

THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION

CHARLES HODGE

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by Charles Hodge

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§ 1. *Its Nature.*

SANCTIFICATION in the Westminster Catechism is said to be "the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin and live unto righteousness."

Agreeably to this definition, justification differs from sanctification, (1.) In that the former is a transient act, the latter a

progressive work. (2.) Justification is a forensic act, God acting as judge, declaring justice satisfied so far as the believing sinner is concerned, whereas sanctification is an effect due to the divine efficiency. (3.) Justification changes, or declares to be changed, the relation of the sinner to the justice of God; sanctification involves a change of character. (4.) The former, therefore, is objective, the latter subjective. (5.) The former is founded on what Christ has done for us; the latter is the effect of what He does in us. (6.) Justification is complete and the same in all, while sanctification is progressive, and is more complete in some than in others.

Sanctification is declared to be a work of God's free grace. Two things are included in this. First, that the power or influence by which it is carried on is supernatural. Secondly, that granting this influence to any sinner, to one sinner rather than another, and to one more than to another, is a matter of favour. No one has personally, or in himself, on the ground of anything he has done, the right to claim this divine influence as a just recompense, or as a matter of justice.

It is a Supernatural Work.

In representing, in accordance with Scripture, sanctification as a supernatural work, or as a work of grace, the Church intends to deny the Pelagian or Rationalistic doctrine which confounds it with mere moral reformation. It not unfrequently happens that men who have been immoral in their lives, change their whole course of living. They become outwardly correct in their deportment, temperate, pure, honest, and benevolent. This is a great and praiseworthy change. It is in a high degree beneficial to the subject of it, and to all with whom he is connected. It may be produced by different causes, by the force of conscience and by a regard for the authority of God and a dread of his disapprobation, or by a regard to the good opinion of men, or by the mere force of an enlightened regard to one's own interest. But whatever may be the proximate cause of such reformation, it falls very far short of sanctification. The two things differ in nature as much as a clean heart from clean clothes. Such external reformation

may leave a man's inward character in the sight of God unchanged. He may remain destitute of love to God, of faith in Christ, and of all holy exercises or affections.

Nor is sanctification to be confounded with the effects of moral culture or discipline. It is very possible, as experience proves, by careful moral training, by keeping the young from all contaminating influences, and by bringing them under the forming influences of right principles and good associates, to preserve them from much of the evil of the world, and to render them like the young man in the Gospel whom Jesus loved. Such training is not to be undervalued. It is enjoined in the Word of God. It cannot, however, change the nature. It cannot impart life. A faultless statue fashioned out of pure marble in all its beauty, is far below a living man.

The word supernatural, as before said, is used in two senses. First, for that which is above nature, and by nature is meant everything out of God. An effect, therefore, is said to be supernatural, in the production of which nature exercises no efficiency. But secondly, the word is often used to mark the distinction between the providential efficiency of God operating according to fixed laws, and the voluntary agency of the Holy Spirit. The Bible makes a wide distinction between the providence of God and the operations of his grace. The difference between the two is, in some respects, analogous to that between the efficiency of a law, or of a uniformly acting force, and the agency of a person. The one is ordered, the other is exercised from time to time, the Spirit distributing his gifts to every one severally as He wills. In the providential agency of God, the effects produced never transcend the power of second causes as upheld and guided by Him; whereas the effects produced by the Spirit do transcend the power of second causes. The effect is due neither to the power of the truth, nor to that of the rational subject in whom the effect is produced. It is due to the power of God over and above the power of the second causes concerned. The effects of grace, or fruits of the Spirit, are above the sphere of the natural they belong to the supernatural. The mere power of truth, argument, motive,

persuasion, or eloquence cannot produce repentance, faith, or holiness of heart and life. Nor can these effects be produced by the power of the will, or by all the resources of man, however protracted or skilful in their application. They are the gifts of God, the fruits of the Spirit. Paul may plant and Apollos water, but it is God who gives the increase.

In this latter sense of the word supernatural, the cooperation of second causes is not excluded. When Christ opened the eyes of the blind no second cause interposed between his volition and the effect. But men work out their own salvation, while it is God who worketh in them to will and to do, according to his own good pleasure. In the work of regeneration, the soul is passive. It cannot cooperate in the communication of spiritual life. But in conversion, repentance, faith, and growth in grace, all its powers are called into exercise. As, however, the effects produced transcend the efficiency of our fallen nature, and are due to the agency of the Spirit, sanctification does not cease to be supernatural, or a work of grace, because the soul is active and cooperating in the process.

Proof of its Supernatural Character.

That sanctification is a supernatural work in the sense above stated is proved, --

1. From the fact that it is constantly referred to God as its author. It is referred to God absolutely, or to the Father, as in I Thessalonians v. 23, "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly." Hebrews xiii. 20, 21, "The God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight." It is also referred to the Son, as in Titus ii. 14, He "gave himself for us, that he might purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." Ephesians v. 25, He "loved the church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not

having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Predominantly sanctification is referred to the Holy Spirit, as his peculiar work in the economy of redemption. Hence He is called the Spirit of all grace; the Spirit of joy, of peace, of love, of faith, and of adoption. All Christian graces are set forth as fruits of the Spirit. We are said to be born of the Spirit, and by Him to be enlightened, taught, led, and cleansed. We are said to be in the Spirit, to live, to walk, and to rejoice in the Spirit. The Spirit dwells in the people of God, and is the abiding source of all the actings of that spiritual life which He implants in the soul. The Bible teaches that the Son and Spirit are in the Holy Trinity subordinate to the Father, as to their mode of subsistence and operation, although the same in substance, and equal in power and glory. Hence it is that the same work is often attributed to the Father, to the Son, and to the Spirit; and as the Father and Son operate through the Spirit, the effects due to the agency of God are referred specially to the Holy Ghost.

This reference of sanctification to God proves it to be a supernatural work, because the insufficiency of second causes to produce the effect is declared to be the ground of this reference. It is because men cannot cleanse or heal themselves, that they are declared to be cleansed and healed by God. It is because rites, ceremonies, sacraments, truth, and moral suasion, cannot bring the soul back to God, that it is said to be transformed, by the renewing of the mind, through the power of the Spirit, into the image of God. We are, therefore, declared to be God's work. manship, created unto good works. And it is not we that live, but Christ that liveth in us.

All Holy Exercises referred to the Spirit as their Author.

2. This reference of sanctification to God as its author, the more decisively proves the supernatural character of the work, because the reference is not merely general, as when the wind and rain, and the production of vegetable and animal life, are referred to his universal providential agency. The reference is special. The effect is one which the Scriptures recognize as not within the sphere of second causes,

and therefore ascribe to God. They recognize the free agency of man; they acknowledge and treat him as a moral and rational being; they admit the adaptation of of truth to convince the understanding, and of the motives presented to determine the will and to control the affections, and nevertheless they teach that these secondary causes and influences be utterly ineffectual to the conversion and sanctification of the soul, without the demonstration of the Spirit. The sacred writers, therefore, constantly pray for this divine influence, "extrinsecus accidens," to attend the means of grace and to render them effectual, as well for sanctification as for regeneration and conversion. Every such prayer, every thanksgiving for grace imparted, every recognition of the Christian virtues as fruits of the Spirit, and gifts of God, are so many recognitions of the great truth that the restoration of man to the image of God is not a work of nature, either originated or carried on by the efficiency of second causes, but is truly and properly supernatural, as due to the immediate power of the Spirit producing effects for which second causes are inadequate.

We are taught to pray for Repentance, Faith, and other Graces.

3. We accordingly find the Apostle and the sacred writers generally, referring not only regeneration, the communication of spiritual life to those spiritually dead, but the continuance of that life in its activity and growth, not merely to the power of God, but to his almighty power. Paul prays in Ephesians i. 19, that his readers might know "what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead." The same almighty power which was exhibited in the resurrection of Christ, is exercised in the spiritual resurrection of the believer. And as the power which raised Christ from the dead was exercised in his ascension and glorification; so also the same power, according to the Apostle, which is exerted in the spiritual resurrection of the believer, is exercised in carrying on his sanctification, which is inward and

real glorification. Accordingly, in the same Epistle (iii. 7), he ascribes all the grace whereby he was fitted for the apostleship, "to the effectual working of his power." And further on (ver. 20), to encourage the people of God to pray for spiritual blessings, he reminds them of his omnipotence whereby He was "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." It is almighty power, therefore, and not the impotence of secondary influences, which works in the believer and carries on the work of his salvation.

They who are in Christ, therefore, are new creatures. They are created anew in Christ Jesus. This does not refer exclusively to their regeneration, but to the process by which the sinner is transformed into the image of Christ.

Argument from the Believer's Union with Christ.

4. All that the Scriptures teach concerning the union between the believer and Christ, and of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, proves the supernatural character of our sanctification. Men do not make themselves holy; their holiness, and their growth in grace, are not due to their own fidelity, or firmness of purpose, or watchfulness and diligence, although all these are required, but to the divine influence by which they are rendered thus faithful, watchful, and diligent, and which produces in them the fruits of righteousness. Without me, saith our Lord, ye can do nothing. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. The hand is not more dependent on the head for the continuance of its vitality, than is the believer on Christ for the continuance of spiritual life in the soul.

Argument from related Doctrines.

