Saint James, "when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed" (James 1: 14); "lust" means desire, not necessarily sinful desire (for sanctified people are cleansed from sinful desire) but legitimate desire, which may become the occasion of temptation and temptation in turn may become the occasion of sin. "No temptation or evil suggestion to the mind becomes sin," says Rev. J. A. Wood, in his book, *Perfect Love*, "till it is cherished or tolerated. Sin consists in yielding to temptation. So long as the soul maintains its integrity so that temptation finds no sympathy within, no sin is committed and the soul remains unharmed, no matter how protracted or severe the fiery trial may prove."

In his book, *Christian Purity*, Bishop Foster, on page 55, says: "To this most difficult question we answer, sin begins whenever the temptation begins to find inward sympathy, if known to be a sollicitation to sin. So long as it is promptly, and with full and hearty concurrence of the soul, repelled, there is no indication of inward sympathy, there is no sin."

"The Scriptures," says Rev. Thomas Cooke in the book, *New Testament Holiness*, "always discriminate between purity of heart and ripeness and fulness of Christian virtues. The one is the work wrought within us in a moment by the omnipotent power of the sanctifying Spirit, and the other a natural process involving culture and discipline. Purity has reference to kind or quality, but maturity has respect to degree or quantity.

¹ Daniel Steele, *Mile-Stone Papers*, pp. 44-49.

... Holiness is both a gift and a process, and as such is both instantaneous and gradual."

Purity of heart is made possible by the work of the Spirit of God; maturity is the result of years of experience. Purity is instantaneous and is obtained by faith; maturity is reached through trials, tests, experiences. Purity may be considered in the light of quality; maturity in the light of quantity. Purity is purity; maturity admits degrees.

As to the matter of growth in connection with Christian perfection, it may be said that there is growth in grace from the moment of conversion but there must be the act of God to make clean. Dr. Daniel Steele says: "Growth in grace, while accompanied by increasing power to abstain from actual sin, has no power to annihilate the spirit of sin, commonly called original sin. The revelation of its indwelling is more and more perfect and appalling as we advance from conversion."¹ After the work of entire sanctification the soul may grow more rapidly in grace than before, for the simple reason that the chief hindrance to growth and advancement, namely inward sin, is removed from the soul, though the external hindrance remains.

Man did not lose by the fall the natural image of God, his freedom of choice as a person. He lost the moral image of God, but this is restored through Christ, "in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4: 24). Man is the creative work of God. God destroys sin but not the ability to sin. A sinful person may become a regenerate person and a regenerate person may become a sanctified person, a person in whom dwelleth God; but he is, nevertheless, a person with the power of choice as before.

Human personality, then, is unchanged in respect to

¹ *Love Enthroned*, by Daniel Steele, p. 104.

the power of choice, which centers in the will, the capital moral power of the soul. The question is often asked, "How could sin enter after once it is removed?" In answer to this, it may be asked, "How did it enter the first pair in the garden of Eden?" If sin entered the human personality in the garden despite the perfection of body and mind of the original pair, may it not re-enter a cleansed personality, especially with the frailties of this physical body? Indeed! We are not, as we have seen, saved from the capacity for sin nor the ability to sin; but we are saved from the very existence of sin within human personality and we are kept clean by the fact of present, perfect cleansing through the blood on the basis of fellowship, obedience, and faith (I John 1: 7). "If sin is cast out," said Mr. Wesley, "see that it no more enters." On this very point, Mr. Wesley declared his dependence momentarily on the blood, stating that if he did not trust the blood the next moment he would be in darkness, death and hell.

To those, however, who would take the advantage of the expression, "sinless perfection" to excuse themselves in their "sinful imperfection," the timely words of the late Dr. A. J. Gordon, a Baptist Minister, should be reemphasized: "If we regard the doctrine of sinless perfection as a heresy we regard contentment with sinful imperfection as a greater heresy, and we gravely fear that many Christians make the apostle's words, 'If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves,' the unconscious justification for a low standard of Christian living. It were almost better for one to overstate the possibilities of sanctification in his eager grasp after holiness than to understate them in his complacent satisfaction with a traditional unholiness. Certainly it is not an edifying spectacle to see a Christian worldling throwing stones at a Christian perfectionist."

PERFECTION NOT PHYSICAL

In his letter to the Philippians, chapter three, verse 11, Paul speaks of a resurrection of the dead, or out from among the dead; in verse 12, continuing the same subject, he says, "Not as though I had already attained (won) or already have been perfected but I am pursuing, if also I may lay hold for that also which I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus." In verses 13, 14, "The image is that of the runner in a foot race, whose body is bent forwards in the direction towards which it runs,"¹ for the prize, as stated in the aforementioned. In verse 15, there is a different perfection mentioned, a perfection evidently already obtained by some of those to whom Paul wrote: "As many as therefore are perfect should be of this mind." The former is physical, a resurrection from among the dead; the latter spiritual, already obtained by some; the first perfected, the second perfect. A runner is not perfected till he reaches the goal, the prize, but he may be a perfect runner.

PERFECTION'S PRELUDE

After the first "Lord's Supper," perhaps on Thursday evening of Passover Week, and after a long discourse, our Lord offered His great Intercessory Prayer. It was not for the world, but for those whom God had given Him out of the world (John 17: 9), and for all believers (v. 20), that they might be sanctified, and as a result made one as the blessed Trinity is one (v. 21), made perfect in one, that the world may know that the Father had sent His Son (v. 23). They were told to rejoice that their names were written in heaven, and in

¹ *The Epistles of Paul*, by Conybeare and Howson; Marshall, Morgan & Scott, London, England.

this prayer there is revealed the true marks of an experience necessary as a prelude to perfection:

1. *They were given to Christ by the Father*: "The men which Thou gavest me out of the world" (v. 6). And they in turn received and kept God's word: "They have kept Thy word" (v. 6).

2. *They were God's own*: "They are Thine" (v. 9).

3. *They glorified Christ*: "I am glorified in them" (v. 10).

4. *They were kept*: "Those that Thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition" (v. 12).

5. *They were hated by the world*: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world, therefore the world hateth them" (vv. 14, 16).

6. *They were sent by Christ to evangelize*: "As Thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world" (v. 18).

7. *They were given the glory which the Father gave the Son*: "The glory which Thou gavest me, I have given them" (v. 22).

In a study of this great intercessory prayer of our Lord for His disciples, it is well to notice at least a few things involved in the experience for which He prayed:

1. *The fulness of joy*: "That they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves" (v. 13). "Joy unspeakable and full of glory!"

2. *Keeping power*: "That Thou shouldst keep them from the evil" (v. 15).

