

# LETTER VII.

TO MNASON.

ON PROGRESSIVE SANCTIFICATION.

MY DEAR MNASON,

I FEEL happy in taking up my pen, prospective of addressing a friend, and a brother, whose very name encourages me to believe, that he ever feels it his highest ambition, diligently to seek, zealously betroth, and habitually to remember. God's truth, in opposition to human errors. The subject on which I am about to address you, is a very popular one, only, sad to relate, as many think, though that is not my own opinion, I am on the opposite side; of this you will be aware, when I inform you, that it is "*progressive sanctification.*"

The term sanctification includes various significations; in the present investigation, however, it must be regarded, wholly in relation to what it implies in the economy of salvation, and in this view of the subject, the Scriptures speak of it, in reference to the Father—to the Son—and to the Holy Spirit: THE FATHER'S work is to set apart, or to give the elect family of God a separate existence from the rest of mankind in Christ, as he gave Noah and his family a separate existence from the rest of the world in the

ark; THE SON'S work was to sanctify *perfectly*, from all the filth, pollution, and uncleanness of the fall, those whom the Father sanctified, by giving them an election interest in his Son; THE SPIRIT'S work was to sanctify, set apart, or separate, from the rest of Adam's race, all those the Father predestinated to obtain salvation in his Son; and how does the Spirit this, but by bringing the elect in Christ apart from all dead moralists, Pharisees, and profane persons, for the work of the Lord, by giving them a new life, a manifest and declarative existence, apart from all others, the fruit of which new birth is their possession of faith, hope, and charity, called the new man, the hidden man of the heart. In addition to this cursory, but I hope perspicuous statement, of the import or sense of the term, in reference to the economy of salvation, I must advert, in particular, to what is styled, most unscripturally, *progressive* sanctification, the denial of which has already secured to myself that enmity, and unequalled ill will, which (had not the good laws of my country prevented) would have terminated in my burning, banishment, or something worse.

The sentiment of progressive sanctification was, when I commenced preaching, as much credited, and as zealously contended for, as it can possibly be by any of my present opponents, but, blest with a happy freedom from those shackles, which too often prevent young Christians and young ministers thinking and believing for themselves; such as the influence of a party, to which they may have united themselves, more from the impulse of feeling than from cool and deliberate reflections, preceded by a judicious and devotional investigation of that party's

sentiments;\* indeed, many young Christians and ministers have desisted from an impartial and personal investigation of the system, which they have, in the warmth of religious feelings, adhered to, for fear of being charged with daring presumption, in calling in question the infallibility of that synod, or single priest, from whose mouth, and not from an investigation of the Bible, they had received their religious creed; a third thing, which prevents, not only young Christians, but young ministers, openly avowing an alteration in their opinions, after they have begun to think and examine for themselves, is, the justly foreboded invectives, persecutions, and excommunications, with the traducing of their characters, and a false construction of their motives, which shall fall upon them, from the moment they dare to suggest to their teachers, or fellow professors, that the creed which they had received from tradition was not, as they once conceived, infallible. Yes I have known many, and do now know those gracious souls, who firmly believe, contrary to the traditions of their teachers, but they are so ensnared, with the fear that they shall lose their trades or employments, and forfeit the good will of, and procure the most cruel usage from, the minister and managers of the place where they worship, that they are kept from acknowledging, what their consciences and Bibles are always telling them is their duty to believe. But

\* Those blessed men, Whitfield, Romaine, Mason, Esq. and many others, in the warmth of their religious feelings injudiciously, without investigation, thinking all was religion, that was called so, united themselves with the Arminian Wesley, but when they thought and read for themselves, they saw the cheat, and renounced their former views, as being no better than spurious religion, they came out from among the sect, and God was their God, and they were his people. Rev. xviii. 4.

from these evils, even before I began to preach, the good Lord delivered me. Yes, my mind has long been open to a free inquiry after truth; it has been open also to conviction, determined not to take up with any sentiment to please a party, to procure, or perpetuate earthly patronages, *nor even personal and family necessities, when possessed.* I had learned from the Scriptures, that faith was a personal matter, that the youngest child, desirous to know the truth for himself, was not to call any priest, pastor, benefactor, or party, master, in things pertaining to the conscience, and that every pastor, priest, or party, that would attempt to palm upon the conscience of a fellow creature, a creed of theirs, as unquestionable truth, were arrogantly essaying to that which belongs to God. If the preceding observations are a digression from the immediate subject in hand, I doubt not, but the candor of my friend, will forgive the deviation, while I submit to his consideration certain reasons for my giving up, and opposing the sentiment of progressive sanctification; and first, I did not give up, and oppose progressive sanctification, expecting thereby to meet with more public acceptance and popularity in the religious world; no, quite the contrary; I was well aware that every religious seminary belonging to our denomination, urged as a most prominent, and supposed important feature of their divinity, the sentiment herein opposed; I was equally aware also, that whatever minister in the denomination dared to call in question the correctness of only one sentiment held by the heads thereof, though he believed all the rest, must expect to sink in the public esteem, and to be represented in every company and religious circle, as a “pestilent fellow, and one who teaches men con-

trary to the law of God." Yes, it matters not what talents he possesses, what grace he is the subject of, how devoted he is to the cause of religion, nor yet how abundantly useful God has made him to souls, in the sphere of action in which God calls him to move. If he dares to think for himself, and differ from a tradition, palmed upon him, as *perfect* truth, in his nonage,\* he must expect to be cast out of the synagogue; and all this, is in a country where the government tolerates all its subjects, to think, speak, and write, in matters of religion, according to the dictates of their own consciences. But what a disgrace it is to any dissenting denomination, to indulge themselves in, and cherish such a persecuting spirit, enjoying such liberty as they do, from the government under which they dwell. But positively: my reasons for not believing the sentiment of progressive sanctifica-

\* St. Paul, says, "when I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child, but when I became a man, I put away childish things." 1 Cor. xiii. 11. This is particularly applicable in matters of faith; when a child of God is first born from above, he possesses life, as much as a father in Christ, but he thinks, understands, and speaks, as a child; that is, his thoughts, words, and understanding, are founded upon what others say, do, and think, he has no mind, that can possibly be called his own, formed by mature investigation, and personal reflection; but when he becomes a man, or to use the prophet's words, Isa. xxviii. 9, when he is weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts, and understands doctrine, then he puts away childish thoughts and words, for he thinks for himself, and speaks for himself; and if in his former childhood, when he spoke, thought, and understood, by hearsay, he spoke, thought, and understood things, contrary to sound truth; he now puts them away, and acknowledges the error of his understanding, words, and sentiments, of which he was the subject, when like a child, he went by what others said, and not from his own personal investigation, and inquiry after truth. I acknowledge, to the shame of many in the present day, that it is otherwise with them, for they wholly speak and believe, from what a favorite preacher or author tells them, is truth, not possessed of a single idea, derived from prayer to God, or reading the Scriptures."

tion, are founded more particularly upon the following considerations. *First*. I cannot find it deducible from the work of God's salvation. *Secondly*. I cannot find it in the experience of any of God's people. *Thirdly*. I have proved it to be in direct opposition to God's word. *First*. I cannot find the sentiment of progressive sanctification, deducible from the work of God as a trinity of persons, to whom the sanctification of the whole family of God is ascribed, without the *least thought, word, or deed*, of the creature. The sanctification of God's elect, as ascribed to the first person, in the glorious Trinity, is mentioned Jude, verse the first, which includes the Father's eternal act of setting apart, from the rest of human nature, the persons of the elect in Jesus Christ, his Son, as the federal head, representative, and everlasting father of God's chosen people. Dr. Watts, sweetly and fitly expresses it,

" Christ be my first elect, he said,  
Then chose our souls in Christ, our head."

