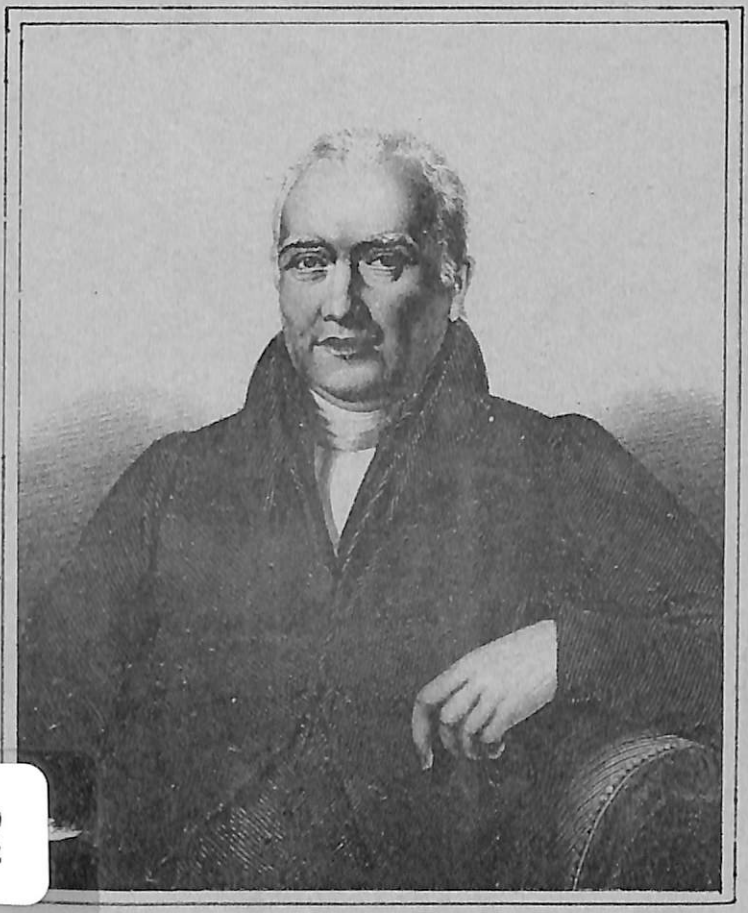
CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

The Sum and Substance and the Purpose of the Apostle Paul's Preaching.



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" To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you the hope of glory.

Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." COL. 1, 27-28.

WE know that many things are implied in apostolic doctrine, and we generally agree, that the sentiments of the apostles are to be gathered out of their writings. But in collecting these doctrines, what a variety of creeds have men made! How different in most cases and contradictory in others! Does then, the trumpet of the apostles give an uncertain sound? If not, whence come those conflicting opinions by which the church of God has been distracted and Christians separated from each other? This may easily be answered. They have not come to the apostles for their creed: they have first formed their own creed, and then they came to the apostolic writings to get it sanctioned. And as they presumed that the basis of their own creed was sound and indisputable, they endeavoured to find passages to support it; and where passages could not be found, they took words, often dismembered from their fellows, and out of connexion in their new association, from that in which they stood in the apostle's discourse. Is it any wonder, then, that creeds are so various, and, in many respects so contradictory?

What was the sum and substance of the apostle Paul's teaching? " Christ in you the hope of glory."

This divine Personage was the grand subject of the apostle's preaching; and to preach him as the Christ or Messiah, he must point out who He was, what He said, what He did, and what was done to Him. Now all this he did amply and faithfully. He represents Him as " the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His

Person." Heb. 1, 3. "As being God over all and blessed for evermore." Roms. 9, 5. "The blessed and only Potentate." 1 Tim, 6, 15. As the Creator of all things: "For by Him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him and for Him, and He is before all things; and by Him all things consist." Col. 1, 16-17. And, "In Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Col. 2, 9.

