

**CHAPTER IV.  
EXPLANATIONS.**

**THE FACTS AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE FACTS.  
“WISDOM IS JUSTIFIED OF ALL HER CHILDREN.”**

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In these sketches and references the first and great fact is that of full salvation through full trust in Jesus. This fact needs no proof. It is at once the provision and the demand of the gospel, and is of course the privilege and duty of all. The Apostle Paul lived in it himself, and commended it, and commanded it, to others. The apostles and primitive Christians generally enjoyed it from the day of Pentecost onward. There were exceptions certainly. The Galatians seem to have been turned aside from the fulness and simplicity of the faith. Having begun in the spirit, they thought to be made perfect by works, and the apostle wrote them with all plainness and urgency of speech, to induce them to look to Christ and Christ alone for holiness, telling them that he travailed in birth for them again, until Christ should be formed in them the hope of glory. And there were other churches beside those of Galatia where, through the blindness of unbelief, they failed of the fulness of God. But, as a general thing, we hear only of the same life of faith in its fulness, and fulness of joy in all, until after the death of all the apostles, save John, and he exiled from the churches and shut up in the lone Isle of Patmos. Then, when the apostles were gone, and the days of miracles were ended, and inspired teaching ceased in the churches, and Satan began to be loosed — then, in the epistles of him who walks in glory amidst the golden candlesticks, we have the first intimation that the light of the candles was beginning to grow dim.

And surely Luther and Baxter, Wesley and D’Aubigne, full and rich as their experience of grace and salvation was, had not outstripped Peter and John, Paul and Apollos! Neither have the Lutherans, as we have named them, or the Wesleyans, or Oberlinians, got beyond primitive Christians! Nay, if we shall carry the comparison back to the bright cloud of witnesses, who passed off before Christ’s coming upon earth, as they are called up in array before us in the beautiful citation by the apostle in the eleventh of Hebrews, we shall hardly find the brightest of moderns outstripping these worthies of old, either in fulness of faith, or fulness of salvation. Going about, therefore, to prove that there is such an experience would be but a fool’s work! If any one doubts, with the Bible in his hand, surely the rushlight of any other proof in the face of this noon-day blaze, would go for nothing!

Neither does this fact need explanation any more than it needs proof. It is simply the result of the gospel received in its fulness. Christ is set forth as all in all for the sinner’s salvation, and the sinner who receives him as such, and abides in him, has full salvation. But there is another fact which should be explained: the fact that in the instances given, as in others not referred to, there is a second experience, distinct from the first — sometimes years after the first — and as distinctly marked, both as to time and circumstances and character, as the first — a second conversion, as it is often called. Baxter speaks of this in his case as quite as important as the first. So does James Brain and Taylor, and many others also; while in such cases as Luther’s and D’Aubigne’s, both the experience and its importance are so marked as to speak for themselves. Some have tried to account for this fact by denying the reality of the first experience. “These people were deceived,” say they, “and not converted at all, as they suppose, in the first instance.”

But if Luther was not converted, who then is? If D’Aubigne was deceived in the first instance, who then is not? If to have been convinced of the deep depravity of the heart by nature, and led to accept Jesus as the Son of God and Saviour of sinners, and to have experienced the joys of the new birth, is not to have been really converted, but deceived, tell us then what conversion is? No, no; this supposition does violence to truth and common sense; it will not do. We must have a better solution, or none.

Others have thought to solve the problem by calling the second experience simply a return from backsliding. But in each of the cases given, we have the testimony of the witnesses

themselves, that it was more than this, a deeper work of grace, a fuller apprehension of Christ, a more complete and abiding union with him than at the first. The witnesses themselves being judges in their own case, this solution is not the true one. We must go deeper for it. Thousands in every age since the primitive, have backslidden and returned again without any such great and permanent advancement in the divine life, as that set forth in the examples before us. In Luther's experience, as he describes it, there was that which made the Bible a new book to him. Already, in his conversion a key had been put into his hand to unlock vast treasures of truth in the Word of God, but it was only after his final and full apprehension of Christ as his sanctification, superadded to his knowledge of Christ in the forgiveness of sins, that the abundance and wealth of the Bible became the Reformer's. And D'Aubigne tells us that after that scene in the inn-room at Kiel he went through and through the Bible anew, gathering up innumerable passages full of new significance to him. His description recalls another very like it, under like circumstances. One who had but just then passed through a similar "second conversion," compared himself to a child sent on an errand, but finding by the wayside so many beautiful flowers and luscious fruits, now on this side, now on that, inviting the hand to pluck them, as to keep the child busy all day long, forgetful of the errand. "So," said he, "has it happened to me with my Bible. I have set out to find some desired passage, and so many things beautiful and new have caught my eye in passing along, as to tempt me to dally, and pick, and eat, and drink in their sweet fragrance all the day long, forgetful of my errand. And then too," he went on to say "when I kneel down to pray, praise only swells my heart, for all the glorious things of Christ." Ah, there is vastly more in such an experience, than mere return from backsliding! Then, too, above and beyond all this, it is never the returning backslider who comes into the fulness of this experience. Indeed, if backsliding and returning would really bring men into this gospel fulness, pity but the whole church would backslide and return. It would be a grand thing for the cause of Christ, and for their own comfort and joy. But in point of fact, in every case, if the reader will examine, it will be seen that it is only the earnest and the active Christian, the working, struggling one, who comes to the knowledge of Christ in his fulness. The backslider returns only to the point attained when he turned back at most, and hard struggling for that! But the work in question is a higher height, and a deeper depth, in the comprehension both of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, and of the way of salvation by faith.

