

fantastic speculations or mere figures of speech to those who press the idea of personality as far in the direction of monadism as many do, but which really lie at the bottom of the whole Christian doctrine of redemption.

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CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

II.

OTHER NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING.

WE have seen that the writers of the New Testament set before their readers, as a goal to be pursued, an ideal human excellence which they called *perfection*, or, as their language might be more correctly rendered, the *maturity* of moral and spiritual *manhood*. This ideal character, they described in different ways: and the variety of description suggested that they had not always in view precisely the same moral standard.

This perfection is, in the sermon on the mount, identified with a love to our enemies like the indiscriminating kindness of the God of nature. In the First Epistle of John the duty of love to our brethren is enforced by the example of the love manifested in the mission of the Son of God. We also read that such love banishes fear, and that he who fears is not perfected in love. This agreement of documents so different emphasises this aspect of Christian perfection.

The same ideal receives still further emphasis and unique honour in Matthew xxii. 37-40, Mark xii. 29-31, where our Lord teaches that to love God with all our hearts and to love our neighbour as ourselves are the two great commandments on which hang all the Law and the Prophets. The same two commands are enforced in Luke x. 27. In remarkable agreement with this teaching of

Christ found in all the Synoptist Gospels, we read in Romans xiii. 8-10 that he who loves his neighbour has fulfilled law and that every command is summed up in the one command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." The same teaching receives further confirmation in the unique place given to love in 1 Corinthians xiii. as the greatest of virtues. In these passages, no express mention is made of perfection or maturity. But they describe and enforce the ideal of perfection set before us by Christ in Matthew v. 48.

Another and very definite ideal, different from yet closely related to that just expounded, is given in 2 Corinthians v. 13-15, where St. Paul lays bare the aims and motives of his own ceaseless activity in the service of Christ. "If, (as may seem to some,) we have gone out of our minds, it is for God: if, (as others may say,) we are men of sober sense, it is for you. For the love of Christ holds us fast (*i.e.* leaves us no other course); since we have come to this judgment, that One died on behalf of all, therefore all died; and that He died on behalf of all in order that they who live may live no longer for themselves, but for Him who on their behalf died and rose."¹

Notice here a definite and very exalted ideal. Christ died in order to give to His followers an aim in life, the noblest conceivable aim, viz. the aim for which He laid down His life, and this aim embraced for His sake. Now, an aim persistently followed is needful in order to give to life unity and force: and the grandeur of life is conditioned by the aim pursued. Therefore, in order to ennoble even the humblest of His followers Christ gave Himself and His mission of mercy to be their one aim, that thus they might ever rise towards Him. This aim is practicable for all men

¹ The dative of advantage, which I have here suitably rendered, "for God . . . for you . . . for Him," is seriously obscured by the meaningless rendering of the Revisers, "unto God . . . unto you . . . unto Him."

at all times. For they who have least abilities can do something to help forward the work of Christ: and the most richly endowed find here an object worthy of their utmost effort and of any sacrifice it may involve.

The same ideal is set before us in Romans vi. 11; and in verse 10 Christ is presented as its pattern. "The death He died, He died to sin, once; the life He lives, He lives for God. In the same way also ye reckon yourselves to be on the one hand dead to sin, on the other hand living for God in Christ Jesus." We have here a negative counterpart to "living for God," viz. "dead to sin." This reminds us that all sin is hostility to God, and that consequently unreserved loyalty to God involves complete victory over all sin. And, since this victory comes through inward union with Him who died on the cross, the victors may be described as "dead to sin . . . in Christ."

This ideal finds its perfect human realisation in the incarnate Son. He says, in John iv. 34, "My food is that I may do the will of Him that sent Me and complete (*τελειώσω*) His work." So in John vi. 38, "I am come down from heaven, not in order that I may do My will, but the will of Him that sent Me." Similarly, in chapter v. 30, "I seek not My will, but the will of Him that sent Me." At the close of His course He said, as recorded in John xvii. 4, "I have glorified Thee on the earth, having completed (*τελειώσας*) the work which Thou gavest Me to do." We have here a definite aim set before the Son by the Father, ever kept in view, and accomplished.

The same ideal is in the New Testament embodied in other language. In John xvii. 17-19 our Lord prays, "Sanctify them in the truth: Thy word is truth." As Thou didst send Me into the world, also I have sent them into the world: and on their behalf I sanctify Myself, in order that also they may be sanctified in truth." So St. Paul prays in 1 Thessalonians v. 23, "May the God of peace

Himself sanctify you *all-perfect*: and your *entire* spirit and soul and body, may they be kept blamelessly at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ": ὁλοτελεῖς καὶ ὁλόκληρον. He desires that God may sanctify his readers, and thus give them a *maturity* or *perfection* embracing every part of their being; and that every part may be kept in a manner leaving them open to no blame. In 1 Corinthians vii. 32, the aim of a Christian woman is said to be "how she may please the Lord": in verse 34 it is said to be, "in order that she may be holy in her body and her spirit." Evidently the two phrases describe the same ideal life.