As to what Christ said, he shows that he himself was converted to the truth of the gospel by the words of Christ, spoken in a miraculous way to him, when he was going to Damascus with the design of persecuting the Christians unto death, and extinguishing if he possibly could, the whole light of the gospel. And what concerns us more is, that, being converted to the truth, he received a commission, immediately from Christ Himself, "to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." Eph. 3, 8, for Christ sent him "to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God, that they might receive the remission of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in Him." Acts 26, 18. As, therefore, he was a preacher of God's own choice and making, he must be the model of all Christian ministers. His matter or doctrine was all divine; and his mode of treating it, that which he received from the continual agency of the Holy Spirit on his understanding and heart. Add to all this, he diligently taught that Christ "came into the world to save sinners"—that "He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification"—that "we have redemption through His blood,"—and that "He tasted death for every man," and that "He saves to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him." In short, he preached Christ the only sacrifice for sin—that "salvation is by grace through faith"—for "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God;" that "He died the just for the

unjust, that He might bring us to God"—and that, to accomplish this end, He suffered various indignities of the Jews, was crucified, lay for a time under the power of death, rose the third day, ascended to heaven, sent down the Holy Spirit who convinces men of sin, righteousness and judgment, and has promised to be with His followers to the end of the world.

But he not only preached what Christ had done for men, but also what He would do in them;—that He should make their "bodies temples of the Holy Ghost," that "Christ should dwell in their hearts by faith," and that "they should be rooted and grounded in love, and comprehend with all saints what was the breadth, the length, and depth and height, and know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, and be filled with all the fulness of God," and he assures us that He is able "to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." Eph.3. He proclaimed Him as Prophet, Priest, and King; and as a complete Saviour from all the power of all sin; from all the guilt of all sin; and from all the in-being and defilement of all sin; and by thus saving us, He prepares us for all and gives us a title to eternal glory. "We," he says, "preach Christ in you the hope of glory; for without Christ there is neither glory, nor a hope of glory, for any son of man." Some contend that "in you," should be translated "among you." It means both. He was among them as the object of their faith and hope:— He was among them to make their preaching effectual to the salvation of the hearers. The Holy Spirit bearing testimony to every believing heart, He had His residence in them, as an indwelling, sanctifying Comforter.

Many talk much and indeed well, of what Christ has done for us; but how little is spoken of what He is to do in us. And yet all that He has done for us, is in reference to what He is to do in us. He was incarnated, suffered, died, and rose again from the dead; ascended to heaven,

and there appears in the presence of God for us. These were all saving, atoning, and mediating acts for us; that He might reconcile us to God; that He might blot out our sin; that He might purge our consciences from dead works; that He might bind the strong man armed—take away the armour in which he trusted, wash the polluted heart, destroy every foul and abominable desire, all tormenting and unholy tempers; that He might make the heart His throne, fill the soul with His light, power and life; and in a word, destroy the works of the devil. These are done in us, without which we cannot be saved unto eternal life; but these acts done in us are consequent on the acts done for us; for had He not been incarnated, suffered and died in our stead, we could not receive either pardon or holiness; and did He not cleanse and purify our hearts, we could not enter into the place where all is purity. Nothing is purified by death: nothing in the grave: nothing in heaven. The living stones of the temple, like those of that in Jerusalem, are hewn, squared and cut here, in the church militant, to prepare them to enter into the composition of the church triumphant. All the work must be done in the soul on earth, that is necessary to prepare it for heaven.

Thus did Paul preach Christ, and thus did Christ dwell in the people under Paul's preaching.

And wherever Christ is preached in the same way, the same influence will attend the preaching, and the same effects will be produced under it. For, as there is no other Saviour but Jesus, so Jesus Christ saves men by delivering them from their sins, and subjecting them to Himself. As Jesus He saves; as Christ, He anoints as Lord, as King He reigns in and over His people, subjecting everything to the mild sway of the sceptre of His righteousness. And it is in reference to this holiness and the heaven for which it prepares the soul, that the apostle adds, the hope of glory, we preach, "Christ in you the hope of glory." For, as it was the design of the gospel to put men in

possession of the Spirit and power of Christ; to make them partakers of the divine nature and thus prepare them for an eternal union with Himself; so he preached this present indwelling Christ as the hope of glory; for no man can rationally hope for glory, who has not the pardon of his sins, and whose nature is not sanctified. And none can have pardon, but through the blood of His Cross; and none can have glorification but through the indwelling sanctifying Spirit of Christ.

Let us observe the manner of the apostle's preaching: "Warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom."

By every man, we are to understand, all that came under the apostle's ministry, the Jews and the Gentiles, for into those two grand classes were all human beings, at this time, divided. He warned them,—Proved that both Jews and Gentiles were under sin: in a state of condemnation and danger, and that the wrath of God was revealed against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men; that time and life were uncertain; and that the present was the time of salvation.

