

CHAIR-TALKS
ON
PERFECTION
—
FOWLER

ould

66
55

GOULD LIBRARY
EASTERN NAZARENE COLLEGE

G. P. Kelly

REV. B. H. MAYBURY
20 DENISON STREET
HARTFORD, CONN. 06105



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2015

Chair-Talks on Perfection

By REV. CHARLES J. FOWLER

President National Association for
the Promotion of Holiness

Author of

*“Christian Unity;” “How to Keep Sanctified”
and “Thoughts on Prayer.”*

THE CHRISTIAN WITNESS CO.
Chicago, Illinois

••C 857

Copyright, 1918
By
THE CHRISTIAN WITNESS CO.

INTRODUCTION

“About right,” is always wrong. This is true in mathematics and in ethics. Two and two equal three and seven-eighths would be about right; and that one pint and three-quarters of milk equal a quart would be most right also. What would all think of that sort of reckoning?

What do men in general demand of themselves and of others? just weights and measures—agreement with recognized standards.

What is this but “perfection?” perfection in every-day affairs.

What does the human conscience demand when it comes to moral character and conduct? *nothing less than being right.*

Perfection, though this term may not be used, is on men’s hands and always has been and always will be.

What shall be done about it?

PART FIRST

Be Perfect

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy.

"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

"That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

"For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

"And if ye salute your brethern only, what do ye more *than others?* do not even the publicans so?

"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:43-48).

I once heard Dr. Daniel Steele preach from this 48th verse and he prefaced his sermon by saying, "This, is the greatest text in the Bible."

How shall it be read? Does it mean to be a simple and forceful command, or a simple and forceful promise?—"Be ye therefore perfect," or "Ye shall therefore be perfect."

The tense is a simple future. The passage is

Chair-Talks On Perfection

read both ways. Some prefer the command, and some the promise. I like both. If perfection is commanded, then it is promised; if promised, it is of importance enough to be commanded. I confess that, for myself, I want to be assured that I may have perfection, and I may need command to urge me to it.

There occurred in a meeting last week something I am not used to. I have a few times in my life heard that it obtained among the holiness people and frequently hear that they are accused of it, but never before came so near to it myself. A woman who seems to have a responsible intelligence claimed an *absolute perfection* for herself and seemed to demand that, as a standard for all others. Then an estimable preacher said that when he preached the other Sunday on *Christian Perfection* that one of his hearers said, "I do not agree with your definition; I believe in an absolute perfection; and, I am absolutely perfect."

I did not at the time consider those things worth notice farther than what I gave them which was this: I said, "a Texas steer getting its tongue around a bunch of green grass and a big

Chair-Talks On Perfection

pig-weed, would release the pig-weed and chew and swallow the grass. We ought to have as much sense as a Texas steer so that when grass and pig-weed are in a meeting served for our eating, we can eat the grass and go home."

I thought that that would be enough. But it seems that it was not, for some came to me after the service with enquiries that indicated that I did not get both heads out the barrel so that people could see clear through. I concluded that it would be of profit, if not for some good people really necessary, if I would give a talk or two on this matter.

Perfection, Scriptural

The scriptures recognize a perfection. Perfection, of some kind is taught there. The word, in some form is of frequent use. "Perfection, perfect, perfectness, perfecting, perfected and perfectly," are words used over one hundred times. Considering this, and the nature of their meaning, it at least indicates that it is a matter of immense importance.

And, whatever these words carry as to their

Chair-Talks On Perfection

meaning, they are used approvingly. God, is favorable to perfection. He, endorses it.

God cannot inspire men to dislike what he likes.

Men, dislike the idea of perfection.

They This dislike, therefore, comes from another quarter than from God; whatever that quarter is, it is not from him.

Why Why this dislike of perfection? Why is the church so set against it?

I say "the church." This question belongs there. It does not have the notice of others; the world knows nothing, as it would care less, of this doctrine. It is a church affair.

For this dislike, the perfection-people are not a little responsible. The blame, to no little extent, must rest there; and it is not unbecoming for us, ourselves, to look seriously into the face of this question. Christleib, at the world's congress of religions in Chicago some years since gave currency to the expression, "The church is the world's Bible." That truth, the Bible has been saying all the while. If the world has an incorrect idea of the true religion, from the liv-

Chair-Talks On Perfection

ing of the church, how about the church's idea of perfection from the living of us who advocate and profess it?

I am making no charges here to you, or of you; I am asking questions. If this is a judgment day to any, it is a good time to have it. Job said, "What shall I do when God riseth up, and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?" i. e., if he could not bear the suggestions of his own conscience and living, what about when God called him to account? John says, "If our heart condemn us, God is greater and knoweth all things."

Why do men dislike this idea of perfection?

(1) Because of their own imperfection. It is common and easy, if not natural for a man to make a standard out of his own thinking and living. His own beliefs and unbeliefs he may make the straight-edge to which he brings all others.

One of you brethren was saying last week here that when you told a fellow that you had lived with your wife so many years and neither

Chair-Talks On Perfection

had spoken a cross word to the other all that time, he said, "You lie!"

Reasons

There is philosophy in that answer; it has method.

That man respected this minister whom we are quoting. He did not *mean* to insult him. He did not mean to say what he said and yet said it with haste and emphasis. As this minister said of him, "He just exploded." What prompted him to say it? just this: His own faulty life. His own relation to his home was the standard by which he judged this minister and judges others, and not coming up to where this minister lived, he could not see that the preacher could reach it. Exactly so.

You have heard about the young and earnest preacher (especially earnest on this question) who was discoursing eloquently against holiness in his own pulpit of a Sunday morning. After his people had congratulated him, a humble and unlettered member, but one in whom all saw true piety, shook his hand and said, "Brother, ye

Chair-Talks On Perfection

say there aint no holiness, but the next time ye preach that sermon ye better say, not as ye knows of, fer I'se had it lo! these twenty years."

Then again (2) The imperfections of those of us who profess this grace are so glaring, in the estimation of the church generally, that they are led to think there is no such thing as perfection.

Every person who thinks about perfection has his standard as to what perfection is. He defines it for himself. To that standard he brings us all. That we do not come up to it goes without saying. So, if the people who represent perfection and advocate it do not have it, who does? simply no one. This, is the conclusion of the church in general, especially the ministry.

Again (3) The idea of perfection so condemns the general church that they do not think of it with favor. The contrast between people who live godly lives and those in the church who are worldly is so striking, that the latter cordially dislike the former. If one be a consistent observer of the Sabbath and next door to him is a member of the same church who takes the Sunday

Chair-Talks On Perfection

paper, uses his Sunday afternoons for pleasure, etc., he does not enjoy the rebuke that the life of this good man gives his living. So, while the ordinary church member may be forced to think and say that his neighbor is a good man, he will likely say, "but he is a crank on religion," and *he says it out of self-defence*. His neighbor's living rebukes him.

But another and more serious reason for this attitude concerning perfection is (4) the distressing, deplorable and disastrous outward sins of those in the holiness ranks betrayed into them; those who stand for the doctrine and experience, and claim it in head and heart.

To mention this will bring upon me stern rebuke from certain, and possibly several quarters; but this is no matter with a serious man; indeed, is not worth a second thought. It certainly is an exceedingly unpleasant duty. And duty, I regard it.

Paul speaks of certain who "held the truth in unrighteousness." His teaching is that certain men which he had in mind, had a right definition of truth in their thinking and teaching,

Chair-Talks On Perfection

but who did not practise it in their lives; on the other hand were ungodly and unrighteous, and he declared that divine wrath was revealed from heaven against such.

