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Art. I.—THE HIGHER LIFE AND CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.*

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THAT the prevalent tone of Christian experience and holy living is quite below the level of scriptural standards and privileges; that there is an urgent call for the great body of Christians to rise to a much higher plane of inward piety and its visiblefruits; that none are so high that they should not make it their supreme endeavor to rise higher; that to struggle onward and upward through the strength, holiness and grace already attained to yet higher measures of them, so that receiving grace for grace, they may go from strength to strength toward the goal of sinless perfection whenever and wheresoever attainable; that so there is required the ceaseless effort to get free from sin and overcome indwelling corruption, are propositions which few will be found to dispute, unless, indeed, some Perfectionists dispute the last of them, claiming to have reached

* *The Higher Christian Life*, by Rev. W. E. Boardman.

Pioneer Experiences; or, the Gift of Power Received by Faith. Illustrated and Confirmed by the Testimony of Eighty Living Witnesses of Various Denominations.

By the author of "Way of Holiness," &c. Introduction by Rev. Bishop Janes.

The Rest of Faith, by Rev. Isaac M. See.

Autobiography of Rev. Charles G. Finney. Chapter xxvii.

Holiness the Birthright of God's Children, by the Rev. J. T. Crane, D. D.

The Old Paths; a Treatise on Sanctification. Scripture the Only Authority. By Rev. Thomas Mitchell.

Purity and Maturity, by Rev. J. A. Wood.

A Plain Account of Christian Perfection, by Rev. John Wesley.

(New Series, No. 22.)

entire sinlessness in this life. They are to the eye of true Christian insight their own evidence.

To emphasize and magnify the "Higher Life" in this sense is simply to recognize and strive to give effect to the principles of our common Christianity; and in this all will or ought heartily to join. It is worth while to mark this distinctly at the outset. For this term "higher life" is constantly used now to denote something quite different, as if it were the peculiarity of a small select circle who make it their watchword, a badge of the chosen few who have reached summits of Christian experience quite above the great mass of the commonwealth of Israel. Theirs are the gifts and endowments to which Christians generally are strangers, and theirs the joys with which a stranger intermeddleth not. The distinctive views of the class we refer to, amid many minor and circumstantial variations, are for substance:

1. That sinless perfection is attainable, and by those who attain the higher life in question, actually attained in this life.

2. That it is gained instantaneously by an act of faith in Christ, which appropriates him for immediate and entire sanctification, in the same manner as for immediate and full justification; and that each is equally, with the other, immediate, equally complete, equally conferred co-instantaneously with the act of faith which receives it; and in equal independence of works, as in any sense either the procuring, instrumental, efficient or meritorious cause.

3. Therefore, that this perfect sanctification is not through any process of gradual growth, striving, or advancement toward sinless perfection, whether in this life or the life to come; but is at once grasped by faith, and held by it till let go by backsliding or apostasy—the latter being regarded by the Higher Life Arminians as liable, by those that are Calvinists as not liable, to occur.

4. This attainment is attended with the constant or ordinary presence of unclouded peace, joy and hope, such as the Bible connects with the highest grades of Christian experience.

5. Some, perhaps most, of this Higher Life school, so far especially as it has appeared in Calvinistic communions, maintain

that this act of faith which instantaneously grasps perfect sanctity is preceded by an act of entire consecration to God in Christ. In other words, it is preceded by itself—for entire consecration is perfect holiness.

In regard to all these points we think the position taken in our standards scriptural and impregnable, and that no more correct and adequate enunciation of Christian truth in the premises can be found.*

We may remark, before going further, that with some the doctrine of Higher Life means merely the habitual possession and enjoyment of Christian assurance, in which they erroneously conceive themselves exceptional or superior to any recognized standards of Christian experience in evangelical churches. This, however, as our standards affirm, belongs to the normal development of Christian experience; not, however, so that it usually becomes firm and enduring, even if it appear at all, in the early stages of the regenerate life. It rather belongs normally, though not exclusively, to the maturer stages of Christian experience; it is confirmed by the culture and consequent evidence of the graces, which are also the fruits of the Spirit, and evidences of his saving work. These, however, are so wrought in us by the Spirit as to depend at the same time upon our "giving all diligence unto the full assurance of hope unto the end"; all "diligence to make our calling and election sure," the Holy Spirit herein and hereby witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God.

It is too true that far fewer attain this blessed estate than might be looked for in a normal condition of the church; far fewer than those to whom the privileges of the gospel estate and Christian vocation open it, who might and should work up to and reach it. It is no less true that those who attain a sound assurance sustained by good Christian fruits, reach a higher than average Christian life, and generally higher than their own previous Christian life. In this sense a higher life than the average among Christians may be maintained. But this is not, or is only in part, the kind of higher life intended. This latter involves not only assurance, which rests on perfect justification duly proving itself by holiness of life, but perfect

*See *Larger Catechism*, answers to questions 77 8-9-80. *Shorter Catechism*, questions 35-82.

sanctification ; and this sanctification received by some single act of faith as an accomplished fact, which keeps the soul in a continuous state of freedom from sin, and from all conscience of sin, and so of abiding peace and joy, by a sort of quietistic resting in Christ, not only for justification, but for sanctification. This peace and assurance, too, come not mainly from the sense of pardon through Christ's imputed righteousness, but of sinlessness through the perfect inherent righteousness or holiness wrought by him within us, and received by us, like his justifying righteousness, by faith, without personal works or strivings on our part to effect or to promote it.

As we shall see more fully further on, this perfectionism is defined and vindicated in different and often inconsistent ways by its advocates. It is apt to run into some form of Quietism or Mysticism, or Antinomianism, or licentiousness, while a large proportion of those embracing some forms of it give every sign of leading holy lives.

The Reformed and Calvinistic doctrine, as expressed in our standards, and as held by nearly all evangelical Protestants, the Methodists and Lutherans excepted, differs from the foregoing by asserting that sin, although subdued and growing weaker, is never entirely eradicated in this life ; while the renewed spirit, ever struggling against it, is, notwithstanding possible occasional vicissitudes and backslidings, on the whole gaining the mastery over it, till the grand consummation of complete deliverance from sin is reached at death, which itself with sin—its cause—there dies. Hence it maintains that sanctification is a gradual work, growing with the growth, and promoted by the efforts, struggles and prayers of the Christian ; who, while in his predominating character holy, is yet never free in this life from the remains of sin, which, though ever dying, is not dead, but still maintains its dying struggle, till the soul, freed at death, passes to be one of the spirits of the just made perfect.

In further clearing the issue before us, it is expedient to dispose of a number of inconclusive arguments, often and confidently advanced by the advocates of the theory in question.

1. Those passages of Scripture which attribute sanctification, holiness, or purity to believers, or which exhort them to seek, pursue or practise the same, or which promise deliver-

ance from sin in its guilt, pollution and dominion, or which covenant full and complete salvation—all these prove nothing in behalf of sinless perfection in this life. They prove nothing because they are applied to all Christians and saints as such in the Scripture, and not merely to a few select ones of a higher grade of Christian life than the mass. But it is admitted by this school that the mass of Christians have not yet attained, and in this life most of them never will attain, sinless perfection. Therefore, if they are actually addressed to those who are Christians, but yet not sinlessly perfect, then this demonstrates that they give no evidence of the perfect sinlessness of those to whom they are addressed, or for whom they are designed.