All men have sinned; and can a more solemn or awful state be conceived than that of a sinner? One who has broken God's laws; grieved His Spirit; equally despised His promises and threatenings; indulged the carnal mind that is enmity to God; rejected His authority; and by his habits of sin, declared himself a rebel against his Maker! Do not such persons need warning? Should they not be told that the sword of God's justice is unsheathed against them? That the stroke is delayed but a little, because of the intercession of the Redeemer of men; but if they continue to provoke, and will not return unto Him from whom they have so deeply revolted, it will be as little consistent with mercy as with justice to spare them, and permit their iniquities to abound to the destruction of others. They should be told that the perdition of ungodly men is at hand; that death is at the door: and the offended justice

of God pressing upon his steps; and the jaws of the place of torment open wide to receive every incorrigible transgressor: that if they continue to reject, gainsay, and blaspheme, neither light nor hope awaits them; that there is no sacrifice for sin, but that which they are rejecting; and that the blackness of darkness, and the horrors of despair are about to shut them in for ever!

The apostle well knew the terrors of the Lord, and therefore endeavoured to persuade men to abandon their sins and false hopes, and flee to Him for mercy and protection. His warnings were not addressed merely to their passions and animal fears: they were addressed to the soul. The word used by the apostle which we translate "warning" signifies laying a thing before the mind, bringing the things to the understanding and conscience, proving the wretchedness of their state, that they might be convinced of their danger and see the reasonableness of fleeing from the wrath to come. And thus, by these terrors of the Lord, their perilous state, the shortness and uncertainty of life, the heaven that was receding and the hell that was fast approaching, the apostle showed his concern for their souls, and God's unwillingness to give them up. Preaching merely hell fire, as it is called, may alarm animal feelings and apprehensions; but if the mind be not convinced and impressed with the sense of its danger there will be no radical awakening of the soul, nor persevering conversion of the heart to God. It was in this way that the apostle warned every man, that he might leave Jews and Gentiles without excuse.

He taught them,—"Teaching every man in all wisdom." St. Paul well knew that the world was in a state of ignorance and darkness, because it was in a state of sinfulness. The influence of God produces light; the influence of Satan produces darkness. Because the latter influence is universal, therefore darkness has covered the earth, and gross darkness the hearts of the people. Hence, the voice of God to them is, "Arise, and shine (be enlightened) for thy light is come,"

and as the darkness or night is the time for sleep, hence such people are represented as sleeping, "Awake thou that sleepest." And as many go to sleep in the darkness that never awake, hence it is said, " Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." So sinners are in darkness, sit in darkness; are asleep in their sins, perhaps dreaming of happiness while on the brink of destruction: they are also dead; dead in trespasses and sins; their souls are separated from God, who is the source of light and life. Their darkness must be illuminated, their sleepy souls aroused from their lethargy; their souls quickened by the spirit of Christ. These are great, indeed they may be called terrible truths: but such truths must be taught to the people, and they must be taught them in all wisdom. Men are ignorant both of themselves and of their God. They must be taught to know that they are sinners, wretched, poor, blind, naked, and perishing; they must be taught to know their God, in His purity, justice and truth, and also in His mercy in Jesus Christ. To this teaching the apostle paid strict attention, and thus he taught men in all wisdom, for the knowledge of a man's self, and the knowledge of his God, constitute all that is essentially necessary to be known for present and future and eternal happiness. It is in this sense that we are to understand the terms all wisdom; all that man should know of himself to give him to feel his need of and dependence upon God. And all that he should know of God, as his Creator and Saviour.

The proper study of mankind is not man, that is a part of proper study but not the whole, for this leaves the knowledge of God out of the question. Man may study man till the judgment day, before he can, from that study, become wise unto salvation. And to be finally saved, is the chief end, and should be the prime object of human knowledge. And what is the history of man? It is a field of blood, a tissue of errors, iniquities, cruelties, wretchedness

and woe. It is a part of wisdom to know ourselves, the other part is to know God. The greatest Teacher said, " This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." John 17, 3. All wisdom centres in these two points of knowledge, for we speak of the wisdom that stands in reference to God's glory in the salvation of the human soul.

We see then that St. Paul was a pastor after God's own heart ; he fed the people with knowledge and understanding.

When God made man, He made him in His own image and in His own likeness. Now this must have been what is termed the moral image of God ; for it cannot be expounded of any formal image or likeness of the Infinite Spirit, and from St. Paul (Col. 3, 10, and Eph. 4, 24) we learn that this image consisted in knowledge, righteousness and true holiness. " Put on," says he, " the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." And again, " Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." It is evident that in these two places, which are strictly parallel, the apostle has in view the account of the creation of man, as given by Moses, and we find that the divine image or model after which man was created consisted in knowledge, rightcousness and true holiness, or, as others express it—in knowledge, righteousness, holiness and truth.