In 2 Corinthians vii. 1, St. Paul exhorts his readers, "let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of flesh and spirit, accomplishing holiness in the fear of God": ἐπιτελοῦντες ἁγιωσύνην. Here, as before, realised holiness is set before the readers as a goal to be pursued. Similarly, in Ephesians i. 4 we read that "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be *holy* and without blemish before Him." So chapter v. 25-27: "Christ loved the Church, and gave up Himself on her behalf; in order that He might *sanctify* her, having cleansed her with the laver of water, in the word, in order that He might, Himself to Himself, present the Church glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she may be *holy* and without blemish." In Hebrews xii. 14 we are bidden to "follow after *sanctification*, without which none can see the Lord." A similar exhortation in very emphatic language is found in 1 Peter i. 15, 16: "But like as He that called you is *holy*, so be also yourselves *holy* in all manner of life, because it is written, *holy* shall ye be; because I am *holy*." In all the above passages, holiness is set before the readers as a goal for pursuit and attainment.

On the other hand, we notice that in the Epistles of St. Paul and the Book of Revelation frequently, and in the Book of Acts and the Epistle to the Hebrews, church-mem-

bers generally, without reference to their degree of maturity, are called "saints" or "holy persons." This is very conspicuous in 1 Corinthians i. 2: "to the Church of God, men sanctified in Christ Jesus, which is at Corinth, called saints." Yet in chapter iii. 1 the readers are described as "men of flesh, as babes in Christ," and therefore incapable of the spiritual food fit only (chap. ii. 6) for the "perfect," *i.e.* for men in Christ.

The real significance of the word *holy* as a description of the ideal life of the servants of Christ, and a solution of this apparent contradiction, are to be found in the holy objects of the old Covenant, *e.g.* the Sabbath, the tabernacle, the sacrifices, and the priesthood. For all these were devoted unreservedly to the service of God. They thus become symbols of the unreserved devotion which Christ claims from His servants. These last are a priesthood offering their own bodies as a living sacrifice, and thus keeping perpetual Sabbath. So 1 Peter ii. 5, "a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices"; and Romans xii. 1: "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, your rational service." In other words, the holiness set before the servants of Christ is unreserved devotion to Him and to His work.

On the other hand, that God had claimed for Himself and His service the various holy objects, placed these last, whatever men might do or fail to do, in a new and solemn relation to Himself. Men might desecrate the Sabbath, or the sanctuary, or the priesthood, but they were holy still, and their indelible sanctity condemned those who defiled them. In this very real sense all whom Christ saves He claims for His own. This is the OBJECTIVE holiness of the servants of Christ. In this most common sense of the word, they are spoken of as *saints* or *holy* persons. But occasionally we find holiness set before them as a goal to be pursued and attained. The word then denotes actual and

unreserved loyalty to Christ. This is the SUBJECTIVE holiness to which Christ calls His servants. Hence the apparently different use of the same word.

It is now evident that the subjective holiness set before us in various passages of the New Testament as a goal for our pursuit is identical with the unreserved devotion to Christ which, as we read in 2 Corinthians v. 15, He died to evoke; and with the death to sin and life for God which, in Romans vi. 11, St. Paul bids his readers reckon to be theirs. Moreover, although this ideal life of devotion to God is not expressly spoken of in the New Testament as *perfection*, it may indisputably be fairly so described, in the sense in which the word *τέλειος* is there used. For they whose devotion is alloyed with selfishness and sin are but babes in Christ; whereas they whose one purpose is to accomplish the purposes of God have attained a maturity of spiritual manhood. It is equally evident that this ideal, which found visible symbolic form in the holy objects of the ancient ritual, is practically equivalent to the whole-hearted love to God and man which, as Christ taught, summed up the whole requirement of the ancient law and which St. Paul taught to be a fulfilment of law and the highest Christian virtue. For loyalty without love is, if not a contradiction in terms, something far below the inward harmony essential to an ideal life. Taken together, these two elements describe fully the ideal life set before us in the New Testament. In proportion as we fall below, or approach this standard are we babes in Christ or full-grown men.

Other teaching of the New Testament not only gives to this ideal still greater definiteness, but places it in a very real sense within reach of all who put faith in Christ.