Not only so, but the Christian to whom all pretensions of sinless perfection are alien and offensive, interprets these passages as applicable to himself and suiting his own case, without the least consciousness or suspicion of distorting, perverting, or overstraining their proper import. Full salvation is indeed promised and secured to all the faithful in Christ Jesus. But it is only in part or in its beginnings here; in its seed first implanted and quickened in regeneration, herein having the pledge of onward growth in holiness, and increasing christian fruitage upon earth. The soul is to be made perfect therein at death; then immediately passing into glory to await reunion with the body at the resurrection of the just, when Christ shall raise it again, and make it like unto his glorious body. So we receive a full salvation in Christ when we receive him by faith; but a salvation begun here, and completed only with respect to the soul when we pass by the gate of death to the realms of glory; and with respect to the body when it shall also be raised in glory. All these things are included in salvation, a part at once finished and perfect upon the first act of faith, as justification and a title to the heavenly inheritance; a part inchoate and germinant, to have a future development and growth, as sanctification and Christian maturity and fruitfulness; or part in promise and foretaste, as the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. He who receives Christ indeed, receives "all things pertaining to life and godliness." "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; whom he called, them he also justified; whom he justified, them he also glorified."—Rom. viii. 30. Is not glorification here declared

to have been conferred on the elect, concurrently with justification, and in terms as completely implying what is already, in some sense, as really done or effected as justification, and as surely indicative of its full accomplishment, as are ever used with reference to our full salvation, or any part of it, even personal holiness or sanctification itself? But no one not fanatically blinded will pretend that heavenly glory is our portion in this life, or is ours on earth otherwise than in the perfect title to it secured by justification, and the preparation for it begun in regeneration and conversion, and carried forward in our progressive sanctification.

No passage of Scripture can *prove* sinless perfection in this life, which is indisputably addressed and applied to those who are confessedly imperfect or defiled with any remainder of sin. But the great majority of professing Christians, whom perfectionists allow to be real Christians according to the judgment of charity on the one hand, and to be imperfect in holiness on the other, are addressed or referred in nearly if not quite all the passages habitually quoted as proving sinless perfection in this life. Thus, the passage 1 John iii: 9: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God," and other less emphatic declarations in the context, must be so interpreted as to be true, whatever else they may signify, of all Christian people—all who are "born of God." But confessedly the most of these come short of the sinless perfection claimed for a few. The sense in which such cannot sin, because the seed of grace and holiness remaineth in them, is that they cannot sin prevailingly, persistently, with full purpose, allowance, or without resistance and repentance. They cannot sin in such wise that "sin shall have dominion over them," or that holiness shall not be the ascendant, and increasingly ascendant principle within them, until at death its victory over sin is absolutely complete and exterminating. It is all solved by the nature of the Christian conflict between the flesh and spirit, so graphically depicted, Gal. v: 17, and Rom. vii: 14-25, which, however we may find it hard to harmonize with the psychology or metaphysics any may have engrafted on their theology, finds its response and counterpart in normal Christian experience. All Christians know what it means to have the flesh

lusting against the spirit, so that in a sense they "cannot do the things they would." While they "delight in the law of God after the inward man," still they do what they allow not, and yet, amazing paradox! in a sense, it is no more they "that do it, but sin that dwelleth in them," and then, whether we can explain it or not, it is the man himself who with the mind serves the law of God, and with the flesh the law of sin. It is the same Ego, or self, that is tainted with the sin, against which it strives, going on from conquering yet to conquer it, and at last, through grace, utterly extinguishing it.

Another climacteric text adduced by perfectionists is Eph. v : 25, 26, 27: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word; that he might present to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish." It is undeniable that this applies to the church of the saved and redeemed, militant and triumphant; to all real Christians, as representing their state already attained or to be attained. But inasmuch as confessedly in the militant state the great body of Christians are not yet without spot, wrinkle or blemish, it follows that this passage does not prove any present sinless perfection in this world, but only in the future life.

If perfectionism derives no support from texts of this tenor, much less does it derive any from passages ascribing, promising or enjoining holiness or sanctification upon the people of God. Yet passages of this scope and tenor are constantly and freely quoted in behalf of sinless perfection. Its advocates speak and argue as if holiness and sanctification belonged to them alone, and were distinctive of them in contrast to the whole church besides; and generally as if it became theirs, not at their original, but at some second conversion. This notion of a second conversion, which introduces to the "higher life" of sinless purity, is maintained expressly by such writers as Boardman in "Higher Christian Life," and in substance by all the Higher Life and Perfectionist school. And they are very apt to represent it as simply an entrance upon, or attainment, or beginning, of sanctification or holiness. They even use these terms as the very titles of their books and treatises in advocacy of

the attainableness of sinless perfection. Thus, the title of one of the best of these books, by a leading Methodist divine, Rev. J. T. Crane, D.D., is "Holiness the Birthright of God's Children." Rev. J. A. Wood, author of a work on "Perfect Love," in his volume on "Purity and Maturity," says: "Purity or holiness, significant of quality, implies entirety. It does not mean a mixture of purity and pollution, partly clean and partly defiled" (p. 25). Binney, in his "Theological Compend Improved," under the head entitled "Holiness—Sanctification," says: "This state . . . is called holiness, sanctification, purity, perfection, fulness of God and of Christ and of the Holy Ghost, and full assurance of faith. What is meant by these expressions is that participation of the divine nature which excludes all original depravity or inbred sin from the heart, and fills it with perfect love to God and man—perfect love, the unction of the Holy One, and the baptism of the Holy Ghost" (p. 128).

According to this, none can be holy or sanctified who have any remains of "*original* depravity or inbred sin," or less than "perfect love to God and man." At this rate all Christians, all who have experienced the new birth, must be in this elevated state. So he proceeds to tell us, "Holiness begins when the principle of purity—namely, love to God—is shed abroad in the heart in the new birth." And yet he immediately adds: "But entire sanctification is that act of the Holy Ghost whereby the justified soul is made holy. This instantaneous work of the sanctifier is usually preceded and followed by a gradual growth in grace. The Spirit certifies this purification."—1 Cor. 11, 12. Can there be greater confusion and self contradiction than this? Holiness and sanctification are defined to be "perfect love"; yet holiness—*i.e.*, perfect love—begins at the new birth; while "entire sanctification" comes later by an instantaneous work of the sanctifier, "usually preceded and followed by a gradual growth in grace." How does "perfect love" differ from "entire sanctification?" And what room remains for growth in grace beyond "entire sanctification?" This, by the way, is one specimen of the enormous inconsistencies into which perfectionists and higher life advocates run, of which we shall see many more as we go on.