Paul further asserts that the ministry of the church need to give exceeding care lest it be "blamed." These are to commend themselves "as the ministers of God" in some thirty particulars which he mentions, among which is "pureness."

The Roman Catholics teach that to be perfect means to withdraw from society to the nunnery or monastery, take the vow of poverty, chastity and obedience to superiors, and there and thus live out of touch with the world. This has brought perfection into disrepute. The Oneida people, so called, but who called themselves the community of perfectionists, taught and practiced free-love and complex marriages. This disgraced, of course, the idea of perfection. But among the genuine holiness people the devil has wrought greater and more glaring sins if possible.

The most contemptible man I ever knew, personally,—the lowest, meanest, dirtiest wretch,

Chair-Talks On Perfection

—was one who preached perfection, claimed it for himself, insisted on it for others and practised the opposite when in earnestness and apparent sincerity was thus engaged as Christ's minister. No language known to me is sufficient to paint the blackness and rottenness of his life. It was so unnatural as to be unmentionable; to my own sex I should never think of describing his filth. And, when this hypocrite was faced with these things, he, with the air of innocent composure denied it all—lied—and within a few hours confessed the whole and asked that he might be permitted to continue in the holiness ministry (and, it would not be uncharitable to say, continue his wicked conduct which even the devil ought to upbraid him for); and not till he had been threatened, by men who would have done it, with exposure country wide, did he withdraw his dirty self from the ministry of holiness.

This instance I would not mention were it an isolated case. They are not common, thank God! but this has not been the only one among us. Then the instances of the violation of the law of purity among the sexes, and the breaking

Chair-Talks On Perfection

down of business integrity, make the situation so glaring and grewsome as to demand that we treat with some considerable patience those who do not hurry to join our forces.

What Shall Be Done

That holiness—perfection—entire sanctification—has been poorly presented, as to teaching and badly represented as to living, at times, there can be no question. But how about other truths of the scriptures? are they not poorly presented and badly represented? and, if the same treatment of neglect and denial were accorded them, because of these facts, what would become of all religion? One of our sane men says, "Abuse of truth can never disprove truth itself; indeed it confirms, since the very abuse is but a caricature of that which is the true, and concedes its existence. To get away from the abuse of right things we would have to go out of the world, for even the world itself is a standing perversion of that which was good and true in the beginning."

"We cannot afford to give up what is right and true because of abuses. If so, we would

Chair-Talks On Perfection

give up the church, for around the true idea of the church innumerable abuses have gathered; we would give up the divine religion of the Bible, for there have always been fanatical and hypocritical abuses of that religion; we would give up prayer, for hardly anything is more abused than true prayer; we would give up faith, for the doctrine of faith so true and good in itself has furnished the pretended inspiration for all classes of misguided zealots, visionaries and charlatans; and truth, if liability to abuse be a reason for rejecting it, then we never could have trusted the Savior, for in his very own words we have a warning against the coming of false Christs; we could never have received the Atonement, for that truth has afforded cover for antinomianism, universalism, restorationism and many like heresies, and the precious blood that gives it its saving virtue is made a superstitious travesty in the transubstantiation of the mass."

"Perfect." Shall we neglect and despise the truth because of this particular word? Jesus used it, and He, evidently guards it. Dr. Steele said, "The lifeblood of Jesus is in his words.

Chair-Talks On Perfection

Cut them and they bleed. Neglect them and you neglect Him." What does Jesus himself say, "Whosoever * * * shall be ashamed of me *and of my words* * * * of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed."

I am not done, but I will close. Whatever view we entertain of perfection, let us encourage ourselves and all about us to be as good as they want to be and can be. A prominent Methodist minister here in Boston said in the preacher's meeting the other day, when the meeting was rather cordially opposing the idea of sanctification, "My idea brethren is, that it is best for me to encourage my members to be as good as they wish to be or can be. This is my course." And he was not a holiness man. But he, it would seem had some sense.

But, whether others encourage us in these particulars, let us encourage ourselves.

Perfection of Man

Considering the use of the terms denoting perfection in the Bible and what they mean, indicate

Chair-Talks On Perfection

that the idea deserves more than passing notice, and more than the Church is giving it.

And, a different notice than is usually given it even when the pulpit and pew give it any; for that notice is, usually, to slur and silence it.

Bible perfection, is a perfection of man. It is a human perfection. The question does not concern angels, or Adam, who is not on the scene now, or God's perfection, but that of man.

Man, has a three-fold selfhood—he is hand, head and heart. The scriptures say, “spirit and soul and body.”

By hand, I mean of course, the body. Perfection—the perfection of the scriptures is not that of the body. Bodily, humanity is imperfect, not only, but, so far as we can judge, must remain so through this life.

Whatever view you or any entertain of the healing of the body as a present privilege, no person teaches that it means recovery from all physical defect.

Paul speaks of “our uncomely parts” and of “our comely parts.” And the figure has to do with the literal body—feet, hands, ears, eyes, etc.

Chair-Talks On Perfection

While no member of the body is useless, and can be dispensed with and no loss be suffered, still it is true that some members are more “comely”—attractive—than others. It is frequent that one speaks of a person’s eye as beautiful, and of the hand as lovely—“What a beautiful eye he has, and what a lovely hand that young woman has,”—but you seldom hear those remarks about people’s *ears*. Yet the ears might be well-nigh perfect.

It is not seldom that we speak of one’s foot, as a comely—a pretty foot—but, it is a foot, as Paul would say, that is honored by having *attention* of being covered in order that it may have “comeliness.” The normal—the usual eye, needs no covering; but how sure it is that the normal foot does. A little child’s foot is perfect. Its toes are shapely and joints are perfect in size; but no adult’s foot is. The foot has to bear the weight of the body and thus is subjected to the hard service that other members are not called to perform, and cannot do this and maintain the softness and perfection that the child’s foot has.

Whose ears are mates? Yours may be but

Chair-Talks On Perfection

more people's ears are not of equal size, are not on straight, are not of the proper size than otherwise. Eyes, are not mates, frequently. Hands, almost never are after adulthood is reached. If you are left-handed, or right-handed one hand is bigger than the other. Your fingers are not of proper length. Often the little finger is longer than its next one, which is a deformity, or the fore-finger projects further toward the sun-rising than its nearest neighbor, which is a defect. The thumb isn't the right shape; in a word, the hands are imperfect.

How about the teeth? Whose mouth has perfect teeth. Hardly anything about us so denotes the physical break-down of the race as our teeth.

Imperfect in Body

A What am I saying? this: The body is imperfect and must remain so. There is one redemption for which we must wait, viz.—“the redemption of the body.”

However pronounced any of us may be in our beliefs concerning the privilege of divine healing, or healing of any sort whether divine or human,

Chair-Talks On Perfection

does it mean a releasing us from these infirmities we have mentioned? Do any mean to say that there is recovery so that the short finger will be longer and the longer one shorter? that the imperfect teeth as to number will be supplied, or the poor ones made good? that the mis-mated ears will become alike and the eyes mates? Certainly not! No person who would be an accredited teacher by the people of his faith in the main, would for a moment claim this.

And this is not saying that the body cannot be improved and is not, often, by reason of the acceptance of the Christian faith, for "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is" as well as of the life "that is to come," but it is saying that the common infirmities of the body will be with us unto the end. Perfection then, is not of the body.

