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A PLAIN ACCOUNT OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

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JOHN WESLEY



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CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

By Rev. John Wesley

Let us strongly and explicitly exhort all believers to go on to perfection. That we may all speak the same thing, we ask once for all, Shall we defend this perfection, or give it up? We all agree to defend it, meaning thereby (as we did from the beginning) salvation from all sin, properly so-called, by the love of God and man filling our heart. Some say, "This cannot be attained till we have been refined by the fire of purgatory." Others, "Nay, it will be attained as soon as the soul and the body part." But others say, "It may be attained before we die: a moment after is too late." Is it so, or not? We are all agreed, we may be saved from all sin before death; that is, from all sinful tempers and desires. The substance, then, is settled. But as to the circumstances, is the change gradual or instantaneous? It is both the one and the other. "But should we in preaching insist both on one and the other?" Certainly we should insist on the gradual change; and that earnestly and continually. And are there not reasons why we should insist on the instantaneous change? If there be such a blessed change before death, should we not encourage all believers to expect it? And the rather, because constant experience shows the more earnestly they expect this the more swiftly and steadily does the gradual work of God go on in their souls; the more careful are they to grow in grace; the more zealous of good works, and the more punctual in their attendance on all the ordinances of God: whereas just the contrary effects are observed whenever this expectation ceases. They are saved by hope, by this hope of a total change, with a gradually increasing salvation. Destroy this hope, and that salvation stands still, or rather decreases daily; therefore, whoever would advance the gradual change in believers should strongly insist on the instantaneous.

What I purpose in the following papers is, to give

a plain and distinct account of the doctrine of Christian perfection.

For this purpose I shall endeavor to show, 1. In what sense Christians are not. 2. In what sense they are, perfect.

1. In what sense they are not. They are not perfect in knowledge. They are not free from ignorance, no, nor from mistakes. We are no more to expect any living man to be infallible than to be omniscient. They are not free from infirmities; such as weakness or slowness of understanding, irregular quickness or heaviness of imagination. Such in another kind are impropriety of language, ungracefulness of pronunciation, to which one might add a thousand nameless defects either in conversation or behavior. From such infirmities as these none are perfectly freed till their spirit returns to God. Neither can we expect till then to be freed from temptation; for the servant is not above his Master. But neither in this sense is there any absolute perfection on earth. There is no perfection which does not admit of a continual increase.

2. In what sense, then, are they perfect? Observe, we are not now speaking of babes in Christ, but adult Christians. But even babes in Christ are so far perfect as not to commit sin. This St. John affirms expressly.

"But does not the Scripture say, A just man sinneth seven times a day?" It does not. Indeed it says, "A just man falleth seven times." But this is quite another thing. For, first, the words *a day* are not in the text. Secondly, here is no mention of falling into sin at all. What is here mentioned is falling into temporal affliction.

"But St. James says, chap. iii, 2, 'In many things we offend all.'" True; but who are the persons here spoken of? Why, those many masters or teachers whom God had not sent; not the apostle himself, nor any real Christian. That in the word *we* (used by a figure of speech, common in all other as well as the inspired writings) the apostle could not possibly include himself, or any other true believer, appears, first, from the ninth verse. "Therewith bless we God, and therewith

curse we men." Surely not we apostles! Not we believers! Secondly, from the words preceding the text: "My brethren, be not many masters or teachers, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. For in many things we offend all." We! Who? Not the apostles, nor true believers, but they who were to "receive the greater condemnation," because of those many offenses. Nay, thirdly, the verse itself proves that "we offend all" cannot be spoken either of all men or of all Christians. For in it immediately follows the mention of a man who "offends not," as the *we* first mentioned did: from whom therefore he is professedly contradistinguished, and pronounced "a perfect man."

"But St. John himself says: 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.' And, 'If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.'"

I answer, 1. The tenth verse fixes the sense of the eighth: "If we say we have no sin" in the former, being explained by "If we say we have not sinned," in the latter verse; 2. The point under consideration is not whether we have or have not sinned heretofore; and neither of these verses asserts that we do sin or commit sin now; 3. The ninth verse explains both the eighth and tenth. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse from all unrighteousness." As if he had said, "I have before affirmed, 'the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin.' And no man can say, I need it not: I have no sin to be cleansed from. 'If we say we have no sin [that we have not sinned], we deceive ourselves' and make God a liar. But 'if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just' not only 'to forgive us our sins,' but also to 'cleanse us from all unrighteousness,' that we may 'go and sin no more.'" In conformity, therefore, both to the doctrine of St. John and the whole tenor of the New Testament we fix this conclusion: a Christian is so far perfect as not to commit sin.

This is the glorious privilege of every Christian, yea, though he be but a babe in Christ. But it is only of grown Christians it can be affirmed they are in such a

sense perfect as, secondly, to be freed from evil desires and evil tempers. First, from evil or sinful desires. Indeed, whence should they spring? Out of the heart of man? But if the heart be no longer evil then evil desires no longer proceed out of it; "for a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit."

And as they are freed from evil desires, so likewise from evil tempers. Every one of these can say, with St. Paul, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me:" words that manifestly describe a deliverance from inward as well as from outward sin. This is expressed both negatively, "I live not—" my evil nature, the body of sin is destroyed—and positively, "Christ liveth in me," and therefore all that is holy, and just, and good. Indeed, both these, "Christ liveth in me," and "I live not," are inseparably connected. For what communion hath light with darkness, or Christ with Belial?

He, therefore, who liveth in these Christians hath "purified their hearts by faith," insomuch that every one that has Christ in him, "the hope of glory, purifieth himself even as he is pure." He is purified from pride; for Christ was lowly in heart. He is pure from evil desire and self-will; for Christ desired only to do the will of his Father. And he is pure from anger, in the common sense of the word; for Christ was meek and gentle. I say in the common sense of the word; for he is angry at sin while he is grieved for the sinner. He feels a displacency at every offense against God, but only tender compassion to the offender.

Thus doth Jesus "save his people from their sins." Not only from outward sins, but from the sins of their hearts. "True," say some, "but not till death; not in this world." Nay. St. John says, "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world." The apostle here, beyond all contradiction, speaks of himself and other living Christians, of whom he flatly affirms that not only at or after death, but in this world, they are as their Master.

Exactly agreeable to this are his words in the first

chapter: "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." And again: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Now it is evident the apostle here speaks of a deliverance wrought in this world. For he saith not, The blood of Christ will cleanse (at the hour of death, or in the day of judgment), but it cleanseth, at the time present, us, living Christians, from all sin. And it is equally evident that if any sin remain we are not cleansed from all sin. If any unrighteousness remain in the soul, it is not cleansed from all unrighteousness. Neither let any say that this relates to justification only, or the cleansing us from the guilt of sin; first, because this is confounding together what the apostle clearly distinguishes, who mentions first "to forgive us our sins," and then "to cleanse us from all unrighteousness;" secondly, because this is asserting justification by works in the strongest sense possible; it is making all inward as well as outward holiness necessarily previous to justification. For if the cleansing here spoken of is no other than the cleansing us from the guilt of sin, then we are not cleansed from guilt—that is, not justified—unless on condition of walking "in the light as he is in the light." It remains, then, that Christians are saved in this world from all sin; from all unrighteousness; that they are now in such a sense perfect as not to commit sin, and to be freed from evil desires and evil tempers.

This great gift of God, the salvation of their souls, is no other than the image of God stamped on their hearts. It is a renewal of the spirit of their minds, after the likeness of him that created them. God hath now laid the ax unto the root of the tree, purifying their hearts by faith and cleansing all the thoughts of their hearts by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit. Having this hope, that they shall see God as he is, they "purify themselves, even as he is pure," and are "holy, as he that hath called them is holy, in all manner of conver-

sation." "Not that they have already attained" all that they shall attain, "or are already [in this sense] perfect." But they daily "go on from strength to strength;" beholding now, "as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, they are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord."

And "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;" such liberty "from the law of sin and death" as the children of this world will not believe, though a man declare it unto them. "The Son hath made them free," who are thus "born of God," from that great root of sin and bitterness, pride. They feel that all their "sufficiency is of God," that it is he alone who is in all their thoughts, and "worketh in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure." They feel that it is not they that speak, but the Spirit of their Father who speaketh in them; and that whatsoever is done by their hands, "the Father" who is in them, "he doeth the works." So that God is to them all in all, and they feel themselves as nothing in his sight. They are freed from self-will, as desiring nothing but the holy and perfect will of God, and continually crying in their inmost soul, "Father, thy will be done." At all times their souls are even and calm; their hearts are steadfast and immovable. Their peace, flowing as a river, "passeth all understanding," and they "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Not that every one is a child of the devil till he is thus renewed in love. On the contrary, whoever has a sure confidence in God that through the merits of Christ his sins are forgiven, he is a child of God, and, if he abide in him, an heir of all the promises. Neither ought he in any wise to cast away his confidence, or to deny the faith he has received because it is weak, or because it is tried with fire, so that his soul is "in heaviness through manifold temptations."

Neither dare we affirm, as some have done, that all this salvation is given at once. There is indeed an instantaneous as well as gradual work of God in his children; and there wants not, we know, a cloud of witnesses who have received in one moment either a

clear sense of the forgiveness of their sins or the abiding witness of the Holy Spirit. But we do not know a single instance in any place of a person receiving, in one and the same moment, remission of sins, the abiding witness of the Spirit, and a clean heart.

Indeed, how God may work we cannot tell; but the general manner wherein he does work is this: those who once trusted in themselves that they were righteous, that they were "rich and increased in goods, and had need of nothing," are, by the Spirit of God applying his word, convinced that they are poor and naked. All the things that they have done are brought to their remembrance and set in array before them, so that they see the wrath of God hanging over their heads, and feel that they deserve the damnation of hell. In their trouble they cry unto the Lord, and he shows them that he hath taken away their sins, and opens the kingdom of heaven in their hearts; "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Sorrow and pain are fled away, and "sin has no more dominion over" them. Knowing they are justified freely through faith in Christ's blood, they "have peace with God, through Jesus Christ;" they "rejoice in the hope of the glory of God," and "the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts."

In this peace they remain for days, or weeks or months, and commonly suppose they shall not know war any more, till some of their old enemies—their bosom sins, or the sins which did most easily beset them (perhaps anger or desire)—assault them again, and thrust sore at them that they may fall. Then arises fear that they shall not endure to the end, and, often, doubt whether God has not forgotten them, or whether they did not deceive themselves in thinking their sins were forgiven. Under these clouds, especially if they reason with the devil, they go mourning all the day long. But it is seldom long before their Lord answers for himself, sending them the Holy Ghost to comfort them; to bear witness continually with their spirits that they are the children of God. Then they are indeed meek and gentle and teachable even as a little child. And now first do they see the ground of their

hearts, which God before would not disclose unto them lest the spirit should fail before him, and the soul which he had made. Now they see all the hidden abominations there: the depth of pride, self-will, and hell; yet having the witness in themselves "Thou art an heir of God, a joint heir with Christ," even in the midst of this fiery trial, which continually heightens both the strong sense they then have of their inability to help themselves and the inexpressible hunger they feel after a full renewal in the image of God, in "righteousness and true holiness." Then God is mindful of the desire of them that fear him, and gives them a single eye and a pure heart; he stamps upon them his own image and superscription; he createth them anew in Christ Jesus; he cometh unto them with his Son and blessed Spirit, and fixing his abode in their souls bringeth them into the rest which remaineth for the people of God.

To cast a fuller light on this important subject, I shall lay before the reader the Minutes of several of our General Conferences on this weighty, this momentous doctrine.

