

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?

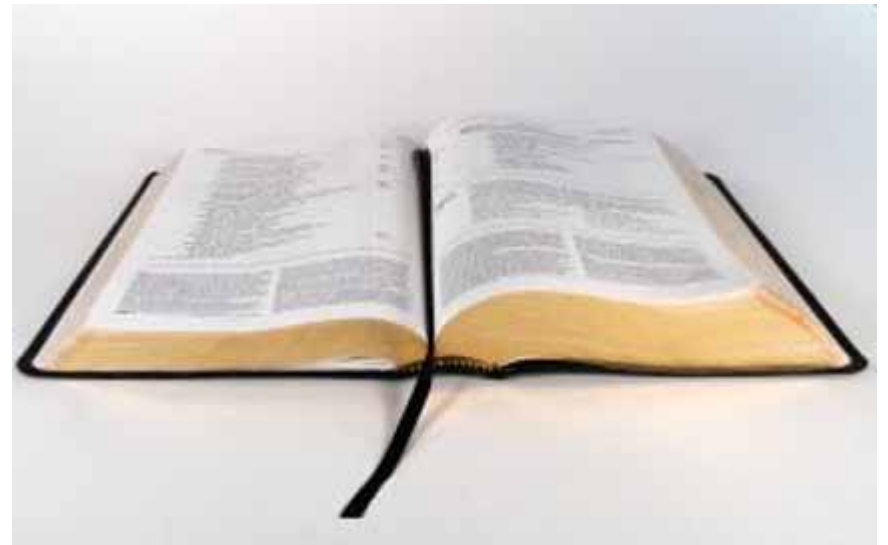
God help thee to consider these questions calmly and impartially!

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Take One Only

Selections From
**A Plain Account Of
Christian Perfection**
by John Wesley



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Views On Christian Perfection

I think it was in the latter end of the year 1740, that I had a conversation with Dr. Gibson, then Bishop of London, at Whitehall. He asked me what I meant by perfection. I told him without any disguise or reserve. When I ceased speaking, he said, "Mr. Wesley, if this be all you mean, publish it to all the world. If any one then can confute what you say, he may have free leave." I answered, "My Lord, I will;" and accordingly wrote and published the sermon on Christian perfection.

In this I endeavoured 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 mistake. 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 behaviour.

From such infirmities as these none are perfectly freed till their spirits return to God; neither can we expect till then to be wholly 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 of degrees, none 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; and it cannot be disproved by the examples of the Old Testament. For what,

(1.) Has there not 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 7:39.)

(2.) Was that 'glory which followed the sufferings of Christ,' (1 Peter 1:11,) an external glory, or an internal, viz., 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 hearts?' (Jer. 31:31, &c.; Heb. 8:10.)

(6.) In what sense is 'the righteousness of the law fulfilled in those who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit?' (Rom. 8:4.)

(7.) Is it impossible for any one 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

certain there are none such, I must 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 had 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 person may have, suppose 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 no, 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 must teach that 'sin will remain till death.'

Questions To Those Who Deny That Christian Perfection Is Attainable In This Life

Some questions, now published by one of these, induced a plain man to write the following —

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

if the holiest of the ancient Jews did sometimes commit sin? We cannot infer from hence, that 'all Christians do and must commit sin as long as they live.'

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 elsewhere Solomon says, 'There is no man that sinneth not.' Doubtless thus it was in the days of Solomon; yea, and from Solomon to Christ there was then no man that sinned not. But whatever was the case of those under the law, we may safely affirm, with St. John, that, since the gospel was given, 'lie that is born of God sinneth not.'

The privileges of Christians are in nowise to be measured by what the Old Testament records concerning those who were under the Jewish dispensation; seeing the fulness of time is now come, the Holy Ghost is now given, the great salvation of God is now brought to men by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The kingdom of heaven is now set up on earth, concerning which the Spirit of God declared of old time, (so far is David from being the pattern or standard of Christian perfection,) 'He that is feeble among them, at that day, shall be as David, and the house of David shall be as the angel of the Lord before them.' (Zech. 12:8.)

'But the Apostles themselves committed sin; Peter by dissembling, Paul by his sharp contention with Barnabas. Suppose they did, will you argue thus: 'If two of the Apostles once committed sin, then all other Christians, in all ages, do and must commit sin as long as they live?' Nay, God forbid we should thus speak. No necessity of sin was

laid upon them; the grace of God was surely sufficient for them. And it is sufficient for us at this day.

But St. James says, '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 offences. Nay, Thirdly, the verse itself proves, that 'we offend all,' cannot be spoken either of all men or 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 us from all unrighteousness.'