Man had an intellect which God filled with His own wisdom, therefore he was wise ; and he had from that wisdom a knowledge of himself, of God, and of His works, far beyond what we can now comprehend. His giving names to the different creatures was one proof of the extent of that knowledge, and of special power to take in particular as well as general views. He gave each creature its name, and as it appears, this name was expressive of some essential characteristic or quality of the creature to which it was applied. The only thing to which this knowledge did not apply, was the knowledge of good and evil, of good as

contradistinguished from evil; and of evil as implying the opposite to good. This distinction could not have been known but by experience, and such an experience could not comport with the perfection of his state as it would be the consequence of his transgression of his Maker's command. When he ate of the forbidden fruit, he then received a knowledge which God never designed him to have. He knew good lost and evil got; but previously his knowledge was pure, holy, good, clear, and perfective of his being. It was in consequence of his acquisition of this forbidden knowledge, that he became spiritually blind, wretched and ignorant, and this is, and has been, the state of man from that day until now. Ignorance is the grand characteristic of the fallen heathen state; as knowledge is of the restored state of man, by Christianity.

The utmost to which heathenism could pretend, was a certain degree of the knowledge of nature; how far this went and how much it fell short of the truth, may be seen in the writings of Aristotle and Pliny, who, though they have said many excellent things on these subjects, have left the science deplorably imperfect, and have not been able to throw one steady ray of light on the nature of God, the immortality of the soul, or any other matter that concerns the salvation and happiness of man. Christianity which is the grand medicine of fallen, corrupted human nature, reveals God Himself, the author of nature; or rather, God has revealed Himself in the Christian system with which He has blessed mankind. Christianity teaches the fallen man the true knowledge, both of himself and God, but it is in the light of God alone that any man can know himself. The famous Greek maxim, "know thyself," was fully practicable only under the Christian religion.

Righteousness. This word among our ancestors signified the same as rightwiseness, thorough wisdom; that which gave a man to distinguish between right and wrong; this is the wisdom that comes from above, and that man is the

right wise man who acts by its dictates.

Right, from the Anglo Saxon, signifies straight as opposed to wrong. Right is straight and wrong is crooked. Hence the righteous man is one who goes straight on or forward ; acts and walks by line and rule ; and the unrighteous is he who walks in crooked paths, does what is wrong and is never guided by true wisdom. This power and with it propensity to act aright, was one of the characteristics of the human soul, as it came out of the hand of God. It was created in knowledge and righteousness.

Holiness. The word means that holiness which acts in reference to God, and differs greatly from another term frequently employed by the apostle, which we translate righteousness, but which properly signifies that honest, pure, and upright principle by which we act towards men. This holiness is properly piety towards God ; heart worship, pure from hypocrisy and superstition ; steady, uniform piety, worshipping God in spirit and in truth. This was another constituent of the image of God in which man was made. And he walked in truth, it was the holiness of truth—unsophisticated piety. Every feeling was a feeling of true piety, and every act of worship flowed from that feeling. This was a state of perfection. He knew everything that belonged to his being and his duty perfectly, he acted perfectly, he walked in the right way, he went straight forward, he ever did what was lawful and right in the sight of God, his Maker. He reverenced Him in the highest degree, offered the purest worship from a pure and holy heart, and all this was according to truth. There were no semblances, no outside piety ; all was sterling, all substantial ; all such as God could require and with every act and feeling was the Lord pleased. Alas, that we must add, from all this state of perfection, excellence and happiness, man fell. This the Scripture declares ; and were it silent, this, the state, feelings and conduct of every man declare, from the remotest antiquity to the present

day. Man is unwise, unrighteous, unholy, impious, false, and wretched in every page of his history and in every period of his being

