

Section I. the Fact Shown; First, in the Condition of Individuals

by Jesse T. Peck

The sermon explores the nature of sanctification, emphasizing that while Christians are justified and regenerated, they are often only partially sanctified at conversion and must engage in a progressive journey towards holiness.

Scripture: Romans 12:1, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Hebrews 12:14, James 2:17, 1 John 4:18

Topics: "Consecration To God", "Holy Sanctification"

Description

Jesse T. Peck preaches about the need for Christians to fully surrender to God, highlighting the importance of consecration, faith, and purity in the church. He emphasizes the significance of complete consecration to God, the necessity of faith that works through love, and the pursuit of purity in heart and actions. Peck addresses the church's feeble spiritual life, defective holiness, and the urgent need for the baptism of the Holy Spirit to revive and sanctify believers. He challenges the church to examine its level of consecration, faith, purity, and completeness in Christian graces, urging a deeper commitment to God and a genuine pursuit of holiness.

Transcript

We believe that Christians, generally, are sanctified but in part.

1. We remark that the probabilities are not against, but in favor of this position. Let it, however, be distinctly understood, that we speak not now of unconverted persons or apostates in the church. There are, doubtless, many of these. But we refer to those who are truly Christians, in the sense of actual inward experience. And, first of all, let no one assume that we undervalue the converted state. Pause for a while over those who can honestly say, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." What reasons have they for gratitude!

Their sins are pardoned, and they were very numerous, and very great. The inward corruptions of a fallen nature were long voluntarily retained. Thoughts of depraved action were fondly cherished. Desires that should shrink from the light of day; motives that were "earthly, sensual, devilish," were freely encouraged. Duties, the most sacred were neglected, and laws pure as the nature of God profanely trampled under foot! And yet, these Heaven-daring offenses were all forgiven! God saw the deep and genuine sorrow of their hearts; their grief for having violated his holy law; their renunciation of sin; their rising, trembling,

confident faith; their living, personal trust in the merits of a Redeemer; and he freely forgave all! What amazing condescension! The very Being whom they had so unjustly offended, without one meritorious act upon their part; without one redeeming element of character; in the pure, unbounded love of his nature; for Christ's sake, did "abundantly pardon;" so that they could triumphantly say, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." This was mercy -- free, boundless mercy. It was efficacy in the blood of the Son of God. What a glorious privilege -- saved from the guilt of the past! After all this unworthiness; this strange obstinacy; this stubborn denial of the right of God to reign; this rebellion against the only faultless government in the universe; after all this, to be freely absolved, so that no impending curse lowers over their heads; no sounds of wrath fill their souls with terror. No wonder that "joy unspeakable and full of glory" swells the heart, speaks from the eye, and quivers upon the lip, while angels chant anew the song which trembled upon the air of Bethlehem, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men."

But more than this: they are regenerated -- "born again" -- "born of God," for in this expressive language do the Scriptures represent the change wrought in the converted by the power of the Holy Ghost.

The leading idea of this great work is reproduction; not of the constitutional elements of the soul, for, though these have been marred and perverted in various ways, they still retain their essential identity, and are unquestionably indestructible. It is a reproduction of life -- life which originally existed in man, but which had become extinct by violence; spiritual life, depending upon union with God -- a union interrupted by sin; hence the soul was "dead in trespasses and sins." No mode of restoring this life could be possible, but that which should unite the soul with God. Christ became the bond of union. He became our "daysman" -- our intercessor. "He took his seat at the right hand of the majesty on high," where "he ever liveth to make intercession for" us. Converted men, by faith, have accepted his mediation, and appropriated the merits of his death, and thus, through him, the elements of a new spiritual life have been imparted to the soul.

But we think some err very much in regarding this work as a literal creation; and this leads them to inquire whether a holy God can permit imperfection to inhere in this "new creation." Others are, perhaps, more spiritual in a similar conception. They think of it as an organic "change of heart," and say, it must indeed be total. Such a conversion of the soul, undertaken and effected by such a power, must, it is assumed, leave it perfectly holy.

But, let us lead you to the contemplation of this gracious work from another direction. We would humbly ask you to take God's favorite language for its expression. "born again;" "born of God;" "born from above;" "sons of God;" "heirs of God."

Now conceive of a soul morally dead. Suppose that soul, with its living intellect, to apprehend God; with its living sensibilities, to feel the impressions of his Holy Spirit; with its living will, to resolve upon the abandonment of sin; upon real, instant, saving faith in Christ. Suppose it done. Now that soul is united to the Father through Christ. Now life runs through, quickens, and pervades it. No new spiritual essence has taken the place of the old; nor is it changed from one kind of organic being to another. But it has received a living energy from God; a power that sets in motion the moral heart, and throws the life-current sweetly through the whole man. This is God in the soul. It is God the Father, the originating Life; it is God the Son, the atoning Life; it is God the Holy Ghost, the sanctifying, witnessing Life.

And what is more natural than that those thus "born of God" should be reckoned "children of God by faith in Christ Jesus?" "When the fulness of time" was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou," (honored Christian,) "art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."

Now, observe, we do not pretend thus to have explained the manner of the new birth. It is too wonderful for us. We cannot explain it. We cannot fathom the doings of the Infinite in the salvation of a soul. Not a step in all that grand process is fully within the grasp of finite minds, though they were extended to the capacity of a seraph.

Nor do we mean that this is the only true idea of regeneration; nor claim that it is even the best one. We only mean that we are exceedingly pleased with it. It presents the glorious idea of spiritual life reproduced in an aspect to us highly illustrative, and surpassingly beautiful. It seems to us not only to be vindicated, but immediately suggested, by the very "words which the Holy Ghost teacheth;" and it must be safe to conceive of the life of God thus powerfully operating to produce a spiritual resurrection of the inner man.

We have shown that regeneration does not necessarily include entire sanctification. It implies neither a literal creation nor an organic change, but the reproduction of life. Then whether or not the soul is made perfect in holiness and love, at the time the divine energy restores it to life, is wholly a question of fact.

