THE GLORY THAT EXCELLETH.

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THERE has been much discussion of the question, Which is the greater work, justification or entire sanctification? Some regard this discussion as merely speculative and fruitless; but we believe that it has a bearing on several very practical questions. It elucidates the inquiry whether complete spiritual purification is a distinct work of the Sanctifier. It is also closely connected with the question whether this blessing is an instantaneous transition in the spiritual life, or whether it is a gradual unfolding, not definitely marked in the
consciousness of the advancing believer. Our inquiry relates to the subjective aspects of the question—that is, to the emotions and estimates of the subject of the two experiences. For we freely admit that justification, when viewed objectively in its relation to the Divine law and to future destiny, is the greater work, inasmuch as it changes the relation of the soul to the moral government of God, and insures eternal life to the persevering believer. In a judicial point of view no change can exceed that which transfers a soul from the class of the guilty and condemned to the class of the pardoned. It is the difference between heaven and hell through the ceaseless cycles of eternal ages. But we are not discussing this view of the subject. We are inquiring into the inward experiences of the subjects of these operations of the Holy Spirit. It is a question to be determined, not by philosophy, but by testimony.

In adducing John Wesley's statements, we are either citing his personal experience or his careful inferences after examining, as a Christian
philosopher, a vast aggregate of facts in the experience of others. In either case the reader may be assured that Mr. Wesley's declaration cannot be lightly set aside as untrustworthy. In fact, to all who have their eyes open to read the signs of the times, the pendulum of public opinion, which for a long time swung in the direction of the depreciation of the great founder of Methodism, has reversed its motion, and is now moving in the opposite direction. Oxford, even, has begun to praise her illustrious son whom she long vilified. In Wesley's "Plain Account of Christian Perfection," in describing its criteria or decisive marks, he says: "If a man be deeply and fully convinced, after justification, of inbred sin; if he then experience a gradual mortification of sin, and afterward an entire renewal in the image of God; if to this change, immensely greater than that wrought when he was justified, be added a clear, direct witness of the renewal, I judge it as impossible that this man should be deceived herein as that God should lie." A peculiarity of this statement of the "immense superiority
of entire sanctification to justification” is the incidental and matter-of-course way in which it is asserted, as if it were a fact conceded by all. In his “Notes on the New Testament,” in his comment on John xiv, 15-23, “We will come to him and make our abode with him,” he says, “which implies such a large manifestation of the Divine presence and love, that the former, in justification, is as nothing in comparison of it.” This erudite theologian and indefatigable inquirer after the whole truth, as evidenced in the testimony of thousands in his societies, in another publication thus describes the experience of perfect love: “This marriage feast signifies the entrance into the highest state of union that can be between God and the soul in this life. This birthday of the Spirit of love in our souls, whenever we attain it, will feast our souls with such peace and joy in God, as will blot out the remembrance of every thing that we called peace or joy before.”

John Fletcher maintains the same view. Says he: “So capital is this promise (Matt. iii, 44) of the Spirit’s stronger influences to raise
the rare plant of Christian perfection, that, when our Lord speaks of this promise, he emphatically calls it *The Promise of the Father*, because it shines among the other promises of the Gospel of Christ as the moon among the stars.” Again: “This promise, when it is received in its fullness, is undoubtedly the greatest of all the ‘exceeding great and precious promises, which are given to us, that by them you might be partakers of the Divine nature;’ that is, of *pure love and unmixed holiness*.” These strongly expressed opinions or testimonies of these two wonderful men are but the focalized experience of thousands in their own age, and of millions in the past, and of myriads more in the present generation. Only three days ago, a woman told me that the spiritual manifestation of the Son of God to her heart was so bright that the sun seemed a cloud in the heavens. It was not so at her conversion, but as the result of the fullness of the Spirit sought as a distinct blessing. That Scripture is verified which many careless readers apply solely to the glories of the upper
world: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." In a lower degree this revelation begins when the penitent soul first comes to the cross, and the burden falls, and "the three shining ones" greet him with "peace be to thee." But the immortal old dreamer in Bedford jail was true to Christian experience when he portrays advanced believers as led on by the Comforter, the guide in the way that leads to the city, till they "were got over the enchanted ground, and entered into the country Beulah, whose air was very sweet and pleasant, among singing birds and fragrant flowers." "In this country the sun shineth night and day; wherefore this was out of the reach of the Giant Despair; neither could they from this place so much as see Doubting Castle"—the full assurance of faith. "Here they were within sight of the city they were going to; also here met them some of the inhabitants thereof; for in this land the shining
ones commonly walked, because it was upon the borders of heaven. In this land also the contract between the Bride and the Bridegroom was renewed;" entire consecration made and accepted; "yea, here, as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so doth their God rejoice over them. Here they had no want of corn and wine, for in this place they met with abundance of what they had sought for in all their pilgrimages”—fullness of joy.

Thus this master of allegory portrays an experience exceeding in richness all former revelations to the soul of things unseen by mortal eye. The fact that Bunyan locates Beulah near to the river of Death, yet upon this side, shows that this great blessing of the full manifestation of Christ to the believer is attainable in this world, and is commonly experienced just before death, because the faith of the general Church has up to this time limited it to that hour. It is not so limited in the word of God. Thus, by the testimony of most eminent saints, in plain language or the drapery of allegory, we have demonstrated
that the fullness of the Spirit, in the estimate of the recipient, dwarfs all former joys, all former victories, all former apprehensions of the unsearchable riches of Christ.

An argument founded on the law of progress, which runs through all the works of God, would lead us to the same conclusion. Reader, if you are resting in the pardon of your sins, and not pressing onward up the path to the cloudless heights of perfect love, you are standing with your back to the sun and looking at your own shadow. The golden age of your Christian experience is not behind, but before you.

"Though you have much peace and comfort,
Greater things ye yet shall find:
Freedom from unholy tempers,
Freedom from the carnal mind.
To procure this perfect freedom
Jesus suffered, groaned and died
On the cross the healing fountain
Gushed from his bleeding side."

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