With such a being, God cannot be pleased; He must either create him anew, or spurn him for ever from His presence. As he is, he can neither please God nor inherit His glory. What is to be done? God has found out a ransom, and devised means that his banished be not expelled from Him. The Messiah came, assumed his nature, suffered and died in his stead, and for his sake, he that believeth is freely justified from all things, from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses. He came to restore man to the divine image and likeness, which he had lost; and this He does by destroying the power, pardoning the guilt, and purifying from the defilement of sin. And in reference to this He has given His gospel, the glad tidings of salvation by Christ Jesus, and has established on the earth a ministry of reconciliation; and in this ministry apostles and apostolic men "teach and warn every man in all wisdom, that they may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." Now this perfection is the restoration of man to the state of holiness from which he fell, by creating him anew in Christ Jesus, and restoring to him that likeness and image of God which he has lost, and this is the perfection here mentioned by the apostle. A higher meaning than this it cannot have, a lower meaning it must not have. God made man in that degree of perfection which was pleasing to His own infinite wisdom and goodness, Sin defaced this divine image; Jesus Christ came to restore it. Sin must have no triumph, and the Redeemer of mankind must have His glory. But if man be not perfectly saved from all sin, sin does triumph, and Satan exult, because they have done a mischief that Christ either cannot or will not remove. To say He cannot would be a shocking blasphemy against the infinite power and dignity of the great Creator; to say He will not would be equally such against the infinite

benevolence and holiness of His nature. All sin, whether in power, guilt, or defilement, is the work of the devil; and as "all unrighteousness is sin," so "His blood cleanseth from all sin," because it "cleanseth from all unrighteousness."

Many stagger at the term "perfection" in Christianity, because they think that what is implied in it is inconsistent with a state of probation; and savours of pride and presumption; but we must take good heed how we stagger at any word of God, and how much more how we deny or fritter away the meaning of any of His sayings, lest He reprove us and we be found liars before Him. But it may be that the term is rejected, because it is not understood. Let us examine its import.

The word perfection, in reference to any person or thing, signifies that such person or thing is complete or finished, that it has nothing redundant, and is in nothing defective. And hence the observation of a learned civilian, is at once both correct and illustrative, viz: "We count those things perfect, which want nothing requisite for the end whereunto they were instituted." And to be perfect often signifies to be blameless, clear, irreproachable, and according to the above definition, a man may be said to be perfect who answers the end for which God made him; and as God requires every man to love Him with all his heart, soul, mind and strength, and his neighbour as himself, then he is a perfect man that does so; he answers the end for which God made him; and this is more evident from the nature of that love which fills his heart; for as love is the principle of obedience so he that loves his God with all his powers, will obey Him with all his powers, and he who loves his neighbour as himself, will not only do no injury to him, but on the contrary, labour to promote his best interests. Why the doctrine which enjoins such a state of perfection as this should be dreaded, ridiculed or despised, is a most strange thing, and the opposition to it can only be from that carnal mind which is enmity to God, and had I no other proof

that man is wholly fallen from God, his opposition to Christian holiness would be to me sufficient.

In Matt. 4, 48, our Lord says, " Ye shall be perfect, as your Father who is in heaven is perfect." Here the word has the very same meaning as the English term ; that which is complete—is in no case defective, in none redundant—and if we speak it of a Christian, he is one that is finished and completed ; God has completed or finished, or made an end of His work in him—broke all the power of sin—and purified his soul from all the defilement of sin ; so that he is pure and holy, and loving and beneficent in his sphere, circumstances, and nature, as God is in His. He is like his God, because he is now holy; created anew in Christ Jesus ; through the power of divine grace, he has regained the image of God which he had lost.

In Heb. 13, 21, the word is used to signify the sum of obedience to the will of God, springing from the work of God in the soul.

And in 1 Peter 5, 10, it is used to express a complete preparation for the kingdom of God. " But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, (restore your whole disordered spirits to perfect soundness) stablish, strengthen, settle you."

And to bring a man to this state of perfect restoration to the image of God, and to fit and adapt him thoroughly to know, do, and suffer God's will, the Holy Scriptures have been given by divine inspiration, that by them, through " doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness, the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished (complete in all parts) unto all good works." 2 Tim. 3, 16-17.

In Heb. 6, 1, the apostle exhorts the people to " go on unto perfection." They were not to rest in what might be called initiatory instructions, or the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, but to proceed to get a full, experimental and practical knowledge of all its excellence.

Once more, the whole gospel, its blessings, and its privileges, in contradistinction from the whole Mosaic dispensation, is termed by the apostle perfection, because it brings perfect instruction in the whole will of God, perfects all revelations and dispensations that had gone before; exhibits a perfect sacrifice for all the sins of all mankind, and the complete destruction of the carnal mind, and restoration of the fallen spirit of man to the image of God, or righteousness and true holiness.