It is evident, also, that in this great work is the commencement of sanctification. The very life which is infused into the soul, is a pure life, and hence, of necessity, a purifying life. It is a divine life, and thus an active, holy energy; working against sin, and in favor of holiness. It is God entering the soul, to make it his home. What else could be expected, than that the glorious work of purification should commence at the very instant the divine entrance is effected? Moreover, the regenerated man is conscious of the inward operation of this cleansing power, and the witness of it is included in the witness that he is "born of God." Indeed, so wonderful is the change produced by the first throbs of this divine life, that it is neither strange nor uncommon for the young convert to suppose that his inward corruptions are totally destroyed. And even when his maturer experience corrects the error, he feels a sense of purity in his motives that he never felt before the great change; a horror of sin, of his own remaining sin, which shows unequivocally that the purifying process has powerfully commenced; and the same testimony is borne by his life.

We cannot over-estimate the value of this great work. What a work of love -- of love divine -- is this surprising transformation! The soul of man alive from the dead, with a clear apprehension of its heirship to glory, unending as the being of God! The fruits of the Spirit new-born within, love gracefully leading the heavenly train! Its appetites changed from earthly to spiritual! Its aims elevated from a world of sin and death to a world of God-like purity, love, and immortality! And all this without claim -- without merit; nay, in despite of a life of ingratitude, a life of rebellion, which were enough to have vindicated forever. his eternity of woe! All for the sake of Christ alone! Well might the soul, thus raised from the dead, exclaim,

"I'll praise my Maker while I've breath

And, when my voice is lost in death,

Praise shall employ my nobler powers

My days of praise shall ne'er be past,
While life, or thought, or being, lasts,
Or immortality endures!"

But we return to the position that Christians generally are sanctified only in part. We trust we have removed one principal difficulty out of the way of the truth. And we may now glance at another. Many forget that inspired, like other writers, discuss truth generically and specifically. When it is their design to represent inward religion as a whole, they say, for instance, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are passed away, and, behold, all things are become new." But then, "perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment; he that feareth is not made perfect in love," is a specific discussion, due in this place, and not in the other. And so of churches. In the Apostle's address to the Corinthians, he assumes their prevailing characteristics, and hence writes, "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ. I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in everything ye are enriched by him, in all utterance and in all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you; so that ye came behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ," &c.

It would thus seem that everything was right in the Corinthian church; but look further on, where the discriminating analysis begins, and you find "It hath been declared unto me that there are contentions among you," -- "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ," -- "It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you," -- "Now then there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another." But this in no wise contradicts the commendatory introduction. It is a specific discussion of facts reserved for this place. So the converted state is sometimes discussed without analysis, but at the proper time just discrimination is adopted. He who would study the Scriptures safely, must consult the scope of the particular discussion, to ascertain whether it is the design of the inspired writer to show what is the essential religious state, or what the highest, or what are its various stages. Neglect of this obviously important method, has led to grave differences of opinion, some maintaining that the lowest actual religious condition includes entire sanctification, and quoting general texts in proof of their position; others insisting upon the opposite, and very properly quoting specific texts to sustain their views.

Another source of error is in opinions entertained of depravity. Those who reject the commonly received doctrine in relation to "sin in believers," object to the terms corruption, carnal nature, inward defilement, and the like, as too physical, affirming that nothing evil can be predicated of spirit but predisposing tendencies. The error here, is in attempting to show in what depravity consists. This is an inquiry prohibited by the laws of our being. Surely, if we cannot know what spirit is, we cannot know the manner of its depravity. Our terms are physical, because we have no others that are more appropriate. There is, however, no more necessity for mistaking the force of the words corruption and defilement, than of the terms expressing the work they require; as washing, cleansing and others. Should any assert that there is no remaining depravity in the heart of a believer, because we cannot tell what it is, the answer would be, we can with no more accuracy tell what is depravity in an unbeliever. As well might we say "the evil man" has no "evil treasure" in "his heart," because we cannot tell what it is. The fact of depravity is evident, and we are bound to infer moral condition from moral phenomena, as we infer intellectual powers from

intellectual phenomena.

But it is still insisted that the holy and omnipotent God would not, could not indeed, do a work imperfectly -- that, from the very nature of the case, the new creation must be instantaneous, and entire. We beg, however, to suggest, that this is so far from being necessarily true, that it is not at all sustained by the analogy of the divine proceedings. Progress in duration from the point of beginning to that of completion, is the law of Jehovah's works. He might undoubtedly have created the world in an instant, but he saw proper to begin it, and then go on through a period of "six. days," to the consummation of his plans. He might have effected the redemption of man, by the atonement of Christ, instantly after the fall, but he saw proper to begin the work, and move on through a space of more than four thousand years in its progress. He might give us perfected vegetation, and harvest, instantly after the deposition of the seed; but naturally, as well as spiritually, he has preferred the progressive order, "first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." He might have given to earth, a "kingdom of heaven" that would be illustrated by the "leavened bread," but he preferred to give one which "is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." So he might have preferred and efficiently secured, invariably, a finished sanctification at the moment of conversion, but he has chosen to begin the work, and make its completion depend upon faithfulness to the grace already given. He might have preferred a conversion which would have superseded the first part of the apostolic prayer, and rendered. only the latter, "I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless," at all proper; but he chose to make the completion of sanctification contingent, and hence inspired the prayer, "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly." The whole probability then is in favor of a progressive, but instantly concluded sanctification. Not only, therefore, is it unlikely that Christians generally have been entirely sanctified, at the moment of conversion, but it is extremely probable that they have quite unnecessarily delayed the fulfillment of its scriptural conditions,

2. We may argue from the facts evident to consciousness and observation. Experience, as we have felt bound to claim, is generally, if not invariably, in favor of the position, that sanctification is at first but partial. It is true, as we have seen, that such is the power of the change from death to life, in conversion, that most who are subjects of it, think the work of cleansing entirely finished; or rather, their attention is so wholly absorbed in the happiness of pardon and adoption, that they do not give calm consideration to this great question.

