

CHRISTIAN

PERFECTION

The Ordination Sermon at the Montreal Conference,
Smith's Falls, June 22nd, 1895.

"TILL WE ALL COME IN THE UNITY OF THE FAITH, AND OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE SON
OF GOD, UNTO A PERFECT MAN, UNTO THE MEASURE OF THE STATURE
OF THE FULNESS OF CHRIST."—Ephes. iv., 13.

BY THE REV. E. B. RYCKMAN, M.A., D.D.

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This text, and the passage in which it occurs, speak of Christian growth, from its very beginning to its consummation—from the first least enlightenment of the Holy Spirit which results in conviction of sin, on through a genuine repentance wrought by the same Spirit, the forgiveness of sins, the renewal of the heart by the transforming power of the Holy Ghost, the sanctification of the nature by the same power, preservation and guidance all along the pathway of life, a victorious death, and glorification in the presence of God. It is my purpose to call your attention to two or three stages of this growth. I desire to say a word on what we are accustomed to call "Entire Sanctification."

The Montreal Conference, in some parts of it, has been, and is now, disturbed by certain irregular and undesirable movements. It has been affirmed that the ministers do not teach the right doctrine on the subject of Scriptural holiness, and that they persecute those who do. I speak in the name of God, and in the interest of truth and justice and honor. Surely we are not to be assailed and put to the worst on what, as Methodists, we have been honored to regard, under God, as our special trust and mission, that is, "to spread Scriptural holiness throughout the land." Surely, in calm deliberation one with another, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we shall be able to be of one mind on this question, and go forth, with one clear and distinct voice to the magnifying of the grace of God and the discomfiture of gainsayers. And permit me most humbly to say that I regard this ONE MIND AND ONE VOICE as of the utmost importance. I may be the feeblest and most unworthy to lead in this deliberation, and it may be unfortunate that the circumstances make it necessary that the discussion this hour should be entirely in my hand, but let me have the sympathies and prayers of all the people, and more prayers than criticisms on the part of the preachers. Do not lie at the catch, brethren, and take me up for a word. I may not employ phrases in definition and description in precisely the same sense as you, but do not listen with a captious ear; let us try to understand each other, and we shall find ourselves in delightful harmony, and God, even our own God shall abundantly bless us.

St. Paul tells us in this passage that the whole system of Gospel agencies is for the perfecting of the saints, that is, the holy ones, for that is what the word "saints" means, and the phrase covers all possible degrees of holiness, from the least beginning of Christian life to the perfection of Heaven. He tells us that the perfecting process is not to stop this side of entire Christlikeness, for we are to grow until we become altogether like Him, our Head and Pattern. The perfection of which this text speaks is not, therefore, realizable in this world. Our growth is a continuous process covering the whole of Christian life, a progressive work carried on steadily in the soul, from the time of our first turning to God

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