We see, therefore, that the whole design of God was to restore man to His image, and raise him from the ruins of his fall; in a word, to make him perfect; to blot out all his sins, purify his soul and fill him with holiness; so that no unholy temper, evil desire, or impure affection or passion, should either lodge or have any being within him; this and this only is true religion, or Christian perfection; and a less salvation than this would be dishonourable to the sacrifice of Christ, and the operation of the Holy Ghost, and would be as unworthy of the appellation of Christianity as it would be of that holiness or perfection. They who ridicule this are scoffers at the word of God; many of them totally irreligious men, sitting in the seat of the scornful. They who deny it, deny the whole scope and design of divine revelation and the mission of Jesus Christ. And they who preach the opposite doctrine, namely, that a man can be saved in his sins, are either speculative Antinomians or pleaders for Baal.

But that the really godly and sincere may not come under such a censure, let us consider what is the ground of that prejudice that opposes what the Scriptures so frequently mention, and what Jesus Christ so solemnly inculcates. When St. Paul says, "He warns every man, and teaches every man in all wisdom, that he may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus," he must mean something. What then is this something? It most mean that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." It

must imply the pardon of all transgression, and the removal of the whole body of sin and death; for this must take place before we can be like Him, and see Him as He is, in the effulgence of His own glory. This fitness then to appear before God, and thorough preparation for eternal glory, is what I plead for, pray for, and heartily recommend to all true believers, under the name of Christian perfection. Had I a better name, one with a greater plenitude of meaning, one more worthy of the efficacy of the blood that bought our peace, and cleanseth from all unrighteousness, I would gladly adopt and use it. Even the word perfection has, in some relations, so many qualifications and abatements that cannot comport with that full and glorious salvation recommended in the gospel, and bought and sealed by the blood of the cross; that I would gladly lay it by, and employ a word more positive, and unequivocal in its meaning, and more worthy of the merit of the infinite atonement of Christ, and of the energy of His almighty Spirit; but there is none in our language, which I deplore as an inconvenience and a loss.

Why are there so many, even among sincere and godly people, who are so much opposed to this term, and so much alarmed at the profession of Christian Perfection? 'Because they do not believe that a man can be fully saved from sin in this life. I ask, where is this, in unequivocal words, written in the New Testament? Where, in that book, is it intimated that sin is never wholly destroyed till death takes place, and the soul and the body are separated? No where. In the popish, baseless doctrine of purgatory, this doctrine with more rational consequences, is held. This doctrine allows, that so inveterate is sin that it cannot be wholly destroyed, even in death, and that a penal fire, in a middle state between heaven and hell is necessary to atone for that which the blood of Christ has not cancelled, and to purge from that which the energy of the Almighty Spirit had not cleansed before death.

Even papists could not see that a moral evil was detained in the soul, through its physical connection with the body; and that it required the dissolution of this physical connection before the moral contagion could be removed. Protestants, who profess and most certainly possess a better faith, are they alone that maintain the death-bed purgatory; and how positively do they hold out death as a complete deliverer from all corruption, and the final destroyer of sin as if it were revealed in every page of the Bible; whereas there is not one passage in the sacred volume that says any such thing. Were this true, then death, far from being the last enemy, would be the last and best friend, and the greatest of all deliverers; for, if the last remains of indwelling sin of all believers is to be destroyed by death, then, death that removes it, must be the highest benefactor of mankind. The truth is, it is neither the cause nor the means of its destruction. It is the blood of Jesus alone that cleanses from all unrighteousness.

It is supposed that indwelling sin is useful, even to true believers, "because it humbles them, and keeps them low in their own estimation." A little examination will show that this is contrary to the fact. It is generally, if not universally allowed, that pride is of the essence of sin, if not its very essence. How then can pride humble us? Is not this absurd? Where is there a sincere Christian, be his creed what it may, that does not deplore his proud, rebellious, and unsubdued heart and will, as the cause of all his wretchedness; the thing that mars his best sacrifices, and prevents his communion with God? How often do such people say or sing, both in their public and private devotions:— "But pride, that busy sin, spoils all that I perform." Were there no pride there would be no sin; and the heart from which it is cast out has the humility, meekness and gentleness of Christ implanted in its stead.

But still it is alleged as an indubitable fact, that, "A man is humbled under a sense of indwelling sin." I grant that

they who see, and feel, and deplore their indwelling sin, are humbled : but is it the sin that humbles ? No. It is the grace of God that shows and condemns the sin that humbles us. Pride works frequently under a dense mask, and will often assume the garb of humility : how true is that saying, and of how many is it the language :

" Proud I am my wants to see,
Proud of my humility."