Among all the adherents of this doctrine since the Quietists

and Mystics of a former age, we rarely find any more refined, cultured, disciplined, endowed with natural and acquired strength of mind, delicacy of taste, and vigor of spiritual graces, than the late T. C. Upham, Professor of Mental Science in Bowdoin College, and author of popular text-books on that subject, as well as of publications on this peculiar type of what he styled the "Interior Life." He, if any who catch the magnetism of the converts to this theory, should have been superior, not only to all shams and impostures, all cant, hypocrisy and affectation, but to all loose bandying of the catch-words and watchwords which form the shibboleths of sects, parties and self-exalting coteries. He speaks of "the true idea of Christian perfection or holiness" as if such perfection were the only holiness," also of being "sanctified unto the Lord," as being identical with the "blessing of perfect love" (*Pioneer Experiences*, pp. 96, 97); also of coming "ultimately to the undoubting conclusion that God required me to be holy, that he had made provision for it, and that it was both my duty and my privilege to be so. The establishment of my belief in this great doctrine was followed by a number of pleasing and important results."—*Id.* p. 91. It could not be otherwise—if, indeed, it was a discovery for the first time that God requires and makes provision for holiness in his people. Of course the only holiness which could have been the subject of such discovery is that which is sinless. Whence it appears that a large part of the arguments and pretensions of this school fall to the ground, unless the holiness and sanctification of the Bible always mean sinless perfection; and hence, that all true Christians are sinless, which these same people do not even claim to be true of more than a small part of them.

Closely connected with all this is the constant confounding of sanctification with justification; of inherent with imputed or forensic righteousness; of the cleansing from the guilt, or condemnation to the punishment of sin, with the cleansing from its power and pollution. Justification is instantaneous and complete upon the first act of faith in Christ or vital union to Him. In its nature, justification is entire, or not at all. "He that believeth shall no more come into condemnation, but hath passed from death unto life." There is indeed "no more condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not

after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Sanctification, on the other hand, is begun in infantile yet prevailing strength at conversion, and advances by a gradual and progressive growth, in which the new-born soul goes forward, "having these promises, to cleanse itself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God"; so always cleansing stains which, although thus growing less, yet still remain in this decreasing form to be contended against till they are wholly expunged.

Now, how often is this declaration, and others the like, that Jesus, "by one offering hath perfected forever them that are sanctified," quoted in favor of perfect and sinless sanctification in this life? Yet, to this construction it is a fatal objection, that it applies to all the sanctified, all who are saved through Christ's offering. But of these it is allowed that the vast majority have not become thus sinless. The perfecting, therefore, must relate to that which is at once made perfect by the offering of Christ, viz., justification. This is conceded on all hands to be perfect from first to last, whatever may or may not be the sense of it in the believer's consciousness. So the declarations, 1 John i: 7-9, "That the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin," and that "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," obviously refer to justification as the immediate and finished result of the application of this blood, and only indirectly to sanctification which accompanies justification, at first initial and germinant, but gradually carried forward to perfect sinlessness in heaven; for the 8th verse declares, to the utter discomfiture of any perfectionism founded in this passage, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." So all promises of cleansing refer to that washing away of sins in the blood of the Lamb which consists in perfect justification, or to progressive cleansing of the pollution of sin by gradual sanctification. To this latter the command to cleanse ourselves refers; charging us to "purify ourselves in obeying the truth through the Spirit," not as a thing yet finished, but always progressing; so that whatever be our assurance of hope, he that hath this hope must be ever purifying himself, "even as God is pure." One source of obscurity and confusion on this subject, therefore, is the ten-

dency of many of the Higher Life persuasion more or less to confound justification with sanctification.

Perhaps the strongest pleas are those founded on the Biblical use of the words "perfect," "blameless," or their equivalents, in reference to the people of God. But that these words are used in various senses, some of them not implying absolute sinlessness, is too plain to admit of plausible denial. Even the injunction so often quoted by the perfectionists, that "having these promises we cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God," implies that this process of perfecting is to go on, and is therefore not yet finished. It implies that the normal Christian life here consists in having the ideal of perfect holiness before the eye of faith, and constantly working toward it, ever approaching, but not reaching it this side of heaven. And this is the only way in which we can consistently interpret Phil. iii : 12, 15, in the former of which the Apostle explicitly says : "Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect ; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which I am apprehended of Christ Jesus ;" while in the latter, his words are : "Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded." Here it is clear that "perfect" means truly apprehending and struggling toward the standard of perfection in holiness, which, in the former, he represents himself as not having yet attained. Not different is the meaning of the word, Eph. iv : 12, where he represents the ministry as given *inter alia* "for the perfecting of the saints." What else does this mean but that they are instruments employed to constantly advance the saints toward that holiness which befits the atmosphere of heaven?

Perfection is also applied to Christian character to denote, not sinlessness, but the elements and constituent parts of Christian character in due proportion and symmetry. So James, i : 4 : "That ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." Then it is often used like the word blameless, to mean inward sincerity and a life outwardly irreproachable in the sight of men, as when it is said of Noah, that "he was perfect ;" of Job, that "he was perfect and upright ; one that feared God and eschewed evil"—Job i. This is precisely the equivalent of the description given of Zacharias and Elizabeth—Luke i : 6 : "That they were both righteous before God, walking in all the

commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." Here the inward righteousness before God was evinced by the visible blameless walk in the ways of God, without any breach or deviation obnoxious to human censure. It is precisely the equivalent of the phraseology applied to Christians as such—Phil. ii: 14, 15: "Do all things without murmuring and disputing, that ye may be blameless and harmless—the sons of God, without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life." Surely this points to a kind of excellence which, while bringing honor to Christ and his religion, implies no sinless perfection. While these terms, as employed thus, denote a relative perfection in the sense of uprightness, integrity, a conscientious and exemplary life, or of wholeness and symmetry of the Christian virtues, or of mature growth, as when it is said the stony ground hearers bring forth no fruit unto perfection, they do not mean to assert sinless perfection of any saints on earth. Indeed, it is so demonstrable that the term "perfect" is often used in various senses in the Bible that perfectionists themselves are constrained to confess it, and thus virtually to acknowledge that it does not of itself import present sinlessness unless the surrounding context and the analogy of faith require it. Thus, Mr. See says (*Rest of Faith*, p. 72): "We merely say of another term, which is *Christian perfection*, that if the candid reader will refer to the Epistle to the Philippians, third chapter, he will find the word "perfect" used in two senses. The one referring to our resurrection perfection (verse 12), and the other (verse 15) referring to the Christian perfection, which we must conclude was preached, professed, and lived in Apostolic times. But how does it appear that the latter was sinless?"

Two passages are constantly quoted in behalf of the doctrine we combat, which show the impossibility of always attaching the literal or any other one sense to words used in Scripture. This arises from the poverty and ambiguity of language which compel us to use words in varied senses, to be determined in each case by its proper exegetic law. We refer to the use of "fear" in the passages, "perfect love casteth out fear," and the injunction that we "perfect holiness in the fear of God."