5. This, however, is one of those doctrines which pervade the whole Scriptures. It follows of necessity from what the Bible teaches of the natural state of man since the fall; it is assumed, asserted, and

implied in all that is revealed of the plan of salvation. By their apostasy, men lost the image of God; they are born in a state of alienation and condemnation. They are by nature destitute of spiritual life. From this state it is as impossible that they should deliver themselves, as that those in the grave should restore life to their wasted bodies, and when restored, continue and invigorate it by their own power. Our whole salvation is of Christ. Those who are in the grave hear his voice. They are raised by his power. And when they live it is He who lives in them. This is the doctrine which our Lord Himself so clearly and so frequently teaches, and upon which his Apostles so strenuously insist. St. Paul in the sixth and seventh chapters of his Epistle to the Romans, where he treats of this subject "in extenso," has for his main object to prove that as we are not justified or our own righteousness, so we are not sanctified by our own power, or by the mere objective power of the truth. The law, the revelation of the will of God, including everything which He has made known to man either as a rule of obedience or as exhibiting his own attributes and purposes, was equally inadequate to secure justification and sanctification. As it demanded perfect obedience and pronounced accursed those who continue not in all things written in the book of the law to do them, it can only condemn. It can never pronounce the sinner just. And as it was a mere outward presentation of the truth, it could no more change the heart than light could give sight to the blind. He winds up his discussions of the subject with the exclamation, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." His deliverance was to be effected by God through Jesus Christ. We learn from the eighth chapter that he was fully confident of this deliverance, and we learn also the ground on which that confidence rested. It was not that he had in regeneration received strength to sanctify himself, or that by the force of his own will, or by the diligent use of natural or appointed means, the end was to be accomplished without further aid from God. On the contrary, his confidence was founded, (1.) On the fact that he had been delivered from the law, from its curse, and from its inexorable demand of perfect obedience. (2.) On the fact that he had received

the Spirit as the source of a new, divine, and imperishable life. (3.) This life was not a mere state of mind, but the life of God, or the Spirit of God dwelling in the heart; which indwelling secured not only the continuance of "spiritual mindedness," but even the resurrection from the dead. "For if," says he, "the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken (zwopoih,sei(make alive with the life of Christ) your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." (4.) Being led by the Spirit of God as the controlling principle of their inward and outward life, believers are the sons of God. The Spirit of God which is in them being the Spirit of the Son, is in them the Spirit of sonship, i. e., it produces in them the feelings of sons toward God, and assures them of their title to all the privileges of his children. (5.) The sanctification and ultimate salvation of believers are secured by the immutable decree of God. For those "whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son; . . . moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." This last includes sanctification; the inward glory of the soul; the divine image as retraced by the Spirit of God, which to and in the believer is the Spirit of glory. (1 Pet. iv. 14.) The indwelling of the Spirit renders the believer glorious. (6.) The infinite and immutable love which induced God to give his own Son for our salvation, renders it certain that all other things shall be given necessary to keep them in the love and fellowship of God. Salvation, therefore, from beginning to end is of grace; not only as being gratuitous to the exclusion of all merit on the part of the saved, but also as being carried on by the continued operation of grace, or the supernatural power of the Spirit. Christ is our all. He is of God made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, sanctification and redemption.

§ 2. *Wherein it consists.*

Admitting sanctification to be a supernatural work, the question still remains, What does it consist in? What is the nature of the effect produced? The truth which lies at the foundation of all the Scriptural representations of this subject is, that regeneration, the quickening, of which believers are the subject, while it involves the implanting, or communication of a new principle or form of life, does not effect the immediate and entire deliverance of the soul from all sin. A man raised from the dead may be and long continue to be, in a very feeble, diseased, and suffering state. So the soul by nature dead in sin, may be quickened together with Christ, and not be rendered thereby perfect. The principle of life may be very feeble, it may have much in the soul uncongenial with its nature, and the conflict between the old and the new life may be protracted and painful. Such not only may be, but such in fact is the case in all the ordinary experience of the people of God. Here we find one of the characteristic and far-reaching differences between the Romish and Protestant systems of doctrine and religion. According to the Romish system, nothing of the nature of sin remains in the soul after regeneration as effected in baptism. From this the theology of the Church of Rome deduces its doctrine of the merit of good works; of perfection; of works of supererogation; and, indirectly, those of absolution and indulgences. But according to the Scriptures, the universal experience of Christians, and the undeniable evidence of history, regeneration does not remove all sin. The Bible is filled with the record of the inward conflicts of the most eminent of the servants of God, with their falls, their backslidings, their repentings, and their lamentations over their continued shortcomings. And not only this, but the nature of the conflict between good and evil in the heart of the renewed is fully described, the contending principles are distinguished and designated, and the necessity, difficulties, and perils of the struggle, well as the method of properly sustaining it, are set forth repeatedly and in detail. In the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans we have an account of this conflict elaborately described by the Apostle as drawn from his own experience. And the same thing occurs in Galatians v. 16, 17. This I say then, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit,

and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Again, in Ephesians vi. 10-18, in view of the conflict which the believer has to sustain with the evils of his own heart and with the powers of darkness, the Apostle exhorts his brethren to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. . . . "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

With the teachings of the Scriptures the experience of Christians in all ages and in all parts of the Church agrees. Their writings are filled with the account of their struggles with the remains of sin in their own hearts; with confessions; with prayers for divine aid; and with longings after the final victory over all evil, which is to be experienced only in heaven. The great lights of the Latin Church, the Augustines and Bernards and Fenelons, were humble, penitent, struggling believers, even to the last, and with Paul did not regard themselves as having already attained, or as being already perfect. And what the Bible and Christian experience prove to be true, history puts beyond dispute. Either there is no such thing as regeneration in the world, or regeneration does not remove all sin from those who are its subjects.

Putting off the Old, and putting on the New Man.

Such being the foundation of the Scriptural representations concerning sanctification, its nature is thereby determined. As all men since the fall are in a state of sin, not only sinners because guilty of specific acts of transgression, but also as depraved, their nature perverted and corrupted, regeneration is the infusion of a new principle of life in this corrupt nature. It is leaven introduced to diffuse its influence gradually through the whole mass. Sanctification, therefore, consists in two things ; first, the removing more and more the principles of evil still infecting our nature, and destroying their power; and secondly, the growth of the principle of

spiritual life until it controls the thoughts, feelings, and acts, and brings the soul into conformity to the image of Christ.

Paul details his own Experience in Roman. vii. 7-25.

The classical passages of the New Testament on the nature of this work are the following, -- Romans vii. 7-25. This is not the place to enter upon the discussion whether the Apostle in this passage is detailing his own experience or not. This is the interpretation given to it by Augustinians in all ages. It is enough to say here that the "onus probandi" rests on those who take the opposite view of the passage. It must require very strong proof that the Apostle is not speaking of himself and giving his own experience as a Christian, when, --

1. His object in the whole discussion throughout the sixth and seventh chapters, is to prove that the law, as it cannot justify, neither can it sanctify; as it cannot deliver from the guilt, so neither can it free us from the power of sin. This is not the fault of the law, for it is spiritual, holy, just, and good. It commends itself to the reason and the conscience as being just what it ought to be; requiring neither more nor less than what it is right should be demanded, and threatening no penalty which want of conformity to its requirements does not justly merit. What is the effect of the objective presentation of the ideal standard of moral perfection to which we are bound to be conformed on the penalty of death? The Apostle tells us that the effects are, (a.) A great increase of knowledge. He had not known lust, had not the law said, Thou shalt not covet. (b.) A sense of moral pollution, and consequently of shame and self-loathing. (c.) A sense of guilt, or of just exposure to the penalty of the law of which our whole lives are a continued transgression. (d.) A sense of utter helplessness. The standard, although holy, just, and good, is too high. We know we never can of ourselves conform to it; neither can we make satisfaction for past transgression. (e.) The result of the whole is despair. The law kills. It destroys not only all self-complacency, but all hope of ever being able to effect our own

salvation. (f.) And thus it lead. the sinner to look out of himself for salvation; i. e., for deliverance from the power, as well as the guilt of sin. The law is a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ. Why could not the Apostle say all this of himself? There is nothing here inconsistent with the character or experience of a true believer. It is as true of the Christian that he is not sanctified by moral suasion, by the objective presentation of truth, as it is of the unrenewed sinner, that he is not regenerated by any such outward influences. It is, therefore, perfectly pertinent to the Apostle's object that he should detail his own experience that sanctification could not be effected by the law.

2. But in the second place, he uses the first person singular throughout. He says, "I had not known sin," "I died," "The commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death," "I consent unto the law that it is good," "I delight in the law of God after the inward man, but I see another law in my members," etc., etc. We are bound to understand the Apostle to speak of himself in the use of such language, unless there be something in the context, or in the nature of what is said, to render the reference to him impossible. It has been shown, however, that the context favours, if it does not absolutely demand the reference of what is said to the Apostle himself. And that there is nothing in the experience here detailed inconsistent with the experience of the true children of God, is evident from the fact that the same humility, the same sense of guilt, the same consciousness of indwelling sin, the same conviction of helplessness, here expressed, are found in all the penitential portions of Scripture. Job, David, Isaiah, and Nehemiah, make the same confessions and lamentations that the Apostle here makes. The same is true of believers since the coming of Christ. There is no one of them, not even the holiest, who is not constrained to speak of himself as Paul here speaks, unless indeed he chooses to give the language of the Apostle a meaning which it was never intended to express.

3. While the passage contains nothing inconsistent with the experience of true believers, it is inconsistent with the experience of unrenewed men. They are not the subjects of the in-ward conflict here depicted. There is in them indeed often a struggle protracted and painful, between reason and conscience on the one side, and evil passion on the other. But there is not in the unrenewed that utter renunciation of self, that looking for help to God in Christ alone, and that delight in the law of God, of which the Apostle here speaks.

What Romans vii. 7-25 teaches.

Assuming, then, that we have in this chapter an account of the experience of a true and even of an advanced Christian, we learn that in every Christian there is a mixture of good and evil; that the original corruption of nature is not entirely removed by regeneration; that although the believer is made a new creature, is translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son, he is but partially sanctified; that his selfishness pride, discontent, worldliness, still cleave to, and torment him, that they effectually prevent his "doing what he would," they prevent his living without sin, they prevent his intercourse with God being as intimate and uninterrupted as he could and does desire. He finds not only that he is often, even daily, overcome so as to sin in thought, word, and deed, but also that his faith, love, zeal, and devotion are never such as to satisfy his own conscience; much less can they satisfy God. He therefore is daily called upon to confess, repent, and pray for forgiveness. The Apostle designates these conflicting principles which he found within himself, the one, indwelling sin; "sin that dwelleth in me;" or the "law in my members;" "the law of sin;" the other, "the mind," "the law of my mind," "the inward man." His internal self, the Ego, was sometimes controlled by the one, and sometimes by the other.

We learn, further, that the control of the evil principle is resisted, that subjection to it is regarded as a hateful bondage, that the good principle is in the main victorious, and that through Christ it will

ultimately be completely triumphant. Sanctification therefore, according to this representation, consists in the gradual triumph of the new nature implanted in regeneration over the evil that still remains after the heart is renewed. In other words, as elsewhere expressed, it is a dying unto sin and living unto righteousness. (1 Pet. ii. 24.)

Galatians v. 16-26.

Another passage of like import is Galatians v. 16-26, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not full the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would," etc., etc. The Scriptures teach that the Spirit of God dwells in his people, not only collectively as the Church, but individually in every believer, so that of every Christian it may be said, he is a temple of the Holy Ghost. God is said to dwell wherever He permanently manifests his presence, whether as of old in the temple, or in the hearts of his people, in the Church, or in heaven. And as the Spirit dwells in believers, He there manifests his life-giving, controlling power, and is in them the principle, or source, or controlling influence which determines their inward and outward life. By the flesh, in the doctrinal portions of Scripture, is never, unless the word be limited by the context, meant merely our sensuous nature, but our fallen nature, i. e., our nature as it is in itself, apart from the Spirit of God. As our Lord says (John iii. 6), "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." These then are the principles which "are contrary the one to the other." No man can act independently of both. He must obey one or the other. He may sometimes obey the one, and sometimes the other; but one or the other must prevail. The Apostle says of believers that they have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts. They have renounced the authority of the evil principle; they do not willingly, or of set purpose, or habitually yield to it. They struggle against it, and not only endeavour, but actually do crucify it, although it may die a long and painful death.

