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"Entire Sanctification"

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"Entire Sanctification."

The old Adam is a thoroughgoing perfectionist. He is able to see that human nature is depraved, though, of course, the depth and extent of human depravity can only be learned from Scripture, (*Trigl.*, 477, 3), and yet in his proud conceit he maintains that he is master of his evil inclinations. The old Adam sees sin and the horrible consequences of sin on all sides; yet in his carnal security he believes that he has "perfectly," *i. e.*, "according to his knowledge and ability," met the demands of the supreme Lawgiver.

The perfectionistic tendencies of the old Adam are easily recognized in a number of pagan philosophies. Zoroastrianism, Gnosticism, notably Manicheism, and similar systems promise purity of body and soul. Buddhism teaches the attainability of the Nirvana, *i. e.*, entire passionlessness or freedom from anger, greed, or wrath. And what is the eclectic mystical philosophy of Plotinus but perfectionism? Neoplatonism offers perfection by reminding the soul of its divine source and by imposing ascetic exercises in order to effect the soul's spiritual unity with the creative mind. But pagan perfectionism is a vicious and hopeless thing. Sooner or later an awakened conscience will precipitate the proud perfectionist from the lofty clouds of his chimerical perfection into the abysmal slough of utter despair.

But, strange to say, also among the adherents of the Christian religion, with its perfect mirror of God's Law and its soul-comforting doctrine of the *sola gratia*, perfectionism has boldly raised its ugly head. The conceited question: "What lack I yet?" (*Matt.* 19, 20) has been repeated in every succeeding generation. Small wonder, then, that even Augustine was deeply impressed by the life of the Anchorites and that he did not fully see the dangers of this type of perfectionism. (*Bindemann, Augustin*, II, 38.) The climax of perfectionism is reached in the Roman doctrine concerning works of supererogation. What impudence to claim that in fulfilling the "evangelical counsels" the monks do more than is necessary for their own salvation! "They not only teach that these observances (monastic vows) are justifying services, but they add that these services are more perfect than other kinds of life, *e. g.*, marriage, rulership. . . . It is the height of impiety to hold that the monks satisfy the Decalog in such a way that merits remain." (*Trigl.* 427, 24; *cp.* 670, 315, 316.) But also the Roman Catholic layman is able to attain perfection, according to the Decrees of the Council of Trent. (*Sess. VI*, chap. 18.) And Wilmers invites all to strive after perfection and for this purpose admonishes them to employ the salutary means which the Church has prescribed and comforts those unable to enter holy orders by reminding them that not all are obligated to seek a

higher (?) degree of perfection. (*Handbuch der katholischen Religion*, 599 f.)

The Lutheran threefold *sola* thoroughly refuted Rome's perfectionism. There is no room for human perfection where grace reigns supreme, where this grace is divorced from all enthusiasm and conveyed solely through the Scriptures, and where grace is accepted only by faith. But the old Adam of Agricola (Antinomianism), of George Major ("Good works are necessary to salvation"), and of Andreas Osiander (mystical subjectivism, based upon the infusion of Christ's essential righteousness) endeavored to hurl the Lutheran Church headlong into perfectionism. Though the Formula of Concord, in Articles 3, 4, and 5, definitely rejected all perfectionistic tendencies, a century later Lutheranism witnessed in its midst the rise of Pietism with its perfectionistic tendencies and the related mystical subjectivism as introduced by Zinzendorf in the Moravian colony at Herrnhut.

But the real hotbed for Protestant perfectionism was and still is the Reformed Church, more specifically the various Methodist bodies. So closely is Wesleyan perfectionism related to Rome's, that the *Katholische Kirchenzeitung* could write: "*Die Methodisten sind keine eigentlichen Protestanten, und in ihren Lehren von den guten Werken und der Heiligung glauben sie fast dasselbe, was die Katholiken glauben.*" (Guenther, *Symbolik*, 255.) Since Wesley's doctrine of "perfect love," or entire sanctification, has molded the doctrinal system of the Arminian Methodists, and since this doctrine plays such an important rôle in the recently organized Holiness bodies, therefore it should be profitable to examine perfectionism as taught 1) in historic Methodism and 2) by the modern Holiness Churches.