Neither of these solutions is the true one. The true, however, is not difficult. Mark it well: It is in perfect harmony with all religious experience. What we call experimental religion, is simply this: The sinner is first awakened to a realization of his guilt before God, and of his danger, it may be too. He really feels, that is, he experiences his, need of salvation, and becomes anxious and eager to do anything to secure it. Tries perhaps all sorts of expedients, except the one only and true, in vain. Then at last his eyes are opened to see that Jesus Christ is set forth to be his salvation, and that all he has to do is, just as he is, without one grain of purity or merit, in all his guilt and pollution, to trust in his Saviour, and now he sees and feels, that is, he experiences, that Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, the very Saviour he needs. In Jesus he triumphs and exults. In Jesus he revels and rejoices. Jesus is the one amongst ten thousands, altogether lovely. The only one in heaven or on earth to be desired, filling all the orbit of his soul with faith, and hope and love. This in substance is the sum of all religious experience. All may be condensed into three words: the first expressive of the sinner's necessities — SALVATION: the second expressive of the gospel provision for the sinner, a SAVIOUR; and the third embodying the condition of the sinner's entire deliverance, FAITH.

And now to account for the two distinct experiences, each so marked and important, and so alike in character, we have only to consider two facts, viz., first, that the sinner's necessities are two-fold and distinct, although both are included in the one word salvation. We express the two in the words of that favorite hymn, Rock of Ages, when we sing,

“Be of sin the double cure,  
“Save from wrath and make me pure.”

And the Psalmist makes the distinction in the second verse of the thirty-second Psalm, saying, “Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity; and in whose spirit there is no guile.”

The apostle Paul generally includes both in the one term “Righteousness of God,” as “to all and upon all that believe,” but in the thirtieth verse of the first chapter of first Corinthians, he separates them and marks them by the distinct terms, “righteousness,” and “sanctification,” and now of late the whole Christian world, has come to distinguish them by the now limited and definite terms, justification and sanctification. Luther used the term justification as including both; in the same way that the apostle Paul used the expression righteousness of God. Justification in the great Reformer’s sense, was being made righteous; that is, being reckoned righteous before God, and ‘being made righteous in heart and life. Nevertheless the two things are distinct and different in their nature, and are expressive of two great and equal wants of the sinner. He must be just in the eye of the law, justified before God. And he must also be holy in heart and life, or he cannot be saved.

This is the first fact to be taken into account in coming to an understanding of the two separate and distinct experiences, so clearly marked in such cases as Luther’s, and D’Aubigne’s. Another is that, practically always perhaps, and theologically often, we separate between the two in our views and efforts, to secure them to ourselves, until we are experimentally taught better. We have one process for acceptance with God, that is faith; and another for progress in holiness, that is works. After having found acceptance in Jesus by faith, we think to go on to perfection by strugglings and resolves, by fastings and prayers, not knowing the better way of taking Christ for our sanctification, just as we have already taken him for our justification. We see and believe in Jesus as our atonement on earth, and our Advocate and Mediator in heaven, but we fail to see and receive him as our ever-present Saviour from sin now here with us in the hourly scenes of the daily journey heavenward. The consequence is, that as in the first instance we tried all sorts of expedients, except the right one, and failed in every one, until at last the Lord opened our eyes to see both our own folly in all these vain attempts, and at the same breath to see the wisdom of God in giving us His Son our Saviour as the Way; even so now again in the second, we try all, and all in vain, until again in this new and equal necessity, we find anew that all our ways are vain, and that Jesus is the Way.

