



*"You will know them by their fruits." Mt. 7:16*

## The Sanctification of Bishop L. L. Hamline

### *Biography of L. L. HAMLIN, Bishop of the M. E. Church*

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**(75 pages)**

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### **Chapter 8 [1842- 43]**

#### **THE GREAT CHANGE -- ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION**

We now approach a crisis – we should rather say an epoch – in Mr. Hamline’s history ever memorable to himself and not less important to the Church. We refer to his entering into the experience of “perfect love,” or entire sanctification. Although widely useful and marvelously blest in his pulpit and personal labors, He was often exercised with a painful consciousness of deficiency and a growing conviction of the need of a deeper work of holiness, a more perfect conformity to God. It is a law of the kingdom of heaven to “give” to those who “ask;” to fill those who “hunger and thirst after righteousness;” to bestow the “pearl of great price” on such as sell all they have” to procure it; to bestow grace on such as are prepared for it, by an exhaustive sense of their need.

Conviction and repentance must precede pardon, and conviction of the necessity of entire sanctification, and desire for it, up to the point of total surrender, the giving up all for Christ, must precede the bestowment of the blessing sought. It is thus that the Holy Spirit leads us first to self-knowledge, self-abhorrence, self-renunciation, before Christ to us can be “all in all.”

Although Mr. Hamline was in the height of his self-denying labors and his usefulness, fulfilling all known duty, and,

we must admit, growing in grace or to use his own words, “had been attentive to the means of grace in the closet and in the sanctuary;” yet he felt that his devotions had sometimes been formal, lacking vitality; that he was lacking in full confidence in drawing nigh to God; that there was in him a proneness to wander, his tempers being not always equally subdued that in his heart were the roots of many evils which “springing up troubled him,” though kept down while under the reign of grace, and that in this state there was not assured safety. His sense of unfitness and unworthiness at times unmanned him. Once, while walking to church on Sabbath morning with his wife, he stopped short and exclaimed in his agony, “I could prefer strangling and death to such a state.” And this was at a time when his popularity was at its height, and his congregations overflowed.

As his spiritual convictions and perceptions became more and more clear and strong, so he increased in prayer and wrestling with God. He says: “I spent several weeks much of the time before God. I felt that without a clean heart I should soon fall.” Indeed, prayer was the habit and occupation of his life. As he drew nearer to God, God drew nearer to him, and his soul increased in power and the fruits of the spirit. He saw holiness more in its loveliness and desirableness. He saw the loveliness of the Divine character, of the word and of worship, in a new light. Still his soul was not satisfied. The introspective habit of his mind, and the acute sensibility of his conscience, allowed no half-way measures, and he found no place to rest short of a finished work. His incisive views of the breadth and spirituality of the law, and of the depravity and deceitfulness of his own nature, became the gauge and measurement of that work for which he groaned and languished. God was preparing him for a great work, and for “showing him how great things he must suffer for his name’s sake.” He had counted the cost, and joyfully accepted the cross. All was real as eternity. With him it was a work of destiny. His being was to be rendered back to God for a new creation, even to be “sanctified wholly,” for which he now gave himself with a profounder view and comprehension of the act than he had ever before attained. His convictions were not general, but specific. Like the woman who had lost the “piece of silver,” he sought a definite good. Like the blind man who, in the midst of general destitution, asked only that he “might receive his sight,” so with him all seemed comprehended in the one blessing which he sought.

In the month of March, 1842, Mr. Hamline went to New Albany, Indiana, for the purpose of enjoying religious privileges of worship, and the counsel of Rev. W. V. Daniels, the pastor of the Church, who was a godly man and walked in the light of a full salvation. He reached the place on Saturday, heard a sermon in the evening on “perfect love,” and after sermon bowed before the altar with others who were seeking the blessing. Through the Sabbath his heart was in a deep struggle.

On Monday morning he rose early, and wrapping his cloak about him continued until breakfast to plead for the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Hastily partaking of a slight repast, he returned to his chamber and fell upon his knees.

It is worthy of remark that he reached the point of deliverance through a process of thought. Faith is not reasoning, but we come to it by a mental process of which we are more or less conscious.

Every act of faith presupposes certain antecedent states of the understanding, “Through reason’s wounds alone your faith can die.”