Now the object of this eternal act of the Father's sanctifying the church, was, St. Paul tells us, that they might be holy, and without blame; Ephes. i. 4. Note, *holy*, not partially so, that is, in some small degree, admitting of a progress to be carried on, and consummated by the creature; no, but that they might be perfectly, spotlessly, holy. The believing spouse was told by her lord, whose judgment may, and ought to be the standard of our faith, concerning the church's sanctification, that she was ALL fair, that there was *no spot* in her. Cant. iv. 7. Paul says, that Christ loved the church, and as a proof of this love, he gave himself for it; and the object of this gracious outgoing of love, was, that he

might sanctify and cleanse it, that it might be **LIKE HIMSELF**, glorious in holiness, not having spot, or wrinkle, or *any* such thing; but, that it should be holy, and without blemish; read the full account. Ephes. v. 25—27. Now, I suppose for the church to be without spot, is to be perfectly holy in Christ, neither needing, nor admitting, of any after degrees acquired by the efforts of the creature. Christ, Heb. ix. 14, is said to have offered himself without spot to God; and if Christ's perfect holiness was thus described, we are bound to allow the same force of meaning, to the words, *without spot*, when applied to the church. Ezekiel says, the church's beauty, which means her holiness, was *perfect* through the comeliness, that is, holiness of the Lord God, which was put upon her; and this is a blessed key to Cant. i. 8, where the poor mourning sorrowful spouse, bewailing her own deformity, and intimating her own ignorance, is told by her lord, that she was "the fairest among women;" expressive of her sanctification, and holiness, which *were* superlative, admitting of no increase, or addition; for I contend, that the church, and every believer is arrived to, and partakes of, the highest and most perfect pitch and degree of holiness, that God himself can be possessed of, according to her covenant standing in, and *eternal union* to, her dear Lord, head, and husband, Jesus Christ. But of what physical, or supernatural powers, must my opponents be possessed, to extract the sentiment of progressive sanctification from the foregoing, and I believe truly scriptural account, of the believer's sanctification. Secondly. The sanctification of the whole family of God, is also ascribed to the second person in the glorious Trinity, the Lord Jesus Christ. The church, or people of God, are

revealed in Scripture, as being, from eternity, **IN** Christ; and according to this doctrinal statement, of believer's eternal union to Christ, the church must have been perfect, and complete, in their perfect head, for there is *no unrighteousness or unholiness in him*; and if perfect, and complete in Christ, they must have in him, what was essential to their going to heaven, or seeing the Lord, i. e. holiness, or sanctification; wherefore, my brother, for proof, that this was, is, and will be the case, consult the following Scriptures. St. Paul, writing to the church at Corinth, 1 Cor. i. 2, salutes them as "the church of God, sanctified **IN** Christ Jesus, who is made unto them sanctification, ver. 30. And if we wish to know now, or in what sense, our Lord is made the sanctification of the church, and the quality thereof, we must read St. Paul's epistle to the Hebrews, who treats on sanctification, as a chief subject in that epistle, as he did on justification in his epistles to the Romans, and Galatians. The church's *eternal* sanctification, in Christ, is derived, first, from the eternal union that exists, between Christ and his people; he being their federal head, whose holy nature, as the *second man*, was theirs, by their union to him, in the very same sense as Adam's pollution became mine, by my being federally united to him, nearly six thousand years before I had an existence, which made Dr. Watts say,

" A thousand new born babes are dead,  
By fatal union to their head."

Yes, the human race, were not only constituted dead, but unholy in, or by Adam's death, and unholiness; and just in the same sense, the church is not only made alive, but holy in Christ Jesus. Modern Calvinists consent to the doc-



trine of imputed sin, but not to the doctrine of imputed holiness. Secondly. Christ is the church's sanctification, inasmuch as the church IN Christ, is perfectly absolved, cleared, acquitted, and made free, from all the uncleanness, pollution, and sin of the fall, yes, they, whom the Son, by his atonement, makes free, are free indeed: he cleanses them from all sin; they are, indeed, glorious to relate, and more glorious to believe, and live upon; by his precious blood, sanctified and separated from all the sin that accompanies their lives in general, and also their prayers, their reading, their meditations, their preachings, their writings, and their best obedience. The poet justly observes,

“ Sin is mixt with all I do.”

And so it is, and yet O glorious belief: our Lord has so efficiently sanctified, and cleansed us from all general and particular sins, that it is not our sin, but his; for however angry poor mortals may be, at such a declaration, it is a fact, that Christ gave himself, that is, his holiness, innocence, and freedom from all exposure to judicial sufferings, to us, and took on himself, all our pollution, guilt, and liabilities to the wrath, and vindictive suffering, which must have been, either ours or his, but cannot possibly belong to both. It was this view of Christ, that made Luther affirm, that he was the greatest sinner in the world; and St. Paul, confirms it, by saying, “ He was made SIN;” yes, I add, Christ sanctifies the church, and absolves them, by delivering them from all sin, and doing the will of God himself, in their stead; which will, as done by Christ their sanctifier, is their sanctification. Heb. x. 10. And on this account, he hath perfected for ever,

them that are sanctified. Heb. x. 14. Yes, "he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one; for which cause, he is not ashamed to call them brethren." Heb. ii. 11. Yes, one in perfect holiness, in the eyes of the most holy God, so that neither iniquity, nor perverseness, does God behold in Jacob: he is pure, even as Christ is pure. OF ONE, see Romans, xi. 16, "For if the first fruits be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches." If the Hebrew church, in the old dispensation, which was a type of the spiritual, under the new, were only freed, or absolved from the *guilt* of their sin, through the medium of the scape-goat, and not from the *pollution* of their sin, by the blood of the slain sacrifices, then, of course, they went back to their tents, in a state of defilement, though not of condemnation; and on an analogy of reasoning, the most scriptural, if God's elect, are only freed from the guilt of their sin, by Christ's bearing their sin away, without being delivered from the pollution of it; by the same medium then, of course, they have only freedom from the guilt of sin, IN Christ, they must look elsewhere for sanctification from the defilement of it; but let the advocates of such partial benefits, connected with union to Christ, read Isaiah i. 18, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Now then, to what does this refer, but to their sanctification, from the defilement of the sin, which is mentioned as a loathsome disease, in verse the sixth—Psa. li. 7; and because the people of God, are sanctified by the will of God, done by Christ, as well as justified by his being the end of the law for

righteousness, I think the Scriptures speak as much of the imputed sanctification of the people of God, as of their imputed righteousness unto justification; but where can we find in this account, of Christ being the perfect sanctification of the church, any thing about progressive sanctification? *Thirdly*. I observe, that the sanctification of the people of God's choice, is ascribed to the third person of the glorious Trinity; "Through sanctification of the Spirit," 1 Pet. i. 2, which sanctification, is much spoken of in the Scriptures. It is a new covenant blessing, exclusively belonging to, because exclusively provided for, and bequeathed to, the children of God, this is the altar mentioned by Paul, whereof others have no right to eat, none but the elect, have either part or lot in this matter, neither can they, any more than fallen angels. The sanctification of the Spirit flows wholly (as the originating cause) from the love of God to the persons of the elect, while the fountain, or source of the Spirit's sanctification is in Christ, in whom, by faith in him, and his perfect doing of the will, or fulfilling the law of God, believers by the indwelling of God the Spirit, in them, receive the personal manifestation, knowledge, and enjoyment thereof, they receive out of his fulness, and grace for grace. They being sons, by eternal election, in due time, that is, according to the time of God's eternal purposing, the "Spirit of his Son comes into their hearts, crying Abba Father," Gal. iv. 6; observe, not they cry, but the Spirit of his Son cries, in their hearts, and this agrees with Romans viii. 26. "The Spirit itself, maketh intercession for us. And he that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what is the mind of the SPIRIT, because HE maketh intercession *for* the saints according to the will of God." The Holy