The latter fear belongs to those who are perfecting holiness

at every stage of their progress, and belongs to the very essence of religion in both worlds. It is mingled with filial love and trust, takes the form of reverence, and comes of that grace whereby we serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear—terms which are equivalent. The former is described in the context as that slavish “fear which hath torment;” which is none other than that spirit of bondage which is unto fear—*i. e.*, servile fear, which is a repelling dread, instead of a confiding, revering, attracting love. Love in proportion to its perfection exorcises this fell spirit in all its forms and remnants; but it is not asserted that this love becomes perfect in this life, or if so, that sinless perfection is meant.

Much is said of “entire sanctification,” and 1 Thess. v: 23, is constantly quoted as proving it in the sense of sinless perfection in this life: “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The wholeness of our sanctification refers to all the parts of our being, body, soul, and spirit, as the context shows, and may signify its future progressive as well as its immediate accomplishment. Enough has already been said in regard to the Biblical import of the word “blameless” in the final clause.

If there are no scriptural proofs of sinless perfection in this life, there are abundant and decisive scriptural proofs against it, not so much in isolated texts—though these are not wanting—as in the whole tone and drift of the inspired portraiture of Christian experience. “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us”—1 John i: 8. “If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: If I say I am perfect, it shall prove me perverse.” This could not be true of the claims to any but sinless perfection, as other kinds of perfection are freely ascribed to the faithful servants of God. The Lord’s prayer is for all Christians of every age and nation. It is therefore their duty always to pray, “forgive our trespasses, even as we forgive those who trespass against us.” It has been the comfort and support of the most eminent saints that this prayer is always acceptable to God and becoming in his children. Baxter is said to have rejoiced on his dying bed that the publican’s prayer, “God be merciful to me a sin-

ner," is never unacceptable to God. Christians are always laying aside every weight (the *impedimenta* coming upon them from the world, the flesh, and the devil), and the "sin which so easily besets them"—(Heb. xii); and "striving against sin," if need be, "resisting it even unto blood."—ver. 4.

Moreover, that chastisement which is the indispensable badge of sonship, without which all pretended sons are but bastards, is for sin—not for sins long past, repented of, and given up, but for present sins; not indeed for vengeance and destruction, but in fatherly love and faithfulness for our salvation—"for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness." This shows that sin still cleaves to all the sons of God, for which they need divine discipline and chastisement in order to its correction and removal; a chastening which they must not despise on the one hand, nor faint or despair under on the other, unless they would miss its saving benefits. But what less than remaining sin in all the sons of God does all this imply? And how does perfectionism consist with that chastisement of which all but bastards are partakers?

The Christian conflict so vividly depicted—Gal. v: 17, and Rom. vii: 14, 25—is proof incontestible of the remains of the *σὰρξ* still warring against the spiritual man, producing all manner of paradoxical antagonisms in the soul; but involving also phenomena impossible in the unregenerate soul. For in what unregenerate soul does the spirit lust against the flesh? At all events, was it not to the experience of the churches of Galatia, consisting of professed Christian converts, that he was writing?

And after all the efforts to torture Rom. vii. into a mere picture of the phenomena of an unregenerate soul, has it ever been plausibly shown how such can truly say, "I love the law of God after the inward man;" "with the mind *I myself* serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin." "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." If this is the language of impenitent unbelievers, where shall we find what is distinctive of the new-born soul? Do we need more evidence that the flesh, and sin in itself, as well as the outside world, are among the foes with which the Church militant must ever contend?

If we do, it is furnished abundantly in the statements, unfoldings, and defences of sinless perfection given by its advocates, whether they reach it from the Pelagian, Arminian, Antinomian, Romish, or Mystic sides. Some of these frequently run or develop from and into each other.

One and all, they are, or come to be, essentially Antinomian. This is a grave charge. It suffices to overthrow the whole of them, not only as in absolute antagonism to Christ's teaching and standard, who came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill and establish it in every jot and tittle thereof, but as in and of itself, however it may often be counteracted by other influences, tending to foster looseness and apostasy in life. When we say that they are essentially Antinomian, we do not mean that their abettors call them such. Some of them, like John Wesley, even warn its adherents against Antinomianism. And many of them have no suspicion that the scheme logically or practically involves such a taint. What we maintain, however, is, that its advocates really take Antinomian ground; that they in one form or another lower the standard of perfect holiness below the only perfect and immutable standard of goodness—*i. e.*, the divine law—to some vague and indeterminate level, depending on and varying with the subjective states of each person who supposes himself to be perfect. With many—we believe with most—each one's assertion of his own Christian perfection is to be taken and treated as proof of it, unless contradicted by unmistakable impieties or immoralities. The essential thing is, that the perfection claimed and insisted on is not in conformity to the original, true, and only law of God, but to some lower, yet undefined, standard level to the infirmities and incapacities of our present fallen and debased state. This is enough; but it is much worse to leave us without any tangible and clear definition of the infirmities that do and do not involve sin.

1. The Romish theory of perfection lowers the original strictness of the law of God not only as it pronounces evil concupiscence to be no longer of the nature of sin, as the law declares in forbidding it (Rom. vii: 7), but as it allows for the tolerance of minor or venial, in distinction from mortal sins. Thus it provides for an easy perfection among the "mass and file" of its average members, whose lives show a very imper-

fect perfection in holiness, while it makes room for an extra-legal perfection in the select classes of its saints, who by monastic vows and discipline, or other volunteer penances and self-inflictions, strive thus to mortify the inclinations and remove the temptations to sin. This they rank as an extra-legal perfection, which consists of works of supererogation and surplus merit, out of which such enormous mischiefs to morals and religion have arisen. This was a process originally devised to mortify the flesh and subdue or extirpate its evil concupiscence, so as to make an end of its antagonism to the law. But when they adopted the dogma that concupiscence had not the nature of sin, thus reducing the demands of the law to this level, they raised the monastic and other equivalent discipline and volunteer self-inflictions to the rank of extra-perfect living and surplus merit. They denominated the super-legal rules prescribing this discipline "evangelical counsels," in contradistinction to the mere requirements of the law, thus reduced from its original strictness, conformity to which constituted ordinary Christian perfection. This perfection pervades the good acts of the faithful, so that they, each and all, are entirely holy, but is compatible at the same time with venial sins intervening between them, which appear to be acts forbidden by the original law of God, and therefore requiring pardon, and making the petition in the Lord's prayer always appropriate; but nevertheless not bringing under condemnation according to the law as reduced to the present level of human infirmity, and so not bringing the soul into jeopardy. That they hold good works of Christians to be sinless, the following utterance of the Council of Trent evinces: "Si quis in quolibet bono opere justum saltem venaliter peccare dixerit . . . anathema sit." The reason of this is, that while perfect love constitutes the extra-perfection of select saints to which we have referred, a mere defect of such perfection of love in ordinary saints is not held to be of the nature of sin, or to impart any taint of sin to works destitute of it. Bellarmin, as quoted by Dr. Hodge, says: "Defectus charitatis, quod videlicet non faciemus opera nostra tanto fervore dilectionis, quanto faciemus in patria defectus quidem est, sed culpa et peccatum non est. Unde etiam charitas nostra, quamvis comparata ad charitatem beatorum sit imperfecta, tamen absolute perfecta dici potest." Perfectionism,