The steps of the reasoning faculty immediately preceding the final act of faith in the present instance were simple, and natural as they were Scriptural. Mr. Hamline himself thus describes:

“While entreating God for a clean heart my mind was led to contemplate ‘the image of Christ’ as the single object of desire. To be Christ-like, to possess ‘all the mind that was in’ the blessed Savior and this became the burden of my earnest prayer. ‘And why do you not take this image?’ was suggested, for he has taken yours. Look at the crucified Lamb. Why does he there hang and bleed, “his visage so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men?” Is it for himself? No, O no! He is innocent, immaculate. It is for me. There on the cross he bears my sin, and shame, and weakness, and misery and death. And why does he bear them? To give me, in their stead, his purity, and honor, and strength, and bliss, and life. Why then not take this image? Give him your sin, and take his purity. Give him your shame and take his honor. Give him your helplessness and take his strength. Give him your misery and take his bliss. Give him your death and take his life everlasting. Nay, yours he already has.

There they are bruising him and putting him to death. Nothing remains but that you take his in exchange. Make haste! Now, just now, he freely offers you all, and urges all upon your instant acceptance.

Suddenly I felt as though a hand omnipotent, not of wrath but of love, were laid upon my brow.

That hand, as it pressed upon me, moved downward. It wrought within and without, and wherever it moved it seemed to leave the glorious impress of the Savior's image. For a few minutes the deep of God's love swallowed me up all its billows rolled over me."

Under this influence he fell to the floor, and in the joyful surprise of the moment cried out in a loud voice. The work was done. The struggle and the outcry were heard in the house, and for a time proved the occasion of a temptation, as if propriety had been transgressed by this liberty among strangers. But the temptation was momentary. The work was clear, the experience undoubted, and from that hour to the close of his mortal life he referred to it as the great epoch of his life. He says:

My joys now became abundant, but were peculiar. In my happiest hours my joys mingled with such a sense of vileness as I can not describe. Sometimes in my near approaches to my Savior (for I seemed to commune with him almost face to face), with tears pouring almost like rain from my eyes, I used to say, O my blessed Lord, how canst thou thus visit and inhabit a heart so vile!"

But this glorious opening of a new life, though not forfeited, was shadowed, and experience became variable by a not uncommon error – the suppression of a clear and distinct confession. God will be honored by the full acknowledgment of all grace received. And this is not rendered simply by the fruit of a cleansed heart as it appears in the daily life, but with the lips also; "with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." The New Testament word for confession or profession (for the original word is the same) signifies a verbal agreement to a given statement, doctrine, or fact. It is of the nature of "setting our seal" publicly to the truth of God. The idea of language, written or spoken, enters into the essence of the word. Confession or profession objectively – i.e., of the doctrines and history of Christ – was, in apostolic times, and ever has been, a fundamental test and duty of all Christians. The same subjectively i.e., of the experiences of the truth through faith in Christ – is not less fundamentally required. "Go tell what great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had mercy upon thee," is not limited to the healed demoniac, but expresses a universal obligation. Mr. Hamline confesses, "For some eighteen months I was like Samson shorn, because I did not fully confess God's goodness toward me." This withholding was not from a motive or thought to shun the cross, but from excessive humility and self-distrust. His sense of personal unworthiness was far beyond the common measure, and often proved an occasion of great despondency, timidity, and reserve.

On September 27, 1843, the Ohio Conference met at Chillicothe, and Mr. Hamline was appointed to take charge of the Sabbath morning love-feast. He had been clearly admonished by a humble disciple of hallowed celebrity, that if he retained the blessing he had received he must publicly confess it. In his opening address in love-feast he accordingly spoke distinctly of the great work of grace which had been wrought in him eighteen months before, and that he had come near "making shipwreck," as he phrased it, by withholding confession. When he sat down he found he had not received the special blessing he had expected in the performance of this duty, and feared it was because he had made a mistake and overstated the case. He therefore, true to the honesty and humility of his character, thought he must rise and say that he had been mistaken, and that he was only a seeker. --But the thought came to him, "How can it seem strange that you are not blessed when you yourself doubt your own testimony?" Instantly he saw the snare of the temptation and as instantly repelled it. From that moment his faith took hold of Christ, and his doubts were dispelled.