3. *Divine oneness*: "That they all may be one . . . in us." Note well the nature and purpose of that oneness: "As Thou Father art in me and I in Thee, that they may be one in us; that the world might believe that Thou hast sent me" (v. 21).

4. *Fulness of love*: "That the love wherewith Thou

hast loved me may be in them" (v. 26). "Perfect love!"

5. *The indwelling Christ*: "And I in them" (v. 26). "Christ in you the hope of glory."

The experience of the disciples before "that day" (John 14: 20), thus reveals the necessary prelude to pentecostal perfection!).¹

¹ *Peerless Christ*, by the author, chapter 12.

III. PERFECTION THAT IS BIBLICAL

IN a study of perfection as revealed in the Bible it is well to note at the very outset that dispensational light should be considered. "Noah was a just man and perfect in his generation" (Gen. 6: 9). And it would be unjust to judge Noah's perfection by any other generation but his own. "If perfection," says the writer to the Hebrews, "were by the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?" (Heb. 7: 11). It is very obvious from this statement that the perfection possible and required of this dispensation is much higher than that required under the old dispensation. In his letter to the church at Philippi, Paul said: "Let us therefore, as many as be *perfect* be thus minded" (3: 15). What kind of perfection did Paul mean?

PERFECTION PROMISED

"Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord Thy God" (Deut. 18: 13).

"Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5: 48).

"Ye shall be perfect," says Dr. Samuel Chadwick, "is the way to divinity's throne. The correspondence is not in natural attributes but in moral qualities. Perfection is through sonship, and sonship is by spiritual affinity and moral correspondence. The promise of perfection marks the climax of an ethical development which assumes discipleship as a basis. The law is spiritual, and evil

cherished in the heart is sin. The soul must be clean. Self-sacrifice is the law of life, and every evil thing must be cut off and cast away. Personal wrongs must be borne in meekness, and a cheerful obedience must be given to commands that may be unjustly imposed. A generous excess over exact requirement must mark the conduct, and beneficence must not be restricted to merit and appreciation. These moral qualities are necessary that we may be sons of our Father which is in Heaven (St. Matt. v. 45). To those who are thus sons is this promise of perfection. Capacity does not always attain to realization, but it constitutes an obligation. Correspondence of nature demands correspondence of character. Only they are truly sons who are sons indeed. They shall be as God; not in every conceivable attribute of divinity, nor of equal excellence in degree, but in every moral grace and glory we shall be of one quality with Him. We shall be righteous, merciful, and holy, even as He."¹

According to Paul the specific purpose of the gifts, offices and officers in the church was "for the *perfecting* of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a *perfect* man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4: 12, 13). In his letter to Timothy, Paul asserts a similar position toward the Holy Scriptures: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the *man of God may be perfect*, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II Tim. 3: 16, 17).

The word translated "perfect" in the New Testament when used with reference to moral requirements of the individual, most surely involves the act of God

¹ *Humanity and God*, p. 7: Hodder & Stoughton, London, England.

in the soul whereby sin is cleansed, for maturity in its final stage cannot be expected of any mortal while in the human body. In instances where perfection may stand for the ethics of holiness, the act of God in delivering the soul from sin in order to make such ethics possible, must be understood. Indeed, the expression, "perfect love" indicates clearly that it is the instrument of deliverance, "perfect love casteth out fear" (I John 4: 18), as well as a state of deliverance, "Because as He is so are we in this world" (4: 17). The same law of exegesis, namely the law of context, should be applied to Eph. 4: 13; a passage understood by some teachers to mean maturity. To take this text alone, maturity would be the conclusion, but to take it with the context the meaning is different. Read verses eleven, twelve and thirteen. Verse thirteen, "Till we all attain" (aorist) which indicates a divine act. "The perfecting of the saints," says Dr. Daniel Steele, "is here expressed by a definite and momentary arrival at a point where faith merges into knowledge, where a Saviour believed becomes a Saviour fully realized . . . This transition from faith to full knowledge is a crisis expressed by the aorist. It is when the Paraclete purges the film of inbred sin from the eye of the soul, and Jesus, as a living, loving, glorified, and complete Saviour, is manifested to the spiritual vision. Then the child, the imperfect believer, becomes a perfect man, and reaches the fulness of Christ, that is, the abundance which He has to bestow, a fulness excluding all sin, but capable of eternal increase. That this point is before death is shown by the consequences which follow in the present life, as detailed in verses fourteen to sixteen."¹ Thus the act and the progress, "capable of *eternal increase.*"

¹ *Mile-Stone Papers*, by Dr. Daniel Steele, p. 79.

PERFECTION OF LOVE

“Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love” (I John 4: 17, 18).

These passages reveal the fact that there is a state in which people neither fear nor love God (the unawakened); a state in which they may fear and not love (the awakened); a state where they love and have carnal fear, “He that feareth is not made perfect in love” (the regenerated); a state of perfect love and no carnal fear, “Perfect love casteth out fear.” That is perfection in love.

What was it which made Mary Slessor, who was such a timid girl at home, whose fears made her life a burden, a fearless character in the wildest regions of Africa? It is reported of her that she would not enter a field at home where there was a cow, and the thought of crossing a street almost paralyzed her. But God called her to Africa and fitted her for the work. “One dark night in Africa she travelled through the forest with wild beasts prowling around and continued her journey until dawn because a young girl was sick and needed help.”

Biblical perfection takes into account the measure of man’s capacity and ability. People greatly differ in this regard, and as a consequence differ in the degree of love and service, but in every case it is loving God with all one’s powers. It should be realized that all Divine love is perfect. The perfection of love has reference to quantity rather than quality. The clean heart has more

room for God and the fulness of His love than has an unsanctified heart.

The Rev. J. Wesley submitted the following propositions:

1. "There is such a thing as perfection; for it is again and again mentioned in the Scriptures."

2. "It is not so early as justification; for justified persons is to 'go on to perfection' " (Heb. 6: 1).

3. "It is not so late as death; for St. Paul speaks of living men that were perfect" (Phil. 3: 15).

4. "It is not absolute. Absolute perfection belongs not to men, nor to angels, but to God alone."

5. "It does not make a man infallible while he remains in the body."

6. "Is it sinless? It is not worth while to contend for a term. It is salvation from sin."

7. "It is perfect love (I John 4: 18). This is the essence of it; its properties, or inseparable fruits are rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, and in everything giving thanks" (I Thess. 5: 16, etc.).

8. "It is improvable. It is so far from lying in an indivisible point, from being incapable of increase, that one perfected in love may grow in grace swifter than he did before."

9. "It is amissable, capable of being lost; of which we have numerous instances."

