

New Doctrine

by Harmon A. Baldwin

The doctrine of holiness is not new and has been upheld by the spiritual church of all ages as a state of purity and perfection that delivers from all depravity and corruption.

Scripture: Psalm 51:10, Matthew 5:8, Acts 2:4, Romans 12:2, 2 Corinthians 7:1, Ephesians 4:22, Philippians 4:3, Hebrews 12:14, 1 Peter 1:15, 1 John 3:3

Topics: "Christian Holiness", "Sanctification Doctrine"

Description

Harmon A. Baldwin addresses the objection that holiness as a possible attainment and as a second work of grace is of modern origin by providing evidence of its antiquity through testimonies from various ages, including early church fathers like Clement of Rome, Justin Martyr, and Macarius the Egyptian. These testimonies emphasize the pursuit of holiness, purity of heart, and the transformative power of God's grace in cleansing the inward man. Baldwin highlights the consistent teaching on holiness throughout history, despite opposition, as a foundational doctrine upheld by the spiritual church of all ages.

Transcript

An objection is urged that holiness as a possible attainment and as a second work of grace is of modern origin and can scarcely be found before Wesley.

To establish the fact of the antiquity of the doctrine of holiness even as a second work of grace, the writer has at hand abundance of testimony, but for the sake of brevity only a few from widely different ages will be quoted.

The first is from Clement of Rome, the man mentioned in Phil. 4:3.

Let us pray, therefore, and implore of his mercy, that we may live blameless in love, free from all human partialities for one against another. All the generations from Adam even unto this day have passed away; but those who, through the grace of God have been made perfect in love, now possess a place among the godly, and shall be manifest at the revelation of the kingdom of God.

Justin Martyr, a philosopher, converted to Christianity after vainly searching the philosophies of the ancients, and who finally sealed his testimony with his blood, wrote as follows:

For our own Ruler, the divine Word, who even now constantly aids us, does not desire strength of body and beauty of feature, nor yet the high spirit of earth's nobility, but a pure soul, fortified by holiness, and

the watchwords of our King, holy actions, for through the Word power passes into the soul. O trumpet of peace to the soul that is at war! O weapon that putteth to flight terrible passions! These instructions that quench the innate fires of the soul! These have conquered me -- the divinity of the instruction, and the power of the Word: for as a skilled serpent charmer lures the terrible reptile from his den and causes it to flee, so the Word drives the fearful passions of our sensual nature from the very recesses of the soul; first driving forth lust, through which every ill is begotten -- hatreds, strife, envy, emulations, anger, and such like. Lust being once banished, the soul becomes calm and serene. And being set free from the ills in which it was sunk up to the neck, it returns to him which made it."

The works of Clement of Alexandria abound in calls to holiness, in instructions to seekers after purity, exhortations to holiness, on holiness as a second work of grace, cleansing from inherent sin, holiness as an actual experience, communion with God, mystic union with God, pure living, perfect love, mystic contemplation, etc.

We will venture just one short quotation:

And the man who turns from among the Gentiles will ask for faith while he that ascends to knowledge will ask for the perfection of love. And the Gnostic (meaning the man who has gained knowledge of God) who has reached the summit, will pray that contemplation may grow and abide, as the common man will for continual good health.

The next is taken from a book called Christian Perfection, written by Macarius the Egyptian or Macarius the Elder or Macarius the Great as he is variously called. Mosheim the Ecclesiastical Historian, who is always ready to accuse everything spiritual, is forced to admit that Macarius deserves first rank among the practical writers of his time, and, that his writings contain the "brightest and most lovely portraiture of sanctity and virtue." Macarius was born in the year 300 A. D. and died in 391 A. D. He was 24 years old at the time of the council of Nice, of which council he was a member. He says:

Only let every one take especial care that when he has been "born again of the Spirit," he thoroughly wash out the inward sin. For that new birth of the Spirit, bears indeed a certain image of perfection in form and parts, though not in power, intelligence, and vigor. But he who has attained to perfect manhood, and the full measure of growth, renounces the things of childhood. And this is what the Apostle has signified: 'Whether there be tongues or prophecies they shall cease.' As, therefore, he who is become a man no longer received either the food or the discourse which is suited to a child, but rejects them with disdain as having passed on to another stage of life; so likewise he who has attained to the full measure of evangelical perfection, and who has advanced his spiritual infancy to the perfection of its growth.

