

there are strong objections; and we are glad to see that Ramsay is very emphatic in preferring the former reading of Galatians ii. 1 as best according with the central significance of the Conversion in the argument.¹ And so we regard 30-33 A.D. as its probable date.

Thirdly, the general effect is to minimize the difference between the attitude of the leading apostles towards the reception of uncircumcised Gentiles and that of Paul himself. A common understanding, based on the coexistence of two branches in the one Ecclesia—if with a certain superiority attaching to the Jewish type in the older apostles' minds—seems to have arisen early; their chief anxiety being to secure a similar type of piety or of religious and ethical feeling. This was certainly the case at the time when the "four abstinences" were laid down at the Jerusalem Concordat. On another occasion we shall try to show that it was so some four years earlier.

VERNON BARTLET.

THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE.

VIII.

SANCTIFICATION.

ACCORDING to the Catholic faith, the religious life has one supreme moment never to be repeated nor annulled, and afterwards it has a varied history whose chapters often repeat themselves, and sometimes annul one another. The conscious moment occurs when one who has been frivolous, unbelieving, and worldly is arrested and bethinks himself, when the mist rolls away in which he has been walking as in a vain show, and he sees the austere and beautiful reality of the spiritual world,—when he is moved by a sudden and irresistible influence to reverse his course and to

¹ EXPOSITOR, July, 1898.

fling himself with utter abandonment into a new and undreamt of future. The veil may be lifted by a book, or by a picture, or by a conversation, or by a silence, as it most commonly is lifted by the gospel declared in Holy Scripture or in public preaching. The effect is vision, conversion (and regeneration). The history begins when a man who has come to himself and to God sets himself to cultivate the religious life under the guidance and the grace of the Holy Ghost. And his progress from that day in knowledge and in holiness is sanctification.

As sanctification is the recreation of the soul in a nobler shape, its first necessity is a *Perfect Type*, and this type is Christ Jesus. Within the recesses of our mind we have got an idea of physical beauty which the ordinary person is neither able to describe nor to draw. It is an endowment of which he is not always conscious, a piece of property which he has not yet possessed. One day he enters a gallery and stands before the Venus of Milo or the Apollo Belvidere. In that instant he is conscious of his ideal, and has recognised that perfection which all along has been in his mind. After the same fashion we have in our soul an ideal of spiritual beauty which we could not place upon paper, and to which we ourselves have never attained. Occasionally it is dimly thrown out before us in the life of a friend; we recognise nobility of which we have dreamed, incarnate in this man. No one, however, has exhibited in his character the absolute perfection that our souls seek after, and would desire to see. Every good man in Holy Scripture or in history is a hint of the supreme Goodness, an inspiration for our imagination, a prophecy of a coming revelation. As the worthies of the Bible pass before us, each one at once attracts and disappoints us, because there is in him some trait of goodness, in him also some grave defect. Moses and David, Samuel and Jonathan, Isaiah and Jeremiah, amaze us in

turn by their moral vision, their spiritual poetry, their chivalrous heroism, their strong integrity, their gracious words, their patient suffering. They also leave us dissatisfied by their human faults and glaring imperfection. They themselves look forward to a day which is to come, and imagine a Face which shall satisfy the soul. Isaiah, in his 53rd chapter, and David, in the 72nd Psalm, with eager, reverent mind, depict the Man which is to be, and bid men wait for His coming. With less than this Man they may not be content; when this Man appears, nothing will remain to be desired. Throughout the world, in sacred literature and also in secular, scattered fragments of a perfect figure can be found, and then when Christ appeared it was discovered. According to universal opinion, from which there is no dissension, and never indeed can be, Jesus fulfils our ideal of the Perfect Man.

It were possible to imagine a human type which would be perfect but provincial; it is a part of Christ's excellence that His perfection is universal. The son of a Jewish maiden, we do not think of Him as a Jew; He is a Man representing the human race. Born in the first century, we do not speak of Him as a Man of His time, because He is a Man of all time. Living within the circumstances of a narrow life, we do not think of Him as a carpenter or as a rabbi. We think of Him as above all circumstances and doing everlasting work. We should find it impossible to describe His character, because we should have to include every single high quality, and to state them at their highest point. One hardly limits Him to manhood, because one feels that in Him was also combined the excellency of the other sex, so that man and woman meet and are harmonized in Him. His character is not one of the colours into which light is split, He is rather Light itself, which gives its tint to every flower, to the sea, and to the sky. For all men, therefore, and all women, of every nation and

of every age, and of every condition, He is the pattern of perfection.

