



You will know them by their fruits." Mt. 7:16

From: Lessons for Seekers of Holiness

By H. A. Baldwin

19. CONFLICTS OF THE ENTIRELY SANCTIFIED

"To retain perfect purity," says James Caughey, "requires a continual acting of faith upon the leading promises of the gospel."

Jesus said, "Have faith in God." Isaiah says, "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established (Isa. 7:9). Paul says, "To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God," etc. (1 Thes. 3:13). "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith" (Col. 2:6, 7). "Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. --- For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end" (Heb. 3: 1-14). "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering for he is faithful that promised. --- Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward" (Heb.10:23,35).

Peter brings out the same general thought when he says, "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you" (1 Pet. 5: 10). After the experience of Christian perfection is received, according to Peter's instructions, the next necessary step is to be established. This is necessary in any religious experience, and is generally brought about through trials and accusations that, at times, are terrible; but, little by little, the soul catches the idea that this is the way it must be established, and becomes more and more firmly fixed on the Rock of Ages.

When your soul is really cleansed, you must not think the battle ended. It has just commenced in earnest, and you are now in a condition to get into the thickest of the fight; and, sooner or later, God will put you there.

You are now in a new country, and the first thing to do is to get your bearings; that is, find out your surroundings, your new relation to yourself, the enemy and God; find out your new condition and its importance in your life; find out the new duties and your relation to them. It is a strange land to you, and you are not as capable of forming judgments about it from what you have heard as you are of forming judgments of China or the jungles of Africa from reading books. The only way to know spiritual things is to "taste and see." *(the author is trying to say that there is a significant learning curve: although you now enjoy a better state of grace, your old habits, relationships and beliefs remain -and these will often be greatly out of harmony with your new state. This requires a time of adjustment, but after this your inward life becomes as smooth as silk, even though the outward challenges you take on will likely be much greater than before. Earnest Seeker)*

The first thing for you to do is to throw away any and all your preconceived notions concerning the experience, and determine to learn all the lessons God has to teach you. It is quite likely that the unlearning will be a more severe process than the learning, but you

can make it easier and cut the work much shorter if you will, right away, thoroughly divest yourself of all past ideas and put your ignorant soul like blank paper in the hands of God to be filled out as he pleases. No matter how orthodox you may have been, you will be surprised at the change God will make relative to your past ideas concerning genuine spiritual experience.

One of the most essential characteristics of holiness is teachableness, and you must keep yourself in a teachable attitude if you expect to grow in grace, or to even retain the grace you already have. You do not know all there is to learn even after you are cleansed; and if you are sanctified you were never as willing to listen as now. You can learn from the humblest saint, or from a little child.

You will in the first place, need to know something about the conflicts with which you will meet in order that you may be prepared when they do come the more easily to overcome them. You cannot go to heaven on flowery beds of ease any more now than before you were cleansed.

No doubt a great many have been wholly sanctified, but, because of improper teaching, or from failure to discern the wiles of the devil, have made shipwreck of faith, who might have been spared much trouble and saved to the cause of God, had they been properly instructed.

In our anxiety to tell the truth we should not be betrayed into holding people to a closer line than the Spirit does. Nor, on the other hand, should we make too much allowance where God would tighten the lines. The claim we make for sanctification is that it delivers the soul from every sinful temper, and renews it in the moral image of God. Fletcher says,

Some people aim at Christian perfection; but mistaking it for angelic perfection they shoot above the mark, and miss it, and then angrily give up their hopes. Others place the mark as much too low; hence it is that you hear them profess to have attained Christian perfection, when they have not so much as attained the mental serenity of a philosopher, or the candor of a good-natured, conscientious heathen.

Wrong doctrine is a fruitful source of vacillation in some people's experiences, another is just as true when they underestimate that experience as when they overestimate it. Underestimation will cause looseness, and overestimation will cause perplexity and uncertainty that will eventually confuse and overthrow. So, to the best of our ability, we should place the experience just where God would have us, and, as the wise man says, not try to "be righteous overmuch," for there is danger on that line the same as in "overmuch wickedness."

I. Holiness does not save one from infirmities. An infirmity is defined as "a physical, mental, or moral weakness or flaw" (Standard Dictionary). It is found in a man's natural involuntary condition. In a holy person it is not sin, and is perfectly consistent with the highest degree of Christian perfection. Fletcher clearly draws the line between sin and infirmities in the following quotation:

An infirmity is a breach of Adam's law of paradisiacal perfection, which our covenant God does not require of us now: and (evangelically speaking) a sin is a breach of Christ's evangelical law of Christian perfection; a perfection this, which God requires of all Christian believers. An infirmity (considering it with the error which it occasions) is consistent with pure love to God and man: but a sin is inconsistent with that love. An infirmity is free from guile, and has its root in our animal frame: but a sin is attended with guile, and has its root in our moral frame, springing either from the habitual corruption of our hearts, or from the momentary perversion of our tempers. An infirmity

unavoidably results from our unhappy circumstances and from the necessary infelicities (troubles) of our present state: but a sin flows from the avoidable and perverse choice of our own will. An infirmity has its foundation in an involuntary lack of power; and a sin in a willful abuse of the present light and power we have. The one arises from involuntary weakness, and is always accompanied by good intentions; intentions unmixed with any bad design, or wicked prejudice: but the other has its source in a voluntary perverseness and presumption, and is always accompanied with intentions altogether bad; or at best, with good intentions founded on wicked prejudices.