Ghost works all our works in us, He quickens us together WITH Christ. Again, "And the angel answered and said unto her, the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God." Being born again of the Spirit, our bodies become temples for the Holy Ghost to dwell in, and from this period, may be seen in every child of God, a company of two armies, the flesh and the Spirit; two distinct natures possessed of two distinct dispositions, and objects of pursuit, they are two distinct ones, called, the old man, and the new; that which is born, and exists after the flesh, is flesh still, as much after the bodies of the saints become the temples of the Holy Ghost, as before, it being our immortal, or spiritual part, only, which is the subject of divine quickening; it having obtained the regenerating change, which is the first fruits of the Spirit's work, on the objects of electing love, which work of the Spirit, will be at the morning of the first resurrection, seen and enjoyed, in the bodies of the saints, "For if the Spirit of him that raised up Christ from the dead, dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his spirit that dwelleth in you;" which words, sweetly explain the context, which says, the believer's spirit, is alive because of righteousness, while his body is still dead, because of sin; the latter having undergone no change whatever, by the work of the Spirit, in regeneration, nor will it till the resurrection. I have often been astonished, to read the exposition given by expositors and preachers, of that exquisitely beautiful passage in the first epistle of John, iii. 9. "Whosoever is born of God,

doth not commit, sin, for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God;" now what interpretation do men give to this passage generally? why, either that it proves the Arminian perfection, or that it means, what it says in a qualified sense, and not absolutely, "i. e. does not make a trade, it is not the common course of his life, he does not give himself up to sin," &c. &c. For a similar exposition, I might refer you to Pool's annotation on the passage; "he cannot *sin*, i. e. do an act of known, gross sin, deliberately, easily, remorselessly, maliciously, as *Cain*, out of hatred to goodness, or do not such acts *customarily*, or not so unto death," &c. Now surely, such expositions are very crude, robbing the passage of all its innate beauty: the passage in my opinion, admits of an exposition, in the most unqualified sense, only with this authorized alteration, instead of its being read "*whosoever* is born," &c. it should be read "*whatsoever* is born of God," unless the reader bears in mind, what must be an allowed fact i. e. that our translators, have personified that, which in reality is not a person, viz. the immortal part of the Christian, which is that part of the believer which *cannot commit sin*; for proof of this, read chap. v. 4. where, more properly that part of the believer, which is the subject of the new birth, is not personified, but spoken of as it really is, a subsistence, and not a person; the meaning of this passage then is this, *whosoever's* spirit is made alive because of righteousness, another expression for being born of God, cannot, that is, that soul doth not commit sin, though it did before regeneration, in conjunction with its consociated existence, both of which made one sinful person, but now it doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, i. e. God's seed,

which remaineth *in* the renewed spirit of the believer, the proposition in, being indicative of the union of the spirit, that is born of God, with Jesus Christ, of whose nature he is made partaker, who is born of God, whosoever he is; this is beautifully explained by the Apostle Paul, who says, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Again, "quickened together *with* Christ;" who, as God's seed, or nature, remains in a consociated union with that immortal part of the Christian, called his spirit, on which account, whatsoever human spirit, is thus become consociated into Christ, cannot sin, because he (if we keep up the figure of personification) is born of God, see 1. John·iii. 7, "*Little children, let no man deceive you, he that doth righteousness is righteous, EVEN (that is in the same way, and to the same extent) AS HE IS RIGHTEOUS;*" what more can be said in defence, not only of the perfect righteousness of believers unto justification, by the imputed righteousness of Christ, but of the true, or *perfect* holiness, elsewhere called righteousness, into which the spirit born of God is formed, by the Holy Ghost, in regeneration? Now Sir, do not these passages thus scripturally explained (and I think I am allowed to say, they are scripturally explained) show, that sanctification of the Spirit, of which all believers are the subjects, is a perfect work? Why, doubtless it is, nor can any sentiment be fraught with more relative evils, than that which represents the work of the Spirit as imperfect; nothing can be more derogatory to the glory of the Spirit than to represent his work imperfectly holy. The Holy Ghost says Ezek. xxxvi 25, "A new heart," not a mended, or old heart new modelled, but "a new heart will I give you:" wherefore, I should conclude, that such a heart would be perfectly holy,

but I need cite no more Scriptures or produce any more arguments to prove that the sentiment of progressive sanctification is not, nor can be deducible from the work of the blessed Trinity, to whom the perfect sanctification of the church is ascribed; "GOD IS A ROCK, AND HIS WORK IS PERFECT." Deut. xxxii. 4. *Secondly*. I cannot find the sentiment of progressive sanctification in the experience of any of God's people, but, like the Arminian's sinless perfection, it is much talked of, but never realized. I have had personal intercourse with ministers of twenty years standing, at the work of preaching progressive sanctification, who have absolutely, and flatly denied the sentiment, in relation to themselves, yes they have more than acknowledged, that they had been preaching for years to their people, about a sentiment, the existence and truth of which, they never either tasted, touched, or handled themselves, yea more, it was *contrary to their own experience*; for, instead of their getting more and more holy, and sanctified every day, they were constrained to acknowledge, that if any alteration existed, it was, that they were worse, and worse, which made them doubt their conversion; nor will it avail any thing, to say, as the advocates of progressive sanctification do, when appealed to on the point, that is, "not that the persons thus complaining and doubting are worse (then why so afraid, and alarmed at being thought so) only they see themselves worse;" was there ever such jejune reasoning in the world, as that which the advocates of progressive sanctification have recourse to? why, if the subjects of progressive sanctification are getting better, and better every day, for twenty years continuance, surely they must be capable of discerning the cheat, which would persuade them,

that they get worse and worse ; the fact is this, I might have said, in prospect of taking up my pen in disapproval of progressive sanctification, as Mr. Toplady did, prospective of his encountering with Arminian freewill, " I am in fact going to encounter a phantom," but how consistent it is, for ministers to preach to others, what they have never experienced themselves, yea, what their own experience contradicts, I will leave my reader to decide. But that this is the case, with every minister who preaches progressive sanctification, is evident, for there neither is, nor can be, such a statement made of sanctification, from personal experience, and depend upon it, all true Christian experience is, but a second edition of the Bible, written in the minds of believers by the Holy Spirit, for, " He shall guide you into all truth."

Wherefore, as the Holy Spirit has never guided any of his dear children into the experience of, what is called progressive sanctification, it must be a genuine fabrication; wherefore, St. Paul's sentence is, " Let God be true, and every man a liar;" consequently, I shall make two general observations on this part of my subject, and pass on. First. I shall observe, that all true Christian experience, and the Scriptures fully and clearly demonstrate, that the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, in believers, called experimental sanctification, neither diminishes the quantity, nor alters the qualities, of the flesh. Rom vii. 18, " For I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing, for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not." And this is most conspicuously evident, from all the similes and scriptural assertions on this point of doctrine. The Shulamite Cant. vi. 13 is, I think, to the point. " There was



only one company, but of that one company, there were two armies," the sense of which is, two opposite forces; for the soldiers under one government, let them be never so many, are never called but one army; whereas, the soldiers belonging to two opposite powers, and those the most hostile, all shut up in one room or company, would still be two armies, and is not this clear, as applied to the point of contention, that is, every believer is like the Shulamite, in possession of two armies; as opposite in their natures, as Christ and Belial; sin and holiness; flesh and spirit; and is not their hostility to each other, as great as the hostility of God and the Devil? do not each seek their own? is not the prince of the power of darkness at the head of one army, and the Prince of peace and light at the head of the other? and though, ultimately, what is called the new man, the Spirit, or nature of Christ, of which believers are partakers, will have the complete victory, over what is called the old man, the flesh, or the "mortal body," yet it will not be from the least alteration in the quality, or quantity of the latter; every believer in Jesus being constrained to say, "Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me; for I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not; for the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, THAT I DO. Now if I do that which I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of

my mind, and *bringing me into captivity to the law of sin*, which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin." Rom. vii. 17—25. Do remark, I beseech you, for the better accounting for the clashing of dispositions, and opposite conduct, of the self-same individual, how the apostle expresses himself on the subject—"So then, with the mind, I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh *I serve* the law of sin." Were it otherwise, the believer would have less reason to complain, he would have less opposition, less need for watching and praying, but this is not the case, for Christ does not put the new wine of sanctification into the old broken bottles of our flesh, called the old man, any more than sew the new linen of his righteousness, upon the old garment of our filthy rags, called our righteousnesses. Believers are said to be partakers of the divine nature, not united to their flesh, but distinct from it, or else, Christ and Belial must be united. Well might Luther importune his friends, saying, "pray for me, I beseech you, for I am cold, and torpid; a most unaccountable lassitude, if not Satan himself, possesses me, so that I am able to do very little."