Hence they are often greatly surprised, when they feel the first movements of an unsanctified nature. A strong, worldly attraction, perhaps, or a sudden assault of the devil, rouses their inward conquered enemy, called "the flesh," which now struggles for the mastery. Bitter disappointment and deep discouragement not unfrequently follow this unexpected disclosure. Some, indeed, conclude instantly, that they were never converted, and fall into hopeless despair, or rush madly into sin.

But others, better instructed, resist manfully. They feel pain, but no guilt; and frequently they have a strong sense of the divine presence graciously assisting in the struggle. They fly to Christ, and are conquerors, "yea, more than conquerors, through him that loved us." When again they feel the risings of carnal nature, if they have been faithful, they are better prepared, and hence more speedily conquer. Now we are not at liberty to consider these converts backsliders, because they have their conflicts with themselves; for they have experienced no alienation of affections from the Savior, no change of their gracious purpose to serve and glorify him.

Indeed, nothing grieves them so much as the thought of offending him. They resist "the flesh" heroically, as they do the world and the devil. They grieve over these evidences of remaining depravity, and in earnest prayer cry out to God for deliverance. Yea; they obtain it, and go from the closet or the prayer-meeting, exulting in the hope of the glory of God. A backslider does none of these things. He yields when our true soldier of Christ fights. He is a captive in chains, where our Christian hero is a victor.

The witness of the Spirit is not lost in the struggle of the successful combatant. We hazard nothing in asserting that true Christians may, and often do know, that they have the remains of carnal nature within them, while, at the same time, "the Spirit itself beareth witness with their spirits that they are the children of God." The more they improve in religious experience, until wholly sanctified, the more they see of the evils of their own hearts. Their tendency to sin is not so great, because they are living nearer to God; but they know more of it.

Their spiritual vision is constantly becoming clearer, and hence, they detect depravity in their own souls, which was before unknown to them. Is not this incontestably so? Who are they, who have the deepest sense of their inward corruptions? Who groan most earnestly for deliverance? Who have most of mental agony upon the discovery of their unlikeness to Christ? Certainly, not those who have "departed from the faith"; not those who seldom pray in earnest -- whose lives are yielded a sacrifice to the world.

No; they are surely those who live nearest to God in a justified state; who are most constant and devout in the use of the means of grace; whose conduct before the world is most exemplary. The discovery of this inward impurity, and these efforts to be freed from it, are not therefore evidences of apostasy, but rather of growth in grace, for which the converted have reason to be devoutly thankful.

3. But let us next inquire, what are the professions of the great mass of Christians? They profess religion: they profess faith in Christ: they profess a sense of pardon, of gracious acceptance, of adoption into the family of God; but do they profess to have received in themselves the answer to the prayer of the great apostle: "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly?" Do they say, "The blood of Jesus Christ has cleansed us from all sin?" No, they cannot, they dare not say it; for they feel the impurities of their nature rising too fearfully within them. They too sensibly feel the dreadful exertions of the strong man bound, struggling for freedom and the mastery. Do they profess to have received the blessing of "perfect love?" No, they may not do it, for they have read expressly, that "perfect love casteth out fear. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." And they do fear, seriously fear, that they shall be conquered by their spiritual foes, and go to hell at last.

Now, would this be so, if Christians generally were sanctified wholly? Would not so rich a grace deserve, and receive, an humble, faithful, and grateful acknowledgment? Would the declarations of our class and conference meetings be, as they now are, a sad tale of confessions, with so little holy triumph and joy! Grant that many of our testimonies are from backslidden members; (and to be honest, however humiliating, we must grant it;) if all who are Christians at all are wholly consecrated to God, with their souls bathed in the ocean of "perfect love," must not the words of their lips burn with holy joy as they declare what Christ hath done for them? Depend upon it, this almost universal reserve with which the regenerated speak of their religious state; this confession and lamentation on their own account, means something. It tells, in language not to be misunderstood, that there is a fearful sense in which "the carnal mind" yet remains. It shows, with incontestable clearness, that much of inward renovation is yet to be accomplished. Let once the fire of the Holy Ghost baptize the soul; let sin be utterly destroyed; let love, pure perfect love, fill the heart, and the testimony would be changed. What meekness of spirit, what

tenderness of affection, what strength of confidence, what boldness of faith, what spiritual, searching, holy power, would gush from the soul made pure by the blood of Christ! We are perfectly certain that the entire sanctification of the great mass of Christians would completely change the character of our social meetings; and, if this is true, then the present humiliating professions of the church are in evidence that its members generally are sanctified but in part.

4. There is a certain peculiarity in the prayers of the devout, which deserves to be carefully studied. We observe that most good men, when they pray, beseech God with more or less earnestness to purify them, to cleanse them from sin, to make them holy. And this they do, not in a style of doubt as to whether they need such cleansing; not as though they were merely conscious of the natural infirmities of human beings, and therefore of a possibility that they may have unintentionally, and without their knowledge, received the stains of sin upon their wholly sanctified natures. This is by no means the general implication of that prayer which goes up often with agonizing earnestness, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." Sin in the soul is felt as a dreadful reality. Its motions have been so frequent, its struggles so powerful, that there has been no mistaking its character, or its presence; and hence, frequently, the very first thing in the prayers of the regenerated is a plea for purification; and such is the power of this inward depravity, that it seems to stupefy the soul, and render the utmost exertion of its energies necessary to a realization of its terrible evils, and, the immense importance of entire deliverance from it. Hence it is that the very prayers offered to God, for an inward cleansing from sin, are often cold and ineffectual.