Perfect peace, love, and joy filled his soul. Henceforward his lips uttered freely what his heart prompted and his life corroborated, that he was indeed fully saved. In the afternoon of the same Sabbath, by appointment he was to preach to the conference. A ministerial brother called on him and asked, "What do you propose to preach from?" "I think of preaching from the words, 'Our sufficiency is of God,' was the reply. The friend rejoined, "Brother Hamline, don't take a new text. The people have come from all parts to hear you preach. The occasion is very important. Take one of your familiar and favorite texts." But Mr. Hamline's thoughts were full of the words he had

announced, and he could not change. He followed the leadings of the Spirit and adhered to his first proposal, and that afternoon the Spirit bore witness to the word with overwhelming power, while all rejoiced when they “perceived the grace which was given to him.”

A new life now dawned upon him. Not one without clouds, temptations, and sore wrestlings, but one in which over all these he was to have victory. He could now say, as never before:

Now I have found the ground wherein  
Sure my soul’s anchor may remain.”

With a body afflicted little less than that of Paul with his “thorn in the flesh,” with a nervous structure which even in health would be subject to great alternations, and with a life of intense labor and the antagonisms of this “evil world,” a perpetually “quiet sea” was not to be expected. His exquisite sensitiveness often occasioned him sorrow and temptation where a common mind would experience no embarrassment. On one occasion where the subject of sanctification had obtained prominence, and a revival was in progress, the preacher had not mentioned the great salvation, either in his prayer or sermon. The heart of Hamline was warm and tender, and he was grieved at this omission. When he rose to exhort, his earliest words were upon the theme of entire holiness, urging the Church to seek the full salvation. The effort was timely and proved effectual. But when the meeting was over he suffered much from the apprehension that his zeal had been misguided, and his distress became so great that he found no relief till the next day, when he was advised to resort to special prayer. Scarcely had he bowed in the attitude of prayer when the cloud burst, and he was filled with joy unspeakable.

At the session of the Ohio Conference, at Hamilton, September 28, 1842, he had succeeded in avoiding a press of conference business, and even of preaching, probably in consideration of his editorial care and the great number of visiting strangers. This enabled him to enter into the enjoyment of conference with a keen relish. To his wife he writes:

“I am, well and happy. Conference moves on slowly. I hope to return more blest than when I went.

Bless the Lord, O my soul. Be holy. Friends and foes are all one. None are foes. Who can harm us if we be followers of that which is good? . . . Yesterday (Sabbath) was one of the best days of my life. I had no preaching to do. Except the bishop’s sermon all the appointments were filled with foreign brethren. Many are from Kentucky, North Ohio, and Indiana conferences. There is more religion in our conference than I ever saw before. Many are sanctified. Many others are pressing into the kingdom and the fruit of this revival in the conference already appears. Ten thousand were added to our Church in this conference last year – an unheard of thing in all the history of Methodism! My mind is kept in peace.”

The great baptism amazingly quickened his love for souls, and his ardent zeal to save them. In his diary for November 26, 1842, he says: “I feel as though I had come to the verge of heaven. I have had sad dreams, but am happy now, filled with weeping and praise. I feel like one who has been wrecked at sea and has got into the long-boat. Persons are sinking all around, and he clutches them by the hair. So I see souls are sinking. I feel in a hurry to save them. And it matters not what I eat or what I wear, or who are my companions, for when I have rowed a few miles I shall get home and shall find all my friends there.” We have already seen specimens of his habit of labor in this department with his brethren in the pastorate. In one of his excursions, whence he had purposed to return after the Sabbath, he writes to Mrs. Hamline, on Monday: “There seems to be so special a call for me to stay here to-day, that I do not know but I shall yield. If I am not home sooner you may expect me Wednesday evening, but likely tomorrow,” and a little farther on he says: “If I can stay till Thursday, say so.” Thus his earnest soul was often in a strait betwixt his editorial claims at home and the revival work in the Gospel battlefield. In the same letter he says: “Such a day as I had yesterday might be expected to be followed by some conflicts. Satan could not see me as I was yesterday without great wrath. I preach at half-past nine this morning and this evening. I preached three times yesterday without the least inconvenience. . . . Reports are coming in from the people which make me wish to stay. God is wonderfully working. I have a special call here. I am happy! Happy! Happy! God is doing wonders. It exceeds all.”