Instead of these infirmities being sin, and as a consequence a hindrance to grace, they may, if taken rightly, be made a means of grace. Not that they would be so if voluntarily indulged, for then they cease to be innocent infirmities and become willful transgressions. The point at which infirmities become sins is where the person voluntarily *indulges them* for some reason that would not pass before God, or where he refuses correction and instruction. He may excuse himself by saying it is his way, and that if he did not do that way he would not be natural; but if down in his heart he finds a secret glorying in such actions, and also in the fact that he cannot do otherwise, he is guilty of sin. Yes, Paul gloried in his infirmities, but not to such an extent that he voluntarily surrendered himself to the weakest points in his nature; but his glorying was in the fact that he could so take advantage of his involuntary weaknesses that what would otherwise have been his ruin should become a means of his furtherance in God. Hence he said, "All things work together for good to them that love the Lord."

Suppose one because of his lack of judgment or foresight makes a mistake. If instead of being glad he has made the mistake, he feels sorry for it, he will gain ground. The mistake costs him no loss of ground unless he repines (frets or complains) over it to an unnecessary degree, but the humiliation has brought him lower before God, and, in addition to this, he has learned a new lesson, and so has increased his knowledge. The glorying comes, not in the action itself, but in the humiliation that of necessity follows the contemplation of that action; not in the fact that there are remaining weaknesses, but in the fact that a candid survey of these weaknesses, and especially when the light of God shines on them, causes the casting away of any temptations to pride and humbles the soul more deeply before God. *And the clean soul is thankful for anything that will more effectually humble it, and keep pride at the greatest distance.* Without infirmities we might get to considering ourselves almost divine, and so be lifted up with pride. Wesley was of the opinion that those things which we cannot help are for our good. He says, "Rather let us pray, both with the spirit and with the understanding, that all these things may work together for our good: that we may suffer all the infirmities of our nature, all the interruptions of men, all the assaults and suggestions of evil spirits, and in all be 'more than conquerors.'"

It may be well to consider what some of the infirmities are from which we are not delivered in the experience of entire sanctification.

1. Physical infirmities. Under this topic comes all those bodily tendencies variously called passions, appetites, or desires. Not that these, could they be restored to normal conditions, would be called infirmities any more than our physical form could be so called; but they are so depraved by the fall that they seldom, or never, manifest normal conditions and activities. They are either too weak or too strong, in some directions scarcely stirring at all, while in others they become inordinate (out of God's order/unnatural). This is seen in an aggravated form in that person who becomes so addicted to the use of tobacco that he will neglect the natural use of his appetite and do without food for the sake of his pet indulgence; or the person who will almost starve in order to obtain intoxicants to satisfy his inordinate desire in that direction. While these

are only illustrations, but, carried to such an extent, are inconsistent with sanctification (and with justification as well, for that matter), yet they show, not the degree, but the manner in which the natural appetites of even a holy person are warped, and at times he may innocently go too far in some direction, and, when he sees his mistake, be forced to humble himself before God. Yet if he keeps clear, he will "keep his body under," and "will not be brought under the power of" even innocent things to such an extent that his transgression will become willful and chronic. On the other hand he will, by prayer and persistent self-denial, safeguard and thus strengthen himself at that point. As this brings in the idea of self-denial, and as self-denial has to do with the very part of our being with which we are now dealing, it may be well to outline the way that should be taken by holy people.

Some people, and good people, too, seem to think that since a thing is lawful, and not positively forbidden in the Bible, there is no such thing as self-indulgence in connection with that thing. And since this gratification is their privilege, and is lawful, that they can please themselves in that thing as much as they desire; and if any one suggests that this is dwarfing to grace, they are ready, with the "law and the testimony," to uphold themselves in their practices. They seem to forget that Paul said, "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient [margin, profitable]: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any" (1 Cor. 6:12).

But there is a point at which the thing that otherwise would be right becomes injurious to the soul. There are different things to be taken into consideration before passing an opinion as to the expediency or non-expediency of any course of action.

Self-indulgence is defined as the "act or habit of indulging or gratifying one's own inclinations, tastes, passions, and appetites, especially when carried to excess or at the expense of the rights of others" (Standard Dictionary). Then self-indulgence is the act of gratifying not only the passions, and appetites, which have their rise in the peculiar demands of the physical man; but any sinful bent of the heart; such as evil speaking, jealousy, envy, etc. Now it is clear that if the heart is made clean, all this "sinful bent" (sinful propensity) is taken away, and where it does not remain there is no desire for indulgence. Consequently, if a person has to work hard to keep from jealousy, evil speaking, etc., there is a strong suspicion that the heart is not made clean. Paul says, "Put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another" (Col. 3:8-9). He makes no allowance for any of these things; they are purely spiritual wickedness and have no manner of excuse for existence in the peculiar physical, mental or moral makeup of a sanctified man. Their indulgence is always sinful.