And Not of the Head

B Mind—intellect—is not perfect. By intellect we mean, in a word, knowledge. Who has perfect knowledge? only One. Perfect knowledge means an understanding of all knowable things.

*Physical brain / judgment
reason
memory
Knowledge - educ*

Chair-Talks On Perfection

Who besides God has it? Of course the question answers itself.

But some person with a commendable zeal but non-covetable understanding calls attention to an utterance by the apostle John which is, "But ye have a unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." And further. "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you:" as suggesting a contradiction of the statement that we have made. This hardly needs an answer: certainly no discussion. John is writing about "the truth"—about "antichrist"—about essentials concerning salvation. Concerning what is essential truth who are antichrists *ye know*; ye need to have no man teach you as to the fact that he who opposes Christ and the blood is antichrist. Speaking of ecclesiastical persecution and that of the world as well Christ himself said, "And these things will they do unto you, (the church and the world alike) *because* they have not known the Father, nor me." That a real heart-knowledge of salvation makes one to know

Chair-Talks On Perfection

better than to do these things. Experience illuminates. It is light.

Not only does no one know everything, none know *all* about *anything*. This is a day of specialists. All knowledge tends to specialism. Take the study and practice of medicine, for instance. Why such specialism in this department of science? because, there is so much to know. The most pronounced infidel-doctor will at once agree with the statement of the scriptures when they say, we "are fearfully and wonderfully made."

This fact accounts for the man in the great city who devotes his time and skill to the eye, another to the ear, the nose, the throat, lungs, stomach, heart, etc., etc.

The perfection of the scriptures then, is not of knowledge.

Not of Conduct

Hence, it is not a perfection of *conduct*—of moral behavior. I mean to say that the perfection that the Bible demands does not consist in always doing the right thing.

Chair-Talks On Perfection

What is the condition, or are the conditions of right doing?

1. A standard of right.
2. A knowledge of that standard.
3. Compliance with it.

Relative to every moral act there is always a standard of right. Not every act of our lives is a moral act, but many, not in themselves directly involving the question of morals, may become that to a given individual. For instance: A proposition is made to a good man to go into a mining scheme. A copper mine exists in a certain state and is, evidently, a good property. That is, "evidently" to these promoters. They are sincere and honest men. Mr. A. is presented with this proposal: He is to sell stock in a given territory. He need furnish no capital.

The inducements are many, as generally obtains, and desirable. The par value of the stock is within reach of people of moderate means, it will pay a large interest and rapidly increase in value.

This good man A. induces his friends and many others to buy. He sells a lot of it. He is

Chair-Talks On Perfection

successful. And, more is the pity! for it proves worthless. The whole thing fails and all lose who went in and some lose all they had and more than they had, for they borrowed, the project was so "sound." No dishonesty was intended upon the part of any one.

The scheme in itself involved no moral quality. It was neither good or bad. Mining, as a business is a legitimate industry, whether it is of copper, gold, lead or coal, and *morals* enter where the question of *method* of doing business comes in, and the *motive*.

In the case of Mr. A. we are here citing, did the moral question come in? Well, look at the results of this affair, or some of them. In the case of many who lost they blamed him for "getting them into it." They say "he should have known better;" that "he feathered his own nest," was "in league with tricky men," etc., etc. "Pretty kind of a Christian he is!" and the moral damage is considerable, and Mr. A. never will overcome the effect of that in certain lives, and himself never will rise above its detriment to his

Chair-Talks On Perfection

own life, in so far as he never will be what otherwise he might have been.

As to the property question he lost all he had so that restitution is out of the question.

Had Mr. A. foreseen all this would he have done it? Certainly not. What then does it prove was the standard for his action—what should he have done? Nothing. Could God have told him what to do he could have and would have been saved from this course. In other words, what required right action relative to this business enterprise apart from what Mr. A. had? He had a *disposition* to do right, and he *chose* the right as he understood it; what more was needful was a knowledge of what the right was, or the standard, or the “law” as the scriptures would put it. Could he have ascertained what the divine mind would be in the matter? Certainly. Was he not then guilty, or decidedly a blunderer for not doing it? Not, necessarily, a blunderer, and certainly not guilty.

Acts

Our life is made up of individual acts. While

Chair-Talks On Perfection

we do not think of it exactly in this way, yet in the nature of things this is true. If every individual act of life could be scrutinized and analyzed as some acts are, then perfection of acts would certainly be much nearer reached if not quite reached.

Our acts are major and minor; *i. e.* they are those things that arrest our attention and those that do not, so much. If one thinks of getting married he would more likely give it consideration and serious thought than he would give to what he should eat for his today's dinner. If he was as serious and religious as he should be relative to marriage, he could get and should get the divine mind concerning it. And indeed, in the common matter of eating a dinner, it might be so vital as to affect his health and possibly cause his death, by reason of certain illness which was upon him; or relative to what he should eat might involve a moral question as Paul discusses with the Corinthians.

Rev. Geo. Muller of Bristol, England, was one of the most striking characters in Christian circles in the last century. Judging him by the

Chair-Talks On Perfection

results of his life, his work was strikingly in evidence of remarkable power and influence in prayer.

Mr. Muller was entertained, by an acquaintance of mine, a few days in his home. One morning my friend said to him, "Would you not like to take a buggy ride?" and Mr. Muller said, "I will see." After a time he came around and said he would go. On that ride reference was made to this I am citing and Mr. Muller said to this friend, "If I have made a mistake in twenty years, I do not know it." Mark you now! I am not saying that Mr. Muller had not made a mistake in twenty years, or saying I think he had not, (what he said to my friend about it, may have been a decided mistake) I am simply saying *what he said*. Before you conclude, however, that his statement was so extravagant that it could not have been either true or wise, stop and consider this: I remember in my reading about his great work of Orphanage-fame, that at one time when he thought he needed a new and larger building, that he took the matter to God and asked for the money to build it. It came.

Chair-Talks On Perfection

After it had come, Mr. Muller prayed *eleven months* over the matter as to whether he should build, so fearful was he of making a mistake.

And, Mr. Muller was not what would be styled a holiness man, so none need fire him at us as an example of a holiness fanatic; that he was a holy man, none have reason to question.

Thinking now of all the acts that make up our lives, *can* life be reduced to such exactness that the mind of God can be gotten in all its details? I suppose that a rational answer would be, *probably not*. I cannot, however, consent to give this answer without reserving the right to say more about it later.

Illustrations

To look at the lives of Jesus and of Paul, we, it would seem, have illustrations of the answer I have given. Jesus lived a human life. An every-day-like life. He was a boy among boys, a youth among youths, a man among men. He was subject to both human and divine law. He lived in this practical, human world of ours for three and thirty years, and died. How, in re-

Chair-Talks On Perfection

lation to God and divine law did He live? Perfectly. He lived without sin; without sinning *once*.

See Paul, the great Apostle to the Gentiles, the great mind of the New Testament and the master-writer of the great epistles. View his life from the beginning of its Christian part to its close and no recorded living is comparable to his; in suffering, patience, self-denial, labor, faith and everything that goes to make up Christianity, where is Paul's equal? How did he live?

Think of a straight line. A line absolutely straight. Not a line straighter than some other line, but so perfect in straightness that it could not be improved. Let that line stand for God's law. A perfect law. Not a law more perfect than some other law, merely, but a law so perfect that it could not be more so.

Think now of these two men—Jesus and Paul—walking alongside this law. All the Thou shalt, and the Thou shalt-nots of divine law emphasized in their lives, pointing to them.