1. On Monday, June 25, 1744, our first Conference began, six clergymen and all our preachers being present. The next morning we seriously considered the doctrine of sanctification, or Christian perfection. The questions asked concerning it, and the substance of the answers given, were as follows:

Q. What is it to be sanctified?

A. To be renewed in the image of God, in "righteousness and true holiness."

Q. What is implied in being a perfect Christian?

A. The loving God with all your heart, and mind, and soul. Deut. vi, 5.

Q. Does this imply that all inward sin is taken away?

A. Undoubtedly; or how can we be said to be saved from all our uncleanness? Ezek. xxxvi, 29.

2. Our second Conference began August 1, 1745. The next morning we spoke of sanctification as follows:

Q. When does inward sanctification begin?

A. In the moment a man is justified. Yet sin re-

mains in him, yea, the seed of sin, till he is sanctified throughout. From that time a believer gradually dies to sin, and grows in grace.

Q. Is this ordinarily given till a little before death?

A. It is not to those who expect it no sooner.

Q. But may we expect it sooner?

A. Why not? For, although we grant, (1) That the generality of believers, whom we have hitherto known, were not so sanctified till near death; (2) That few of those to whom St. Paul wrote his epistles were so at that time, nor (3) He himself at the time of writing his former epistles, yet all this does not prove that we may not be so today.

Q. In what manner should we preach sanctification?

A. Scarce at all to those who are not pressing forward; to those who are, always by way of promise; always drawing rather than driving.

3. Our third Conference began Tuesday, May 26, 1746.

In this we carefully read over the minutes of the two preceding Conferences, to observe whether anything contained therein might be retrenched or altered on more mature consideration. But we did not see cause to alter in any respect what we had agreed on before.

4. Our fourth Conference began on Tuesday, June 16, 1747. As several persons were present who did not believe the doctrine of Christian perfection, we agreed to examine it from the foundation.

In order to do this, it was asked,

Q. How much is allowed, by our brethren who differ from us, with regard to entire sanctification?

A. They grant, 1. That every one must be entirely sanctified in the article of death; 2. That till then a believer may daily grow in grace; come nearer and nearer to perfection; 3. That we ought to be continually pressing after it, and to exhort all others so to do.

Q. What do we allow them?

A. We grant, (1.) That many of those who have died in the faith, yea, the greater part of those we have known, were not perfected in love till a little before death. (2) That the term *sanctified* is continually ap-

plied by St. Paul to all that were justified. (3.) That by this term alone he rarely, if ever, means "saved from all sin." (4.) That, consequently, it is not proper to use it in that sense, without adding the word *wholly, entirely*, or the like. (5.) That the inspired writers almost continually speak of or to those who were justified, but very rarely of or to those who were wholly sanctified.* (6.) That, consequently, it behooves us to speak almost continually of the state of justification; but more rarely,** at least in full and explicit terms, concerning entire sanctification.

Q. What then is the point where we divide?

A. It is this: should we expect to be saved from all sin before the article of death?

Q. Is there any clear Scripture promise of this: that God will save us from all sin?

A. There is. Psalm cxxx, 8: "He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities."

This is more largely expressed in the prophecy of Ezekiel: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you; I will also save you from all your uncleanliness," chap. xxxvi, 25, 29. No promise can be more clear. And to this the apostle plainly refers in that exhortation, "Having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." 2 Cor. vii:1. Equally clear and express is that ancient promise, "The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul." Deut. xxx:6.

Q. But does any assertion answerable to this occur in the New Testament?

A. There does: and that laid down in the plainest terms. So, 1 John iii, 8: "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil," without any limitation or restriction; but

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* That is, unto those alone, exclusive of others, but they speak to them jointly with others, almost continually.

** More rarely, I allow! but yet in some places very frequently, strongly, and explicitly.

all sin is the work of the devil. Parallel to which is the assertion of St. Paul, Eph. v, 25, 27, "Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it . . . that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish."

And to the same effect is his assertion in the eighth of the Romans, verses 3, 4, "God sent his Son, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Q. Does the New Testament afford any farther ground for expecting to be saved from all sin?

A. Undoubtedly it does, both in those prayers and commands which are equivalent to the strongest assertions.

Q. What prayers do you mean?

A. Prayers for entire sanctification, which, were there no such thing, would be mere mockery of God. Such in particular are, 1. "Deliver us from evil." Now when this is done, when we are delivered from all evil, there can be no sin remaining. 2. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." John xvii, 20, 21, 23. 3. "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . . that he would grant you . . . . that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled with all the fullness of God." Eph. iii, 14, etc. 4. "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God, your whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thess. v, 23.

Q. What command is there to the same effect?

A. 1. "Be ye perfect, as your Father who is in heaven is perfect." Matt. v, 48. 2. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy

soul, and with all thy mind." Matt. xxii, 37. But if the love of God fill all the heart, there can be no sin there.

Q. But how does it appear that this is to be done before the article of death?

A. 1. From the very nature of a command, which is not given to the dead but to the living. Therefore, "Thou shalt love God with all thy heart" cannot mean thou shalt do this when thou diest, but while thou livest.

2. From express texts of Scripture. 1. "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking to . . . the glorious appearing of . . . our Savior Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Tit. ii, 11-14. 2. He "hath raised up a horn of salvation for us . . . to perform the mercy promised to our fathers . . . the oath which he sware to our father Abraham, that he would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, should serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life." Luke i, 69, etc.

Q. Is there any example in Scripture of persons who had attained to this?

A. Yes; St. John, and all those of whom he says, "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world." 1 John iv, 17.

Q. Can you show one such example now? Where is he that is thus perfect?

A. To some that make this inquiry, one might make answer, If I knew one here, I would not tell you; for you do not inquire out of love. You are like Herod; you seek the young child to slay it.

But more directly we answer: There are many reasons why there should be few, if any, indisputable examples. What inconveniences would this bring on the person himself, set as a mark for all to shoot at! And

how unprofitable would it be to gain-sayers! "For if they hear not Moses and the prophets," Christ and his apostles, "neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

Q. Are we not apt to have a secret distaste to any who say they are saved from all sin?

A. It is very possible we may, and that upon several grounds: partly from a concern for the good of souls, who may be hurt if these are not what they profess; partly from a kind of implicit envy at those who speak of higher attainments than our own; and partly from our natuural slowness and unreadiness of heart to believe the works of God.

Q. Why may we not continue in the joy of faith till we are perfect in love?

A. Why, indeed! since holy grief does not quench this joy; since even while we are under the cross, while we deeply partake of the sufferings of Christ, we may rejoice with joy unspeakable.

5. At the Conference in the year 1759, perceiving some danger that a diversity of sentiment should insensibly steal in among us, we again largely considered this doctrine. And soon after I published "Thoughts on Christian Perfection," prefaced with the following advertisement:

"The following tract is by no means designed to gratify the curiosity of any man. It is not intended to prove the doctrine at large, in opposition to those who explode and ridicule it; no, nor to answer the numerous objections against it which may be raised even by serious men. All I intend here is, simply to declare what are my sentiments on this head: what Christian perfection does, according to my apprehension, include, and what it does not; and to add a few particular observations and directions relative to the subject."

As these thoughts were at first thrown together by way of question and answer, I let them continue in the same form:

Q. What is Christian perfection?

A. The loving God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. This implies that no wrong temper, none

Perfect Love

contrary to love, remains in the soul; and that all the thoughts, words and actions are governed by pure love.

Q. Do you affirm that this perfection excludes all infirmities, ignorance and mistake?

A. I continually affirm quite the contrary, and always have done so.

Q. But how can every thought, word and work be governed by pure love, and the man be subject at the same time to ignorance and mistake?

A. I see no contradiction here. A man may be filled with pure love, and still be liable to mistake. Indeed, I do not expect to be freed from actual mistake till this mortal puts on immortality. I believe this to be a natural consequence of the soul's dwelling in flesh and blood. For we cannot now think at all but by the mediation of these bodily organs, which have suffered equally with the rest of our frame. And hence we cannot avoid sometimes thinking wrong till this corruptible shall have put on incorruption.

But we may carry this thought farther yet. A mistake in judgment may possibly occasion a mistake in practice. For instance, Mr. De Renty's mistake touching the nature of mortification, arising from prejudice of education, occasioned that practical mistake, his wearing an iron girdle. And a thousand such instances there may be, even in those who are in the highest state of grace. Yet where every word and action spring from love such a mistake is not properly a sin. However, it cannot bear the rigor of God's justice, but needs the atoning blood.

Q. What was the judgment of all our brethren who met at Bristol in August, 1758, on this head?

A. It was expressed in these words: 1. Every one may mistake as long as he lives. 2. A mistake in opinion may occasion a mistake in practice. 3. Every such mistake is a transgression of the perfect law. Therefore, 4. Every such mistake, were it not for the blood of atonement, would expose to eternal damnation. 5. It follows that the most perfect have continual need of the merits of Christ, even for their actual transgressions, and may say for themselves, as

well as for their brethren, "Forgive us our trespasses."

This easily accounts for what might otherwise seem to be utterly unaccountable; namely, that those who are not offended when we speak of the highest degree of love yet will not hear of living without sin. The reason is, they know all men are liable to mistake, and that in practice as well as in judgment. But they do not know, or do not observe, that this is not sin if love is the sole principle of action.

Q. But still, if they live without sin, does not this exclude the necessity of a mediator? At least, is it not plain that they stand no longer in need of Christ in his priestly office?

A. Far from it. None feel their need of Christ like these; none so entirely depend upon him. For Christ does not give life to the soul separate from, but in and with himself. Hence his words are equally true of all men, in whatsoever state of grace they are: "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me; without [or separate from] me, ye can do nothing."

In every state we need Christ in the following respects: 1. Whatever grace we receive, it is a free gift from him. 2. We receive it as his purchase, merely in consideration of the price he paid. 3. We have this grace not only from Christ, but in him. For our perfection is not like that of a tree, which flourishes by the sap derived from its own root, but, as was said before, like that of a branch, which, united to the vine, bears fruit, but, severed from it, is dried up and withered. 4. All our blessings—temporal, spiritual, and eternal—depend on his intercession for us, which is one branch of his priestly office whereof, therefore, we have always equal need. 5. The best of men still need Christ in his priestly office to atone for their shortcomings (as some not improperly speak), their mistakes in judgment and practice, and their defects of various kinds. For these are all deviations from the perfect law, and consequently need an atonement. Yet that they are not properly sins we apprehend may appear from the words of St. Paul: "He that loveth another hath fulfilled the

law, . . . for love is the fulfilling of the law." Rom. xiii, 8-10. Now mistakes, and whatever infirmities necessarily flow from the corruptible state of the body, are no way contrary to love, nor therefore, in the Scripture sense, sin.

To explain myself a little farther on this head: 1. Not only sin properly so called—that is, a voluntary transgression of a known law, but sin improperly so called—that is, an involuntary transgression of divine law, known or unknown, needs the atoning blood. 2. I believe there is no such perfection in this life as excludes these involuntary transgressions, which I apprehend to be naturally, consequent on the ignorance and mistakes inseparable from mortality. 3. Therefore "sinless perfection" is a phrase I never use, lest I should seem to contradict myself. 4. I believe a person filled with the love of God is still liable to these involuntary transgressions. 5. Such transgressions you may call sins, if you please; I do not, for the reasons above mentioned.

Q. What advice would you give to those that do and those that do not call them so?

A. Let those who do not call them sins never think that themselves or any other persons are in such a state as that they can stand before infinite justice without a mediator. This must argue either the deepest ignorance or the highest arrogance and presumption.

Let those who do call them so beware how they confound these defects with sins properly so called. But how will they avoid it? How will these be distinguished from those if they are all promiscuously called sins? I am much afraid, if we should allow any sins to be consistent with Christian perfection, few would confine the idea to those defects concerning which only the assertion could be true.

Q. But how can a liableness to mistake consist with perfect love? Is not a person who is perfected in love every moment under its influence? And can any mistake flow from pure love?

A. I answer. 1. Many mistakes may consist with pure love. 2. Some may accidentally flow from it. I

mean love itself may incline us to mistake. The pure love of our neighbor, springing from the love of God, "thinketh no evil," "believeth and hopeth all things." Now this very temper, unsuspicious, ready to believe and hope the best of all men, may occasion our thinking some men better than they really are. Here there is a manifest mistake accidentally flowing from pure love.