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 have 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 are none made perfect yet, God has not sent me to preach 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

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 ill 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, an 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

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 110 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 thoughts and evil tempers. First, from evil or sinful thoughts. Indeed, whence should they spring? 'Out of the heart of man,' if at all, 'proceed evil thoughts.' If, therefore, the heart be no longer evil, then evil thoughts no longer proceed out of it: For 'a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit.'

And as they are freed from evil thoughts, 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 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 offence 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

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 thereby; 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, it may destroy their souls. This is nothing impossible, no, nor improbable. It may so enrage or so 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 in one: What self-sufficiency is this, to set ourselves up for inquisitors-general, for peremptory judges in these deep things of God!

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 deceive 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 seeking 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; to-day, while it is called to-day. Do not call this 'setting God a time.' Certainly, to-day is his time as well as to-morrow. 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, the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus.' And

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 all 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 thoughts and evil tempers.

It could not be, but that a discourse of this kind, which directly contradicted the favourite opinion of many, who were esteemed by others, and possibly esteemed themselves, some of the best of Christians, (whereas, if these things were so, they were not Christians at all,) should give no small offence. Many answers or animadversions, therefore, were expected; but I was agreeably disappointed. I do not know that any appeared; so I went quietly on my way.

Preface To Hymn Book 1741

Not long after, I think in the spring, 1741, we published a second volume of Hymns. As the doctrine was still much misunderstood, and consequently misrepresented, I judged it needful to explain yet farther upon the head; which was done in the preface to it as follows : —

This great gift of God, the salvation of our souls, is no other than the image of God fresh stamped on our hearts. It is a 'renewal of believers in the spirit of their minds,

after the likeness of Him that created them.' God hath now laid 'the axe 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 conversation.' Not that they have already attained all that they shall attain, either 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 are nothing in his sight. They are freed from self-will, as desiring nothing but the holy and perfect will of God; not supplies in want, not ease in pain, [This is too strong. Our Lord himself desired ease in pain.] He asked' for it, only with resignation: "Not as I will," I desire, "but as thou wilt."] nor life, or death, or any creature; but continually crying in their Inmost soul, 'Father, thy will be done.'

They are freed from evil thoughts, so that they cannot enter into them, no, not for a moment. Aforetime, when an evil thought came in, they hooked up, and it vanished

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; if he then experience a gradual mortification of sin, and afterwards 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 as impossible this man should be deceived herein, as that God should lie. 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, till 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 stills grows in grace, in the knowledge of Christ, in the love and image of God; and will do so, not only till death, but 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

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; 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 scriptural 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 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

away. But now it does not come in, there being no room for this, in a soul which is full of God. They are free from wanderings in prayer.

Whensoever they pour out their hearts in a more immediate manner before God, they have no thought of anything past, [This is far too strong. See the sermon "On Wandering Thoughts."] or absent, or to come, but of God alone. In times past, they had wandering thoughts darted in, which yet fled away like smoke; but now that smoke does not rise at all. They have no fear or doubt, either as to their state in general, or as to any particular action. [Frequently this is the case; but only for a time.]

The 'unction from the Holy One' teacheth them every hour what they shall do, and what they shall speak; [For a time it may be so; but not always.] nor therefore have they any need to reason concerning it. [Sometimes they have no need; at other times they have.] They are in one sense freed from temptations; for though numberless temptations fly about them, yet they trouble them not. [Sometimes they do not; at other times they do, and that grievously.] At all times their souls are even and calm, their hearts are steadfast and unmovable.

Their peace, flowing as a river, 'passeth all understanding,' and they 'rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.' For they 'are sealed by the Spirit unto the day of redemption,' having the witness in themselves, that 'there is laid up for' them a 'crown of righteousness~ which the Lord will give' them 'in that day.' [Not all who are saved from sin; many of them have not attained it yet.]

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 anywise 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 a 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's receiving, in one and the same moment, remission of sins, the abiding witness of the Spirit, and a new, 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 his blood, they have peace with God 'through Jesus Christ;' they 'rejoice in 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;

But what then? This is no proof that he has not more grace; and by this God measures the outward work. Hear ye Him: 'Verily, I say unto you, this poor widow has cast in more than them all.' Verily, this poor man, with his few broken words, hath spoken more than them all. Verily, this poor woman, that hath given a cup of cold water, hath done more than them all. O cease to 'judge according to appearance,' and learn to 'judge righteous judgment!'

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 hinderances 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.) Unreadiness to think or own he has attained it. (6.) Overvaluing or idolizing him. (7.) Overvaluing yourself and your own judgment.