10. "It is constantly both preceded and followed by a gradual work."¹

In this connection it is noticeable that the Rev. John Wesley insisted on the emphasis of divine love. "It is," he said, "loving God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. This implies that no wrong temper, none contrary to love, remains in the soul; and that all the thoughts, words, and actions are governed by pure

¹ John Wesley, *Christian Perfection*.

love.”¹ The sainted John Fletcher says: “It is the pure love of God and man shed abroad in a faithful believer’s heart by the Holy Ghost given unto him, to cleanse him, and to keep him clean.”

In 1769 Mr. Wesley writing on *Christian Perfection* said: “I mean

1. Loving God with all our heart;
2. A heart and life all devoted to God;
3. Regaining the whole image of God;
4. Having all the mind that was in Christ;
5. Walking uniformly as Christ walked.

“If anyone,” concluded Mr. Wesley, “means anything more or anything less by perfection, I have no concern with it.”²

“How shall we avoid setting perfection too high or too low?” asked Mr. Wesley. “By keeping to the Bible and setting it just as high as the Scriptures do. It is nothing higher and nothing lower than this: the pure love of God and loving our neighbors as ourselves. It is love governing our tempers, words, and actions.”

“Another ground of these and a thousand mistakes is the not considering deeply that love is the highest gift of God; humble, gentle, patient love; that all with visions, revelations, manifestations whatever, are little things compared to love, and that all the gifts above mentioned are either the same with, or infinitely inferior to it.

“It were well you were thoroughly sensible of this, the heaven of heavens is love. There is nothing higher in religion; there is, in effect, nothing else; if you look for anything but more love, you are looking wide of the

¹ John Wesley’s Works, Vol. VI, p. 500.

² *The Call to Christian Perfection*, by Samuel Chadwick, pp. 11, 12: Beacon Hill Press, Kansas City, Mo.

mark, you are getting out of the royal way. When you are asking others, have you received this or that blessing? If you mean anything but more love, you mean wrong; you are leading them out of the way, and putting them upon a false scent. Settle it then in your heart, that from the moment God has saved you from all sin, you are to aim at nothing more, but more of that love described in the thirteenth of Corinthians. You can go no higher than this, till you are carried into Abraham's bosom."¹

Henry Drummond: "Only give me love, pure, burning love, and loyalty to Him, and I shall climb from law to law, through grace and glory to the place beside the throne where the angels do His will."

"The greatest of these is Love" (I Cor. 13: 13).

The whole plan of redemption is but an unfolding of love. God "so loved" that He gave His only Son. Christ so loved that He gave Himself. His sacrifice is a proof and an illustration of the Father's love. "The gift of Christ to man," says Dr. A. Clark, "is the measure of God's love; the death of Christ for man is the measure of Christ's love."

The great test of religion is love, for the Christian religion is love—love to God and man. Perfect religion is perfect love. Without love there is no Christian religion. There are creeds many, forms many, ceremonies many, gods many, but true Christian religion cannot be without divine love: for the Christian religion is Christ and His love, "Christ in you, the hope of glory"; "and Christ is God," "the Word was God"; and "God is love."

This love, "agapao," is divine love; "the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost given unto us"; "The love of Christ"; the love that brought Him

¹ *Christian Perfection*, Rev. J. Wesley.

down from above, down to man, down to the manger, down to the way of poverty, the way of the cross, the lowly way, the way that was and is despised; down to death: all for others.

After enumerating the various gifts in the twelfth chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians, Paul ends the chapter with the striking words, "But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way"; the way of divine love. In the next chapter (the 13th) he compares gifts and love. Love is greater than the tongues of men and of angels (v. 1), greater than prophecy (v. 2), greater than faith (v. 2), greater than charity (v. 3), greater than loyalty to one's religion or belief (v. 3). It is greater than words (v. 1), greater than thoughts (v. 2), greater than deeds (v. 3).

Perfect love in its nature is long-suffering and kind. "Has a long mind to the end of which neither trials, adversities, persecutions, nor provocation can reach. The love of God, and of our neighbour for God's sake, is patient toward all men: it suffers all the weakness, ignorance, errors, and infirmities of the children of God; and all the malice and wickedness of the children of the world; and all this, not merely for a time, but long, without end; it is still a mind or disposition, to the end of which trials, difficulties, etc. never reach."¹ It is kind, tender, compassionate in itself, and kind and obliging to others. "Kindness," says one, "has converted more sinners than zeal, or eloquence, or learning, and these three have never converted anyone unless they were kind." "Kind words are the music of the world." "Charity envieth not" the financial, intellectual or spiritual blessings of others. "Vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up," yea is humble, for it knows what it has

¹ *Commentary*, by Dr. A. Clarke.

worth having is from God. A heart full of perfect love is full of humility. Holy people are very humble. "Doth not behave itself unseemly." "Love never acts out of its place or character; observes good manners; is never rude, bearish or brutish; and is ever willing to become all things to all men, that it may please them for their good to edification."¹ "Seeketh not its own," ease, pleasure, and such like; "grasps not at her own rights." "Thinketh no evil." Indeed, it cannot but see and hear evil things, and know that they are so; but it does not willingly think evil of any; neither infer evil where it does not appear. It tears up, root and branch, all imagining of what we have not proved. It casts out all jealousies, all evil surmisings, all readiness to believe evil.² "Rejoiceth not in iniquity," yea, weeps over it, "but rejoiceth in the truth," for it is of the truth. Holy people speak the truth in love and always rejoice in the truth. "Beareth all things," that is, covers all things, "whatever evil the lover of mankind sees, hears, or knows of anyone, he mentions it to none; it never goes out of his lips, unless where absolute duty constrains to speak" (Wesley). "Believeth all things"; a charitable construction is God's plan. "Hopeth all things and endureth all things." First, it covers, as much as possible; if unable to cover, it believes; if unable to believe, it hopes; if unable to hope, the facts being clear and unanswerable, then it endures. "Love never faileth." While gifts disappear, tongues cease, knowledge vanishes, love continues. Love is eternal, for love is God.

"The end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart." Therefore this perfection is not legal perfection. "All the law is fulfilled in one word even in this, Thou

¹ *Commentary*, by Dr. A. Clarke.

² *Notes on New Testament*, by J. Wesley.

shalt love." "God is love. He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in Him."

This love is as high as heaven. It is as deep as the heart of the Eternal. It is as broad as the universe of God. It is as long as eternity; longer than the longest day; longer than the longest night; longer than the longest road; longer than the longest life. It is eternal (Eph. 3: 16-21).