"To good and evil equal bent,  
Sinful in nature, yet a saint."

Or, as another saint says,

"I see the right, and I approve it too;  
Condemn the wrong, and yet **THE WRONG PURSUE.**"

My second general observation is, that whereas,

the mortal bodies of God's saints, admit of no alteration, in either quality or quantity, they being perfectly depraved, desperately wicked, and deceitful above all things, so neither, does the divine, or sanctified nature of believers, admit of any preferment in holiness, nor can it suffer any diminution, it being perfectly holy, yes, like the "holy thing," produced in the virgin's womb, called the Son of God, whose holy nature every believer is made partaker of, for "He that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified are one;" wherefore, there is no more room for progressive sanctification of believers, than there is for the progressive sanctification of Christ, seeing they are both equally holy. But, before I conclude my communication upon sanctification, I shall advert to the false reasoning, of a late popular, modern Calvinist, notorious, for his avowed hostility to those of his brethren, who could not see with his eyes upon this controverted point; I refer to the late Dr. Ryland, who, in his preface to Mr. Fuller's pamphlet, on Antinomianism, undertook to write in defence of progressive sanctification, by affirming, that it is not only a scriptural doctrine, but it is a duty imperiously enjoined on all believers: this, I confess sounds very strange, that the sanctification of believers, begun as they tell us, by the Spirit in regeneration, should become the duty of the professor to perfect. After the doctor had made a most unchristian like, and false insinuation, concerning his brethren who believe in the imputed sanctification of Christ to believers, by insinuating that they deny internal sanctification, he goes on to say, "but if there be any internal sanctification, is it *progressive*; is there any such thing as *growth* in grace? and is growth in grace a *duty*?" Here I understand (says the doctor) there are pro-

fessors, who would return a negative answer." This question, I reply, is evidently complex, and plainly shows, either, that the doctor could not see afar off, upon his subject, or that he intentionally jumbled these two distinct objects into one question, as a designed snare, and net, for the unstable reader; for the last question or part, "Is there any such thing as growth in grace?" is evidently intended, as an underhand insinuation, that the persons who do not believe, and are not afraid to deny the dogma of progressive sanctification, disbelieve, and deny also, the same sentiment, the Christian's growth in grace, or his perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord; a sentiment, the most remote from their minds and words, who disbelieve, in either creature holiness, or progressive sanctification. No Sir, but on the contrary, myself as an individual, and every one who believes with the heart, and confesses with the mouth, the belief of the church's perfect sanctification in Christ, believes also that their perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord, wholly originates in, and flows from, the perfection of their sanctification or holiness, which they have in their head, Christ. One great evil, characteristic of the advocates of progressive sanctification is, that they *cannot* discern, and therefore do not distinguish, things which differ, the baneful result of which is, they confound things, wherein they are palpably distinct, though in other respects they are united; as is the case with the tree and its fruit. It is acknowledged on all hands, that our first parents ate the forbidden fruit, but it is no where said, that they ate the tree; but it might be said so on the system of progressive sanctification, for that invariably confounds sanctification and its fruits, as though they were one. Could the

branches of a vine speak, they would say, they should droop, despair, and die, without hope of ever bringing forth perfect fruit, as it respects either quality or quantity, were not their entire resources of fruitfulness lodged in the vine; on the contrary, that is, seeing they have perfect resources in the vine, they do not despair of perfect fruitfulness. But the living branches can speak, and they are free to say, that they must for ever despair of perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord, only for the assurance, that they have *perfect* holiness in Christ, their true and living vine; but having those great and precious promises, "I will be your God, and ye shall be my people," with the declaration, that "my beloved is mine, and I am his;" that Christ and his people are one, even as Christ and his Father are one; flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone; a rib taken out of his flesh; they claim equality of nature with their Husband and Brother, with as much propriety and truth, on their side, as Eve, on her part, could claim equality with Adam: wherefore, seeing Christ is perfectly holy, they must be so too. Christ is the believer's green tree; from him is their fruit found, and therefore it must be perfect fruit. Christ taught in his days, that a tree must be good, before the fruit could be good, and of course, where the tree is good, the fruit will be good also; for a good tree cannot bring forth bad fruit, any more than that which is born of God, can sin. Our Lord also said, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father, which is in heaven, is perfect." But where was this perfection to spring from? Not from an imperfect source of sanctification; you might as well tell the Saviour that a tree, partially good, might bring forth perfect fruit.

It must be acknowledged on all hands, that sanctification and its fruits, are two distinct things, as distinct as a tree and its fruit; and yet, both Christ and his apostles enjoined it upon their disciples, to bring forth, not partial, imperfect, or progressive, but the perfect fruits of their sanctification; but how were they to do it, but by "looking unto Jesus?" As the elect of God, holy and beloved, we are "to put off the old man," not make him better, nor expect God to do it, but to put him off, not partially, or progressively, but fully. "Likewise, reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom. vi. 11. Again, we are exhorted to "Put on the new man, which, after (or by) God, is created in righteousness and *true* holiness;" or, as the margin reads it, "the holiness of truth;" i. e. Christ, who is both the TRUTH and true holiness, (Eph. iv. 24) perfect, genuine, not partial, nor admitting of being progressively made so, by creature performances; indeed it is self-evident, that a child of God must have perfect sanctification in Christ, from arguments too numerous to be named. From these observations, the reader will perceive the very obvious and cogent reasons, why I cannot receive as truth, Dr. Ryland's system of *partial* sanctification; but Dr. R. not only taught and urged, most vehemently, the sentiment, here opposed, but urged also, that it was the *creature's duty*. With what propriety has that worthy author of a sermon, entitled "God the Doer of all Things." remarked, that "many who call and account themselves Calvinists, or Calvinistic, are in heart and understanding, if not avowedly, freewillers, squaring, as they seek to do, the testimony of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to the deductions

of blinded human reason, and making a God for themselves, by blending shreds and patches of Scripture, with shreds and patches of their own imagination, instead of simply studying, lying at the feet of, and inhabiting, that Living and True One, whom the Bible has been written and published to make known ;” though really such is the confusion of the sentiment, it being made up of contradictions, the most opposed, that all who have written, or spoken in defence of it, have only darkened counsel with words without knowledge ; as a glaring proof of this, read Dr. R’s. own words—he says, “ In order to judge better of the sentiment (progressive sanctification) let us take it to pieces, or consider the different *fruits* of the Spirit separately. If there be no growth in faith, why did the apostles apply to their divine Lord, saying, ‘increase our faith!’ In this statement, two inconsistencies stare us in the face, both of which clearly prove, that the sentiment, herein contended for, is not of God. *First.* It is insinuated, that the fruits of the Spirit are the believer’s sanctification, but pray what single text of Scripture warrants such a conclusion? I have always thought, since I have thought from the word, that Christ was OUR SANCTIFICATION, and that the fruits of the Spirit were only the manifestation, and certain evidence of interest therein. But, *secondly.* I ask, allowing that the fruits of the Spirit were the church’s sanctification, what Christian man, in his right mind, would think of insinuating, that the fruits of the Spirit were not, like the author of them, most holy, perfectly holy? Can any thing be imperfectly holy, that proceeds from the Holy Spirit? surely not. But the doctor teaches moreover, that the sentiment includes an increase of faith, and that to acquire