These two facts will account for these cases of “second conversion.” Let it not be supposed, however, that in every instance there must be two distinct experiences, separated by a gulph of vain strugglings. It is not necessary that there should be one even. Let Jesus be received as the all in all, and that is enough! Whoever can say, “Jesus is mine and I am his, that he is complete and I am complete in him,” and say the truth, has the experience whether he has an experience to relate, or not. He has the Rock of Ages for his foundation, and all the driving storms, and beating tempests, and swelling floods of time and eternity, will not sweep it from under him. Christ, without any marked experience whatever, is all-sufficient; but the most brilliant experience without Christ, would be only quick-sand in the day of trial. Loyola’s experience was as brilliant as Paul’s; and Mahomet’s was even more wonderful than either; just as some counterfeits are really finer in appearance than the genuine; but that did not make the great Jesuit a saint, except in his own eyes, and in the Romish calendar, nor the false prophet an angel anywhere outside of his own sensual paradise.

Some voyagers heavenward trouble themselves all the live-long voyage, clear to the very entrance of the haven of rest, with doubts whether after all they have really set sail at all or not, because they had not the same struggles and difficulties in hoisting anchor and getting the canvas spread to the breezes of heaven, that others describe! Surely it should be enough that they are on shipboard, with anchor up, sails set, steam working, outward bound, plowing

the deep at the rate of fifteen knots an hour! What if they did set out in the nighttime, or in a fog? Is it not enough that the captain and the pilot knew how to find the way, and that they are now out in the sunlight, on the open sea, and bounding over the billows to the desired haven?

This, by the way. It is certainly pleasant to have distinct recollections of one's conversion, and also of the moment and the circumstances when full trust for full salvation was first reposed in Jesus, but this is by no means indispensable. To be in the way, to have Jesus for the all in all, is the great thing.

There remains yet one thing more to be done before closing these explanations. In the preceding examples and comparisons, certain differences were shown between the three classes, which, for convenience, we named Lutherans, Wesleyans, and Oberlinians. It will be important to note again, first the points, both of agreement and of difference between them, and then to give the reasons of both their differences and their agreements.

It is worthy of special note again that their differences are altogether those of opinion, not at all of fact. All are agreed as to the essential facts of the experience in question. The shades of difference in the manner of narrating are not at all essential. All agree especially in the one great matter, that the experience is that of the way of sanctification by faith: that of really practically receiving Jesus for sanctification by faith, as before he had been received as the sacrifice for sins. This may be variously expressed, but this is the marrow and substance of the whole matter in every case and with every class.

Again: all agree as to the fact that this practical, experimental apprehension of Christ is instantaneous in every case, whether the instant can be marked, as in the cases referred to, or not. However long the struggles beforehand, and however gradual the rising of the light afterwards in the soul, there is a moment when Christ is first seen to be The Way, and when the soul leaves every other way and trusts solely in Jesus. In these facts all agree. And it may be added, that in the one essential doctrine of the way of sanctification, as by faith and not by works, they all agree, of course, if they agree in its practical reception in the experience in question. Theologically, therefore, they are so far in harmony.

Now the differences are, first, as to whether this experience is that of entire instantaneous sanctification or not. Whether the instant the sinner is given up to Christ to be "Sanctified soul, body and spirit, and preserved blameless, until the coming of our Lord," as the apostle prays that the Thessalonians may be, whether then the sinner is indeed, in that moment, made perfect in holiness or not. Or if not, whether in any proper sense he may be spoken of as perfect.

Oberlinians affirm, in the case, absolute moral perfection.

Wesleyans affirm a modified perfection called "Christian."

Lutherans affirm neither, but deny both. Then as to terms descriptive of the experience there is a corresponding difference.

Oberlinians use freely and without qualification the term "entire sanctification."

Wesleyans also, use the word entire, in a restricted sense, though their favorite names are "Perfect love" and "Christian perfection," as modifying, and qualifying the idea of absolute perfection.

Lutherans have discussed the experience less as a thing distinct, and therefore have known it less, and named it less distinctively, than either Wesleyans or Oberlinians.

Cases of it have always occurred in every great awakening, and often also in solitary instances, in the furnace of affliction or under the special influences of sovereign grace and power. Such cases have generally received the convenient name, "second conversion:" but in the standards, as in the Westminster Assembly's Confession, it is called, "The full assurance of grace and salvation," and elsewhere, "The full assurance of faith," while in hymns it is often named, "Full salvation."

Now as to the reasons of these agreements and these differences, it will be easy to see

them, if we scan the matter closely.

All agree in the facts of the experience, because the facts themselves are in harmony in all cases. And all agree in the doctrine of sanctification by faith, because in every case, that is the great principle received experimentally in place of sanctification by works. And all agree that this experimental reception of Christ for sanctification is instantaneous, because it could not be otherwise. For in every change of one principle of action for another, however long the matter may be under consideration before hand, the change at last when it does occur, must from the nature of the case be instantaneous.