Chair-Talks On Perfection

Sin?

What is sin? "Sin," John says, "is the transgression of the law." Transgression (*trans-gradi*; *trans*, over; *gradi*, to step), means to step over the law. To cross over it. To violate it.

What was the relation of Jesus to this law for the whole of His life as to walking by its prohibitions and requirements? Did He step over at any point? The question is its own answer. Never! Why not? Because of His *light* and of His *love*—His *knowledge* and His *purpose*. He knew what the requirement was, always; knew which way the law pointed, ever; and, He had a perfect heart to choose it.

I want, now, to suppose that Paul had as true a heart as Jesus. This I most certainly believe. If he did, it was not that he had it by the same method; for Jesus had His by nature, while Paul had his by super-nature. His was a gift from Him who only could give.

Jesus can give that kind of a heart. "As He is, so are we in this world." Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

Chair-Talks On Perfection

As now Paul comes to walk by and before the divine standard of a perfect law, he more or less often crosses it—steps over it—violates it. Why? Because he did not have a perfect heart? No, but because he did not have a perfect *head*; he did not always see where the law pointed and what it required.

To observe Paul's living is to see a perfection of living not common—indeed, see what is scarce among men—but not a living equal to that of Jesus Christ in all particulars. And, for the reason we have given.

But when we suggest that Paul's living was imperfect, we (*I* certainly), will be unable to point to a given place where it was not. Still, the logic of the situation forces me to this finding. When Paul himself teaches that "sin is not imputed when there is no law," he is saying for all mankind and must include himself.

Under what head do such violations of law come which we have mentioned were in Paul's life?

Chair-Talks On Perfection

Mistakes

What is a mistake? and how does it differ from sin?

A mistake, is a miss-take. It is a *miss* in taking,—a not taking, at all, or a taking *amiss*, or wrongly. It is something un-right; it is wrong.

But a mistake does not take on the seriousness that sin does. The wrongness of it was not *meant*; in sin, the wrongness is meant. The difference is vital. Mr. Jones says, "I saw Mr. Fowler smoking a cigar yesterday and I was sorry. I did not think he would do that." Mr. Smith says, "I saw Mr. Fowler smoking a cigar yesterday, and I was glad; it is just what I thought he would do behind the scenes."

Now, what were the facts? Neither saw me smoking a cigar yesterday, or any other day, for the reason that I did not do it.

Every person has his double. Both these men said the thing that was not true. Did they lie? One did; the other did not. One *thought* the man he saw smoking was Mr. Fowler; the other

Chair-Talks On Perfection

knew it was not; one *intended* to tell the truth; the other intended to tell an *untruth*.

The difference was in the intention.

Where now must we place the violations of the law that Paul committed? *Under the head of mistakes.*

All, more or less often, are doing that which is a violation of strict law. They are wrong acts. Why are not such people condemned by conscience and God?

Years ago there lived in Amherst, New Hampshire, an elect woman by the name of Richardson. Quite a remarkable woman for both natural gifts and spiritual grace. Her home was, what in the older times used to be styled a "Methodist Tavern."

A minister was sent to the Methodist church of that country village by the name of Ruland. They had a baby in their family. As the parsonage was not ready for the minister, they went to Mrs. Richardson's home for a few days. This baby was taken ill, with something like colic. Mrs. Richardson had bought a few days before of a medicine "peddler," as was the custom in

Chair-Talks On Perfection

the country in those days, some medicines, among which was *rhubarb* (as she supposed). She gave the baby a small dose, which evidently proved harmful and it caused its death in a few hours. But, it was not *rhubarb*, at all, but *laudanum* she had given. This the peddler had sold her for *rhubarb*.

This woman had killed the baby. Was she arrested by the civil authorities? No. Was she blamed, even, by the neighbors? No. Did Mrs. Ruland blame her? No. Did she blame herself? No. That she was full of sorrow, regret and even distress goes without saying, as were the good neighbors, and of course the mother of the babe, but blame—censure—was not laid against her.

Intention

Why not? Because of the *evident intention* of this godly woman; she thought and wanted to help and save the child.

Intention, is everything in determining virtue or vice. A poor and worthy man in the community has been long ill and is suffering for the common comforts of life as is his whole family.

Chair-Talks On Perfection

One man gives him five dollars because he pities him and out of his heart wants to help; another man gives him the same amount because he wants the credit for it as he is running for a town office and hopes by it to get votes. In one case, the gift is commendable; in the other, condemnable. Why? Because of the *intention* of these two men. Intention, is everything.

Just here is the place for large charity toward those who oppose us and the truth we love so much. People sometimes, are as sincere in their opposition to truth, for a time, as we are in its support. I am saying "for a time." Paul tells us that he verily thought that he "ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" and did them. Others may; but like Paul, if sincere they will have more and sufficient light to see error; and if they do not like the Apostle yield to it, even then he tells us that "the servant of the Lord should be gentle toward all, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover

Chair-Talks On Perfection

themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."

Not only are the real violations of law such as mistakes not condemnable, either by conscience or God, *their intention which protects them is a ground of commendation and reward.*

One is not judged by what he does, but by what he intended to do. This obtains in human and divine courts. Jesus says distinctly, "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward." What is this teaching other than *intention* and the *treatment that intention has?* that if one thought a person was a prophet, or a righteous man and treated him as such, he is rewarded for it though the man proved a scamp. When God settles life's affairs, He will reward Mrs. Richardson for what she *meant* to do—not for her mistake in killing the child, but for her *purpose* to save it.

But this must not make one indifferent about his acts. And, if one is serious, it will not.

Chair-Talks On Perfection

Improvement in Conduct

Conduct, with the most of us can be improved. And should be. Certainly it should be if it can be, and in many cases it needs to be. Perfect conduct can be more nearly reached than it is, or with many is thought to be possible. Christ says that we may by "good works, glorify our Father which is in heaven," and the writer to the Hebrews presents a standard for good works which comes near to perfection, if not quite there. "Make you perfect in every good work."

Right is right wherever it is; a good work is a good work by whomever done. "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous." While good works never can merit one's salvation, none can evidence that they have salvation without good works; one wrong act by a good man, so harms his reputation with a good cause that all should look to our acts with great concern. Woe to our reputation for good character and to our religion as of great saving value, when our moral conduct has widely to be apologized for!

Not altogether what a person does is to be

Chair-Talks On Perfection

considered, but what was the *purpose* in the doing of it. It is this that determines the moral quality of an act both before the civil and divine law.

Not only so, but right intention not only preserves one from condemnation; it is the ground for divine reward. And yet, conduct must be guarded and all serious people will deplore their mistakes so really and deeply that they will watch against their repetition and seek by all means to perfect their moral behavior.

By increase in ability
Knowledge
opportunity
Experience

PART SECOND

Bible Perfection.

Let us now come directly to the question.

What is Bible perfection? It is *Christian* perfection.

And that does not answer the question, quite. Christian perfection is not a question of *un-essentials*. By un-essentials I mean that not necessary to salvation in this life and the next. Whatever you and I must be or have, in order to possess present salvation and its future, is an essential; whatever is not, is un-essential.

But this is not saying that what is not essential is not of interest, or of importance. They may be both. Often are.

Certain things are allowed by all intelligent persons to be secondary importance; but these same persons lift them into the place of primary things, seemingly. Who would claim that the *mode* of water baptism was of *primary* importance? and yet in a certain large holiness camp meeting in New England certain good men in-

Chair-Talks On Perfection

sisted that the brook be "dammed up" so that there could be baptism by immersion. And this every year for many years.