1.

An exact definition of Wesley's position in the doctrine of entire sanctification is extremely difficult. The latitudinarianism of Wesley and his associates is well known. The doctrinal position of the Methodists cannot be gaged by their brief confessional basis, but must be gathered from the private writings of the accepted leaders. This is especially true of the doctrine of entire sanctification. A superficial examination of Wesley's writings on this doctrine will reveal "that he found himself oscillating between conclusions varying with the different stages of his own inquiry into this Christian experience. It seems certain that, while he taught both the doctrine of entire sanctification and Christian perfection as *goals* of the regenerate life, he did not set down for himself any record of absolute attainment." (Du Bose, *History of Methodism*, II, 89.) Wesley apparently feared the logical excesses to which the doctrine of entire sanctification would lead and therefore expressed himself so guardedly on this point that

modern Methodists differ as to the mode, yea, even concerning the essence of this Christian experience. The only point on which they are agreed is the *reality* of sanctification. (Miley, *Systematic Theology*, II, 365.)

Though regeneration is considered complete in its sphere, *viz.*, to *renew* the moral nature, yet this gracious act of God is said to be insufficient because in the state of regeneration the Christian is unable to fulfil the divine injunctions of *perfect* holiness as demanded in Matt. 5, 48; 1 Pet. 1, 15, 16, and many other passages. And yet, because such holiness is required of man, there must also be a possibility of rendering it. "Divine holiness is the reason for Christian holiness," this is an axiom of Methodistic theology. But since the regenerated Christian is not able to render the divinely demanded holiness, the Methodists have invented a second gracious act, which enables man to "enter into perfect love." The Methodists readily admit that this doctrine raises many perplexing questions in the fields of theology and psychology. "Why can a sanctified believer do what the regenerate is unable to do?" "Just what takes place in the act of sanctification? Is a different kind of sin removed in the second act from the first act, or is sanctification only a more thorough regeneration?" These are some of the vexatious questions which Methodists are unable to answer and which, according to their own admission, are not treated in the Scriptures. But their enthusiastic interest for this specific doctrine is undaunted, and they only make all the more of the "testimonies" of sanctified believers. This doctrine, that man is able perfectly to fulfil the law of love so pleases the old Adam that he is not at a loss to find plausible arguments: "If regeneration is possible, then also sanctification," or: "If the words 'that which is born of the flesh is flesh' prove the total depravity of man, then, conversely, we must hold that no uncleanness remains in the soul which is born of the Spirit." (Miley, *op. cit.*, 362.) The entire argument may be summed up in Wesley's words: "Since God cannot be pleased with the sin which still dwelleth in the regenerate Christian, therefore God has provided a second gracious act, whereby we become perfect images of God"; in other words, the regenerate Christian has good intentions, the sanctified believer carries them out fully.

Entire sanctification is described by Wesley as "loving God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. This implies that no wrong temper, none contrary to love, remains in the soul; that all thoughts, words, and actions are governed by pure love." Entire perfection is usually called perfect love by Methodists, because in this state perfect love of God is supposed to be the guiding principle and with the supremacy of love the whole life "must be in harmony with the will of God." According to another writer on this topic, holiness is that state of the soul when the alienation from

God and the natural aversion to a holy life have been removed. In this state the temptations to sin no longer leave a damaging moral influence, and the Holy Spirit constantly reigns supreme.

Sanctification, like regeneration, is usually viewed as an instantaneous act. This does not mean that Wesley denied the possibility of a life of holiness in the state of *regeneration* or a process of preparation preceding the attaining of perfect love. On the contrary, Wesley and his followers stress the necessity of a preparation for the "second blessing." But the actual "death to sin," the entire sanctification, itself is an instantaneous act, just as a man may be dying for long months, yet death does not occur until the instant when the soul leaves the body. But Wesley did not leave his followers a clear-cut definition on the attainability of entire sanctification for every Christian, and his vagueness has been the cause of much strife and contention among the Methodists. His evangelical consciousness did not permit him to set down perfect love as a definite goal attainable for every Christian. This vacillating, no doubt, accounts for the fact that among his followers to-day there are rationalists on the one hand and thoroughgoing perfectionists on the other.