His elevation above the limitations of His time and nation make Him an eternal type. Pictures even of the great masters have their vogue, coming into favour, and going out of favour, like a fashion. The picture indeed remains the same, but our idea of what we want and of what we admire changes. This picture only is not subject to the caprice of moral fashion, since the only change is in its growing appreciation and its deeper understanding. There have been many schools in Christianity, but all of them have adored Christ. There have been many schools of unbelief, but none of them, save the most unworthy, have dared to criticise Christ. He is new in every age, and He belongs to every age, and with every age He is more certainly accepted as the brightness of humanity.

Against Christ, however, as the type of the soul it may be urged that He is too high and is lifted beyond our attainment. Is it not a disability in our Christian faith that it should propose unto every Christian, however imperfect, the imitation of Jesus, and insist that he shall never be content till he is like his Lord? If this be a fault, it is a fault of nobility, and not of poverty. What finer tribute could be paid to any religion than this, that it will look at nothing but the ideal of perfection, and never rest till that be realized in the life of its humblest member? It is better to fail aiming at the highest than to succeed aiming at the lowest; and in the distant perfection of Christ is the inspiration of the Christian life. For St. John and for St. Paul it was the joy of their hearts that they had never reached unto the height of Jesus, although they had ever been climbing, and that with every year to come there would open out to them unimagined summits of holiness, so that they would still be only drawing nearer to Christ, whom no man could overtake on this

side of the grave. It is the very penalty and promise of our life that with us everything approximates, but never touches, perfection. No one has ever seen a straight line ; it is but a form of speech, or a unit of calculation. All that we see, all that we feel, are but essays at absolute beauty, truth, and love. What we see is higher than what we do, what we imagine is more than we see, and yet there remaineth what has not entered into the heart of man. The glory of Christian sanctification is twofold : that we never can in this world rise to the perfection of Christ, but that we may ever be growing into His likeness from youth to old age.

If the first word in sanctification be *Perfection*, the second is *Revelation*, for this perfection must be shown unto our eyes, and it has been so made manifest in the mirror of the gospel. For a moment one had desired a grander medium, and had been inclined to ask that the character of Jesus should have been made known to us by the mind of angels, or by the trained thinkers of the human race. The next moment one sees his mistake, and is thankful for the biographers of Jesus. What was required in this case was not exposition by supernatural intellect or by great genius, but simply honest and loyal minds which would hold up the glass to the life and person of the Lord. It had been an unspeakable misfortune if, instead of the simple annals of the gospel, we had had learned studies of Jesus' life. We had then seen the Master as men imagined Him, tricked out with their dainty phrases and tawdry tributes of respect. As it is we see the Master as He spoke and as He worked before men who did not understand Him and could not then appreciate Him, but who loved Him and reflected Him in their love. We may be certain as we read the Gospels that we are looking on the Face of Christ, and that we know what He was and what He is.

For this revelation the Gospels are absolutely necessary,

and can never be superseded; for although the Christian may come to know Christ in his heart, he can never afford to lose Christ in the Gospels. It is there that we first see Him, and it is there that we first understand Him. We had never known the Christ of the heavenly places unless we had known the Christ of Galilee, and we only know to-day what the Christ of the heavenly places is because we know what the Christ of Galilee was. It is best that every disciple should have the likeness of the Lord hanging upon the inner wall of his heart, but it is necessary that he should ever verify that likeness by the one which he possesses in the four Gospels. Had we not the authoritative portrait of the Gospels, as time went on strange likenesses of Christ might be created and come into fashion, and Christians be formed after a type which would be no longer the character of Jesus Christ, but the creation of a later age. There has been such a thing as an unreal and fantastic Christ, who has been preached and held up for imitation, and against this false and dangerous mysticism there is no check or remedy save the face of Christ in the mirror of the gospel.