There are some, who abstain from all overt sins, as fornication, theft, avarice, and all similar corruptions, and who therefore class themselves with the holy; and yet are they far from being such in truth, For, evil is not yet wholly expelled from them; but it still lives, and lurks, and creeps within, their minds. But the holy, is he who is perfectly cleansed in the inward man.

For, abstinence from overt sins is not perfection but purification of the mind within is alone perfection. And the end of every Scripture, both Old and New, is purity; and everyone, whether Jew or Greek, is desirous of purity, though he is unable to attain it. But this I affirm, that purity of heart cannot otherwise be effected than through Jesus."

His opinion of the experience received by the disciples at Pentecost is seen from the following quotation:

Wherefore, when the Comforter came at the feast of Pentecost, according to the promise, and when the power of the Good Spirit had rested upon the souls of the Apostles, the veil of sin was at once taken off from their hearts, their evil passions were extinguished, and the eyes of their hearts were opened; and being thence forward replenished with wisdom, and established perfect by the Spirit, which governed and directed their souls, they were taught to fulfil the will of God and were led into the knowledge of all truth, when, therefore, we feel ourselves effected to tears on hearing the word of God, let us still with a firm faith beseech Christ to come to us; in full confidence that the Spirit will truly come, and will both hear and pray in us, according to His will.

Hugo of St. Victor, who lived in the 12th century, speaks of the purification of the soul in the following manner:

Fire is applied to green wood, it kindles with difficulty; clouds of smoke arise; a flame is seen at intervals, flashing out here and there; as the fire gains strength, it pierces the fuel; presently it leaps and roars in triumph -- the nature of the wood is being transformed into the nature of fire. Then, the struggle over, the crackling ceases, the smoke is gone, there is left a tranquil, friendly brightness, for the master-element has subdued all into itself. So, do sin and grace contend; and the smoke of trouble and anguish hang over the strife. But when grace grows stronger, and the soul's eye clearer, and truth pervades and swallows up the kindling aspiring nature, then comes the holy calm, and love is all in all. Save God in the heart, nothing of self is left."

The following is from *Theologia Germania*, the book that Luther prized next to the Bible and Augustine:

Now be assured that no one can be enlightened unless he be first cleansed or purified and stripped. So also, no one can be united with God unless he be first enlightened. Thus there are three stages: The purification concerneth those who are beginning or repenting, and is brought to pass in a three-fold wise; by contrition and sorrow for sin, by full confession, by hearty amendment. The enlightening belongeth to such as are growing and also taketh place in three ways: to wit, by the eschewel of sin, by the practice of virtue and good works, and by the willing endurance of all manner of temptation and trials. The union belongeth to such as are perfect, and also is brought to pass in three ways: to wit, by pureness and singleness of heart, by love, and by the contemplation of God, the Creator of all things.

Peter Poiret, an early Protestant writer, in his *Divine Economy*, says:

But when he thinks himself far advanced, and his activity at an end, and as it were quite wearied and spent in this holy employment, which is a true worship of God; then does God strike him with a light so penetrating and so lively, and with motions so internal and powerful, that all the corruption of the inward recesses of his soul, is stirred up from the very bottom. And this discovers to him on one hand so great and so perfect a purity in God, that all his past good works and righteousness seem to him but little in comparison of it; and on the other hand, the corruption that is at the bottom of his heart which he discerned not before, appears to him so heinous that not daring to do anything more, nor to use any activity so corrupt as he is, despairing of whatever may come from him, he casts himself as dead into God's hands.

From the time of this perfect resignation, God becomes all in man: he works in him as he pleases and without opposition; and there grace is absolute mistress. 'Tis God that then disposes of the liberty and faculties of man, of his desires, his understandings, and of everything: he moves and penetrates all by the motions of his love and of his divine light; but in such a manner as is at first very dreadful and mortifying to

sense; because God's motions investing the inmost recesses of the soul are expelling thence their most central and rooted corruption, which is not alone without great agonies which are extremely acute and desolating to a soul that is by nature of the greatest and tenderest perception imaginable.

But this perfect operation of purifying grace being finished, the soul comes pure out of this furnace, and lives thence forward in the bright element of reigning grace. She is then a new creature, and her divine faculties, now that they are repaired in their utmost recesses are governed and acted by the Holy Ghost, who uses them as he sees convenient for God's glory and the benefit of other souls.

To these quotations many others could be added until the fact is established that no doctrine is more clearly set forth nor more perseveringly upheld by the spiritual church of all ages than is holiness of heart which delivers from all depravity. Of course, we will admit that since the fourth century hundreds of people have opposed the doctrine, but that proves no more against it than does the opposition of thousands today.

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