We are frequently taught that all spiritual growth is a work and gift of God. So, in Philippians i. 5, 6, in view of the spirit of brotherhood manifested by his readers, St.

Paul expresses a confident hope that He who has began a good work in them will complete it: *ἐπιτελέσει*, *i.e.* bring it to its goal. While urging them, in chapter ii. 12, to work out their own salvation, he remembers that it is God who works in them both to desire and to work on behalf of His good pleasure, *i.e.* to accomplish what seems good to Him. In Ephesians i. 19 St. Paul desires his readers to know the surpassing greatness of God's power in them that believe, which he compares to the power which raised Christ. The same is taught, in reference to the ideal life of holiness, in the prayer of Christ recorded in John xvii. 17, "Sanctify them in Thy truth"; and in St. Paul's prayer in 1 Thessalonians v. 23, "may the God of peace Himself sanctify you." For here sanctification is sought for as God's work. And this must be, inasmuch as the disciples and readers were already, as followers of Christ, objectively holy, the inward subjective holiness of actual devotion to God. Similar teaching underlies all the epistles of the New Testament.

This important doctrine, *viz.* that whatever God claims from us He is ready to work in us, is taught, at least as a hope for the good time coming, in the Old Testament. After the command in Deuteronomy vi. 5, "thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart," we find a corresponding promise in chapter xxx. 6, "Jehovah thy God will circumcise thy heart to love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart and all thy soul." A similar prophetic promise is found in Ezekiel xxxvi. 25, "and I will sprinkle upon you clean water, and ye shall be clean: and from all your filthiness and from all your idols I will cleanse you." These great promises are re-echoed in earnest prayer in Psalm li. 7, "purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. . . . Create in me a clean heart, O God." All these passages imply that purification from sin and loyalty to God are a work of God in man.

We are frequently taught in the New Testament that the Holy Spirit of God given to His adopted sons is the inward source and animating principle of their new life of devotion to God. In Galatians v. 16, St. Paul bids his readers "walk by the Spirit, and ye will not accomplish the desire of the flesh"; and in verse 22 he gives a list of Christian virtues which he describes as "the fruit of the Spirit." So elsewhere frequently.

This teaching we can well understand. For the Holy Spirit is a bearer of all the attributes of God, and the inward and personal medium through whom God comes into immediate contact with the spirit of man. Moreover He is the Spirit of Christ. By His agency the heart of Christ beats in those whom the Son is not ashamed to call brethren. We wonder not that He imparts to men the mind and power of Christ and of God. Indisputably He is able to fill us with whole-hearted love to God and man and unreserved loyalty to the kingdom of God, like the love and loyalty of Christ. That God works in man, through the inward agency of His Spirit, whatever He claims from man, is one of the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel.

Yet, if this new life is to be in any real sense man's own life, it must be conditioned by his own free choice, by his free surrender to this divine guidance and acceptance of this divinely offered strength. And that the Spirit of God is received by faith and that His work in man is conditioned by faith, is frequently taught in the New Testament. In John vii. 38, after bidding the thirsty to come to Him and drink, Christ gives the wonderful promise that from those who believe in Him shall flow rivers of living water. This promise, the evangelist tells us in verse 39 refers to the Spirit whom they who believe in Him were about to receive. Here abundant spiritual usefulness, a sure mark of Christian maturity, is promised through the agency of the Spirit of God to all who believe in Christ. Similarly, in

Galatians ii. 20, St. Paul asserts that no longer does he live, but Christ lives in him. If so, St. Paul's life must be an outflow and counterpart of the life of Christ, and in some sense a prolongation of His life on earth, a life inspired by love to God and man and by unreserved devotion to the work of God. Here then we have in St. Paul's own blessed experience, the ideal life which he put before his readers. He goes on to say that, while Christ lives in Him, he lives "in faith." In other words, St. Paul's loyalty to God is conditioned by his faith in Christ. Similar teaching is found in Ephesians iii. 17, where St. Paul prays "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith"; in 1 Peter i. 5, "who are guarded, in the power of God, through faith"; in 1 John v. 4, "this is the victory which hath overcome the world, even our faith"; and elsewhere frequently. That the new life breathed into man by the Spirit of God is conditioned by faith, is another primary doctrine of the Gospel of Christ.

This new life of loyalty to God involves complete deliverance from all sin. For all sin is hostility to God. And this deliverance from sin is an all-important element in the full salvation wrought by God in those who believe. It is expressly mentioned in the description given in Romans vi. 11: "dead to sin, but living for God, in Christ Jesus." So in 1 Corinthians vii. 1, the apostle bids his readers, "cleanse yourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, accomplishing holiness." Here and again in 1 John iii. 3, as conditioned by his own free surrender of faith, the cleansing is spoken of as man's own work: "he that hath this hope in him purifieth himself as He is pure." On the other hand, in chapter i. 7, 9 we read that "the blood of Jesus, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin. . . . He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Here the cleansing is said to be the work of God and a result of the shed blood of Christ.