Ephesians iv. 22-24.

In Ephesians iv. 22-24, we are told: "Put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and" put ye "on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." By the old man is to be understood the former self with all the evils belonging to its natural state. This was to be laid aside as a worn and soiled garment, and a new, pure self, the new man, was to take its place. This change, although expressed in a figure borrowed from a change of raiment, was a profound inward change produced by a creating process, by which the soul is new fashioned after the image of God in righteousness and holiness. It is a renewing as to the Spirit, i. e., the interior life of the mind; or as Meyer and Ellicott, the best of modern commentators, both interpret the phrase, "By the Spirit" (the Holy Spirit) dwelling in the mind. This is a transformation in which believers are exhorted to cooperate; for which they are to labour, and which is therefore a protracted work. Sanctification, therefore, according to this representation, consists in the removal of the evils which belong to us in our natural condition, and in being made more and more conformed to the image of God through the gracious influence of the Spirit of God dwelling in us.

It is not, however, merely in such passages as those above cited that the nature of sanctification is set forth. The Bible is full of exhortations and commands addressed to the people of God, to those recognized and assumed to be regenerate, requiring them, on the one hand, to resist their evil passions and propensities, to lay aside all malice, and wrath, and pride, and jealousy; and on the other, to cultivate all the graces of the Spirit, faith, love, hope, long-suffering, meekness, lowliness of mind, and brotherly kindness. At the same time they are reminded that it is God who worketh in them both to will and to do, and that therefore they are constantly to seek his aid and to depend upon his assistance.

It follows from this view of the subject that sanctification is not only, as before proved, a supernatural work, but also that it does not consist exclusively in a series of a new kind of acts. It is the making the tree good, in order that the fruit may be good. It involves an essential change of character. As regeneration is not an act of the subject of the work, but in the language of the Bible a new birth, a new creation, a quickening or communicating a new life, and in the language of the old Latin Church, the infusion of new habits of grace; so sanctification in its essential nature is not holy acts, but such a change in the state of the soul, that sinful acts become more infrequent, and holy acts more and more habitual and controlling. This view alone is consistent with the Scriptural representations, and with the account given in the Bible of the way in which this radical change of character is carried on and consummated.

§ 3. *The Method of Sanctification.*

It has already been shown that although sanctification does not exclude all cooperation on the part of its subjects, but, on the contrary, calls for their unremitting and strenuous exertion, it is nevertheless the work of God. It is not carried on as a mere process of moral culture by moral means; it is as truly supernatural in its method as in its nature. What the Bible teaches in answer to the question, How a soul by nature spiritually dead, being quickened by the mighty power of God, is gradually transformed into the image of Christ, is substantially as follows, --

The Soul is led to exercise Faith.

1. It is led to exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, to receive Him as its Saviour, committing itself to Him to be by his merit and grace delivered from the guilt and power of sin. This is the first step, and secures all the rest, not because of its inherent virtue or efficacy, but because, according to the covenant of grace, or plan of salvation,

which God has revealed and which He has pledged Himself to carry out, He becomes bound by his promise to accomplish the full salvation from sin of every one who believes.

The Effect of Union with Christ.

2. The soul by this act of faith becomes united to Christ. We are in Him by faith. The consequences of this union are, (a.) Participation in his merits. His perfect righteousness, agreeably to the stipulations of the covenant of redemption, is imputed to the believer. He is thereby justified. He is introduced into a state of favour or grace, and rejoices in hope of the glory of God. (Rom. v. 1-3.) This is, as the Bible teaches, the essential preliminary condition of sanctification. While under the law we are under the curse. While under the curse we are the enemies of God and bring forth fruit unto death. It is only when delivered from the law by the body or death of Christ, and united to Him, that we bring forth fruit unto God. (Rom. vi. 8; vii. 4-6.) Sin, therefore, says the Apostle, shall not reign over us, because we are not under the law. (Rom. vi. 14.) Deliverance from the law is the necessary condition of deliverance from sin. All the relations of the believer are thus changed. He is translated from the kingdom of darkness and introduced into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Instead of an outcast, a slave under condemnation, he becomes a child of God, assured of his love, of his tenderness, and of his care. He may come to Him with confidence. He is brought under all the influences which in their full effect constitute heaven. He therefore becomes a new creature. He has passed from death to life; from darkness to light, from hell (the kingdom of Satan) to heaven. He sits with Christ in heavenly places. (Eph. ii. 6.) (b.) Another consequence of the union with Christ effected by faith, is the indwelling of the Spirit. Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law by being made a curse for us, in order that we might receive the promise of the Holy Ghost. (Gal. iii. 13, 14.) It was not consistent with the perfections or purposes of God that the Spirit should be given to dwell with his saving influences in the apostate children of men, until Christ had made a full satisfaction for the sins of the world. But as

with God there are no distinctions of time, Christ was slain from the foundation of the world, and his death availed as fully for the salvation of those who lived before, as for that of those who have lived since his coming in the flesh. (Rom. iii. 25, 26; Heb. ix. 15.) The Spirit was given to the people of God from the beginning. But as our Lord says (John x. 10) that He came into the world not only that men might have life, but that they might have it more abundantly, the effusion, or copious communication of the Spirit is always represented as the great characteristic of the Messiah's advent. (Joel ii 28, 29; Acts ii. 16-21 ; John vii. 38, 39.) Our Lord, therefore, in his last discourse to his disciples, said it was expedient for them that He went away, for "if I go not away, the Comforter (the Parakletos) (the helper) will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." (John xvi. 7.) He was to supply the place of Christ as to his visible presence, carry on his work, gather in his people, transform them into the likeness of Christ, and communicate to them all the benefits of his redemption. Where the Spirit is, there Christ is; so that, the Spirit being with us, Christ is with us; and if the Spirit dwells in us, Christ dwells in us. (Rom. viii. 9-11.) In partaking, therefore, of the Holy Ghost, believers are partakers of the life of Christ. The Spirit was given to Him without measure, and from him flows down to all his members. This participation of the believer in the life of Christ, so that every believer may say with the Apostle, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20), is prominently presented in the Word of God. (Rom. vi. 5; vii. 4; John xiv. 19; Col. iii. 3, 4.) The two great standing illustrations of this truth are the vine and the human body. The former is presented at length in John xv. 1-8, the latter in 1 Corinthians xii. 11-27; Romans xii. 5; Ephesians i. 22, 23; iv. 15, 16; v. 30; Colossians i. 18; ii. 19; and frequently elsewhere. As the life of the vine is diffused through all the branches, sustaining and rendering them fruitful; and as the life of the head is diffused through all the members of the body making it one, and imparting life to all, so the life of Christ is diffused through all the members of his mystical body making them one body in Him; having a common life with their common head. This idea is urged specially in Ephesians iv. 15, 16, where it is said that it is from Christ that the

whole body fitly joined together, through the spiritual influence granted to every part according to its measure, makes increase in love. It is true that this is spoken of the Church as a whole. But what is said of Christ's mystical body as a whole is true of all its members severally. He is the prophet, priest, and king of the Church; but He is also the prophet, priest, and king of every believer. Our relation to Him is individual and personal. The Church as a whole is the temple of God; but so is every believer. (1 Cor. iii. 16; vi. 19.) The Church is the bride of Christ, but every believer is the object of that tender, peculiar love expressed in the use of that metaphor. The last verse of Paul Gerhardt's hymn, "Ein Lammlein geht und tragt die Schuld," every true Christian may adopt as the expression of his own hopes: --

"Wann endlich ich soll treten ein
In deines Reiches Freuden,
So soll diess Blut mein Purpur seyn,
Ich will mich darein kielden;
Es soil seyn meines Hauptes Kron'
In welcher ich will vor den Thron
Des hochsten Vaters gehen,
Und dir, dem er mich anvertraut,
Als eine wohlgeschmuckte Braut,
An deiner Seiten stehen."

The Inward Work of the Spirit.

3. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit thus secured by union with Christ becomes the source of a new spiritual life, which constantly increases in power until everything uncongenial with it is expelled, and the soul is perfectly transformed into the image of Christ. It is the office of the Spirit to enlighten the mind; or, as Paul expresses it, "to enlighten the eyes of the understanding" (Eph. i. 18), that we may know the things freely given to us of God (1 Cor. ii. 12); i. e., the things which God has revealed; or, as they are called in v. 14, "The things of the Spirit of God." These things, which the natural man cannot know, the Spirit enables the believer "to discern," i. e., to

apprehend in their truth and excellence; and thus to experience their power. The Spirit, we are taught, especially opens the eyes to see the glory of Christ, to see that He is God manifest in the flesh; to discern not only his divine perfections, but his love to us, and his suitableness in all respects as our Saviour, so that those who have not seen Him, yet believing on Him, rejoice in Him with joy unspeakable and full of glory. This apprehension of Christ is transforming; the soul is thereby changed into his image, from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord. It was this inward revelation of Christ by which Paul on his way to Damascus was instantly converted from a blasphemer into a worshipper and self-sacrificing servant of the Lord Jesus.

It is not, however, only one object which the opened eye of the believer is able to discern. The Spirit enables him to see the glory of God as revealed in his works and in his word; the holiness and spirituality of the law; the exceeding sinfulness of sin; his own guilt, pollution, and helplessness; the length and breadth, the height and depth of the economy of redemption; and the reality glory, and infinite importance of the things unseen and eternal. The soul is thus raised above the world. It lives in a higher sphere. It becomes more and more heavenly in its character and desires. All the great doctrines of the Bible concerning God, Christ, and things spiritual and eternal, are so revealed by this inward teaching of the Spirit, as to be not only rightly discerned, but to exert, in a measure, their proper influence on the heart and life. Thus the prayer of Christ (John xvii. 17), "Sanctify them through thy truth," is answered in the experience of his people.

God calls the Graces of his People into Exercise.

4. The work of sanctification is carried on by God's giving constant occasion for the exercise of all the graces of the Spirit. Submission, confidence, self-denial, patience, and meekness, as well as faith, hope, and love, are called forth, or put to the test, more or less effectually every day the believer passes on earth. And by this

constant exercise he grows in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It is, however, principally by calling his people to labour and suffer for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom, and for the good of their fellow-men, that this salutary discipline is carried on. The best Christians are in general those who not merely from restless activity of natural disposition, but from love to Christ and zeal for his glory, labour most and suffer most in his service.