In a letter to his friend, Rev. C. W. Sears, December 16, 1842, he says:

“Since our conference rose on the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> of October, I have by the divine goodness been almost constantly employed in preaching Christ and him crucified, in Ripley, Dover, Levanna, Covington, Shiloh, Cheviot, Aurora, and Warsaw in Kentucky. In these places the word of God has had free course, and more than five hundred have been added to the Lord. For one week I have been resting from these labors and enjoying the peace of home. My breast, which was much affected by preaching more than seventy sermons in two months, with all my editorial duties, is now getting strong again, and today I expect to go ten miles in to the country and recommence my labors. I have been ‘watered also myself.’ God has made the labors of the ministry sweet unspeakably sweet.”

In the Fall of 1842, within less than three months he says: “I have enjoyed the privileges of attending some eight or ten protracted meetings, at each of which there was a glorious display of God’s saving power.” Does the reader ask how he could, under such circumstances, not only give satisfaction but win reputation as the editor of the Ladies’ Repository? He answers the question in part: “My labors are heavy. I take my papers often into the country and write between preachings.”

He was a ready and rapid writer. When his mind was roused and concentrated, and that was as often as duty demanded and health permitted, after the first dictation little was left for critical review. His writings would read as well at the first as at the fortieth edition. Yet all this and more could not have sufficed to sustain his editorial care, had not his ever faithful and highly accomplished wife, herself a writer and a critic, Mrs. Melinda Hamline, relieved his office duties, and substituted much of his editorial work. They perfectly sympathized both in the editorial and evangelical work, and they wrought as “true yoke-fellows.”

Some of his letters in these times may suffice to indicate his conflicts and triumphs and his habit of labor. In a letter to his wife, dated Lebanon, Ohio, Wednesday, January 18, 1843, he says: I want to see you very much, more than usual. I trust you are near to Jesus. I hope you are not sorrowing. Yesterday was a blessed day to me, until near night, when very heavy clouds came over me. I could hardly keep from starting right home. Brother Elliott preached powerfully last night. Our congregations have been very large, solemn, and affected, but something holds back. Sister Brodie and three others joined last night. She was happy. I have preached eight times since Saturday night and feel no inconvenience. I start for Franklin in two or three hours. This morning I am somewhat burdened, but hoping. My conflicts are mental, the absence of love and joy, no special temptations, much outward power; and know no reason for my conflicts ‘but the cup which my Father giveth me.’

O may I meekly drink it. Pray, my beloved, as I know you do.”

To the same he writes, having reached Franklin, Friday morning, January 20, 1843:

“The meetings here are blessed, especially to the Church. Yesterday morning was one of the best times I ever saw, and the P. M. one of the best in my closet I ever felt. I feel much stronger in Christ.

I am struggling for the blessing both for you and myself. My health is excellent, and my breast very little affected. Preached twice yesterday. We have sacrament this morning and I shall preach tonight.

Leave in the stage tomorrow morning at 9 o’clock for Hamilton. My return will depend somewhat on appearances there. Write a letter on Saturday and direct to Hamilton. Let me know if I am wanted.

I hope to be greatly blessed today; have been up since 6 o’clock (now half past seven). O may Jesus bless us exceedingly. I told you, I think, that the day after I came up the stage upset near Jamison’s tavern, and almost killed the driver and one passenger. I thought we should be destroyed on the way.

It was fearful to travel in the stage on that road.”

In the midst of labors beyond his strength, and which he afterwards admits laid the foundation of his premature infirmities and his retirement from public life; with a popularity which exposed him to envious criticism; and with the two mightiest social forces in his hands – the pulpit and the press – one might well fear for his humility. But to him selfish ambition was unknown. For himself he sought nothing, desired nothing; for Christ, every thing. His

deadness to the world and his self-abnegation were almost startling, even to his friends. His views of natural depravity and the malignity of sin in the light of the divine law left him in utter amazement at that divine love which had borne with his life of unbelief so long, and had multiplied such boundless “grace upon grace” in his redemption.

Before Mr. Hamline was converted he was acquainted with a young lawyer of respectable parentage and position who was indulging freely in the social glass till habit was fixing its iron rule, and the young man was on the way to ruin. Mr. Hamline was moved to interpose an effort for his rescue, and wrote him several anonymous letters. Although the lawyer knew not who was the author of the letters, yet the letters wrought such a powerful effect upon him that he turned from his cups and became a sober man. Afterward, in the height of Mr. Hamline’s popularity, the lawyer writes to him, in real respect and friendship, urging upon his attention the duty of preparing an autobiography, suggesting meanwhile that perhaps some “concealed” grief might deter him or be the cause of his unwillingness. To this letter the following characteristic answer was given:

“Cincinnati, December 20, 1843 “To A. S. C., Esq.