Among the various guides to sanctification the most reliable and effectual is the Life of Christ; because, while every other is local and represents a school, this book contains the length and breadth of Christian perfection. A Puritan is satisfied with the *Pilgrim's Progress*, and a Roman with the *Imitation of Christ*; and each may appreciate up to a certain degree the school of the other, but both find themselves at one in the Gospels. If, however, the Gospels are to have their due effect, and one is to see in their pages the very face of Jesus, he must come without prejudice and without preconceptions—in fact, as St. Paul would say, “with unveiled face.” There is a constant danger that one should have made up his mind as to what Jesus ought to do and what Jesus ought to say,

and then to readjust the whole Life of Jesus, with subtle interpretations and artificial glosses, to fit in with his own mind. An ingenuous faith will accept the Lord as he appears in the picture of the Evangelists, being prepared for any surprises of goodness, and being always convinced that Jesus' Life is Life in Excelsis. Especially is it dangerous to lay down in one's mind any principles about the miraculous, and to take it for granted, as a modern person is apt to do, that the miraculous is impossible. Nothing can be impossible with Jesus, who has brought the power and grace of Deity within the narrow circumstances of human life. Far more wonderful than the healing of lepers and the raising of the dead is His own personal life, with its air of Heaven, its unfailling resources of grace, its irresistible influence upon human character. One reason for limited and provincial Christianity, a Christianity with narrow vision and one-sided character, is that Christians have gone to learn holiness everywhere except in the Gospels. The condition of a rich and full Christianity will be the study of the Divine and perfect life revealed to us by the Evangelists, and allowed to have its unfettered play upon our own souls and lives.

The third principle in the doctrine of sanctification is *Contemplation*, and it would be wise for Christians to remind themselves constantly that there are two methods by which any person can become like another, just as there are two methods by which an artist can be the disciple of a great master. We may set ourselves with care and perseverance to reproduce our friend's manner, to echo his tone of voice, and to repeat his actions in detail. We can attain such skill in this study that strangers will be irresistibly reminded of our hero by our pronunciation of a word, or by a sudden gesture, or by the repetition of an idea. This is imitation, a method which is sanctioned in Art as often as a pupil copies from a picture, sanctioned

also in literature as often as a student masters a great writer's style, and sanctioned in life with frequent good results as often as a young person follows exactly in the steps of a good man.

There is, however, another method, which is more spontaneous and more effectual, wherein one simply lives as much as he can in his friend's company, and leaves his mind open to his influence, and braces himself to seek after the same ends. Gradually, and without conscious effort, the poorer nature changes into the likeness of the higher, so that every person can recognise that a change has taken place, and that it has been a regeneration; but the change is recognised, not by sound of voice or trick of manner, but by the spirit of the life and the new shape of the soul. The subject of this change will have no self-consciousness, and will not know that his face is shining; he will rather be more painfully convinced than ever of his unlikeness to the friend whom he reveres, while all the world has seen him approximating to that likeness every day. This method is contemplation, which is not to imitate but to behold Christ.

Contemplation has two advantages over imitation, and the first is inwardness, for he that contemplates knows Christ better than he who imitates. One person may set himself to study a picture, reading what he can find about the age and school, about the drawing and colour of the work, till he could give its description and its history. Another may sit alone with that picture, without a book and without a note, for the same space of time, and allow the picture to imprint itself upon his soul. The former could write the story of the picture, the latter possesses the picture in the spirit. The saint is not simply a man who could relate the biography of Christ from end to end, and at every turn could discover a rule for his daily actions, till the Life of the Lord had passed into dates and regulations.

He is rather a man who has been overcome by the excellent beauty of the Lord's face, and has spent his time in admiration, so that afterwards the reflection of that beauty still lingers on his own character and life. Contemplation also has this advantage, that it never suggests the bondage of conscious Art, but always allows the perfect freedom of the soul. There is a vast distinction between one who copies a master and one who belongs to the school of the master. The copy of a picture is exact in details, and may often be rendered with great skill ; but it remains even in the case of the most pious copyist a representation of alien work. The disciple does not copy any of the master's work, but he paints in the master's spirit. His subject may be different from any which the master has chosen, but his treatment of the subject will be after the master's mind, so that you do not say, This is what the master first did, but This is how that master would have done. He has retained his own individuality, and has done more homage to the master.

It seems an excellent rule to say what Jesus says, and do what Jesus did ; but this is really a mechanical idea of sanctification, and would keep the disciple of Jesus in bondage all his days. Between the details of Jesus' life and of our own there is the difference between the east and the west, the difference between the first century and the nineteenth, the difference between two civilizations. One dares to say that there are words of Jesus which, as they stand, we could not use, and works of Jesus which we ought not to do. It is not for us to reproduce the form of Galilean life, nor even to draw too close an analogy between its circumstances and our environment. It is ours to catch the spirit of the Lord and to enter into His mind, so that the love and righteousness which inspire every word and deed of Christ may pass as a subtle essence into the body of our daily life. And so it will come to pass that in our

modern life Jesus Himself will live afresh, and we shall bring Him nearer to a faithless world.