Q. How then shall we avoid setting Christian perfection too high or too low?

A. By keeping to the Bible, and setting it just as high as the Scripture does. It is nothing higher and nothing lower than this: the pure love of God and man; the loving God with all our heart and soul and our neighbor as ourselves; it is love governing the heart and life, running through all our tempers, words, and actions.

Q. Suppose one had attained to this, would you advise him to speak of it?

A. At first, perhaps, he would scarce be able to refrain, the fire would be so hot within him; his desire to declare the loving kindness of the Lord carrying him away like a torrent; but afterward he might; and then it would be advisable not to speak of it to them that know not God; it is most likely it would only provoke them to contradict and blaspheme; nor to others without some particular reason—without some good in view. And then he should have especial care to avoid all appearance of boasting; to speak with the deepest humility and reverence, giving all the glory to God.

Q. But would it not be better to be entirely silent; not to speak of it at all?

A. By silence he might avoid many crosses, which will naturally and necessarily ensue if he simply declare, even among believers, what God has wrought in his soul. If, therefore, such a one were to confer with flesh and blood, he would be entirely silent. But this could not be done with a clear conscience, for undoubtedly he ought to speak. Men do not light a candle to put it under a bushel; much less does the all-wise God. He does not raise such a monument of his power and love to hide it from all mankind. Rather he intends it

as a general blessing to those who are simple of heart. He designs thereby not barely the happiness of that individual person, but the animating and encouraging others to follow after the same blessing. His will is that many shall see it and rejoice, and put their trust in the Lord. Nor does anything under heaven more quicken the desires of those who are justified than to converse with those whom they believe to have experienced a still higher salvation. This places that salvation full in their view and increases their hunger and thirst after it—an advantage which must have been entirely lost had the person so saved buried himself in silence.

Q. But is there no way to prevent those crosses which usually fall on those who speak of being thus saved?

A. It seems they cannot be prevented altogether while so much of nature remains even in believers. But something might be done if the preacher in every place would, 1. Talk freely with all who speak thus; and, 2. Labor to prevent the unjust or unkind treatment of those in favor of whom there is reasonable proof.

Q. What is reasonable proof? How may we certainly know one that is saved from all sin?

A. We cannot infallibly know one that is thus saved (no, nor even one that is justified), unless it should please God to endow us with the miraculous discernment of spirits. But we apprehend these would be sufficient proofs to any reasonable man, and such as would leave little room to doubt either the truth or depth of the work: 1. If we had clear evidence of his exemplary behavior for some time before his supposed change, this would give us reason to believe he would not lie for God, but speak neither more nor less than he felt; 2. If he gave a distinct account of the time and manner wherein the change was wrought, with sound speech which could not be reproved; and, 3. If it appeared that all his subsequent words and actions were holy and unblamable.

The short of the matter is this: 1. I have abundant reason to believe this person will not lie. 2. He tes-

tifies before God, "I feel no sin, but all love; I pray, rejoice, and give thanks without ceasing; and I have as clear an inward witness that I am fully renewed as that I am justified." Now, if I have nothing to oppose to this plain testimony I ought in reason to believe it.

It avails nothing to object: "But I know several things wherein he is quite mistaken." For it has been allowed that all who are in the body are liable to mistake; and that a mistake in judgment may sometimes occasion a mistake in practice; though great care is to be taken that no ill use be made of this concession. For instance, even one that is perfected in love may mistake with regard to another person, and may think him in a particular case to be more or less faulty than he really is; and hence he may speak to him with more or less severity than the truth requires. And in this sense (though that be not the primary meaning of St. James), "In many things we offend all." This therefore, is no proof at all that the person so speaking is not perfected in love.

Q. But is it not a proof if he is surprised or fluttered by a noise, a fall, or some sudden danger?

A. It is not, for one may start, tremble, change color, or be otherwise disordered in body, while the soul is calmly stayed on God and remains in perfect peace. Nay, the mind itself may be deeply distressed, may be exceeding sorrowful, may be perplexed and pressed down by heaviness and anguish, even to agony, while the heart cleaves to God by perfect love, and the will is wholly resigned to him. Was it not so with the Son of man himself? Does any child of man endure the distress, the anguish, the agony, which he sustained? And yet he "knew no sin."

Q. But can any who have a pure heart prefer pleasing to unpleasing food? Or use any pleasure of sense which is not strictly necessary? If so, how do they differ from others?

A. The difference between these and others in taking pleasant food is, 1. They need none of these things to make them happy, for they have a spring of happiness within. They see and love God. Hence they "re-

joice evermore, and in everything give thanks." 2. They may use them, but they do not seek them. 3. They use them sparingly, and not for the sake of the thing itself. This being premised, we answer directly —Such a one may use pleasing food without the danger which attends those who are not saved from sin. He may prefer it to unpleasing though equally wholesome food as a means of increasing thankfulness, with a single eye to God "who giveth us all things richly to enjoy." On the same principle, he may smell a flower, or eat a bunch of grapes, or take any other pleasure which does not lessen but increase his delight in God. Therefore neither can we say that one perfected in love would be incapable of marriage, and of worldly business. If he were called thereto he would be more capable than ever, as being able to do all things, without hurry or carefulness, without any distraction of spirit.

Q. But if two perfect Christians had children how could they be born in sin, since there was none in the parents?

A. It is a possible but not a probable case; I doubt whether it ever was or ever will be. But, waiving this, I answer, Sin is entailed upon me, not by immediate generation, but by my first parent. In Adam all died; by the disobedience of one, all men were made sinners; all men, without exception, who were in his loins when he ate the forbidden fruit.

We have a remarkable illustration of this in gardening. Grafts on a crab stock bear excellent fruit; but sow the kernels of this fruit, and what will be the event? They produce as mere crabs as ever were eaten.

Q. But what does the perfect one do more than others, more than common believers?

A. Perhaps nothing, so may the providence of God have hedged him in by outward circumstances. Perhaps not so much (though he desires and longs to spend and be spent for God)—at least not externally. He may neither speak so many words nor do so many works; as neither did our Lord himself speak so many words or do so many, no, nor so great works, as some of his apostles, John xiv, 12; but this is no proof that

he has not more grace.

Q. But is not this a proof against him: I feel no power either in his words or prayer?

A. It is not; for perhaps that is your own fault. You are not likely to feel any power therein, if any of these hindrances lie in the way: 1. Your own deadness of soul. The dead Pharisees felt no power even in his words "who spake as never man spake." 2. The guilt of some unrepented sin lying upon the conscience. 3. Prejudice toward him of any kind. 4. Your not believing that state to be attainable wherein he professes to be. 5. Believing it to be ungodliness to think or own he has attained it. 6. Overvaluing or idolizing him. 7. Overvaluing yourself and your own judgment. If any of these be the case, what wonder is it that you feel no power in anything he says? But do not others feel it? If they do, your argument falls to the ground. And if they do not, do none of these hindrances lie in their way too? You must be certain of this before you can build any argument thereon. And even then your argument will prove no more than that grace and gifts do not always go together.

"But he does not come up to my idea of a perfect Christian." And perhaps no one ever did or ever will. For your idea may go beyond, or at least beside, the scriptural account. It may include more than the Bible includes therein, or, however, something which that does not include. Christian perfection is pure love filling the heart and governing all the words and actions. If your idea includes anything more or anything else it is not scriptural: and then no wonder that a scripturally perfect Christian does not come up to it.

I fear many stumble on this stumbling-block. They include as many ingredients as they please, not according to Scripture, but their own imagination, in their idea of one that is perfect in love; and then readily deny any one to be such who does not answer that imaginary idea.

The more care should we take to keep the simple scriptural account continually in our eye. Pure love reigning alone in the heart and life—this is the whole

of Christian perfection.

Q. When may a person judge himself to have attained this?

A. When, after having been fully convinced of inbred sin by a far deeper and clearer conviction than that which he experienced before justification, and after having experienced a gradual mortification of it, he experiences a total death to sin and an entire renewal in the love and image of God, so as to "rejoice evermore," to "pray without ceasing," and "in everything to give thanks." Not that "to feel all love and no sin" is a sufficient proof. Several have experienced this for a time before their souls were fully renewed. None, therefore, ought to believe that the work is done till there is added the testimony of the Spirit, witnessing his entire sanctification as clearly as his justification.

Q. But whence is it that some imagine they are thus sanctified, when in reality they are not?

A. It is hence: they do not judge by all the preceding marks, but either by part of them or by others that are ambiguous. But I know no instance of a person attending to them all and yet deceived in this matter. I believe there can be none in the world. If a man be deeply and fully convinced, after justification, of inbred sin, and afterward an entire renewal in the image of God; if to this change, immensely greater than that wrought when he was justified, be added a clear, direct witness of the renewal, I judge it next to impossible this man should be deceived herein. And if one whom I know to be a man of veracity testify these things to me I ought not, without some sufficient reason, to reject his testimony.

Q. Is this death to sin and renewal in love gradual or instantaneous?

A. A man may be dying for some time, yet he does not, properly speaking, die till the instant the soul is separated from the body; and in that instant he lives the life of eternity. In like manner he may be dying to sin for some time, yet he is not dead to sin until sin is separated from his soul; and in that instant he lives the full life of love. And as the change undergone when

the body dies is of a different kind, and infinitely greater than any we had known before, yea, such as till then it is impossible to conceive; so the change wrought when the soul dies to sin is of a different kind, and infinitely greater than any before, and than any can conceive till he experiences it. Yet he still grows in grace and in the knowledge of Christ, in the love and image of God, and will do so, not only till death, but probably to all eternity.

Q. How are we to wait for this change?

A. Not in careless indifference or indolent inactivity, but in vigorous universal obedience, in a zealous keeping of all the commandments, in watchfulness and painfulness, in denying ourselves and taking up our cross daily, as well as in earnest prayer and fasting and a close attendance on all the ordinances of God. And if any man dream of attaining it any other way (yea, or of keeping it when it is attained, when he has received it even in the largest measure), he deceiveth his own soul. It is true, we receive it by simple faith. But God does not, will not, give that faith unless we seek it with all diligence in the way which he hath ordained.

This consideration may satisfy those who inquire why so few have received the blessing. Inquire how many are seking it in this way, and you have a sufficient answer.

Prayer especially is wanting. Who continues instant therein? Who wrestles with God for this very thing? So "ye have not because ye ask not," or because "ye ask amiss," namely: "that you may be renewed before you die." Before you die! Will that content you? Nay, but ask that it may be done now, today, while it is called today! Do not call this "setting God a time." Certainly today is his time, as well as tomorrow. Make haste, man—make haste! Let

"Thy soul break out in strong desire
The perfect bliss to prove!
Thy longing heart be all on fire
To be dissolved in love!"

Q. But may we not continue in peace and joy till

we are perfected in love?

A. Certainly we may, for the kingdom of God is not divided against itself. Therefore let not believers be discouraged from rejoicing in the Lord always. And yet we may be sensibly pained at the sinful nature that still remains in us. It is good for us to have a piercing sense of this and a vehement desire to be delivered from it. But this should only incite us the more zealously to fly every moment to our strong helper, the more earnestly to "press forward to the mark for the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus." And when the sense of our sin most abounds the sense of his love should much more abound.

Q. How should we treat those who think they have attained?

A. Examine them candidly, and exhort them to pray fervently that God would show them all that is in their hearts. The most earnest exhortations to abound in every grace, and the strongest cautions to avoid all evil, are given throughout the New Testament to those who are in the highest state of grace. But this should be done with the utmost tenderness, and without any harshness, sternness or sourness. We should carefully avoid the very appearance of anger, unkindness or contempt. Leave it to Satan thus to tempt, and to his children to cry out, "Let us examine him with despitefulness and torture, that we may know his meekness and prove his patience." If they are faithful to the grace given they are in no danger of perishing by mistake; no, not if they remain in that mistake till their spirit is returning to God.

