

OUR MISSION

Reformed Baptists practice immersion only as baptism. They believe it to be the teaching of Scripture. But we are not disposed to contend with others over the externals of religion. Baptism in whatever mode it is practised cannot change the character of the subject only as it answers to a good conscience or as it symbolizes the change previously wrought in the heart by the Holy Ghost.

Reformed Baptists were not brought into existence as a church by emphasizing baptism either for or against any form of administration, but believing it best to practice one form only. We choose the form we believe to be sanctioned by Scripture and by almost all the Christian denominations of christendom.

But the scriptural truth which we feel called upon to emphasize and for which we believe we have an existence is entire instantaneous sanctification. For preaching this scriptural truth and giving testimony to it as a personal experience we were disfellowshipped by denominations of which we were members and forced to organize and make a religious home for ourselves, where we could unitedly work for the spread of holiness and give to others the blessed experience which God, by His grace, has conferred upon us. Because of this we have been called hobbyists, and so we are. Holiness is the hobby of every writer of the Bible, and it is and will ever be the hobby of each and all who have passed through the experience of entire cleansing of heart. This central idea of Christianity must be emphasized where it exists. It will not remain where it is not talked out and worked out and preached out; it will burn its way out as it did in the heart of Jeremiah, who said, "His word was like fire shut up in my bones," as it did in Isaiah's case when the fire touched his lips and he heard the call, "whom shall we send, and who will go for us?" then said, "I, here am I, send me." It will burst out as it did at Pentecost, when "they all began to speak with other tongues as the spirit gave them utterance." Fear will not prevent this, for fear is cast out by perfect love. Pride will not hinder, for pride is destroyed. Self and selfish interests are no effectual impediment, as every holy man or woman is dead to self. Now, to make prominent this gospel of full salvation, we were called into existence as a denomination, and for this purpose, and for this alone, is our existence necessary. Our mission is the spreading of scriptural holiness, and when we cease to make this a specialty in all our aims we ought not to be known as a church. We are the Baptist section of the great and grand army of holiness people which God is raising up all over the world, in all denominations, in whom is fulfilled the beautiful prayer of our Lord, "Sanctify them through thy truth, . . . That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may know that thou hast sent me."—John 17:17-21.

We have committed to us as a people a sacred trust, and only as we prove true to this trust can we hope to succeed, and we would like to impress this upon all our readers, especially upon each member of our churches. Holiness to the Lord,—a pure heart,—the baptism of the Holy Ghost,—should be the theme of our ministry: it should burn in the testimony, be seen in the life, and appear in the dress and demeanor of every member of a Reformed Baptist church, and to do this we

must keep the experience of perfect love, the spirit must fill us, his fire must burn in us, we must be cleansed of all sin and indwelt of God, now—all the time. Then we shall be empowered to carry out the mission entrusted to us. Failing in this God has no place for us. There are many fashionable churches where intellectual treats are dealt out from the pulpit and testimonies are kept on ice; where propriety is considered before spirituality; where water baptism is the essential to spiritual privileges, and sanctification is sought by works rather than faith. But our mission is to preach a gospel of faith; a salvation from all sin by faith; entire sanctification by faith; cleansing of the flesh and spirit; salvation from all uncleanness of the flesh, from anger, malice, envy, pride, hatred and all filthiness of the spirit; a salvation from all doubtful amusements, from all unscriptural ways of money raising for church purposes, bazaars, grab-bags, pie socials, suppers, etc.; a salvation that saves and keeps the soul amid life's perils, temptations, losses and bereavements three hundred and sixty-five days in every year and an extra day in leap year in sweet and contented communion with God all the time; hallelujah! It will be a sorry day for us when this great truth drops out of our sermons and testimonies.

Brethren, are we keeping true, have we the fire, is Pentecost still burning in us. Let us search and try our hearts, and if there is a dimness of vision, a lack of warmth, if our souls do not pant for victory, and if victory is not in us, let us seek it at once in the old paths.—Editorial in Highway of 1895.

JOHN WESLEY'S TESTIMONY TO
SANCTIFICATION

Did John Wesley give direct testimony to a personal experience of entire sanctification? This question has been asked by both friend and foe of the Wesleyan doctrine of entire sanctification. A recent writer (Dr. W. E. Sangster, in Path to Perfection) affirms that John Wesley gave no direct testimony to his own sanctification—although it is only fair to state that there is much in Dr. Sangster's book which favors John Wesley's doctrinal position.

There was always about Mr. Wesley an abhorrence of spiritual pride—he warned against it frequently and denounced it among his followers. This made him very cautious in his spoken utterances relative to his own experience. This caution is manifest even in his testimony to his conversion on May 24, 1738, at Aldersgate, of which he writes: "In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

That he was a seeker after a perfection of love, or Christian perfection, is well known. Also there is some evidence that he arrived at some experience in his life which satisfied this quest. In his Journal, December 23-25, 1744, this notation was made, " * * * in the evening, while I was reading prayers at Snowfields, I found such light and strength as I never re-

member to have had before. I saw every thought as well as every action or word, just as it was rising in my heart; and whether it was right before God, or tainted with pride or selfishness, I never knew before (I mean not at this time) what it was 'to be still before God.' Tuesday, 25. I walked, by the grace of God, in the same spirit; and about eight, being with two or three that believed in Jesus, I felt such an awe and tender sense of the presence as greatly confirmed me therein, so that God was before me all the day long. I sought and found Him in every place, and could truly say, when I lay down at night, 'Now I have lived a day.'"

This observation is made by Dr. Olin A. Curtis in his book, The Christian Faith, "To anyone familiar with John Wesley's careful, realistic manner of speech, it is evident that we have here the same sort of testimony to the experience of holiness that we have in his Journal, May 24, 1738, to the experience of conversion. If the one is not quite so near a full definition as the other, it surely is just as expressive of the fact. I find it almost impossible to read Wesley's words in the light of all his later utterance about the doctrine of Christian perfection, and not consider this date, December 24, 1744, as the probable time when he began to love God supremely."

His further utterances seem to give further evidence to his own personal experience of sanctification. On November 1, 1762, John Wesley wrote to Messrs. Maxwell, Bell and Owens as follows: "You have over and over denied instantaneous sanctification, but I have known and taught it (and so has my brother, as our writings show) above these twenty years."

In his sermon, "The Scripture Way of Salvation," published first in 1765, Mr. Wesley says: "I have continually testified, in private and in public, that we are sanctified, as well as justified, by faith."

In a letter written from London, June 19, 1771, to Lady Huntington, he says: "Many years since I saw that 'without holiness no man shall see the Lord.' I began following after it, and inciting all with whom I had any intercourse to do the same. Ten years after, God gave me a clearer view than I had before of the way to attain this, namely, by faith in the Son of God. And 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. I have continued to declare this for above thirty years; and God has continued to confirm the word of His grace."

That he did not change his views is evident from his last-recorded utterance, written in the year of his death (1791):

"A man that is not a thorough friend to Christian perfection will easily puzzle others, and thereby weaken, if not destroy, any select society."

These recorded utterances of John Wesley surely constitute a clear, personal testimony to the experience of entire sanctification. However, it is comforting to realize that our enjoyment of the experience today does not rest upon Mr. Wesley's testimony, but upon the Word of God and the power of the blood of Christ to cleanse from all sin. This glorious experience of heart purity is the wonderful privilege of all of God's children today.—D. Shelby Corlett, in Herald of Holiness.