The Church and Sacraments as means of Grace.

5. One great end of the establishment of the Church on earth, as the communion of saints, is the edification of the people of God. The intellectual and social life of man is not developed in isolation and solitude. It is only in contact and collision with his fellow-men that his powers are called into exercise and his social virtues are cultivated. Thus also it is by the Church-life of believers, by their communion in the worship and service of God, and by their mutual good offices and fellowship, that the spiritual life of the soul is developed. Therefore the Apostle says, "Let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together. as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another; and so much the more as ye see the day approaching." (Heb. x. 24-26.)

6. The Spirit renders the ordinances of God, the word, sacraments, and prayer, effectual means of promoting the sanctification of his people, and of securing their ultimate salvation. These, however, must be more fully considered in the sequel.

The Kingly Office of Christ.

7. In this connection, we are not to overlook or undervalue the constant exercise of the kingly office of Christ. He not only reigns over his people, but He subdues them to Himself, rules and defends them, and restrains and conquers all his and their enemies. These

enemies are both inward and outward, both seen and unseen; they are the world, the flesh, and the devil. The strength of the believer in contending with these enemies, is not his own. He, is strong only in the Lord, and in the power of his might. (Eph. vi. 10.) The weapons, both offensive and defensive, are supplied by Him, and the disposition and the skill to use them are his gifts to be sought by praying without ceasing. He is an ever present helper. Whenever the Christian feels his weakness either in resisting temptation or in the discharge of duty, he looks to Christ, and seeks aid from Him. And all who seek find. When we fail, it is either from self-confidence, or from neglecting to call upon our ever present and almighty King, who is always ready to protect and deliver those who put their trust in Him. But there are dangers which we do not apprehend, enemies whom we do not see, and to which we would become an easy prey, were it not for the watchful care of Him who came into the world to destroy the works of the devil, and to bruise Satan under our feet. The Christian runs his race "looking unto Jesus;" the life he lives, he lives by faith in the Son of God; it is by the constant worship of Christ; by the constant exercise of love toward Him; by constant endeavours to do his will; and by constantly looking to Him for the supply of grace and for protection and aid, that he overcomes sin and finally attains the prize of the high-calling of God.

§ 4. *The Fruits of Sanctification, or Good Works*

Their Nature.

The fruits of sanctification are good works. Our Lord says "A good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit, For every tree is known by his own fruit: for of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes." (Luke vi. 43, 44.) By good works, in this connection, are meant not only the inward exercises of the religious life, but also outward acts, such as can be seen and appreciated by others.

There are three senses in which works may be called good, --

1. When as to the matter of them they are what the law prescribes. In this sense even the heathen perform good works; as the Apostle says, Romans ii. 14, "The Gentiles . . . do by nature the things contained in the law." That is, they perform acts of justice and mercy. No man on earth is so wicked as never, in this sense of the term, to be the author of some good works. This is what the theologians call civil goodness, whose sphere is the social relations of men.

2. In the second place, by good works are meant works which both in the matter of them, and in the design and motives of the agent, are what the law requires. In other words, a work is good, when there is nothing either in the agent or in the act which the law condemns. In this sense not even the works of the holiest of God's people are good. No man is ever, since the fall, in this life, in such an inward state that he can stand before God and be accepted on the ground of what he is or of what he does. All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. (Is. lxiv. 6.) Paul found to the last a law of sin in his members. He groaned under a body of death. In one of his latest epistles he says he had not attained, or was not already perfect, and all Christians are required to pray daily for the forgiveness of sin. What the Scriptures teach of the imperfection of the best works of the believer, is confirmed by the irrepressible testimony of consciousness. It matters not what the lips may say, every man's conscience tells him that he is always a sinner, that he never is free from moral defilement in the sight of an infinitely holy God. On this subject the Form of Concord¹ says, "Lex Dei credentibus bona opera ad eum modum praescribit, ut simul, tanquam in speculo, nobis commonstret, ea omnia in nobis in hac vita adhuc imperfecta et impura esse;" and² "Credentes in hac vita non perfecte, completive vel consummative (ut veteres locuti sunt) renovantur. Et quamvis ipsorum peccata Christi obedientia absolutissima contacta sint, ut credentibus non ad damnationem imputentur, et per Spiritum Sanctum veteris Adami mortificatio et renovatio in spiritu mentis eorum inchoata sit: tamen vetus Adam in ipsa natura, omnibusque illius interioribus et exterioribus viribus

adhuc semper inhaeret." Calvin³ says, " Seligat ex tota sua vita sanctus Dei servus, quod in ejus cursu maxime eximium se putabit edidisse, bene revolvat singulas partes: deprehendet procul dubio alicubi quod carnis putredinem sapiat, quando numquam ea est nostra alacritas ad bene agendum quae esse debet, sed in cursu retardando multa debilitas. Quanquam non obscuras esse maculas videmus, quibus respersa sint opera sanctorum, fac tamen minutissimos esse naevos duntaxat: sed an oculos Dei nihil offendent, coram quibus ne stellae quidem purae sunt? Habemus, nec unum a sanctis exire opus, quod, si in se censeatur, non mereatur justam opprobrii mercedem."

Romish Doctrine on Good Works.

Against the doctrine that the best works of the believer are imperfect, the Romanists are especially denunciatory. And with good reason. It subverts their whole system, which is founded on the assumed merit of good works. If the best works of the saints merit "justam opprobrii mercedem" (i. e., condemnation), they cannot merit reward. Their argument on this subject is, that if the Protestant doctrine be true which declares the best works of the believer to be imperfect; then the fulfilment of the law is impossible; but if this be so, then the law is not binding; for God does not command impossibilities. To this it may be answered, first, that the objection is inconsistent with the doctrine of Romanists themselves. They teach that man in his natural state since the fall is unable to do anything good in the sight of God, until he receives the grace of God communicated in baptism. According to the principle on which the objection is founded, the law does not bind the unbaptized. And secondly, the objection assumes the fundamental principle of Pelagianism, namely that ability limits obligation; a principle which, in the sphere of morals, is contrary to Scripture, consciousness, and the common judgment of mankind. We cannot be required to do what is impossible because of the limitation of our nature as creatures, as to create a world, or raise the dead; but to love God perfectly does not exceed the power of man as he came from the

hands of his maker. It is not absolutely, but only relatively impossible, that is, in relation of the thing commanded, to us not as men, but as sinners. Although it is essential to the Romish doctrine of merit, of indulgences, of works of supererogation, and of purgatory, that the renewed should be able perfectly to fulfil the demands of the law, nevertheless, Romanists themselves are compelled to admit the contrary. Thus Bellarmin says,⁴ "Defectus charitatis, quod videlicet non faciamus 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." That is, although our love is in fact imperfect, it may be called perfect. But calling it perfect, does not alter its nature. To the same effect another of the leading theologians of the Roman Church, Andradius, says, "Peccata venalia per se tam esse minuta et levia, ut non adversentur perfectioni caritatis, nec impedire possint perfectam et absolutam legis obedientiam: utpote quae non sint ira Dei et condemnatione, sed venia digna, etiamsi Deus cum illis in iudicium intret."⁵ That is, sins are not sins, because men choose to regard them as trivial.

Works of Supererogation.

But if no work of man since the fall in this life is perfectly good, then it not only follows that the doctrine of merit must be given up, but still more obviously, all works of supererogation are impossible. Romanists teach that the renewed may not only completely satisfy all the demands of the law of God, which requires that we should love Him with all the heart, and all the mind, and all the strength, and our neighbour as ourselves; but that they can do more than the law demands, and thus acquire more merit than they need for their own salvation, which may be made available for those who lack.

It is impossible that any man can hold such a doctrine, unless he first degrades the law of God by restricting its demands to very narrow limits. The Romanists represent our relation to God as

analogous to a citizen's relation to the state. Civil laws are limited to a narrow sphere. They concern only our social and political obligations. It is easy for a man to be a good citizen; to fulfil perfectly all that the law of the land requires. Such a man, through love to his country, may do far more than the law can demand. He may not only pay tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, and honour to whom honour; but he may also devote his time, his talents, his whole fortune to the service of his country. Thus also, according to Romanists, men may not only do all that the law of God requires of men as men, but they may also through love, far exceed its demands. This Mohler represents as a great superiority of Romish ethics over the Protestant system. The latter, according to him, limits man's obligations to his legal liabilities, to what in justice may be exacted from him on pain of punishment. Whereas the former rises to the higher sphere of love, and represents the believer cordially and freely rendering unto God what in strict justice could not be demanded of him. "It is the nature of love, which stands far, even immeasurably higher than the demands of the law, never to be satisfied with its manifestation, and to become more and more sensitive, so that believers, who are animated with this love, often appear to men who stand on a lower level as fanatics or lunatics."⁶ But what if the law itself is love? What if the law demands all that love can render? What if the love which the law requires of every rational creature calls for the devotion of the whole soul, with all its powers to God as a living sacrifice? It is only by making sin to be no sin; by teaching men that they are perfect when even their own hearts condemn them; it is only by lowering the demands of the law which, being founded on the nature of God, of necessity requires perfect conformity to the divine image, that any man in this life can pretend to be perfect, or be so insane as to imagine that he can go beyond the demands of the law and perform works of supererogation.

Precepts and Counsels.

The distinction which Romanists make between precepts and counsels, rests upon the same low view of the divine law. By precepts are meant the specific commands of the law which bind all men, the observance of which secures a reward, and non-observance a penalty. Whereas counsels are not commands; they do not bind the conscience of any man, but are recommendations of things peculiarly acceptable to God, compliance with which merits a much higher reward than the mere observance of precepts. There are many such counsels in the Bible, the most important of which are said to be celibacy, monastic obedience, and poverty.⁷ No man is bound to remain unmarried, but if he voluntarily determines to do so for the glory of God, that is a great virtue. No one is bound to renounce the acquisition of property, but if he voluntarily embraces a life of absolute poverty, it is a great merit. Our Lord, however, demands everything. He saith, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me, and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me." "He that findeth his life, shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it." (Matt. x. 31, 39.) "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." (Luke xiv. 26.) The law of Christ demands entire devotion to Him. If his service requires that a man should remain unmarried, he is bound to live a life of celibacy; if it requires that he should give up all his property and take up his cross, and follow Christ, he is bound to do so; if it requires him to lay down his life for Christ's sake, he is bound to lay it down. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Nothing can go beyond this. There can be no sacrifice and no service which a man can make or render, which duty, or the law of Christ, does not demand when such sacrifice or service becomes necessary as the proof or fruit of love to Christ. There is no room, therefore, for this distinction between counsels and precepts, between what the law demands and what love is willing to render. And therefore the doctrine of works of supererogation is thoroughly anti-Christian.