Q. But what hurt can it do to deal harshly with them?

A. Either they are mistaken or they are not. If they are not it may destroy their souls. This is nothing impossible—no, nor improbable. It may so enrage or discourage them that they will sink, and rise no more. If they are not mistaken it may grieve those whom God has not grieved, and do much hurt unto our own souls; for undoubtedly he that toucheth them toucheth, as it were, the apple of God's eye. If they are indeed full of

his Spirit, to behave unkindly or contemptuously to them is doing no little despite to the Spirit of grace. Hereby, likewise, we feed and increase in ourselves evil surmising and many wrong tempers. To instance only one, what self-sufficiency is this, to set ourselves up for inquisitors-general or peremptory judges in these deep things of God! Are we qualified for the office? Can we pronounce in all cases how far infirmity reaches? What may and what may not be resolved into it? What may in all circumstances and what may not consist with perfect love? Can we precisely determine how it will influence the look, the gesture, the tone of voice? If we can, doubtless we are the men, and wisdom shall die with us!

Q. But if they are displeased at our not believing them, is not this a full proof against them?

A. According as that displeasure is. If they are angry, it is a proof against them; if they are grieved, it is not. They ought to be grieved if we disbelieve a real work of God and thereby deprive ourselves of the advantage we might have received from it. And we may easily mistake this grief for anger, as the outward expressions of both are much alike.

Q. But is it not well to find out those who fancy they have attained when they have not?

A. It is well to do it by mild, loving examination. But it is not well to triumph even over these. It is extremely wrong, if we find such an instance, to rejoice as if we had found great spoils. Ought we not rather to grieve, to be deeply concerned, to let our eyes run down with tears? Here is one who seemed to be a living proof of God's power to save to the uttermost; but alas! it is not as we hoped. He is "weighed in the balance and found wanting!" And is this matter of joy? Ought we not to rejoice a thousand times more if we can find nothing but pure love?

"But he is deceived." What then? It is a harmless mistake while he feels nothing but love in his heart. It is a mistake which generally argues great grace, a high degree both of holiness and happiness. This should be a matter of real joy to all that are simple of heart; not

the mistake itself, but the height of grace which for a time occasions it. I rejoice that this soul is always happy in Christ, always full of prayer and thanksgiving. I rejoice that he feels no unholy temper, but the pure love of God continually. And I will rejoice if sin is suspended till it is totally destroyed.

Q. Is there no danger, then, in a man's being thus deceived?

A. Not at the time that he feels no sin. There was danger before, and there will be again when he comes into fresh trials. But so long as he feels nothing but love animating all his thoughts, and words, and actions, he is in no danger; he is not only happy, but safe "under the shadow of the Almighty;" and for God's sake let him continue in that love as long as he can. Meantime you may do well to warn him of the danger that will be if his love grow cold and sin revive; even the danger of casting away hope, and supposing that because he hath not attained yet therefore he never shall.

Q. But what if none hath attained it yet? What if all who think so are deceived?

A. Convince me of this and I will preach it no more. But understand me right: I do not build any doctrine on this or that person; this or any other man may be deceived, and I am not moved; but if there be none made perfect in love yet, God has not sent me to preach Christian perfection.

Put a parallel case. For many years I have preached, "There is a peace of God which passeth all understanding." Convince me that this word has fallen to the ground; that in all these years none have attained this peace; that there is no living witness of it at this day, and I will preach it no more.

"O, but several persons have died in that peace." Perhaps so; but I want living witnesses. I cannot, indeed, be infallibly certain that this or that person is a witness. But if I were certain that there is none such I should have done with this doctrine.

"You misunderstand me. I believe some who died in this love enjoyed it long before their death. But I

was not certain that their former testimony was true till some hours before they died."

You have not an infallible certainty then, and a reasonable certainty you might have had before; such a certainty as might have quickened and comforted your own soul and answered all other Christian purposes. Such a certainty as this any candid persons may have, supposing there be any living witness, by talking one hour with that person in the love and fear of God.

Q. But what does it signify whether any have attained it or not, seeing so many scriptures witness for it?

A. If I were convinced that none in England had attained what has been so clearly and strongly preached by such a number of preachers in so many places, and for so long a time, I should be clearly convinced that we had all mistaken the meaning of those scriptures. And therefore for the time to come I too should teach that "sin will remain till death."

I will here beg leave to add a few questions written by a plain man on this important subject:

Queries humbly proposed to those who deny Christian perfection to be attainable in this life.

1. Has not there been a larger measure of the Holy Spirit given under the Gospel than under the Jewish dispensation? If not, in what sense was "the Spirit not given" before Christ was glorified? John vii, 39.

2. Was that "glory which followed the sufferings of Christ," (1 Pet. i, 11), an external glory, or an internal; namely the glory of holiness?

3. Has God anywhere in Scripture commanded us more than he has promised to us?

4. Are the promises of God respecting holiness to be fulfilled in this life, or only in the next?

5. Is a Christian under any other laws than those which God promises to write in our heart? Jer. xxxi, 31, etc., Heb. iii, 10.

6. In what sense is "the righteousness of the law fulfilled in those who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit?" Rom. viii, 4.

7. Is it impossible for anyone in this life to love

God with all his heart, and mind, and soul, and strength? And is the Christian under any law which is not fulfilled in this love?

8. Does the soul's going out of the body effect its purification from indwelling sin?

9. If so, is it not something else, not the blood of Christ, which cleanseth it from all sin?

10. If his blood cleanseth us from all sin while the soul and body are united, is it not in this life?

11. If when that union ceases, is it not in the next? And is not this too late?

12. If in the article of death, what situation is the soul in when it is neither in the body nor out of it?

13. Has Christ anywhere taught us to pray for what he never designs to give?

14. Has he not taught us to pray, "Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven?" And is it not done perfectly in heaven?

15. If so, has he not taught us to pray for perfection on earth? Does he not then design to give it?

16. Did not St. Paul pray according to the will of God when he prayed that the Thessalonians might be "sanctified wholly and preserved (in this world, not the next, unless he was praying for the dead) blameless in body, soul and spirit, unto the coming of Jesus Christ?"

17. Do you sincerely desire to be freed from indwelling sin in this life?

18. If you do, did not God give you that desire?

19. If so, did he not give it you to mock you, since it is impossible it should ever be fulfilled?

20. If you have not sincerity enough even to desire it, are you not disputing about matters too high for you?

21. Do you ever pray God to cleanse the thoughts of your heart, that you may perfectly love him?

22. If you neither desire what you ask, nor believe it attainable, pray you not as a fool prayeth?

God help thee to consider these questions calmly and impartially!

In the year 1768, the number of those who believed

they were saved from sin still increasing, I judged it needful to publish, chiefly for their use, *Farther Thoughts on Christian Perfection, which I will also adjoin:*

Q. 1. How is "Christ the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth?" Rom. x, 4.

A. In order to understand this you must understand what law is here spoken of. And this, I apprehend, is, 1. The Mosaic law, the whole Mosaic dispensation, which St. Paul continually speaks of as one, though containing three parts: the political, moral and ceremonial. 2. The Adamic law, that given to Adam in innocence, properly called "the law of works." This is in substance the same with the angelic law, being common to angels and man. It required that man should use to the glory of God all the powers with which he was created. Now he was created free from any defect, either in his understanding or his affections. His body was then no clog to the mind: it did not hinder his apprehending all things clearly, judging, truly concerning them and reasoning justly, if he reasoned at all. I say, "if he reasoned;" for possibly he did not. Perhaps he had no need of reasoning till his corruptible body pressed down the mind and impaired his native faculties. Perhaps till then the mind saw every truth that offered as directly as the eye now sees the light.

Consequently this law, proportioned to his original powers, required that he should always think, always speak, and always act precisely right, in every point whatever. He was well able to do so; and God could not but require the service he was able to pay.

But Adam fell, and his incorruptible body became corruptible; and ever since it is a clog to the soul and hinders its operations. Hence, at present, no child of man can at all times apprehend clearly or judge truly. And where either the judgment or apprehension is wrong it is impossible to reason justly. Therefore it is as natural for a man to mistake as to breathe, and he can no more live without the one than without the other. Consequently no man is able to perform the service which the Adamic law requires.

And as no man is obliged to perform it God does not require it of any man. For Christ is the end of the Adamic as well as the Mosaic law. By his death he put an end to both; he hath abolished both the one and the other with regard to man; and the obligation to observe either the one or the other is vanished away. Nor is any man living bound to observe the Adamic more than the Mosaic law.*

In the room of this Christ hath established another, namely, the law of faith. Not every one that doeth, but every one that believeth, now receiveth righteousness in the full sense of the word; that is, he is justified, sanctified, and glorified.

Q. 2. Are we then "dead to the law?"

A. We "are dead to the law by the body of Christ" given for us (Rom. vii, 4); to the Adamic as well as the Mosaic law. We are wholly freed therefrom by his death, that law expiring with him.

Q. 3. How then are we "not without law to God, but under the law to Christ?" 1 Cor. ix, 21.

A. We are without that law; but it does not follow that we are without any law: for God has established another law in its place, even the law of faith; and we are all under this law to God and to Christ. Both our Creator and our Redeemer require us to observe it.

Q. 4. Is love the fulfilling of this law?

A. Unquestionably it is. The whole law under which we now are is fulfilled by love. Rom. xiii, 9, 10. Faith working or animated by love is all that God now requires of man. He has substituted (not sincerity) but love in the room of angelic perfection.

Q. 5. How is "love the end of the commandment?" 1 Tim. i, 5.

A. It is the end of every commandment of God. It is the point aimed at by the whole and every part of the Christian institution. The foundation is faith, purifying the heart; the end love, preserving a good conscience.

Q. 6. What love is this?

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*I mean, it is not the condition either of present or future salvation.

A. The loving the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength; and the loving our neighbor, every man as ourselves, as our own souls.

Q. 7. What are the fruits or properties of this love?

A. St. Paul informs us at large, Love is long-suffering. It suffers all the weaknesses of the children of God, all the wickedness of the children of the world; and that not for a little time only, but as long as God pleases. In all it sees the hand of God and willingly submits thereto. Meanwhile it is "kind." In all and after all it suffers, it is soft, mild, tender, benign. "Love envieth not;" it excludes every kind and degree of envy out of the heart. "Love acteth not rashly," in a violent, headlong manner, nor passes any rash or severe judgment. It "doth not behave itself indecently;" it is not rude; does not act out of character; "seeketh not her own" ease, pleasure, honor, or profit; "is not provked;" expels all wrath from the heart; "thinketh no evil;" casteth out all jealousy, suspiciousness, and readiness to believe evil; "rejoiceth not in iniquity," yea, weeps at the sin or folly of its bitterest enemies; "but rejoiceth in the truth," in the holiness and happiness of every child of man. "Love covereth all things;" speaks evil of no man; "believeth all things" that tend to the advantage of another's character. "It hopeth all things," whatever may extenuate the faults which cannot be denied; and it "endureth all things" which God can permit, or men and devils inflict. This is "the law of Christ," "the perfect law, the law of liberty."

And this distinction between the "law of faith" (or love and the "law of works" is neither a subtle nor an unnecessary distinction. It is plain, easy, and intelligible to any common understanding. And it is absolutely necessary to prevent a thousand doubts and fears, even in those who do "walk in love."

Q. 8. But do "we" not "in many things offend all," yea, the best of us, even against this law?

A. In one sense we do not, while all our tempers, and thoughts, and words, and works spring from love. But in another we do, and shall, more or less, as long as we remain in the body. For neither love nor the

"unction of the Holy One" makes us infallible. Therefore, through unavoidable defect of understanding, we cannot but mistake in many things. And these mistakes will frequently occasion something wrong both in our temper and words and actions. From mistaking his character we may love a person less than he really deserves. And by the same mistake we are unavoidably led to speak or act with regard to that person in such a manner as is contrary to this law in some or other of the preceding instances.