therefore, as maintained by the Romanists, lowers the law of God to the infirmities and defects of our present state, and thus destroys its authority. The perfection it advocates is not even a pretence of sinless conformity to that law. Nor does it lay down any clear line of demarcation between what is or what is not now obligatory in that law ; or show us the precise level of the requirements of the law they now recognize as our binding rule of action. They gain perfect holiness not by lifting men up to the law, but by bringing the law down to them. See Article *Perfectionism*, in Hodge's *Theology*, vol. III., p. 245, *et seq.* ; also, Article on *The Protestant Doctrine of Evangelical Perfection*, in "British and Evangelical Review" for January, 1876. Another article on the *Means and Measure of Holiness*, in which, *inter alia*, the higher life views of Mr. and Mrs. Pearsall Smith are sifted, is worthy of attention. The sum of the whole is, that the difference between the Reformed and Romanists about perfection has its root in a difference as to what is sin, and how far the divine law is now in force. Had the latter our views of these things, the claim of perfection would sink in the outcry, "Lord, if thou wert strict to mark iniquities, who could stand?" And we see in this, as we shall in other schemes to be noticed, the amazing incongruity of a theory demanding forgiveness and atonement for sinless and faultless conduct. Its supporters establish and annul the divine law in the same breath.

2. We find the same Antinomian element in the Arminian type of perfectionism which we take up before the Pelagian, because, though not first in original historical development, it has been more prominent in the Protestant churches, chiefly as being a prime article of Wesleyan Methodism. Wesley says : "The best of men still need Christ in his priestly office to atone for their omissions, their shortcomings (as some not improperly speak), their mistakes in judgment and practice, and their defects of various kinds. For these are all deviations from the perfect law, and consequently need an atonement. Yet, that they are not properly sins, we apprehend may appear from the words of St. Paul: 'He that loveth hath fulfilled the law, for love is the fulfilling of the law.'—Rom. xiii: 10. Now, mistakes and whatever infirmities naturally flow from the corruptible state of the body are no way contrary to

love, nor, therefore, in the Scriptural sense, *sin*." It would seem from this that the doctrine is, that love is so the fulfilling of the law that where it exists, in whatever degree, perfection exists, and there can be no infirmities or faults which are properly "*sin*."

Yet he cannot abide by this, and goes on: "To explain myself a little further on this head: 1. Not only *sin properly so called*—that is, voluntary transgression of a known law; but *sin improperly so-called*—that is, involuntary transgression of a divine law, known or unknown, needs the atoning blood. 2. I believe there is no such perfection in this life as excludes these involuntary transgressions, which I apprehend to be naturally consequent on the ignorance and mistakes inseparable from mortality. 3. Therefore, *sinless perfection* is a phrase I never use lest I should seem to contradict myself. 4. I believe a person filled with the love of God is still liable to these involuntary transgressions. 5. Such involuntary transgressions you may call sins if you please; I do not, for the reasons above mentioned."—*Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, Wesley's works, vol. I., pp. 28-9; Harper's edition, 1834.

The confusing and groundless distinctions here set forth in support of this scheme are enough to throw suspicion upon it, even if they could be sustained, as they cannot be in any degree which will make them serve their purpose. What is undeniable is, that the perfection maintained is below some requirements of the divine law known or unknown to its possessor; that his transgressions of, or want of conformity to, the same require to be atoned for by Christ's blood; that he will neither venture to call these sins, nor the normal state to which they belong one of *sinless perfection*; that all sins arising from ignorance are of this innocent character, which does not mar the Christian perfection contended for; that in these are included those arising "from the corruptible state of the body," which, when we consider the mysterious union of soul and body, and the implication of the moral states and actings of the former with those of the latter, have a vast, undefined reach, excluding, who can tell what, actions from the category of sin? What of the acts arising from a drunkard's appetite, the "eyes full of adultery," the "feet swift to shed blood," the "poison of asps under the lips," of the very flesh itself, which, though

not meaning the body simply, mean the whole man as implicated with, affecting, and affected by the body, lusting against the spirit, so that no less a saint than Paul, therewith, to some extent at least, still "served the law of sin?"

Then, as to faults and wrongs committed, or duties omitted, through ignorance. Some of our most dangerous sins are sins of ignorance. Nay, the very ignorance of moral and Christian duty is itself often most culpable, and incurs the divine condemnation, even the woe upon those who call good evil and evil good; who put light for darkness and darkness for light. It is the very essence of sin to be deceitful, to disguise itself, to hate the light, and refuse to come to the light which would unveil it—and is not this declared by the Light of the world to be eminently its condemnation? What! do men become innocent by blinding themselves to their guilt, and sinless by ignoring their sin? Paul "verily thought that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." Can a man be innocent and perfect in persecuting the Church, whatever his ignorance or sincerity therein? Out upon such casuistry, no matter how plausible and acceptable it may be to a worldly and backslidden church, or those who think they are something when they are nothing, or who "say they are perfect," by whatsoever names sanctioned!

And as to the distinction of voluntary and involuntary transgressions or shortcomings, who can know where this will lead us until we have a clear definition of the terms to show whether it and its corresponding adjectives are used, as was common down to the days of Edwards and Reid, for all the non-cognitive powers of the soul, including moral habits and states, or in the more restricted later meaning of many, in which it excludes not merely the cognitive, but the sensitive, affectional, appetitive, or irectic—all the optative powers of the soul, even in regard to moral and spiritual duties, but that of deliberate choice? If so, there is no end to the deformities and sins which may consist with this sort of perfection, and which even the Romanists would find it hard to pass over as venial sins.

In all this, Wesley simply goes in the track of the leading Arminian divines. Limborch, as quoted by Dr. Hodge, in the chapter already referred to, styles this obedience "perfect as

being, correspondent to the stipulation contained in the divine covenant." "It is not a sinless or absolutely perfect obedience, but such as consists in a sincere love and habit of piety, which excludes all habits of sin, with all enormous and deliberate actions." But it does not, according to this, exclude all sins. So Fletcher and others are quoted to the same effect. "With respect to the Christless law of paradisaic obedience, we utterly disclaim sinless perfection." "We shall not be judged by that law, but by a law adapted to our present state and circumstances, called the law of Christ." What! is this law of Christ laxer than the original law of God, and who will define it so that imperfect conformity to it may be certainly known and tested?

Recent Arminian and Wesleyan writers take a similar position. Thus, Binney's *Improved Theological Compend* teaches: "Errors of judgment, infirmities of body, fears occasioned by surprise, unpleasant dreams, wandering thoughts in prayer, times when there is no joy, a sense of insufficiency in Christian labor, and strong temptation, are by no means inconsistent with perfect *love*. Yet errors need the atonement" (p. 132). So the late Bishop Janes, in his introduction to the book entitled *Pioneer Experiences*, says that "while entire sanctification makes us perfect Christians, it does not make us perfect men. Our bodies have been greatly impaired by the fall. We are encompassed with infirmities. Our knowledge is imperfect; our judgment fallible. We shall need the reconstruction of the judgment day to make us perfect men. But, thank God, His grace can make us perfect Christians, now and here" (p. 9). The distinction between perfect Christians and perfect men, in a moral sense, we understand to be that between those who keep the original and perfect law of God, and those who keep some supposed and undefined relaxation of it, called the law of Christ or the Gospel. Conformity to this relaxed standard is the perfection claimed.