If any of these is 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 hinderances 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. Scripture perfection is, pure love filling the heart, and governing all the words and actions. If your idea

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 to 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 waving 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 the 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 neither speaks so many words, nor does 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 14:12.)

till some of their old enemies, their bosom sins, or the sin 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 heart; [Is it not astonishing, that while this book is extant, which was published four-and-twenty years ago, any one should face me down, that this is a new doctrine, and what I never taught before?] which God before would not disclose unto them, lest the soul should fail before him, and the spirit which he had made.

Now they see all the hidden abominations there, the depths of pride, self-will, and hell; yet leaving 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 his image, 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.'

Here I cannot but remark, (1.) That this is the strongest account we ever gave of Christian perfection; indeed too strong in more than one particular, as is observed in the notes annexed. (2.) That there is nothing which we have since advanced upon the subject, either in verse or prose, which is not either directly or indirectly contained in this preface. So that whether our present doctrine be right or wrong, it is however the same which we taught from the beginning.

Misunderstandings Concerning Perfection

About a year after, namely, in the year 1742, we published another volume of Hymns. The dispute being now at the height, we spoke upon the head more largely than ever before. Accordingly abundance of the hymns in this volume treat expressly on this subject. And so does the preface, which, as it is short, it may not be amiss to insert entire :

(1.) Perhaps the general prejudice against Christian perfection may chiefly arise from a misapprehension of the nature of it. We willingly allow, and continually declare, there is no such perfection in this life, as implies either a dispensation from doing good, and attending all the ordinances of God, or a freedom from ignorance, mistake, temptation, and a thousand infirmities necessarily connected with flesh and blood.

(2.) First. We not only allow, but earnestly contend, that there is no perfection in this life, which implies any dispensation from attending all the ordinances of God, or from doing good unto all men while we have time, though 'especially unto the household of faith.'

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 perfect.

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 colour, 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 God 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 one who has 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 rejoice 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.

might be done, if the Preacher in every place would, (1.) Talk freely with all who speak thus; and, (2.) Labour to prevent the unjust or unkind treatment of those in favour 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 those 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 behaviour for some time before this 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 reprov'd; 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 testifies 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.

We believe, that not only the babes in Christ, who have newly found redemption in his blood, but those also who are 'grown up into perfect men,' are indispensably obliged, as often as they have opportunity, 'to eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of Him,' and to 'search the Scriptures;' by fasting, as well as temperance, to 'keep their bodies under, and bring them into subjection;' and, above all, to pour out their souls in prayer, both secretly, and in the great congregation.

(3.) We Secondly believe, that there is no such perfection in this life, as implies an entire deliverance, either from ignorance, or mistake, in things not essential to salvation, or from manifold temptations, or from numberless infirmities, wherewith the corruptible body more or less presses down the soul.

We cannot find any ground in Scripture to suppose, that any inhabitant of a house of clay is wholly exempt either from bodily infirmities, or from ignorance of many things; or to imagine any is incapable of mistake, or falling into divers temptations.

(4.) But whom then do you mean by 'one that is perfect?' We mean one in whom is 'the mind which was in Christ,' and who so 'walketh as Christ also walked;' a man 'that hath clean hands and a pure heart,' or that is 'cleansed from all filthiness of flesh and spirit;' one in whom is 'no occasion of stumbling,' and who, accordingly, 'does not commit sin.'

To declare this a little more particularly: We understand by that scriptural expression, 'a perfect man,' one in whom God hath fulfilled his faithful word, 'From all your filthiness and from all your idols I will cleanse you: I will also save you from all your uncleannesses.' We understand hereby, one whom God hath 'sanctified throughout in body, soul, and spirit;' one who 'walketh in the light as He is in the light,

in whom is no darkness at all; the blood of Jesus Christ his Son having cleansed him from all sin.'

(5.) This man can now testify to all mankind, 'I am crucified with Christ: Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' He is 'holy as God who called' him 'is holy,' both in heart and 'in all manner of conversation.' He 'loveth the Lord his God with all his heart,' and serveth him 'with all his strength.' He 'loveth his neighbour,' every man, 'as himself;' yea, 'as Christ loveth us;' them, in particular, that 'despitefully use him and persecute him, because they know not the Son, neither the Father.'

Indeed his soul is all love, filled with 'bowels of mercies, kindness, meekness, gentleness, longsuffering.' And his life agreeth thereto, full of 'the work of faith, the patience of hope, the labour of love.' 'And whatsoever' he 'doeth either in word or deed,' he 'doeth it all in the name,' in the love and power, 'of the Lord Jesus.' In a word, he doeth 'the will of God on earth, as it is done in heaven.'