that increase is the Christian's duty; though, by the by, we are told, in the same breath, that the disciples prayed to their Lord, to perform this for them; from which we learn, that the disciples prayed to their divine Lord, to do their duty. How absurd; but the doctor informs us, moreover, (page 11) that the sentiment of progressive sanctification, is contained in the apostle's prayer for the Philippians, (Philip. i. 9—11) whereas, the prayer is not *to the Philippians*, but *to God for them*, and yet we are told by the writer, that progressive sanctification is a creature duty; but would the apostle be so absurd, as to pray to God to do for the Philippians, what it was their duty to do for themselves, which was, to make themselves more sanctified; but this is the very folly of the sentiment I am opposing: the absurdity however, of my opponents' attempting to establish their truly unscriptural tenet, on this text, will appear, if we only glance at the import of the Apostle Paul's prayer. He prays for an abundant increase of their love, knowledge, and judgment, that they might be sincere or genuine in their sentiments, discerning and approving that which was excellent, being without offence, and filled with the *fruits of righteousness*, but if these words contain the sentiment of progressive sanctification, then I will be answerable, for asserting, that the angels in heaven, and Christ, when on earth, were both the subjects of progressive sanctification, for that this prayer was realized in the life of Christ, from his birth to his death, who will question, and that angels have been increasingly abounding, in love, knowledge, and judgment, discerning and approving that which is excellent, ever since God has been discovering himself to them,



none can disprove; but does this teach that, therefore, they are the subjects of progressive sanctification. That angels always have been, and still are, the subjects of comparative knowledge, who dare deny, but that they are not the subjects of perfect holiness, who dare affirm. Are we not informed also, that our dear Lord grew in knowledge; but if a growth in knowledge is progressive sanctification, as say its abettors, then necessarily the Saviour was the subject of it, an assumption the most ridiculous. But the authors and advocates of this ridiculous cipher, have made much ado about our Lord's parable of the blade, the ear, and the full corn; they have asserted, that if progressive sanctification was not contained, and defended, in those words, then there was no such sentiment in the Bible, and it really is so; wherefore, we have only to prove, that it is not there, and by so doing, we shall prove it to be, as I have before said, unscriptural. The Saviour's parable, was evidently designed to set forth his dear children in the various stages of their experience; but who can possibly think so absurdly, who accustom themselves to think at all, that our Lord taught such a doctrine, as that his people's experience was their sanctification. Oh, my brother, what a poor sanctification, as well as salvation, do they contend for, who contend for a sanctification out of Christ. I would advise my friend to consult, without fail, Mr. Newton's tract, "Growth in Grace;" and there he has described the matter, as wholly implying a progressive increase in knowledge, judgment, correct feelings, and correspondent practice in the life of a Christian, but does the believer's faith, knowledge, judgment, and correct feelings, or the most exemplary conduct, include *any part of his sanctification*; till

this can be proved, progressive sanctification ought to lay by in the chancery of oblivion, as not teachable, till God shall give us another gospel. Mr. Newton, any more than his divine Master, never once insinuated that C. was more sanctified than B., or that B. was more sanctified than A. No, I believe that good man was too honest, and judicious, to interpret Scripture thus. Time would fail me; indeed, it would be needless to advert to minor considerations, which gentlemen have advanced, in favor of the sentiment I have here opposed; in fact they merit no notice. I have aimed at laying the axe of truth, to the root of the erroneous sentiment, and succeeding in this, the branches must fall, though in fact, the clashing contradictions contended for, one against another, amongst its ablest supporters, are all that can be desired, with a view to its overthrow, in the minds of young Christians, the very hour they apply themselves to read the books that have been written in its defence. Dr. Ryland contends for it, as a duty, devolving on the creature. Agnostos insists that it is a blessing, promised by God; Mr. Fletcher affirms, that regeneration is the *beginning* of sanctification; Mr. Beart, in his book, so highly recommended by Mr. Fletcher, will have it, that regeneration is an *entire* renovation; Mr. Hinton, another very popular modern Calvinist, asserts, that a part of the Christian is wholly sanctified, being "*as holy now as ever it will be,*" and this perfectly sanctified part of the Christian, is called by Mr. H. "*the new creature,*" which to me, seemed very ambiguous, and made me desirous to know what he referred to by *his* "*new creature;*" in answer to which, I was informed that it "*is simply a right disposition:*" but that, in which this popular modern Calvinist is most heterodox, is in his

views, of how Christ is made unto us sanctification, i. e. "Christ is made unto us sanctification, but it is strictly, exclusively, by the motives arising from his death," from which, had not Mr. H. informed me to the contrary, I should have thought him a *modern Socinian*, for that is expressly how they contend for Christ being made sanctification to his people, only they add, his life is to be coupled with his death, in which they verily outstrip modern Calvinists, in point of accuracy. Mr. Buck, another violent opponent to Antinomianism, teaches us, that sanctification is to be considered, "*first*, as an inestimable *privilege* granted us from God; and, *secondly*, as an all comprehensive *duty*, required of us by his Holy Word." Mr. Crisp might well say, that some men's learning makes them write *pro* and *con*. Nor was Dr. Hawker less guided by the Spirit of inspiration, when he undertook to publish that very blessed work, "THE TRUE GOSPEL, NO YEA AND NAY GOSPEL." O, but modern Calvinists have altogether abandoned the idea of being consistent, in the ministry of the word, on which account, they, with one breath, tell their hearers, that "*they can do nothing*," and then directly after contend, with an effrontery, characteristic of inconsistency, that though they can do nothing, yet they are to be exhorted to do that, on which is suspended their eternal all, even to repent, whether they possess the grace of repentance or not. "Yes, we must exhort you, to do, as the condition of your being saved, that which we tell you you have *no* might or strength to perform." But who, among those who are inquiring after truth, are to prepare themselves for battle, guided by a trumpet of such an uncertain sound. I may conclude this department of my strictures, on progressive

sanctification, and defence, of the believer's perfect sanctification, by asserting, that whatever controverted point in theology, is at war with that which is incontrovertible, is founded on falsehood, and not on truth. It is incontrovertibly true, that we are COMPLETE IN Christ, that we are blessed with ALL spiritual blessings IN him, and that, from the period of our being the elect of God, accepted in the beloved; also, that God's work is *perfect*. It having been proved, then, that the believer's sanctification, is the *sole* work and achievement of the Holy Trinity, the believer's sanctification must be *perfect*; to contend otherwise, is to contend that the creature is *bound, in duty*, to perfect the work which God has begun. Now, *progressive* sanctification, is directly opposed to the above incontrovertible text of divine revelation; and this proves, that progressive sanctification is human error, opposed to God's truth. In opposition to this, we are informed by Agnostos, "that if there is no such thing as *progressive sanctification*, there can be no such thing as perseverance;" "this is undoubtedly true, if the biblical sentiments of God's sanctifying his people, and the saints, or sanctified one's, final perseverance unto glory, are one and the same sentiment. Agnostos, therefore, must in his next "thoughts on Antinomianism," prove, that the believer's sanctification, and the saints' final perseverance, are one and the same thing; this, however, he will be matched to do, for God's saints are to hold on their way to glory, as those who are already "washed," not partially so; already sanctified, not partially so; already justified, not partially so. And though they shall grow "stronger and stronger," to which Agnostos refers us, in his sixteenth page, but that authorizes no such a