Dr. Crane, in the little volume already referred to, so apprehends the difficulties of thus holding to a perfection that is not perfect, that he sets himself to discover and remove the cause of Wesley and others of this school being thrown into an attitude so weak and vacillating. He finds it in Wesley's still retaining in his creed that clause of the Anglican articles which

asserts that "this infection of nature doth remain, yea, in them that are regenerated." He thinks it essential to any consistent holding of the doctrine of perfection that this be abandoned. He is not far wrong. It is difficult to maintain the co-existence of a corrupt *imperfection* of nature with sinless *perfection*, without lowering the divine requirements so as to take this "infection" and its fruits out of the category of sin, or sinful imperfections, while yet conceding that they are contrary to the original and perfect law of God. But notwithstanding the protestation of Dr. Crane, the evidence is painfully abundant that this "infection" does remain in the best of men. And those know it most who know themselves best. On the other hand, if no such infection remains in the regenerate, it is difficult to see how their sanctification is not entire, and why each and every regenerate person is not perfectly sinless. This contradicts his doctrine, that a large proportion of Christians are yet imperfect, and that entire sanctification is rarely attained at the beginning of the Christian life. This book of Dr. Crane is mainly a critique on Wesley's modes of stating and defending perfection. He is successful in exposing their weakness and fallacy; but we do not see that his own position is any stronger. This is not his fault. The fault lies in the nature of the doctrine itself. It runs so counter to Scripture and normal Christian experience that it admits of no strong and consistent statement and defense. Hence we are not surprised when Dr. Crane tells us that—

"Hardly one in twenty of our ministers professes it, either publicly or privately, so far as I can learn. We preach it occasionally; but among our people its confessors are still fewer, in proportion to members, than in the ministry. Even among our bishops, from 1784 to the present day, confessors are as hard to find as in any other class of our people. The very princes of our Israel have been silent in regard to their own experience of it. The apostolic Wesley never professed it. In the sixty-fourth year of his age and the forty-second of his ministry he published in one of the leading journals of London a letter containing these words: 'I have told all the world *I am not perfect*; I have not attained the character I draw.' Bishop Asbury, who, if possible, exceeded Wesley in the toils and sufferings of his fruitful ministry, did not profess it. The saintly Hedding, approaching the grave by lingering disease, always calm, and often joyous in view of death, was importuned to profess it, and declined. Myriads of men and women among us, whose lives were bright with a holy light, saints *of whom the world was not worthy*, never professed it".—Pp. 14, 15.

Even so; and this no way to their detriment, however it may be to the doctrine of sinless perfection here below.

3. If we examine the Pelagian or semi-Pelagian doctrine of Perfection we shall find it equally in derogation of the continued authority of the divine law. The essential difference between this and the Arminian is, that the latter asserts that the ability, be it natural or moral, to render such obedience as is required by the law of Christ and constitutes Christian Perfection, is itself largely the result of a gracious assistance given to reinforce the weakness induced by the fall. The law is lowered and our weakness strengthened, until our increased ability and God's reduced requirements meet and become commensurate. The Pelagian theory, however, maintains that our natural powers in their native moral state are, *per se*, adequate to fulfill the demands of the law; that no law can be binding, *i.e.*, be a law, which surpasses our full ability without divine aid to keep it. Pelagius himself accordingly held that the fall did not debilitate our moral powers, and that they still remain, equal to keeping the law in its original, unabated strictness. The evident opposition between this view of the present condition of human nature and the representations of Scripture, reinforced by both the natural and Christian consciousness, has rendered it difficult for any but the lowest of Socinian and Rationalistic divines to entertain or adhere to it. Hence the fundamental thesis that no binding law can exceed our ability, whether natural or moral, is brought to bear in a semi-Pelagian or Arminian way, to lower the demands of the law to the moral state and ability of a race lapsed into such weakness. Men are in some degree corrupted and debilitated by the fall, to be sure; but the requirements of the law are accommodated to their weakness, and they are fully adequate to keep it perfectly; nor can they be under obligation to obey any law which they are not fully able perfectly to keep. It is in this line that perfectionism has been developed in this country by those whose metaphysical or philosophical views in theology made this the most obvious route to sinless perfection. When we were students in theology, a little coterie, becoming wiser than their teachers or fellow-students, strained the doctrine of ability beyond the scope contended for or admitted by its most eminent champions, to the length of maintaining, not only that

all men can, but that some do, reach sinless perfection in this life, of which, so far as the students there were concerned, a trio or so were the principal confessors. The net result of the whole was that the leader, instead of going forward into the ministry, ran into various socialistic and free-love heresies, on the basis of which he founded the Putney and Oneida communities, over the latter of which he now presides. Other sporadic outbreaks of the distemper appeared here and there in the Presbyterian and Congregational communions, or among separatists and come-outers from them, these often uniting with the radicals or advanced reformers of other communions.

But the only strong and serious development in this line had for its centre Oberlin, and for its great expositors and defenders Professor Finney and President Mahan. The *Oberlin Evangelist* and *Quarterly Review* were the organs for propagating and defending this scheme. These are not now within our reach, and we are obliged to depend on the undisputed quotations from them in the controversial papers of the time. The *Princeton Review*, for April, 1841, p. 241, quotes, from the *Oberlin Evangelist*, vol. 2, p. 50, Mr. Finney as saying:

“It is objected that this doctrine (of perfect sanctification) lowers the standard of holiness to our own experience. It is not denied that in some instances this may have been true. Nor can it be denied that the standard of Christian perfection has been elevated much above the demands of the law in its application to human beings in our present state of existence. It seems to have been forgotten that the inquiry is, What does the law demand?—not of angels, and what would be entire sanctification in them; nor of Adam previously to the fall, when his powers of body and mind were all in a state of perfect health; nor what will the law demand of us in a future state of existence; nor what the law may demand of the church in some future periods of its history on earth, when the human constitution, by the universal prevalence of thorough temperance principles, may have acquired its pristine health and powers; but the question is, What does the law of God require of Christians in the present generation, of Christians in all respects in our circumstances, with all the ignorance and debility of body and mind which have resulted from the intemperance and abuse of the human constitution through so many generations?

“The law levels its claims to us as we are, and a just exposition of it, as I have already said, under all the present circumstances of our being, is indispensable to a right apprehension of what constitutes entire sanctification.”

Unmistakably this asserts that the law lowers its claims to our strength as debilitated by sin and corruption. But when is

this process of deterioration to stop, which, it has been well said, makes sin "its own remedy and apology"? It is easy enough to be perfectly sanctified, according to such a standard. Can any one tell how far men, by sinning, may become enslaved to sin, without making this very servitude, the very invincibility and obduracy of sin, their own apology, whether in this world or the realms of outer darkness? Or is there any lower deep beneath this lowest deep in which this ceases to be? It is obvious on the face of the foregoing presentation why this form of Antinomianism may, like that of the Romanists, lead to a certain outward ascetic as well as inward looseness in its regimen and cultus.