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart"—sincerity; with all thy mind—intelligence; with all thy soul—emotion; with all thy strength—energy. Hence, our love must be sincere, intelligent, emotional, and energetic. We love God with all our heart, when we love nothing in comparison to Him and nothing but in reference to Him; when we are ready to do or suffer anything for His glory. We love God with all our mind when we apply ourselves to know only Him and His Holy will; when all our research is to this end. We love God with all our soul, or rather life, when we are ready to give up life for His sake; ready to endure all kinds of trials and sufferings for His glory. We love God with all our strength when we exert all the powers of body, mind, soul and spirit in His service.¹ We love our neighbor as ourselves (Matt. 22: 39). We serve one another by love (Gal. 5: 13).

After enumerating the virtues that the Colossians were to put on, Paul said, "Above all (or over all) put on love, which is the bond of perfectness" (3: 14). The last, the most important virtue, is to be put on as an outer garment, enveloping all the clothing (Clarke): love to God and man. As the bond of perfectness, represented here as a girdle, not only covers and sustains all, but it unites, consolidates and beautifies all the virtues into a whole just as a girdle binds the clothing to the body: the bond of perfectness!

¹ See Dr. Adam Clarke's comment on this passage.

The perfect man, then, is a person of integrity, which includes undividedness, singleness of heart and purpose, fixedness in God: "My heart is fixed, O God; my heart is fixed, trusting in Thee."

The perfect man is a person "in whom is no guile." He is sincere, without wax and without weakness of fiber, so the Latin and Greek indicate. He is like his God and loyal to Him, loyal to His Son, loyal to His Spirit and to His Word; and he is loyal to his fellow-man, for he loves his neighbor as himself.

The perfect man is a person purged from inward sin, thus "a vessel unto honor, sanctified and meet for the Master's use and prepared unto every good work."

IV. PERFECTION THAT IS BIBLICAL (*continued*)

PERFECTION OF HEART

DAVID'S charge to his son was, "Thou Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind; for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek Him, He will be found of thee; but if thou forsake Him, He will cast thee off for ever." The closing statement at the dedication of the temple was, "Let your heart therefore be perfect with the Lord your God, to walk in His statutes, and to keep His commandments, as at this day" (I Kings 8: 61). In II Chron. 16: 9, we read, "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him."

These passages clearly indicate that the Divine requirement even of old was perfection of heart. The last passage quoted reveals the search of God, and, as a consequence the concern of God, for that higher type of character, the person "whose heart is perfect toward God," as a medium through which He could show His strength. In the light of this dispensation, when a pure heart is possible experientially in a greater sense than in the old dispensation, this text has a vital lesson. Our Lord said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. 5: 8). To those who argue that a "pure heart" is impossible, we would say, surely the Lord would not declare a people blessed who did not exist!

Pathologically the heart is the fountain of life

through which the blood passes to be distributed into every part of our being. Spiritually our religion must be measured by the condition of our heart. People may be better or worse than their theology but not so respecting their heart. The difference is this: Theology has to do with the theory or doctrine; religion with heart relationship to God. It is essentially a life.

Physically, if the heart is bad, the condition is serious. Spiritually, if the heart is bad the condition is more serious. Jesus says, "out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man." Under inspiration, the prophet of God says, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked" (Jer. 17: 9).

There is a complete cure, and it is "the blood cure." "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son cleanseth us from all sin."

According to the passage from Chronicles, God searches for "Those whose heart is perfect toward Him" (II Chron. 16: 9). Through that perfect heart He will show His strength. A perfect heart is a vessel sanctified and meet for His use (II. Tim. 2: 21). Wherever God has found such an heart, He has revealed His strength and power. This is the perfection to be sought.

PERFECTION OF FAITH

"Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face and perfect that which is lacking in your faith" (I Thess. 3: 10).

The idea here is to complete that which is lacking, so that faith may function perfectly; by which is not meant "the gift of faith," however (I Cor. 12: 9), nor

“all faith” (I Cor. 13: 2); for one may have the “gift of faith” and not have divine love (ch. 13 of I Cor.): but a faith that appropriates the work of heart cleansing and in return functions perfectly. The word suggests quality and fitness rather than completeness. Matt. 4: 21, of “mending nets,” making them fit for use; Matt. 21: 16, to set in order as in music; I Cor. 1: 10, to fit into perfect relationship; Gal. 6: 1, to “restore,” to adjust that which is dislocated. Heb. 11: 3, to frame together various parts as in a machine; II. Tim. 3: 17, “Artios,” means fitted up to date, “complete may be the man of God, to every good work fitted.”

Unbelief in the heart might have been the trouble with the Thessalonians as with God’s ancient people, for we read, “They could not enter in because of unbelief” (Heb. 3: 19).

Unbelief kept the children of Israel out of the land of Canaan. God wanted them to go up at once and possess the land. They said, “We cannot do it.” God said, “Go up.” They said, “We are not able.” They were not able because they would not believe.

Unbelief is a traitorous enemy. It is the root of sin: “Of sin because they believe not in me.” It is a heart condition; “An evil heart of unbelief, departing from the living God” (Heb. 3: 12). It is that within that would suspect God, question His ability and willingness to do this or that: “Why do these thoughts arise in your hearts?” Is God not capable of forgiving sins and healing the body? Why do you question Him in your hearts? Why do you question His ability to do this?

Unbelief strikes at the foundation of Christian character. It destroys love because it destroys confidence: “If our heart condemn us.”

Unbelief paralyzes our powers. “They are too much

for us. We cannot go up. It is not the time. Circumstances are not favourable. It is no use." This is the language of unbelief, and this is the way it talks in the unsanctified heart. It is a deadly enemy, and must be destroyed.

Unbelief shrivels the soul. It shrivels our spiritual capacity as well as our ability and power. "I have fed you with milk and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither now are ye able" (I Cor. 3:2). When unbelief is destroyed it is natural for the soul to reach out to greater things, and believe God for them.

"Trusting is like breathing here:
Just as easy doubt and fear
Vanish in this atmosphere
In Beulah land."

Unbelief is unreasonable; destructive and not constructive. It requires proof where no further proof is needed. It requires a moral impossibility, and, in consequence, is unreasonable. Some person has well said, "Unbelief requires that kind of evidence that makes it impossible to doubt and hence salvation by faith is out of the question for it."

Unbelief leads to disobedience. It led the children of Israel to tempt God, to lust, to murmur, to merely eat, drink and play.

"Remove this hardness from my heart,
This unbelief remove;
To me the rest of faith impart,
The Sabbath of Thy love."

Paul was anxious that an adjustment be made in their faith. The grace of sanctification does something to faith. Paul in his letter to the Galatians, after stating that he had been crucified with Christ and that he lived no

longer, affirmed: "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by *the* faith of the Son of God" (Gal. 2: 20).

"A faith that will not shrink
 Though pressed by every foe;
 That will not tremble on the brink
 Of any earthly woe.