But while all agree in this, and thus far — just here the separation begins.

Oberlinians look upon the soul's sanctification as complete, entire, wanting nothing, the instant Christ is accepted for entire sanctification.

Lutherans look upon this, the acceptance of Christ as the soul's sanctification, as the entrance merely upon the true and only way of being made holy, as the first full discovery of the real and the right way.

Wesleyans take a middle view, indefinite, and therefore undefinable. They do not believe in the absolutely perfected holiness of the soul the instant it trusts fully in Jesus for holiness of heart. They freely admit that imperfections may and do still exist, while yet a sort of modified perfection is attained, as they think.

Now what is the right and the truth of the matter? Exactly what is attained in this experience?

Christ. Christ in all his fulness. Christ as all in all. Christ objectively and subjectively received and trusted in. That is all. And that is enough.

But what as to holiness of heart? Nothing! Nothing but a sense of self-emptiness and vileness, and helplessness. Nothing but a sense of unholiness, and a full consciousness that all efforts and resolutions, and strugglings and cries for holiness of heart, are just as vain as the attempts of a leopard or an Ethiopian to bathe white in any waters. This with a sense of absolute dependence upon Christ for holiness of heart and life, just as for the forgiveness of sin is the sum and substance of the soul's attainment. At the same time while this deep self-abasement, and utter self-aborrence fills the soul, there is on the other hand just as deep a sense of the all-sufficiency and perfect loveliness of Christ, and a realization of the fulness of his love, and an assurance of his ability to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask Or think, according to the power that worketh in us. And a confidence that he will do it, according to the plan of God.

Then what follows?

Then follows the work according to our faith.

By faith the soul is now placed in the hands of Christ, as the clay in the hands of the potter; and by faith, Christ is received by the soul as the potter to mold it at his own sovereign will, into a vessel for the Master's own use and for the King's own table.

By faith the soul now is opened as a mirror to the Master, and as in a crystal fount of unrippled face, the Master's image is taken in all its meekness and majesty.

By faith the soul is put into the hands of Christ, like paper into the hands of the printer to be unfolded and softened and printed, with all the glorious things of God. And by faith Christ is taken to the soul like an unopened book, title page read it may be, and portrait frontispiece scanned and admired, but its leaves uncut, and its treasures of wisdom and knowledge all unexplored, all in reserve, to be gained by daily and hourly reading, in all after time.

By the power of God, in the light of truth, a new starting point has been gained. A new and higher level has been reached, and in the new light all things take on a new loveliness, and from the new starting point the race becomes swifter and yet easier. A starting point it is however, and not the goal reached, or the mark of the prize won. Let this be specially noted, and kept ever in mind. This being the case it is easy to see why the Lutherans should reject the terms and ideas of perfection, as attained in this experience, for it is the beginning, not the

end; only the entrance, fully and consciously, by the right principle, upon the process of sanctification — not sanctification completed.

When a man sick unto death, has become fully convinced of the utter hopelessness of his case in his own hands, and thrown away every remedy devised by himself, or recommended by his friends, and sent for a physician who has wisdom to understand and skill to heal his disease, it would be folly to say that at the moment his case was entrusted to the physician, his cure was complete. So in the Lutheran view, the transfer and the trust of the soul, for the whole work of sanctification by the Holy Spirit is but the first effectual step in the work. It is the door of the way fairly entered, and the way clearly perceived. So much, no more. The goal and the crown are yonder in the glorious future, and in the open vision and unveiled presence of the King immortal and eternal — but as yet invisible — the only wise God our Saviour.

And it is also easy to see why the Wesleyans reject the idea of absolute perfection attained in the experience, for they see and know that, according to their standard of sinless obedience, it is not true. While at the same time it is easy to see how the fact that it is an experimental apprehension of the true way of sanctification, together with the desire to give the experience a distinctive name has led to the adoption of such terms as “Christian perfection” and “Perfect love” with a disclaimer of any profession of sinless perfection or absolute angelic holiness of heart and life.

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

As a closing remark: Let it be borne in mind that these differences, are only differences of opinion. Important certainly; but after all, nothing in comparison with the great facts in which all are agreed. Not for a moment should they be allowed to keep one back from securing the great and blessed realities of such an experimental apprehension of Christ and salvation as is set forth in the examples given. The experience is a reality. Jesus is freely offered as our sanctification as well as our justification. Faith — full trust in him will bring full salvation with him to the soul. Let no one fail of the grace of God. “Behold, saith he that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it.”