In order to maintain the doctrine of perfection, it is necessary to minimize or even expunge the sinfulness which remains in believers and likewise to exaggerate the regenerate's ability. And this is exactly what Methodists have done and still do. It is a mooted question among them whether the work of entire sanctification is in the mode of repression or eradication. Extremists among the Methodists believe that the evil propensities are eradicated and not only repressed. If, they argue, sanctification were only repression of the evil lust, then all heathens who valiantly fight against their wicked thoughts, words, and deeds would be sanctified; then every good resolution and habit would be sanctification. But, they say, grace penetrates into the texture of our spiritual being and *destroys* the disordered affections. Historic Methodism, however, defended the doctrine of *repression*; *i. e.*, the latent powers in the mind of the *regenerate* are developed to their full capacity in the act of sanctification, so that the good emotions have obtained dominance over all disordered affections, and these new spiritual powers suppress or cast out the evil inclinations. The spiritual capacities are developed to such a degree that all passions are controlled and perfect love reigns supreme. Quite naturally the Methodists have considerable difficulty with the remnant of sin, which no perfectionist can rule out of existence. The easiest way to dispose of this perplexing problem is to hurl a broadside at Scripture and all the confessional standards, which uphold the doctrine of sin and guilt in the believer. Methodists state that the Lutheran and the Reformed confessions exaggerate the sinful character of evil propensities. In full accord with the Roman communion,

Wesley denied the damnableness of concupiscence. Wesley in *Plain Account of Christian Perfection* gives us a comprehensive view concerning the perfectionist's idea of sin in the sanctified Christian, which may be summarized as follows: "Christian perfection does not exclude all infirmities, ignorance, and mistakes; for a man may be filled with pure love and still be liable to mistakes. A mistake in judgment may occasion a mistake in practise. Yet, where every word and action *springs from love, such a mistake is not properly a sin*, though it needs the atoning blood, for it is a deviation from the perfect Law; but it is not sin, for it is not contrary to love, and 'love is the fulfilling of the Law.' As long as the Christian is in this world, he is subject to involuntary transgressions, which are consequent on the ignorance and mistakes due to our mortal frame. Such transgression you may call sin if you please; I do not." Thus Wesley has paved the way for the doctrine of perfectionism by denying the sinfulness of the evil inclinations. But he has landed—in Rome, which teaches: "This concupiscence, which the apostle sometimes calls sin, the holy synod declares that the *Catholic Church* has never understood it to be called sin, as being *truly and properly sin* in those born again, but [it is called sin] because it is of sin and inclines to sin." (Council of Trent, Sess. V.)

The other necessity to which the perfectionists are driven in order to hold their doctrine is that they must consistently reduce the demands of God's holy Law down to the standard of human ability. No perfectionist claims that he has attained the perfection of Adam in Paradise or the perfection in heaven. His perfection is not that demanded of God, but a self-appointed holiness, a relative holiness. Methodists usually warn against considering sanctification such a state where the soul is free from all anxiety and care, indifferent to all outward things, and resting completely and securely in God. And yet, is not the sum and substance of the First Commandment this, that in every moment of our life we find perfect joy in God's will, trust in Him implicitly, without a quiver of the lip, and so love Him that no strange thought ever enters our heart? The Methodists have brought the demands of the First Commandment down to the level of their imagined capacity. In their opinion there are different grades of holiness for different Christians. The element of time, the various degrees of trials, the opportunities for service, the difference in the mental and religious capacities, make it impossible "to establish one grade for all who attain unto a life of holiness." Yes, as the mental faculties of the individual differ in strength, as he may be weak in languages, but strong in mathematics; so also, we are told, not to be disappointed if we do not find all graces perfectly developed in one Christian. The point to be maintained is that the Christian must be actively engaged in "a loving service

progressively commensurate with our ever-increasing capacity and light." (Lowrey, *Possibilities of Grace*, 227.)