Q. 9. Do we not then need Christ even on this account?

A. The holiest of men still need Christ as their prophet, as "the light of the world." For he does not give them light but from moment to moment; the instant he withdraws all is darkness. They still need Christ as their king. For God does not give them a stock of holiness. But unless they receive a supply every moment nothing but unholiness will remain. They still need Christ as their priest, to make atonement for their holy things. Even perfect holiness is acceptable to God only through Jesus Christ.

Q. 10. May not then the very best of men adopt the dying martyr's confession, "I am in myself nothing but sin, darkness, hell; but thou art my light, my holiness, my heaven?"

A. Not exactly. But the best of men may say, "Thou art my light, my holiness, my heaven. Through my union with thee I am full of light, of holiness, and happiness. But if I were left to myself I should be nothing but sin, darkness, hell."

But to proceed: The best of men need Christ as their priest, their atonement, their advocate with the Father; not only as the continuance of their every blessing depends on his death and intercession, but on account of their coming short of the law of love. For every man living does so. You who feel all love, compare yourselves with the preceding description; weigh yourselves in this balance, and see if you are not wanting in many particulars.

Q. 11. But if all this be consistent with Christian

perfection that perfection is not freedom from all sin, seeing "sin is the transgression of the law." And the perfect in love transgress the very law they are under. Besides, they need the atonement of Christ; and he is the atonement for nothing but sin. Is, then, the term sinless perfection proper?

A. I do not approve of the expression. But observe in what sense the persons in question need the atonement of Christ. They do not need him to reconcile them to God afresh, for they are reconciled. They do not need him to restore the favor of God, but to continue it. He does not procure pardon for them anew, but "ever liveth to make intercession for them." And "by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." Heb. x, 14.

For want of duly considering this some deny that they need the atonement of Christ. Indeed, exceeding few. I do not remember to have found five of them in England. Of the two I would far sooner give up Christian perfection. But we need not give up either one or the other. The perfection I hold, love "rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, and in everything giving thanks," is well consistent with it. If any hold a perfection which is not they must look to it.

Q. 12. Does, then, Christian perfection imply any more than sincerity?

A. Not if you mean by that word love filling the heart, expelling pride, wrath, evil desires, self-will; rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, and in everything giving thanks. But I doubt few use sincerity in this sense. Therefore I think the old word is best.

A person may be sincere who has all his natural tempers, pride, wrath, lust, self-will, in some degree. But he is not perfect in love till his heart is cleansed from these and all its other corruptions.

To clear this point a little farther: I know many that love God with all their heart. He is their one desire, their one delight, and they are continually happy in him. They love their neighbor as themselves. They feel as sincere, fervent, constant a desire for the happiness of every man, good or bad, friend or enemy, as

for their own. They rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks. Their souls are continually streaming up to God in holy joy, prayer, and praise. This is a point of fact. And this is plain, sound, scriptural experience.

But even these souls dwell in a shattered body, and are so pressed down thereby that they cannot always exert themselves as they would by thinking, speaking and acting precisely right. For want of better bodily organs, they must at times think, speak, or act wrong; not, indeed, through a defect of love, but through a defect of knowledge, and while this is the case, notwithstanding that defect and its consequences, they fulfill the law of love.

Yet, as even in this case there is not a full conformity to the perfect law, so the most perfect in love do on this very account need the blood of atonement, and may properly, for themselves as well as for their brethren, say, "Forgive us our trespasses."

Q. 13. But if Christ has put an end to that law, what need of any atonement for their transgressing it?

A. Observe in what sense he has put an end to it, and the difficulty vanishes. Were it not for the abiding merit of his death and his continual intercession for us that law would condemn us still. These, therefore, we still need for every transgression of it.

Q. 14. But can one that is saved from sin be tempted?

A. Yes; for Christ was tempted.

Q. 15. However, what you call temptation I call the corruption of my heart. And how will you distinguish one from the other?

A. In some cases it is impossible to distinguish without the direct witness of the Spirit. But in general one may distinguish thus:

One commends me. Here is a temptation to pride; but instantly my soul is humbled before God, and I feel no pride, of which I am as sure as that pride is not humility.

A man strikes me. Here is a temptation to anger. But my heart overflows with love, and I feel no anger

A corrupt heart would not only recognize the temptations, but

at all; of which I am as sure as that love and anger are not the same.

A woman solicits me. Here is a temptation to lust. But in the instant I shrink back, and I feel no desire or lust at all; of which I am as sure as that my hand is cold or hot.

Thus it is, if I am tempted by a present object; and it is just the same if, when it is absent, the devil recalls a commendation, an injury, or a woman, to my mind. In the instant the soul repels the temptation and remains filled with pure love.

And the difference is still plainer when I compare my present state with my past, wherein I felt temptation and corruption too.

Q. 16. But how do you know that you are sanctified—saved from your inbred corruption?

A. I can know it no otherwise than I know that I am justified. "Hereby know ye that we are of God (in either sense), by the Spirit that he hath given us."

We know it by the witness and by the fruit of the Spirit. And, first, by the witness. As, when we were justified the Spirit bore witness with our spirit that our sins were forgiven, so when we were sanctified he bore witness that they were taken away. Indeed, the witness of sanctification is not always clear at first (as neither is that of justification); neither is it afterward always the same, but, like that of justification, sometimes stronger and sometimes fainter. Yea, and sometimes it is withdrawn. Yet, in general, the latter testimony of the Spirit is both as clear and as steady as the former.

Q. 17. But what need is there of it, seeing sanctification is a real change, not a relative only, like justification?

A. But is the new birth a relative change only? Is not this a real change? Therefore if we need no witness of our sanctification, because it is a real change, for the same reason we should need none that we are born of, or are, the children of God.

Q. 18. But does not sanctification shine by its own light?

delight in it. This is not true of a pure heart.

A. And does not the new birth too? Sometimes it does. And so does sanctification; at others it does not. In the hour of temptation Satan clouds the work of God and injects various doubts and reasonings, especially in those who have either very weak or very strong understandings. At such times there is absolutely need of that witness, without which the work of sanctification not only could not be discerned, but could no longer subsist. Were it not for this the soul could no longer abide in the love of God; much less could it rejoice evermore and in everything give thanks. In these circumstances, therefore, a direct testimony that we are sanctified is necessary in the highest degree.

"But I have no witness that I am saved from sin, and yet I have no doubt of it." Very well. As long as you have no doubt it is enough; when you have you will need that witness.

Q. 19. But what scripture makes mention of any such thing or gives any reason to expect it?

A. That scripture, 1 Cor. ii, 12, "We have received not the spirit which is of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we may know the things which are freely given us of God."

Now surely sanctification is one of "the things which are freely given us of God." And no possible reason can be assigned why this should not be expected when the apostle says we receive the Spirit, for this very end, "that we know the things which are thus freely given us."

Is not the same thing implied in that well-known scripture, Rom. viii. 16, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God?" Does he only witness this to those who are children of God in the lowest sense? Nay, but to those also who are such in the highest sense. And does he not witness that they are such in the highest sense? What reason have we to doubt it?

What if a man were to affirm (as indeed many do) that this witness belongs only to the highest class of Christians? Would you not answer, the apostle makes no restriction? Therefore, doubtless it belongs to all

the children of God. And will not the same answer hold if any affirm that it belongs only to the lowest class?

Consider, likewise, 1 John v, 19, "We know that we are of God." How? "By the Spirit that he hath given us." 1 John iii, 24. Nay, "hereby we know that he abideth in us." And what ground have we, either from Scripture or reason, to exclude the witness any more than the fruit of the Spirit from being here intended? By this then, also, we know that we are of God, and in what sense we are so. Whether we are babes, young men, or fathers, we know in the same manner.

Not that I affirm that all young men, or even fathers, have this testimony every moment; there may be intermissions of the direct testimony that they are thus born of God. But those intermissions are fewer and shorter as they grow up in Christ. And some have the testimony both of their justification and sanctification, without any intermission at all; which I presume more might have, did they walk as humbly and as closely with God as they may.

Q. 20. May not some of these have a testimony from the Spirit, that they shall not finally fall from God?

A. They may. And this persuasion, that neither life nor death shall separate them from him, far from being hurtful, may in some circumstances be extremely useful. These, therefore, we should in no wise grieve, but earnestly encourage them to "hold the beginning of their confidence steadfast to the end."

Q. 21. But have any a testimony from the Spirit that they shall never sin?

A. We know not that they have. Besides, we do not find any general state described in Scripture from which a man cannot draw back to sin. If there were any state wherein this was impossible, it would be that of those who are sanctified, who are fathers in Christ, who "rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks." But it is not impossible for these to draw back. They who are sanctified may yet fall and perish. Heb. x, 29. Even fathers in Christ

need that warning, "Love not the world." 1 John II, 15. They who rejoice, pray, and give thanks without ceasing, may nevertheless "quench the Spirit." 1 Thess. v, 16, etc. Nay, even they who are "sealed unto the day of redemption" may yet "grieve the Holy Spirit of God." Eph. iv, 30.

Q. 22. By what fruit of the Spirit may we know that we are of God, in the highest sense?

A. By love, joy, peace, always abiding; by invariable long-suffering, patience, resignation; by gentleness triumphing over all provocation; by goodness, mildness, sweetness, tenderness of spirit; by fidelity, simplicity, godly sincerity; by meekness, calmness, evenness of spirit; by temperance not only in food and sleep, but in all things natural and spiritual.

Q. 23. But what great matter is there in this? Have we not all this when we are justified?

A. What! Total resignation to the will of God, without any mixture of self-will? Gentleness without any touch of anger, even the moment we are provoked? Love to God, without the least love to the creature, but in and for God, excluding all pride? Love to man, excluding all envy, all jealousy, and rash judging? Meekness keeping the whole soul inviolably calm? And temperance in all things? Deny that any ever came up to this, if you please; but do not say all who are justified do.

Q. 24. But some who are newly justified do; what then will you say to these?

A. If they really do I will say they are sanctified: saved from sin in that moment; and that they never need lose what God has given, or feel sin any more.

But certainly this is an exempt case. It is otherwise with the generality of those that are justified. They feel in themselves more or less pride, self-will, and a heart bent to backsliding. And till they have gradually mortified these they are not fully renewed in love.

Q. 25. But is not this the case of all that are justified? Do they not gradually die to sin and grow in grace, till at, or perhaps a little before, death God per-

fects them in love?

A. I believe this is the case of most, but not all. God usually gives a considerable time for men to receive light to grow in grace, to do and suffer his will, before they are either justified or sanctified. But he does not invariably adhere to this. Sometimes he cuts short his work. He does the work of many years in a few weeks; perhaps in a week, a day, an hour. He justifies, or sanctifies, both those who have done or suffered nothing, and who have not had time for a gradual growth, either in light or grace. And may he not do what he will with his own? Is thine eye evil, because he is good?

It need not, therefore, be affirmed over and over, and proved by forty texts of Scripture, either that most men are perfect in love at last—that there is a gradual work of God in the soul—or that, generally speaking, it is a long time, even many years, before sin is destroyed. All this we know. But we know, likewise, that God may, with man's good leave, cut short his work, in whatever degree he pleases, and do the usual work of many years in a moment. He does so in many instances. And yet there is a gradual work both before and after that moment. So that one may affirm the work is gradual; another, it is instantaneous; without any manner of contradiction.

Q. 26. Does St. Paul mean any more by being "sealed with the Spirit" than being "renewed in love?"

A. Perhaps in one place, 2 Cor. i, 22, he does not mean so much. But in another, Eph. i, 13, he seems to include both the fruit and the witness, and in a higher degree than we experience, even when we are first renewed in love. God sealed us with the Spirit of promise by giving us full assurance of hope; such a confidence of receiving all the promises of God as excludes the possibility of doubting; with that Holy Spirit, by universal holiness, stamping the whole image of God on our hearts.

