

More on Christian Perfection

Copyright (c) 2010 by Frank W. Hardy, Ph.D.

When the principle of love is implanted in the heart, when man is renewed after the image of Him that created him, the new-covenant promise is fulfilled, "I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them." Hebrews 10:16. And if the law is written in the heart, will it not shape the life? Obedience—the service and allegiance of love—is the true sign of discipleship.¹

One meaning of the phrase "the service and allegiance of love," as applied to the topic of Christian perfection, is that human service must be complete. In an earlier paper I was at pains to emphasize that our love must be complete.² My point in saying this is that humankind is capable of responding to Christ's love. We are capable of reflecting it back to Him. This is one aspect of what it means to reflect the image of Jesus fully. Notice that true "service and allegiance" to Christ is "of love," i.e., it derives from and is a natural outgrowth of our love for Him, which in turn is an outgrowth of His love for us.

At this point Seventh-day Adventist readers will be nodding their agreement and thinking to themselves that what I just said is what they have always believed. And it might be. There is a way to tell. When the topic of Christian perfection comes up, what occupies the largest part of the discussion? If we find ourselves making a token statement about loving so that we can go quickly on to the real focus of our attention, which is serving, then the point has been missed and something is wrong.

I submit that within a person's life Christian perfection is the perfection of what it means to be a Christian. So what does that mean? "Who has the heart? With whom are our thoughts? Of whom do we love to converse? Who has our warmest affections and our best energies?"³ Like the needle of a compass, to what point does the discussion naturally return?

The focus with which we go through last events on planet earth will be the same one we take with us into eternity. Then as now our awareness of what Christ has done for us will keep alive a response of love for Him and—just like the woman at the well long ago (see John 4:28-29)—our hearts too will overflow in service for the Master. Obedience on this order is not antithetical to love but rather provides unmistakable evidence that our love for Christ is genuine.

¹Ellen White, *Steps to Christ* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1977), p. 60.

²Hardy, "The Ten Commandments, Part 3: Christian Perfection," *Historicism* No. 11/Jul 87, pp. 28-62.

³White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 58.