Not only this, but the candidates for baptism need to be considered here in order to get the full force of what I am saying. Who were they? Sinners converted? Not necessarily or generally; but when people got sanctified who had been baptized in infancy or some mode other than immersion, they were urged now "to be baptized," which was saying that nothing was baptism but this.

Please now do not misunderstand me. I am not objecting to immersion. Were the same thing true relative to any other form of baptism—had they wanted a service to sprinkle, or pour people—the situation would be the same; it is a bringing into too great prominence a comparatively indifferent matter; certainly one not essential to salvation.

Let us get our bearings: Christian perfection not only does not have to do with the *mode* of baptism, it does not involve the question of water baptism at all. One can have Christian

Chair-Talks On Perfection

perfection who is baptized, and one can have it who is not.

Christian perfection is not *non-life* insurance. I apologize for introducing a matter of this nature into so serious and spiritual a discussion. As Paul said, "ye have compelled me." So frequently do excellent people emphasize that they "are not insured, could not be and would not so deny" their faith, that one would think that the matter of life insurance was an essential part of Christian perfection.

The for, or against life insurance I am not discussing; I am simply saying that people have Christian perfection who are insured, and people have it who are not insured. It is not then vital to the question.

Dress, Church and Other Un-Essentials

Christian perfection does not consist in the *dress* question. Shall a woman wear a feather in her hat, or rats in her hair, an engagement or wedding ring, are matters I cannot here discuss; I simply say that some women give evidence that their profession of this grace is genuine who

Chair-Talks On Perfection

wear such things, and some give this evidence who do not wear them. This being the case, these matters are not essential parts of this precious experience. That, however, the grace of Christian perfection modifies the matter of the apparel of both men and women I judge no one questions.

Christian perfection does not necessarily involve the *church* question. People belong to churches, or I better say, have membership in churches who do not know what those churches teach, or stand for in particular. I asked a man who evidently was a serious and good man, what church his membership was in, and he said he was a Presbyterian. I said, "What branch of Presbyterianism?" and he replied, "I do not know." I did not wonder so much, when I remembered how many branches there were. And, I think that this was really to be commended in this man. Something was of larger moment than mere connection with a church or denomination; and, it was a right relation to Christ.

When I am here saying "church," of course, I

Chair-Talks On Perfection

mean the church of our Lord Jesus Christ and not so-called churches that reject him.

While I hold, as I suppose you people do, that a Christian should have a church connection somewhere, still it is quite possible for one to enjoy the experience of Christian perfection and have no such relation, though these are probably rare.

That one can be a Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, Adventist, Nazarene, Episcopalian, etc., etc., or even a Campbellite, or a Lutheran, and have Christian perfection would seem to go without saying; and yet certain good people give such prominence to the church question as to almost teach that they thought otherwise, and that one should belong to their fold to be just "clear in the experience."

It is no wonder that good people like the Friends, or Quakers, should repudiate formal church membership and its sacraments, when we consider the stress laid on the *mere forms* of these, by which so many are deceived unto their destruction. While the Friends reject water baptism, and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper,

Chair-Talks On Perfection

they are, many of them, the most devoted followers of Christ and consistent professors of Christian perfection.

This leads me to say that it is, in my judgment, an unwise thing, and discourteous also, to introduce in a meeting where all classes of Christians share its privileges and responsibilities, matters that are distinctively denominational. For instance, such as I have noted in that baptism service at the camp meeting; a Love-Feast service, or communion service and the like; why not? because it is an interdenominational meeting and distinctively denominational matters should not come to the front to divide and distress. Why not have a feet-washing service when some in the meeting would like that? Think that over.

Nor Physical Healing

And Christian perfection is not a question of Divine Healing.

It becomes necessary for me to constantly explain myself. When discussing a question like this one and its connections, it is thought that I am antagonizing the question I raise, like this of

Chair-Talks On Perfection

Healing, unless I carefully and constantly say, this I am not doing. The privilege of having our bodies healed is a decided one with me; but, it is not vital to Christian perfection.

And I want to say a word more. I regard a "healing service"—I mean *public* healing service to which people are called as to any service—an unwise and improper thing in a mixed and miscellaneous camp meeting or convention. And, I will give two reasons for my conviction. (1) It divides and distresses people who should not be divided and distressed. For what is this meeting held? for the purpose of salvation. Here, the meeting, as to its interdenominational character, is in harmony. It agrees on holiness and on its advocacy. But good people and holiness people of this meeting are not agreed relative to the question of physical healing. That question would divide them, and to press it would distress them. One has as much right as the other to object to *prominence* given to healing, as the other has that *prominence* *be* given it.

There you are.

Mark you I am talking about *prominence* given

Chair-Talks On Perfection

it. I am not saying or thinking that healing should have no mention. I am not saying that if God has healed a person it should not be confessed, I certainly would say that it should be, and that if one wanted healing he may ask that prayer be offered in his behalf, and he be anointed if this is his request. I am simply saying that the prominence of *specific preaching* or *public anointing* should not be given in a meeting of a mutual character. This whole matter can have proper and profitable attention without the offence from publicity.

Christian perfection is not a *millennium* question. The interesting question and important one of the second coming of our Lord, is not an *essential* one to this experience. I mean to say that whether one hold that His coming is literal, or spiritual; whether it is near or remote; whether it is pre-millennial or post-millennial is not vital to Christian perfection. I mean to say, that one may have perfect love in its most spiritual sense and hold either view, or no view, at all. Is not that so? then, it is as I am saying not a *vital* matter—a matter *necessary to spir-*

Chair-Talks On Perfection

itality, for that is what "*vital*" in this connection means.

The position I have taken on Divine Healing is the one that sharply is related to this matter of the Lord's return, so far as its relation to the Millennium is concerned; whether it is "pre," or "post." That the Lord will come, I think should be decidedly and determinately declared and its ponderous motive presented, but the mooted matter of how or when, left in the background. Surely, one has much right in a mutual meeting to present one side as one has to present the other; let this be done, and the meeting is ruined for salvation purposes.

Perfection of Intention

Christian perfection is a perfection of intention.

Intention, includes design and decision,—a plan and a choice to make the plan one's own. In order for intention to be perfect the nature back of it must be pure. As sure as a bottle having in it salt water and fresh will send forth

Chair-Talks On Perfection

mixed liquid, so sure is it that a nature having two opposite qualities will be influenced by both. James presents this at length and conclusively in the third chapter of his epistle and settles for us the question by declaring that "the wisdom that is from above is *first* pure, *then* peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." Nature, he teaches, like a "fountain" does not "send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter;" but, from the "same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be." Natural conditions do not do this; they are a unit; super-natural conditions should not; they should be a unit.

What *one word* expresses the *nature* of a gospel-recovered soul? Holiness! What *one word* expresses the *nature* of holiness? Love!

God, is twice defined in the scriptures. "God is light" and "God is love." That God is justice, is truth, is power, is wisdom, is might, the word does not say, but He is *light* and He is *love*.

For what do light and love stand? for holiness and the expression of holiness. Holiness is

Chair-Talks On Perfection

the quality of His nature and love the manifestation of that nature.