The Sense in which the Fruits of the Spirit in Believers are called Good.

3. Although no work even of the true people of God, while they continue in this world, is absolutely perfect, nevertheless those inward exercises and outward acts which are the fruits of the Spirit are properly designated good, and are so called in Scripture. Acts ix. 36, it was said of Dorcas that she "was full of good works." Ephesians ii. 10, believers are said to be "created in Christ Jesus unto good works." 2 Timothy iii. 17, teaches that the man of God should be "thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Titus ii. 14, Christ gave Himself for us that He might "purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." There is no contradiction in pronouncing the same work good and bad, because these terms are relative, and the relations intended may be different. Feeding the poor, viewed in relation to the nature of the act is a good work. Viewed in relation to the motive which prompts it, it may be good or bad. If done to be seen of men, it is offensive in the sight of God. If done from natural benevolence, it is an act of ordinary morality. If done to a disciple in the name of a disciple, it is an act of Christian virtue. The works of the children of God, therefore, although stained by sin, are truly and properly good, because, (1.) They are, as to their nature or the thing done, commanded by God. (2.) Because, as to the motive, they are the fruits, not merely of right moral feeling, but of religious feeling, i. e., of love to God; and (3.) Because they are performed with the purpose of complying with his will, of honouring Christ and of promoting the interests of his kingdom.

It follows from the fundamental principle of Protestantism, that the Scriptures are the only rule of faith and practice, that no work can be regarded as good or obligatory on the conscience which the Scriptures do not enjoin. Of course it is not meant that the Bible commands in detail everything which the people of God are bound to do, but it prescribes the principles by which their conduct is to be regulated, and specifies the kind of acts which those principles require or forbid. It is enough that the Scriptures require children to

obey their parents, citizens the magistrate, and believers to hear the Church, without enjoining every act which these injunctions render obligatory. In giving these general commands, the Bible gives all necessary limitations, so that neither parents, magistrates, nor Church can claim any authority not granted to them by God, nor impose anything on the conscience which He does not command. As some churches have enjoined a multitude of doctrines as articles of faith, which are not taught in Scripture, so they have enjoined a multitude of acts, which the Bible neither directly, nor by just or necessary inference requires. They have thus imposed upon those who recognize their authority as infallible in teaching, a yoke of bondage which no one is able to bear. After the example of the ancient Pharisees, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, and claim divine authority for human institutions. From this bondage it was one great design of the Reformation to free the people of God. This deliverance was effected by proclaiming the principle that nothing is sin but what the Bible forbids and nothing is morally obligatory but what the Bible enjoins.

Such, however, is the disposition, on the one hand, to usurp authority, and, on the other, to yield to it, that it is only by the constant assertion and vindication of this principle, that the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free can be preserved.

§ 5. *Necessity of Good Works.*

On this subject there has never been any real difference of opinion among Protestants, although there was in the early Lutheran Church some misunderstanding. First. It was universally admitted that good works are not necessary to our justification; that they are consequences and indirectly the fruits of justification, and, therefore, cannot be its ground. Secondly, it was also agreed that faith, by which the sinner is justified, is not as a work, the reason why God pronounces the sinner just. It is the act by which the sinner receives

and rests upon the righteousness of Christ, the imputation of which renders him righteous in the sight of God. Thirdly, faith does not justify because it includes, or is the root or principle of good works; not as "*fides obsequiosa*." Fourthly, it was agreed that it is only a living faith, i. e., a faith which works by love and purifies the heart, that unites the soul to Christ and secures our reconciliation with God. Fifthly, it was universally admitted that an immoral life is inconsistent with a state of grace; that those who wilfully continue in the practice of sin shall not inherit the kingdom of God. The Protestants while rejecting the Romish doctrine of subjective justification, strenuously insisted that no man is delivered from the guilt of sin who is not delivered from its reigning power; that sanctification is inseparable from justification, and that the one is just as essential as the other.

The controversy on this subject was due mainly to a misunderstanding, but in a measure also to a real difference of opinion as to the office of the law under the Gospel. Melancthon taught that repentance was the effect of the law and anterior to faith, and used forms of expression which were thought to imply that good works, or sanctification, although not the ground of justification, were nevertheless a "*causa sine qua non*" of our acceptance with God. To this Luther objected, as true sanctification is the consequence, and in no sense the condition of the sinner's justification. We are not justified because we are holy; but being justified, we are rendered holy. Agricola (born in Eisleben, 1492, died 1566), a pupil of Luther, and greatly influential as a preacher, took extreme ground against Melancthon. He not only held that repentance was not due to the operation of the law, and was the fruit of faith, but also that the law should not be taught under the Gospel, and that good works are not necessary to salvation. The believer is entirely free from the law, is not under the law but under grace; and being accepted for what Christ did, it is of little consequence what he does. Luther denounced this perversion of the Gospel, which overlooked entirely the distinction between the law as a covenant of works demanding perfect obedience as the condition of justification, and the law as the

revelation of the immutable will of God as to what rational creatures should be and do in character and conduct. He insisted that faith was the receiving of Christ, not only for the pardon of sin, but also as a saviour from its power; that its object was not merely the death, but also the obedience of Christ.**8**

The controversy was renewed not long after in another form, in consequence of the position taken by George Major, also a pupil of Luther and Melancthon, and for some years professor of theology and preacher at Wittenberg. He was accused of objecting to the proposition "we are saved by faith alone" and of teaching that good works were also necessary to salvation. This was understood as tantamount to saying that good works are necessary to justification. Major, indeed, denied the justice of this charge. He said he did not teach that good works were necessary as being meritorious, but simply as the necessary fruits of faith and part of our obedience to Christ; nevertheless, he maintained that no one could be saved without good works. How then can infants be saved? And how can this unconditional necessity of good works be consistent with Paul's doctrine that we are justified by faith without works? Whom God justifies He glorifies. Justification secures salvation; and, therefore, if faith alone, or faith without works, secures justification, it secures salvation. It is very evident that this was a dispute about words. Major admitted that the sinner was in a state of salvation the moment he believed, but held that if his faith did not produce good works it was not a saving faith. In his sermon "On the Conversion of Paul," he said: "As thou art now justified by faith alone, and hast become a child of God, and since Christ and the Holy Ghost through that faith dwell in thy heart, so are good works necessary, not to obtain salvation (which thou already hast as a matter of grace, without works, through faith alone on the Lord Jesus Christ), but to hold fast your salvation, that it be not lost, and also because if thou dost not produce good works, it is an evidence that thy faith is false and dead, a mere pretence or opinion." Amsdorf, the chief representative of the extremists in this controversy, laid down his doctrine in the following propositions: (1.) *Etsi haec oratio: bona*

opera sunt necessaria ad salutem in doctrina legis abstractivae et de idea tolerari potest, tamen multae sunt graves causae, propter quas vitanda, et fugienda est non minus, quam haec oratio: Christus est creatura. (2.) In foro justificationis haec propositio nullo modo ferenda est. (3.) In foro novae obedientiae post reconciliationem nequaquam bona opera ad salutem, sed propter alias causas necessaria sunt. (4.) Sola fides justificat in principio, medio, et fine. (5.) Bona opera non sunt necessaria ad retinendam salutem. (6.) Synonyma sunt et aequipollentia, seu termini convertibiles, justificatio et salvatio, nec ulla ratione distrahi aut possunt aut debent. (7.) Explodatur ergo ex ecclesia cothurnus papisticus propter scandala multiplicia, dissensiones innumerabiles et alias causas, de quibus Apostoli Act. xv. loquuntur."

The "Form of Concord," in which this and other controversies in the Lutheran Church were finally adjusted, took the true ground on this subject, midway between the two extreme views. It rejects the unqualified proposition that good works are necessary to salvation, as men may be saved who have no opportunity to testify to their faith by their works. On the other hand, it utterly condemns the unwarrantable declaration that good works are hurtful to salvation; which it pronounces to be pernicious and full of scandal. It teaches that "Fides vera nunquam sola est, quin caritatem et spem semper secum habeat." 9

The same doctrine was clearly taught in the Lutheran Symbols from the beginning, so that the charge made by Romanists, that Protestants divorced morality from religion, was without foundation, either in their doctrine or practice. In the "Apology for the Augsburg Confession" it is said: "Quia fides affert Spiritum Sanctum, et parit novam vitam in cordibus, necesse est, quod pariat spirituales motus in cordibus. Et qui sint illi motus, ostendit propheta, cum ait: 'Dabo legem meam in corda eorum.' Postquam igitur fidei justificati et renati sumus, incipimus Deum timere, diligere, petere, et expectare ab eo auxilium. . . . Incipimus et diligere proximos, quia corda habent spirituales et sanctos motus. Haec non possunt fieri, nisi postquam

fide justificati sumus et renati accipimus Spiritum Sanctum. . . .
Profitemur igitur, quod necesse est, inchoari in nobis et subindo
magis magisque fieri legem. Et complectimur simul utrumque
videlicet spirituales motus et externa bona opera. Falso igitur
calunmiantur nos adversarii, quod nostri non doceant bona opera,
cum ea non solum requirant, sed etiam ostendant, quomodo fieri
possint." **10**

Antinomianism.

Antinomianism has never had any hold in the churches of the Reformation. There is no logical connection between the neglect of moral duties, and the system which teaches that Christ is a Saviour as well from the power as from the penalty of sin; that faith is the act by which the soul receives and rests on Him for sanctification as well as for justification; and that such is the nature of the union with Christ by faith and indwelling of the Spirit, that no one is, or can be partaker of the benefit of his death, who is not also partaker of the power of his life; which holds to the divine authority of the Scripture which declares that without holiness no man shall see the Lord (Heb. xii. 14); and which, in the language of the great advocate of salvation by grace, warns all who call themselves Christians: "Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.) It is not the system which regards sin as so great an evil that it requires the blood of the Son of God for its expiation, and the law as so immutable that it requires the perfect righteousness of Christ for the sinner's justification, which leads to loose views of moral obligation; these are reached by the system which teaches that the demands of the law have been lowered, that they can be more than met by the imperfect obedience of fallen men, and that sin can be pardoned by priestly intervention. This is what logic and history alike teach.

§ 6. Relation of Good Works to Reward.

Romish Doctrine.

