

Zinzendorfism

by Harmon A. Baldwin

The sermon critiques Zinzendorfism, a doctrine that magnifies the article of regeneration and teaches that no man can be a child of God while sin remains in his heart, arguing that believers can be sanctified partially and not be sanctified wholly.

Scripture: Romans 7:18, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Philippians 1:6, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 1 John 1:8

Topics: "Sanctification", "Sin Nature"

Description

Harmon A. Baldwin delves into the Zinzendorf doctrine, emphasizing the misconception that partial sanctification equals complete sanctification, and the belief that no one can be a child of God while sin remains in their heart. He contrasts this with John Wesley's arguments in his sermon 'Sin in Believers,' where Wesley refutes the idea that believers are entirely free from sin, highlighting the ongoing struggle with the remnants of the old self even after conversion.

Transcript

We now came to consider the Zinzendorf doctrine which, with various modifications, still exists. Zinzendorf's error did not consist in denying the possibility of heart purity, for he accepted that, but in magnifying the article of regeneration, and in teaching that no man can be a child of God while sin remains in his heart.

The persons who hold this doctrine make the mistake of supposing that partial sanctification is complete sanctification or that a person cannot be sanctified partially and not be sanctified wholly. There is no doubt that every Christian is sanctified and sanctification means to cleanse or make holy. But that he is not cleansed completely is proven both by experience and by the Bible.

From the standpoint of experience, Wesley perfectly refutes this error in his sermon, "Sin in Believers." A few of his arguments we subjoin.

Is there then sin in him that is in Christ? Does sin remain in one that believes in him? Is there any sin in them that are born of God, or are they wholly delivered from it? Let no one imagine this to be a question of mere curiosity: or, that it is of little importance whether it be determined one way or the other. Rather it is a point of the utmost moment to every serious Christian: the resolving of which very nearly concerns both his present and eternal happiness. Yet I do not know that ever it was controverted in the primitive church. Indeed there was no room for disputing concerning it, as all Christians were agreed. And so far as I have

ever observed, the whole body of ancient Christians who have left us anything in writing, declare with one voice, that even believers in Christ, till they are 'strong in the Lord and in the power of his might,' have need to 'wrestle with flesh and blood,' with an evil nature, as well as 'with principalities and powers.'

However, let us give a fair hearing to the chief arguments of those who endeavor to support it. And it is, first, from Scripture they attempt to prove, that there is no sin in a believer. They argue thus: 'The Scripture says, Every believer is born of God, is clean, is holy, is sanctified, is pure in heart, has a new heart, is a temple of the Holy Ghost. Now, as that which is born of the flesh is flesh, is altogether evil, so that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, is altogether good. Again: a man cannot be clean, sanctified, holy, and at the same time unclean, unsanctified, unholy. He cannot be pure and impure, or have a new and an old heart together. Neither can his soul be unholy, while it is a temple of the Holy Ghost.'

I have put this objection as strong as possible, that its full weight may appear. Let us now examine it part by part. And, (1). 'That which is born of the Spirit is spirit, is altogether good.' I allow the text, but not the comment. For the text affirms this, and no more, That every man who is born of the Spirit, is a spiritual man; else they had been no Christians at all; and yet they were not altogether spiritual, they were still, in part, carnal. 'But they were fallen from grace.' St Paul says, no. They were even babes in Christ. (2). 'But a man cannot be clean, sanctified, holy, and at the same time unclean, unsanctified, unholy.' Indeed he may. So the Corinthians were. 'Ye are washed,' says the apostle, 'ye are sanctified;' namely cleansed from 'fornication, idolatry, drunkenness,' and all other outward sins, I Cor. 6:9-10-11; and yet, at the same time, in another sense of the word, they were unsanctified; they were not washed, not inwardly cleansed from envy, evil surmising, partiality. 'But sure they had not a new heart and old heart together.' It is most sure they had; for at that very time, their hearts were truly yet not entirely renewed. Their carnal mind was nailed to the cross; yet it was not wholly destroyed. 'But could they be unholy, while they were 'temples of the Holy Ghost?' Yes; that they were temples of the Holy Ghost is certain, I Cor. 6:19; and it is equally certain they were, in some degree, carnal, that is, unholy.

However, there is one scripture more which puts the matter out of question: 'If any man be (a believer) in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are passed away; behold all things are become new' -- II Cor. 5:17. Now, certainly, a man cannot be a new creature and an old creature at once. Yes, he may: he may be partly renewed, which was the very case with those at Corinth. They were doubtless 'renewed in the spirit of their mind,' or they could not have been so much as babes in Christ; yet they had not the whole mind which was in Christ, for they envied one another. 'But it is said expressly, Old things are passed away; all things are become new.' But we must not so interpret the apostles' words, as to make him contradict himself. And if we will make him consistent with himself, the plain meaning of the words is this: His old judgment concerning justification, holiness, happiness, indeed concerning the things of God in general, is now passed away: so are his old desires, designs, affections, tempers, and conversation. All these are undeniably become new, greatly changed from what they were. And yet, though they are new, they are not wholly new. Still he feels, to his sorrow and shame, remains of the old man, too manifest taints of his former tempers and affections, though they cannot gain any advantage over him, as long as he watches unto prayer.

The whole argument, 'if he is clean, he is clean:' 'if he is holy he is holy;' (and twenty more expressions of the same kind may easily be heaped together;) is really no better than playing upon words: it is the fallacy of arguing from a particular to a general; of inferring a general conclusion from particular premises. Propose the sentence entire, and it runs thus: 'If he is holy at all he is holy altogether.' That does not follow: every babe in Christ is holy, and yet not altogether so. He is saved from sin; yet not entirely: it

remains though it does not reign. If you think it does not remain, (in babes at least, whatever be the case with young men, or fathers,) you certainly have not considered the height and depth, and length, and breadth of the law of God; (even the law of love, laid down by St. Paul in the thirteenth of Corinthians;) and that every disconformity to, or deviation from this law, is sin. Now is there no disconformity to this in the heart or life of a believer? What may be in an adult Christian, is another question; but what a stranger must he be to human nature, who can possibly imagine that this is the case with every babe in Christ!

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