And to conceal his working, even Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. It appears then, that we attribute this boasted humiliation to a wrong cause; we never are humbled under a sense of indwelling sin, till the Spirit of God drags it to the light, and shows us, not only its horrid deformity, but its hostility to God; and He manifests it, that He may take it away ; but a false opinion causes many to hug the monster, and to contemplate their chains with complacency !

It has been objected to this perfection, this perfect work of grace in the soul, that " the greater sense we have of our own sinfulness the more will Christ be exalted in the eye of the soul ; for if the thing were possible, that a man might be cleansed from all sin in this life, he would feel no need of a Saviour ; Christ would be under-valued by him as no longer needing His saving power." This objection mistakes the whole state of the case. How is Christ exalted in the view of the soul ? Is it not from a sense of what He has done for us ; and what He has done in us ? Did any man ever love God till he felt that God loved him ? Do we not love Him because He first loved us ? Is it the name Jesus that is precious to us ? or Jesus the Saviour, saving us from our sins ? Is all our confidence placed in Him because of some one saving act ? or because of His continual operation as the Saviour ? Can any effect subsist without its cause ? Must not the cause continue to operate in order to maintain the effect ? Do we value a good cause more for the instantaneous production of a good and important effect, than we

do for its continual energy, exerted to maintain that good and important effect? All these questions can be answered by a child. What is it that cleanseth the soul and destroys sin? Is it not the mighty power of the grace of God? What is it that keeps the soul clean? Is it not that same power dwelling in us? No more can an effect subsist without its cause than a sanctified soul abide in holiness without the indwelling Sanctifier.

When Christ casts out the strong armed man, He takes away that armour in which he trusted, He spoils his goods: He cleanses and enters into the house, so that the heart becomes the habitation of God through the Spirit. Can then a man under-value that Christ, Who not only blotted out his iniquity but cleansed his soul from all sin; and Whose presence and inward mighty working constitute all his holiness and all his happiness? Impossible! Jesus was never so highly valued, so intensely loved, so affectionately obeyed, as now. The great Saviour has not His highest glory from His atoning and redeeming acts, but from the manifestation of His saving power.

He was incarnated, suffered, died, and rose again from the dead that He might make an atonement for the world, and save His people from their sins. It is only when "the thoughts of our hearts are purified by the inspiration of His Holy Spirit that we perfectly love Him, and worthily magnify His name." We never properly know His worth, nor feel any obligation to Him, till we feel that He has blotted out our sin, and healed the infected streams of our fallen nature.

"But the persons who profess to have been made thus perfect are proud and supercilious, and their whole conduct says to their neighbour, Stand by, I am holier than thou." No person that ever acts so has received this grace. He is either a hypocrite or a self-deceiver. Those who have received it are full of meekness, gentleness and long-suffering; they love God with all their hearts, they love

even their enemies; love the whole human family, and are servants of all. They know they have nothing but what they have received. They have neither light, power, love, nor happiness, but from their indwelling Saviour. Their holiness, though it fills the soul, yet is only a drop from the infinite ocean. The flame of their love, though it penetrates their whole being, is only a spark from the incomprehensible Sun of Righteousness.

It has been no small mercy to me that, in the course of my religious life, I have met with many persons who professed that the blood of Jesus Christ had saved them from all sin; and whose profession was sustained by an immaculate life; but I never knew one of them that was not of the spirit above described. They were men of the strongest faith, the purest love, the holiest affections, the most obedient lives, and the most useful in society. I have seen such walking with God for many years; and as I had the privilege of observing their walk in life, so I have been privileged with their testimony at death, when their sun appeared to grow broader and brighter at its setting; and though they came through great tribulation, they found that their robes were washed and made white through the blood of the Lamb. They fully witnessed the grand effects which in this life flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification: viz., assurance of God's love; peace of conscience; joy in the Holy Ghost; increase of grace; and perseverance in the same to the end of their lives. O God, let my death be like that of those righteous! and let my end be like theirs. Amen.

