

# The Provincial Wesleyan.

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## Perfect in Love.

The extent to which argument and persuasion are engaged on the subject of the higher Christian life, is suggested by the mere enumeration of the late works on that subject, given below. They hold somewhat diverse views as to the mode and possibly as to the state of this grace. Yet they all point to one end, and like treatises upon a debated dogma of faith or science, at least show the interest that topics create, and the fact that in its centre somewhere is found a truth that the Church believes in, seeks for, and that some of its members have experienced. The works mentioned below are all but one from Methodist pens, and this proportion is about the usual ratio of such compositions, showing the far greater interest and experience of the grace existing in our own denomination than as yet possesses other churches. Yet it should also be said that not a few of its teachers and professors are found even in high places in other churches. A synopsis of these works would lead to the only point of difference among Methodists, which is not so much as to the grace itself, as to the mode of its acquisition. These books, as do all our literature teach the great Bible doctrine of living in grace, by the power of the Holy Spirit, without condemnation. The experience of the eighth of Romans is the profession of faith of every Methodist hymn, text book, and living member. The earnestness of loving God with all the heart, is one of the first and dearest state of the redeemed soul. Mr. Wesley and his associates revived several marked features of doctrine and experience in the Christian Church. The trammels of Calvinism had forbidden the most loving and devout disciple from asserting, or even believing his conversion for if he should, it would prove that he was not one of the elect, and had never been in the state of grace. Therefore he must only say, "I hope I have a hope." The Methodist Church with rare unanimity, stood on the ground of assurance of faith. They answered back the declaration, that such assertions were arrogant and deceptive, by the most exultant hymns and hallelujahs. How their acclamations ring—

"We who in Christ believe,  
That He for us hath died,  
And that He has risen again,  
And that He will come again,  
To judge the living and the dead,  
And that He will be with us  
Forever, ever, ever,  
Till we are brought to His  
Father's throne,  
And that He will be with us  
Forever, ever, ever,  
Till we are brought to His  
Father's throne,  
And that He will be with us  
Forever, ever, ever,  
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So that rapturous "Arie, my soul, arise,  
With its concluding verse, "My God is reconciled," alike testifies to the ecstasy, boldness, and fullness of this new life. Charles Wesley's hymns are full of it, and by this ecstatic experience Methodism has done more than by any other of its agencies, to grow to its present height. This conceded point gained, the next step inevitably appears. Can one live without condemnation? He enters into a state where he can say, "Now there is no condemnation." Can he abide in it? What is it to continue in it? Did the Apostles abide in it? Did ever any abide in it? In many ways this query propounds itself to every believing soul. With Wordsworth, he says—

"I feel the weight of anxious desires,  
Which hope to more than ever change their name,  
I long for a repose which never is the same."  
He longs for a perpetual calm of soul, for a peace that continually like a river, flows right against that which ever like the waves of the sea. There is no doubt of the twofold fact, the possible ecstasy of early experience, and the sense of imperfection in life that seems and may be an imperfection of love. The soul gets entangled again in the yoke of bondage. It feels sinful yearnings and yieldings. It loses its relish for holy things. It finds the way of grace and nature contrary, and trends the latter with the loss of peace and purity. Its love grows cold. Such is to often the Christian's experience.

Is there a state in which the soul goes not down? Is there a love that abides full and supreme under all circumstances? Can the child of God love God with all his heart? Does one ever do so? These questions Methodist theology and experience answer in the affirmative. With unquestioned unanimity they assert that every redeemed soul can, and should, and that many a redeemed soul does, permanently abide in this fullness of love. They are careful to say that this perfection of love is not perfection of life. As the wife's love for her husband, and the husband's for his wife, as the parent for the child, and the child for his parent may be perfect and perpetual, without their lives perfectly corresponding to this fullness of passion, with marked defects even in this life, so can the Christian love his Lord with all his heart, while all his acts may not correspond to this emotion. Wesley carefully guarded his views on this point from the Antinomianism that sprung up then, and that has since reared its head in our day, in the Nazarene revival itself, even in our day, it is taken the ground that entire sanctification is the duty of every believer, and is attained by growth in grace. It examines Mr. Wesley's philosophy of the mind, and shows that modern discriminations did not then exist, and that a clearer nomenclature as to the difference between the will and the affections would have removed some of the obscurity which rests upon his treatment of this subject. It also shows how great were the fluctuations of his own mind on the dogmatic statement of this grace, though we think, he hardly conceived sufficiently his unity in his later writings, and his firm adherence to the doctrine of Christian Perfection, as he often writes in an especially valuable. The tract urges the higher, and the highest life, proclaims its possibility and blessedness, and only differs with others as to the process of attainment.

From these works we take encouragement. The Church has never yet, as a whole, subdued herself. She can never subdue the world till she has subdued herself world-loving, carnal-minded, half-hearted, half-believing professors. She has to many who simply employ her as a passport to Paradise, without seeking or enjoying her work and power; who go from her others to bite and devour one another, who make money, and hoard it for selfish lusts; who

advanced stage of its existence, when it ought to be reposing from the conquest of the world, the Church listens to an account of its early triumphs, as if they were meant only for wonder and not for imitation; as if they pertook too much of the romance of benevolence to be again attempted. Now, when it ought to be holding the world in frown, as if it barely occupying a few western provinces, as if by satisfaction, and has to begin its conflicts again. And, we repeat, the only adequate explanation of this appalling fact, lies in the selfishness of the Church, in its selfishness, the sin of the world, has become the prevailing sin of the Church.

