

# Examples Compared

by William Edwin Boardman

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*The sermon explores the experiences of Christian salvation and the concept of sanctification through the examples of Luther and Merle D'Aubigne.*

**Scripture:** Romans 3:23, Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 1:7, Philippians 4:7, Colossians 2:10, 1 John 1:9

**Topics:** "Sanctification", "Faith In Christ"

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## Description

William Edwin Boardman compares the experiences of Martin Luther and Merle D'Aubigne to illustrate the journey of faith and sanctification. Both Luther and D'Aubigne, despite their different backgrounds, struggled with sin and found ultimate peace and sanctification in Christ. Their examples show that salvation and sanctification are attainable through faith in Jesus, who is the same for all in all time. The sermon emphasizes the importance of surrendering to Christ, finding forgiveness of sins, and experiencing the fullness of Christ as sanctification.

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## Transcript

EXAMPLES COMPARED.

"YE ARE MY WITNESSES."

The experience of Luther has been given at length because the great reformer stands in forefront of Protestantism, a true and noble type of the real ripe, whole-souled Christian, very much abridged, and condensed, however, from the accounts given by his biographers. It is entitled to great weight as an example. Let not its force be broken by the thought that Luther was great, and a special instrument of God specially endowed. So far as salvation is concerned, Luther stood with us precisely. He was a man, and a sinner, as we all are. Faith in him and in us is the same thing, and Jesus is the same to all and for all in all time. The same rays of the sun of righteousness shining through the same tears of penitence, cause the same bow of the covenant to arch the same clouds of despair, in all ages and nations, and the same eye of faith discerns the promise and rests joyously upon it, in all persons, alike the great and the small.

It will be observed that Luther's first light and comfort was in the forgiveness of sins; and the last and greatest, in the full apprehension of Christ as his sanctification. We shall have occasion to see the same thing in every instance as we go on. How this comes to pass we shall see very clearly when we come to speak of the philosophy of Christian experience.

With some, the force of Luther's example may be broken by the fact that he was bred in all the superstitions of Rome, and had a second shell to break through, after he was out of the first. We will, therefore, take another example: one from the ranks of those bred in the full blaze of the light of the Protestant day, three centuries after Luther's time.

#### MERLE D'AUBIGNE

was educated at Geneva, the home of Calvin and the stronghold of the Reformation. Calvin himself is not a better representative of the reformed religion, or a nobler champion than Merle D'Aubigne, the famous historian of the Reformation. His conversion was at Geneva, while in the university. The subsequent deeper work was several years later at Kiel in Germany. His conversion, together with others, a noble band, was by the instrumentality of one of the Lord's Scottish noblemen, Robert Haldane. In some sort it was the payment of an old debt of three hundred years' standing due from Scotland to Geneva. Knox, driven from home by bloody persecutions, found refuge three several times in Geneva, and during the years of his stay there, while, doubtless he imparted much of his iron energy and Scottish firmness; he certainly received much of the clear light of the Swiss mountain height so elevated above the murky mists of the Campagna, the Tiber and Rome. Right eagerly Robert Haldane sought to pay the debt, and God helped him, as the conversion of D'Aubigne, Monod, Gonthier, Gaussin, Rieu, and many more will testify.

Dr. Cheever, as quoted in the memoirs of R. & J. A. Haldane, speaks of D'Aubigne's conviction as follows:

"At this juncture it was that D'Aubigne heard of the visit of Mr. Haldane. He heard of him as the English or Scotch gentleman who spoke so much about the Bible, a thing which seemed very strange to him and the other students to whom the Bible was a shut book. He afterwards met Mr. Haldane at a private house, along with some of his friends, and heard him read from an English Bible, a chapter from the Epistle to the Romans, concerning the natural corruption of man, a doctrine in regard to which he had never received any instruction. He was astonished to hear of men being corrupt by nature, but clearly convinced by the passages read to him, he said to Mr. Haldane, 'Now I do indeed see this doctrine in the Bible.' 'Yes,' replied the good man, 'but do you see it in your heart?' It was but a simple question, but it came home to his conscience. It was the sword of the Spirit; and from that time he saw and felt that his heart was indeed corrupted, and knew from the Word of God that he could be saved by grace alone in Jesus Christ."