It is scarcely worth mentioning another objection that has been started by the ignorant, the worthless, and the wicked. "The people that profess this leave Christ out of the question; they either think that they have purified their own hearts, or that they have gained their pretended perfection by their own merits." Nothing can be more false than this calumny. I know that people well in whose

creed the doctrine of salvation from all sin in this life, is a prominent article. But that people hold most conscientiously that all our salvation from the first dawn of light in the soul to its entry into the kingdom of glory, is all by and through Christ. He alone convinces the soul of sin, justifies the ungodly, sanctifies the unholy, preserves in the state of salvation, and brings to everlasting blessedness. No soul ever was or can be saved, but through His agony and bloody sweat, His cross and passion, His death and burial, His glorious resurrection and ascension, and continued intercession at the right hand of God.

If men would but spend as much time in fervently calling upon God to cleanse them from sin as they spent in decrying this doctrine, what a glorious state of the church should we soon witness! Instead of tormenting their minds to find out with how little grace they may be saved, they would renounce the devil and all his works; and be determined never to rest till they had found that he had bruised him under their feet, and that the blood of Christ had cleansed them from all unrighteousness. Why is it that men will not try how far God will save them? nor leave off praying and believing, for more and more, till they find that God has withheld His hand? When they find that their agonizing faith and prayer receive no further answer, then,and not till then, they may conclude that God will be no farther gracious, and that He will not save to the uttermost them who come unto Him through Christ Jesus.

But it is further objected that even St. Paul himself denies this doctrine of perfection: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after." Phil. 3, 12. This place is mistaken; the apostle is not speaking of his restoration to the image of God, but of his completing of his ministerial course, and receiving the crown of martyrdom.

There is another point that has been produced, at least indirectly, in the form of an objection to this doctrine:

"Where are those adult, those perfect Christians? We know none such; but we have heard that some persons professing those extraordinary degrees of holiness, have become scandalous in their lives." When a question of this kind is asked by one who fears God and earnestly desires his salvation; and only wishes to have full evidence that the thing is attainable, that he may shake himself from the dust, and arise and go up to possess the good land,—it deserves to be seriously answered. To such, I would say, there may be none among your religious acquaintance, because they do not know their privilege, or unfortunately sit under a ministry where the doctrine is decried, and in such congregations and churches holiness never abounds, men are too apt to be slothful, and unfaithful to the grace they have received; they need not their minister's exhortations to beware of looking for or expecting a heart purified from all unrighteousness. Striving or agonizing to enter in at the strait gate, is not pleasant work to flesh and blood; and they are glad to have anything to countenance their spiritual indolence: and such ministers have always a powerful coadjutor; the father of lies, and the spirit of error, will work in the unrenewed heart, filling it with darkness, and prejudice, and unbelief; no wonder then that in such places, there is no man that can be presented perfect in Christ Jesus. But wherever the trumpet gives a certain sound, and the people go forth to battle headed by the Captain of their salvation, there the foe is routed, and genuine believers brought into the liberty of the children of God.

As to some having professed to have received this salvation, and afterwards become scandalous in their lives I would just observe that they might possibly have been deceived; thought they had what they had not; or they might have become unfaithful to that grace and lost it; and this is possible through the whole range of a state of probation. There have been angels who kept not their first estate, and we all know to our cost, that he who was the

head and fountain of the whole human family, who was made in the image and likeness of God, sinned against God and fell from that state. And so may any of His descendants fall from any degree of the grace of God while in their state of probation; and any man, and every man must fall whenever he or they cease to watch unto prayer, and cease to be workers together with God. Faith must ever be kept in lively exercise, working by love; and that love is only safe when found exerting its energies in the path of obedience. The truth is, no doctrine of God stands upon the knowledge, experience, faithfulness, or unfaithfulness of man: it stands on the veracity of God who gave it. If there were not a man to be found who was justified freely through the redemption that is by Jesus; yet the doctrine of justification by faith is true, for it is a doctrine that stands on the truth of God. And suppose that not one could be found in all the churches of Christ whose heart was purified from all unrighteousness, and loved God and man with all his regenerated powers, yet the doctrine of Christian perfection would still be true, for Christ was manifested that He might destroy the work of the devil, and His blood cleanseth from all unrighteousness, and suppose every man be a liar, God is true.

It is not the profession of a doctrine that established its truth, it is the truth of God, from which it has proceeded. Man's experience may illustrate it, but it is God's truth that confirms it.

I conclude from the whole, and trust I have satisfactorily proved it, that as Christ among and in the people, the hope of glory, was the sum and substance of the apostle's preaching, so, their redemption from ALL sin, its power, guilt, and contamination, even in this life, was the grand, the only end at which He aimed in all his ministry; and that to labour to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus, is at once, the duty and glory of every Christian preacher.