Another principle of sanctification is *Progression*, which means that we cannot grow into the likeness of the Lord in a brief space, but that we must advance from stage to stage. It is unfortunate for plain people who do not care for argument or nice distinctions that there has been so much trouble made over the idea of Christian perfection. It is exasperating, on the one hand, that a believer in Jesus Christ should almost resent the suggestion that he can overcome his sins and trample them under foot; and it becomes an irony when, on occasion, he will refuse to sing the words at the end of the *Te Deum*, that God would keep us this day from sin, upon the ground that this is impossible, and is foolhardy to ask. Does it prove inevitable shallowness of character and a vain mind to believe that we can rid ourselves of sin in the fellowship of Jesus Christ? and is it an example of humility, and even of reverence for the Lord, that we should groan all our days under this body of death? Can no Christian say with truth, "Thanks be unto God who has given me the victory"? and if he says so, is he of necessity a weakling or a boaster? It is also only less trying to be told that certain people have come to perfection and are no longer conscious of sin; and the irony is still keener in this case when they alone have perceived their own perfection, and any one of their neighbours could point out their sins. Can the recreation of the soul be so rapid and slight an achievement? Can the height of Christian character be so easily and surely climbed? This perfection must be on a very narrow and poverty-stricken scale—the scale not of an oak which groweth slowly to its majestic proportions, but of a gourd which cometh up in a night. What occurs to the plain person who has no theory, but is only possessed with an overwhelming idea of the excellence of Christ, is that sanctification will advance on a

series of levels, one rising above the other. Each level, as we look at it from below and toil to reach it, will seem perfection, because it is the complete face of Christ as we have seen it from our standpoint. When we have completed a fresh ascent, our vision will have grown; we shall then discover fresh imperfection in ourselves and unsuspected beauty in Christ. Again we shall be inspired with adoration, again we shall be smitten with dissatisfaction—adoration of the new glory, dissatisfaction with our own defects. We shall brace ourselves for another ascent, which is to be the last; and again we shall be disappointed with that disappointment wherein are mixed both joy and sorrow. It has been said that the final ascent will be the hour of death, and that then the soul will pass altogether into the likeness of the Lord; but on this point Catholic doctrine has not agreed, and the Christian reason must have her own difficulty. One believes that deliverance from the body and the open vision of the Lord will strike dead within us the remains of sin, both the desire and the habit. One hopes also that the first day of the heavenly life will only be the beginning of another progress which shall know no end, wherein with every age we shall again ascend, following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, while He ever moves before us in new revelations of holiness.

The last great word in this doctrine is *Inspiration*, without which indeed there could be no hope of sanctification. Between formal and real holiness the difference really is that the one is of the Spirit of God, and the other is of the will of man. It is possible by sheer force of will to abandon certain sins and to copy certain virtues; by sheer force of will to walk at a distance in the steps of Christ, and to approximate to the outer form of His life. This is a laborious effort without beauty and without fruit—a carved tree, not a living plant. Growing and fruitful holiness is the outcome of Jesus' spirit living and working within the

soul. It matters not how much the student may love the master's work, or how patiently he may reproduce it on the canvas, there will ever be something which cannot be designed, present in the original picture and absent in the reproduction. Were the master to stand beside the pupil and ply him with rules, were he even to take his hand and guide it in the stroke, it would not avail. One thing only would serve, that the very spirit of the master should pass into his pupil, till he saw with his master's eye and wrought with his master's hand, till he was lost and absorbed in his master. While Jesus was with His disciples they were pupils in His school, and we envy them their privilege. He pointed out their faults, and showed them what they ought to have done, and yet they failed, and came short in almost every point of the religious life. By-and-by He passed from sight, and then He returned as a spiritual influence to speak not in their ears but in their souls, to guide not their lives but their minds. They were not now simply instructed—they were also inspired, and inspiration is as much beyond instruction as the soul is more than the body. It has frequently happened that a husband and wife have lived together for a quarter of a century, and the husband has been filled with devotion and admiration; but it was after his wife departed, and was now a spiritual presence in his heart, that he began to think and to live so exactly after her model that the world noticed the change, and were reminded at every turn of her who, unseen, was still living. The vision of perfection would not avail the Christian soul without the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, by which that vision is indeed afforded, and by which it is turned into reality. For the soul is like the sensitive film, and the Lord in the Gospels is the perfect beauty; but the medium of reproduction, without which all would be vain, is the light of the sun, and the light of the sun is the Holy Spirit of the Lord.

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