Holiness in man is the quality of his recovered selfhood. This was the quality of his nature when God started the race, and this is the quality to which God recovers it. Sin *de*-natured man; grace *re*-natures him, "the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

Perfect Love

Christian perfection is *Perfect Love*. It may better be said, *perfect loving*.

first love

The Scriptures divide love. There is love and there is perfect love. And, the one is not the other. Love is not, necessarily perfect love, and perfect love is not mere love. John says, "Herein is our love made perfect," or is love with us made perfect. . . . He that feareth is not "made perfect in love." He does not say, has no love, but, is not yet "made perfect in love." Surely, John makes that plain enough.

Loving, is love's evidence. Love is the state of the nature, but loving is its act. The difference is the difference between wind and air.

Chair-Talks On Perfection

Wind is air, but air is not wind. Wind is air in motion. Air is always in motion, but not always in the same degree, or to the degree of wind. It never is or can be unqualifiedly still. So with love. Love is too strong a sentiment or a something to be *non-moving*. Love, *loves*. It is *lov-ing*. It is at it.

Practically, love seems to have no passive voice.
It does not admit of being acted upon. It is ever acting.

This is exceedingly noticeable in the Scriptures. The famous and familiar John 3:16 illustrates here, "God so loved the world, that *he gave*." See? the *giving* evidenced the love, and the *Gift*, the "so" of the love, or the *degree* of it. John, in his epistle says on this point, "Hereby *perceive* we the love of God, *because* he laid down his life for us. . . . But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; *but in deed and in truth*."

It is striking to notice how widely this obtains

Golden Rule

*+2
com*

*John
Phalt*

Chair-Talks On Perfection

in the Scriptures; that where love with God is mentioned it is in connection with its out-going—its manifestations; and that this is the requirement that God emphasizes with man, that love must be active and evident. Love, cannot be seen, but its *love-work* can.

Perfect love and perfect service are required and possible. This love is required because possible and possible because required. And a perfect service, so far as *intention* is concerned, for the same reasons.

Perfect Sinners

Perfect love and perfect service are the commonest experiences in the world of sin about us. Of course I am now speaking of sinful love and service. There are two loves; a divine-love and a devil-love. If the devil and the world can produce perfect sinners, Christ and the church should be able to produce perfect saints. They both can and do. The Scripture says that the devil has sinned "from the beginning." Since his sinning began, he has never broken his record as a sinner. At least thousands of years have witnessed his

Chair-Talks On Perfection

sinning without a break! What is that but perfect love in and for sin and a perfect sin-service?

Every sinner about you is a perfect sinner. What is a perfect sinner? not one who sins more than another in number of sins committed, and in the nature of them, but one who never does other than sin. One who never breaks with sin's master or fails to do his bidding. One who chooses sin and has a nature that prompts and approves of sin. The sinners about you never have chosen Christ and his service *once*. What is that if not perfection? it is; it denotes that the *disposition* is to do the will of the wrong, and the *choice* also. That makes a perfect sinner.

Christ can *so* perfect his people. Christ can transform man's nature and possess it, that it will be disposed to do the will of God at all times.

To whom do such statements and experiences seem extravagant? To those who have no experience of them. One who does not love, not only does not know its delight, but thinks that love is silliness and softness.

Those of us who were fortunate enough to know Dr. Daniel Steele not only knew a saint

Chair-Talks On Perfection

and a scholar, but one who would not be likely to be given to much *gush*. He dedicates one of his books to his wife and in these words:—"To Harriette Binney

In maidenhood my mate,
In womanhood my wife,
In gentleness my joy,
In council my guide,
In industry my thrift,
In trouble my cheer,
In ministry my help,
In love my bliss.

this volume, written during our pleasant pastorate in Lynn is gratefully inscribed."

Mr. Spurgeon—Charles H. Spurgeon of London—was a very eminent minister of the Baptist persuasion. No minister of his time was more and more favorably known in the world. His wife was an invalid for years. During one of the times when she was away to a sanatorium he wrote her in these words:

"Over the space that parts us, my wife,
I'll cast me a bridge of song;
Our hearts shall meet, O joy of my life,
On its arch unseen, but strong.

Chair-Talks On Perfection

“The wooer his new love’s name may wear
Engraved on a precious stone;
But in my heart thine image I wear,
That heart has long been thine own.

“The glowing colors on surface laid,
Wash out in a shower of rain;
Thou need’st not be of rivers afraid,
For my love is dyed ingrain.

“And as every drop of Garda’s lake
Is tinged with sapphire’s blue,
So all the powers of my mind partake
Of joy at the thought of you.

“All earth-born love must sleep in the grave,
To its native dust return;
What God hath kindled shall death outbrave
And in heaven itself shall burn.

“Beyond and above the wedlock tie
Our union to Christ we feel,
Uniting bonds which were made on high
Shall hold us when earth shall reel.

“Though he who chose us all worlds before
Must *reign* in our hearts alone,
We fondly believe that we shall adore
Together before his throne.”

With whom are such things sickening sentiment? The answer is simple enough and it is this:—With those who have had no experience

Chair-Talks On Perfection

in true love, or it better be said, with those who have had the opposite experience.

Love is loyalty. Loyalty is a striking evidence and accompaniment of love. We have only to look at the soldier to see this and industrial and business life as well illustrate it. You can find people not a few who have been in business together for a life-time, who have never had a fuss. They have not always seen everything alike, but they have agreed to disagree and be agreeable about it. Now, or contention is that *God can do that much for his people*; that if on the plane of the mere natural and human men can be true to one another, in the sphere of the supernatural and divine they can, and be true to God as well.

Perfection Possible

The perfection we are outlining is possible because:

(1) It is implied in the Scriptures; language is robbed of meaning if the possibility of being perfect is not in the words God uses in his book.

“Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man.”

Chair-Talks On Perfection

“He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked.”

“Mark the perfect man.”

“That they may shoot in secret at the perfect.”

“The perfect shall remain.”

“Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect.”

“We speak wisdom among them that are perfect.”

“This also we wish, even your perfection.”

“Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?”

“For the perfecting of the saints.”

“Till we all come. . . . unto a perfect man.”

“That we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.”

“That ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.”

“That the man of God may be perfect.”

“Let us go on unto perfection.”

“The God of all grace. . . . maketh you perfect.”

“The same is a perfect man.”

(2) The perfection we are emphasizing is possible because it is commanded.

God said to all Israel, “Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God.” Jesus said, “Be ye there-

Chair-Talks On Perfection

fore perfect." Paul said to the most unpromising people to whom he wrote, "Finally, brethren. . . . Be perfect."

(3) Perfection is possible because it is confessed by *people who had it*. David said, "He maketh my way perfect." Paul allowed he had this perfection, as did others.—"Let us therefore, as many as be perfect."

(4) Perfection is possible because *God presents examples of it*.

God called the devil's attention to Job's perfection. "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect man?" and God did this twice. God says in the most direct and unmistakable manner just this: "There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil."

Now, let it be noted that if Job, or any one else ever had perfection then there *is* such a thing. You and I may not have it, or think we have never been in the neighborhood of any one who has had it; but if it has been had—then it

Chair-Talks On Perfection

has been *had*; if had, *then there has been such a thing under the sun.*

Skeptics have always made capital out of the imperfections of the people in the Scriptures whom God pronounced perfect. And those who are cordial in their dislike of holiness have done the same thing. Abraham is chosen for attack. "A pretty kind of a perfect man," they say, "he lied twice and was rebuked by a heathen for it."

I do not propose to say all that may be said in vindication of this man of God. As to his lies, I allow that he told them. God, nowhere, calls Abraham a perfect man though he told him to be "perfect." None can read the life of this "Friend of God" and fail to see that, *in the main*, he had Bible perfection.