Wesley's doctrine, consistently adhered to, leads either to despair or to carnal security and spiritual presumption. But Wesley was not consistent. Wesley admitted time and again that he had not attained the perfection state. Though he taught that the evil inclinations in the regenerate believer are involuntary and therefore not, properly speaking, sin, yet, when he dealt with his God and Lord, his only plea was: "Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness my beauty are, my glorious dress." (*Ev. Luth. Hymn-book*, 326.)

Wesley sensed the soul-destroying dangers which lurk in his doctrine. Though Wesley carefully refrained from stating that he had attained perfection, though he tried to guard the doctrine from its natural excesses by stressing the attainability of holiness only on the ground that the evil inclinations are not, properly speaking, sin, and not primarily because the Christian is inherently good, yet his doctrine is responsible for the many unholy fruits which to this day are ripening on the tree of Methodism. Though he warned against spiritual pride and advised his followers "not hastily to ascribe dreams, voices, impressions, and visions to be from God," yet his doctrine of sanctification is the mother of the presumptuous enthusiasm which has perturbed so many American and even foreign communities. For after all, Wesley must be considered the spiritual father of the modern Holiness movement.

2.

The attainability of holiness through sanctification as an act subsequent to regeneration is that doctrine which explains the presence of Methodism among the Christian churches. Due largely to the great revivals of the early part of the nineteenth century, this Methodistic leaven permeated the majority of the Reformed churches. But during the closing decades of the same century the conviction was voiced in many quarters that the original power and spirituality of Wesley's doctrines were rapidly disappearing from the churches. Almost simultaneously there arose in widely scattered parts of the country under the leadership of such men as the Revs. Hoople, Bresee, Knapp, Rees, and others independent movements within the various denominations for the "conservation and spread of apostolic power and holiness." At the same time a number of missionary associations were organized along undenominational lines, notably by Revs. Simpson, Dake, and Mrs. Alma White, who gained many adherents to the Holiness doctrine among the neglected and unchurched masses. Though this large group of Holiness bodies fell into many excesses, *e. g.*, the gift of tongues, divine healing, etc., they all believed themselves called to "promote and preserve Scriptural holiness." In 1890

the general conference of the Methodist Church viewed with alarm the wide-spread interest in the extreme view of entire sanctification as represented by the numerous *ecclesiolae in ecclesia*. In 1894 the bishops in their "Pastoral Address" referred to this movement in these words: "The privilege of believers to attain unto the state of entire sanctification and to abide therein is a well-known teaching of Methodism. . . . But there has sprung up among us a party with 'holiness' as a watchword. They have holiness associations, holiness meetings, etc. Religious experience is represented as if it consists of only two steps, the first step out of condemnation into peace and the next into Christian perfection. The effect is to disparage the new birth and all stages of spiritual growth if there be not professed perfect holiness. Such terms as 'saints,' 'sanctified,' etc., are restricted to the few who have reached the height of perfect purity and improperly denied to the body of believers, . . . even to those mature Christians who are ever increasing in the knowledge of God and are fruitful in every good work. . . ." (Du Bose, *op. cit.*, II, 90 f.) Not finding the Methodistic communion receptive to their peculiar conception of "entire sanctification" the leaders in this movement organized independent church-bodies, which coalesced into about twelve denominations, notably the Nazarene, the Pilgrim Holiness, the Pentecostal Holiness Church, the Church of God, the Assemblies of God. In addition to these aggressive bodies a number of evangelistic associations, chiefly the Christian and Missionary Alliance, the Pillar of Fire, send their apostles of the Holiness doctrine into the cities, villages, and hamlets of this and foreign countries.

