

THE IMPORTANCE OF CHRISTIAN TESTIMONY

"Ye shall be witnesses." (Words of Jesus, Acts 1:8)

From the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost in A. D. 33 to the conversion of Constantine the Great in 312 A. D., was almost exactly three centuries. Religiously this period was marked by the terrible persecutions pagan Rome directed against the followers of the Lord Jesus, whose defense was mainly found in their individual faith and testimony. Nor was that equipment a weak and insignificant thing. Some of the greatest triumphs of all the Christian era are written down in the history of that period, when it was the rule that every Christian felt it was his task to spread the Gospel by his testimony, as well as by a holy life.

Holiness was the standard. They asked of each other, "Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed?" God's power accompanied their words and little churches sprang up in thousands of places where Christian individuals or families tarried for a time. When opposition was withdrawn by the orders of Constantine, after he became at least a nominal Christian, there was much gained, of course, in the peace and comfort that followed, but there came to be a loss of this sense of individual responsibility as witnesses for Christ. The Church developed much strength in the direction of a great organization, costly buildings and a formal ritual. Christian testimony died down and survived mainly in the incidents of the great revivals, such as the Lutheran and Wesleyan revivals. In our day testimonies are seldom heard except within the ranks of the Holiness churches, and some of the propagandist type of religious movements, such as the Mormon and Christian Science bodies.

Writing on the duty of witnessing for Jesus to the blessing of entire sanctification, Mr. Wesley says in his Plain Account of Christian Perfection: "Suppose one had attained to this, would you advise him to speak of it?" Answer "At first perhaps he would scarce be able to refrain, the fire would be so hot within him; his desire to declare the loving-kindness of the Lord carrying him away like a torrent. But afterwards he might; and then it would be advisable, not to speak of it to them that know not God (it is most likely it would only provoke them to contradict and blaspheme); nor to others, without some particular reason, without some good in view. And then he should have special care to avoid all appearance of boasting; to speak with the deepest humility and reverence, giving all the glory to God."

Pursuing the subject with another question and answer he says: "But would it not be better to be entirely silent, not to speak of it at all?" "By silence, he might avoid many crosses which will naturally and necessarily ensue, if he simply declare, even among believers, what God has wrought in his soul. If therefore, such a one were to confer with flesh and blood, he would be entirely silent. But this could not be done with a clear conscience: for undoubtedly he ought to speak. Men do not light a candle to put under a bushel; much less does the all-wise God. He does not raise such a monument of God's power and love to hide it from all mankind. Rather, He intends it as a general blessing to those who are simple of heart. He designs thereby not barely the happiness of that in-

dividual person, but the animating and encouraging of others to follow after the same blessings His will is, "That many shall see it and rejoice, 'and put their trust in the Lord.' Nor does anything under heaven more quicken the desires of those who are justified, than to converse with those whom they believe to have experienced a still higher salvation. This places that salvation full in their view, and increases their hunger and thirst after it; an advantage which must have been entirely lost, had the person so saved buried himself in silence." Let us hear again some testimonies of God's people to Full Salvation.

Saint Paul: "Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded." (Phil. 3:15. Note in the twelfth verse Paul disclaims the perfection of being glorified on the completing of his life-work, but joins with others in laying claim to Christian perfection in this verse.) "And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ." (Rom. 15:29.)

Saint Peter: "And God . . . bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as He did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." (Acts 15:8, 9, comparing the coming of the Holy Spirit to the household of Cornelius, with the blessing received by the disciples on the day of Pentecost.)

John Wesley: "Immediately I declared to all, 'We are saved from sin, we are made holy by faith.' This I testified in private, in public, in print, and God confirmed it by a thousand witnesses." (Vol. 7, page 38 Wesley's Works.)

Bishop Francis Asbury: "I live in patience, in purity, and in the perfect love of God. . . I think we ought modestly to tell what we feel to the fullest." (Journal of Francis Asbury, first Bishop of American Methodism.)

Dr. Adam Clarke, the great Commentator of Methodism: "I regarded nothing, not even life itself, in comparison of having my heart cleansed from all sin; and began to seek it with full purpose of heart." . . . Soon after this, while earnestly wrestling with the Lord in prayer, and endeavoring self-desperately to believe, I found a change wrought in my soul, which I endeavored, through grace, to maintain amid the grievous temptations and accusations of the subtle foe." (Mr. Clarke obtained this experience at the age of twenty-two, and this description is quoted from a letter written to Mr. Wesley).—*The Wesleyan Methodist*.

MR. WESLEY'S ANALYSIS OF HOLINESS

"In the year 1764," Rev. John Wesley writes in Plain Account of Christian Perfection, "upon a review of the whole subject, I wrote down the sum of what I had observed in the following short propositions:

1. There is such a thing as perfection; for it is again and again mentioned in Scripture.
2. It is not so early as justification; for justified persons are to "go on unto perfection" (Heb. 6:1).
3. It is not so late as death; for Saint Paul speaks of living men that were perfect (Phil. 3:15).
4. It is not absolute. Absolute perfection belongs, not to man nor to angels, but to God alone.
5. It does not make a man infallible. None is infallible while he remains in the body.
6. Is it sinless? It is not worth while to

contend for a term. It is "salvation from all sin."

7. It is "perfect love" (I. John 4:18). This is the essence of it; its properties, or inseparable fruits are, "rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, and in everything giving thanks" (I. Thess. 5:16).

8. It is improvable. It is so far from being incapable of increase that one perfected in love may grow in grace far swifter than he did before.

9. It is amissable, capable of being lost; of which we have numerous instances. But we were not thoroughly convinced of this till five or six years ago. (The Wesleyan revival had then been under way nearly twenty-five years).

10. It is constantly both preceded and followed by a gradual work.

11. But is it in itself instantaneous or not? In examining this let us go step by step. (Mr. Wesley's reply is somewhat extended, the gist of it being that the death of sin, like the death of the body may be sudden or lingering, "It is often difficult to perceive the instant when a man dies; yet there is an instant in which life ceases. And if even sin ceases there must be a last moment of its existence, and a first moment of our deliverance from it."

"Therefore," concludes Mr. Wesley, "all our preachers should make a point of preaching perfection to believers constantly, strongly and explicitly; and all believers should mind this one thing, and continually agonize for it."—*The Wesleyan Methodist*.

A SLUM GIRL

She was a child of the slums, a ragged, forlorn little girl of about ten years of age. Some one had given her a penny, and she had hurried away to the penny store and there purchased a stick of striped red and white candy. She was running along the street, proud and happy in her new and rare possession, when I saw her.

Suddenly another little girl, equally ragged and forlorn looking, came limping out of the dark hallway of a dilapidated old rookery of a tenement house. She was very lame, and evidently suffered much in her short life. Her face had a drawn and prematurely old look, such as one is always sorry to see in the face of children. We think that a little child should naturally be happy.

The two little girls met, and the one with the candy held it aloft, exclaiming, "See what I've got! Just see what I've got!"

"Where'd you get it, Janie?"

"Bought it."

"Where'd you get the money?"

"A man gave it to me for scooting after his hat when the wind blowed it off."

"Gimme some of it, won't you, Janie? Please do."

There was a wistful, eager, hungry look in the drawn little face.

Janie hesitated. Evidently sticks of candy came rarely to her. She looked longingly at the candy and then at the girl. Suddenly she rushed forward, saying, eagerly, joyously: "You take it all, Maggie; you take it all. You can't scoot after gentlemen's hats and earn pennies, and if I get a chance to earn another penny I'll give it to you to buy anything you want to with it."—Miss. H. H. and The Vanguard.