On this subject the Romanists make a distinction between works done before, and those done after regeneration. Works as to the matter of them good, when performed from mere natural conscience, have no other merit than that of congruity. They are necessarily imperfect, and constitute no claim on the justice of God. But works performed under the control of gracious principles infused in baptism, are perfect; they have therefore real merit, i. e., the merit of condignity. They give a claim for reward, not merely on the ground of the divine promise, but also on the divine justice. To him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. (Rom. iv. 4.) On this subject the Council of Trent,[11](#) says: "Si quis dixerit, hominis justificati bona opera ita esse dona Dei, ut non sint etiam bona ipsius justificati merita; aut ipsum justificatum bonis operibus, quae ab eo per Dei gratiam, et Jesu Christi meritum cujus vivum membrum est, fiunt, non vere mereri augmentum gratiae, vitam aeternam, et ipsius vitae aeternae, si tamen in gratia decesserit, consecutionem, atque etiam gloriae augmentum; anathema sit." Bellarmin[12](#) says: "Habet communis catholicorum omnium sententia, opera bona justorum vere, ac proprie esse merita, et merita non cujuscunque premii, sed ipsius vitae aeternae."

The conditions of such meritorious works, according to Bellarmin, are: (1.) That they be good in their nature. (2.) Done in obedience to God. (3.) By a man in this life. (4.) That they be voluntary. (5.) That the agent be in a state of justification and favour with God. (6.) That they be prompted by love. (7.) That some divine promise be attached to them.

Refutation of this Romish Doctrine.

1. This whole doctrine of merit is founded on the assumption that justification, their term for regeneration, removes everything of the

nature of sin from the soul; that works performed by the renewed being free from sin are perfect; that a renewed man can not only fulfil all the demands of the law, but also do more than the law requires. As these assumptions are contrary to Scripture, and to the experience of all Christians, the doctrine founded on them must be false.

2. The doctrine is inconsistent, not only with the express declarations of the word of God, but also with the whole nature and design of the Gospel. The immediate or proximate design of the plan of salvation, as the Scriptures abundantly teach, is the manifestation of the grace of God, and therefore it must be gratuitous in all its parts and provisions, to the entire exclusion of all merit. Unless salvation be of grace it is not a revelation of grace, and if of grace it is not of works.

3. The doctrine is so repugnant to the inward teachings of the Spirit, as well as to the teachings of his word, that it cannot be practically believed even by those who profess it. The children of God, in spite of their theories and their creeds, do not trust for their salvation, either in whole or in part, to what they are or to what they do; but simply and exclusively to what Christ is and has done for them. In proof of this, appeal may be made to the written or recorded experience of all the great lights of the Latin Church. If every Christian is intimately convinced that he is unholy in the sight of God; that all his best acts are polluted; and that in no one thing and at no time does he come up to the standard of perfection; it is impossible that he can believe that he merits eternal life on the ground of his own works.

4. As the doctrine of merit is opposed to the nature and design of the Gospel, and to the express declarations of Scripture that we are not justified or saved by works, but gratuitously for Christ's sake, so it is derogatory to the honour of Christ as our Saviour. He gave Himself as a ransom; he offered Himself as a sacrifice; it is by his obedience we are constituted righteous; it is, therefore, only on the

assumption that his ransom, sacrifice, and obedience are inadequate that the merit of our works can be needed or admitted. The Romanists attempt to evade the force of this objection by saying that we owe to Christ the grace or spiritual life by which we perform good works. Had He not died for our sins, God would not in baptism wash away our guilt and pollution and impart those "habits of grace" by which we are enabled to merit eternal life. This does not help the matter; for salvation remains a debt as a matter of justice on the ground of our good works. It is this which is so contrary to Scripture, to the intimate conviction of every Christian, and to the glory of Christ, to whom the whole honour of our salvation is due.

Doctrine of the older Protestant Divines.

The older theologians, in order the more effectually to refute the doctrine of merit, assumed that a work, to be meritorious, must be (1.) "Indebitum," i. e., not due. Something which we are not bound to do. (2.) Our own. (3.) Absolutely perfect. (4.) Equal, or bearing a due proportion to the recompense. (5.) And, therefore, that the recompense should be due on the ground of justice, and not merely of promise or agreement. On these conditions, all merit on the part of creatures is impossible. It is, however, clearly recognized in Scripture that a labourer is worthy of his hire. To him that worketh, says the Apostle, the reward is not reckoned of grace, but of debt. It is something due in justice. This principle also is universally recognized among men. Even on the theory of slavery, where the labourer himself his time, and strength, and all he has, are assumed to belong to his master, the servant has a claim to a proper recompense, which it would be unjust to withhold from him. And in every department of life it is recognized as a simple matter of justice, that the man who performs a stipulated work, earns his wages. The payment is not a matter of favour; it is not due simply because promised; but because it has been earned. It is a debt. So in the case of Adam, had he remained perfect, there would have been no ground in justice why he should die, or forfeit the favour of God; which favour is life.

The passage in Luke xvii. 10, is relied upon as proving that a creature can in no case perform a meritorious act, i. e., an act which lays a claim in justice for a reward. Our Lord there says, "When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.'" This does not teach that the labourer is not worthy of his hire. The passage is part of a parable in which our Lord says, that a master does not thank his servant for merely doing his duty. It does not call for gratitude. But it does not follow that it would be just to withhold the servant's wages, or to refuse to allow him to eat and drink. God is just, and being just, He rewards every man according to his works, so long as men are under the law. If not under the law, they are dealt with, not on the principles of law, but of grace.

But although Protestants deny the merit of good works, and teach that salvation is entirely gratuitous, that the remission of sins, adoption into the family of God, and the gift of the Holy Spirit are granted to the believer, as well as admission into heaven, solely on the ground of the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ; they nevertheless teach that God does reward his people for their works. Having graciously promised for Christ's sake to overlook the imperfection of their best services, they have the assurance founded on that promise that he who gives to a disciple even a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, shall in no wise lose his reward. The Scriptures also teach that the happiness or blessedness of believers in a future life, will be greater or less in proportion to their devotion to the service of Christ in this life. Those who love little, do little; and those who do little enjoy less. What a man sows that shall he also reap. As the rewards of heaven are given on the ground of the merits of Christ, and as He has a right to do what He will with his own, there would be no injustice were the thief saved on the cross as highly exalted as the Apostle Paul. But the general drift of Scripture is in favour of the doctrine that a man shall reap what he sows; that God will reward every one according to, although not on account of his works.

§ 7. *Perfectionism.*

Protestant Doctrine.

The doctrine of Lutherans and Reformed, the two great branches of the Protestant Church, is, that sanctification is never perfected in this life; that sin is not in any case entirely subdued; so that the most advanced believer has need as long as he continues in the flesh, daily to pray for the forgiveness of sins.

The question is not as to the duty of believers. All admit that we are bound to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. Nor is it a question as to the command of God; for the first, original, and universally obligatory commandment is that we should love God with all our heart and our neighbour as ourselves. Nor does the question concern the provisions of the Gospel. It is admitted that the Gospel provides all that is needed for the complete sanctification and salvation of believers. What can we need more than we have in Christ, his Spirit, his word and his ordinances? Nor does it concern the promises of God; for all rejoice in the hope, founded on the divine promise, that we shall be ultimately delivered from all sin. God has in Christ made provision for the complete salvation of his people: that is, for their entire deliverance from the penalty of the law, from the power of sin, from all sorrow, pain, and death; and not only for mere negative deliverance, but for their being transformed into the image of Christ, filled with his Spirit, and glorified by the beauty of the Lord. It is, however, too plain that, unless sanctification be an exception, no one of these promises besides that which concerns justification, is perfectly fulfilled in this life. Justification does not admit of degrees. A man either is under condemnation, or he is not. And, therefore, from the nature of the case, justification is instantaneous and complete, as soon as the sinner believes. But the question is, whether, when God promises to make his people perfectly holy, perfectly happy, and perfectly glorious, He thereby promises to make them perfect in holiness in this life? If the promises of happiness and glory are not perfectly fulfilled in this life,

why should the promise of sanctification be thus fulfilled? It is, however, a mere question of fact. All admit that God can render his people perfect before death as well as after it. The only question is, Has He promised, with regard to sanctification alone, that it shall be perfected on this side of the grave? and, Do we see cases in which the promise has been actually fulfilled? The answer given to these questions by the Church universal is in the negative. So long as the believer is in this world, he will need to pray for pardon.

The grounds of this doctrine are, --

1. The spirituality of the divine law and the immutability of its demands. It condemns as sinful any want of conformity to the standard of absolute perfection as exhibited in the Bible. Anything less than loving God constantly with all the heart, all the soul, all the mind, and all the strength, and our neighbour as ourselves, is sin.

2. The express declaration of Scripture that all men are sinners. This does not mean simply that all men have sinned, that all are guilty, but that all have sin cleaving to them. "If," declares the Apostle, "we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (1 John i. 8.) As the wise man had said before him, "There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." (Eccles. vii. 20.) And in 1 Kings viii. 46, it is said, "There is no man that sinneth not." And the Apostle James, iii. 2, says: "In many things we offend all." It is a manifest perversion of the simple grammatical meaning of the words to make a *martian* come to refer to the past. The verb is in the present tense. The truth is not in us, says the Apostle, if we say we have no sin, i. e., that we are not now polluted by sin. In the context he sets forth Christ as the "Word of Life," as having life in Himself, and as being the source of life to us. Having fellowship with Him, we have fellowship with God. But God is light, i. e., is pure, holy, and blessed; if, therefore, we walk in darkness, i. e., in ignorance and sin, we can have no fellowship with Him. But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin. If we say we have

no sin, and do not need now and at all times the cleansing power of Christ's blood, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

Argument from the General Representations of Scripture.

The declarations of Scripture, which are so abundant, that there is none righteous, no not one; that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; that no flesh living is just in the sight of God; and that every one must lay his hand upon his mouth, and his mouth in the dust in the sight of the infinitely holy God, who accuses his angels of folly, refer to all men without exception; to Jews and Gentiles; to the renewed and unrenewed; to babes in Christ and to mature Christians. All feel, and all are bound to acknowledge that they are sinners whenever they present themselves before God; all know that they need constantly the intervention of Christ, and the application of his blood, to secure fellowship with the Holy One. As portrayed in Scripture, the inward life of the people of God to the end of their course in this world, is a repetition of conversion. It is a continued turning unto God; a constant renewal of confession, repentance, and faith; a dying unto sin, and living unto righteousness. This is true of all the saints, patriarchs, prophets, and apostles of whose inward experience the Bible gives us any account.

Passages which describe the Conflict between the Flesh and the Spirit.