The conversion of D'Aubigne was decided, clear and unmistakable. He himself speaks of it in his "Travelling Recollections in Germany, England and Scotland," chap. I, § 2., in these explicit words, "I had been seized by the Word of God;" (while at the university in Geneva;) "I had believed in the divinity of Christ, in original sin, the power of which I had experienced in my own heart; and in justification by faith. I had experienced the joys of the new birth."

Of the later, deeper work he speaks more fully in the same connexion and just as explicitly. After his conversion he completed his course at the university at Geneva, was ordained, went to Germany; pursued study still further, first at Leipsic, then at Berlin, and then spent four years as a pastor over the French church at Hamburg. Several years had thus fled before the time came for the Lord to give him the final full knowledge of Jesus as all in all. It was on this wise. At an inn, in Kiel, he had planned and entered upon a journey with two of his old Genevan fellow students and fellow converts, to Copenhagen. They met at Kiel, a remarkable trio: Rev. Frederick Monod settled at Paris; Rev. Charles Rien, pastor of Fredencia in Jutland; and D'Aubigne. Steamboats were irregular; they waited at the hotel. D'Aubigne was then in the midst of a terrible struggle. Kiel was a university, and Kheuker, an old champion of the word and an

experienced Christian; was Biblical professor there. D'Aubigne says, "I called upon him and requested him to elucidate several passages of Scripture for my satisfaction.\*\*\*\* The old doctor would not enter into any detailed solution of my difficulties. 'Were I to succeed in ridding you of them,' he said to me, 'others would soon arise; there is a shorter, deeper, more complete way of annihilating them. Let Christ be really to you the Son of God, the Saviour, the Author of eternal life! Only be firmly settled in his grace, and then these difficulties of detail will never stop you! The light which proceeds from Christ will disperse all your darkness.' The old divine had shown me the way: I saw it was the right one, but to follow it was a hard task."

The Way. Yes, indeed! and the right one. Happy for D'Aubigne that he saw it! Happy that its hardness did not keep him back from it! While they waited at Kiel for the steamboat, they devoted part of the time to reading the Word of God together, a pattern for all detained Christian travellers. Rieu was chaplain. D'Aubigne says of him that he had even then far outstripped both himself and M. Monod in the divine life. Two years after, he finished his brilliant career upon earth by a triumphant transit to heaven. His converse was very sweet. They all three communicated their thoughts to each other on the Word of God, but Rieu brought out the hidden riches of the Book of God most abundantly.

"We were studying the Epistle to the Ephesians," says D'Aubigne, "and had got to the end of the third chapter. When we read the two last verses 'Now unto him who is able to do EXCEEDING ABUNDANTLY above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory' &c. This expression fell upon my soul as a revelation from God. 'He can do by his power,' I said to myself, 'above all we ask, above all even that we think, nay, EXCEEDING ABUNDANTLY above all! A full trust in Christ for the work to be done within my poor heart now filled my soul. We all three knelt down, and, although I had never fully confided my inward struggles to my friends, the prayer of Rieu was filled with such admirable faith, as he would have uttered had he known all my wants. When I arose, in that inn-room at Kiel, I felt as if my 'wings were renewed as the wings of eagles.' From that time forward I comprehended that all my own efforts were of no avail; that Christ was able to do all by his 'power that worketh in us;' and the habitual attitude of my soul was to lie at the foot of the cross, crying to Him, 'Here am I, bound hand and foot, unable to move, unable to do the least thing to get away from the enemy who oppresses me. Do all thyself. I know that thou wilt do it. Thou wilt even do exceeding abundantly above all that I ask.'