Good men all recognize this state of things in the church. The most devout ministers, as well as the best of the laity, make the burden of their cry, O Lord, sanctify thy people. O cleanse thy believing children! The Savior himself set the example, "Sanctify them through thy truth." It must be so. Christians generally are sanctified but in part. What reason this for the most earnest searchings of heart, and devout humiliation before God!

5. If the position we have taken be not true, then, we are driven to one of two painful conclusions; either the great mass of those who are supposed to be Christians are backsliders, or entire sanctification is a very low state of grace.

If we understand this perfected work in the ordinary sense of being "cleansed from all sin," as "the mind that was in Christ," or "perfect love," how exceedingly small the number who can claim it! And though we should, as we do, concede it to some who do not "bear witness of the light," the number would still be small; for almost all 'e know are so far from furnishing clear evidence of perfect holiness of heart and life, that they furnish abundant evidence to the contrary; and it must be admitted that, in general, the reason why it is not professed under proper circumstances, is, that brethren know they do not enjoy it. Let a searching examination be commenced by any one who doubts this, and we believe he will soon be perfectly convinced. Small, indeed, is the number in whom the blessed image of God is perfectly restored; and are these all the Christians there are in the world? Are all the rest hypocrites? Surely, this cannot be. He who would thus, at a stroke, sweep away so large a proportion of the church of Christ, must have studied imperfectly both men and Revelation; and yet he who asserts that none are Christians at all, except those who are perfectly holy, certainly does this!

But let us look at the other alternative. Admit that the number of the wholly sanctified is considerable -- that all who were once converted, and have not backslidden, are as pure in their souls as it is the aim of the Holy Ghost to make them; then, alas! where are we? These inward tendencies to sin must remain for life!

The gospel makes provision to suppress, but not to remove them! Pride, anger, and lust, must arise whenever their excitants are brought to act upon the soul, and our best hopes can only extend to victory over them. Except as the number of conveys shall increase no purer state of the true church can ever be expected than we now have! The world has, in believers as they now are, the holiest models of Christian character that it will ever behold!

Against both of these alternatives we enter our solemn protest. For all those who hate sin on its own account, but who are painfully convicted of inward corruptions, and devoutly aspiring after the complete image of God, we claim the evidences of justification, and hence, a valuable Christian character. In the strength of grace they resist, and conquer their inward propensities to evil. They pray with spiritual power, and are often melted into tenderness and holy joy. They love the brethren, They impress the world more or less with the truthfulness of religion. In imitation of their Master, they "go about doing good." They humbly affirm the witness of the Spirit that they are "born of God." They "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." None of these things were ever true of them in their unconverted state. None of them could be possible if they were backslidden. We must not therefore throw them away. We must not rank them with wicked men in the road to hell. To do it, we must decide against the evidence of experience; against the whole force of observation; against the most solemn professions of the men themselves; against the word of God, which says, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and Spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God;" -- "If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin;" "and every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure;" -- against the universal opinions of the primitive church; for, says Wesley, "I do not know that ever it [possible sin in believers] was controverted in the primitive church. Indeed, there was no room for disputing concerning it, as Christians were agreed; and, so far as I have ever observed, the whole body of ancient Christians, who have left us any thing 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.'" Indeed, the judgement we oppose, must be against fact itself. This must be extremely hard; and, we submit there is no earthly necessity for it. How happy, upon the contrary, should we be to know that there are many Christians besides those who are wholly sanctified!

But mark the acknowledged defects in the experience of the persons under consideration. Impurities yet remaining, show themselves in thoughts, in feelings, and desires, which ought never to be gratified. "The flesh warreth against the Spirit." It is an enemy -- a known and powerful enemy -- in alliance with the world and the devil, to ruin the soul. Or, in other words, it is a state of mind peculiarly susceptible of worldly impressions and allurements; a state which responds to the suggestions of the devil, and strongly tends to guilty compliance with temptation; and hence the war with self, which these disciples are compelled to keep up. Hence, also, the many "fears within," which harass them. Hence the darkness and doubts which distress them. Hence the weakness which they frequently feel in spiritual exercises -- the reluctance against which they are often forced to do duty. Hence that liability to fluctuation in character, in enjoyment, in life, over which they have to mourn. Hence those humiliating confessions which they make from week to week, often with tears of contrition, in the presence of God and their brethren. Hence the struggle which is necessary in the closet, and in the prayer-meeting, to be blessed -- the frequent groanings to be set free. That all these facts may co-exist with all the evidences of adoption given above, we know by experience; and from the plain word of God, from the testimony of multitudes, and from the actual and relative developments of religion in the world.

But is this all of entire sanctification? Has the cleansing power of the Holy Ghost passed through us, done its work, and left all these impurities never to be removed? Is there no higher style of faith -- no more permanent happiness -- no more complete deadness to the world -- no purer inner life -- no holier living? Is the church, which we now see, leaving out irreligious members, the "peculiar people," for whom Christ gave himself that he might redeem them from all iniquity? And are they already so redeemed? "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish." Is the present state of Christians the realization of all that is included in this glorious revelation of the object for which the Savior died? No, God forbid. Let us not thus lower the standard of holiness. Some bright examples there are on record, and some still living, of entire sanctification, in distinction from the many who are sanctified but in part; some of "perfect love," in distinction from those whose love is, to the eye of God and men, evidently imperfect. And these are so many indications of what the whole church of Christ may be -- of what it ought to be -- of what it will be, when he shall have fully "sanctified and cleansed it," and when he shall "present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." Then, indeed, it shall "be holy, and without blemish." O, transporting thought! Such a destiny awaits the church of the Redeemer. And all that is "glorious in holiness," as the privilege of the militant church, is fairly within the reach of every member.

But we have a great practical end in view, in this attempt at true analysis, and an honest development of the state of believers. It is not to convince speculators upon this ancient and honorable faith of the Bible, and of the best forms of Christianity known in history, though we should rejoice to see the last doubt removed from every mind in the church. It is not even to convince the masses of sincere disciples, who are, in reality but partially sanctified,-- for we cannot doubt that this fact is already known to them individually. No. But we wish to rouse the sensibilities of the church to the character of this truth.

