

## CHAPTER XIII

ARTICLE XII.—*Of Sanctification.*—We believe that those who are regenerated and justified grow in the likeness of Christ through fellowship with Him, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and obedience to the truth; that a holy life is the fruit and evidence of saving faith; and that the believer's hope of continuance in such a life is in the preserving grace of God. And we believe that in this growth in grace Christians may attain that maturity and full assurance of faith whereby the love of God is made perfect in us.

To have given ourselves to Jesus, to be His, to be "in Him," is a state or a standing; but it is also a starting-point, the opening of a great career. It is good to look back, and ask if we did really enter on it. It is better to consider whether we are now in the way, and how far we have got on our way. Sanctification, accordingly, is not an addendum to the Christian life; it is in reality that life itself, viewed as progress from a starting-point to a goal. It is impossible, without grave spiritual danger, to be preoccupied with forgiveness, and to leave holiness to later consideration. As impossible would it be, without making shipwreck of our hopes, to be interested in holiness, and to labor for it, while leaving unanswered the question as to our forgiveness and our sonship.

The article, then, deals with the deepening and development of the new life. (1) The goal of the Christian life. This is defined briefly as "the likeness of Christ." In this matter, the Christian

is not permitted an option. He may not decline Christlikeness, and declare that less will satisfy him. "Enough for him to be a good citizen and live a fairly decent life, etc.! Let others, *unco guid*, make a specialty of holiness!" To speak thus is to betray profound ignorance. A Christian's life is rooted in Christ, and can have nothing short of Christlikeness as its issue. To decline that issue, is to rule himself outside of the Christian fellowship. The Christian, as such, is committed to Christlikeness, as the be-all and end-all of his whole Christian life. The likeness of Christ is there, in the Gospel page. That likeness is to be stamped on the character of the Christian, recognizably so even in this life, to be perfected hereafter, when we see Him as He is, and shall then be like Him. (2) Progress to this Goal. This is described in the New Testament as of the nature of growth, and is so designated in this article. The Christian character is not a manufactured article. It is the product of life, a result, the special result, of "the indwelling of the Holy Spirit." The Old Testament has caught the idea—"he shall grow as the lily." And our Lord, looking on the same lovely outcome of a hidden life, calls attention to it, pointing out that lilies neither toil nor spin; they simply grow. (See a valuable chapter on "The Law of the Lily," in Mrs. Herman's beautiful book, "The Secret Garden of the Soul.") Thus the soul grows, spontaneously, unconsciously, through the presence within it of the very life of God Himself. (3) The conditions of

Progress. It is strange that, while growth in the spiritual life is described as fact or law, it is also described as a duty—"Grow in grace." Of course, we are not responsible for the power by which we grow; that is supplied by God. Nor are we responsible for the conditions and circumstances, amid which the growth takes place, and by which it is fostered and increased. These are ordered by the love and wisdom of God. Yet we are not unconscious like the flowers. We are conscious and responsible personalities. We have a very definite responsibility by the life that is God's gift to us. There are conditions, which we are called on to supply, God's grace enabling us to fulfil them. Three are noted in the article. *First*, faith. Faith is what old writers called the instrumental cause of salvation, including justification and sanctification. Unthinking Christians have not always remembered this. They were willing to allow that they were *justified* by faith; but they clung to the conviction that they must be *sanctified* by their own independent exertions! And a very poor job they made of it! In answer to such ignorant pretensions, Marshall wrote his great classic—"The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification." A later generation saw the rise of the "Keswick School," to emphasize this almost forgotten truth, that holiness is by faith, as much as justification is. *Second*, fellowship with Christ. So, Christ ordained Twelve that they should be "With Him." That companionship with Christ, as lovely as we picture it in the fields



of Galilee, is to be realized even more intimately now, as the Spirit takes the things of Christ, and shows them to us. Keep close. Let not sin drive a wedge between. In a daily fellowship of prayer and meditation, as we gaze on the face of our Master and Friend, we shall grow into His likeness. *Third*, obedience. The truth of God is not for fruitless discussion, but for practical accomplishment. It is to be done, not merely learned. Every duty, conscientiously performed, has a reflex action on ourselves, and the likeness of Christ becomes more definite. (4) The evidential value of growth. Holiness, Christlikeness, is the characteristic fruit of faith, as just emphasized. Therefore, also, it is the best, and ultimately the only, evidence that faith is present and in exercise. The question, have we a saving interest in Christ? is to be answered by pressing this other question, "are we growing in the likeness of Christ?" If there is life, there is growth. If there is no growth, decay has set in, and death is inevitable. (5) Our Hope of Reaching the Goal. There is one only, and that is the keeping power of God. This is not a physical force exerted upon matter. It is the Divine Spirit acting on the human spirit, with all the power of omnipotence in it, under condition of simple trust in the Redeemer. The "Perseverance of Saints" has sometimes been travestied, as though a soul could be saved, irrespective of the exercise of a living faith. This is, of course, dangerous nonsense. The "perseverance of saints" rests on the bedrock of the faithfulness of

God. What is committed to Him, He will keep. Without this confidence, life, with its trials and temptations, would be too perilous an enterprise; death with its darkness and anguish would be an unendurable terror. (6) The Possibilities of Experience. In plain words, these are boundless. The riches of Christ cannot be tracked to their termination. There is always a beyond, for faith to explore and appropriate. It is a vast pity that a truth like this, so inspiring, should have been thrown into the arena of debate, for bad-tempered theologians to wrangle over. Perfection is impossible, cry some; and debar the soul from hopes of victory. Perfection is possible, affirm others, adding "we ourselves have lived so many days without conscious sin." Neither party has considered what scripture means when it applies the epithet "perfect" to believers. It certainly does not mean "sinlessness." It means "maturity," as compared with a stage far earlier, where ignorance and inexperience prevail. The stage of maturity may be reached by those who are making progress in the Divine life. Those, who grow, may become mature. The Signs, that a soul is reaching such a stage, are two. *First*, a faith that makes a full surrender, and gains a full assurance. *Second*, a love which owns absolutely the constraint of the love of Christ, dies utterly to self, is not a mere passing emotion, but is, in very deed, "the love of God, shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given into us."