In the main the Holiness people follow Wesley. But they consider the doctrine of entire sanctification the *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae* and hence make every Scriptural statement subservient to their distinctive doctrine and therefore go beyond Wesley and historic Methodism. They are very positive in claiming that sanctification is the eradication of all evil propensities, that it is an instantaneous act, and that it must be the goal of every regenerate believer.

a) With Wesley they teach that "regeneration removes the *love* of sin, justification the *guilt* of sins already committed, and sanctification the *inclination* to sin in the future." (Hills, *Holiness and Power*, 91.) But while Wesley taught that the evil propensities continue in the sanctified believer, and while he based the attainability of entire sanctification on the assumption that the wayward tendencies are involuntary and therefore sinless, the modern Holiness people believe, that "entire sanctification is that act of God, subsequent to conversion, by which regenerate believers are *made free from inbred sin* and brought into the state of *entire devotement* to God." (*Nazarene Manual*.) That sanctification is considered as the *eradi-*

cation of inbred sin is evident from their writings. According to Dr. Carradine, *justification* cannot reach original sin. Justification is *pardon*, and original sin cannot be pardoned since it involves no guilt. The conclusion, then, is: "I stand a justified man with inherited depravity within me." Neither can *regeneration* correct man's inherited depravity, for it affects only man's *personal* depravity, man's personal evil *will*. But original sin is more than an act of the will. It is the *involuntary waywardness* of the flesh. (*Op. cit.*, 97 f.) But since God demands not only an *actual* (*i. e.*, an acted) obedience, but also holy dispositions, therefore entire sanctification must be the only means which can separate the sinner from all involuntary tendencies. "A fully saved heart can look into the face of Jesus and without mental reservation say, 'Thy will be done,' while the *whole nature* responds 'Amen.' But if depravity remains, it will rebel and refuse to yield." (*Op. cit.*, 89.) To deny this doctrine, to teach that sin and guilt still inhere in a Christian, from which God does not sanctify the believer, is considered a horrible and appalling doctrine, filling the Church with despair." (*Op. cit.*, 39.)

The Holiness exponents teach that Christ procured a twofold salvation, forgiveness of sins *and* entire sanctification, the one affecting our voluntary sins, the other the secret yearnings that do not come to the surface, that lie behind the will. Entire sanctification goes into the bed-rock of the moral nature and gives us relief in the "basement story" of our moral nature. And God is able to cleanse us perfectly of all evil dispositions because "by the gracious act of sanctification we are transformed into the same image from glory to glory and are made partakers of the divine nature. The longings [which cannot be realized as long as the involuntary sinwardness is not eradicated, M.] for holiness and the image of God become realized." (Hills, *op. cit.*, 92.) According to A. B. Simpson, a well-known advocate of this doctrine, sanctification is the entire eradication of the evil propensities; for, he says, "sin is not in the body, but in the heart. Death will not sanctify you, your heart must be sanctified *now*." (*The Fourfold Gospel*, 31.) "When we are dedicated to God, He comes to live in us and transfuses His life through our being. . . . He comes to live in us as truly as though we were visibly dwelling under His wing. God is again manifest in the flesh." (Pp. 39. 40.) The Holiness people clearly go beyond Methodist theology, for they cannot quote Wesley as their authority for the following statement: "There is no longer a conflict between the inclinations and the judgment. The seat of war has been mainly changed. Formerly we contended with enemies without *and* within. Now the citadel is purged; the enemies are all without, and the fort royal is all friendly to the King." (*Saved to the Uttermost*, 32.) When sanctification occurs, then, according to Dr. Carradine, "the various