"I was not disappointed; all my doubts were removed, my anguish quelled, and the Lord 'extended to me peace as a river.' Then I could comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. Then was I able to say, 'Return unto thy rest, O my soul: for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.'"

In these sketches of experience, nothing has been said in either case touching the question of entire instantaneous sanctification, or Christian perfection. Neither the great reformer or the great historian of the Reformation made any profession of perfection themselves. Indeed Luther expressly disclaims it, and D'Aubigne records the disclaimer. Yet in both the soul and marrow of the full experience of salvation at the last, was the perception and the reception of the Lord Jesus as their righteousness in the sense of sanctification, as already before they had taken him as their righteousness in the sense of justification; for these senses are both included in the term "righteousness of God" as used by Paul, and exulted in by Luther, and in both senses Christ is complete to the believer, and in both, the believer is complete in Christ.' Luther and D'Aubigne alike hungered after righteousness, true holiness, and either would fain have satisfied himself with husks from any hand, if he could, but he could not. God had in store for both, the true bread that cometh down from heaven to the full. Both struggled long and manfully, each in his

own way, both in vain, until each gave up his own way, and took the Lord Jesus as THE WAY. Both fought resolutely, and were foiled in every onset, and would have fallen at last slain and conquered, had not God taught them the sweet truth uttered by the loving disciple, "This is the victory that overcometh -- even your faith." By faith at last, by full trust in Jesus, both conquered an abiding peace, and both gained the full salvation.

To these examples scores upon scores might be added of the same class; those who have given themselves wholly to Jesus, and taken Jesus wholly to themselves, and so found the abiding sunshine, and the serene sky of full salvation, but who yet make no profession of perfection, but like Luther and D'Aubigne, disclaim it. The memoirs of the great and good, gone to their reward, abound in such, and the living witnesses are many. Richard Baxter, Jonathan Edwards, Hewitson, McCheyne, Mrs. Edwards, Adelaide Newton, and a host of others. In the Life and Times of Richard Baxter, 2 vols. 8 vo. London, a very circumstantial account is given of this great man's experience. Quite as distinct as either Luther's or D'Aubigne's, both as to his final full apprehension of Christ as all in all, and as to his conversion years before. President Edwards himself has given to the world a sketch as remarkable as either, known to be the experience of his own beloved consort; one of the happiest Christians that ever lived. And in the details he has spread out of his own inner life, if the moments of the first and the last great transitions are less distinctly traced, the same fulness of faith at the last, and the same precious results are as clearly seen.

The memoirs of Hewitson by Baily, and of Adelaide Newton by the same, furnish each a lovely instance also. Hewitson describes a long and severe struggle years after his Conversion, terminating finally in such an apprehension of Christ in his fulness, as his righteousness -- sanctification -- as filled him with heavenly consolations, and abode with him ever after.

But we have no space even for references to each of the noble many in this bright cloud of witnesses, much less for their experience in detail. Other classes must be compared with this if we would gain a clear comprehension of the whole subject. We will call this class THE LUTHERAN. Another may be called THE WESLEYAN, and a third THE OBERLINIAN. The Wesleyans received their first light in this matter, and their first impulse from the Moravian brethren of Germany. And the Oberlinians took their terms, and some colors and shades of view from the Wesleyans. Both use the terms, "perfect love," "Christian perfection" "entire sanctification" to describe the experience in question, and "doctrine of sanctification," or "doctrine of holiness," as expressive of their creed about it. The Oberlinians differ from the Wesleyans in their philosophy of the will of man, and of the law of God. Their view of the claims of the law as graduated to the sinners ability, enables them to hold and profess perfect sanctification when they come to yield wholly to the known will of God, and take Christ wholly as their righteousness and true holiness. The Wesleyans admit the claims of the law of God as requiring absolute perfection, like the spotless purity of Jesus, and the holy angels, and make no professions of it, but only of Christian perfection, making a broad distinction between Christian and angelic perfection.