But another strange result was logically reached by overstraining what was formerly known as the "Exercise Scheme" to extreme consequences wholly unlooked for, and repudiated by many of its supporters. Said Mr. Finney, *Ob. Evan.*, vol I., p. 42., *et passim* :

"It seems to be a very general opinion that there is such a thing as imperfect obedience to God, *i. e.*, as respects one and the same act, but I cannot see how an imperfect obedience relating to one and the same act can be possible. *Imperfect obedience!* What can be meant by this but *disobedient obedience!* *A sinful holiness* Now, to decide the character of any act, we must bring it into the light of the law of God; if agreeable to the law, it is obedience—it is right—*wholly right*. If it is in *any respect* different from what the law of God requires, it is wrong—*wholly wrong*."

According to this there is no medium between a state of perfect sinlessness on the one hand, and perfect impenitence on the other. The soul is liable to alternations from one to the other each successive moment, and with each transient instantaneous volition. No enduring moral bias deeper than such momentary volitions is recognized. And as each of these follows each, he may soar one moment to the summit of absolute perfection, to plunge the next moment to the abyss of carnal obduracy. This is no unfair interpretation of this system by an adversary. It is precisely that given by a leader in Higher Life teaching, when comparing and endeavoring to harmonize into substantial unity the theoretical grounds adopted by different classes of its advocates. Says Boardman, *Higher Life*, pp. 61-2 :

"For the Oberlinian idea that the experience brings the soul into a state of sinless perfection or entire sanctification the grounds must be sought in

three things: first, their philosophy of the will, according to which each volition or choice is in itself absolutely holy, or absolutely unholy and altogether so. So that when God is chosen, while that choice is predominant, the soul is perfectly holy; and when the world is chosen, then while that choice is uppermost, then the soul is perfectly sinful. This, with their view of the law of God as graduated to the sinner's condition, whatever it is, not requiring of all alike the same entire conformity to the absolute and unchangeable standard of heavenly holiness, but claiming no more than the sinner's earthly blindness permits him to see, and no more than his earthly weakness permits him to do. And to these two a third must be added: viz., their definition of sanctification, according to which it is consecration only—or setting apart to God—and so is man's own work, instead of God's. Whereas, according to the popular acceptance, sanctification is the work of God in the soul after it is set apart to God by voluntary consecration. These three things taken together, and taken together with the experience, may serve to show us why and how the Oberlinians adopt the terms and accept the idea of 'entire sanctification' as attained in the experience."

If the Antinomian character of this system, in its different forms and potencies, has been proved, then it makes out sinless perfection by lowering the divine law to men. It is also certain that not only can its advocates take and hold no uniform and consistent position on the subject, or draw any clear line between the perfectly and the imperfectly sanctified, but much of their reasoning is to the effect that all Christians are entirely sanctified. This is the necessary consequence of the Oberlinian dogmatic which acknowledges no holy act which is not perfectly holy, but of all arguments in its favor based on Scriptural passages that apply indiscriminately to all the saints. This is so inevitable that one of the recent treatises on this subject is written for the express purpose of proving that there is no conversion from sin save to spotless purity; that "sanctification admits of no degrees, and is never used in a limited sense designating degrees of cleanness or purity. If a thing or being has the least degree of uncleanness or defilement, it is unsanctified."*

Dr. Crane says: "The ablest writers who have discussed this subject, on the residue theory of infection of nature still remaining in the regenerate, have not been able in their descriptions of the Christian life to maintain a clear, practical distinction between those who are supposed to be simply regenerate and

*The *Old Paths, a Treatise on Sanctification*, by Rev. Thomas Mitchell.

those who are accounted to be freed from all depravity." [We have seen what those are capable of who ignore or fritter away this infection.] He proves by quotations from Wesley that he sometimes puts the "religious state of the sanctified man below that of one who is simply born of God." That he now represents the perfect man as liable to "something wrong, in tempers, words and actions," and now as exceeding the imperfect Christian in being "freed from evil thoughts and evil tempers." Dr. Wakefield is quoted by Dr. Crane as saying that "entire sanctification does not differ in essence from regeneration."—See *Holiness the Birthright of God's Children*, pp. 83-86.

But it may be asked, however wrong theoretically and doctrinally, must not the effects of such a standard of life as entire sanctification be benign and purifying? We do not believe that error can promote holiness. God sanctifies by his truth, and his word is truth. Important life-giving truths may accidentally become associated in the view of many with baneful errors, and may exert their proper purifying influence, and serve as an antidote to the errors which accidentally contributed to give them prominence. We believe that the Millerite delusion prevalent about the year 1843, that the second advent of Christ was to occur in that year, and on some certain day of it, was overruled of God to the awakening of many callous persons from their soul-destroying slumbers to prepare to meet their God by embracing his salvation. Yet it was a fatal delusion to those who hung their faith upon its truth, while it served to harden the sceptical and worldly in their inclination to regard Christianity as mere fanaticism or imposture.

There is no question that, in the minds of many good people, the higher life movement has a grasp on their consciences and hearts, owing to its arousing them to recognize and feel the duty of rising to higher grades of sanctity and consecration, greater elevation above self and the world. Furthermore, it is often confounded with that assurance of hope which is the common privilege of justified persons, who, though imperfectly sanctified, evince the genuineness of their faith to themselves and others by their Christian works; who thus assure their hearts before God, and know that they know Christ because they keep his commandments; who also receive in and through all

this the witness of the Spirit with their spirits that they are the children of God. But all these truths, duties and privileges are better gained and conserved without this pretension of higher life, and perfect holiness, and assumed superiority to the great brotherhood of the redeemed, than when burdened with these fungus parasites. In themselves considered, and in their own proper influence and tendencies, we regard them as evil only, and that continually. It is proper to add, moreover, that not all who join in these higher life movements embrace the perfectionism which so largely underlies and permeates them. They are conscious only of arriving simply and purely at a higher Christian life, and deeper experience. These constitute the only truth and good accompanying such movements that are likely to give them power.

1. We deem it a great evil for those to think themselves perfectly holy who are not so, or at best only imperfectly so. It is an evil which makes a dangerous approach to thinking themselves something when they are nothing. It fosters spiritual pride, and is destructive of humility. It checks or stops struggles to overcome indwelling sin, and to advance to a nearer conformity to the divine law. Instead of stimulating us to forget the things which are behind and press forward to those which are before, it makes us easy with our present attainments in holiness, "as though we had already attained or were already perfect." We are quite aware, and do not mean to question, that these people hold to a continual growth in the Christian life; but it is such a growth as takes place in heaven—a growth in general capacity, but not in moral purity or freedom from sin. This is already perfect, and cannot be more than perfect. So they no longer need to die unto sin. It is already extinct within them. It is as if in our investigations of truth we should take remaining ignorance for perfect and infallible knowledge.