In the unsanctified heart there are sinful tendencies (as covetousness, lust, etc.), which correspond with these natural appetites, passions and desires and use them as channels through which to operate. Now, when the heart is cleansed, these sinful tendencies are removed, and there remains only the natural appetites, desires, etc., which all men have in common.

But there are other things which stand on a different footing; and, since they use the body and mind as channels through which to operate, they will never be removed till this corruptible shall have put on incorruption. Paul seems to recognize this difference, and says: "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence (lust) and covetousness which is idolatry" (Col. 3:5). Here, in pointing out the danger to the Colossians, instead of using a mild form of speech, which would so faintly express his antipathy for self-indulgence, he shows what their natural tendencies (such as sexual desire, desire for money, etc.) would grow into if not mortified.

Though the soul is purified and restored to its original holiness, as far as the quality of the renewed nature is concerned, yet the natural desires remain to some extent warped, just as our minds are still subject to follies; and these desires must be kept under or they will make excessive demands and ruin the soul. The tendency of the natural desires is always toward excess, unless firmly held in check by grace. Quarles says, "My passions eagle-eyed, my judgment blind." If we listen to the clamorings of passion, the warning voice of judgment will soon be lost.

This brings the idea of self-denial and self-indulgence down to denial, or gratification of the natural desires, passions, appetites and inclinations, such as desire for pleasing food, pleasant surroundings, congenial companionship, the attractions of the sexes, sleep, rest, etc., and attraction toward anything is in proportion to its ability to produce mental or physical pleasure.

A sanctified person may become too self-indulgent — partaking too freely of those things which produce physical or mental pleasure; and, somewhere along this line one may cross the boundary of the lawful and enter the realm of the inordinate, thus becoming unclean again. Consequently the only safe plan is to swing as far on the line of self-denial as is consistent with physical and spiritual well-being. Keep the body under, even at the expense of physical comfort if necessary; and, by so doing, the soul will thrive. Godly self-denial produces great enjoyment at the last.

We do not for a moment think that it is necessary for a sanctified person to be satisfied with the poorest things of life, as poor clothing, poor food, poor houses, etc., unless one's circumstances are such that he cannot afford any better. If in following the way of duty, the splinters have to be scraped from the bottom of the flour barrel, and one patch is added to another, or a mansion is changed for a dugout, or for a log cabin in the wilderness, it is a fine thing to have at least grace enough to endure it, and that uncomplainingly, for the sake of Jesus, who had not where to lay his head, and had but five *barley* loaves and two small fishes to set before a multitude of about ten thousand.

Self-denial does not mean to live in rags, dirt, filth, slovenliness and indifference; such wretchedness is contrary to the spirit of a clean, wide-awake gospel. But there is such a thing as self-denial. It is defined as "the act or power of denying one's self gratification, as for the good of some one else or for self-mortification; forbearance, or refusal to gratify one's own feelings, inclinations, or desires; passive self-sacrifice. (Standard Dictionary).

Self-denial is not Greek stoicism nor monastic asceticism, but simply Christian self-mortification, that places the feelings of others before one's own, and the glory of God before one's own inclinations and desires; and, where the good of others or the glory of God run counter to all we should like to do, to put our own pleasures in the background and live for others; and also where present pleasure or gratification excludes to any degree any possibility of future good or spiritual profit, to deny himself the present gratification for the sake of the future benefit. Even self-love properly governed would lead one to do that.

There are five points to be considered by a holy person before entering upon the enjoyment of any pleasure of the senses:

(1) Is it lawful? That is, do the laws of God and man uphold me in what I am about to do? If so, it is well. But we must remember that lawful things must be "used" and not "abused," and beware lest, in using the privileges we have under human law, and those which we flatter ourselves that divine law allows, we should cross the boundary of things consistent with spiritual health and enter the malarial quagmire of sin.

(2) The second point to be considered is the physical condition of the person. That which would be beneficial to one person, might be positively injurious to another. Some require a warm and some a cooler climate; some a low and some a higher altitude; some regard pork as not injurious, but beneficial to their health, while a little lard cooked in the victuals of others will cause nausea. Some aged persons have been inveterate tobacco users and liquor drinkers all their lives. It would be of no use to lecture them on the physical injuries of tobacco and liquor since their very existence would seem to make you a liar; others, however, would be permanently injured or killed by the use of either in a few months. We can settle on this one point, that that which is injurious to the health, be it self-denial or indulgence, is wrong and should be discontinued. But, on the contrary, we cannot admit that whatever is not thus injurious is right. We should be careful that while we are not injuring our bodies we are also not injuring our souls.

(3) For what purpose is the act committed? While man looks on the outward appearance God looks on the heart, and judges according to the motive that prompts the action. An act which is all right in one place may be wrong in another, according to the motive which prompts it. It is all right to seek congenial companionship when the motive is spiritual profit, as when we seek the communion of the saints; but when we seek certain companions because they amuse or flatter us, the motive is improper and the effect injurious. Again, when we follow any pleasing occupation for the glory of God, the effect is salutary; but should we follow it simply because it is pleasing, it is ruinous. Any indulgence, no matter how pleasing to the flesh, that does not strictly conform to the rule "whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God," will, if persistently followed, eventually sap one's spiritual vitality and leave him spiritually dead.