Both Wesleyans and Oberlinians differ from Lutherans in the use of terms, and in the theology of the experience described, but aside from this, in all that is essential in the experience itself all are agreed. Of the Wesleyans, the memoirs of Carvasso are clearest and simplest in the development of the experimental truth. He was a man of God. His faith was wonderful, and his views clear as the light. Bramwell if less clear was even more absorbed and ardent. Mrs. Rogers was truly seraphic. Mrs. Fletcher's memoirs are very fascinating, as indeed are all these and many more of this class. They have opened the eyes of thousands to the higher walks of Christian life, and impelled tens of thousands to

press for the mark. But so far as we can see, there is no essential difference between the experience they describe, and those of Luther and D'Aubigne, Baxter and Edwards. All alike begin with a sense of their guilt, and peril, and come sooner or later to a sense of sins forgiven, blotted out in the blood of Jesus, and then, again sooner or later, in every case, hungering and thirsting for true holiness is induced, and after varied strugglings the issue in all alike, is that of finding in Christ the end of the law for sanctification.

This unity will be apparent if we place any two of them side by side. Here for instance are the expressions of Mrs. Rogers, and of D'Aubigne from their own pens in their own words, descriptive of their own views and feelings at the moment their struggles were crowned with the victory that overcometh, viz., full trust in Jesus.

#### D'AUBIGNE

[Pardon the repetition, it seems to be necessary.]

After describing his conversion clearly, and the subsequent struggles and turn given to the current of his desires and efforts, by the counsels of the good old champion of the faith Klucker at Kiel, and the scene at Inn, with his two fellow travelers, Monod and Rieu; their reading in the word of God, the III of Ephesians, and the power with which the two last verses were set home to his heart, says, "When I arose, in that inn-room at Kiel, I felt as if my 'wings were renewed as the wings of eagles.' From that time forward, I comprehended that my own efforts were of no avail; that Christ was to do all by his 'power that worketh in us,' and the habitual attitude of my soul was to lie at the foot of the cross, crying to Him, 'Here am I, bound hand and foot, unable to move, unable to do the least thing to get away from the enemy that oppresses me. Do all thyself. I know that thou wilt; thou wilt even do exceeding abundantly above all that I ask.'

I was not disappointed, all my doubts were soon dispelled, and not only was I delivered from the inward anguish which in the end would have destroyed me, had not God been faithful; but the Lord 'extended peace to me like a river.' Then I could 'comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge,'" (filled with all the fullness of God.)

#### MRS. ROGERS

After all the record of her earlier contest, and earlier experience of sins forgiven, and after describing her heart-searchings, doubts, fears, desires, and efforts for true holiness, comes at last to the moment when she sees Christ to be all in all, and receives him. Then she says, "Lord, my soul is delivered of her burden. I am emptied of all. I am at thy feet, a helpless, worthless worm; but take hold of thee as my fullness! Everything that I want, thou art. Thou art wisdom, strength, love, holiness: yes, and thou art mine! I am conquered and subdued by love. Thy love sinks me into nothing; it overflows my soul. O, my Jesus, thou art all in all! In thee I behold and feel all the fullness of the Godhead mine. I am now one with God; the intercourse is open; sin, inbred sin, no longer hinders the close communion, and God is all my own. O, the depths of that solid peace my soul now felt!"

And this, like D'Aubigne she describes, not merely as the rapture of a favored hour, but as the habitual attitude of the soul, at the foot of the cross.

"Yea, Christ all in all to me

And all my heart is love."

"With every coming hour

I prove

His nature and his name is

Love."

Like David in his expressions of love to Jonathan when these dear friends parted in the field, Mrs. Rogers "excelled" in ardency of feelings and words, but in all that is essential there is not a single line of difference. Both are self-emptied, both prostrate in the dust at the foot of the cross; both accept Jesus as all in all, and find themselves conquerors, and more than conquerors through faith in his name.

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Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/william-edwin-boardman/examples-compared/>

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