3. More definitely is this truth taught in those passages which describe the conflict in the believer between the flesh and the Spirit. To this reference has already been made. That the seventh chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans is an account of his own inward life at the time of writing that Epistle, has already, as it is believed, been sufficiently proved; and such has been the belief of the great body of evangelical Christians in all ages of the Church. If this be the correct interpretation of that passage, then it proves that Paul, at least, was not free from sin; that he had to contend with a law in his members, warring against the law of his mind; that he groaned constantly

under the burden of indwelling sin. At a still later period of his life, when he was just ready to be offered up, he says to the Philippians, iii. 12-14, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." This is an unmistakable declaration on the part of the Apostle that even at this late period of his life he was not yet perfect; he had not attained the end of perfect conformity to Christ, but was pressing forward, as one in a race, with all earnestness that he might reach the end of his calling. To answer this, as has been done by some distinguished advocates of perfectionism, by saying that Paul's not being perfect, is no proof that other men may not be is not very satisfactory.

The parallel passage in Galatians, v. 16-26, is addressed to Christians generally. It recognizes the fact that they are imperfectly sanctified; that in them the renewed principle, the Spirit as the source of spiritual life, is in conflict with the flesh, the remains of their corrupt nature. It exhorts them to mortify the flesh (not the body, but their corrupt nature), and to strive constantly to walk under the controlling influence of the Spirit. The characteristic difference between the unrenewed and the renewed is not that the former are entirely sinful, and the latter perfectly holy; but that the former are wholly under the control of their fallen nature, while the latter have the Spirit of God dwelling in them, which leads them to crucify the flesh, and to strive after complete conformity to the image of God. There was nothing in the character of the Galatian Christians to render this exhortation applicable to them alone. What the Scriptures teach concerning faith, repentance, and justification, is intended for all Christians; and so what is taught of sanctification suits the case of all believers. Indeed, if a man thinks himself perfect, and apprehends that he has already attained what his fellow believers are only striving for, a great part of the Bible must for him

lose its value. What use can he make of the Psalms, the vehicle through which the people of God for millenniums have poured out their hearts? How can such a man sympathize with Ezra, Nehemiah, or any of the prophets? How strange to him must be the language of Isaiah, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."

Argument from the Lord's Prayer.

4. Not only do the holy men of God throughout the Scriptures in coming into his presence, come with the confession of sin and imperfection, praying for mercy, not only for what they were but also for what they are, but our Lord has taught all his disciples whenever they address their Father in heaven to say, "Forgive us our trespasses." This injunction has ever been a stumbling block in the way of the advocates of perfection from Pelagius to the present day. It was urged by Augustine in his argument against the doctrine of his great opponent that men could be entirely free from sin in the present life. The answer given to the argument from this source has been substantially the same as that given by Pelagius. It is presented in its best form by the Rev. Richard Watson.¹³ That writer says, "(1.) That it would be absurd to suppose that any person is placed under the necessity of trespassing, in order that a general prayer designed for men in a mixed condition might retain its aptness to every particular case. (2.) That trespassing of every kind and degree is not supposed by this prayer to be continued, in order that it might be used always in the same import, or otherwise it might be pleaded against the renunciation of any trespass or transgression whatever. (3.) That this petition is still relevant to the case of the entirely sanctified and the evangelically perfect, since neither the perfection of the first man nor that of angels is in question; that is, a perfection measured by the perfect law, which in its obligation, contemplates all creatures as having sustained no injury by moral lapse, and admits, therefore, of no excuse from infirmities and mistakes of judgment; nor of any degree of obedience below that which beings created

naturally perfect, were capable of rendering. There may, however, be an entire sanctification of a being rendered naturally weak and imperfect, and so liable to mistake and infirmity, as well as to defect as to the degree of that absolute obedience and service which the law of God, never bent to human weakness, demands from all. These defects, and mistakes, and infirmities, may be quite consistent with the entire sanctification of the soul and the moral maturity of a being still naturally infirm and imperfect."

The first and second of these answers do not touch the point. No one pretends that men are placed under the necessity of sinning, "in order that" they may be able to repeat the Lord's prayer. This would indeed be absurd. The argument is this. If a man prays to be forgiven, he confesses that he is a sinner, and if a sinner, he is not free from sin or perfect. And therefore, the use of the Lord's prayer by all Christians, is an acknowledgment that no Christian in this life is perfect. The third answer which is the one principally relied upon and constantly repeated, involves a contradiction. It assumes that what is not sin requires to be forgiven. Mr. Watson says the petition, "Forgive us our trespasses," may be properly used by those who are free from sin. This is saying that sin is not sin. The argument by which this position is sustained also involves a contradiction. Our "infirmities" are sins if judged by "the perfect law"; but not if judged by "the evangelical law." As we are not to be judged by the former, but by the latter, want of conformity to the law is not sin. The only inability under which men, since the fall, labour, arises from their sinfulness, and therefore is no excuse for want of conformity to that law which it is said, and said rightly, is "never bent to human weakness."

Argument from the Experience of Christians.

5. Appeal may be made on this subject to the testimony of the Church universal. There are no forms of worship, no formulas for private devotion, in any age or part of the Church, which do not contain confession of sin and prayer for forgiveness. The whole

Christian Church with all its members prostrates itself before God, saying, "Have mercy upon us miserable sinners." If here and there one and another among this prostrate multitude refuse to bow and join in this confession, they are to be wondered at and pitied. They are, however, not to be found. Consciousness is too strong for theory, and therefore,

6. We may appeal to the conscience of every believer. He knows that he is a sinner. He never is in a state which satisfies his own conviction as to what he ought to be. He may call his deficiencies infirmities, weaknesses, and errors, and may refuse to call them sins. But this does not alter the case. Whatever they are called, it is admitted that they need God's pardoning mercy.

§ 8. *Theories of Perfectionism Pelagian Theory.*

Pelagian Theory.

The two radical principles of Pelagianism are, first, that the nature of man is uninjured by the fall, so that men are free from sin until by voluntary transgression they incur guilt. Secondly, that our natural powers, since, as well as before the fall, are fully competent to render complete obedience to the law.

From these principles Pelagius inferred, (1.) That a man (even among the heathen) might live from birth to death free from all sin, although he did not assert that any man ever had so lived. (2.) That when converted, men might, and numbers of men did, live without sin; perfectly obeying the law. (3.) That this obedience was rendered in the exercise of their ability, assisted by the grace of God.

By grace, Pelagius says that we are to understand, (1.) The goodness of God in so constituting our nature that we can completely obey the law in virtue of our free agency. (2.) The revelation, precepts, and example of Christ. (3.) The pardon of sins committed

before conversion. (4.) The moral influences of the truth and of the circumstances in which we are placed. The effect of grace thus understood, is simply to render obedience more easy.

In the Council of Carthage, A. D. 418, the Pelagians were condemned, among other things, for teaching, (1.) That the effect of grace was merely to render obedience more easy. (2.) That the declaration of the Apostle John, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us," is, as to some, a mere expression of humility. (3.) That the petition in the Lord's prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses," is not suited to the saints. They use it only as expressing the desire and necessity of others.

According to the Pelagian theory, therefore, (1.) The sin from which the believer may be perfectly free is the voluntary transgression of known law. Nothing else is of the nature of sin. (2.) The law to which perfect conformity in this life is possible, and in many cases actual, is the moral law in all its strictness. (3.) This obedience may be rendered without any supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit.

Romish Theory.

Romanists teach, (1.) That by the infusion of grace in justification as effected by or in baptism, everything of the nature of sin is removed from the soul. (2.) That good works performed in a state of grace are free from the taint of sin, and are perfect. "Si quis in quolibet bono opere justum saltem venaliter peccare dixerit anathema sit." (3.) That the law may be and often is, perfectly obeyed by the children of God in this life. (4.) That men may not only do all that the law requires, but may even go beyond its demands. (5.) Nevertheless, as there is in higher law than that by which men are to be judged, no man is entirely free from venial sins, i. e., sins which do not bring the soul under condemnation, and therefore all men in this life have need to say, "Forgive us our trespasses."

From this statement it appears,

1. That by sin from which advanced believers are said to be free, is meant only what merits condemnation, and in itself deserves the forfeiture of grace or divine favour. It is admitted that "concupiscence," or the remains of original sin, is not removed by baptism, but it is not of the nature of sin, in the sense just stated. Neither are venial sins, i. e., sins which do not forfeit grace, properly sins, if judged by the law under which believers are now placed. So far, therefore, as the negative part of perfection, or freedom from sin is concerned, the Romanists do not mean freedom from moral faults, but simply freedom from what incurs the sentence of the law. It is perfection as judged by a lower standard of judgment.

2. The law to which we are now subject, and the demands of which Romanists say are satisfied by the obedience of the saints, is not the moral law in its original strictness, but the sum of that which is due from man in his present circumstances; in other words, the demands of the law are accommodated to the condition of men in this life. This is evident, because they say that the saints obey the law so far as it is now binding, and because they admit that saints commit venial sins, which can only mean sins which, under a stricter rule of judgment, would merit condemnation.

3. As stated above, they distinguish between the law and love. The former is that which all men, and especially Christians, are bound to observe, but love is a higher principle which prompts to doing more than the law or justice demands. Consequently, the positive part of perfection, or conformity to the law, does not imply the highest degree of moral excellence of which our nature is susceptible, but only such as answers to the lower demands of the law to which we are now subject. In a passage already quoted, Bellarmine says, "Defectus charitatis, quod videlicet non faciamus 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 operatorum sit imperfecta, tamen absolute

perfecta dici potest."¹⁴ In like manner Moehler says,¹⁵ "In modern times the attempt has been made to sustain the old orthodox doctrine by assuming that the moral law makes ideal demands, which, as every other ideal, must remain unattainable. If this be true, then the man who falls short of this ideal is as little responsible, and as little deserving of punishment, as an epic poet who should fall short of the Iliad of Homer."

The Romish theory is consistent. In baptism all sin is washed away. By the infusion of grace full ability is given to do all that is required of us. Nothing can be required beyond what we are able to perform, and, therefore, the demands of the law are suited to our present state. By obedience to this modified law, we merit increased supplies of grace and eternal life.

The perfection, therefore, which Romanists insist upon is merely relative; not an entire freedom from sin, but only from such sins as merit condemnation; not holiness which is absolutely perfect, but perfect only relatively to the law under which we are now placed. It is clear that there is a radical difference between Romanists and Protestants as to the nature of sin and the limits of moral obligation. If they were to adopt our definition of sin, they would not pretend to any perfection in the present life.

The Arminian Theory.

The perfection which the Arminians teach is attainable, and which, in many cases, they say is actually attained in this life, is declared to be complete conformity to the law; including freedom from sin, and the proper exercise of all right affections and the discharge of all duties.

Episcopus defines it to be, keeping the commandments of God with a perfect fulfilment; or loving God as much as we ought to love Him, according to the requirements of the Gospel; or according to the covenant of grace. "By a perfection of degrees is meant that

highest perfection which consists in the highest exertion of human strength assisted by grace." "This perfection includes two things, (1.) A perfection proportioned to the powers of each individual; (2.) A desire of making continual progress, and of increasing one's strength more and more."