(4) What effect will the action have on any other party concerned? None of us live to ourselves. The least act will in some sense have an influence on some other person. That bunch of ribbon on your hat, that extra tuck or bit of lace may seem small to you, but some one else in following your example may go a little farther. That careless remark seemed small to you, but others standing by were taking you for an example. Of course, they should not have done this, but they did, and they were looking for just such a slip from you as an excuse for several such slips on their part. Now their consciences are eased, and they can more easily do the wrong thing the next time, and then excuse themselves by saying, "Brother So-and-So did it, and he is holy."

But some acts of indulgence implicate more than one party. Then a holy person in maintaining his fancied rights should be very careful that he is not trampling on the rights of some others. Is it as pleasing to the other party concerned as it is to you? Godly self-denial, according to the rule "do all to the glory of God," would wonderfully straighten out some people and do away with the things that "hinder so many prayers." See 1 Peter 3: 7. But some one is ready to say, "My rights, my God-given rights." Nothing has been said against your rights; we have merely mentioned the rights of the other person whom you ought to love. There is a line that is pleasing to God; if you would try it, you would be delighted with the results in soul-health and growth.

(5) The last and greatest rule by which we should govern our pleasure is, What effect will the act have on my soul? This is equivalent to asking, "Is it God's will?" for when the will of God is done, the soul is always benefited. Every spiritual person knows that there are some things that help and some things that hinder the soul's prosperity. It takes careful living and constant praying to find the path of spiritual prosperity, but if honest in its pursuit we shall eventually find it. "I want to" is a poor rule by which to govern the life; "God wants me to," is the only safe way. If any course of action causes deadness of soul and lessens the spirit of prayer, it is unsafe and should be discontinued.

Do nothing for present pleasure that will cause future suffering. Do nothing that has the appearance of evil. Do nothing that has a tendency to weaken the soul. Do always that which is well pleasing in God's sight. "For if ye do these things, ye shall never fall."

On the line of physical infirmities come the pains and aches, sicknesses and disabilities arising from disease, heredity or advanced age. These of necessity cause inconvenience, and often also hinder the person from doing the things he otherwise would; or, if he does attempt to do them, the performance is necessarily imperfect. Those shortcomings which arise from deficiency of physical power, caused either by lack of strength or practice, are infirmities that no person should look upon in individuals as wrongs, unless they have willfully kept themselves in weakness or ignorance. In such a case we would rightfully accuse them for not knowing the things that it was their privilege and duty to know.

2. We are not delivered from mental infirmities only in so far as these infirmities are sinful. When man fell he fell in the unity of his being and his mind went down in the general wreck. A certain class of modern scientists would have us believe that the mental caliber of man was very small at first, but that by constant development he has risen to a loftier plane of knowledge than that occupied by our primeval parents in Eden. We cannot accept such a theory, however, since to our mind it is destructive and pernicious. There is no doubt that, in respect to natural research, the scholarship of to-day eclipses that of the philosophers of two thousand years ago; but this is not because of an increase of intellect, but because we have the benefits of the researches, successes and failures, of the men of two thousand and more years ago, added to all that have lived since that time; and these products are handed to us in a form that we can easily grasp and retain, or if we do not wish to do that, we can put endless volumes in our libraries and turn to them when we choose. This is not to the glory of the intellect of the twentieth century, but rather, to the glory of that of former years. What scholar of to-day, without a foundation from which to start, could successfully study out Aristotle's rules of logic, and make them so perfect that two thousand years of sharpest criticism would not impair them?

No, our race is not on the up grade, and that to such an extent that mental infirmities will soon disappear. Until "time shall be no more" and this "mortal shall have put on immortality," mental infirmities will remain with the most intellectual and even the most spiritual. How often does the man of God bewail his lack of knowledge, his wrong conclusions, and hence his wrong though not sinful actions — wrong in such a sense that, if he had the thing to do over with the increased light and experience he now possesses, would do differently. How often we hear him humbly confessing his lack of judgment that has caused him so much trouble.

We copy the following from Wesley's sermon on "Wandering Thoughts."

But does it only cause this in the time of sickness or preternatural disorder? Nay, but more or less, at all times, even in a state of perfect health. Let a man be ever so healthy he will be more or less delirious every four and twenty hours. For does he not sleep? And while he sleeps, is he not liable to dream? And who then is master of his own thoughts, or able to preserve the order and consistency of them? Who can then keep them fixed on any point, or prevent their wandering from pole to pole?

But suppose we are awake, are we always so awake that we can steadily govern our own thoughts? Are we not unavoidably exposed to contrary extremes, by the very nature of this machine, the body? Sometimes we are too heavy, too dull and languid to pursue any chain of thought. Sometimes, on the other hand, we are too lively. The imagination, without leave, starts to and fro, and carries us away hither and thither, whether we will or no, and all this from the merely natural motion of the spirits, or vibration of the nerves.