propensities of the body, which regeneration subdued, but could not eradicate, are instantly arrested or extirpated. The craving of habit is ended, the root of bitterness is extracted. A sweet, holy calm fills the breast, actually effects [affects, M.] the body, steals into the face, and rules the life." (*Sanctification*, 31.) According to Simpson the spirit is so perfectly separated in its own divine nature from its own sinful heart that our ears are deaf to all sinful and mundane sensuality. The voice which sings for Jesus will unconsciously refrain from singing the *Ave Maria*. Though we come into contact with sin, it cannot contaminate us, for Christ's pure life fills us and expells all evil. Our soul naturally withdraws from the filth on all sides, yes, even from esthetic, but mundane thoughts, and our mind actually becomes an empty skull, which is then filled with God's penetrating fire, so that the intellect and all mental faculties become willing servants of God. The mind is able to rise above its former possibilities, and also the powers of the body are glorified and exalted." (*Wholly Sanctified*, *passim*.) No wonder that Merle D'Aubigné's *History of the Reformation* is credited to the increase of the mental powers which the famous historian received through "sanctification." (Hills, *op. cit.*, 299 f.) No wonder that the majority of the Holiness preachers claim that entire sanctification implies also divine healing; for "we are so united with Christ in our body that we shall have His power in this broken vessel of clay." (*Wholly Sanctified*, 129.) "The living physical Christ must come into your life, and He is able and willing to share His physical life with you. This is a nearer union than the connubial life, so near that the very life of His veins is transfused into yours." (*The Fourfold Gospel*, 61.)

That the Holiness people believe that sin is entirely eradicated is proved from the comfort which is given to a "saint" who feels his sin. Wesley would have answered him: Do not worry about the evil inclinations, for they are involuntary and therefore guiltless. But Rev. Simpson assures the "saint" that these temptations are entirely from without, solely from the devil. Yes, "God credits you with an obedience all the more pleasing, because temptation has been so strong." (*Wholly Sanctified*, 105.)*

b) Wesley preferred to say that perfect love was the result — at least in his own case — of the ripening of Christian experience and motive into the measure of the perfect man in Christ. The modern Holiness teachers stake their entire doctrine upon the claim that "entire sanctification" is an instantaneous act subsequent to regeneration. Sanctification in their opinion is not "following after," "mortifying the lusts of the flesh," "drowning the old Adam with

* The close affinity of these people to Rome becomes evident from a comparison of this statement with the concluding sentence of the Council of Trent concerning original sin. (Waterworth ed., 24.)

all sins and evil lusts," but it is "entering in," "saved to the uttermost." Therefore they ridicule the idea that a Christian, who, according to Rom. 5, 1, has peace with God, at the same time experiences a deepening of the consciousness of his guilt, a fuller realization of the weakness of his spiritual powers, and an increased conviction that temptations become greater and more insidious. They believe that sanctification is that ecstatic state in which the regenerate believer "feels as though a hand, not a human, but the almighty hand of God, were laid upon his brow, which is felt internally and externally. The hand of God penetrates into all parts of the body and infuses a sin-consuming power into the heart, the mind, and all members of the body." (*Synodalbericht*, Illinois, 1883, 35.) All passages in Scripture which contain the words "sanctification," "saint," "sanctified," are explained according to their conception of entire sanctification. Of course, if sanctification were such a new creation, then it could be attained solely through a divine act instantaneously performed. And that is the claim. This is the definition of the manuals of the various Holiness bodies, this is what Simpson means when he writes: "Sanctification is *obtainment*, not *attainment*." Christ is received by an instantaneous act. A person cannot be partially converted and partially unconverted. And just so, according to these enthusiasts, "the special ministry of the Holy Spirit, whose work it is to perfectly sanctify the regenerated sons of God, is received by an instantaneous act." A Christian, who has fully received the grace of Christ in justification and regeneration, must now also fully receive the gift of sanctification. He cannot be partially sanctified and partially subject to sin. Their whole theory of this doctrine demands the conception of an instantaneous act. What else than an instantaneous act of God could produce such a state, concerning which a perfectionist can claim: "During these last fifty years I have ceased to be conscious of the existence of those evil propensities which during the preceding eighteen years 'warred in my members.' In but one single instance have I during these fifty years been conscious at all of a movement of that evil temper, and that was but for a moment"? In this state there is no sin, though it is possible to lapse from this state. That is what these perfectionists mean when they say that entire sanctification is not *sinless* perfection; *i. e.*, the Christians are not as yet confirmed in their perfection, but may fall from grace while in this world. And when they say that it is not *absolute* perfection, they simply wish to state that God alone is absolute, that even the angels cannot approach His holiness. (Hills, *op. cit.*, 93.) Perfection is complete, entire, all-embracing, from its inception and in all its details no different from the perfection in heaven. These conceited spirits would have us strike from the Lord's Prayer the words "Forgive us our tres-

passes." Every Christian who still feels the pangs of an evil conscience must upbraid himself that he has either not diligently sought this blessing or think that God will not fulfil His "promises," and thus he must sink into bitter gloom and despair.