"A faith that shines more bright and clear
 When tempest rage without;
 And when in danger knows no fear,
 In darkness feels no doubt:

"A faith that keeps the narrow way
 Till life's last hour is fled;
 And with a pure and heavenly ray
 Illumines a dying bed.

"Lord, give us such a faith as this
 And then whate'er may come,
 We'll taste while here the hallowed bliss
 Of an eternal home."

PERFECTION OF SPIRIT

"Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you . . . resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. . . . Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5: 39-48). A "clean heart and a right spirit" go together (Psa. 51: 10).

The importance of a right spirit is obvious; the spirit in which one does something is more important than

the thing done. In his sermon on "The Extra Mile," Dr. Samuel Chadwick, says: "Christians are to be known by the things in their life that are in excess of the claims of law, civilization, and duty. Others demand restitution, recognition, and appreciation. The Christian resists not wrong, returns good for evil, and reflects the Divine character in the persistence of unappreciated goodness. These 'extras' are the distinguishing marks of Christianity, and declare men to be sons of the Father which is in Heaven. If this is the estimate Christ puts upon these things, no follower of Christ can ignore them, and it is important we should understand and obey them.

"St. Matthew's Gospel is the Gospel of the Kingdom. The Sermon on the Mount is the manifesto of the King. It first sets forth the character of the citizen, and then proceeds to adjust the old order to the new life. We understand perfectly His treatment of the old law. There He teaches us that obedience to the letter is not enough. Sin is a question of spirit rather than action. Its offence is in the motive, not in the transgression; in the attitude, not in the act. Hatred is murder, a lustful look is adultery, and extravagance of speech is of the Evil One. God judges by the heart. That is clear.

"Then we come to those precepts which are in excess of law, and set forth the Christian's spirit in social life, and define his attitude to social wrongs. Resist not evil; turn the other cheek to the smiter; submit to injustice rather than go to law; yield to the oppressor even in excess of his demand; give to the beggar, and to the borrower, lend; love your enemies; pray for persecutors; and do good to the evil and unthankful. Everything short of this is common civility and natural obligation. For those who are sons of God, the way of perfection is in the things that exceed the natural

moralties of men, and the common civilities of polite society. It is the extras that make the Christian.”¹

PERFECTION OF WILL

The will is the moral capital power of the soul. There is such a thing as self-will and it is unlike Christ, for He “pleased not Himself.” It is possible, through the wonderful grace of sanctification, to reach a place where the human will perfectly coincides with the Divine will: “Stand perfect and complete in all the will of God” (Col. 4: 12).

“Take my will and make it Thine;
It shall be no longer mine.
Take myself and I will be
Ever, only, all for Thee.”

It is a state where we will what God wills, how He wills it, and when He wills it.

“Sweet will of God, still fold me closer
Till I am wholly lost in Thee.”

PERFECTION OF UNITY

“Sanctify them . . . that they all might be one; as Thou Father art in me, and I in Thee, that they also might be one in us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me. And the glory which Thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know” (John 17: 17-23).

“Made perfect in one.” This is a strong statement, but, nevertheless, possible or our blessed Lord would not have prayed thus. The very nature of that perfection

¹ *Humanity and God*, by Dr. Samuel Chadwick, pp. 315, 316.

is suggested, "As Thou Father art in me and I in Thee that they also may be one in us."

The same glorious perfection of unity may be seen in the vine and the branches (John 15); the Head and the body made up of members (I Cor. 12).

PERFECTION OF WORD

"If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able to bridle the whole body" (James 3: 2).

The words of the sanctified are "Yea, yea; nay, nay"; they are seasoned with grace, and minister grace to the hearers. To put it in the form of an old saying, "Their words are few and well chosen." They realize that by their words they "shall be justified, and by their words they shall be condemned." The grace of perfection gives them perfect control, even of the unruly member, the tongue.

The child may be a perfect child, but being a perfect child does not for a moment mean that he is a perfect man; nor does "a perfect man" mean the end of perfection. There are degrees of maturity especially in the word realm.

PERFECTION PROGRESSIVE

It is surely not difficult to understand that a thing may be perfect and yet improbable. Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians, chapter six, verses fourteen to eighteen, says: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God: as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them;

and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”

By way of a logical conclusion, Paul continues: “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved.” What promises? The promises afore-mentioned and enumerated, namely, what God would do, provided the Corinthians would cease to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers, would be separate, and touch not the unclean thing; then the promises as to what He would do. In view of this, “Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh”: all uncleanness; all sins against the body, the temple of God: “and spirit”; all impure thoughts, impure desires; all unholiness of the inner life: “perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” The two-foldness of cleansing is clearly inferred here. The human, “Let us cleanse ourselves”; the Divine, “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin” (I John 1: 7). The human, “Sanctify yourselves” (Lev. 11: 44; Joshua 3: 5); the Divine, “Sanctified by the Holy Ghost” (Rom. 15: 16). Here is the human and the Divine: “Ye shall keep my statutes and do them; I am the Lord which sanctify you.”

There is the act of God in making real experientially what the Corinthians did in obedience to God’s command, for the expression, “let us cleanse” is aorist, and thereby denotes something done by a stroke, an accomplished act. But “perfecting” is in the present tense and denotes a present progressive work “in the fear of God.”

V. PERFECTION OBTAINED

PERFECTION BY WHAT MEANS?

THERE are many theories as to how this Christian experience of perfection may be obtained.

There is the old theory of *growth*, but growth does not change the nature of the thing or person growing. It is therefore ruled out, for there is in this experience a change in nature necessary.

There is the theory of *suppression*. In the sense of victory over sin in all its forms and manifestations from the time of the "new birth", "regeneration," this is true, as we have seen. In this connection, however, I John 2: 1 should be kept in mind. "If any man sin," argues the probability that it may happen, though not "on the time table," as one has expressed it. In case it may occur, there is here the emergency clause.

Suppression in the sense of keeping under the human body (I Cor. 9: 27) is a necessity; not the body of sin, for it cannot be subjected (Rom. 8: 7), but it can and should be laid aside, discarded (Heb. 12: 1).

There is the *holy in Christ* theory. To accept Christ is to be holy in Christ. Christ being holy, God the Father sees Him and us through Him, though not our sinful conditions. The great weakness of this theory is the lack of a place for Scriptural cleansing from sin.

"There is the theory of *counteraction* of the principle of sin and death through the principle of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus."

The weakness of this theory may be seen in the fact that it fails to offer deliverance from "the principle of sin and death" in the Scriptural way. According to this theory the war within between two natures, between "the law of sin" and "the law of the mind" must go on throughout life, but the idea of counteraction by the Spirit of life assures victory.