The case of David is paraded. It well may be if a point against character is sought. "David was a nice example to be a man after God's own heart." That David was a venturesome and villainous sinner in the matter which God himself mentions against him, cannot for a moment be questioned; but in *the main*, he was strikingly a man of God, though nowhere called "perfect."

Chair-Talks On Perfection

Noah—poor Noah—comes in for the licks—“and he got drunk.” How many times did this godly man get under the influence of liquor? It will do for the objector to think of this question. Does the Bible say, “And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: And he drank of the wine and was drunken” and *got drunk every week the rest of his life?*

What were the facts? Noah’s drunkenness was *an accident*. He knew nothing of the nature of the wine which he drank. *He never repeated the act*. It may do to think of that fact. And further: When God speaks of three men who could influence him if any could, he includes *Noah* with Daniel and Job. (See Ezk. 14:14).

God gives many object lessons of perfection in people, whom he does not call “perfect” so far as that word is concerned, but who are, and he intends them as examples of it. See the case of Enoch, for instance. The Bible says that he walked with God for three hundred years *after* he began to have a family; that he “begat sons and daughters” and lived with them all that time and had the “testimony that he pleased God.”

Chair-Talks On Perfection

Enoch was no recluse, but a practical family-man. He walked with God. Which way did God go? Enoch went the way God was going. "How can two walk together except they be agreed?" Think of him!

How about Joseph?—Joseph the patriarch. How about Daniel? How about Samuel? where do these men break down? can you point to the instance?

What about Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist? How about John himself? What of Mary the Virgin? And Joseph her husband? Simeon? Anna the prophetess? Paul the apostle? Where is there evidence of a moral lapse in any of these characters? while, on the other hand the evidence of perfection is marked.

It is fortunate for the Christian Church that where in any defect in character or conduct Bible characters appear, the facts are brought out; for the reason if all of God's saints had the character and conduct that some had, the church would despair because of their own failures. Enough imperfections are mentioned to keep us

Chair-Talks On Perfection

from discouragement; and enough perfections to stimulate good living.

Perfection and Conduct

While Bible perfection does not consist in perfect moral conduct, there can be no perfection apart from moral conduct.

There is a sect known as the Plymouth Brethren. They flourish particularly in England, though they have societies in this country. One of the emphatic features of their doctrines is *non-forfeitable justification*. Once one is justified, and he never can be *unjustified*. This is emphatic. He never *can* be. Once a child, always a child, None *can* lose their child-relation. *Once* converted, *always* converted.

These people make large account of "state" and "standing"—or, to be more exact, standing and state. One's standing is his relation to Christ; his state, is what he is in his own character. If one has been converted he has a standing in Christ sure and eternal and no conduct or character can effect it. He may be as corrupt as Herod as to character, or as perverse in conduct as

Chair-Talks On Perfection

Judas, but this does not harm his standing, for God sees him in Christ—Christ's robe is about him.

This savors of the old Calvinism which said, "Once in grace, always in grace." But, it is a *perversion* of that doctrine, and much more dangerous. The old Calvinist never taught the doctrine of "assurance." He said that one could not *know* that his sins were forgiven. That his holding out to the end, or not doing this, was the evidence.

This, it will at once be seen, protects the situation.

On the other hand, the Plymouth doctrine gives prominence to the matter of "assurance" and teaches that one may and should and does know if born of God.

"Free from the law, O happy condition," which we all used to sing so lustily, is the great Shibboleth of this people. Paul's "not under law, but under grace," is their key. The mischief is not in the fact, but in their interpretation of the fact. Of course we are free from the law, but in what sense? free, in that it has no claims upon us

Chair-Talks On Perfection

at all? that we have nothing to do with it? By no manner of means!

Condition of life and *rule* of life are two different things. The law or its keeping is no *condition of life*, but it is the rule of life. The law has no power *to save*, but does have power to serve; it cannot grant life, but it can guide life; it cannot propel, but it can protect. The familiar illustration is this: The track and the train. The track furnishes no power to *propel* the train, but it guides the train. If an engineer ignores the track at a given switch, he will ditch the train.

Apart from conduct, there can be no proving of character. Words, are cheap as are they many; it takes *works* to make them convincing. None can see your motives, but they can see your movements; none can see your affections, but they can see your affiliations; none can see your heart, but they can see your hand; none can see the inner man, but they can see the outer man.

Here, the scriptures are tremendously emphatic. Peter declares, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye *should forth* the praises

Chair-Talks On Perfection

of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." "Having your conversation honest among Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evil doers, *they may by your good works*, which they shall *behold*, glorify God in the day of visitation."

"Who" asks James, "is a wise man among you and endued with knowledge? let him *show* out of a good conversation (behavior) his *works* with meekness and wisdom."

Carefulness

Paul in admonishing the young man Titus says, "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be *careful to maintain good works*." And, "In all things showing thyself a pattern in good works: . . . that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you." Peter again, speaking to the "elders" urges that they be "examples to the flock."

James, treats this matter at length, and discusses it. With him it was important enough for

Chair-Talks On Perfection

him to do this. To read his epistle at the second chapter beginning with the fourteenth verse is to see his treatment of it. He stresses the word "say." "What thou a man *say* he hath faith and have not works? can faith, (that *kind* of a faith) save him?" . . . "faith if it hath not works is dead, being *alone*." No bird can fly with one wing. Works, are a wing, "show me my faith without thy works, and I will show you my faith by my works." . . . Faith without works is dead.

But here, there is no open question. That there should be good moral behavior we will all allow, at once. At least so it seems. Certainly so it should be.

And more than this, we all I judge, would claim and contend for the exercise of care that conduct be not open to suspicion.

We certainly would teach that character conditions conduct. That if one *do* right he needs to *be* right; that the inside man controls the outside man.

We are sure also that the experience of holiness elevates the conduct of all who receive the grace. While one to be justified and maintain

Chair-Talks On Perfection

that relation must walk in all light given, it is still true that holiness increases light, and in this sense makes conduct better than any former experience exhibits.

While all this is conceded, it must be seen that it is held by us in theory, far too often, than in practice. There are grave faults with us. We are not conducting ourselves as we should, in cases far too frequent. Moral deportment is decidedly and detrimentally and disasterously lacking in not a few quarters. This condition is not the *rule* with us thank God! but the exception must be written in the plural for they are many more than one, more than occasional. When heads are counted the number is distressingly large of those whose conduct is not in harmony with holiness, and not in harmony with the ordinary ethics of community and the world.

Personal and Positional

Our *opinion* of wrong doing goes not a little way toward determining what should be the proper course to take in a given instance of a person going astray. Here is a case of gross

Chair-Talks On Perfection

immorality. The party confesses the wrong and we will allow what we are all glad to allow, that there are genuine sorrow and repentance. That that person should be forgiven, received into our fellowship, sympathized with, aided in all legitimate ways I judge we would not question—this would be the feeling of us all.

But this is *personal* place and not *positional* place—it is a restoring one to former confidence in our *feelings* and *personal attentions*, but not necessarily, to *official* place.

Suppose one had been a servant in the home. While there had been guilty of immoral conduct with one of your sons. Would confession, genuine sorrow and repentance be sufficient for you to restore that party to her place in your family? would it be considered a proper thing to do by you, or for you to do, by your neighbors?

Mark you now: You do forgive. In the sincerity of the person's confession you do believe, and in their real restoration to God. You would feed her **if** in need; you would clothe her if required; **you** would protect her person from assault or her reputation; would you, could you,

Chair-Talks On Perfection

or should you place her back in your service? That is for you to say.