“Dear Sir, Whether I have written to you before with my own proper signature, I do not recollect.

But for circumstances known to you I should never have been covert in my correspondence. I am glad that your friendly letters open time way for frank and full communications. You speak of autobiography. But for one fact I could never discourse, or scarcely think again of self. Except for that one thing I should be the most ultra of all misanthropes. And yet my man-hating would be concentrated self-abhorrence, while I should, without effort, look tolerantly on mankind. And what do you imagine is the isolated fact which renders me often willing to think of self?

If you were doomed to bury your chiefest friend, how would you thereafter read over and over the productions of her admired pen? As fruits and evidences of the riches of her mind they would be very precious.

“Now, there is ONE – Jesus the son of God – who is doing a great work amongst sinners upon earth. He is saving them ‘by the washing of regeneration.’ The enterprise was commenced upon the cross. In every believing heart he has written his law in letters of blood. All the regenerated are examples of the power of his cross, and the efficiency of his Spirit. I am an unworthy receiver of this grace. In my own renewed heart I read those characters which his wounded hand has there graciously inscribed. For this I love to look in upon myself. Every motion of my heart – every thing in my whole being, which does not bear the stamp of total – of ineffable depravity, is a fruit of my blessed Savior’s sufferings and love, and an illustration of his wonder working grace.

“In this connection I can bear to see myself, and to scan my inward life in its most repulsive aspects. In this connection I can review my outward life, for the efficacy of grace is not only evidenced in whatever sanctified affections I may possess, but also in the long journey by which mercy brought me from the Egypt of my bondage to the Canaan of God’s love. The artisan’s skill should certainly be judged of not merely from the excellence of his mechanical productions, but also from the material out of which he wrought them. He who from dross could produce a single dime, would merit more than he who should coin millions out of pure massive bullion.

“You see now, my dear friend, how only the sight of self can be endured. It is a helper in crucifying pride. It can contribute to cast me down deep into the dust. It can aid my views of Christ.

It often helps me to conceive more clearly the love of Jesus passing knowledge as displayed toward one so vile. I am this dross. Yet on me Jesus lays his hand of pity and of power. He takes ‘my feet out of the pit,’ and places them ‘upon a rock.’ He takes away my notes of mourning, and puts into my mouth the song of joy and praise. Casting all my sins behind him – removing them ‘far from me,’ he raises me up to ‘sit in heavenly places ‘ with his saints.

“The song of the redeemed, even in the heavenly world, regards their lost estate on earth, as well as their beatitudes in paradise. ‘Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood – and made us unto our God kings and priests!’ The Savior’s love and glory appear not only in their present eminence and bliss, but also in running back to what they once were, and in the redeeming process which sanctified and crowned them. In the connections here expressed, I have use for all my past remembered life. Let its history be graven on my soul forever. I never must – never shall forget it.

It must and will remain in everlasting junction with the cross of my Redeemer. No – no – thou bleeding one, let neither time nor eternity – nor both with their brief or lengthened cycles – efface from memory time past! O how will the greatest follies and offenses of my life gather a welcome freshness from the future, as seen in the ever growing light of a Savior's cross and passion!

“While I sit in meditation on a theme so mortifying, and yet so salutary – so self-annihilating, amid yet so life-giving, connecting all with Christ's most gracious sufferings and doings, my nature is dissolved. To my consciousness existence seems naught but flames, and tears, for gratitude and penitence do swallow up my being. And these very meltings are fresh fuel for the flames because themselves are new instances of God's exceeding great compassion. He kindles up this life of ardors or it never could exist. A threefold death is conquered first, that Life may gain dominion afterwards.

You speak of some 'concealed' grief. No, my friend, I have none. There is not a sorrow of my nature but you and all the world may know. Buy would you know it you must come along with me to Calvary. All my deep emotions are now kindled at the Mount. My griefs and joys, of any moment, are blended with its scenes. O my friend! Be assured that I am born into a new and higher life, which slights, as insignificant, the interests and the sympathies dissevered from the cross. Can you understand this? To know it well is the acme of all wisdom and felicity in time. “T 'is climbing up to heaven. It is ascending to where angels would, but can not soar.”

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