That is good as far as it goes but is there not the victory of deliverance "from the body of this death" (Romans 7: 24, 25), victory of freedom from "the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8: 2)? Then, again, how could one love God with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his strength, with all his mind and his neighbor as himself with this inward battle going on all the time? There is surely a release, a deliverance "from", in order for greater service to God and humanity.

There is the comforting Scriptural provision of cleansing (Psa. 51: 7; Ezek. 36: 25; I John 1: 9); purging (Psa. 51: 7; John 15: 2); purifying (Acts 15: 8, 9).

Is there habitation? Yes, for He has said, "I will dwell in them and walk in them," but this last statement indicates a state rather than an instantaneous act of God, whereas the act precedes the state. One must get into Canaan before he can dwell in the land. Then, too, there must be first, the negative; then, the positive, the filling: "Put off . . . the old man and put on the new man" (Eph. 4: 22-24). "Instantaneous purifying (aorist) their hearts by faith" (Acts 15: 9). There can be no habitation without crucifixion and death. "I have been crucified . . . I live no longer. Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2: 20). That is the order which leads to habitation. Sin removed by cleansing, purging, is the position of Arminian Theology without any extreme notions. The word eradication has been greatly misunderstood and

misinterpreted, so that to use it, certainly involves explanation.¹

PERFECTION OBTAINED THROUGH AGENCIES

God the Father is the One who does the work through various agents. They are as follows:

1. *The source is God the Father:* "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly" (I Thess. 5: 23). "Sanctify you through and through" (Phillips' Version).

2. *The sacrificial agent is the Saviour:* "Wherefore Jesus also that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate" (Heb. 13: 12). "Sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10: 10). "By one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10: 14). In this last passage the writer exalts the glorious provision of Christ Jesus, the supreme and never failing efficacy to sanctify.

3. *The sacred Scriptures the instrument agent:* "Sanctify them through thy truth: Thy word is truth" (John 17: 17). "Purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit" (I Peter 1: 22).

4. *The Spirit of God the administrative agent:* "Sanctified by the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 15: 16). "Through sanctification of the Spirit" (II Thess. 2: 13).

5. *The sanctifying faith of the believing soul, the conditional agent,* the faith that sanctifies: "Purifying their hearts by faith" (Acts 15: 9). "Sanctified by faith" (Acts 26: 18).

With regard to the way of the obtainment of this love, John makes two startling statements: John 2: 5, "But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected; hereby know we that we are in him"; and in chapter four, verse twelve, he says: "If

¹ See our book, *Scriptural Sanctification*, pp. 23-30.

we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us.”

“If by faith,” says Mr. Wesley, “it is attainable now.”

PERFECTION IN HYMNS

“Let us, to perfect love restored,
Thy image here retrieve,
And in the presence of our Lord.
The life of angels live.

“On one the faith divine bestow,
Which doth the mountain move;
And all my spotless life shall show,
The omnipotence of love.

“Come, Saviour, come, and make me whole!
Entirely all my sins remove;
To perfect health restore my soul,
To perfect holiness and love.

“Since Thou wouldst have us free from sin,
And pure as those above,
Make haste to bring thy nature in,
And perfect us in love.”

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“O glorious hope of perfect love!
It lifts me up to things above;
It bears on eagles’ wings;
It gives my ravished soul a taste,
And makes me for some moments feast
With Jesus’ priests and kings.

“Rejoicing now in earnest hope,
I stand, and from the mountain-top
See all the land below:

Rivers of milk and honey rise,
 And all the fruits of paradise
 In endless plenty grow.

“A land of corn and wine and oil,
 Favored with God’s peculiar smile,
 With every blessing blest;
 There dwells the Lord our Righteousness,
 And keep his own in perfect peace,
 And everlasting rest.

“O that I might at once go up;
 No more on this side Jordan stop,
 But now the land possess;
 This moment end my legal years,
 Sorrows and sins and doubts and fears,
 A howling wilderness!

“Now, O my Joshua, bring me in!
 Cast out thy foes; the inbred sin,
 The carnal mind remove;
 The purchase of thy death divide,
 And, oh, with all the sanctified
 Give me a lot of love!”

CHARLES WESLEY.

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“He wills that I should holy be;
 That holiness I long to feel;
 That full divine conformity
 To all my Saviour’s righteous will.

“See, Lord, the travail of thy soul
 Accomplished in the change of mine;
 And plunge me, every whit made whole,
 In all the depths of love divine.

“On thee, O God, my soul is stayed,
 And waits to prove thine utmost will;
 The promise by thy mercy made,
 Thou canst, thou wilt, in me fulfil.

“No more I stagger at thy power,
 Or doubt thy truth, which cannot move;
 Hasten the long-expected hour,
 And bless me with thy perfect love.”

CHARLES WESLEY.

“Jesus, thy boundless love to me
 No thought can reach, no tongue declare:
 O knit my thankful heart to thee,
 And reign without a rival there:
 Thine wholly, thine alone I am;
 Be thou alone my constant flame.

“O grant that nothing in my soul
 May dwell, but thy pure love alone:
 O may thy love possess me whole,
 My joy, my treasure and my crown:
 Strange flames far from my heart remove,
 My every act, word, thought, be love.

“Unwearied may I this pursue;
 Dauntless to the high prize aspire;
 Hourly within my soul renew
 This holy flame, this heavenly fire:
 And day and night, be all my care
 To guard the sacred treasure there.

“In suffering be thy love my peace;
 In weakness be thy love my power;
 And when the storms of life shall cease,

Jesus, in that important hour,
In death as life be thou my guide,
And save me, who for me hast died."

PAUL GERHARDT, tr. by John Wesley.

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

VI. PERFECTION INCLUSIVE

BIBLICAL PERFECTION CENTERS IN THE CHRIST OF CALVARY

BIBLICAL perfection centers in the Christ. Apart from Him there can be no such perfection. He is our "all and in all" in this regard. To the church at Ephesus, in speaking on the purpose of the offices and officers in the church, Paul says: "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (4: 12-16).

The Christian, with a pure heart, perfect love, will have obtained the immediate objective, but his ultimate objective will be "The measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4: 12-16). That is not only true of the individual but it is true of the church collectively. *Stability* is the lesson of verse fourteen, "No more children, tossed to and fro"; *sanctified spirit* is outstanding in verse fifteen, "speaking the truth in love," "for the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life"; *spiritual advancement*, "may grow up into him in all things." *Edification in love* is the lesson of verse sixteen.

Paul continues in this great chapter to show that Christ is the truth, for He said, "I am the Truth." He is the lesson of truth, "learned Christ" (v. 20). He is the Teacher of truth, have "been taught by Him" (v. 21). He is the standard of truth, "As the truth is in Jesus" (v. 21); not so much the creed or articles of religion (they may help), but truth as it is in Christ Jesus.