Q. 27. But how can those who are thus sealed grieve the Holy Spirit of God?

A. St. Paul tells you very particularly, 1. By such

conversation as is not profitable, not to the use of edifying, nor apt to minister grace to the hearers. 2. By relapsing into bitterness or want of kindness. 3. By wrath, lasting displeasure, or want of tender-heartedness. 4. By anger, however soon it is over; want of instantly forgiving one another. 5. By clamor, or brawling, loud, harsh, rough speaking. 6. By evil speaking, whispering, tale-bearing; needlessly mentioning the fault of an absent person, though in ever so soft a manner.

Q. 28. What do you think of those in London who seem to have been lately renewed in love?*

A. There is something very peculiar in the experience of the greater part of them. One would expect that a believer should first be filled with love, and thereby emptied of sin; whereas these were emptied of sin first, and then filled with love. Perhaps it pleased God to work in this manner, to make his work more plain and undeniable; and to distinguish it more clearly from that overflowing love which is often felt even in a justified state.

It seems likewise most agreeable to that great promise, Ezek. xxxvi, 25, 26, "From all your filthiness will I cleanse you. A new heart will I also give you, and a new spirit will I put within you."

But I do not think of them all alike: there is a wide difference between some of them and others. I think most of them with whom I have spoken have much faith, love, joy, and peace. Some of these, I believe, are renewed in love, and have the direct witness of it; and they manifest the fruit above described, in all their words and actions. Now let any man call this what he will. It is what I call Christian perfection.

But some who have much love, peace, and joy, yet have not the direct witness. And others who think they have are nevertheless manifestly wanting in the fruit. How many I will not say; perhaps one in ten, perhaps more or fewer. But some are undeniably wanting in longsuffering and Christian resignation. They

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*In the year 1763, when between three and four hundred in the society in London professed to be perfected in love.

do not see the hand of God in whatever occurs, and cheerfully embrace it. They do not in everything give thanks, and rejoice evermore. They are not happy; at least, not always happy. For sometimes they complain. They say, "This, or that, is hard!"

Some are wanting in gentleness. They resist evil instead of turning the other cheek. They do not receive reproach with gentleness; no, nor even reproof. Nay, they are not able to bear contradiction without the appearance, at least, of resentment. If they are reproved or contradicted, though mildly, they do not take it well. They behave with more distance and reserve than they did before. If they are reproved or contradicted harshly, they answer it with harshness: with a loud voice, or with an angry tone, or in a sharp or surly manner. They speak sharply, or roughly, when they reprove others, and behave roughly to their inferiors.

Some are wanting in goodness. They are not kind, mild, sweet, amiable, soft, and loving at all times, in their spirit, in their words, in their looks and air, in the whole tenor of their behavior; and that to all, high or low, rich and poor, without respect of persons; particularly to them that are out of the way, to opposers, and to those of their own household. They do not long, study, endeavor by every means, to make all about them happy. They can see them uneasy, and not be concerned; perhaps they make them so, and then wipe their mouths and say, "Why, they deserve it. It is their own fault."

Some are wanting in fidelity, a nice regard to truth, simplicity, and godly sincerity. Their love is hardly without dissimulation; something like guile is found in their mouth. To avoid roughness they lean to the other extreme. They are smooth to an excess, so as scarce to avoid a degree of fawning, or of seeming to mean what they do not.

Some are wanting in meekness, quietness of spirit, composure, evenness of temper. They are up and down, sometimes high, sometimes low; their mind is not well balanced. Their affections are either not in due proportion; they have too much of one, too little of anoth-

er; or they are not duly mixed and tempered together, so as to counterpoise each other. Hence there is often a jar. Their soul is out of tune, and cannot make the true harmony.

Some are wanting in temperance. They do not steadily use that kind and degree of food which they know, or might know, would most conduce to the health, strength and vigor of the body. Or they are not temperate in sleep; they do not rigorously adhere to what is best both for body and mind. Otherwise they would constantly go to bed and rise early, and at a fixed hour. Or they sup late, which is neither good for body nor soul. Or they use neither fasting nor abstinence. Or they prefer (which are so many sorts of intemperance) that preaching, reading, or conversation which gives them a transient joy and comfort, before that which brings godly sorrow or instruction in righteousness. Such joy is not sanctified. It doth not tend to and teminate in the crucifixion of the heart. Such faith doth not center in God, but rather in itself.

So far all is plain. I believe you have faith, and love, and joy, and peace. You are particularly concerned, know each for yourself, that you are wanting in the respect above mentioned. You are wanting either in longsuffering, gentleness, or goodness; either in fidelity, meekness, or temperance. Let us not, then, on either hand, fight about words. In the thing we clearly agree.

You have not what I call Christian perfection. However, hold fast what you have, and earnestly pray for what you have not.

Q. 29. Can those who are perfect in love grow in grace?

A. Undoubtedly they can! and that not only while they are in the body, but probably to all eternity.

Q. 30. Can they fall from it?

A. I am well assured they can. Matter of fact puts this beyond dispute. Formerly we thought one saved from sin could not fall; now we know the contrary. Neither does any one stand by virtue of anything that is implied in the nature of the state. There is no such

height or strength of holiness as it is impossible to fall from. If there be any that cannot fall, this wholly depends on the promise and faithfulness of God.

Q. 31. Can those who fall from this state recover it?

A. Why not? We have instances of this also. Nay, it is an exceeding common thing for persons to lose it more than once before they are established therein.

It is therefore to guard them who are saved from sin, from every occasion of stumbling, that I give the following advice.

Q. 32. What is the first advice that you would give them?

A. Watch and pray continually against pride. If God has cast it out, see that it enter no more; it is full as dangerous as evil desire, and you may slide back into it unawares, especially if you think there is no danger of it. "Nay, but I ascribe all I have to God." So you may, and be proud nevertheless. For it is pride not only to ascribe anything we have to ourselves, but to think we have what we really have not. You ascribe all knowledge you have to God, and in this respect you are humble. But if you think you have more than you really have, or if you think you are so taught of God as no longer to need man's teaching, pride lieth at the door.

Do not, therefore, say to any that would advise or reprove you, "You are blind; you cannot teach me;" do not say, "This is your wisdom, your carnal reason;" but calmly weigh the thing before God.

Always remember much grace does not imply much light. These do not always go together. As there may be much light where there is little love, so there may be much love where there is little light. The heart has more heat than the eye; yet it cannot see. And God has wisely tempered the members of the body together, that none may say to another, "I have no need of thee."

To imagine none can teach you but those who are themselves saved from sin is a very great and dangerous mistake. Give not place to it for a moment, it will lead you into a thousand other mistakes, and that irre-

coverably. No; dominion is not found in grace, as the madmen of the last ages talked. Obey and regard "them that are over you in the Lord," and do not think you know better than they. Know their place and your own, always remembering much love does not imply much light.

The not observing this has led some into many mistakes, and into the appearance, at least, of pride. O, beware of the appearance and the thing. Let there be in you that lowly mind which was in Christ Jesus. And be ye likewise clothed with humility. Let it not only fill, but cover you all over. Let modesty and self-diffidence appear in all your words and actions. Let all you speak and do show that you are little, and base, and mean, and vile, in your own eyes.

As one instance of this, be always ready to own any fault you have been in. If you have at any time thought, spoke, or acted wrong, be not backward to acknowledge it. Never dream that this will hurt the cause of God; no, it will farther it. Be, therefore, open and frank when you are taxed with anything; do not seek either to evade or disguise it. But let it appear just as it is, and you will thereby not render, but adorn the Gospel.

Q. 33. What is the second advice which you would give them?

A. Beware of that daughter of pride, enthusiasm! O, keep at the utmost distance from it; give no place to a heated imagination. Do not hastily ascribe things to God. Do not easily suppose dreams, voices, impressions, visions, or revelations to be from God. They may be from him; they may be from nature; they may be from the devil. Therefore "believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God." Try all things by the written word, and let all bow down before it. You are in danger of enthusiasm every hour if you depart ever so little from Scripture; yea, or from the plain literal meaning of any text taken in connection with the context. And so you are if you despise or lightly esteem reason, knowledge, or human learning: every one of which is an excellent gift of God, and may

serve the noblest purposes.

I advise you never to use the words wisdom, reason or knowledge by way of reproach. On the contrary; pray that you yourself may abound in them more and more. If you mean worldly wisdom, useless knowledge, false reasoning, say so; and throw away the chaff, but not the wheat.

One general inlet to enthusiasm is, expecting the end without the means; the expecting knowledge, for instance, without searching the Scriptures and consulting the children of God; the expecting spiritual strength without constant prayer and steady watchfulness; the expecting any blessing without hearing the word of God at every opportunity.

Some have been ignorant of this device of Satan. They have left off searching the Scriptures. They said, "God writes all the Scripture on my heart, therefore I have no need to read it." Others thought they had not so much need of hearing, and so grew slack in attending preaching. O, take warning, you who are here concerned herein. You have listened to the voice of a stranger. Fly back to Christ, and keep in the good old way which was "once delivered to the saints."

The very desire of growing in grace may sometimes be an inlet of enthusiasm. As it continually leads us to seek new grace, it may lead us unawares to seek something else new besides new degrees of love to God and man. So it has led some to fancy they had received gifts of a new kind after a new heart, as 1, the loving God with all our mind; 2, with all our soul; 3, with all our strength; 4, oneness with God; 5, oneness with Christ; 6, having our lives hid with Christ in God; 7, being dead with Christ; 8, rising with him; 9, the sitting with him in heavenly places; 10, the being taken up into his throne; 11, the being in the New Jerusalem; 12, the seeing the tabernacle of God come down among men; 13, the being dead to all works; 14, the not being liable to death, pain, grief, or temptation.

One ground of many of these mistakes, is the taking every fresh, strong application of any of these scriptures to the heart to be a gift of a new kind; not

knowing that several of these scriptures are not fulfilled yet; that most of others are fulfilled when we are justified; the rest of the moment we are sanctified. It remains only to experience them in higher degrees; this is all we have to expect.

Another ground of these and a thousand mistakes is, the not considering deeply that love is the highest gift of God—humble, gentle, patient love; that all visions, revelations, manifestations whatever are little things compared to love; and that all the gifts above mentioned are the same with or infinitely inferior to it.

It were well you should be thoroughly sensible of this: the heaven of heaven is love. There is nothing higher in religion; there is, in effect, nothing else; if you look for anything but more love, you are looking wide of the mark, you are getting out of the royal way. And when you are asking others. Have you received this or that blessing? if you mean anything but more love you are wrong; you are leading them out of the way, and putting them upon a false scent. Settle it then in your heart, that from the moment God has saved you from sin you are to aim at nothing more, but more of that love described in the thirteenth of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. You can go no higher than this till you are carried into Abraham's bosom.

I say again, beware of enthusiasm. Such is the imagining you have the gift of prophesying, or of discerning of spirits, which I do not believe one of you has; no, nor ever had yet. Beware of judging people to be either right or wrong by your own feelings. This is no scriptural way of judging. O keep close "to the law and to the testimony."

Q. 34. What is the third?

A. Beware of Antinomianism, making void the law, or any part of it, through faith. Enthusiasm naturally leads to this; indeed they scarce can be separated. This may steal upon you in a thousand forms, so that you cannot be too watchful against it. Take heed of everything, whether in principle or practice, which has any tendency thereto. Even that great truth, that "Christ is the end of the law," may betray us into it, if

we do not consider that he has adopted every point of the moral law, and grafted it into the law of love. Beware of thinking, "Because I am filled with love, I need not have so much holiness; because I pray always, therefore I need not set time for private prayer; because I watch always, therefore I need no particular self-examination." Let us "magnify the law," the whole written word, "and make it honorable." Let this be our voice, "I prize thy commandments above gold or precious stones. O what love have I unto thy law. All the day long is my study in it!" Beware of Antinomian books. They contain many excellent things, and this makes them the more dangerous. O be warned in time! Do not play with fire; do not put your hand upon the hole of a cockatrice' den.

I entreat you, beware of bigotry. Let not your love or beneficence be confined to Methodists (so called) only; much less to that very small part of them who seem to be renewed in love, or to those who believe yours and their report. O make not this your shibboleth! Beware of stillness; ceasing in a wrong sense from your own works. To mention one instance out of many: "You have received," says one, "a great blessing; but you began to talk of it, and to do this and that; so you lost it. You should have been still."