sentiment as progressive sanctification, for the persons mentioned in the text referred to, (Job xvii. 9) are referred to in a fourfold view; *first*, to their justification, as "the righteous;" *secondly*, to their sanctification, under the emblem of "*clean hands*;" note Sir, "*CLEAN HANDS*," not partly so, admitting, yea, requiring to be made cleaner, which was to be effected by the subject of the already attained to sanctity. No, I repeat, the hands of the righteous were as perfectly clean, as the subjects of that sanctification, were perfectly, and not partially, righteous. The *third* sentiment, contained in that precious text is, the doctrine of the saints' final perseverance, they shall hold on their way. Now who, but a crazy person, would think of consolidating these two distinct gospel doctrines, into one and the same thing. I should not have detained you so long, by my remarks on this text, had not Agnostos referred to it, for proof of progressive sanctification; but what of growing "*stronger*, and stronger?" Why, this is the fourth member, if I may so express myself, of the blessedness of those, whose mercy it is to be found on "*the way*" to heaven, by being *in* the way, Christ Jesus, of whose nature, and I suppose his nature is perfect sanctity, they are made partakers, by being quickened together *with* him, born of God; but what is their state when they are first brought forth by God, as new born babes; are they as strong as children? are they as strong as young men? are they as strong as fathers? no, indeed; but they are like lambs, so weak, that they must be carried in the shepherd's bosom. But shall they always continue thus weak? O no; they shall, as God's righteous and sanctified ones, grow stronger and stronger; and if we want to know, what that increase of

strength, promised to the righteous and sanctified believer, consists of, we are informed by the apostles, in their different epistles, to the saints in Christ Jesus; and what is it? why an increase of knowledge, not always remaining *children*, i. e. weaklings, in divine understanding; but who will dare to say, that in case Adam and Eve had had a child, while in their primeval holiness, that their new born babe would not have been so *holy* as its parents, though not so strong. But this leads me to observe, *thirdly*, that I object to the dogma of *progressive* sanctification, on account of its being in direct opposition to God's Holy Word; this I have already proved to be the case, from Job xvii. 9; that passage, however, is only one of a thousand, equally decisive on the subject; in proof of which, I beg you will follow me in my references to revelation, that every word of the Antinomian faith, now pleaded for, may be established "*according to the Scriptures,*" for—

“ There the fair tree of *knowledge* grows,  
Nor *danger* dwells therein.

This is the judge that ends the strife,  
Where wit and reason fail;  
Our guide to everlasting life,  
Through all the gloomy vale.

WATTS.

Pray what is it to be sanctified? is it not to be sinless? In that *invaluable* treasure, (which, could I have my will, every student in divinity should possess) “ Bagster's Comprehensive Bible,” we have the fullest, the truest, and, therefore, the very best exposition of the Holy Scriptures that ever was published; for therein, (distinct from all other expositions) the Scriptures are *suffered* to speak for, and therefore to expound, their own legitimate meaning, by which twofold authority,

the scriptural reader, of the meanest capacity, is furnished with the most unerring standard, for ascertaining the knowledge of the truth, as it is in "*the gospel of grace and truth.*" In Job xvii. 9, for instance, to which your attention has been invited already, where the Holy Ghost has set forth the sanctification of his church, by the metaphor, of "*clean hands,*" for the exposition, or signification of which, the reader is referred to Gen. xx. 5, where Abimelech contends for his own sinlessness, although he had taken Abraham's wife, by saying, "in the integrity of my heart, and the *innocency* of my hands, have I done this;" to which the Almighty, ("who will by no means clear the guilty,") more than admits, by saying, in verse 6, "I know that thou didst this in the *integrity* of thy heart," the meaning of which is, in the most *spotless* innocency, or sanctity of thy heart thou didst it; the margin reads it, in the "*sincerity* of thy heart." Now for the scriptural meaning of the word sincerity, I have only to insert this beautiful note, to which in fact, those very commentators have acceded, and from which, they have quoted; whose sentiment of progressive sanctification, it overthrows, "*sincere*, note: *properly pure and unsullied, to such a degree, as to bear examination in the full splendors of the solar rays,*" the radical meaning of which, may be further confirmed by Job xxxiii. 10, "I am *clean* without transgression, I am innocent, neither is their iniquity in me." Should it be said, that the legitimate meaning of these words is legal, and not spiritual, I will readily concede to it, but with how much more propriety may they be adopted, by the sanctified IN Christ Jesus, of whom, and to whom, it has been declared, "thou ART all fair my love, there is *no spot* in thee." Song iv. 7. But perhaps some determined advo-

cate for progressive sanctification, will retort, "yes all fair in Christ, in point of righteousness, inasmuch, as Christ's righteousness is imputed to all his people, but it is downright Antinomianism to believe, that the believer is sanctified, or made holy *in Christ Jesus*," indeed it is downright Antinomianism, thus to believe, nor is it less downright Christ's gospel, for what is Christ's gospel, but the glad tidings which speak to every one, "called to be a saint," saying "thou art all fair my love, there is no spot in thee;" for proof of this, let us ask, could it be said, that the believer is *all* fair in Christ, if he only possessed the righteousness, which is the matter of his justification, and not the holiness, which is the matter of his sanctification? Again, would that gospel be either the gospel of peace, or good news, which informs a poor law convicted, sin diseased, and defiled sinner, that though it proclaimed justification from guilt by Christ, it did not proclaim absolution from pollution, by the same medium, and from the same source? and yet, such is the gospel preached, in the present day, of anti-evangelical darkness, the evidence of which is, the abounding distress of mind and soul, among God's own called people, whose misery it is, to give ear to that Arminianized gospel propagated by persons, who, "with lies have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I, saith the Lord, have not made sad." (Ezek. xiii. 22) by telling them, "they must have a worthiness, a personal fitness, nay, they must have a righteousness, an evangelical one, as a condition on which God bestows Christ's righteousness;" so said some, in opposition to Dr. Crisp's Antinomianism, to which his son smartly replies, "I should have thought the best direction for spiritual peace, had been, to send



men immediately to Christ; this man shall be our peace, he having made peace by the blood of his cross, he saith, ' My peace I give to you; ' he doth not say, I give it *on condition* you get an evangelical righteousness, and worthiness; but saith, ' Whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely.' " The poormanslayer would not thank any that should stop him, when fleeing to the city of refuge, to tell him, Sir, you must not run into that city, all bloody and dirty, you must stay and wash yourself in yonder puddle (of an evangelical righteousness) before you go farther. But if the called of God are all fair, perfectly sanctified, unsullied to such a degree, as to challenge examination by the full splendor of the solar rays, there appears great beauty in that little comprehensive, *positive present tense* word, thou ART all fair, but if the church is only partially holy, admitting, yea needing to be made *more holy*, by the creature; in that case the Holy Ghost has misled us, and instead of saying, " thou ART all fair," it ought to have been, " thou art *beginning* to be fair my love," your Ethiopian skin has *begun* to change, by the *partial* washing of regeneration, and by the "*beginning*" of the renewings of the Holy Ghost, and your sanctification being thus *begun*, you are to be made a little holier and holier every day, by the increasing of your faith, which faith (and not the holiness of Christ, the object of faith) is your sanctification; mind therefore, you must not say, " it is not my DUTY to be any more humble, penitent, patient, submissive, or resigned to the will of God, than I am already;" do not say, it is no *duty* to realize things invisible, (whether you have faith to realize them or not) and to set your affections on high, for in the performance of these duties, depends your attaining to (what

the Holy Ghost, by mistake, for want of seeing so clearly into the doctrine of divine sanctification as divines of the nineteenth century, said you had already attained to IN Christ) perfect sanctification. Another text, to which the sentiment of progressive sanctification is in direct opposition, is Psa. xxiv. 4, "He that hath CLEAN hands and a PURE heart," &c. Now, though the text (let modern divines deny it if they please) has direct reference to Jesus Christ, it is equally applicable to his people, they being one, inasmuch, that Luther represents Christ as saying, "I AM THAT SINNER, *the meaning of which is, in other words, his sins, his death, and punishment, are mine, because he is united, joined to me, and I to him.*" My object however, in directing you to the precious text already named, is to show the equality of the believer with Christ, in point of sanctification; for proof of which, we have only to consider the terms made use of, in reference to both. Is Christ's holiness and sanctity, or *sinless* state, set forth by his having clean hands and a pure heart? certainly it is; and is not the *sinless* state, or sanctification of believers, set forth by the very same terms? Does not Job refer to their sanctity, by that exquisitely striking metaphor of spotless purity and characteristic innocence of "clean hands, while Jesus Christ refers to the same subject, in language, borrowed from the psalm, which referred to himself, calling them the "pure in heart." Compare Psa. xxiv. 4 with Matt. v. 3; and, after that, let the advocates of partial sanctification prove to us, from any lexicon extant; that the etymology of the terms are not the same, when applied to the spiritual in Christ Jesus, as when referring to their spiritual head, and I will be the first to receive the law from their lips; but till that is