If it be true, that Christians generally are sanctified but in part, can it be that we have no interest in such a state of things? Are we to know such a fact as this, and make no inquiries in relation to it? Have we no concern as to the results of the fact? None as to the reasons for it? Can we remain so seriously imperfect in our Christian state, year after year, and make no efforts to know whether a better character is possible to us whether there is guilt in our negligence, whether there is danger to ourselves, danger to the church, danger to the world, in so long remaining "babes in Christ" when we ought to be mature men?

Verily, the mere suspicion that the mass of Christians are sanctified but in part ought to rouse the spirit of inquiry throughout the length and breadth of Zion; and the positive knowledge of the fact ought to enlist the sympathies, and engage the energies of the church, till we can say, in truth and holy triumph, Christians generally are sanctified wholly.

SECOND; THE FACT SHOWN IN THE STATE OF THE CHURCH.

"Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" The reception of the Holy Ghost, in a special sense, is every believer's privilege. This is evident from the promises made. John said, "He that cometh after me shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." The special character of this baptism appears in the language of the Savior given by St. Luke: "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." Now "the number of the names together were about an hundred and twenty;" and "they were all with one accord in one place;" "and there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them." It was hence evident that this special baptism was provided for the whole church. St.

Peter confirmed this opinion. "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

Now this could not have been the only work of the Holy Spirit upon earth. He is the great agent of general grace, and must have been engaged in the ordinary work of enlightening, purifying, and saving men since the first promise of redemption. But the Christian dispensation was to be marked by peculiar responsibilities, and hence, of course, by peculiar privileges. The full inauguration of the Messiah-King was therefore attested by the abundant outpouring of the Spirit, which was so special as to be announced and, described as an original gift.

The instances recorded are ample confirmation of the general right of believers to this special baptism. We have room for but two: "Now, when the apostles that were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John, who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost; (for as yet he was fallen upon none of them; only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." Consider also the brief history in Acts 19.1-7. Paul found certain disciples at Ephesus, to whom he proposed the question, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" He supposed them to be true believers -- regularly baptized Christians. From both these instances, and other similar ones, it is evident that, in primitive theology, a special baptism, in distinction from the ordinary work of the Spirit, was recognized as the believer's privilege. It was not implied in the rudiments of faith -- in the first conditions of discipleship. It did not invariably accompany Christian adult baptism. It was received at times more or less remote from primary faith, and hence in different stages of Christian progress. It was given in answer to prayer, which, in the forms of primitive simplicity, was accompanied by the laying on of hands. And, finally, it was sometimes followed by certain miraculous results, that were in accordance with the spirit and emergencies of those times, yet not essential to the promised blessing.

But, conclusively, the results required imply the special baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is not merely the conviction for sin, the repentance and faith, the regeneration and witness given in the ordinary forms of divine agency, that will impart completeness to the Christian character, that will clothe it "in the beauty of holiness," that will gird it with power to conquer the world; and, yet these are results imperatively demanded in the revelation of God. The church is held responsible for a state of perfection, for a style of activity, and a degree of moral power, which must be utterly impracticable in the absence of this special baptism. It is evidently assumed in her predicted mission that she will have received the fulfillment of the promise which is to her and her children; and when Christians are found without their intended purity, development and efficiency, it may well be asked, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?"

It thus appears, from the promises recorded, the instances given, and the results required, that the reception of the Holy Ghost in some special sense, is every believer's privilege.

But how is this important, apostolic question to be answered by the mass of believers at the present time? Perhaps few could reply, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." Unquestionably, however, large numbers must answer in the negative. They have been truly converted, are recognized as believers by the church and the world, and perhaps by the omniscient God. Still they are only "babes," -- weak in faith, and very inefficient. They have at no time felt the corruptions of their hearts, so as to make them cry out for deliverance. They have not bewailed their sinfulness for days and nights together, engaged in fervent, agonizing prayer, for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, determined

never to rest, until they could "reckon themselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." They have not felt the holy violence of faith, that knew no denial, and claimed, in present renovating power, the baptism of fire. They have not realized the dissolving energies of the Holy Ghost, pervading their whole being, and filling their souls with a burning desire for the glory of God. Or, if so, they have been unfaithful, and are now uttering their lamentations by the rivers of Babylon, with their harps hung upon the willows.

Though devoutly grateful for the special manifestations of saving grace, wherever they appear, the friends of Zion cannot fail to see, and mourn over, her low estate. Inefficiency is felt to so great an extent, as to excite alarm and anxious inquiry into its causes and remedies. The church question -- involving the whole field of its essential and organic life, of its historic and prophetic relations to itself, to human governments, and to the ultimate destiny of the race -- has no one aspect so intensely interesting as this: What is its essential want? With all deference to those who seek to solve this problem, in other modes, we believe that, The baptism of the Holy Ghost is "the great present want of the church.

1. In proof of this position, we observe, that, The Vision of the church is obscure. From the modes of her being, and the feature of her mission, the church is required to examine with great accuracy the moral condition of the world. She must study profoundly her own state, and the wants and woes of those who are out of her pale. But she does not succeed well in these efforts. Thousands of her members cast a momentary glance at their own hearts, and are flattered by the view; seeing nothing but virtue, where pride, avarice, envy, lust and revenge, have their undisturbed habitation. The soul's reflection cannot reach these depths of concealed depravity. The light is insufficient. The road to heaven is a narrow way, but do not Christians generally think it exceedingly broad? The boundaries of the road, which to an accurate vision would be distinctly marked, seem quite undefined; and when they suppose themselves in the way to life, it is quite possible that they are in "the broad road that leadeth to destruction." There are dangers before them, but they cannot see them; dangers in their worldly prosperity, but they think it the best of fortune; dangers in their levity, but they think it merely innocent joy: dangers in their splendor of dress and equipage, but they think it only decency and good taste; dangers in their sumptuous entertainments and fashionable amusements, but they regard them as essential modes of social refinement. There are frightful dangers in the outward prosperity of the church; in her accumulating wealth and numbers; in her popular and secular power; but she takes these to be the true signs of progress, and ever and anon reaches out her grasping hand for more. These are sad evidences of obscure vision. But there are others.