Farther: How many wandering thoughts may arise, from those various associations of our

ideas, which are made entirely without our knowledge and independently of our choice! How these connections are formed we cannot tell; but they are formed in a thousand different manners. Nor is it in the power of the wisest or holiest of men to break these associations, or prevent what is the necessary consequence of them, and matter of daily observation. Let the fire but touch one end of the fuse, and it immediately runs to the other.

Once more: let us fix our attention as studiously as we are able on any subject, yet let either pleasure or pain arise, especially if it be intense, and it will demand our immediate attention, and attach our thought to itself. It will interrupt the steadiest contemplation, and divert the mind from its favorite subject."

In this wonderful sermon Wesley clearly draws the line between sinful thoughts and wandering thoughts that are not sinful, for in addition to what we have quoted, he says,

All those thoughts which wander from God, which leave him no room in our minds, are undoubtedly sinful. ---Such are all murmuring, discontented thoughts, which say, in effect, We will not have thee to rule over us; all unbelieving thoughts, whether with regard to his being, his attributes, his providence. ---All thoughts which spring from sinful frames of mind, are undoubtedly sinful. --- And so must those be, which either produce or feed any sinful frame of mind; --- for not only whatever flows from evil is evil; but also whatever leads to it; whatever tends to alienate the soul of God, and to make or keep it earthly, sensual, or devilish.

3. In the definition of infirmities given in the foregoing, moral flaws are mentioned in addition to those which are physical or mental. This is true of the sinner, and also of the imperfect Christian; but as applied to the fully sanctified, the term flaw must be limited to that innocent "weakness" which springs from our finite condition. God has not promised to deliver us from this in the present life. We do not mean "weakness" in the sense of inability to do all God's will concerning us (for his will makes allowance for this very weakness), but we mean rather that we are in ourselves finite, and incapable of doing things beyond our finite sphere. Taking Fletcher's definition of an infirmity as being an "involuntary lack of power," and applying it to the condition of the holiest of earth, and it is perfectly consistent with experience, if not with some people's theories.

While we are sure that the soul is thoroughly delivered from sin, outward and inward, yet who can accomplish anything, even in spiritual matters, to his complete satisfaction? Here, as well as elsewhere, though "perfect in love" we are still imperfect in conduct. Who is there but at times, finds his soul lagging and stumbling, pressed down by the corruptible body and by corrupt surroundings, until he cries to God for a new impetus in divine things, a deeper going down before God, and a mighty quickening in holiness and love. Not that he has lost ground, but the time has come that he must get more grace or that which he already has will steadily decline. Wesley says we must continually pray and press forward.

It is good to renew ourselves from time to time, by closely examining the state of our souls, as if we had never done it before: for nothing tends more to the full assurance of faith, than to keep ourselves by this means in humility, and the exercise of all good works.

Bramwell says,

I am giving myself to God, to receive a much deeper baptism, which I feel is my liberty in this world. I cannot rest in sins forgiven, or in being cleansed from all unrighteousness. I see the glory which belongs to me in my blessed Lord is for himself to dwell fully in my soul.

What holy person, when he compares himself and his attainments with the attainments of some of his brethren, or with the worthies of other days, but has felt like saying, with the holy Bramwell: "I long to live as near as any ever did; and yet I feel I have not all Ann Cutler found. My soul is subject to sloth; and I have hard work, I assure you, to keep all things going at full speed. But when I do this for one day, I see the ground I have gone over. Oh, how swiftly we may run even in this world!"

There is no doubt but that a great share of this confession was caused by humility, but humility sees facts; it sees sins all gone, but places the soul on the proper level, and puts it in a place where, acknowledging its needs, it earnestly stretches out after more. Bramwell again searches his heart, and, in his earnest endeavors after God, cries:

"The love of Christ is my study; but I am frequently at a loss to understand how it is that my love to him is so little. I am sometimes ready to stumble at myself on this account. Am I right? Can I be right in this little love? Could I die for thee? Could I suffer long, and still love with a passion like thine? I cry to God daily, hourly, constantly, to receive a thousand times more love. I must give myself away; for the sacrifice was consumed."

May God breathe on us more of the precious Spirit that inspired this holy man, and set us to reaching out with greater endeavors after all his fullness.

A lack of perfect maturity (which the most advanced saint would not claim to have attained) is an infirmity, in the sense in which we have spoken of infirmities. Anything that can be improved either in quality or degree is not yet absolutely perfect. Fletcher says,

Absolute perfection belongs to God alone. --God alone is supremely perfect: all beings are imperfect, when they are compared to him; and though all his works were perfect in their places, yet, as he gave them different degrees of perfection, they which have inferior degrees of goodness, may be said to be imperfect in comparison to them which are endued with superior degrees of excellence.