done, I will not cease to withstand their dogma, as a sentiment directly opposed to God's word; for if the language employed by the Holy Ghost, in relation to the sanctification of Christ's bride, instructs us to believe, that believers in Christ are the subjects of progressive holiness, then, the etymology of the terms, when applied to Christ, being just the same, proves that Christ also, when on earth, was the subject of progressive sanctification, this being an unavoidable concomitant, (though not the most creditable to the common sense of its votaries) of the sentiment contended against. The next text, by which I have been established in the belief of the sinless sanctity of the sanctified in Christ Jesus, is Prov. xx. 9. Who can say, "I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" Now, though this is a double-edged sword to dispose of the fallacious doctrine of sanctification, perfected by the works of the creature, it is the most confirming text that could be desired, in proof of what I am now contending for, viz. that to be sanctified, is to be "*pure from sin.*" But the Holy Ghost asks, with a view to discriminate between things and persons that differ, "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from sin?" To which I answer, none can say that in truth, (though many others have pretended to it falsely) but the spiritual in Christ Jesus; AND CAN THEY? some will exclaim, with as much amazement as if I was introducing some doctrine never yet found in the Bible;—this however, shall not deter me from giving the most positive answer in the affirmative, this being the express case of all "Who are born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the WORD of God, (Christ) which liveth and abideth

for ever." "Ye," says Peter, "have purified your souls, in obeying the truth, through the Spirit;" &c. It is a hard thing for an author, who is a preacher, to keep from sermonizing, when called to explain a text, but I will not intrude; suffice it to say, that it, is positively affirmed, that the persons referred to, had purified their souls; here I might leave it it being the testimony of the Holy Ghost, and warrants the most implicit faith; but we may remark further *how they did it*, "in obeying the truth;" what is implied by this? Why, believing the gospel, which says, "Christ is made unto us sanctification, that by one offering, he hath PERFECTED FOR EVER, them that are sanctified," that he is his people's sanctification, by doing the will of God, in their stead, which will, as done by Christ, was in fact their doing it themselves, not in their first Adam's existence, but in the second. So then, as "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted unto him for righteousness," so it is also in sanctification, for God is said, "to purify (sanctify) the hearts of his people, by faith," that is, faith apprehends Christ as the object, the source, or matter of heart purification, for "he that hath this hope (i. e. Christ as revealed in the gospel, for the obedience or apprehension and reliance of faith, as the very substance of the believer's sanctification) *purifieth himself*, even as Christ is pure." But we must not overlook the power, or agent, by which believers purify their souls, which is, "the Spirit;" through the Spirit, believers purify their souls; how so? Why, by HIS taking of Christ, as provided by the Father, as his people's sanctification, and showing him in that covenant character, and union relationship, to the heaven-born soul, whose faith, by the sight

of Christ, thus divinely provided, and divinely revealed, is called forth to act upon Christ, as such, and by which medium, the believer can say, "thanks be to God, for his unspeakable gift," by which "*I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin.*" But in which of all these texts, that treat so pointedly, and exclusively, on sanctification, is there the most distant trace of the sentiment of *progressive*, in opposition to COMPLETE, SANCTIFICATION? I might refer my friend to an almost countless number of passages in Holy Writ, equally conclusive with those already named, but it is unnecessary; allow me, however, to ask, are not the sanctified, in Christ Jesus, said to be, "*clear as the sun?*" Song vi. 10. Are they not compared to "*a flock of sheep that go up from the washing?*" Does not Christ call his church "**A DOVE?**" and does he not also compare them to "*a chaste virgin?*" in which representation, are we not taught to view the bride, the lamb's wife so *completely sanctified*, as to be "*without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing?*" But to all these plain, and positive Scripture references, in defence of what I am contending for, the chimera of progressive sanctification is directly opposed. My next endeavor will be, to dethrone the lofty pretensions of such, as have attempted to support their belief of progressive sanctification, from divine revelation; to effect this, little else is necessary, than to insert the Scriptures to which my opponents refer their readers, for proof of what they believe. In a word, I might do it, by remarking, that the great evil, so glaringly manifest in the defence conducted by the advocates of the sentiment now opposed, is, they will not concede to that, which would end the controversy, by allowing, that sanctification is one

and the same thing, whether in Christ, as the head, or in believers as the body; to oppose which, is as fallacious, as to argue that Cain, the first born of Adam, was not the subject of such *complete* depravity as his father, although the Holy Ghost tells us, that he inherited the likeness, or image of his father, as an heir of all evil; whereas, the Scriptures positively affirm, that those whom the Father foreknew, "were predestinated, to be *conformed* to the *image* of the Son," and how is this brought to pass? why by their being made partakers of the DIVINE NATURE, which, in every sense of the word, is perfect holiness. How I ask, are the subjects of the new birth set forth, in reference to that part of them which is born of God? *First*. We are his workmanship. Now is the work of God, here referred to, a holy work? yes; in what sense? imperfectly so, admitting to be made more holy by the work itself? no; then why contend for progressive sanctification? as they do, who refer us to 1 Pet. ii. 2, for proof of it, insinuating, and teaching, that the "*divine nature*," of which newborn babes in Christ are made partakers, is *less holy* than is the *divine nature*, of which young men in Christ are partakers, on which account one soul in Christ, can say to another soul in Christ, "stand by thyself; I am holier than thou," although they are both partakers of the divine nature. Does *the new man—the hidden man of the heart—the inward man*, include that part of the believer, which is "*born of, or from God?*" who can deny it, but it might be denied with as much propriety, as to allow, with modern Calvinists, that the new born babe in Christ is not so holy, as it is in *duty bound to become*. Some people are warned against the sin of adding to the *word* of God, others have need to be warned

against the sin which presumes on adding to the *work of God*;" but if there is no such thing as progressive sanctification, what is the meaning of Phil. i. 6, "He who hath begun a good work in you, will perform (margin 'finish') it." I have suggested to you already, that the surest way to come at the sense of the Scriptures, is to take their own exposition, and were this method adopted by students in divinity, their hearers would have more of the mind of the Spirit in their sermons. Mr. Brown, the compiler of "*The Self-interpreting Bible*," according to his references from this text, to those designed to expound it, instructs us to understand the "good work begun," &c. to be exclusively a work of divine *teaching*, imparted to those, who were previously made partakers of the divine nature, without which none can receive the teachings of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to them; for proof of which, he directs his readers to John xvi. 8, to show what that teaching included, i. e. "the knowledge of sin, of righteousness and of judgment;" in which exposition, allow me to ask, do you not observe how this work of divine instruction is worded? "He shall *convince*," as was the case, (Acts ii. 37) when the Jews were *pricked*, or *wounded to the heart*, by the arrows of the Almighty, sticking in them, but is all this, or any part of it, a believer's sanctification? I should think not indeed; but God did not give the saints at Philippi this knowledge all at once, for like the Saviour's disciples (John xvi. 12) though God had much to teach them, they could not bear it all at once; after this, Mr. B. directs us to John vi. 29, to prove, that the work was not the work of man, but the work of God, which proves at the same time, that it was not progressive sanctification, "*for that is to be considered,*

as an *all* comprehensive *duty required* of us by the divine word;" although it is very evident, that the apostle never thought of such wild fire as progressive sanctification, the very sense and meaning of which, is a want of perfection in holiness, whereas, the apostle calls the Phillippians the saints *in* Christ; now to be a saint *in* Christ, is to be *superlatively* holy, of which holiness, I add, "our flesh" does not partake in the most remote sense; this is evident from the apostle's words in reference to himself, "FOR *I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing?*" I think I shall never forget, how much mercy and relief I obtained a year or two back, when bowed down by the powerful outgoings of the most sinful desires, to commit sin with all greediness, from which I had not the least power to release myself, on account of which I concluded, that I was indeed a hypocrite the most notorious in the sight of God, that ever had an existence in my solemnly important office, and that it must be, sooner or later, the common conversation of all who knew me; at which time, I happened to take up from among the books in my study, the select remains of that blessed man of God, Mr. JOHN BROWN, to whom I have before referred, in which work, were certain letters, in which I found the following language.