c) In the opinion of these modern perfectionists entire sanctification is not a utopian dream, but a state which is attainable for all Christians and must be sought by all regenerate believers. They go far beyond Wesley and historic Methodism in leaving no stone unturned to prove the attainability of entire sanctification for all believers. They advance arguments of probability and possibility (we were tempted to write "improbability and impossibility"), they marshal forth a vast array of Scripture-texts, they conjure up visions and secret voices; they relate experiences and give testimonies by the hundreds and thousands to prove their contention.

Though they employ Scripture very profusely (in a treatise of about 250 pages some 150 passages were treated to prove the attainability of perfection), yet their entire doctrine is based on the grossest kind of enthusiasm. But enthusiasm and rationalism always go hand in hand. In spite of their prolific use of Scripture they are the victims of a coarse rationalism. They "prove" the *probability* of entire sanctification from the essence of God, "who, hating sin and loving His children, would certainly also appoint means for completely sanctifying His believers." The *possibility* is established according to the Scholastic argument: *A debito sequitur posse*; if God demands holiness of His children, then they must *be able* to render such holiness. "God never gives a 'must' without a 'may.'" "What shall we say of these commands in Eph. 1, 4; Col. 1, 22? Is God a heartless tyrant issuing commands to a race of moral beings that none are able to keep? If holiness is not attainable, then God commands what is impossible. But God's commands are *enablings*." (Hills, *op. cit.*, 101—124.) God's promise that Christ *is able* to succor them who are tempted occasions the perfectionistic comment: "If He is able to come to our aid and to remove all inbred sin, will He refuse to remove this evil?" (P. 131.) Another example of their rationalistic tendencies: "Jesus taught His disciples to pray, 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' No one will deny that the angels are sanctified. Then, Jesus prays that believers may be sanctified on earth. . . . Who will be rash enough to affirm that the Son of God was praying for something that was not according to the will of God and was therefore impossible?" (P. 126.) We are told either to accept the doctrine that entire sanctification is attainable or to hold to the following absurdities: "That God of choice induces imperfect moral and spiritual purity, when He might just as well effect perfect purity; that Jesus abides in believers who are filled with warring lusts, when He might render their hearts clean temples

of the Holy Ghost; that God commands us to be holy, though He knows we cannot keep this command, thus making Himself an unjust tyrant." (P. 165.)

Rationalism is vicious. But it is doubly soul-destroying when it insidiously parades as Scriptural wisdom. Satan has blinded these modern perfectionists, who refuse to see their rationalistic enthusiasm. They feel secure in "the fact that the word 'perfection' and its relatives are predicated of human character under the operations of grace more than fifty times and that the words 'holy,' 'holiness,' 'sanctify,' 'sanctification,' etc., as affirmed of believers or urged upon them, move through the Scriptures like a flock of birds." (*Op. cit.*, 153.) "There are five times as many proof-texts, fairly interpreted, for the support of this doctrine as there are for the doctrine of conversion. There are ten times as many as there are for the divinity of Christ." But though the Scriptures seem to be on their side, a closer examination of the respective texts reveals that these enthusiasts have torn them out of their context, *e. g.*, Col. 3, 14, 15 (*cp. Trigl.*, 182), or that these texts, which speak of justification, continual justification, spiritual help in trials and temptations, or of sanctification in its Scriptural meaning, are made to teach entire sanctification, *e. g.*, Heb. 12, 10; 7, 25; Eph. 5, 25, 26; Acts 20, 32. Instruction seems to be hopeless when a professor of theology establishes the doctrine of entire sanctification with this interpretation of Matt. 23, 13: "Jesus (the altar) makes entirely holy (sanctifies) the regenerated and consecrated believer (the gift)." (*Op. cit.*, 264.)