But in this world the spirit is infirm, not only because it is immature, but also in respect to its understanding and judgments; and from wrong judgments affections are liable to flow which, if we had judged rightly, would have been different. This appears whenever we misunderstand a person's motive, and, as a consequence, indulge affections toward him which are different than in strict justice he deserves. If we were angels we would make no such mistakes; but, while our spirits are perfectly cleansed from sin, yet through our error of judgment we love the man only as we would a sinner or an enemy, when he is worthy of being loved as a holy Christian, or a friend. Wesley is very clear on this point. In his sermon on "Perfection" he says:

"The highest perfection which man can attain, while the soul dwells in the body, does not exclude ignorance, and error, and a thousand other infirmities. Now from wrong judgments, wrong words and actions will often necessarily flow: and, in some cases, wrong affections may also spring from the same source. I may judge wrong of you; I may think more or less highly of you than I ought to think; and this mistake in my judgment, may not only cause something wrong in my behavior, but it may have a still deeper effect; it may occasion something wrong in my affection. From a wrong apprehension, I will love and esteem you either more or less than I ought. Nor can I be freed from a liability to such a mistake while I remain in a corruptible body. A thousand infirmities, in consequence of this, will attend my spirit, till it returns to God who gave it. And, in numberless instances, it comes short of doing the will of God, as Adam did in Paradise."

Let no man excuse his carnality on this score, for if he feels in his heart the least tendency toward evil surmising, unkindness, uncharitable criticism, or any lack of perfect

love toward all men, he is yet in need of the sanctifying grace of God.

II. Holy people are subject to trials. This arises from the peculiar relation they sustain to the world, both to the people and natural things, and to the various circumstances which arise from their connection with these things. This is not always the meaning that is attached to the word either in the Bible or in common parlance, but for the want of some better word we desire to use it with that meaning. Peter says, "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet 1: 7). God appeared to Abraham and said, "I am the Almighty God, walk before me and be thou perfect" (Gen. 17: 1). Some time afterward he "*tried*" Abraham's integrity by commanding him to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. Job was a "perfect and an upright man," yet God allowed him to be tested, and when he was tried he "came forth as gold." Daniel says, "Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried" (Dan. 12:10).

All people have trials. Man is ushered into the world amid scenes of suffering and sorrow. The first sound he produces is a cry, as if he would bewail his existence and reproach his parents for the sorrows to which they have begotten him. Here the stormy career begins. Through the little joys and sorrows of childhood the babe arrives at youth, when the mystery of existence begins to dawn upon him. Through young manhood he pursues his way, and at length we see him in succession, at the marriage altar, in his own home, surrounded by his family, in business life, in social and religious relations, until as his hair gradually silvers for the tomb, his eyes grow dim, his steps slacken, his spirit droops and he realizes, if he is a man of thought, that "Man born of a woman hath but few days and is full of sorrow" He rejoices in the house of feasting to-day, and tomorrow mourns at the coffin of his friend. Now he exults at success, but soon weeps at failure. He laughs most happily when his spirits are light and airy, but soon groans in anguish as his body is racked with pain, and at last he goes the way of mankind "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust"

"Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?
Like a swift fleeting meteor, a fast flying cloud,
A flash of the lightning, a break of the wave,
Man passes from life to his rest in the grave.

"'Tis the wink of an eye, 'tis the draught of a breath,
From the blossom of health to the paleness of death,
From the gilded room to the bier and the shroud —
Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?"

We are social beings — we desire companionship. Very few — and they are abnormally constituted — prefer to live as hermits, alone. Beasts and birds might associate together without the rights of one interfering with those of another, for their capacities are small and their wants few. But man is a complex being, with rights and desires which reach out in all directions. Hence it is impossible for him to associate with his fellows for any length of time without the real or fancied rights of one interfering with those of the other. Every time your neighbor, in maintaining what he may call his rights, interferes with your rights or privileges, or even transgresses your ideas of neighborliness or philanthropy, though he does nothing that injures you or detracts from your freedom or rights, if you are not careful to keep your heart steady before God, you will find a suggestion stealthily taking possession of you that he is not worthy of your friendship. Your spirit will become agitated, or at least uneasy, and you will find it necessary to pray in order to keep wrong feelings from entering your heart. This is a trial — a testing of your grace. Sin has not yet entered your heart in the shape of animosity against your neighbor, but the temptation is in that direction.

While it is impossible to get to a place where you will have no such trials, yet by the grace of God you may reduce them to a minimum; and that person who is always finding occasion to suspect his neighbor, and who is always having his rights crossed, even by well-meaning people, needs to get saved from touchiness and sensitiveness.

George Müller testified,

"Not until I became *totally indifferent* to what I thought, desired or preferred; to my opinions, tastes, purposes, and the blame or praise, the censure or applause, of my fellow men, and determined that henceforth I would seek no approval but that of God; did I ever start on a life of happiness and holiness; but from that day until now I have been content to live alone with God."

The Rev. W. H. Kennedy, of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, says:

"The true condition of the soul is shown by contact with things opposed to our tastes or habits of life. So when our good is evil spoken of, when our tastes are offended, our wishes or advices disregarded, or our opinions ridiculed, to take it all in patient silence is a fruit of inward purity.

When I am 'contented with mean things' (Rom. 12: 16, margin), with any food, any raiment, any society, any climate, any seclusion, any interruption, by the will of God, I have an evidence of inward purity.