2. Closely connected with this is the denial and stoppage of growth in sanctification by struggling toward its entireness and perfection and ever making closer approximations to it, till all sin disappears in the spirits of the just made perfect. The favorite doctrine of these people is, that as perfect justification is received at the new birth by the initial act of faith, so, at some later period, perfect sanctification is received instantaneously.

neously by a single act of faith. And this is variously styled the rest of faith, the rest of the soul, &c., &c., implying that the soul rests at peace in its reliance on Christ for sanctification as well as justification, and this in such a sense as to be freed from the necessity of working to promote holiness, and subdue sin within us, in the same way and measure as in our justification, which is wholly by faith to the exclusion of all works of our own. "Thus," says one of these writers, "sanctification, like regeneration, is a supernatural, instantaneous work; and not a human, gradual work. Both are God's work. Both are instantaneous."—*Purity and Maturity*, p. 223. "There is no gradual growing out of sin."—*Id.* p. 145. This is very unsafe teaching. The constant teaching of Scripture, confirmed by sound Christian experience, is that we "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, while God works in us to will and to do"; that this is a continuous process, and that we never cease, not merely works of holy living and service according to the measure of our present attainment, but in striving against sin in heart and life, laying aside the sin which easily besets us.

And we have observed that even those who come to perfectionism by the Pelagian or semi-Pelagian method of plenary ability without divine grace to perfectly keep the divine law, no sooner conceive themselves to have attained perfection in the exercise of this ability than they reverse their attitude into one of almost passive receptivity—of simply receiving by one act of faith the gift from the fulness of Christ—of waiting, resting in Christ, to the discarding of all works or efforts of our own, or in our own strength as subservient thereto. A notable case of some remarkable and elevated phases of this experience is found in the 27th chapter of Mr. Finney's *Autobiography*. Those who read it will find how he "seemed to be in a state of perfect rest," even to the point of a super-scriptural, if not anti-scriptural, Hopkinsian submission, in respect to "the salvation or damnation of his own soul, as the will of God might decide"; his mind "too full of the subject to preach anything but a full and present salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ." "What I had been praying for, for myself, I had received in a way that I least expected. Holiness to the Lord seemed to be inscribed on all the exercises of my mind. I had such strong faith that God would accomplish all his perfect will, that

I could not be careful about anything." . . . "I then realized what is meant by the saying, that he is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. He did at that time teach me, indefinitely, above all that I had ever asked or thought. I had had no conception of the length and breadth, and height and depth, and efficiency of his grace. It seemed then to me that that passage, 'My grace is sufficient for thee,' meant so much, that it was wonderful I had never understood it before," etc., etc. Much in this chapter verges upon an elevated tone of hyper-Calvinism, Mysticism, and Quietism. So Dr. Mahan (*Pioneer Experiences*, p. 14) says: "For sanctification, on the other hand, to overcome the world, the flesh and the devil, I had depended mainly upon my own resolutions. Here was my grand mistake, and the source of all my bondage under sin." . . . "If my propensities which lead to sin are crucified, I know that it must be done by an indwelling Christ" (p. 17). He proceeds to state his belief "that the Lord Jesus Christ has provided special grace for the entire sanctification of every individual. . . . The first inquiry with me is, in what respect do I need the grace of Christ? . . . Thus having discovered my special necessities in any one of the particulars above referred to, my next object is to take some promise applicable to the particular necessity before me, and to go directly to Christ for the supply of that particular necessity." This is all right on two suppositions: 1—that in these approaches to Christ for sanctifying grace, the sufficient grace be expected according to the measure of the present dispensation, but not in the measure of sinless perfection; and 2—that it be in such wise that Christ's working in us to will and to do the things pleasing in his sight will be evinced by our working out our own salvation, even if with (holy) fear and trembling. But all will recognize in this the complete swinging from the extreme of self-sufficient reliance on native powers to that of a life consisting in a comparatively passive reciprocity of divine grace.

3. In perfect consonance with the scheme, and as its logical outcome, all that implies imperfection, the conflict between the flesh and spirit, penitential confession and humiliation for present spiritual faults and shortcomings, are unwelcome to these people. Mr. See, in his *Rest of Faith*, gives vent to these feel-

ings in an introductory chapter, in which he maintains that the "church is not a hospital," *i.e.*, for the cure of enfeebled or the strengthening of imperfect Christians. He represents, in a condemnatory tone, that "the churches through the land are only infirmaries where people come to be treated by the Great Physician, who proceeds to cure people by a slow process, in the meantime leaving them to the oversight of these sick ministering nurses." He warns (p. 179) against being entangled in a "seventh of Romans difficulty 'and a Galatian snare,' which in our journey we do well to keep in the distance by simple faith." He would banish from the worship of the church "hymns that hurt," among which he classes those that voice the Christian's penitential confession; specifying explicitly those beginning:

"Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove."

"O for a closer walk with God."

"Come, thou fount of every blessing."

"Thus far my God hath led me on."

Comment is needless.

4. It cannot be denied that while many persons of sweet and unpretending spirit are allured into these Higher Life circles for reasons already stated, the system tends to nourish a spirit of Pharisaism and uncharitableness. It does so, as its professors assume a superiority to ordinary Christians; they are perfect, while the church as a whole is imperfect, or if not this, they are leading a higher christian life than the average. Many of their adherents assume, what most of their arguments imply, that those not entirely sanctified are not regenerated, and, therefore, if professing Christians, are hypocrites. The very gathering into separate meetings, called "holiness meetings," or "higher life meetings," is an assumption of superiority—nay, it implies that the ordinary meetings and services of the church are not thus in the interest of holiness, which is to impeach their Christian character. This spirit says literally, "Stand by, for I am holier than thou." It cannot, as a whole, and exceptions aside, be otherwise than divisive, denunciatory and censorious. What the ultimate issue of all this must be, that on the whole it must be disastrous to religion, all history and reason prove.

5. It cannot be denied that the Antinomian feature of this system has strong logical and practical affinities for licentious-

ness: men who esteem themselves perfect are apt to make themselves, their own subjective exercises, experiences, judgments, desires, and appetites, the measure and standard of perfection; to make these the rule and measure of rectitude, rather than God's word; or rather to construe them as God's voice and word, speaking in and through them. They have often maintained that as Christ was living within them, their desires, and words and deeds were Christ's. This, of course, is the extreme of fanatical and blasphemous Antinomian pride and licentiousness. It goes to seed in Onedia communities. Mr. Finney says (*Autobiography*, p. 341) that about the time he commenced preaching on perfection, it came to be agitated, in the Antinomian sense of the term, a good deal at New Haven, at Albany, and somewhat in New York City, and that he could not accept these views. History shows their melancholy course and results. But there are other and higher forms of making our subjective feeling the standard of truth and holiness besides the gross and low form above noted. It often develops in simple mysticism, in which the feeling of the subject, devout and elevated though it be, still becomes a law unto itself, and sets its own impulses and bewilderments above the law and the testimony. Against all this we cannot too sedulously guard. Nor do we think it wrong or uncharitable in this connection to refer to the career of Mr. Pearsall Smith, who has been so conspicuous in Higher Life leadership.