BIBLICAL PERFECTION INCLUDES THE CROSS
OF CHRIST

There can be no perfection apart from the cross; neither in the crisis experience, nor in the process and development in the life of the sanctified.

The cross of Christ stands for crucifixion which leads to the crisis of death and crucifixion as a life. To the Galatians, Paul said: "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (2: 20). Literally, I have been crucified with Christ and I live no longer. After the crisis, comes the life, "And the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God." In the same letter, Paul speaks further of that life which he expresses in the words, "The life I *now* live," when he says in chapter six, verse fourteen: "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

Thus, the crucified life; indeed, the cross Paul gloried in is the cross that crucified the world to him. The challenge of the cross involves the whole life of the cross as well as the crisis (Matt. 16: 24, 25).

BIBLICAL PERFECTION INCLUDES CHRIS-
TIAN CONSECRATION

God cannot keep that which is not committed to Him. We must do the committing, then He will do the keeping. Consecration to God as a living sacrifice is all inclusive and absolutely necessary in view of the experience and life of perfect love (Romans 12: 1, 2). "The body with all its faculties; the soul with all its affections, tastes and appetites; the substance with all its gains and uses, including business pursuits and social relations,

recreations, education, thought and reading, embracing all our advantages natural and acquired; indeed, our whole life, together with our death, grave and memory, must be given to Christ and placed under contribution for His glory"; or as Miss Frances Ridley Havergal puts it: "A Cathedral window seen from without is dull and meaningless; but enter and the light of heaven beams through it with every beauty of form and color. Consecration to God for service may seem dull enough when seen from without but enter into that experience and the light of Divine love streaming through it shall glorify your life with a beauty and blessedness which are Heaven's own."

"Take my life and let it be
 Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
 Take my moments and my days,
 Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

"Take my hands and let them move
 At the impulse of Thy love;
 Take my feet and let them be
 Swift and beautiful for Thee.

"Take my silver and my gold—
 Not a mite would I withhold;
 Take my intellect and use
 Every power as Thou shalt choose.

"Take my voice and let me sing
 Always, only, for my King;
 Take my lips and let them be
 Filled with messages from Thee.

"Take my will and make it Thine,
 It shall be no longer mine;
 Take my heart, it is Thine own;
 It shall be Thy royal throne."

BIBLICAL PERFECTION INCLUDES CHRISTIAN COMMUNION

Communion suggests the idea of spiritual relationship, whereas "partnership" suggests a business relationship; but spiritually, however, the Spirit enters into partnership with the saint; and on being received, the Holy Spirit becomes partner with and operates through sanctified personality. Thus communion of the Spirit suggests a common interest and a common objective in the work of Christianity.

Christians who enter into the experience of perfect love are called to enter into the suffering of Christ. Paul desired to "fill up that which was behind in the afflictions of Christ" (Col. 1: 24). He desired to present himself as a medium through which Christ may carry on His work of salvation. Peter speaks of being "partakers of Christ's suffering" (I Pet. 4: 13). Christians must suffer with Him, if they would reign with Him: suffer with Him in the same cause, the glorious cause of Christianity in relation to human redemption; suffer with Him to the same end, the glory of God; suffer with Him from the same source, the world, the flesh and the devil; suffer with Him in the same spirit, the spirit of the Master, the spirit of self-giving and unselfishness.¹

¹ *Scriptural Sanctification*, p. 87.

VII. PERFECTION INVOLVES CHRISTLIKENESS OF CHARACTER

“OUR conversation is in heaven” (Phil. 3: 20).

A traveler in China asked a native if he had ever read the Gospel. “No,” was the answer, “but I have seen it. I have seen a man who was the terror of the neighborhood with his curses and his violent temper. He was an opium smoker, a criminal and as dangerous as a wild beast. But the religion of Jesus made him gentle and good, and he has left off opium. No, I have not read the gospel, but I have seen it and it is good.” Ghandi, the great Indian leader, when speaking to Charles F. Andrews, an American missionary, said, “The trouble with you Americans is that you start doing before being.”

The purpose in this message is to dwell briefly on some expressions in the Bible respecting Christlikeness of character showing the purpose of God in this condition, namely, to reveal His Character unto the world. Mr. Wesley in defining holiness speaks of it as “the habitual disposition of soul.” True Christians do more good by what they are than by what they say or do. “I want to write a book,” said some person to Sir Walter Scott. “No,” Sir Walter replied, “be a book: that is greater.”

CHRISTLIKENESS THROUGH PERFECTION ILLUSTRATED BY CITIZENSHIP

Moffat's translation has it thus, “The colony of heaven.” Weymouth translates the text, “We are free citizens of heaven,” and (he continues) “we are looking

for the coming from heaven of a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ."

Citizens of heaven represent heaven; colonies represent the empire to which they belong. They reproduce all the features of the great empire, and labour for its extension. Moreover, the empire is always ready with all its resources to defend every member of its colonies.

People with perfect love properly represent the heavenly empire. Their manner of living reveals the fact that they are the "free citizens of heaven" "colonies of heaven" (Phil. 3: 20).

CHRISTLIKENESS THROUGH PERFECTION ILLUSTRATED BY WITNESS

"Ye shall be witnesses unto me" (Acts 1: 8). Witnesses are to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. This brings a serious responsibility on both ministry and laity. The word "witness" from the Greek literally means "martyrs." This suggests the idea of sacrifice.

Christians are witnesses by what they say and also by what they are. They preach the gospel by a cry, a proclamation, from the Hebrew, "gerial," and the Greek, "Kerugnia"; but they preach by their lives, if they are good preachers. They preach by being. That is the thought. "Ye shall be."

CHRISTLIKENESS THROUGH PERFECTION ILLUSTRATED BY HUSBANDRY AND BUILDING

"Ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building" (I Cor. 3: 9).

The first expression refers to farming. Ye are God's farms. If so, then let Him work His farm, and raise a

good crop of fruit, the fruit of the Spirit. The second expression refers to building. Then let Him supervise as the great Master Builder; let Him clean, decorate, and dwell within.

A similar thought is expressed by Peter when he speaks of "a spiritual house," made up of "lively stones," save that here God's people are the stones, different in size and capacity, perhaps, but all needed, and ready to fit in anywhere (I Peter 2: 5).

CHRISTLIKENESS THROUGH PERFECTION ILLUSTRATED BY A PRESERVATIVE

"Ye are the salt of the earth" (Matt. 5: 13). "Salt of the earth, to preserve the world from putrefaction and destruction" (Clarke).