When I can bear with loving patience any irregularity, any disorder, any lack of punctuality, or any of the annoying things of life with inward quietness and meekness, then I bear the fruit of holiness.

When I prefer to neglect myself for the benefit of others; when I avoid referring to myself in commendation, or to desire to be well spoken of; when I am forgotten, neglected or purposely set aside and my soul inwardly rejoices; that is an evidence of being dead, and my life hid with Christ.

When I 'take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake,' I agree with St. Paul (see 2 Cor. 12: 10), and, 'In all these things am more than conqueror through him that loved me' (Rom. 8:37).

Circumstances sometimes get so complicated that they become a trial. Poverty, failure of crops, failure of business, etc., all conspire to try one's patience and faith; but in proportion as we learn to see God in everything, in that proportion these things cease to be a trial. Madam Guyon says, "Oh, what fears and uneasiness does a resigned soul spare itself!"

The following is from Wesley's sermon on "Heaviness Through Temptations":

"But how many are there in this Christian country that toil, and labor, and sweat, and have it [food] not at last, but struggle with weariness and hunger together? Is it not worse, for one after a hard day's labor to come back to a poor, cold, dirty, uncomfortable lodging, and to find there not even the food that is needful to repair his wasted strength? --Perhaps to find also the comfort of five or six children, crying for what he has not to give! Were it not that he is restrained by an unseen hand, would he not 'curse God and die'? Oh, want of bread! Want of bread! Who can tell what this means, unless he hath felt it himself?"

Besides these trials that are common to man, there are those that are peculiar to the Christian. It is a mistake to say that the sinner has all the trials a Christian does, for if you live for God the devil will do his best to make your life miserable. Jesus said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." Under this head come the persecutions, mockings, scoffings, and jeerings of the unholy throng. You will be reproached for being a

Christian, "but he that endureth to the end the same shall be saved."

III. We are surrounded by innumerable hosts of spirits, some good and some bad, some intent on our salvation and some on our destruction. If we could meet our enemies in the open field, ourselves armed by the power of God and aided by our heavenly guardians, we might vanquish them; but no, they are unseen. Instead of coming out in bold array they keep up a rambling, guerrilla warfare, darting in when least expected, and always endeavoring to find the soul off guard. This is the most tantalizing, aggravating warfare imaginable. The enemy cannot be located till the crack of his gun is heard, and then he is invisible, and the victim might about as well save his ammunition as to waste it shooting at random into the bushes. Take a lesson from this, and when you hear the crack of the devil's gun do not fire back; save your ammunition for better game; set to running off some of his flock, and keep him so occupied keeping up fences and renewing brand-marks that he will have to give you some rest. True he will try all the harder to catch the "robber," but you are never safer than when on such an expedition, for you are surrounded by a wall of fire, and "an innumerable company of angels" that are especially interested in your success.

The Bible represents the devil in different ways. He is sometimes called an "adversary," or "the accuser of the brethren." Always when the sons of God come together Satan (the adversary) comes also, and straightway begins his old business of accusing. And it is well if the sons of God detect his wiles and banish him. At times, realizing his inability to get people willingly to follow him if his identity is manifest, he puts on a cloak; clothes himself with the livery of heaven, and comes as an angel of light, thereby trying to deceive people into his clutches. When he fails as an adversary and as an angel of light, he sometimes throws off all cloaks, stands forth in his true nature and attempts to frighten the soul into submission. Then it is that he appears as "a roaring lion."

Satan has different ways of working. One is by flashing evil suggestions, or, as the Bible says, "fiery darts." With these he attempts to pierce your shield. He searches diligently for a weak place in your harness. Like a good general he tries to find some place where you are off your guard, or where you have not properly strengthened your bulwarks. Then through the gap thus caused he hurls his fiery darts, in the shape of accusations, solicitations to or suggestions of evil; and it is well if he was mistaken and you had your shield ready, for against that his fiery darts will glance off like bullets shot against a wall of granite. If you have "the shield of faith," he cannot puncture it "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." Meet him with a Bible promise, or some other appropriate passage of scripture, as Jesus did or go on your way without heeding him. Yet do not dare him to the fray, for he will come soon enough without that. Do not use railing accusations, since even Michael the archangel dare not do that. It is better to say, like Michael, "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan."

At times the very air will seem alive with his flying missiles, but do not be frightened or nervous; he is shorn of his strength, and faith as a grain of mustard seed on your part will make you "more than conqueror." Fear not "Have faith in God," and by him you can run through a troop unscathed, pass through the floods and not be drowned, and march through fire without its smell left on your garments. In the midst of all you will be able, with Charles Wesley, to sing:

"Though in affliction's furnace tried,
Unhurt on snares and death I'll tread;
Though sin assail, and hell, thrown wide,
Pour all its flames upon my head;
Like Moses' bush I'll mount the higher,

And flourish, unconsumed, in fire."