Beware of self-indulgence; yea, and making a virtue of it, laughing at self-denial and taking up the cross daily, at fasting or abstinence. Beware of censoriousness, thinking or calling them that in any way oppose you, whether in judgment or practice, blind, dead, fallen, or "enemies to the work." Once more, beware of Solifidianism; cry nothing but "Believe, believe;" and condemning those, as ignorant, or legal, who speak in a more spiritual way. At certain seasons, indeed, it may be right to speak of nothing but repentance, or merely faith, or altogether of holiness; but in general our call is to declare the whole counsel of God, and to prophesy according to the proportion of faith. The written word treats of the whole, and every particular branch of righteousness, descending to its minutest branches; as to be sober, courteous, dililgent, patient, to

honor all men. So likewise the Holy Spirit works the same in our hearts, not merely creating desires after holiness in general, but strongly inclining us to every particular grace, leading us to every individual part of "whatsoever is lovely." And this with the greatest propriety; for as "by works faith is made perfect," so the completing or destroying the work of faith, and enjoying the favor, or suffering the displeasure of God, greatly depends on every single act of obedience or disobedience.

Q. 35. What is the fourth?

A. Beware of sins of omission; lose no opportunity of doing good in any kind. Be zealous of good works. Willingly omit no work, either of piety or mercy. Do all the good you possibly can to the bodies and souls of men; particularly "thou shalt in any wise reprove thy neighbor and not suffer sin upon him." Be active. Give no place to indolence or sloth; give no occasion to say, "You are idle, you are idle." Many will say so still, but let your whole behavior refute the slander. Be always employed, lose no shred of time, gather up the fragments, that nothing be lost, and whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might. Be slow to speak, and wary in speaking. "In a multitude of words there wanteth not sin." Do not talk much, neither long at a time. Few can converse profitably above an hour. Keep at the utmost distance from pious chit-chat, from religious gossipping.

Q. 36. What is the fifth?

A. Beware of desiring anything but God. Now you desire nothing else. Every other desire is driven out; see that none enter again. Keep thyself pure, let your eyes remain single, and your whole body shall be full of light. Admit no desire of pleasing food, or any other pleasure of sense; no desire of pleasing the eye or the imagination by anything grand, or new, or beautiful, no desire of money, of praise, or esteem, of happiness in any creature. You may bring these desires back, but you need not; you need feel them no more. O stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free.

Be patterns to all, of denying yourselves, and taking up your cross daily. Let them see that you make no account of any pleasure which does not bring you nearer to God, nor regard any pain which does; that you simply aim at pleasing him, whether by doing or suffering; that the constant language of your heart, with regard to pleasure or pain, honor or dishonor, riches of poverty, is,

All's alike to me, so I
In my Lord may live and die!

Q. 37. What is the sixth?

A. Beware of schism! of making a rent in the Church of Christ. That inward disunion, the members ceasing to have reciprocal love one for another (1 Cor. xii, 25), is the very root of all contention and every outward separation. Beware of everything tending thereto. Beware of a dividing spirit; shun whatever has the least aspect that way. Therefore say not, "I am of Paul, or of Apollos;" the very thing which occasioned the schism at Corinth. Say not, "This is my preacher, the best preacher in the land; give me him and take all the rest." All this tends to breed or foment division; to disunite those whom God hath joined. Do not run down any preacher. Do not exalt any one above the rest, lest you hurt both him and the cause of God. On the other hand, do not bear hard upon any by reason of some incoherency or inaccuracy of expression; no, nor for some mistakes, were they really such.

Likewise, if you would avoid schism, observe every rule of the society, and of the bands, for conscience' sake. Never omit meeting your class or band; never absent yourself from any public meeting. These are the very sinews of our society; and whatever weakens, or tends to weaken, our regard for these, or our exactness in attending them, strike at the very root of our community. As one saith, "That part of our economy, the private weekly meeting for prayer, examination, and particular exhortation, has been the greatest means of deepening and confirming every blessing that was received by the word preached, and of diffusing it

to others who could not attend the public ministry—whereas, without this religious connection and intercourse, the most ardent attempts by mere preaching have proved of little lasting use."

Suffer not one thought of separating from your brethren, whether their opinions agree with yours or not. Do not dream that any man sins in not believing you, in not taking your word, or that this or that opinion is essential to the work, and both must stand or fall together. Beware of impatience of contradiction. Do not condemn or think hardly of those who cannot see just as you see, or who judge it their duty to contradict yet, whether in a great thing or a small. I fear some of us have thought hardly of others, merely because they contradicted what we affirmed. All this tends to division, and by everything of this kind we are teaching them an evil lesson against ourselves.

O beware of touchiness, of testiness, not bearing to be spoken to, starting at the least word; and flying from those who do not implicitly receive mine or another's sayings!

Expect contradiction and opposition, together with crosses of various kinds. Consider the words of St. Paul, "To you it is given in the behalf of Christ," for his sake, as a fruit of his death and intercession for you, "not only to believe, but also to suffer for his sake." Phil. i, 29. It is given! God gives this opposition or reproach; it is a fresh token of his love. And will you disown the Giver? or spurn his gift, and count it a misfortune? Will you not rather say, "Father, the hour has come that thou shouldst be glorified. Now thou givest thy child to suffer something for thee. Do with me according to thy will." Know that these things, far from being hindrances to the work of God, or to your soul, unless by your own fault, are not only unavoidable in the course of Providence, but profitable, yea, necessary for you. Therefore receive them from God (not from chance) with willingness, with thankfulness. Receive them from men with humility, meekness, yieldingness, gentleness, sweetness. Why should not your outward appearance and manner be soft? Remember

the character of Lady Cutts: "It was said of the Roman emperor Titus, 'Never any one came displeased from him;' but it might be said of her, never any one went displeased to her. So secure were all of the kind and favorable reception which they would meet with from her."

Beware of tempting others to separate from you. Give no offense which can possibly be avoided; see that your practice be in all things suitable to your profession, adorning the doctrine of God our Savior. Be particularly careful in speaking of yourself; you may not indeed deny the work of God; but speak of it, when you are called thereto, in the most inoffensive manner possible. Avoid all magnificent, pompous words. Indeed, you need give it no general name; neither "perfection," "sanctification," "the second blessing," nor "the having attained." Rather speak of the particulars which God has wrought for you. You may say, "At such a time I felt a change which I am not able to express. And since that time I have not felt pride, or self-will, or wrath, or unbelief, nor anything but a fullness of love to God and to all mankind." And answer any other plain question that is asked with modesty and simplicity.

And if any of you should at any time fall from what you now are, if you should again feel pride or unbelief, or any temper from which you are now delivered, do not deny, do not hide, do not disguise it at all, at the peril of your soul. At all events, go to one in whom you can confide, and speak just what you feel. God will enable him to speak a word in season, which shall be health to your soul. And surely the Lord will again lift up your head and cause the bones that have been broken to rejoice.

Q. 38. What is the last advice that you would give them?

A. Be exemplary in all things; particularly in outward things (as in dress), in little things, in the laying out of your money (avoiding every needless expense), in deep steady seriousness, and in the solidity and usefulness of your conversation. So shall you be

"lights shining in a dark place," so shall you fully grow in grace, till "an entrance be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Most of the preceding advices are strongly enforced in the following reflections, which I recommend to your deep and frequent consideration, next to the Holy Scriptures.

1. The sea is an excellent figure of the fullness of God and that of the blessed Spirit. For as the rivers all return into the sea; so the bodies, the souls, and the good works of the righteous return into God, to live there in his eternal repose.

Although all the graces of God depend on his mere bounty, yet he is pleased generally to attach them to the prayers, the instructions, and the holiness of those with whom we are. By strong though invisible attractions he draws some souls through their intercourse with others.

The sympathies formed by grace far surpass those formed by nature.

The truly devout show that passions as naturally flow from true as from false love, so deeply sensible are they of the goods and evils of those whom they love for God's sake. But this can only be comprehended by those who understand the language of love.

The bottom of the soul may be in repose even while we are in many outward troubles; just as the bottom of the sea is calm while the surface is strongly agitated.

2. The best helps to growth in grace are the ill usage, the affronts, and the losses which befall us. We should receive them with all thankfulness, as preferable to all others, were it only on this account—that our will has no part therein.

The readiest way to escape from our sufferings is to be willing they should endure as long as God pleases.

If we suffer persecution and affliction in a right manner, we attain a larger measure of conformity to Christ by a due improvement of one of the occasions than we could have done merely by imitating his mercy, in abundance of good works.

One of the greatest evidences of God's love to those that love him is to send them afflictions, with grace to bear them.

Even in the greatest afflictions we ought to testify to God, that in receiving them from his hand we feel pleasure in the midst of pain, from being afflicted by him who loves us, and whom we love.

The readiest way which God takes to draw a man to himself is to afflict him in that he loves most, and with good reason; and to cause this affliction to arise from some good action done, with a single eye; because nothing can more clearly show him the emptiness of what is most lovely and desirable in the world.

3. True resignation consists in a thorough conformity to the whole will of God; who wills and does all (excepting sin) which comes to pass in the world. In order to this we have only to embrace all events, good and bad, as his will.

In the greatest afflictions which can befall the just, either from heaven or earth, they remain immovable in peace, and perfectly submissive to God, by an inward loving regard to him, uniting in one all the powers of their souls.

We ought quietly to suffer whatever befalls us, to bear the defects of others and our own, to confess them to God in secret prayer, or with groans which cannot be uttered; but never to speak a sharp or peevish word, nor to murmur or repine.

Be thoroughly willing that God should treat you in the manner that pleases him. We are his lambs, and therefore ought to be ready to suffer, even to the death, without complaining.

We are to bear with those we cannot amend, and to be content with offering them to God. This is true resignation. And since he has borne our infirmities, we may well bear those of each other for his sake.

To abandon all, to strip one's self of all, in order to seek and to follow Jesus Christ naked to Bethlehem, where he was born; naked to the hall where he was scourged; and naked to Calvary, where he died on the cross, is so great a mercy that neither the thing nor the knowledge of it is given to any but through faith

in the Son of God.

4. There is no love of God without patience, and no patience without lowliness and sweetness of spirit.

Humility and patience are the surest proof of the increase of love.

Humility alone unites patience with love, without which it is impossible to draw profit from suffering, or indeed to avoid complaint, especially when we think we have given no occasion for what men make us suffer.

True humility is a kind of self-annihilation, and this is the center of all virtues.

A soul returned to God ought to be attentive to everything which is said to him, on the head of salvation, with a desire to profit thereby.

5. The bearing with men, and suffering evils in meekness and silence, is a grand part of Christian life.

God is the first object of our love; its next office is to bear the defects of others. And we should begin the practice of this amid our own household.

We should particularly exercise our love toward them who most shock either our way of thinking, or our temper, or our knowledge, or the desire we have that others should be as virtuous as we wish to be ourselves.

6. On every occasion of uneasiness we should retire to prayer, that we may give place to the grace and light of God; and then form our resolutions, without being in any pain about what success they may have.

God's command to "pray without ceasing" is founded on the necessity we have of his grace to preserve the life of God in the soul, which can no more subsist one moment without it than the body can without air.

Prayer continues in the desire of the heart, though the understanding be employed on outward things.

In souls filled with love the desire to please God is a constant prayer.

As the furious hate which the devil bears us is termed the roaring of the lion, so our vehement love may be termed crying after God.

7. It is scarce conceivable strait the way is wherein God leads them that follow him; and how dependent on him we must be, unless we are wanting in our faithfulness to him.

It is hardly credible of how great consequence before God the smallest things are; and what great inconveniences sometimes follow those who appear to be light faults.

As a very little dust will disorder a clock, and the least sand will obscure our sight, so the least grain of sin which is upon the heart will hinder its right motion toward God.