(6.) This it is to be a perfect man, to be 'sanctified throughout;' even 'to have a heart so all-flaming with the love of God,' (to use Archbishop Usher's words,) 'as continually to offer up every thought, word, and work, as a spiritual sacrifice, acceptable to God through Christ.' In every thought of our hearts, in every word of our tongues, in every work of our hands, to 'show forth his praise, who bath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light.' O that both we, and all who seek the Lord Jesus in sincerity, may thus 'be made perfect in one!'

This is the doctrine which we preached from the beginning, and which we preach at this day. Indeed, by viewing it in every point of light, and comparing it again and again with the word of God on the one hand, and the experience of the children of God on the other, we saw farther into the nature and properties of Christian perfection. But still there is no contrariety at all between

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 these 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

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 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 neighbour, springing from the love of God, thinketh no evil, believeth and hopeth all things. Now, this very temper, unsuspecting, ready to believe and hope the best of all men, may occasion our thinking some men better than they really are. Here then is a manifest mistake, accidentally flowing from pure love.

Q. How shall we avoid setting 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 neighbour 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 afterwards he might; and then it would be advisable, not to speak of it to them that know not God; (it

our first and our last sentiments. Our first conception of it was, It is to have “the mind which was in Christ,” and to “walk as He walked;” to have all the mind that was in Him, and always to walk as he walked: In other words, to be inwardly and outwardly devoted to God; all devoted in heart and life. And we have the same conception of it now, without either addition or diminution.

Questions And Answers On The Doctrine Of Sanctification

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 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 our heart, and mind, and soul. (Deut. 6:5.)

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 uncleannesses?’ (Ezek. 36:29.)

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 remains in him, yea, the seed of all 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 to-day.

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.

Our Third Conference began Tuesday, May 13, 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 upon before.

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

In order to this, it was asked,

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, hath fulfilled the law; for love is the fulfilling of the law.' (Rom. 13:10.) Now, mistakes, and whatever infirmities necessarily flow from the corruptible state of the body, are noway 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 a 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 that 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.

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 omissions, their shortcomings, (as some not improperly speak,) their mistakes in

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 daily grows in grace, comes 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 their death. (2.) That the term sanctified is continually applied 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. [That is, unto those alone, exclusive of others; but they speak to them, jointly with others, almost continually.] (6.) That, consequently, it beloves us to speak almost continually of the state of justification; but more rarely, [More rarely, I allow; but yet in some places very frequently, strongly, and explicitly.] '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: 'He shall redeem Israel from all his sins.' (Psalm 130:8.)

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 uncleannesses.' (Ezek. 36:25, 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. 7:1.) 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. 30:6.)

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 3:8: 'For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil;' the works of the devil, without any limitation or restriction; but all sin is the work of the devil. Parallel to which is the assertion of St. Paul: '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 might be holy and without blemish.' (Eph. 5:25-27.)

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.' [Rom. 8:3, 4]

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

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 mistakes, 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 those 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 springs from love, such a mistake is not properly a sin. However, it cannot bear the rigour 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.'

Thoughts On Christian Perfection

At the Conference in the year 1759, perceiving some danger that a diversity of sentiments 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 practical 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. They are just the same that I have entertained for above twenty years.

Q. What is Christian perfection?

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

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 17:20-23.)

(3.) 'I bow my knees unto the God and 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 fulness of God.' (Eph. 3:14, &c.) (4.) 'The very God of peace sanctify you wholly. And I pray God, your whole spirit, soul, and body, may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.' (1 Thess. 5:23.)

Q. What command is there to the same effect?

A. (1.) 'Be ye perfect, as your Father who is in heaven is perfect.' (Matt. 5:48.) (2.) 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.' (Matt. 12:37.) But if the love of God fill all the heart, there can be no sin therein.

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: (i.) 'The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men; teaching us that, having renounced ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for the glorious appearing of our Lord 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.' (Titus 2:11-14.)

(ii.) 'He hath raised up an horn of salvation for us, to perform the mercy promised to our fathers; the oath which he swore 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 1:69, &c.)

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 4:17.)

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

A. To some that make this inquiry one might answer, If I knew one here, I would not tell you; for you do not inquire out of love. You are like Herod; you only 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 gainsayers! '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 natural 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 perfected 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.

From these extracts it undeniably appears, not only what was mine and my brother's judgment, but what was the judgment of all the Preachers in connexion with us, in the years 1744, 45, 46 and 47. Nor do I remember that, in any one of these Conferences, we had one dissenting voice; but whatever doubts any one had when we met, they were all removed before we parted.