Failing with his fiery darts, he will use various kinds of pressure to overcome you. Throwing his infernal influences around your soul (thank God, not into it) as an octopus does its many arms around its prey, he will thus attempt to force you into yielding to his demands. The victim will be troubled with strange, unaccountable feelings. At times the very atmosphere will seem pregnant with spirits that would goad your impatience, that insist on an entrance to the soul. Then pride will thrust sore at you, seeking to engender a spirit of self-exaltation. A spirit of envy will seek to usurp a place in your heart, or a jealous or covetous spirit to take possession of its throne; and so on through all the avenues of approach the adversary will seek to control and overthrow you. Sometimes groans will be wrung from your very heart, so crushing will be your burden. These suggestions and feelings may accumulate until your condition will answer the Bible description of "heaviness through manifold temptations."

James Caughey says, "Temptation is a subject of *feeling*, as well as indwelling sin. A temptation is not a temptation in reality unless it is felt. How can we know we are tempted unless we *feel* it? How difficult it is, frequently, to discriminate!" All this is true, with this explanation: indwelling sin implies an inherent tendency to evil struggling for gratification, while temptation to the holy soul, in addition to the *feeling* caused by the temptation, is met by a feeling of aversion to and recoil from the forbidden object or the evil suggested, *because* of its sinful character. Joseph's response to the solicitations of Potiphar's wife, "How can I do this great evil and sin against God?" is an illustration.

Here is another point. As you look back at it you will see that the stirrings of carnality in the past were definite — that is of pride, envy, etc.; but in the present temptation there is an indefiniteness and uncertainty that shows it to be false. Wesley says that the purity of our hearts at present will appear in a clearer light if we compare the present with the past feelings. But if the heart is not clean, and we compare the present with the past, there will be such a striking similarity that it will increase the feeling that the experience has not been received.

In Wesley's sermon on "Wandering Thoughts" the following passage occurs:

"And as long as evil spirits roam to and fro in a miserable, disordered world, so long they will assault (whether they can prevail or no) every inhabitant of flesh and blood. They will trouble even those whom they cannot destroy: they will attack, if they cannot conquer. And from these attacks of our restless, unwearied enemies, we must not look for an entire deliverance, till we are lodged 'where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest.'"

It might be asked, "At what point does the clean soul again become carnal?" Take one form of temptation as an illustration, which is no doubt the most dangerous and subtle of all, and perhaps the one that the enemy uses the oftenest: At what point do temptations to doubt so enter the heart as to render it again carnal?

(1) As soon as a person is really cleansed the devil levels all his batteries at this experience. He immediately suggests, "You do not have the experience. Be careful, holiness is a wonderful work and you are professing a great thing. No one was ever sanctified," etc. But none of these suggestions, no matter how persistently urged, are inconsistent with a clean heart. They are outside.

(2) A serious doubt as to whether the heart has been made clean, arising from a misconception of what real cleansing is, does not necessarily forfeit the experience. On the contrary it may cause one to examine the foundation of his hope and the more thoroughly convince himself of the genuineness of his experience.

(3) A fear that the experience has been forfeited does not of necessity forfeit it. This fearfulness is likely to occur often before the heart becomes "established" and learns the wiles of the devil, especially if the person is extremely conscientious.

(4) A failure to profess the experience, at least for a short time, during these temptations to doubt, does not necessarily admit unbelief to the heart. A great amount of mental misconception is consistent with a clean heart.

(5) To give up one's profession and attempt to pray through does not necessarily forfeit the experience. I have known persons who, in their great anxiety to be right, and honestly attempting to pray through, have obtained the witness to their cleansing, if possible, more clearly than before, and upon examination of their past from this advanced ground were convinced that they had not lost their experience at all.

You say, "If all this is consistent with an experience, where can doubt come in?" You will notice that all the above-mentioned complications arise from a misconception of God's requirements, or from a failure to recognize the devil's temptations. And there is no doubt that God makes a great deal of allowance for our human short-sightedness. Faith is not so much the acknowledgment of a fact of experience as confidence in God. This bases the experience on a different principle than much of the preaching of to-day wittingly or unwittingly does. But he who builds his hopes on his ability to profess an experience is not properly founded on the rock. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 8:11).

Here is the point of actual failure. The devil slips up in the midst of a severe test and says, "There is no use trying, God cannot keep you." This runs against the will, and if it is quickly repelled the heart is still clean; but if the will weakens and accepts the statement, the heart immediately becomes unclean. Or, the devil says, "Are you not sorry you ever professed holiness?" If the will says, "No," all is well. But if it admits the temptation, it falls. As long as the will persistently rejects the onslaughts of the devil, and holds its steadfastness in God, there is no cause for fear; but when it weakens and *accepts distrust of God*, carnality re-enters.

Carnality enters at the point of distrust toward God, be that distrust ever so small. So press on, though all your foundations of experience seem to totter; for if you steadily hold your confidence in God, all will come out right in the end. Remember that carnality enters, if at all, at the point of accepting and yielding to some sinful principle. Are you guilty in this respect? If so, you are on a lower plane than you once were. Rest not until the loftier plane is regained, and, "rooted and grounded in love," you are able to pass through every conflict, not only unscathed, but *more than conqueror*."

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