A work of vast moment is committed to the church; but how little of it does she see! A circle of a few miles bounds the vision of her greatest numbers. And even within that narrow circle, hundreds are perishing for lack of spiritual food; but they are not seen. The hours and the moments of wicked men all around these professed Christians, are made up of eventful crises on which eternal life and eternal death depend; but they come and pass, with their momentous issues, unnoticed!

Far off in the regions of idolatry, what deep and damning guilt preys upon the souls of men! -- what agonies wring and crush the heart! -- what fearful corruption rages! -- what distressing doubts hang over the great unknown! -- what countless myriads are moving off, in all the misery of unpardoned sin, every day, into the world of retribution! But all this is nothing to the church. She cannot see it. She has, it is true, an idea that there is something to be done in this direction, but, whatever it may be, she seems hardly aware that it requires haste; and hence she calculates, with cool and exact economy, how much she can spare towards it, from home demands and worldly gratification; proposing in all sincerity to send a few

missionaries more, each year, into this vast field of the morally dead. What is it to the church that there are more than six hundred millions of deathless souls, unaware of the revelation God has made to man -- of the Savior he has given them -- of the immortality to which they are destined -- of the bright glories of the heavenly world, and the deep horrors of an endless hell?

Now, no light of science that ever dawned upon the world can illuminate these "dark habitations of cruelty." No inquiry of human reason can ever reach the moral death that pervades the world. No natural eye can gaze into these depths of human misery. No merely natural philanthropy can ever explore these abodes of sin. Nor can any ordinary Christian sight penetrate this vast profound of darkness and woe.

But the special reception of the Holy Ghost is a baptism of light. He is God, and "God is light. In him is no darkness at all." It was to this Divine Spirit that we were indebted for the first view of our sinful hearts. It was his gracious light that revealed the cross, and that has led us every step we have taken in the way to heaven. But hitherto we have received this light in limited portions, just as God has seen to be suited to us, just as our faith has commanded. Hence this obscurity of vision. But "light is sown for the righteous." Provision is made to take all this obscurity away. The promised baptism of the Holy Ghost is a flood of light, penetrating the darkest recesses of the soul, revealing its most concealed corruption. Receiving this, the Christian, sanctified but in part, could not return from an examination of his heart, congratulating himself that there is so little sin there. Its very fountain of inbred corruption would be exposed, causing him to groan in anguish, to "abhor himself, and repent as in dust and ashes." But to the same mind this light would reveal more distinctly than ever its cause of gratitude for what the Lord had done -- the evidence of his justification -- the honor of sonship -- the open "fountain in which to wash from sin and all uncleanness."

It is a clear light, reflected from the mind upon the word of God. It opens with astonishing brightness the promises of the gospel, and strongly illustrates the divine providences. It quickens the inquiring and active powers, and pushes investigation far out into the world of suffering humanity. It reveals with great distinctness the "high and holy way cast up for the ransomed of the Lord to walk in." It discovers dangers that were never before realized. It shows the perilous track of a wandering church within the unhallowed precincts of sin. It compels the soul to shrink from and abhor the very things which before it has earnestly coveted. It trembles to see that the outward splendors of the church, once deemed the reliable evidences of success, are but the attire of a harlot, both revealing and inviting illicit intercourse with a godless world.

It is a baptism of light, uncovering the responsibilities of the church; the fearful power of sin over the hearts of men; the peril of neighbors and friends out of Christ; the delusions of errorists in the struggles of reason after truth to believe, a God to adore, a power to redeem. It more than manifests the fact that "the world lieth in wickedness," which may have been known before. But with this strong accession of light, the soul sees the danger of ignorance, the guilt of infidelity, the responsibility and power of a love of sin. It looks out upon the bewildered masses of humanity as they are moving off to perdition, and says, Alas! these are my brethren! I have a personal, living, eternal interest in them. I am responsible for them to the full extent of the moral power that resides in a converted soul, and lies within its reach. It exclaims in agony, I am, O my God, I am my brother's keeper! And lo! he goes, uninstructed, unwarned, before my eyes, down to hell!

We have no room to extend the view. The argument stands thus: the special outpouring of the Holy Ghost is alone a baptism of light; the vision of the church is obscure; therefore the great present want of the church is a baptism of the Holy Ghost.

2. The life of the church is feeble. Christians have a life in common with the race, and they have a life other than that -- a "life hid with Christ in God." It is given in regeneration, in the union established through Christ with the Fountain of life. It is hence characterized as a divine life -- a life "begotten of the Father." It is a union of humanity with divinity -- a life utterly new in all its attributes and functions. The soul which before gave out only the manifestations of death, now gives out those of life; which before was downward, hell-ward in its tendency, is now upward, heavenward.

It is, moreover, characterized as a life of faith, not merely a life of belief. This is the life of wicked men -- the life of devils. It is a life of voluntary reliance upon the Savior. It is faith in the unseen, in the unknown, in the non-existent! Taking God at his word, the soul renounces all worship of visible, tangible being, in favor of an unseen, impalpable, spiritual essence. It renounces present gratification, in favor of that which is mainly future. It sets aside the glories of earth for the beatitudes of heaven, which can only exist for the individual, when they are realized. And all on the strength of a word.

Such is faith. But let it be strictly observed, it is a life of faith, in distinction from any number of separate exercises or acts; in itself a living, God-inspired principle; giving perpetual life to the soul as well when asleep as awake; as well when intensely fixed upon a mathematical problem, as when engaged in prayer; a faith that lives in God, that receives all from God, that turns all to God.