Limborch defines it as "keeping the precepts of the Gospel after such manner, and in such degree of perfection as God requires of us under the denunciation of eternal damnation." This obedience is "perfect as being correspondent to the stipulations 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 habit of sin, with all enormous and deliberate actions."¹⁶ This perfection has three degrees -- (1.) That of beginners. (2.) That of proficient. (3.) That of the truly perfect, who have subdued the habit of sin, and take delight in the practice of virtue.

Wesley¹⁷ says; "Perfection is the loving God with all the heart, mind, soul, and strength. This implies that no wrong temper, none contrary to love, remains in the soul; and that all the thoughts, words, and actions, are governed by love." Dr. Peck¹⁸ says that it is "a state of holiness which fully meets the requirements of the Gospel."

Although these definitions differ in some respects, they agree in the general idea that perfection consists in entire conformity to the law to which we are now subject, and by which we are to be judged.

The Law to which Believers are subject.

What, according to the Arminian theory, is that law? The answer to that question is given in a negative, and in a positive form. Negatively, it is said by Dr. Peck not to be the Adamic law, or the law originally given to Adam. Fletcher¹⁹ says: "With respect to the Christless law of paradisiacal 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." "Our Heavenly Father never expects of us, in our debilitated state, the obedience of immortal Adam in paradise." The positive statements are, "It is the law of Christ." "The Gospel." "The standard of character set up in the Gospel must be such as is practicable by man, fallen as he is. Coming up to this standard is what we call Christian perfection."**20**

From this it appears that the law according to which men are pronounced perfect, is not the original moral law, but the mitigated law suited to the debilitated state of man since the fall. The sin from which the believer may be entirely free, is not all moral imperfection which in itself deserves punishment, but only such delinquencies as are inconsistent with the mitigated law of the Gospel.

On this point the language of Limborch above quoted, is explicit. It is not "an absolutely sinless perfection" that is asserted. And Fletcher says, We utterly disclaim "sinless perfection" according to the paradisiacal law. Wesley says, By sin is meant (1.) Voluntary transgression of known law. In this sense all who are born of God are free from sin. (2.) It means all unholy tempers, self-will, pride, anger, sinful thoughts. From these the perfect are free. (3.) But mistakes and infirmities are not sins. "These are," indeed, "deviations from the perfect law, and consequently need atonement. Yet they are not properly sins." "A person filled with the love of God is still liable to these involuntary transgressions. Such transgressions you may call sins, if you please, I do not."**21** The question, however, is not what Wesley or any other man chooses to call sin; but what does the law of God condemn. Nothing which the law does not condemn can need expiation. If these transgressions, therefore, need atonement, they are sins in the sight of God. Our refusing to recognize them as such does not alter their nature, or remove their guilt.

According to the Arminian system, especially as held by the Wesleyans, this perfection is not due to the native ability, or free will

of man, but to the grace of God, or supernatural influence of the Spirit. Perfection is a matter of grace, (1.) Because it is solely on account of the work of Christ that God lowers the demands of the law, and accepts as perfect the obedience which the milder law of the Gospel demands. (2.) Because the ability to render this obedience is due to the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit. (3.) Because believers constantly need the intercession of Christ as our High Priest, to secure them from condemnation for involuntary transgressions, which, judged by the law, would incur its penalty.

Oberlin Theory.

This theory is so called because its prominent advocates are the officers of the Oberlin University in Ohio. President Mahan²² says, perfection in holiness implies a full and perfect discharge of our entire duty; of all existing obligations in respect of God and all other beings. It is loving God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength. It implies the entire absence of selfishness and the perpetual presence and all pervading influence of pure and perfect love.

Professor Finney says: "By entire sanctification, I understand the consecration of the whole being to God. In other words, it is the state of devotedness to God and his service required by the moral law. The law is perfect. It requires just what is right, all that is right, and nothing more. Nothing more nor less can possibly be perfection or entire sanctification than obedience to the law. Obedience to the law of God in an infant, a man, an angel, and in God himself, is perfection in each of them. And nothing can possibly be perfection in any being short of this; nor can there possibly be anything above it."²³

The law which now binds men and to which they are bound to be perfectly conformed, is the original moral law given to Adam. But that law demands nothing more and nothing less than what every man in his inward state and outward circumstances is able to render. The law meets man at every step of his ascending or descending

progress. The more grace, knowledge, or strength he has, the more does the law demand. On the other hand, the less of knowledge, culture, moral susceptibility, or strength he possesses, the less does the law require of him.

President Mahan says, Perfection does not imply that we love God as the saints do in heaven, but merely that we love Him as far as practicable with our present powers.

Professor Fiuney says, The law does not require that we should love God as we might do, had we always improved our time, or had we never sinned.. It does not suppose that our powers are in a perfect state. The service required is regulated by our ability.

The principle of this perfect obedience is our own natural ability. A free moral agent must be able to be and to do all that the law can justly demand. Moral ability, natural ability, gracious ability, are distinctions which Professor Finney pronounces perfectly nonsensical. "It is," he says, "a first truth of reason that moral obligation implies the possession of every kind of ability which is required to render the required act possible."**24**

The Oberlin theory of perfection is founded on the following principles: --

1. Holiness consists in disinterested benevolence, i. e., a perfect willingness that God should do whatever the highest good of the universe demands. A man either has, or has not, this willingness. If he has, he has all that is required of him. He is perfect. If he has not this willngness he is in rebellion against God. Therefore it is said, "Perfection, as implied in the action of our voluntary powers in full harmony with our present convictions of duty is an irreversible condition of eternal life."**25**

2. There is no sin but in the voluntary transgression of known law.

3. There is no moral character in anything but generic volitions, or those purposes which terminate on an ultimate end. There is no moral character in feeling, and much less in states of mind not determined by the will. When a man's purpose is to promote the happiness of the universe he is perfectly holy; when it is anything else, he is perfectly sinful.

4. Every man, in virtue of being a free agent, has plenary ability to fulfil all his obligations. This principle, though mentioned last, is the root of the whole system.

The Relation between these Theories of Perfection.

The Pelagian and the Oberlin theories agree as to their views of the nature of sin; the ability of man; and the extent of the obligation of the law.

They differ as to their views of the nature of virtue or holiness. The Pelagian system does not assume that disinterested benevolence, or the purpose to promote the highest good of the universe, is the sum of all virtue; i. e., it does not put the universe in the place of God, as that to which our allegiance is due. They differ also in that, while the Oberlin divines maintain the plenary ability of man, they give more importance to the work of the Holy Spirit; and in that, it is generally admitted that although men have the ability to do their whole duty, yet that they will not exert it aright unless influenced by the grace of God.

The Romish and Arminian theories agree, (1.) In that both teach that the law to which we are bound to be conformed is not "ideal excellence;" not the Adamic law; not the moral law in its original strictness; but a milder law suited to our condition since the fall. (2.) That by freedom from sin is not meant freedom from what the law in its strictness condemns, and what in its nature needs expiation and pardon, but from everything which the milder law, "the law of Christ," condemns. (3.) They agree in denying to men since the fall

ability perfectly to keep the commandments of God, but attribute the ability and disposition to obey to the grace of God; or the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit.

They differ as to the mode in which this grace is communicated, in that the Romanists say that it is only through the sacraments, whereas Arminians say that sufficient grace is given to all men, which, if duly improved, secures such larger measures of grace as will enable the believer to become perfect. They differ also as to the nature of good works in so far as Romanists include under that category many things not commanded in the Scriptures; and as they teach the possibility of performing works of supererogation, which the Arminians deny. The Romanists also teach that good works merit eternal life, which evangelical Arminians do not.

These theories, however, all agree in teaching that the law of God has been lowered in so far that its demands are satisfied by a less degree of obedience than was required of Adam, or of man in his normal state; and therefore in calling that perfection which in fact is not perfection, either in the sight of God or of an enlightened conscience. It is a contradiction to say that a man is perfect whose acts and shortcomings need expiation and the pardoning mercy of God.

It may be safely assumed that no man living has ever seen a fellow-man whom, even in the imperfect light in which a man reveals himself to his fellows, he deems perfect. And no sound minded man can regard himself as perfect, unless he lowers the standard of judgment to suit his case. And here lies one of the special dangers of the whole system. If the law of God can be relaxed in its demands to suit the state of its subjects, then there is no limit to be assigned to its condescension. Thus perfectionism has sometimes, although not among the Methodists, lapsed into antinomianism.

Endnotes

1. VI. 21; Hase, *Libri Symbolici*, 3d edit. Leipzig, 1846, p. 723.
2. VI. 7; *Ibid.* p. 719.
3. *Institutio*, III. xiv. 9; edit. Berlin, 1834, part ii. p. 37.
4. *De Justificatione*, IV. xvii; *Disputationes*, edit. Paris, 1608, vol. iv. p. 933, b.
5. See Chemnitz *Examen, De Bonis Operibus*, III. edit. Frankfort, 1574, part i. p. 209, a.
6. Mohler, *Symbolik*, 6th edit. Mainz, 1843, p. 216.
7. Bellarmin, *De Membris Ecclesiae Militantis*, lib. II. *de Monachis*, cap. 7, 8; *Disputationes*, edit. Paris, 1608, vol. ii. pp. 363-365.
8. See Dorner, *Geschichte der protestantischen Theologie*, Munich, 1867, pp. 336-344.
9. *Epitome*, III. xi.; Hase, *Libri Symbolici*, 3d edit. 1846, p. 586.
10. III. iv., v., xv.; Hase, pp. 83, 85.
11. Sess. vi. canon 32; Streitwolf, *Libri Symbolici*, Gottingen, 1846, vol. i. p. 37.
12. *De Justificatione*, v. i.; *Disputationes*, edit. Paris, 1608, vol. iv. p. 949, a.
13. *Theological Institutes*, II. xxix.; edit. New York, 1832, p. 545.
14. *De Justificatione*, IV. xvii.; *Disputationes*, edit. Paris, 1608, vol. iv. p. 933, b.
15. *Symbolik*, 6th edit. Mainz, 1843, p. 216.
16. *Theologia Christiana*, v. lxxix. 2, 8, 14; edit. Amsterdam, 1715, pp. 658, a, 659, b, 661, a.
17. *Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, p. 43.
18. *Christian Perfection*, New York, 1843, p. 292.
19. See above, p. 192.
20. Peck, *Christian Perfection*, p. 294.
21. *Plain Account*, pp. 62-67.
22. *Christian Perfection*, p. 7.
23. *Oberlin Evangelist*, vol. ii. p. 1.
24. *Sermons*, vol. iv. No. 18.
25. *Oberlin Quarterly Review*, May 1846, p. 468.