Scripture-passages which clearly reject the idea of perfect sanctification are simply brushed aside. God's repeated verdict concerning man in the Old Testament: "There is none that sinneth not," is made to read: "that *may* not sin" (the Vulgate also has *peccet*), or this verdict is said to apply to man prior to his sanctification. (*Op. cit.*, 169 ff.) Dr. Steele adds the sarcastic remark: "A little scholarship applied to these Old Testament texts would improve the theology of some people." The well-known words of Paul, Rom. 7, 14—25, "cannot be accepted as a portrayal of Paul in the perfect life, but must be considered either as a picture of those living far beneath their privilege as believers or as a description of some experience in his own life when as a legalist he tried in vain to keep the Law." (P. 174.) Phil. 3, 11—15 does not disturb the perfectionist one moment, for Paul is here made to speak "of the perfection of the *resurrection* state," and this interpretation is established by comparing this text with Luke 13, 32, where Christ says: "The third day I am perfected." The words are changed to read: "Not that I have already completed my course and arrived at the goal, so as to receive a prize." (Pp. 178 f.) Even 1 John 1, 8 does not dampen the spirit of these enthusiastic spirits, for in their opinion these words were

written against the Docetae, who, in claiming that the souls were immaterial, denied that their bodies were sinful.

But the final and clinching argument for the attainability of entire sanctification in the opinion of these "Spirit-baptized" people is the claim that not only Abel, Enoch, Moses, Caleb, Zacharias, Elisabeth, the disciples, and many other Biblical characters had this gift, but that also under the ministrations of modern Holiness preachers thousands upon thousands have been brought to a "Spirit-witnessed" realization of entire sanctification. "Testimonies" of those "who have entered in and are saved to the uttermost" fill their literature, and a recital of individual "experiences" constitutes a prominent part of their revivals, camp-meetings, prayer-meetings, and class-meetings. In short, their entire argumentation may be summed up in the statement: Believe that you are perfectly sanctified, and you are sanctified.

It goes without saying that the subjectivism and enthusiasm of the exponents of the doctrine of entire sanctification has made this one of the most bewitching, beguiling, and insidious errors of our day. It is a real menace because so many Scripture-passages are quoted in its defense. It is extremely dangerous because it flatters the old Adam by teaching an anticipation of the heavenly perfection, thus ignoring sin and the threefold use of the Law; and where there is no sin, there is no need of Him who died for sinners. These spirits ought to read what Luther said in his third public disputation against Agricola (St. Louis Ed., XX, 1642 ff.) or Historical Introductions to Triglotta, p. 165. But such enthusiastic spirits do not want to be instructed. It is impossible to convince him of his error who bases his contention upon a supposed vision, or an hallucination. The perfectionist has soared to dizzy heights of spiritual pride and carnal security on the mere bubble of an ecstatic revelation. But when the prick of God's holy Law pierces this vain bubble, he will be hurled into the depths of despair.

"Those haughty spirits, Lord, restrain," etc. (Hymn 110, 6.)
Springfield, Ill. F. E. MAYER.

Die Hauptschriften Luthers in Chronologischer Reihenfolge.

Mit Anmerkungen.

(Fortsetzung.)

1521. „An den Bod zu Leipzig.“ — Diese Schrift war am 14. Januar in Arbeit und scheint noch vor Ende des Monats ausgeschickt worden zu sein. Luthers Streit ging zurück in das Jahr 1519 und wurde veranlaßt durch einen Brief Hieronymus Emser's an Johann Sad, worin er sich über die Leipziger Disputation aussprach. Schon Ende September 1519 hatte Luther hierauf durch einen „Zusatz“ geantwortet. Es erfolgte eine Antwort auf seitens Emser's: *A Venatione Luteriana Aegocerotis Assertio*, auf die Luther damals nicht einging. Die kurze Schrift vom Januar 1521 ist in einem sehr scharfen Ton gehalten. (St. Louiser Ausgabe XVIII, 1250 ff.)