It is also distinguished as a life of love; a life of holy delight in the character of God, and a true desire to promote his glory; of delight in the characters of Christians, and a desire to promote their prosperity; of delight in the essential qualities of the human soul, and a desire to save it; a delight in all goodness, and a desire to extend it; a living love, that is a divine reality, whether it glows in the fervor of a pure, intense passion, or rules as a fixed, commanding principle.

Now, such is the individual Christian life; such is the associated, organic Christian life; a divine and spiritual life; a life of faith, a life of love, with all their implied concomitants and results.

But in the same hearts it may vary in its strength and vigor, in proportion as its conditions are met. Especially does it depend upon the measure of divine influence received. And this is comparatively limited at first, though its smallest measure seems too much for the soul in its unworthiness to receive, in its feebleness to endure. But experience proves that these incipient gifts of the Holy Ghost are but the earnest of the baptism in reserve, and made to depend upon faithfulness to the grace already given.

As in individuals, so in the church. You shall find a collected, organized life, just in proportion to the individual life of which it is composed. And it is this life of the church which we would accurately estimate.

The individual consciousness of the church, if it could be ascertained, would be decisive in this inquiry. We may certainly know something of this from ourselves; and let us ask, how does the interior life report itself? What is the vigor of that life which you profess to have, in distinction from the natural life; your divine life, wholly unlike any thing human or earthly; your life of faith, renouncing the tangible, the sensual, the present, for the spiritual, the rational, the future; your life of love, fixed on God -- God in unchangeable triunity, God in doctrine, God in law, God in redemption, God in fellowship with man? In all candor, is not the inward witness of this life faint, and often inaudible to the spirit-ear?

Actions report correctly this individual consciousness. True, the work of an inward, spiritual life, may be seen at the present time, and it is seen. Many are the spiritual toils, the works of faith, the labors of love, that show a divine life in the church. But there are other works that do not subordinate to these; that are

not merely diverting from the true employment of a living spirit; that are not merely accidental or occasional in their demands; works that are engrossing, and that shudder at the light!

Upon the whole, the phenomena of a deep, pervading, spiritual life in the church do not appear at this time. The facts, so far as we are able to judge, compel us to admit that it is comparatively feeble. The general impression, that it is so, cannot be mistaken; and it is distressing to see the expedients adopted, to stimulate this fainting life, and revivify the church. To some it seems that long, loud, and censorious preaching will accomplish it; to others, that special revival measures are the remedy; to yet others, that a spirit of deeper, purer intelligence, diffused throughout the church, will secure the desired result; others still, think radical changes in the constitution and policy of the church are demanded; while not a few insist, that the hope of religion is in a more critical, liberal, and extended philosophy. But sad experience proves that, under the strongest action of these, and a thousand other similar resources, the church may wither and die. She has use for an honest and faithful ministry, for special revival measures, for widely diffused intelligence, for improvements in the flexibility of ecclesiastical polity, for a sound philosophy. But it may be doubted whether she ever had more of these than now, and yet her life is drooping.

It is time to consider the fact that the Holy Ghost is eminently life-giving, as well as life-being. His special influence is alone a baptism of life. We have had it in a small degree. Individuals have felt it in its ordinary power and effect. Churches have enjoyed it in a limited measure. The whole church is sustained by its usual general grace; but all this is not enough. It is not what the Bible promises. It is not what the Savior purchased. It is not what the church of antiquity received. It is not what the church of the Reformation experienced. It is not what the church of former generations enjoyed in the days of Wesley and Asbury, of Edwards and Payson. We have too much forgotten this grand and effective provision for the emergencies of the church -- the very power which the omniscient God foresaw would be imperatively demanded in the church of the future. We have allowed our minds to be engrossed by subordinate instrumentalities, and just in the same proportion have approached the standard of the church of the Middle Ages. The Holy Spirit is clothed with omnipotence, for the very work we are struggling to accomplish, too much without him. Let the divine effusion come; let it fall as upon the day of Pentecost; let it baptize the whole church of the living God; let it penetrate the souls of ministers and official members, and run like fire through the masses, and then there will be life. This is, by way of eminence, a revival. It is pouring the life of God through the souls of men, and wrapping the church in a flame.

Clearly enough, the special gift of the Holy Ghost is alone a baptism of life. The life of the church is feeble; therefore the great present want of the church is the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

3. The holiness of the church is defective. We have seen that the first great law of holiness is consecration. It is so because, in every act of divine grace efficiently successful, there must be the concurrence of the will. This fundamental principle is conceded in the revelation of God. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies [a part for the whole] a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." It is an imperative duty, founded in the relations we sustain to God as creatures, and as probationers under a remedial dispensation. But we must do it. God will disturb our sinful devotion to self, his great rival in man. He will awe us by his threatenings, and move us by his "mercies." He will send us the stimulating power and gracious aid of his Holy Spirit. But he will not yield for us. We must present ourselves as the sacrifice upon his holy altar. It is not till the first point is yielded -- our voluntary attachment to sin -- that he begins the work of sanctification. Nor can the work progress faster than the voluntary consecration proceeds. The full and final realization of that "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord," must involve the free surrender of soul and body,

with every power, known and unknown, of life and health, of attainments and reputation, of property and friends, to God for ever. The reservation of the least of these shows a will not yet perfectly subdued.

The second great law of holiness is faith, the "faith that works by love and purifies the heart."

Another is purity: the word implies it. All the terms used in Scripture to define and enforce holiness make this interpretation necessary. The divine arrangements are made to purify us. If the conditions are met, "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" -- an achievement so great, it would seem to us, as to be utterly impossible; but the infinite power and faithfulness of God are pledged.