"With all thy offerings thou shalt offer salt" (Lev. 2: 13). "Salt," says Adam Clarke, "was the opposite to leaven, for it preserved from putrefaction and corruption and signified purity and preserving fidelity that were necessary in the worship of God. Everything was seasoned with it, to signify purity and perfection that should be extended through every part of the divine service and through the hearts and lives of God's worshippers. It was called the salt of the covenant of God, because as salt is incorruptible so was the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the patriarchs, relative to the redemption of the world by the incarnation and death of Jesus Christ."

Salt has a wonderful buoyancy. It is easier to swim in salt water than in fresh. The saints are lifters, supporters in time of need. When souls are ready to sink, they help to keep them from going under.

The saints are to preserve the world from corruption. This they do by the purity of their lives. It was said of the early church that "great grace was upon them all."

They had grace which could be seen. "They saw the grace of God and were glad."

CHRISTLIKENESS THROUGH PERFECTION
ILLUSTRATED BY LIGHT

"Ye are the light of the world" (Matt. 5: 14). The "phos," radiance, of the world ye are. Christ is the great source as the Light of the world; His followers the reflectors of that Light. If the reflectors, however, are covered by carnal cobwebs, the great Light is dimmed. They need cleansing, and they need to be kept clean, if Christ, the Light of the world, would be seen. They are the light of the world only as He shines through their personalities, and His life is manifested in their mortal bodies.

Ye are, then, God's advertisements. The question is, What kind of advertisements are you? One has written:

"What you are speaks so loud
That the world can't hear what you say;
They are looking at your walk, not listening to your talk
They're judging from your actions every day.
Don't believe you'll deceive
By claiming what you've never known;
They'll accept what they see and know you to be,
They'll judge from your life alone."

CHRISTLIKENESS THROUGH PERFECTION
ILLUSTRATED BY WORKMANSHIP

The word "workmanship" is from the Greek, "Poiema," poems; literally, "His poems ye are" (Eph. 2: 10). Ye are God's sacred songs. The question is, What kind of song are you, especially when things are dark, and the way seems hard?

A similar thought may be gleaned from "adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things" (Titus 2:

10). The idea is, that Christians should make the doctrine beautiful by their lives, or as one has expressed it, they should put music to the words, and play.

“There is a little sentence worth its weight in gold;
 Easy to remember, easy to be told;
 Changing into blessing every curse we meet,
 Turning hell to heaven. This is all—keep sweet.”

CHRISTLIKENESS THROUGH PERFECTION
 ILLUSTRATED BY EPISTLES

“Ye are the epistles of Christ, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the Living God; not in tables of stone, but in the fleshy tables of the heart” (II Cor. 3: 3).

Christians are living epistles. The world reads them more than it reads the written word of God. There should be carefulness to give the world a clear reading. In order to do this, they will have to avoid blots, omissions, and such like. Be sure to make the reading clear.

“Christ has no hands but our hands,
 To do His work today;
 He has no feet but our feet, to lead
 Men in his way.
 He has no tongue but our tongues,
 To tell men how he died;
 He has no help but our help
 To bring them to His side.

“We are the only Bible the careless
 World will read,
 We are the sinner’s Gospel;
 We are the scoffer’s creed.
 We are the Lord’s last message,

Given in deed and word,
 What if the type be crooked?
 What if the print be blurred?

“What if our hands are busy with
 Other work than His?
 What if our feet are walking
 Where sin’s allurements is?
 What if our tongues are saying
 Things His lips would spurn?
 How can we hope to help Him,
 Or hasten His return?”

.
 “Make me humble, O my Saviour,
 That I may receive Thy grace;
 Purge me from my sins and failures,
 In my heart Thine image trace.

“Write Thyself upon me, Jesus,
 So that all who see may read—
 Read of Thee, and see Thy spirit
 In the life I daily lead.

“Let my life be an epistle,
 Known and read of every man:
 As men read me may they see Thee,
 And accept Thy saving plan.”

CHRISTLIKENESS THROUGH PERFECTION
 ILLUSTRATED BY FRAGRANCE

“A sweet savour of Christ” (II Cor. 2: 15). “A fragrance of Christ” (Weymouth); literally, “Of Christ a sweet perfume ye are to God.”

An ungodly man said of a sainted bishop, “If I had stayed another day in his presence I am afraid I would have to become a Christian; his spirit was so pure, so

attractive, and so beautiful." A poor down-and-out met a man in whose face he saw hope. "O man," he exclaimed, "with heaven in your face, won't you help me?" The man thus addressed was a great benevolent character and he did help the poor fellow.

A young lady was engaged in a certain hotel. She purposed to say nothing about religion, though it was the joy of her heart to speak of her loving Saviour; but, under the circumstances, thought it would be better to keep quiet, and just live before them. After three days, the proprietor called her into his office and said, "I am sorry to inform you that we cannot keep you longer." "Why? What have I done?" she asked. "Nothing," he replied, "your presence disturbs our patrons. They say they will not come if you remain." Her holy presence was a constant rebuke to them.

A sweet perfume of this kind is what this old world needs, and it is God's will concerning His saints. The Lord help us!

There is moral omnipotence in perfect love thus lived. "Argument may be resisted; persuasion and entreaty may be scorned; the thrilling appeals and monitions of the pulpit, set forth with all vigor and logic and all aglow with eloquence may be evaded or disregarded; but the exhibition of exalted piety has a might which nothing can withstand; it is truth embodied; it is the gospel burning in the hearts, beaming from the eyes, breathing from the lips and preaching in the lives of its votaries. No sophistry can elude it; no conscience can ward it off. No bosom wears a mail that can brave the energy of its attack. It speaks in all languages, in all climes and to all phases of our nature. It is universal, invincible and clad in immortal panoply, goes on from victory to victory."

The glorious life of *Biblical perfection* must include, if

it is retained and developed in new possessions and accomplishments, a daily denial of self, a daily keeping the body under, and daily yielding of one's members as instruments of righteousness unto God, a daily loyalty to God in all things, a daily appropriating of God's promises, a daily feasting on the Word in order for the Word to abide in the heart, a daily communion with Christ in order to abide in Him, a daily shining for Him; for without such the second crisis will be of little avail. Perfection is not a state of stagnation. It is rather a state of holy movement, a state of aggressiveness in God and for God.

People in the possession and enjoyment of this wonderful grace of *Biblical Perfection* will exalt Christ Jesus and His wonderful provision for the soul. They will testify of His sanctifying grace, of a clean heart. They may testify to the fact that the love of God in them has been made perfect. They will not tell of their being perfect. Others will tell what they see and do not see in them.

In conclusion, it is God's plan to convince the world through His people: "And the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, said the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes" (Ezek. 36: 23).

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