These and other similar passages are a virtual promise that God will here and now, by His own power, rescue from all bondage and defilement of sin all those who venture to believe His promise of such deliverance.

This deliverance involves victory over, and complete neutralisation of, all inward influences tending towards sin. But it does not necessarily involve their immediate annihilation or the annihilation of the source from which they spring. For, unless yielded to, these evil influences do not defile. For instance, the reformed drunkard who is painfully conscious of an appetite remaining in him, but who never yields to it, is a strictly sober man. God saves him from the accumulated power of a habit formed by sinful indulgence. But the habit can be destroyed only as it was formed, by continuous action. This subject will receive further attention in my next paper.

It is worthy of note that the aorist tense in 2 Corinthians vii. 1, 1 John i. 9 (*καθαρίσωμεν, καθάριση*) suggests a completed purification and not merely an approach towards it. And this is implied in the salvation from sin described in the foregoing paragraph. They who entrust their wayward hearts to Christ are already clean, but only because each moment the power of God saves them from defilement.

That the ideal life set before us in the New Testament is wrought by the Spirit of God in all who believe and when they believe, places this ideal in an aspect altogether new. Apart from this divine inworking, whole-hearted love to God and loyalty to the work of Christ would be only a distant goal to be pursued by our own moral effort. And for such sustained effort our own moral strength is altogether insufficient. But now all is changed. The question is no longer whether we are able to pursue and attain the goal set before us but whether God is able and ready to rescue us from all sin and to work in us here and now the devotion He claims; and whether we can trust Him from

this moment to do so. Thousands have made, and daily make, this venture of faith; and have found, by happy experience, an unseen hand breaking their old fetters and bearing them upwards and onwards with the strength of God. And this discovery has been to them a new era in their spiritual life.

Yet this discovery is to them not a goal attained but a new equipment for further and more rapid pursuit of a goal still before them. For all spiritual advance brings us into clearer light revealing a loftier ideal and the imperfection of even our best works. It is still our aim to be holy in body and spirit, and our prayer is that God may sanctify us and thus perfect in us that which each day's progress shows to be still lacking. So St. Paul, while asserting that he no longer lives but Christ lives in him, refuses to call himself perfected and ever presses forward to a loftier goal. In this he presents himself as a pattern for full-grown men in Christ.

Such then is the teaching of the New Testament, as I read it, about Christian Perfection. The word rendered *perfect* denotes the maturity of spiritual manhood; and this is set before us as an ideal to be realised in our own heart and life. Sometimes it is represented as complete control of the tongue; in other places as a result of brave endurance of hardship or temptation. Elsewhere it is goodwill to all, even to our enemies; and is incompatible with party spirit. Very conspicuous as supreme virtues are whole-hearted love to God and indiscriminating love to man, and unreserved devotion to Christ and to His work of saving men. Taken together, these last are an absolute standard by which each may measure his own spiritual stature. The writers of the New Testament, and especially St. Paul, teach that to this goal the power of God will raise us here and now, so far as we venture in faith to expect Him to raise us. But in this spiritual victory and elevation there

is no finality. For each upward step reveals heights still above us. But it reveals also a power still further raising us. To expect and to experience this inward revelation of the power of God in our own spiritual life, is to find rest amid toil and conflict, a rest which is ceaseless and effective activity and constant victory.

In view of this teaching of the New Testament, I shall in another paper discuss the teaching of Wesley on Christian Perfection; and certain subordinate questions connected with the same subject.

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PROF. HOMMEL ON ARPHAXAD.

THE archæological problems of the present are so numerous and exact such careful and methodical treatment that one is disposed to regret the appearance of works like that of Prof. Sayce and (one may add by anticipation) Prof. Hommel, in which some attempt is made to give critical archæological treatment of Old Testament problems. If these zealous archæologists had confined themselves to incidental suggestions, or at most to academical dissertations on well-defined minute portions of the Old Testament literature, one could receive with gratitude such modest contributions to historical study. But one grieves at the loss of time inevitably caused by the popularization of uncritical arguments and harmful misunderstandings. Prof. Hommel's book will no doubt contain much that is of interest. But if he wishes to prove the antiquity of the document known by the symbol P by arguments such as he has produced in his recent letter to the *Academy* (Oct., 1896) on Arphaxad, he will find few scholars to agree with him. The present writer has no expectation of being able to contribute more than this one point to the discussion,