"Dear Friend!—Pity me, and cry mightily to God in my behalf, it is shocking, if you knew it, to think *what difference there is betwixt my sermons and my own inward life*: oh what astonishing grace, and blood that must be, which can save such *devils!* I should say such sinners, *worse than devils;*" in another part, (page 132) speaking of the state of his mind towards Jesus Christ, he says, "I could neither breathe after, nor pray for his visits, I neither knew, nor cared,



whether I found them or not, nay, rationally sensible, that my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone; a stupid unconcern overpowered my heart: I was almost content to have his room filled with SINFUL PLEASURES, and *earthly* enjoyments." But for what purpose have I inserted these extracts? why, with a view to confirm what I have before stated, which is, that progressive sanctification is neither in accordance with the work of God, the experience of the best of Christians, nor the Holy Scriptures. There is not a single Scripture, referred to by the advocates of the system, which does not seal the truth of my assertion; who does not see this from Pro. iv. 18. The path of the just, is as the "shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." To this Scripture, we are continually directed for the sentiment I am now opposing, but from which member of the text, progressive sanctification is extorted, I cannot conceive. "The path." What is a path, but a foot-way from one place to another? what then is the path of "the *just*?" or the Just One, why the path way by which the Just One (Christ) goes to the Father, as our forerunner, and in whose footsteps believers tread, as followers of Christ; it consists of what Christ is, has done, and is doing, which is the path the holy prophets went, and it is the path to heaven, which is hid from the wise and prudent, but it is revealed to babes, although not revealed to them all at once, for the path of the just, is as the "shining light," which begins, as Luke teaches, like the day-spring, or rising of the sun, like the glimmerings of light, verging toward the perfect day, and becomes lighter, and lighter, till the believer has arrived at full day light, in the knowledge of divine things; but what such a Scripture has to do with *duty*

sanctification, I must wait to learn, which will not be until my opponents obtain sanction from heaven, "to be wise above what is written." The next text we are referred to, for proof of progressive sanctification, is, 1 Thess. iv. iii. "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification; that ye should abstain from fornication, that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification, and honor," &c. to the seventh verse, in which verses, we have first God's will, which is our sanctification; the design of God in willing our sanctification, even our abstaining from sinful practices, the two members of the passage are as distinct as cause and effect; but let us suppose, for argument sake, that, instead of the will of God, as done by Jesus Christ, being our sanctification, we contend, that our abstaining from fornication, &c. was to be our sanctification, would even that warrant such a *notion* as *progressive sanctification*? If it does, then the text ought to have read thus, this is the will of God, &c. that ye abstain, *not all at once*, but *progressively* from fornication. I think I now see one of these notorious declaimers occupying the pulpit, and crying aloud, "Men and brethren, the subject on which I am about to address you, is, 'Christian sanctification, which consists in abstaining from FORNICATION;' sanctification however, is a progressive work; consequently, let me tell you, for your encouragement, that you are not called upon to desist from the sin of fornication all at once; suppose then, that you begin by talking about it, and so go on, but as the duty is all your own, and God does not expect you to abstain wholly from fornication, till you die, for progressive sanctification is never completed till death; therefore, you may leave

off the sin of fornication, by such progressive degrees, as to have done with the sin altogether, when you are dead, for abstaining from fornication is your sanctification; and your sanctification is progressive; nor can it be expected to arise to its zenith, till death prevents your being any longer in 'the lust of concupiscence.' I would enlarge, but I have said enough, to prove, that though it is God's will, that you should leave off living in lust, it is his will that it should not be left off all at once, sanctification being progressive; this I might prove from many Scriptures, read Acts ii. 40. 'Save yourselves from this untoward generation;' for this is your *duty*, and the performance of your duty, is your sanctification; but, as your sanctification is progressive, you need not be in a hurry to obey the command, so that you mind, and complete the duty enjoined therein by the time you die." How ridiculous; but not less so, than the sophistry, which undertakes to palm the belief of progressive sanctification on us, from 1 Thess. v. 13, which is a prayer to God to sanctify his people at Thessalonica, which could not refer to progressive sanctification, because all its votaries teach, that that is the believer's duty, on which account, it would be profane to teach, that the apostle was praying to God to perform the duty, which he had enjoined on his subjects; but surely, progressive sanctification must meet with its total overthrow from two things, first, the word "*wholly*." Now, did this petition involve a wish, that God would sanctify his people all at once, or that he would do it progressively? which should terminate in death, I will leave modern Calvinists to take their choice, if they choose the former sense, down goes their modern Diana; if the latter, then it involves

the foolishness of petitioning for that in life, which is not to be obtained till death; but what think such folks of these words? “*preserve you blameless,*” compared with John xvii. 17. Sanctify, not in part, a little by little, till death, but in the most comprehensive sense of the word, separate them as my disciples from all the false doctrines, and false religions, that are abroad in the world, introduced by the man of sin, by teaching them the *truth*, for thy word is truth; and when they are thus taught the truth, preserve them blameless in the belief of it, by not suffering them to deny it, through fear of Antichrist, let the wheat of truth separate or sanctify them from the chaff of error, and preserve them from denying the truth, like the Galatians, who began in the truth, and then went to the law, to be perfectly sanctified. Alas, alas! how true is the saying of Luther, “*All do not know THE TRUTH who search the Scriptures.*”

I will here relate to you a fact, and then conclude. When I went first to Braintree, I was invited to a select meeting of ministers, and I attended; on which occasion, as a principal topic in divinity, progressive sanctification was expatiated on, at large; but as I was a stranger, and not a member of the meeting, I said but little, till others had done talking; I then *ventured* to address the Rev. Mr. G. of L. thus, “Sir,” said I, “will you tell me how much sanctification is necessary for a person to be possessed of, in order to his going to heaven? for, except I am sanctified *enough*, being partially so, will be of no use to me, for I am certain, *imperfect*, or *incomplete* sanctification, will never do for heaven, and on this account, I request you will in-

form me upon a subject of such moment. A pause ensued, color came and went, the question came unexpectedly, and wanted more time to answer than a minute could command; ultimately however, though reluctantly, I received for answer as follows, "Why, I think regeneration makes a person meet or ready to go to heaven;" "And yet, Sir," I replied, "you contend that a person is not perfectly sanctified at regeneration, although he may go to heaven with regeneration sanctification." I urged the subject, but it was waved, and the next news I heard, was a charge against my ministerial reputation, for denying the sentiment of progressive sanctification.

I make no apology for the protracted length of this letter; I sincerely thank my God, and request you will do the same, for the measure of favor he has been pleased to show me, and by which I am authorized to say, I have succeeded in proving the threefold preposition, with which I set out, (*viz.*) that the sentiment of progressive sanctification has no place in God's word, but is quite contrary thereto; nor is it deducible from the work of JEHOVAH, as a trinity of persons, in the sanctification of the elect in Christ Jesus, any more, than it is to be found in the experience of the Lord's regenerate people.

Now, beloved, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified. Consider what I say, and the Lord give you understanding in all things. I can from my very heart join with my beloved author, Martin Luther, in saying, "Weigh it in the balances of Scripture: I desire to be received *no farther* than as I speak accord-

ing to the oracles of God." Wherefore, beloved, ever remaining, in myself considered, a sinner black as hell, deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, yet IN CHRIST fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners,

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