Here is a Sunday School Superintendent who is a holiness man. He is known as such. The schools so understand it. They respect him and his profession. He falls into open and gross sin. The church and Sunday School know it, as do the community. Should he be restored to his *position*, though he is to your *personal favor*?

Here is a holiness preacher—pastor or evangelist. The condition of falling and restoration to the favor of God and to your favor are the same: should he be restored to *position*?

Our views of these serious questions of course determine our conduct, and our conduct and decisions in these matters effect the influence of holiness in the community. A cashier of a bank proving faithless would, I suppose, in no case be restored to his position though the directors believed in his determination not to repeat these acts. A clerk in a business house who should steal from that house, would, I suppose, never be returned to his former responsibility.

Chair-Talks On Perfection

If my attention is called to the humane consideration that the renowned Mr. Ford is giving ex-criminals and ex-wrongdoers of various kinds as illustrations of exceptions to the position I am taking, I have this to say: I see nothing in that estimable man's course that contradicts my position. Just let me further say, when a man who defrauds Mr. Ford and is given that same chance to defraud again, then I will admit that there is an instance against my position. But, not till then.

But you say, "holiness people should forgive as none others do." It is not a question of forgiveness. "They should believe in people as others do not." It is not a question of believing in people. "But they should treat them with consideration of a different order than others." It is not a question of treatment, in general: it is a question of *restoration to position*. Should the maid in the kitchen who has been in immoral relations with your son be given back the place even though she is penitent? If we will keep that illustration in mind, it will help the holiness

Chair-Talks On Perfection

people determine the proper course in other matters.

Appearance of Evil

Paul exhorts that we "abstain from all *appearance* of evil." And we say so. You do. I do. All of us do. But our "say"—our exhortation—may be for the other fellow and not for ourselves. *Do* we abstain from the appearance of evil? We *mean* to? Does the idea *grip* us? Do we look at it, for ourselves, with emphasis? Do we excuse ourselves if we fail?

"I do not care what people think if I am right." But you are not all right, my friend, with that spirit. You *ought* to care. There is not protection for you or the cause if you do *not* care. Masses of many have been ruined by that don't-care spirit. This is not a question of principle, but a question of one's having his own way. No one has right to a course that imperils another. No one has a right, to his own rights, when it endangers a weaker brother.

Was not this Paul's preaching and practise? "And through thy knowledge shall the weak

Chair-Talks On Perfection

brother perish, for who Christ died? * * * Wherefore, if meat maketh my brother to offend," (what, has not a person a right to eat what he wishes? Paul would say, No! for himself and he did say no relative to these indifferent questions), "I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, *lest* I make my brother to offend."

But to be particular: I heard a good brother preach the other day to holiness people. He was a holiness man. Speaking of how an insurance agent bothered him by constantly coming to his office to have him get insured, he said, "I grabbed him by the collar and threw him out of the office." That is all he said about that.

What did that man mean? Did he do that literally, or was it a figure of speech denoting that he told him never to come again? I do not know. That is what the good preacher said, and the supposition is that he meant what he said, that he laid hold of him and ejected him!

That remark startled me. It distressed me. It, I thought, did others who heard it. It would seem to me that he should have said more about

Chair-Talks On Perfection

it and vindicated himself, or allowed his haste, or something, and not left it where he did. Was it avoiding the appearance of evil temper and world-act?

Nearly 30 years ago I was in a holiness camp meeting in New England, where were two of the most prominent holiness leaders in the country. I was young in the work. As I came to know afterwards, the best of feeling did not exist between these men. The sacred question was before the meeting as to the Holy Spirit's guidance. One of these men was leading the meeting and the other was on the platform. The leader referred to the position this brother held on the question, which was not his, and turning partly around to him, he said, "But I don't care what *he* thinks about it," and the brother replied, "And I do not care what *you* think about it."

That hurt me. It impressed me as being unholy. I have never gotten over it. I do not *want* to remember it. Had those men told me that they *felt* all right when they said that, I should have believed them, though I greatly fear that neither could have said that he did; at

Chair-Talks On Perfection

any rate, putting the best construction on it, it was not avoiding the "appearance of evil." How those good men could have gone on in that meeting without a public confession of a wrong there, at least in appearance, I never could see. I do not want to see, for it would be wanting *not* to see the right, and wanting not to see the right would be sin.

Some of us were getting our baggage checked in a railroad station in the Southwest, when one of our good brethren had occasion to disagree with another, and he expressed it in such a strenuous manner that the brother starting back almost as in physical fear. I believed, and believe now, that it was a nervous exclamation that had no element of sin in it; but it was not avoiding the "appearance of evil."

Of this, can we be too careful?

Divisions and Diversity

And does not this question of "appearance" have to do with the matter of *divisions*—the divisions among the holiness people?

The church, as the body of Christ, is spoken

Chair-Talks On Perfection

of as one of the mysteries of the gospel. Paul says, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." The word "church" is inclusive. It takes up into itself all God's people. Some people, both small people and great people, forget to remember this. Nevertheless, the church is more than a denomination, or several denominations; it is all Christian peoples whether massed in companies, organizations, churches, sects, denominations or as separate individuals. All are the church. No one person is more the church than another. There is no superiority or inferiority for all are one in Christ Jesus.

The figure Paul uses denoting the relation that Christians hold to each other is both wonderful for its simplicity and sufficiency; that of the body in its various members—the foot, hand, ear, and eye. To keep in mind this figure is to see at once the inconsistency and, indeed, the insanity of schism in the body. The idea of the hand falling out with the foot, or the eye with the ear! and saying in Paul's language, "I have no need of you."

We preach *unity*. Do we have it? We de-

Chair-Talks On Perfection

clare that this is a conspicuous evidence of entire sanctification, or Christian perfection. Are we illustrating this grace, in this particular? Are we coming up to the help of our Lord in showing that we *are* "one," as he prays his church may be? Are we helping or hindering him at this point?

But when I say "unity" I am not saying *uniformity*. These words are different and express altogether different things. Unity means *one*; uniformity means *one form*.

There is also a difference between *diversity* and *division*. Diversity would be defined as a state of being different; division is a state of being divided. The scriptures commend diversity, but they condemn division.

We are apt to think that unity means that we must be all of one church, or organization—one *form*—when there may be genuine unity with many forms. Divisions in this connection mean factions, disunions, etc., while diversity means variety.

A simple suggestion, I think, would determine whether we or any one's spirit is that of division

Chair-Talks On Perfection

or otherwise: The real heart attitude toward the other fellow, or the other church, or the other denomination before God in prayer. Alone, with God, can, we say, "Lord, if thou hast but *one* blessing; if thou hast but *one* success to give; if thou hast but *one* to manifestly favor; *give these to the other and pass me by.*"

Perfection *does* unite! It gives *heart* oneness! And a oneness that will be so outward and evident that it will force the conviction that it is a something that is genuine and seen nowhere else! The hand will not say to the foot, I have no need of you, or the eye to the ear, I have no need of you, but all will dwell together in the body of Christ in the unity of the spirit and in the bonds of peace!

"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present *you* faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.

"To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

GOULD LIBRARY

EASTERN NAZARENE COLLEGE

NEASE LIBRARY EASTERN NAZARENE COLLEGE
BT766 .F65 GOULD
Fowler, Charles J./Chair-talks on perfec



3 2999 00042 1474