We ought to be in the church as the saints are in heaven, and in the house as the holiest men are in the church: doing our work in the house as we pray in the church, worshipping God from the ground of the heart.

We should be continually laboring to cut off all the useless things that surround us. And God usually retrenches the superfluities of our souls in the same proportion as we do those of our body.

The best means of resisting the devil is to destroy whatever of the world remains in us, in order to raise for God upon its ruins a building all of love. Then shall we begin in this fleeting life to love God as we shall love him in eternity.

We scarce conceive how easy it is to rob God of his due, in our friendship with the most virtuous persons, until they are torn from us by death. But if this loss produces lasting sorrow, that is a clear proof that we had before two treasures, between which we divided our heart.

8. If after having renounced all we do not watch incessantly, and beseech God to accompany our vigilance with his, we shall be again entangled and overcome.

As the most dangerous winds may enter at little openings, so the devil never enters more dangerous than by little, unobserved incidents, which seem to be nothing, yet insensibly open the heart to great temptations.

It is good to examine closely the state of our souls, as if we had never done it before; for nothing tends more to the full assurance of faith than to keep ourselves by this means in humility and the exercise of all good works.

To continual watchfulness and prayer ought to be

added continual employment. For grace flies a vacuum as well as nature, and the devil fills whatever God does not fill.

There is no faithfulness like that which ought to be between a guide of souls and the person directed by him. They ought continually to regard each other in God, and closely to examine themselves, whether all their thoughts are pure and all their words directed with Christian discretion. Other affairs are only the things of men, but these are peculiarly the things of God.

9. The words of St. Paul, "No man can call Jesus Lord but by the Holy Ghost," show us the necessity of eyeing God in our good works, and even in our minutest thoughts, knowing that none are pleasing to him but those who he forms in us and with us. From hence we learn that we cannot serve him unless we use our tongue, hands, and hearts, to do by his Spirit whatever he would have us do.

If we were not utterly impotent, our good works would be our own property; whereas now they belong wholly to God, because they proceed from him in his grace; while raising our works and making them all divine, he honors himself in us through them.

One of the principal rules of religion is to lose no occasion of serving God. And since he is invisible to our eyes, we are to serve him in our neighbor, which he receives as if done to himself in person standing visibly before us.

God does not love men that are inconstant, nor good works that are intermitted. Nothing is pleasing to him but what has a resemblance of his own immutability.

A constant attention to the work which God intrusts us with is a mark of solid piety.

Love fasts when it can and as much as it can consistent with health. It leads to all the ordinances of God, and employs itself in all the outward works whereof it is capable. It flies, as it were, like Elijah, over the plain to find God upon his holy mountain.

God is so great that he communicates greatness to the least thing that is done for his service.

Happy are they who are sick, yea, or lose their life,

for having done a good work.

God frequently conceals the part which his children have in the conversion of other souls. Yet one may boldly say, that person who long groans before him for the conversion of another, whenever that soul is converted to God, is one of the chief causes of it.

Charity cannot be practiced right unless first we exercise it the moment God gives the occasion, and then offer it to God by humble thanksgiving. And this for three reasons: 1. To tender to him what we have received from him; 2. To avoid the dangerous temptation which springs from the very goodness of these works; and, 3. To unite ourselves to God, in whom the soul expands itself in prayer, with all the graces we have received and the good works we have done, to draw from him new strength against the bad effects which these very works may produce in us if we do not make use of the antidotes which God has ordained against them. The true means to be filled anew with the riches of grace is thus to strip ourselves of it; and without this it is extremely difficult not to grow faint in the practice of good works.

Good works do not receive their last perfection till they, as it were, lose themselves in God. This is a kind of death to them resembling that of our bodies, which will not attain their highest life, their immortality, till they lose themselves in the glory of our souls, or rather of God, wherewith they shall be filled. And it is only what they had of earthly and mortal which good works lose by this spiritual death.

Fire is the symbol of love, and the love of God is the principle and the end of all our good works! but as truth surpasses figure, the fire of Divine love has this advantage over material fire, that it can reascend to its source, and raise thither with it all the good works which it produces; and by this means it prevents their being corrupted by pride, vanity, or any evil mixture. But this cannot be done otherwise than by making these good works in a spiritual manner die in God, by a deep gratitude which plunges the soul in him as in an abyss with all that it is and all the grace and works for which it is indebted to him; a gratitude whereby the

soul seems to empty itself of them that they may return to their source, as rivers seem willing to empty themselves when they pour themselves with all their waters into the sea.

When we have received any favor from God we ought to retire, if not into our closets, into our hearts, and say, "I come, Lord, to restore to thee what thou hast given, and I freely relinquish it, to enter again into my own nothingness. For what is the most perfect creature in heaven or in earth in thy presence but a void capable of being filled with thee and by thee, as the air which is void and dark is capable of being filled with the light of the sun? Grant, therefore, O Lord, that I may never appropriate thy grace to myself any more than the air appropriates to itself the light of the sun, which withdraws it every day to restore it the next, there being nothing in the air that either appropriates its light or resists it. O give me the same facility of receiving and restoring thy grace and good works! I say thine, for I acknowledge the root from which they spring is in thee, not in me."

In the year 1764, upon a review of the whole subject, I wrote down the sum of what I had observed in the following short propositions:

1. There is such a thing as Christian perfection, for it is again and again mentioned in Scripture.

2. It is not so early as justification; for justified persons are to "go on to perfection." Heb. vi, 1.

3. It is not so late as death; for St. Paul speaks of living men that were perfect. Phil. iii, 15.

4. It is not absolute. Absolute perfection belongs not to man, nor to angels, but to God alone.

5. It does not make a man infallible; none is infallible while he remains in the body.

6. It is perfect love. 1 John iv, 18. This is the essence of it; its properties or inseparable fruits are rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, and in everything giving thanks. 1 Thess. v, 16, etc.

7. It is improvable. It is so far from lying in an indivisible point, from being incapable of increase, that one perfected in love may grow in grace far swifter than he did before.

8. It is amissible; capable of being lost; of which we have had instances. But we were not thoroughly convinced of this for several years.

9. It is constantly both preceded and followed by a gradual work.

10. But is it in itself instantaneous, or not? In examining this let us go on step by step.

An instantaneous change has been wrought in some believers; none can deny this who is acquainted with experimental religion.

Since that change they enjoy perfect love. They feel this and this alone; they rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks. Now this is all that I mean by Christian perfection; therefore these are witnesses of the perfection which I preach.

"But in some this change was not instantaneous; they did not perceive the instant when it was wrought." It is often difficult to perceive the instant when a man dies, yet there is an instant in which life ceases; and if ever sin cease, there must be a last moment of its existence, and a first moment of our deliverance from it.

"But if they have this love now, they will lose it." They may, but they need not. And whether they do or not, they have it now; they now experience what we teach; they now are all love; they now rejoice, pray, and praise without ceasing.

"However, sin is only suspended in them, it is not destroyed." Call it what you please. They are all love today, and they take no thought for tomorrow.

"But this doctrine has been much abused." So has that of justification by faith. But that is no reason for giving up either this or any other scriptural doctrine. When you wash your child, as one speaks, "throw away the water, but do not throw away the child."

"But those who think they are saved from sin say they have no need of the merits of Christ." They say just the contrary. Their language is,

> Every moment, Lord, I want
> The merit of thy death!

They never before had so deep, so unspeakable a

conviction of the need of Christ in all his offices as they have now.

Therefore all our preachers should make a point of preaching Christian perfection to believers constantly, strongly, and explicitly; and all believers should mind this one thing, and continually agonize for it.

I have now done what I proposed. I have given a plain and simple account of the doctrine of Christian perfection. I have declared the whole and every part of what I mean by that scriptural expression. I have drawn the picture of it at full length, without either disguise or covering. And remember, this is the doctrine of Jesus Christ. Those are his words, not mine: "Ye shall therefore be perfect, as your Father who is in heaven is perfect." And who says ye shall not? Or, at least, not till your soul is separted from the body? It is the doctrine of St. Paul, the doctrine of St. James, of St. Peter, and St. John. It is the doctrine of every one who preaches the pure and the whole Gospel. Look at it again; survey it on every side, and that with the closest attention; in one view it is purity of intention, dedicating all the life to God. It is giving God all our hearts, it is one desire and design ruling all our tempers. It is the devoting, not a part, but all of our soul, body, and substance to God. In another view, it is all the mind that was in Christ, enabling us to walk as Christ walked. It is the circumcision of the heart from all filthiness, all inward as well as outward pollution. It is the renewal of the heart in the whole image of God, the full likeness of him that created it. In yet another, it is the loving God with all our heart, and our neighbor as ourselves.

Now let this Christian perfection appear in its native form, and who can speak one word against it? Will any dare to speak against loving the Lord our God with all our heart, and our neighbor as ourselves; against a renewal of heart, not only in part, but in the whole image of God? Who is he that will open his mouth against being cleansed from all pollution, both of flesh and spirit; or against having all the mind that was in Christ, and walking in all things as Christ walked? What man who calls himself a Christian has the hardi-

ness to object to the devoting, not a part, but all our soul, body, and substance to God? What serious man would oppose the giving God all our heart, and the having one desire ruling all our tempers? I say again, let this Christian perfection appear in its own shape, and who will fight against it? It must be disguised before it can be opposed. It must be covered with a bear-skin first, or even the wild beasts of the people will scarce be induced to worry it. But whatever these do, let not the children of God any longer fight against the image of God. Let not the members of Christ say anything against having the whole mind that was in Christ. Let not those who are alive to God oppose the dedicating all our life to him. Why should you, who have his love shed abroad in your heart, withstand the giving him all your heart? Does not all that is within you cry out, "O, who that loves can love enough?" What pity that those who desire and design to please him should have any other design or desire! much more that they should dread, as a fatal delusion, yea, abhor as an abomination to God, the having this one desire and design ruling every temper! Why should devout men be afraid of devoting all their soul, body, and substance to God? Why should those who love God count it a damnable error to think we may have all the mind that was in him? We allow, we contend, that we are justified freely through the righteousness and the blood of Christ. And why are you so hot against us, because we expect likewise to be sanctified wholly through his Spirit? We look for no favor either from the open servants of sin, or from those who have only the form of religion. But how long will you who worship God in spirit, who are "circumcised with the circumcision not made with hands," set your battle in array against those who seek an entire "circumcision of heart," who thirst to be cleansed "from all filthiness of flesh and spirit" and to "perfect holiness in the fear of God?" Are we your enemies because we look for a full deliverance from the carnal mind, which is enmity against God? Nay, we are your brethren, your fellow-laborers in the vineyard of our Lord, your companions in the kingdom and patience of Jesus. Although this we

confess (if we are fools therein, yet as fools bear with us), we expect to love God with all our heart, and our neighbor as ourselves. Yea, we do believe that he will in this world so "cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit that we shall perfectly love him and worthily magnify his holy name."

THE REST OF FAITH.

Lord, I believe a rest remains
To all thy people known;
A rest where pure enjoyment reigns,
And thou art loved alone;

A rest where all our soul's desire
Is fixed on things above;
Where doubt and pain and fear expire,
Cast out by perfect love.

From every evil motion freed
(The Son hath made us free),
On all the powers of hell we tread
In glorious liberty.

Safe in the way of life, above
Death, earth, and hell we rise;
We find, when perfected in love,
Our long sought paradise.

O that I now the rest might know,
Believe and enter in!
Now, Savior, now the power bestow,
And let me cease from sin!

Remove this hardness from my heart;
This unbelief remove;
To me the rest of faith impart,
The sabbath of thy love.

Come, O my Savior! come away;
Into my soul descend;
No longer from thy creature stay,
My author and my end.

The bliss thou hast for me prepared,
No longer be delayed:
Come, my exceeding great reward,
For whom I first was made.

Come, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
And seal me thine abode;
Let all I am in thee be lost:
Let all be lost in God!

Charles Wesley, 1740.

1. Elementi definiti

2. Elementi derivati

3. Elementi notevoli

1. Punto di [illegible]