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All down the Christian centuries, covetousness has been the chief barrier of Christ's cause; the one great and only insurmountable obstacle in the way of the world's evangelization. This world will never be converted until Christian nations, imitating the example of the wise men from the East, shall lay their gold at Jesus' feet. Prophecy is full of this idea. Whenever she takes her harp to hymn the glories of Messiah's reign, the congregation of the world's wealth forms a prominent strain in the lofty anthem. "To him shall be given of the gold of Sheba." "The merchandise of Tyre shall be holiness and a dropping of incense. It shall not be treasured or laid up." "Surely the Isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first to bring to me from afar, their silver and their gold with them, and the name of the Lord thy God." "Kings shall bring presents unto him." "They shall bring gold and incense."

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In a recent article on our Relations to Money, we inquired into the nature of that comprehensive sin which the Bible denounces as "the root of all evil." We saw that it is not possession in the hands, but a passion of the heart; so that its existence in any specific case cannot be argued from the single fact of great wealth; nor its absence from the single fact of utter poverty. We also brought against this arch criminal a general indictment as the prolific parent of all kinds of sin. It requires that we substantiate this charge by a few specific instances.

Before proceeding, however, we must close up a loop-hole through which some unscrupulous consciences are wont to escape the force of such considerations as we are about to present. Covetousness is not synonymous with avarice. It includes avarice, and much more. Many an intensely selfish man misunderstands himself because he is not a miser. It was a man who proposed to bestow his goods freely on himself, to whom a voice from heaven said, "Thou fool! The prodigal is brother to the miser. Both are ever grasping after more; the one after more gold, the other after more of those supposed pleasures which gold can buy. Sillyst says of Palestine: "He was covetous after other men's wealth, while he squandered his own." The world is full of such Castles. They must be covetous that they may be prodigal. With one hand they are ever reaching out after treasures, and with the other bestowing that treasure on the gratification of their own selfish lusts. They may lavish their abundance on themselves with no such taste as to be positively extravagant, and even do good; and yet the idea which lies at the foundation of their lives may be the same as that on which the ill-favored miser builds—intense, unrelieved selfishness.

Let us take a rapid glance at the effects of covetousness upon the individual, the Church, and the State.  
To the soul which harbors it, this is a most narrowing and constricting passion. It is the bondage of the heart. It exalts position upon all its various virtues, so that no one among them can have a normal growth in its presence, and all have their shrivel and die. It warps the judgment, and dulls the ear of conscience to the plainest demands of duty. It is the most irredeemable of all vices; strengthening with advancing years, until it obtains complete mastery of the soul.  
All down the Christian centuries, covetousness has been the chief barrier of Christ's cause; the one great and only insurmountable obstacle in the way of the world's evangelization. This world will never be converted until Christian nations, imitating the example of the wise men from the East, shall lay their gold at Jesus' feet. Prophecy is full of this idea. Whenever she takes her harp to hymn the glories of Messiah's reign, the congregation of the world's wealth forms a prominent strain in the lofty anthem. "To him shall be given of the gold of Sheba." "The merchandise of Tyre shall be holiness and a dropping of incense. It shall not be treasured or laid up." "Surely the Isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first to bring to me from afar, their silver and their gold with them, and the name of the Lord thy God." "Kings shall bring presents unto him." "They shall bring gold and incense."

Dr. John Harris, in his admirable treatise on "Mammon," utters a sentiment which ought to be read and re-read, and pondered and prayed over, by every disciple of Jesus. He says, "We repeat the momentous inquiry, and we would repeat it slowly, solemnly, and with a desire to receive the full impression of the only answer which can be given to it. What has prevented the Gospel from fulfilling its first promise, and completely taking effect? What has hindered it from filling every heart, every province, the entire mass of humanity, with the one spirit of divine benevolence; why, on the contrary, has the Gospel, the great instrument of Divine love, been threatened, age after age, with failure? It must be attributed solely to the treachery of those who have had the administration of it—to the selfishness of the Church. No element essential to success has been left out of its arrangements; all those elements have always been in the possession of the Church; no new form of religion has arisen in the world; no antagonist has appeared, through which the Gospel did not encounter and subdue in its first onset; yet at this

advanced stage of its existence, when it ought to be reposing from the conquest of the world, the Church listens to an account of its early triumphs, as if they were meant only for wonder and not for imitation; as if they pertook too much of the romance of benevolence to be again attempted. Now, when it ought to be holding the world in frown, as if it barely occupying a few western provinces, as if by satisfaction, and has to begin its conflicts again. And, we repeat, the only adequate explanation of this appalling fact, lies in the selfishness of the Church, in its selfishness, the sin of the world, has become the prevailing sin of the Church.

Covetousness was the first sin of the Jewish Church in Canaan; and the first sin of the Christian Church was the selfishness of the sinners. Rev. Mr. Mangan's definition of "Selfishness" (*Ibid.*, p. 184), as "not only a deliverance from moral evil, but also an endowment with spiritual gifts," is the profession of every Methodist faith, and the earnest appeal of every Methodist, and the earnest appeal of every Methodist teacher. Rev. Mr. McDonald's excellent advice to those who enjoy the grace (*Ibid.*, p. 262-267), is just the advice every new-born Christian needs; as well as every true-born Christian, whatever hour he enters this emancipated fullness.

All these efforts will, therefore, we firmly believe, do good. If our brethren who dwell in the liberty, will work with those whose light, but not love, may be less, in the joint effort to bring all the Church to the heights of perfect consecration and love, and to bring poor sinners to the blessed liberty of the Gospel of Christ; we shall see an outpouring of God's Spirit, increase of grace, of salvation, and of power, such as the Church has never yet known. We God grant it, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.—*Edw. H. Hall.*

**Note by the Book-Steward.**  
The two principal works referred to in the foregoing article, viz. Dr. Foster's and Mr. Boardman's are kept for sale at the Halifax Wesleyan Book Store; and any of the others can be ordered by mail from the same source.

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