

Holy Living and Perfectionism

Barrington Brennen & Martin Hanna
 Wednesday, April 15, 2015
 Grant's Town Seventh-day Adventist Church
 Nassau, The Bahamas

Let us look at a few texts then a few quotations. Then I will pose a few questions and then we will go to Pastor Martin Hanna live via the internet from Andrews University.

Texts:

PERFECTION:

Matthew 5:48 Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

James 1:4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

Colossians 3:14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.

1 John 1:6-10 6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

1 John 4:16-21 16 And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. 17 Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. 19 We love Him[a] because He first loved us. 20 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can[b] he love God whom he has not seen? 21 And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.

SINLESSNESS

1 John 1:10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

1 John 3:7-10 7 Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. 8 He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. 9 Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. 10 In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.

New Living Translation of Verse 9 Those who have been born into God's family do not make a practice of sinning, because God's life[a] is in them. So they can't keep on sinning, because they are children of God.

HOLY LIVING

Leviticus 20:26 You must be holy because I, the Lord, am holy. I have set you apart from all other people to be my very own.

1 Peter 1:13-16 ¹³ So prepare your minds for action and exercise self-control. Put all your hope in the gracious salvation that will come to you when Jesus Christ is revealed to the world. ¹⁴ So you must live as God's obedient children. Don't slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires. You didn't know any better then. ¹⁵ But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy. ¹⁶ For the Scriptures say, "You must be holy because I am holy."

Quotations from Ellen White on “Holy Flesh” teaching and perfectionism:

“When human beings receive holy flesh [sinless perfection], they will not remain on the earth, but will be taken to heaven. While sin is forgiven in this life, its results are not now wholly removed. It is at His coming that Christ is to “change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body” (Selected Messages, Vol. 2, pg. 33).

The teaching given in regard to what is termed “holy flesh” [last generation theology] is an error. All may now obtain holy hearts, but it is not correct to claim in this life to have holy flesh [sinless perfection]. The apostle Paul declares, “I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing” (Romans 7:18). To those who have tried so hard to obtain by faith so-called holy flesh [sinless perfection], I would say, You cannot obtain it. Not a soul of you has holy flesh [sinless perfection] now. No human being on the earth has holy flesh [sinless perfection]. It is an impossibility” (Selected Messages, Vol. 2, pg. 32).

Spectrum Magazine: “Although Ellen White condemned the perfectionism of the holy flesh movement in the GC Session of 1901, Adventism did not fully break off its love affair with “holy flesh.” It is alive and well in Adventism. What could have been in 1901, i.e., a full repudiation of perfectionism, never was.

“No doubt of the root causes for this an unbalanced apocalypticism that constantly stretches its hand to grasp the hand of perfectionism in an insane, symbiotic relationship.”

From a historical standpoint the leaders of the holy flesh movement in Indiana were probably the first to espouse the notion that Jesus had come in Adam’s unfallen nature, a concept foreign to Adventist theology at the time but which from the late 1950’s is considered the mainstream Adventist position. In his exchanges with the Indiana brethren, Haskell disagreed with their views and complained to Ellen White about them. The problem with the Indiana version of pre-lapsarianism is that they took it to another extreme and stated that the Christian can attain the holy flesh Adam and Jesus had if completely surrendered to the Holy Spirit. While Alonzo T. Jones was preaching sinless perfection by considering Jesus as our example in sinful flesh, the Indiana brethren preached the same thing based on Jesus as our example in sinless flesh. The perfectionism we see in Adventism today is a mixed bag, with most firmly within the “sinful nature” of Christ camp.”

"Those who take pains to call attention to their good works, constantly talking of their sinless state and endeavoring to make their religious attainments prominent, are only deceiving their own souls by so doing." (The Sanctified Life, p. 7 & 12)

"But we shall not boast of our holiness. As we have clearer views of Christ's spotlessness and infinite purity, we shall feel as did Daniel, when he beheld the glory of the Lord, and said, "My comeliness was turned in me into corruption." (Selected Messages 3, p. 355)

"Why is it that so many claim to be holy and sinless? It is because they are so far from Christ." Manuscript 5, 1885

Questions to Ponder:

- Can we stop performing a specific sinful activity? **YES, with the power of the Holy Spirit.**
- Will we ever reach the point in our current life that we will not be able to sin? Can we be sin-proof now? **No. That is only possible in our glorified bodies**
- Can we absolutely loose all desires to sin at all in this present life? **Yes and No. Some people do loose the desire for a particular sin. However, still having desire is not proof that one has not gain of victory over a sinful habit.**
- Would we ever cease being **sinner**s in this present life? **No. Not until glorification—after the second coming. However, our goal is to not deliberate sin and to sin less and less. Also to live a life where we will not, through our patterns of behavior or thoughts, mistakenly sin. In the end, we cannot say we are sinless until after the resurrection.**