The remaining law is completeness or perfection, not in development, for eternal progression is the rule of God's spiritual kingdom. We mean completeness in the character of the Christian graces especially. Impurities mingled with these render them imperfect in themselves, irregular in their exercise, and slow in growth. Take love as the great, general grace, inclusive of all the rest. We quote once more: "Perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." Plainly, therefore, there is a Christian love that is less than perfect love; a love mingled with fear: and there is a "perfect love that casteth out fear." This is holiness; and surely it is not beyond the claims of God, or the power of redemption. It is only measuring up to the broad command, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." This is the great principle and sum of obedience. Even outward obedience proceeding from imperfect love would be irregular, constrained, and deficient; but, proceeding from perfect love, in all the details of Christian duty it would be a holy pleasure. The will of God would be supreme. Love to God would be so intense and absorbing that it should not be needful to inquire whether his pleasure is uttered in the way of imperative command or otherwise. The slightest intimation that any act, however hard to perform, however crossing to human nature, would be, in any degree, pleasing to him, would move the whole soul to do it.

Such is holiness in its highest practicable realization. Of course there has been no time in which the church has fully measured up to this standard. It would be true of her in any age to say she is defective in holiness. As the purification of the heart is a progressive work, there will always be great variety in the holiness of the church. Nor do we now compare the church of the present with that of the past. Even granting it could be proved that there is more holiness in the church now than at any former period, it might be more defective. For the light, the privileges, and the responsibilities of the church are constantly increasing. She may be defeated. now under the same degree of moral power which in a former day would have rendered her triumphant. We seek to estimate her attainments by her present responsibilities.

And first, the holiness of the church is in proportion to the degree of her consecration. The grand test of consecration is humility. In the heart of an individual, the complete domination of pride is evidence that there is no consecration. Its partial ascendancy shows the struggle between conflicting powers indecisive. But self-abasement reveals a consecrated soul. That which values itself does not surrender to God. And the same must be said of the church. Perfect humility alone would be the proof of her entire consecration.

Upon careful examination, we fear it will be found that her members, as individuals, have a high estimate of self, of its value and rights; that they habitually place themselves above their brethren, and, in some instances, even above the Almighty! Else how should it happen that they are so exacting in relation to the esteem of others; so sensitive in regard to reputation; so grasping in bargains; so aspiring as to official rank and posts of honor? How is it that so much power of body and mind is concentrated upon worldly schemes,-- that so much property is claimed for self, and so little really rendered to the Lord, who rightfully

claims the whole? Why is so much time engrossed with schemes for the aggrandizement of the individual, and so little recognized. as the Lord's? Why are kindred and friends held so closely? and, when God asserts his right by taking them to himself, why such immoderate grief, such rebellion against divine sovereignty? These claims, it must be remembered, are asserted against God, in defiance of his authority. Self is not humbled. It has not accepted its revealed insignificance, its nothingness. It has rejected it, denied it, and preferred its claims to high consideration by signs which none can mistake. The extent of this practical rebellion is alarming; and to the same extent is the evidence of defective consecration in the church. No talents, no property, no time is set apart to a sacred use, consecrated to God, which is reserved for the unauthorized use and disposal of self.

Nor can we make a higher claim for the church collectively. If her consecration were complete, she might show it by her humble views of herself; by her attentions to the poor; by her plainness and economy; by her liberal contributions for the spread of the gospel; but other and opposite facts and principles are exceedingly prevalent. Her separate denominations are characterized by elevated views of themselves. In the general, their arrangements and policy are not adapted to illustrate this distinguishing glory of the Christian dispensation, -- "Unto the poor the gospel is preached." Artificial distinctions are daily indulged, that bring home to the poor the fact that they are poor, and to a greater or less extent prove that poverty is proscription. Plainness in churches, in establishments, is dreaded. as an evil; and splendor is courted and adopted at the expense of credit, justice, and charity. Extravagant demands at home render foreign appropriations small and entirely inadequate. Alas! how much of unsanctified self yet remains in the church! Defective consecration is marked and daily published to the world.

And what is the faith of the church? Works are the evidence of faith, and she does some important work for the world. But not the work demanded to renovate society, and save the millions who are dying without the Redeemer. Hers is a faith too easily baffled, not, as it should be, that which removes mountains.

Next, we must inquire into the purity of the church; not her purity in doctrines and ecclesiastical polity, but in heart. "The pure in heart " love holiness and hate sin, So strong and decisive are these principles, that their developments are visible. It is impossible to conceal them. The conversation, the company, the employment, will all reveal the inner condition. How are these in the church? The fact cannot be concealed that the purest services known on earth do not attract the multitude. The social prayer meeting, where the purer hearts seek direct communication with God, is generally small. The close and searching religious conference is thinly attended. The rooms of the sick and suffering, of "the widow and the fatherless," are frequented by but few. The holy communion is dreaded and neglected by multitudes. These are among the holiest scenes on earth. It must be cause of deepest sorrow that so few have the state of mind which renders them delightful; that there is so much impurity in the church, that the most trifling diversions will prevent great numbers from entering them; that attachments to them are so slight as to constitute almost no effective moral power, in competition with parties of pleasure or any species of fashionable amusement. By these simple tests, this grand element of holiness is shown to be wanting to an alarming extent.

But, finally: The holiness of the church is in proportion to its completeness in the Christian graces, especially love; and obedience is the test of love. "If ye love me, keep my commandments." Let us seize at once upon a few specific laws which distinguish the Christian system. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Alas! what a fearful amount of disobedience to this most solemn command there is in the church! Take another: "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." And another: "Follow peace

with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Mark this law of progress. See with what authority we are called upward in the divine life. But disobedience defeats these splendid schemes of divine love. We do not love God further than we obey him. Our very feeble and imperfect obedience reveals a sad deficiency of love.

In all the great elements of holiness, then, the church is seriously defective. And the remedy -- what is the remedy? is a question of the gravest importance. We have not been wanting in experiments. The common resort is reformation of life, attempted by thousands from deepest conviction of want, and in the utmost sincerity; but followed by the most lamentable failures. The reason is obvious. It is an effort to purify the streams while the fountain remains corrupt. Discipline is another mode of purifying the church. But the power to execute it is insufficient; the subjects

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